I'm not a bot

Reflexive verbs are verbs whose subjects are also their direct objects—that is, the action of the verb is both committed and received by the same person or thing. Reflexive verbs are sometimes identified as being in the “middle voice” (as opposed to the active voice or the passive voice).Reflexive verbs can most easily be identified by the use of reflexive pronouns, which are used as the direct object and refer back to the subject of the sentence.“I accidentally burned myself with the hairdryer.” (Myself refers to the subject, I.)“The baby is smiling at herself in the mirror.” (Herself refers to the subject, the baby.)“The problem seems to have worked itself out in the end.” (Itself refers to the subject, the problem.)When the same verb is paired with an object that is not a reflexive pronoun, then the verb is no longer considered reflexive. For example, consider how the first two examples change if we use non-reflexive pronouns:“I accidentally burned him with the hairdryer.” (Him refers to a second person who is not the subject, I.)“The baby is smiling at her in the mirror.” (Her refers to a second person who is not the subject, the baby.)The third example would not make sense with a different pronoun because the subject, the problem, is inanimate and cannot have agency over a separate direct object. Certain reflexive verbs can also have reflexive pronouns as direct objects that are implied and therefore omitted from the sentence. For example:“My father is shaving in the bathroom.” (with the reflexive pronoun himself implied)“She always stretches before doing yoga.” (with the reflexive pronoun herself implied)“Children, please keep quiet!” (with the reflexive the pronoun yourselves implied)While the majority of reflexive verbs are transitive, with reflexive pronouns as their objects, certain intransitive verbs can be used to modify a subject (usually an inanimate object) that is also the receiver of the action. In the middle voice, this type of verb does not take a reflexive pronoun (or any direct object). For example:“My sister’s lunch is cooking on the stove.” (Cook is an intransitive verb indicating what is being cooked.)“This car doesn’t drive smoothly anymore.” (Drive is an intransitive verb indicating what is being driven.)“Her engagement ring broke in half.” (Break is an intransitive verb indicating what is being broken.)We can see that the subjects of these examples (my sister’s lunch, this car, and her engagement ring) are also the recipients of the action in each sentence, even though the verbs are intransitive and do not take direct objects.Most of the time, a verb’s meaning is not inherently different when it becomes reflexive. However, there are some instances in which reflexive verbs have slightly different meanings from standard transitive verbs. For example:“He decided to apply himself to the work at hand.” (reflexive verb, meaning “to engage in something with great diligence and persistence”)“She applied pressure to the wound.” (non-reflexive verb, meaning “to bring into contact with”)“They found themselves without a leader.” (reflexive verb, meaning “to perceive oneself to be in a specific place or condition”)“We found the solution we were looking for.” (non-reflexive verb, meaning “to come upon, discover, or ascertain”)“Please, help yourself to the food.” (reflexive verb, meaning “to serve or provide oneself with”)“Please help your brother with his homework.” (non-reflexive verb, meaning “to give assistance to”)We must be careful whenever we make a verb reflexive, as there is no rule to know when or if a verb’s meaning might be altered. Get all volumes of The Farlex Grammar Book in paperback or eBook. Share Tweet This verb is irregular Reflexive verb: yes Gerund / Gerundio: acostándose Past particle / Participio: acostado —-Conjugate “acostarse” at BEGINNER level:—-Conjugate “acostarse” at INTERMEDIATE Level:—-Conjugate “acostarse” at ADVANCED Level:—-ORDERS and COMMANDS conjugation (Imperativo) for the verb “acostarse”: A full list of all 69 reflexive verbs in Spanish can be found underneath. Search, scroll and find the verbs in the table. Click on the verb to find it's full conjugation chart.Want to learn more about reflexive verbs first? Click here for the full guide.All reflexive verbs in Spanish:Spanish verbEnglish translationaburrirseto get bored, become bored, be boredacercarseto approachacordarseto rememberacostarseto go to bed, to lie downacostumbrarseto get used to, get accustomed toafeitarseto shave oneselfalegrarseto be glad, to rejoicearrepentirseto regret, to be sorryasustarseto be frightened oneselfatreverseto dare, to venture, to hazardbañarseto bathe oneselfbroncearseto get a tan, to tanburlarseto make fun, to scoffcalentarseto get warmcallarseto shut up, to keep quitecalmarseto calm down yourselfcansarseto get tired, to get worn out,casarseto get marriedcomunicarseto communicatecriarseto grow, to be brought updecidirseto decidededicarseto devote oneselfdesarrollarseto develop oneself, to growdespertarseto wake up, to lie downdetenerseto stop, to pause, to restdivertirseto have fun, to have a good time, to enjoy oneselfdivorciarseto get divorceddormirseto go to sleep, to fall asleepducharseto take a showercharseto lie, to lean, to throwemborracharseto get drunk, to become drunkenamorarseto fall in love, to fall forenfadarseto get angry, to get irritated, to get annoyedenfermarseto get sick, to become ill, to fall ill. become sickenflaquecerseto get thin, to lose weight, to grow weakenojarseto get angry, to lose one's temperenriquecerseto get richenterarseto find out, to get