

Reflexive Verbs

Reflexive verbs have no real equivalent in English. The closest English comparison would be verbs with 'self' or 'selves', like 'He helped himself'. Even in these cases, it doesn't always work exactly the same way as in English.

I. Construction

To construct these verbs, we have to use the subject (e.g. 'je'), a reflexive pronoun and the correct conjugation of the verb. We will take the example of 'se réveiller' (to wake (one's self) up).

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reflexive Pronoun</u>	<u>Conjugated Verb</u>
Je	Me	Reveille
Tu	Te	Reveilles
Il/Elle/On	Se	Reveille
Nous	Nous	Reveillons
Vous	Vous	Reveillez
Ils/Elles	Se	Reveillent

The verb endings, coloured red, are the same as the regular '-er' verbs in the present tense.

The table below shows examples of the different types of verb endings as reflexive verbs:

'-ER' – Se lever (to get up)	'-IR' – Se sentir (to feel)	'-RE' – S'entendre avec (to get along with)
Je me lève	Je me sens	Je m'entends
Tu te lèves	Tu te sens	Tu t'entends
Il/Elle/On se lève	Il/Elle/On se sent	Il/Elle/On s'entend
Nous nous levons	Nous nous sentons	Nous nous entendons
Vous vous levez	Vous vous sentez	Vous vous entendez
Ils/Elles se lèvent	Ils/Elles se sentent	Ils/Elles s'entendent

As you can see, the verb endings follow the same patterns as verbs in the present tense. If the verb is regular in the present tense, it will remain regular as a reflexive verb. If it is irregular in the present tense, it will remain irregular as a reflexive verb too.

However, notice that the verbs beginning with a vowel make the reflexive pronouns take an apostrophe (m',t',s') instead of remaining 'me', 'te', and 'se'. The reflexive pronouns 'nous' and 'vous' don't change.

II. How do I know if a verb is reflexive?

Reflexive verbs in the dictionary will have 'se' or 's'' in front of them. One of the reflexive verbs you should easily recognise is 's'appeler'. 'Je m'appelle...' literally means 'I call myself...'

III. Other Uses of Reflexive Verbs:

1. *Reciprocal Verbs - Conveying Reciprocity*

Using reflexive verbs is another way of conveying the meaning of 'each other'.

Example: 'Ils s'adorent' can mean 'They adore each other' as well as 'They adore themselves'.

2. *Equivalent to the Passive in English*

Reflexive verbs can also be equivalent to our passive tense in English ('be' + past participle).

Example: 'Le café se boit chaud' can mean 'Coffee is drunk hot'.

3. *Idiomatic Pronominal Verbs - Reflexive Verbs without Explanation*

Some reflexive verbs are just reflexive and don't exist without the reflexive pronoun.

Here are a few examples:

- Se souvenir de (to remember)
- Se plaindre (to complain)
- Se marier (to get married)

IV. How to Use Reflexive Verbs in the Negative

When we want to change reflexive verbs to form negative sentences, we put the 'ne' before the reflexive pronoun and the 'pas' after the conjugated verb.

Example:

- Je ne me souviens pas de la fête (I don't remember the party).
- Tu ne t'entends pas bien avec ma sœur (You don't get on well with my sister).

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. How can we compare reflexive verbs to English verbs?

- a) They can't be compared to English in any way
- b) They are similar to the way we use 'self' and 'selves' (myself, yourself etc.)
- c) They are similar to possessive adjectives
- d) All of the above

2. How can we tell if a verb is reflexive or not?

- a) Because of the reflexive pronoun 'se' before the infinitive
- b) It will have different verb endings to normal verbs
- c) It will have two subjects
- d) All of the above

3. How can we say 'I get on well with my sister'?

- a) J'entends bien avec ma sœur
- b) Je m'entends bien avec ma sœur
- c) Ma sœur entend bien avec moi
- d) Ma sœur s'entend bien avec moi

4. 'La salade se mange froide' means...

- a) We eat salad cold
- b) Salad is cold
- c) Salad is eaten cold
- d) I ate cold salad

5. Which of the options below is an idiomatic pronominal reflexive verb?

- a) S'entendre avec
- b) Se souvenir de

- c) Se sentir
- d) All of the above

6. 'Ils s'aiment' means...

- a) They love each other
- b) They love themselves
- c) Either of the above (depending on context)
- d) Neither of the above

7. How do we form reflexive verbs in the negative?

- a) By adding 'ne pas' in front of the reflexive pronoun
- b) By adding 'ne pas' after the reflexive pronoun
- c) By adding 'ne' after the reflexive pronoun and 'pas' after the verb
- d) By adding 'ne' before the reflexive pronoun and 'pas' after the verb

8. How can we translate 'I don't remember the party' into French?

- a) Je me ne souviens pas de la fête
- b) Je ne me souviens pas de la fête
- c) Je ne pas me souviens de la fête
- d) Je me souviens pas de la fête

9. Which sentences below are incorrect (more than one)?

- a) Jean Marie Louise ce week-end
- b) Il se souvient mon livre
- c) Ils se lèvent a sept heures
- d) Le thé se boit chaud

10. Which of the option below is not another use of reflexive verbs?

- a) Conveying reciprocity

- b) Conveying the meaning of the passive tense in English
- c) When using idiomatic pronominal verbs
- d) All of the above use reflexive verbs

Answers:

- 1. B
- 2. A
- 3. C
- 4. C
- 5. B
- 6. C
- 7. D
- 8. B
- 9. A and B
- 10. D