

Reflexive Verbs: Part II

In the previous lesson, you learned that a verb is reflexive when the subject and the object are the same.

I wash myself.

subject: I
verb: wash
object: myself

Since the subject and object are the same, the verb is reflexive.

I wash the car.

subject: I
verb: wash
object: car

Since the subject and object are different, the verb is not reflexive.

You also learned that when a verb is reflexive, the infinitive ends in "se."

lavar..... to wash (non-reflexive)
lavarse to wash oneself (reflexive)
rascar..... to scratch (non-reflexive)
rascarse..... to scratch oneself (reflexive)

You should have memorized a set of pronouns called "reflexive pronouns."

me (myself)
te (yourself)
se (himself, herself, yourself)
nos (ourselves)
os (yourselves)
se (themselves, yourselves)

You learned to conjugate reflexive verbs like this:

lavarse

yo me lavo I wash (myself)
tú te lavas you wash (yourself) (informal)
él/ella se lava he/she washes (him/herself)
usted se lava you wash (yourself) (formal)
nosotros/as nos lavamos..... we wash (ourselves)
vosotros/as os laváis you-all wash (yourselves) (informal)
ustedes se lavan you-all wash (yourselves) (formal)
ellos/as se lavan..... they wash (themselves)

In the lesson titled Direct Object Pronouns Part III you learned that when there are two verbs, you have two options on where to place the pronoun: before the conjugated verb or attached to the end of the infinitive.

I want to see it. (querer, ver)

Lo quiero ver.

Quiero verlo.

Lo debemos comprar.

Debemos comprarlo.

We should buy it.

María nos debe visitar.

María debe visitarnos.

Mary should visit us.

Juan lo necesita lavar.

Juan necesita lavarlo.

John needs to wash it.

The same is true regarding reflexive pronouns. When the sentence has two verbs, the pronoun can be placed directly before the conjugated verb or attached to the end of the infinitive.

I want to see myself.

Me quiero ver.

Quiero verme.

John needs to wash his hair.

Juan se necesita lavar el pelo.

Juan necesita lavarse el pelo.

Maria can wash her face now.

Ahora María se puede lavar la cara.

Ahora María puede lavarse la cara.

I have just gone to bed.

Acabo de acostarme.

Me acabo de acostar.

We prefer to wash with scented soap.

Preferimos lavarnos con jabón perfumado.

Nos preferimos lavar con jabón perfumado.

Whenever a verb directly follows a preposition, it remains in the infinitive form. For reflexive verbs, the ending -se changes to agree with the subject. Observe the differences in the following sentences, all of which are about counting burros before falling asleep.

Antes de dormirme, **yo** cuento burros.

Antes de dormirte, **tú** cuentas burros.

Antes de dormirse, **la chica** cuenta burros.

Antes de dormirnos, **nosotros** contamos burros.

Antes de dormiros, **vosotros** contáis burros.

Antes de dormirse, **los chicos** cuentan burros.

In English, many verbs can be used transitively (with a direct object) or intransitively (without a direct object).

The sun dried the clothes. (transitive)

The clothes dried in the sun. (intransitive)

In Spanish, these intransitive constructions frequently employ the reflexive form.

The sun dried the clothes. (transitive) El sol secó la ropa.

The clothes dried in the sun. (intransitive)..... La ropa se secó al sol.

Sometimes, the reflexive construction is used merely to emphasize who is performing the action of the sentence.

The cake? **Maria** ate it..... ¿La torta? María se la comió.

For some verbs, the meaning changes when they are used reflexively.

aburrir - to bore

aburrirse - to be bored

acordar - to agree

acordarse de - to remember

acostar - to put to bed

acostarse - to go to bed

casar - to perform a marriage ceremony

casarse con - to become married to someone

despedir - to fire

despedirse de - to say goodbye

dormir - to sleep

dormirse - to fall asleep

ir - to go

irse - to go away, to leave

morir - to die (abruptly, as of an accident, war, etc.)

morirse - to die (as from natural causes; also "to die" figuratively)

negar - to deny

negarse a - to refuse

parecer - to seem

parecerse a - to resemble

poner - to put

ponerse - to put on

probar - to try, to taste

probarse - to try on

quitar - to take away

quitarse - to take off

■ A few verbs are always used reflexively.

arrepentirse (e:ie) to repent

atreverse a to dare

darse cuenta de to realize

jactarse de to boast

quejarse de to complain about

suicidarse to commit suicide