to knowentusiasmarseto get excited, to become excitedenvejecerseto get old, to agegraduarseto graduatehallarseto find oneselfirseto leave, to go awayjactarseto boast, bragjuntarseto get together, to joinlavarseto wash oneself, to wash uplevantarseto get upllamarseto be called, to be namedmaquillarseto put on make-up someonematricularseto enroll, to register, to matriculate, to entermoverseto move, to travel, to stirmudarseto move housenegarseto refuseolvidarseto forget, to blow overoponerseto stand against, to objectpeinarseto comb one's hair, to do one's hairponerseto wear oneself, to put on selfpreguntarseto wonder, to ask oneselfprepararseto prepare oneself, to get oneself readyquebrarseto break, smash, get brokenquedarseto stay, to remain, to stick aroundquejarseto complain, to moanquemarseto burn oneselfregistrarseto register oneself, to check in oneself, to sign in onseselfsecarseto dry, to dry off, to dry upsentarseto sit down, to seat oneselfsentirseto feelvestirseto get dressed, to dresszambullirseto dive, plunge Oh man, we’re really excited to share una bella notizia (good news) with you. The wait is over! FluentU Italian … So you’re thinking about learning Italian by yourself. While it may not always be easy, it’ll be worth it. Self-studying… Essere is an Italian verb meaning “to be” or “to exist”. Learning the conjugations of essere immediately gives you the… His and hers, yours and mine—these are all examples of possessive pronouns, and there are only eight of these in… If you ask former language students where they gave up on learning Italian, or where they thought the end of… If you’re learning Italian, you may have noticed that many words look similar to English. But as far as pronunciation… or are common ways to say “I love you” in Italian. But there are many other ways to express your… Italian, a language as vibrant and captivating as the country it hails from, has its origins in the Latin spoken… If you’re learning Italian, you may have noticed that many words look similar to English. But as far as pronunciation… Disney Plus has at least 1,900 movies and counting—and many of these are available in Italian. From animated favorites like… Italian cinema has produced a lot of masterpieces that are internationally renowned—romantic movies included. From modern favorites like “Call Me… Let me guess: You’re here not just because you want to know which countries speak Italian—you want to know if… It’s fine if you alight in Naples and can order a pizza in flawless Italian. But to really impress your… If you’re looking for the fastest way to learn Italian, you’re in the right place. I’ll go over tips for… After “hello,” the most common Italian phrase you’ll hear will be some variation of “how are you?” But just one… In Italian Grammar, words can be masculine or feminine, but the reason why is not always clear to those learning… In Italian, a mood is the form of a verb that shows how it is expressed, not just when the… If you’re visiting Italy, you’ll have many reasons to use the word “beautiful” and its synonyms. From the landscapes and… means “emotions” in Italian. Whether you’re happy, sad, excited, angry or somewhere in between, knowing how to describe your feelings… Italy is a country renowned for its delicious food and wine, but its drinks repertoire goes far beyond that. From… You’ve probably seen the gestures that are such an essential part of communicating in Italian—a flick of the wrist or… Italian accent marks are a vital part of mastering the language, and using the wrong one in the wrong place… I have a simple but effective rule for you to remember: To write, you have to write. Seems like common… Italian has a lot of similar sounds, and getting a handle on pronouncing sounds like “glio” and “glia” can be… A “reflexive” sentence is one in which the subject does something to him/herself. Or put another way, the subject and the object of the sentence refer to the same person. The action of the verb in a reflexive sentence is “reflected” back onto the subject. Compare: I read the book. I wash myself. In the first sentence the action of the verb, reading, is passed onto an object, the book. The sentence is not reflexive. But in the second sentence, the person doing the washing and the person being washed is one and the same. The second sentence is reflexive. In English we deal with reflexives by adding words like “himself” or “yourself” to the sentence. In Spanish we use a special class of verbs known as “reflexive verbs” which have their own unique rules. Spanish Reflexive Verbs In their infinitive form reflexive verbs end with a “-se” after the usual “-ar,” “-er,” or “-ir.” For example if you look up “to shave” in a Spanish/English dictionary, you’ll find afeitarse and you can see from its “-se” ending that it is a reflexive verb. Here are some other reflexive verbs. Notice the “-se” endings: Spanish: English: despertarse to wake up levantarse to get up sentarse to sit down acostarse to go to bed The “-se” at the end of each verb is something known as a “reflexive pronoun” and we’ll need to pay special attention to it when we conjugate. Conjugating Reflexive Verbs To conjugate a reflexive verb we first take the “-se” ending and place it in front of the verb. Then we conjugate as we normally would. Here’s the process for saying “I shave”: Yo afeitarse. ↓ Yo se afeitar. ↓ Yo se afeito. Note: In English when someone says “I shave” it’s understood that they’re talking about shaving themselves. Rarely does anyone say, “I shave myself,” but in Spanish we’re a bit more explicit. This is a good start, but we’re not