

The Forms of Reflexive Pronouns

Personal Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun
I	myself
You	Yourself
He	Himself
She	Herself
It	Itself
We	Ourselves
You	Yourselves
They	Themselves

When to use a reflexive pronoun

Reflexive pronouns are used in three main situations:

- ◆ When the subject and the object are the same: "*I hurt myself*"; "*The band called themselves 'Dire Straits'*"
- ◆ As the object of a preposition, referring to the subject: "*I bought a present for myself*"; "*She did it herself*".
- ◆ When you want to emphasise the subject: "*I'll do it myself*" (*no-one else will help me*).

Verbs which are reflexive in many languages are not normally reflexive in English. Thus, we would say:

- ◆ My beard growth is so strong that I have to shave twice a day. (Not: shave myself...)
- ◆ Remember to wash behind your ears (Not: wash yourselves...?)
- ◆ The door opened and the Queen walked in. (Not: opened itself)

However, if it is necessary to make it clear who is responsible for the action, reflexive pronouns may be used:

- ◆ After the stroke, he is quite paralysed down his left side and unable to dress himself.
- ◆ Somebody has to come to dress him.

Reflexive pronouns usually refer back to the subject of the clause and are used to talk about action where the subject and object are the same person. Study the following:

- ◆ Jamie was in such a hurry that he cut himself shaving this morning. (Not: cut me)
- ◆ She decided to end her life and killed herself by swallowing rat poison.
- ◆ I must get myself a new pair of trainers. These are falling apart.
- ◆ Nobody offered to serve Kevin so he helped himself to the vegetables. (he = Kevin himself)
- ◆ Nobody offered to serve Kevin so he helped him to the vegetables. (He = somebody else)
- ◆ They missed the ferry by five minutes and only had themselves to blame.