

# Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns: Social Interaction and Self-Reliance

INTERMEDIATE

**Focus: Verbs of emotion and state (feel, relax), Verbs of social meeting (concentrate, meet), Daily routine verbs (wash, shave, dress), -selves vs. each other, One another, Visualizing mutual actions, Emphatic use, 'me' vs. 'myself'.**

In English, the use of reflexive pronouns (*myself, yourself*) differs significantly from many other languages. It is important to know when to use them, when to use reciprocal pronouns (*each other*), and when to use **no pronoun** at all.

## 1. Verbs that DO NOT use Reflexive Pronouns

Many verbs regarding daily routines, emotions, or social meetings are reflexive in other languages (e.g., Spanish, French) but **not** in English. We do not usually use *myself/yourself/etc.* with these verbs:

- **Daily Routine:** *wash, shave, dress, change (clothes).*
  - *Correct:* I got up, **shaved**, and **dressed**. (NOT: I shaved myself).
- **Emotions/States:** *feel, relax, concentrate.*
  - *Correct:* I **feel** great today. (NOT: I feel myself great).
  - *Correct:* You need to **relax**. (NOT: relax yourself).
- **Social Meeting:** *meet.*
  - *Correct:* Let's **meet** at the station. (NOT: meet us/ourselves).

## 2. Reflexive vs. Reciprocal Pronouns

- **Reflexive Pronouns (-selves):** The subject and object are the same person. (A → A).
  - *Example:* They looked at **themselves** in the mirror. (They saw their own reflections).
- **Reciprocal Pronouns (each other / one another):** There is a mutual action. (A → B and B → A).
  - *Example:* They looked at **each other** and smiled. (Person A looked at Person B, and Person B looked at Person A).
  - *Note:* **One another** is a synonym for *each other*, often used in more formal contexts.

## 3. Emphatic Use

We can use reflexive pronouns to emphasize a noun or pronoun.

- **Doing it without help:** "I painted the room **myself**." (Nobody helped me).
- **Emphasizing a specific noun:** "The film **itself** was boring, but the music was good."

## 4. Reflexive vs. Object Pronouns (Prepositions of Place)

Usually, after prepositions of place (*with, next to, behind, near*), we use **object pronouns** (*me, him, her, us*), not reflexive pronouns.

- *Correct:* She took her bag with **her**. (NOT: with herself).
- *Correct:* He closed the door behind **him**. (NOT: behind himself).

# Practice

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**Instruction:** Complete the sentences using a **reflexive pronoun** (*myself, themselves, etc.*), a **reciprocal pronoun** (*each other*), an **object pronoun** (*me, him, etc.*), or a **dash (-)** if no pronoun is needed.

1. After a long day at work, I just wanted to go home and relax \_\_\_\_\_ in front of the TV.
2. My brother and I help \_\_\_\_\_ with our homework; I help him with Math, and he helps me with English.
3. Be careful with that knife! You might cut \_\_\_\_\_.
4. She looked in the mirror and smiled at \_\_\_\_\_.
5. We haven't seen \_\_\_\_\_ for ten years, but we talk on the phone every week.
6. The children are old enough to dress \_\_\_\_\_ without their parents' help.
7. Did you bring your wallet with \_\_\_\_\_?
8. I don't think they are listening to \_\_\_\_\_; they are both talking at the same time!
9. He doesn't feel \_\_\_\_\_ very well today, so he is staying in bed.
10. Nobody helped me fix the car. I repaired it entirely by \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Why is it so noisy? I can't concentrate \_\_\_\_\_ on my work!
12. Sarah and Tom met \_\_\_\_\_ at a café for lunch yesterday.
13. The manager \_\_\_\_\_ welcomed us to the hotel, which was very polite of him.
14. When he left the room, he shut the door quietly behind \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Why do you blame \_\_\_\_\_? It wasn't your fault.

## Answer Key

1. - (No pronoun needed with *relax*)
2. **each other / one another** (Mutual action)
3. **yourself** (Reflexive)
4. **herself** (Reflexive - looking in mirror)
5. **each other / one another** (Mutual action)
6. - (No pronoun usually needed with *dress* in this context, though *themselves* is possible if emphasizing ability, the dash is the standard rule for daily routine verbs).
7. **you** (Preposition of place/possession uses object pronoun)
8. **each other / one another** (Reciprocal)
9. - (No pronoun needed with *feel*)
10. **myself** (Emphatic - doing it alone)
11. - (No pronoun needed with *concentrate*)
12. - (No pronoun needed with *meet*)
13. **himself** (Emphatic - the specific person)
14. **him** (Preposition of place uses object pronoun)
15. **yourself** (Reflexive)