quite done. Just as the verb ending, “-o,” needs to agree with the subject, our reflexive pronoun, se, needs to agree as well. In this case, the se needs to become me: Yo se afeito. ↓ Yo me afeito. I shave. / I shave myself. So the reflexive pronoun se becomes me when the subject is yo. What about other subjects? Spanish Reflexive Pronouns Here’s the list of reflexive pronouns in Spanish, with subject pronouns for comparison: subject pronouns: yo nosotros,-as tú vosotros,-as él, ella, Ud. ellos, ellas, Uds. reflexive pronouns: Therefore a complete set of sentences using afeitarse as the verb would look like this: Yo me afeito. Tú te afeitas. Róger se afeita. Nosotros nos afeitamos. Vosotros os afeitáis. Mis amigos se afeitan. Notice that with reflexive verbs, the subject, the reflexive object, and the verb ending are all in agreement (because the subjects are doing the action to themselves). Some more examples: Tú te despiertas. You wake up. Ella se levanta. She gets up. Nosotros nos sentamos. We sit down. Uds. se acuestan. You go to bed. Two things to be aware of before we get any further: Reflexive pronouns are not optional. This “extra” reflexive pronoun can be frustrating for students who are already busy enough trying to remember the verb endings and as a result it often gets ignored, but we can’t just ignore the things we find difficult. Reflexive pronouns do not replace the subject. Nos is not the same as nosotros. It’s not an abbreviation either. So how do you know if a verb is reflexive or not? Well, the idea that reflexive verbs are used when the subject does the action to him/herself is a good starting place, but the truth is you really need to memorize which verbs are reflexive and which ones aren’t. You won’t be able to tell from context whether you need to add a reflexive pronoun or not. For some reflexive verbs it’s quite obvious why they are reflexive but other reflexive verbs may make no sense to you whatsoever. Common Reflexive Verbs Here’s a list of commonly used reflexive verbs: reflexive verb:meaning:more literal translation: acostarse to go to bed to put oneself to bed afeitarse to shave to shave oneself apurarse to hurry up to hurry oneself bañarse to take a bath to bathe oneself despertarse to wake up to wake oneself ducharse to take a shower -- lavarse to wash up to wash oneself levantarse to get up to raise oneself peinarse to comb one’s hair -- ponerse to put on to put onto oneself quitarse to take off to remove from oneself reirse to laugh -- secarse to dry off to dry oneself sentarse to sit down to seat oneself sentirse to feel -- vestirse to get dressed to dress oneself A few things to note from the list above: Many reflexive verbs have to do with daily routine: washing, combing, drying, etc. and many have to do with emotions. As mentioned before it’s not obvious why some of these verbs are reflexive; they just are. The sooner you accept that, the better off you’ll be. Some of the verbs listed are inherently reflexive and can’t be conjugated any other way. Some also have non-reflexive forms that convey different meanings. Speaking of which… Note: Ponerse means “to put on” but it can also mean “to become.” Possessive Adjective Replacement When using reflexive verbs we frequently omit possessive adjectives and use definite articles instead (this tends to happen with body parts and articles of clothing). The reflexive pronoun does the job of the possessive adjective: Yo me seco el pelo. I dry my hair. Juana se lavó las manos. Juana washed her hands. Tú te pones el abrigo. You put on your jacket. Reflexive Pronoun Placement Like other pronouns, reflexive pronouns are placed before a “normal” conjugated verb. But they can attached to present participles and infinitives if they’re available. Reflexive pronouns must be attached to affirmative commands. Some examples: “normal” verb: Él se viste. He gets dressed. infinitive: Él quiere vestirse. Él se quiere vestir. He wants to get dressed. present participle: Él está vistiéndose. Él se está vistiendo. He is getting dressed. command: ¡Vístete! Get dressed! This verb is regular Reflexive verb: yes Gerund / Gerundio: acercándose Past particle / Participio: acercado —-Conjugate “acercarse” at BEGINNER level:—-Conjugate “acercarse” at INTERMEDIATE Level:—-Conjugate “acercarse” at ADVANCED Level:—-ORDERS and COMMANDS conjugation (Imperativo) for the verb “acercarse”: Los verbos reflexivos or Spanish reflexive verbs are a special type of verbs whose action reflects back on the subject. They are used very often in everyday conversations, which is why we decided to make a lesson that explains how they can be used to make grammatically correct sentences. This lesson includes a list of these verbs, a conjugation chart and interactive quizzes to practice grammar. Comencemos… This video makes use of nice graphics and several examples to explain what Spanish reflexive pronouns are and their relationship with subject pronouns. It also explains how to conjugate reflexive verbs in the language to make sentences about daily routines and other topics. All the examples in the video will help you get the best out of this lesson. As we mentioned in our lesson for regular verbs, Spanish verbs normally end in -AR, -ER and -IR in their infinitive form, and all of them represent an action that usually affects an object. For a very basic sentence like ¨Yo barro el piso¨, YO (I) would be the subject, BARRER (sweep) the action or verb and EL PISO (the floor) the object. Spanish reflexive verbs are somewhat different as they represent actions that affects the subject of the sentence