

Reflexive pronouns in English (myself, herself...)

A reflexive pronoun is a pronoun that refers to a person already mentioned (the word reflected is used in the sense of reflection, like a mirror, not in the sense of reflecting on something... understood?).

Here is the list of reflexive pronouns:

- myself
- yourself
- himself
- herself
- itself
- ourselves
- yourselves
- themselves

⚠ *oneself* is an impersonal form, mostly used in dictionaries.

Here are some verbs frequently used with reflexive pronouns:

- to clean oneself
- to burn oneself
- to cut oneself
- to help oneself
- to talk to oneself
- to wash oneself
- to look at oneself
- to defend oneself
- to dry oneself
- to introduce oneself
- to enjoy oneself
- to see oneself
- to behave oneself

They are always placed after the verb. A few examples:

- Tina was looking at herself in the mirror.
- Be careful! You're going to hurt yourself.
- The computer turns itself off.

⚠ Depending on where it is placed, the meaning of the sentence is different:

- He cut himself.
- He cut himself a piece of cake.
- He cut the cake himself.

Reflected pronouns can have an insistence value:

- Do it yourself.
- I'll open it myself.

⚠ By + reflexive pronoun reinforces the idea of insistence:

- I was by myself (ou on my own) when it happened.
- Can you manage by yourself?
- He can't do that by himself.

⚠ In English, we do not use reflexive pronouns after certain verbs. These are mainly verbs about personal care and movement:

- to worry
- to concentrate
- to dress
- to fight
- to relax
- to shave
- to wake up
- to feel
- to hide
- to get ready
- to get up
- to sit down
- to meet
- to adapt
- to complain
- to remember
- to shower
- to lie down

⚠ After a preposition of place (on, about, near...), a complementary personal pronoun is used and not a reflexive pronoun:

- I haven't got any money on ~~myself~~ me.
- She put her bag near ~~herself~~ her.

⚠ Reflected pronouns can be used as the object of a preposition:

- He made a cup of coffee just for himself.
- He was talking to himself.
- They had to cook for themselves.

⚠ Reflected pronouns are used to emphasize the person or thing you are talking about, especially if you are talking about someone known (but it is not mandatory to use a reflected pronoun):

- I met the King himself.
- Madonna herself sang at the festival.
- The President himself announced the news.

⚠ Sometimes a thoughtful pronoun can be used to say 'also':

- Sarah was pretty drunk last night. I was pretty drunk myself.

⚠ Do not confuse reflexive pronouns with reciprocal pronouns that serve to show a reciprocal relationship (*each other* and *one another*)! *Each other* and *one another* are interchangeable, although in principle *each other* is used more commonly than *one another*.

- We love each other.
- We've known each other (= one another) for ten years.