

English Grammar: Reflexive Verbs

A reflexive verb is a verb whose object is the same as its subject - when the subject receives and does the action at the same time. For example:

"The cat **cleaned itself**."

However, the verb "to clean" doesn't need to be reflexive: "I **cleaned** the house."

Some verbs are always reflexive, for example "to behave". This is because you can only "**behave yourself**" and not "behave another person".

Here is another example:

"I **injured myself**". (reflexive) ("I injured-I", "I injured-me")

"I **injured my ankle**". (not reflexive)

To say "I injured" is incomplete because the verb is "transitive" – it needs an object.

When using a reflexive verb, we use the following words:

- **I** – **myself**
- **you** – **yourself** (singular)
- **he** – **himself**
- **she** – **herself**
- **it** – **itself** (singular - object or animal)
- **you** – **yourselves** (plural)
- **we** – **ourselves**
- **they** – **themselves** (plural - people, objects or animals)

We use the word "**oneself**" when referring to the infinitive form of the verb. For example:
comportar-se = to behave **oneself**

Examples:

I hurt **myself** when I played football yesterday.

Did you injure **yourself** when you fell?

He lost **himself** when he was walking in the forest.

Lucy has cut **herself**. Can you get a band-aid?

The notebook turned **itself** off because the battery was very low.

Welcome to my English class. Please introduce **yourselves**.

We must congratulate **ourselves** for winning the cup.

They confused **themselves** when they used the map upside down.

The prefix/suffix "*self*" is similar to the Portuguese prefix "*auto*". Here are some other words and phrases which use it:

selfish	(<i>egoísta</i>)	self-control	(<i>autocontrole</i>)
selfless	(<i>altruísta</i>)	self-portrait	(<i>autorretrato</i>)
self-help	(<i>autoajuda</i>)	self-taught	(<i>autodidata</i>)
self esteem	(<i>auto estima</i>)	by myself	(<i>sozinho</i>)
selfie	(<i>foto</i>)	self-service	(<i>por kilo / bufet livre</i>)

Here are some more examples of English reflexive verbs:

- I taught **myself** English. / I am **self-taught**.
(*Eu ensinei inglês a mim mesmo. (Eu aprendi inglês sozinho.) / Eu sou autodidata.*)
- Jane prepared **herself** for the test.
(*Jane se preparou para o teste.*)
- I blame **myself** for the accident.
(*Eu me culpo pelo acidente.*)
- He is proud of **himself**.
(*Ele está orgulhoso de si mesmo.*)
- The kids behaved **themselves** very well.
(*As crianças se comportaram muito bem.*)
- The kids couldn't control **themselves**. They were so excited.
(*As crianças não conseguiam se controlar. Eles estavam tão animados.*)
- I see **myself** as a manager in ten years.
(*Eu me vejo como gerente daqui a dez anos.*)
- I noticed **myself** singing in the shower.
(*Eu me percebi cantando no banho.*)

Some Portuguese reflexive verbs **are not** reflexive in English:

Reflexive

casar-se

Fred se casou com Mary no ano passado.

sentar-se

Eu me sentei.

levantar-se

Eu me levantei.

vestir-se

Você vai se vestir?

arrepender-se

Ele se arrependeu de tudo.

sentir-se

Ela se sente bem.

hospedar-se

Eu me hospedei na casa dele.

Not Reflexive

to marry

Fred married Mary last year.

to sit down

I sat down.

to get up

I got up.

to dress

Are you going to dress?

to regret

He regretted everything.

to feel

She feels fine.

to stay

I stayed in his house.

Some Portuguese reflexive verbs **can be** reflexive in English:

divertir-se

a) to have fun

b) to enjoy oneself (reflexive)

Nós nos divertimos.

We had fun.

Did they have fun?

We enjoyed ourselves.

Did they enjoy themselves?

chamar-se

a) to be

b) to call oneself (reflexive)

Eu me chamo David.

I am David.

What's his name?

He is John.

I call myself David.

What does he call himself?

He calls himself John.

Exercise. Translate the following to English. Some use reflexive verbs and others not.

1. Por favor, lave o carro.

2. Eu preciso me lavar.

3. Ele se machucou ontem durante o jogo de futebol.

4. Bob cortou o próprio dedo quando estava cortando a carne.

5. Bob sempre se corta no trabalho.

6. Ele se apresentou a Karen.

7. Como ele se chama?

8. Simon! Comporte-se!

9. Eu sempre me levanto às 6 horas.

10. Eles se arrependeram de não ir à praia com os primos deles.

11. Como você se sente? Eu me sinto ótimo!

12. Até mais! Diverta-se!