not the object itself. Reflexive verbs will not end in -AR, -ER or -IR but in -SE. It is often a verb in infinitive (part 1) plus the -SE ending (part 2), for example: BAÑAR + SE = BAÑARSE. We could transform any simple verb into a reflexive verb, but it does not make sense to do so for a great deal of them. The picture below shows the structure and two different ways to use them in sentences. Los verbos reflexivos en español As shown in the picture, reflexive verbs in Spanish are formed by two parts: a verb in infinitive + a reflexive pronoun. The verb in infinite is conjugated following the rules for regular verbs so for a verb like BAÑARSE (BAÑAR + SE), we should apply the rules for –AR ending verbs and conjugate that part as (Yo) baño, (Tú) bañas, (Él) baña and so on. The reflexive pronoun -SE at the end of BAÑARSE will also change depending on the pronoun or subject in use, e.g. “Yo me baño”, where ME is the reflexive pronoun that corresponds to YO. Putting all the pieces together, for the verb BAÑARSE we could say: “Yo me baño”, “Tú te bañas”, “Él se baña”… and so on. Leaving out the subject pronoun is totally fine, but do not omit the reflexive pronoun. Here is a chart with several examples of sentences using all the possible conjugations for the reflexive verb BAÑARSE. Click on PLAY to listen to the example. I take a shower in the morning Tú te/Vos te – Tú te bañas muy rápido Él se/ Ella se / Usted se – ¿Ella se baña sola? Does she bathe by herself? Nosotros nos bañamos en el río We go swimming in the river Vosotros os bañáis sin permiso You take a shower without permission Los niños se bañan juntos The children take a shower together There are many reflexive verbs in Spanish to choose from, but we selected some of them and created sentences for you to see their conjugation as well. For irregular verbs like IR (to go), that sometimes can be used in a reflexive form, make sure you conjugate the infinitive correctly as this verb do not follow regular verbs rules: Yo me voy, Tú te vas… and so on. Most are regular verbs, but some may need a stem change or an orthographic change, for example, SALIR is conjugated as SALGO for the pronoun YO so we should say Yo me salgo not Yo me salo. Make sure you are familiar with all these rules for regular verbs and that you recognize a few basic irregular verbs as well. In order to use and conjugate Spanish reflexive verbs properly, you really need to know how to conjugate the verb in infinitive and then just add the correct reflexive pronoun for the subject. PONERSE – Ella se pone el sombrero QUITARSE – Nosotros nos quitamos el brazalete ENCONTRARSE – ¿Ustedes se encontraron con ellos? DARSE CUENTA – ¿Ellos ya se dieron cuenta del accidente? Did they realize about the accident? FIJARSE – Yo siempre me fijo en los anuncios I always pay attention to the adds METERSE – Siempre nos metemos en problemas ACORDARSE – ¿Tú te acuerdas de mi? ENOJARSE – Él se enojó contigo IRSE – ¿Usted se va con nosotros? Spanish Reflexive verbs can be used to say simple things such as “Yo me baño” or to talk about topics that are a little more complicated like daily routines and hobbies. Here are a few notes to learn how and when to use them: This happens when we want to use a reflexive verb as the subject of the sentence, for example: Ejercitarse es bueno (Exercising is good) and Despertarse temprano es difícil. (Waking up early is difficult). Some verbs will not need a reflexive form such as COCINAR (to cook): Cocinar es mi pasatiempo (Cooking is my hobby). COCINAR is what we would call a non-reflexive verb in the language. Using one or the other depends on what we are trying to say, for example the sentence Bañar al perro es divertido (Bathing my dog is fun) begins with BAÑAR not BAÑARSE because we want the verb to affect the object PERRO not everyone in general unlike Bañarse es divertido (Taking a shower is fun). In other words, when reflexive verbs are used as activities, if the action will affect a specific object then use the verb in infinitive form only. These verbs can also be used for commands or orders such as “¡Ya es hora! ¡Alístate!” or “¡Cómete toda la comida Alex!” where CÓMETE and ALÍSTATE are verbs in reflexive form. Here we only conjugate the verb following the rules for Spanish regular verbs and then add the corresponding reflexive pronoun at the end. Commands are often used for conjugations in the second person so for a verb like BAÑARSE, we would say Tú báñate, Usted báñese, Vos báñate, Ustedes báñense, Vosotros bañaos. We can apply this rule with names instead of the pronouns so for Alex (he), we would say Alex báñate, Alex duérmete, Alex vístete and so on, all of them ending in the reflexive pronoun -TE. It is important to mention that not all commands will need reflexive verbs, for example: ¡Alex estudia! (not Alex estudiate as it would mean Alex study yourself not Alex study!). The verb CÓMETE that we used in the first example, would be used only as COME if we do not have the object LA COMIDA in the sentence: ¡Come Alex! or keeping the object ¡Cómete la comida Alex! Be careful Finally, we may use reflexive verbs in Spanish to talk about obligations and chores and to do this it is common to use the irregular verb TENER as in: Yo tengo que alistarme (I have to get ready), Ellos tienen que irse (They have to go) or Tenemos que dormirnos (We have to go to sleep). The biggest difference in this case is that we keep the verb in infinitive form for all subject pronouns, but change the reflexive pronoun at the end depending on the subject of the sentence. Have conversations faster, understand people when they speak fast, and other tested tips to learn faster. More info Reflexive verbs in Spanish are used all the time, and can take several forms. Mastering them is an important step in becoming a competent speaker, so we bring you this updated guide to show how and when to use reflexive verbs in Spanish. We’ll go step by step, starting at the beginning with what is a reflexive verb. We’ll introduce the reflexive pronouns, and we’ll see where to place them in different types of sentences. Then we’ll focus on the three major types of reflexive pronouns in Spanish: natural reflexives, reciprocal reflexives, and non-reflexive verbs that can be used reflexively. As we do in all our lessons, we’ll provide plenty of examples to demonstrate how to use reflexive verbs in Spanish. We’ll also provide a list of reflexive verbs in Spanish for each of the three types. So without further ado, let’s get started! What is a reflexive verb in Spanish? In simple terms, reflexive verbs in Spanish are used when a person performs an action on, for, or to themself. For example, I wake (myself) up, he gets (himself) dressed, she showered (herself), and so on. In other words, both the subject and the indirect object of a reflexive verb are the same person or thing. This means that the subject pronouns (yo, tú, él, ella, usted, nosotros, nosotras, vosotros, vosotras, ellos, ellas, ustedes) will always be affected by the action, and will match the reflexive pronouns (me, te, se, nos, os, se). We’ll go into more detail on the reflexive pronouns below. How do you identify a reflexive verb? As we’ll cover later in this post, reflexive verbs come in many forms. We can identify reflexive verbs by their verb endings in the infinitive verb form: Spanish reflexive verbs always end in se, which is the neutral reflexive pronoun. Examples are conocerse (to know each other), llamarse (to call oneself), or maquillarse (to put makeup on oneself). Before we see our first list of reflexive verbs in Spanish, however, we need to take a slight detour to review the reflexive pronouns. Recommended: How to Learn Spanish Fast in 2025 What is a reflexive pronoun? The reflexive pronoun is key to identifying reflexive verbs. All Spanish reflexive verbs require a reflexive pronoun; otherwise they’re not reflexive verbs! In many cases the verb will mean something else if it doesn’t have a reflexive pronoun. Sometimes it won’t even make any sense at all! Let’s take the verb bañar, which means to bathe. In its reflexive form we add the reflexive pronoun se: bañarse becomes a reflexive verb meaning to bathe oneself. We’ll cover more verbs like this later. For now, let’s focus on each reflexive pronoun and how to use them. What are the six reflexive pronouns in Spanish? There are actually only five reflexive pronouns in Spanish that you need to learn, since se is the same third-person pronoun for both singular and plural. Here we present all the reflexive pronouns Spanish uses, organized by grammatical person. Reflexive pronouns, Spanish Singular Plural First-person me nos Second-person te (se) os (se) Third-person se se Note that we’ve only included se as second-person pronouns when they refer to usted or ustedes, which both mean you in Spanish. In Spanish grammar, these are considered third-person pronouns, with their corresponding third-person verb conjugations. Os is rarely used outside of Spain since it corresponds to vosotros and vosotras, which are the second-person plural pronouns for you. We explain the differences between all of these in our detailed post on You in Spanish. The reflexive pronouns in English generally end in -self or -selves, as in myself or yourselves. We’ll also see how reflexive pronouns can be used reciprocally, with translations closer to one another or each other. In many cases, the English pronoun is omitted entirely from the translation, even when it’s required in Spanish. We have a dedicated lesson on Spanish reflexive pronouns where we go into a lot more detail, but this is enough for now so you know what they are. Now we’re ready to see how to use them. Where to place reflexive pronouns in a sentence Reflexive pronouns are typically placed before conjugated verbs. Tú te afeitas todas las semanas. – You shave (yourself) every week. Yo me despierto a las 6 de la mañana. – I wake (myself) up at 6am. For negative commands, the reflexive pronoun is placed between the Spanish negation word no and the conjugated verb. No se preocupen, todo está bien. – Don’t worry (guys), everything is fine. There are a few sentence structures where reflexive pronouns don’t have to be placed before the conjugated verbs. We’ll introduce each one here before we move on to the three categories of Spanish reflexive verbs. When we have a sentence that includes an infinitive verb form, the pronoun can be placed before the conjugated verb or attached to the end of the infinitive verb. No se van a saludar. – They won’t say hello to each other. No vas a salirte con la tuya. – You are not going to get away with it. The same placement applies when we use the progressive verb forms (equivalent to -ing in English): either before the conjugated auxiliary verb (usually estar) or attached to the end of the gerund. Me estaba duchando cuando me llamaste. – I was showering when you called. Estaba lavándome la cara, perdona. – I was washing my face, sorry. We saw above that with negative commands, we place the reflexive pronoun before the conjugated verb. With affirmative commands in Spanish, on the other hand, we attach the reflexive pronoun directly to the end of the conjugated verb. Levántate temprano mañana, es un día importante. – Wake up early tomorrow, it’s an important day. Now that we’ve seen a basic explanation of reflexive verbs, we can examine their use in further detail. What are the three types of reflexive verbs in Spanish? Spanish reflexive verbs can be broken down into three main categories: natural reflexives, reciprocal reflexives, and non-reflexive verbs. We’ll look at each one in turn in the next sections. Natural reflexives are verbs which are easily identified as reflexive, since the pronoun se is attached to the infinitive (dormirse, bañarse, arrepentirse). Me arrepiento de todo lo que hice. – I regret everything I have done. Reciprocal reflexives are used to describe an action being performed by two or more people at the same time, and normally on each other. Patricia y Ana se maquillan antes de salir. – Patricia and Ana put makeup on each other before going out. Many non-reflexive verbs can still be used with reflexive pronouns, in which case they take on a different meaning. For example, volver is a non-reflexive verb meaning to return, while volverse means to become. Yo vuelvo a Asia la próxima semana. – I return to Asia next week. Ellos se volvieron amigos después de unos años. – They became friends after a couple of years. So how do you use reflexive Spanish verbs? The answer to this question will depend on which type of reflexive verb you are using. Let’s take a look at each of these three categories to see how to use reflexive verbs in Spanish. Natural Reflexives Natural reflexives are what first come to mind when we think of reflexive verbs in Spanish, since many describe actions that people generally do on themselves. In other words, these are the Spanish verbs that are most commonly used for reflexive actions. Many of these natural reflexives can be classed as routine verbs, since we use them when speaking about daily actions, routines, and personal care. These verbs are reflexive by nature, since they’re used to describe an action being performed on the subject. Some natural reflexives can still be used as non-reflexive verbs in Spanish. They often keep the same meaning, but describe the action being performed on somebody else than the subject. In these cases, we use direct object pronouns instead of reflexive pronouns. For example, in this first sentence we use the reflexive form of afeitarse (to shave) to indicate that the subject is doing the action for themself. Yo me afeito la barba en la mañana. – I shave my beard in the morning. When we use the same verb in its non-reflexive form afeitar, we indicate that the direct object of the verb’s action is somebody different from the subject who is performing the action. Yo afeito la barba de mi abuelo en la tarde. – I shave my grandfather’s beard in the afternoon. You may have noticed that when we use these reflexive verbs to talk about an action we do on ourselves like shaving, we don’t use the possessive adjective in Spanish. Instead, we just use the indefinite article along with the reflexive pronoun to convey the same meaning: “yo me afeito la barba” means “I shave my beard.” We explain this more in our post on possessive adjectives in Spanish. Reflexive verbs for daily actions Now, let’s review the most common reflexive verbs for speaking about daily actions. Notice that the non-reflexive forms mostly have the same meaning, except that they need to have a different direct object. To compare these reflexive vs non-reflexive verbs we could say that the former usually includes oneself while the latter can include someone else (as in to shave oneself vs to shave someone else for afeitarse vs afeitar, for example) Reflexive verbs, Spanish English Non reflexive verbs, Spanish English acostarse to lie down, to go to bed acostar to lay down afeitarse to shave oneself afeitar to shave bañarse to bathe oneself bañar to bathe cepillarse to brush oneself cepillar to brush despertarse to wake up despertar to wake up, to rouse dormirse to fall asleep, to go to sleep dormir to sleep lavarse to wash oneself lavar to wash maquillarse to put makeup on oneself maquillar to put makeup on peinarse to comb oneself’s hair peinar to comb sentarse to sit, to take a seat sentar to seat Now let’s see a few examples of how to use these reflexive Spanish verbs for daily routines. Siéntate acá, ya vuelvo. – Sit here, I’ll be right back. Siempre me ha gustado cepillarme antes de bañarme. – I have always liked to brush my hair before taking a bath. Ve a vestirte para salir temprano. – Go and get dressed so that we can leave early. Tú puedes acostarte en el sofá toda la noche si quieres. Yo prefiero dormirme en mi cama. – You can lie on the couch all night if you want. I prefer to fall asleep in my bed. Reflexive verbs for emotions and moods Another set of natural reflexives are used to describe emotions and moods. In their reflexive forms, these verbs refer to the feelings of the subject. Non-reflexively, the same verbs generally need a direct object. Here are some of the most common Spanish reflexive verbs for emotions, along with their non-reflexive counterparts. Reflexive verbs, Spanish English Non reflexive verbs, Spanish English aburrirse to get bored aburrir to bore alegrarse to be pleased, to be happy alegrar to cheer up, to lighten up asustarse to get scared, to be frightened asustar to scare, to frighten cansarse to get tired, to tire cansar to tire, to annoy divertirse to enjoy onself, to have a good time divertir to amuse sentirse to feel (psychological) sentir to feel (physical) Let’s see a few examples with these reflexive verbs of emotion. Me alegra mucho que vengas. – It makes me happy that you’re coming. La niña se divierte con el gatito. – The girl amuses herself with the kitten. Me siento menos solo con muchas plantas en casa. – I feel less alone with many plants in the house. Now compare the previous examples with these next ones where we use the non-reflexive forms of the same verbs. The meanings are similar, but they require direct objects to understand who or what is being affected by the verb’s action. Tú alegras mi día. – You brighten up my day. El gatito divierte a la niña. – The kitten amuses the girl. Siento la tierra antes de regar las plantas. – I feel the soil before watering the plants. Truly natural reflexives The final set of verbs we’ll mention in this section can only be used with the reflexive pronouns. There are no non-reflexive versions of these verbs, so they are truly natural reflexives. Unlike the other Spanish verbs we saw in the previous lists, these verbs don’t have another meaning if we use them without reflexive pronouns; instead, they just won’t make any sense. Reflexive verbs, Spanish English adentrarse to enter adormilarse to doze off adueñarse to take ownership arrepentirse to regret casarse to get married desvestir to get undressed desinteresarse to become disinterested, to lose interest dignarse to condescend suicidarse to commit suicide quitarse to take off Let’s see a few examples of how these reflexive verbs are used. Estabas adormilándote en el viaje hacia acá. – You were getting sleepy on the way here. Debes arrepentirte de perder tanto tiempo en eso. – You must regret wasting so much time on that. Este otoño, mi hermano se casa con su novia de la universidad. – This fall, my brother is marrying his sweetheart from university. Ella se desinteresó una vez que descubrió mi edad. – She became disinterested once she found out my age. To be honest, we’ve simplified things a bit by grouping these different Spanish reflexive verb lists together under the same banner of natural reflexives. We go into a lot more detail on how they differ in our advanced grammar post on all the different uses of Se in Spanish. For today’s lesson though, this grouping is adequate for understanding how to use reflexive verbs in Spanish. Reciprocal reflexive verbs As their name suggests, reciprocal reflexives are verbs that describe actions that two or more subjects perform on each other at the same time. Since the action is reciprocal, we always have a plural subject and use the corresponding plural reflexive pronoun: nos, os, or se. Here’s a list of Spanish verbs that are common reciprocal reflexives. We’ll use each one in an example below. Reciprocal reflexive verb, Spanish English conocerse to know each other saludarse to say hello to each other, to greet each other golpearse to hit each other contarse to recount to each other, to tell one another lastimarse to hurt each other pelearse to fight each other insultarse to insult each other Paolo y Sofía se conocen hace mucho tiempo. – Paolo and Sofía know each other since a long time. Ellos se saludan en la oficina. – They say hello to each other at the office. Los peleadores se golpean fuerte. – The fighters hit each other hard. Raquel y yo nos contamos todo – Raquel and I tell each other everything. Los competidores se lastiman. – The competitors hurt each other. Carlos y yo nos peleamos casi todos los días. – Carlos and I fight one another almost every day. Ellas se insultan por el chico. – They insult each other because of the boy. You’ll notice that the closest English translation for reciprocal reflexives is: action verb + each other. Don’t try to translate each other in Spanish with additional reciprocal words or phrases like entre sí or el uno al otro. The reciprocal reflexive pronouns already tell us that the action is being performed by the two subjects on each other. The only reason you might use these words is to place emphasis on who is receiving the action. Patricia y Damián se aman el uno al otro. – Patricia and Damián love each other. Even when we don’t add an additional each other, the sentence is understood as a reciprocal action just by properly using the reflexive pronouns. Joseph y yo nos saludamos en la mañana. – Joseph and I said hello to each other in the morning. Finally, we should mention that other Spanish verbs that aren’t typically reciprocal verbs can, in the right context, be used this way to indicate a reciprocal action when two or more subjects are involved. Franco y Bianca se comen a besos. – Franco and Bianca eat each other up with kisses. Mis amigos se adivinaban los pensamientos. – My friends guessed each other’s thoughts. This brings us to our final category of reflexive verbs in Spanish, which are normally non-reflexive but can still be used reflexively sometimes. Non-reflexive verbs As you may have guessed, verbs that are used without reflexive pronouns are considered non-reflexive verbs in Spanish. However, many non-reflexive verbs also have reflexive counterparts. We’ll take a look at these reflexive vs non-reflexive verbs here. These verbs are ones that can easily land you in trouble, since most of the time the meaning of the verb changes as well – sometimes drastically. Whether the verb takes a reflexive pronoun or not directly affects who is concerned by the verb’s action. With a reflexive pronoun, the verb affects the subject just like the natural reflexives we saw earlier. Without a reflexive pronoun, the action of the verb affects a direct object that is different from the verb’s subject. As an example, let’s look at what happens to the non-reflexive verb levantar (to pick up, to lift) when we add reflexive pronouns to make it levantarse (to get up). Andrea levanta los libros. – Andrea picks up the books. Andrea se levanta temprano. – Andrea gets up early. In the first non-reflexive example, Andrea’s action is affecting the books. In the next reflexive example, Andrea’s action is affecting herself. Now let’s see a list of non-reflexive verbs that have distinct reflexive counterparts. Reflexive verbs, Spanish English Non-reflexive verbs, Spanish English acercarse to get closer acercar to bring closer caerse to fall down, to fall over, to fall out caer to fall, to fall for encontrarse to find (someone) encontrar to find irse to leave ir to go levantarse to get up levantar to pick up, to lift llamarse to be called, to be named llamar to call negarse to decline, to refuse negar to deny ocuparse to take care of (something) ocupar to occupy, to fill perderse to become lost, to miss something perder to lose referirse to refer referir to narrate retirarse to back out, to retire retirar to remove reunirse to gather, to get together reunir to collect secarse to dry off secar to dry volverse to become volver to return ponerse to put on poner to put quedarse to stay quedar to set a meeting, to agree on (something) As you can see in this table, many non-reflexive verbs in Spanish take on a completely different meaning when used with reflexive pronouns. This naturally causes a lot of confusion when you mistakenly misuse reflexive pronouns. Let’s see a few more examples where we use the reflexive and non-reflexive verbs distinctly. Ese mueble ocupa mucho espacio en la sala de estar. – That piece of furniture takes up too much space in the living room. Yo me ocupo de sacarlo de aquí. – I’ll take care of getting it out of here. Ella pone las llaves sobre la mesa al llegar del trabajo. – She lays her keys on the table when she comes home from work. Ella se pone un vestido para ir a trabajar. – She puts on a dress to go to work. Danilo retira sus ahorros del banco. – Danilo withdraws his savings from the bank. Él no se retira de la carrera aunque va de último. – He doesn’t drop out of the race even though he is in last place. Conclusion: Reflexive verbs in Spanish This wraps up our full guide on how to use reflexive verbs in Spanish. Let’s do a quick recap before we go. Once you’re through, we’ll leave you with a set of exercises where you can practice conjugating reflexive verbs with the right reflexive pronouns. We started today’s lesson with a basic rundown to explain what are reflexive pronouns in Spanish. We saw that they come in many forms, but the main unifier is that they always have the pronoun se attached to the end of their infinitive form. We also learned all of the reflexive pronouns in Spanish that correspond with each grammatical person (me, te, se, nos, os, se). Once we’d seen the basics on sentence structure, we went into more detail on the different categories of reflexive pronouns Spanish has. We explained the particularities of each category, providing Spanish verb lists for each one. You should now be able to recognize the differences between reflexive verbs for daily routine, for emotions, and for reciprocal actions, for example. You’re also familiar with the different meanings that many non-reflexive verbs take when they’re used reflexively. By applying the concepts we’ve laid out in this lesson, you should be well on your way to mastering the reflexive verbs in Spanish. Keep practicing, and they’ll come naturally to you soon enough! Download the exact curriculum that thousands of BaseLang students have used to become fluent in Spanish. Download Guide Now! Practice: Reflexive verbs in Spanish Complete the sentences by properly conjugating the reflexive verbs in parentheses. Remember to use the correct reflexive pronoun. The correct answers are below. 1.Todos los días luego de _____ (levantarse), _____ (lavarse) la cara. – Every day after waking up, I wash my face. 2. Recuerda _____ (lavarse) los dientes antes de salir. – Remember to brush your teeth before going out. 3. Mis familiares _____ (reunirse) todos los años en esta fecha. – My family members gather every year around this time. 4. _____ (Asustarse) cuando vieron todo el trabajo que tenían que hacer. – They got scared after seeing how much work they had to do. 5. Luego de vivir solo, Carlos _____ (volverse) una persona mucho más responsable. – After living alone, Carlos became a much more responsible person. 6. ¡_____ (Perderse) el partido por llegar tarde! – You missed the game by being late! 7. Es una niña pequeña así que _____ (aburrirse) muy fácil. – She’s a little girl, so she gets bored easily. 8. _____ (Arrepentirse) por muchas de las cosas que había hecho. – He regretted many of the things he had done. 9. Ayer _____ (dormirse) muy temprano. – We fell asleep early yesterday 10. No _____ (quedarse) aquí, está haciendo frío y es peligroso. – Don’t stay here, it’s cold and dangerous. Answers: 1. Todos los días luego de levantarme, me lavo la cara. 2. Recuerda lavarte los dientes antes de salir. 3. Mis familiares se reúnen todos los años en esta fecha. 4. Se asustaron cuando vieron todo el trabajo que tenían que hacer. 5. Luego de vivir solo, Carlos se volvió una persona mucho más responsable. 6. ¡Te perdiste el partido por llegar tarde! 7. Es una niña pequeña así que se aburre muy fácil. 8. Se arrepintió por muchas de las cosas que había hecho. 9. Ayer nos dormimos muy temprano. 10. No se queden aquí. Está haciendo frío y es peligroso. Reflexive verbs are verbs whose subjects are also their direct