

Word Order with Reflexives

The reflexive pronouns are:

Singular:	<i>myself - yourself - himself - herself - itself</i>
Plural:	<i>ourselves - yourselves - themselves</i>

We use a reflexive pronoun:

- as a **direct object** when the **object** is the **same** as the **subject** of the verb:

I am teaching **myself** to play the piano.

Be careful with that knife. **You** might cut **yourself**.

We can use a reflexive pronoun as direct object with most transitive verbs, but these are the most common:

amuse	blame	cut	dry	enjoy	help
hurt	introduce	kill	prepare	satisfy	teach

Some verbs **change their meaning** slightly when they have a reflexive pronoun as direct object:

- Would you like to help yourself to another drink?
• = *Would you like to take another drink.*
- I wish the children would behave themselves.
• = *I wish the children would behave well.*
- He found himself lying by the side of the road.

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- = *He was surprised when he realised that he was at the side of the road.*
- I saw myself as a famous actor.
- = *I imagined that I was a famous actor.*
- She applied herself to the job of mending the lights.
- = *She worked very hard to mend the lights.*
- He busied himself in the kitchen.
- = *He worked busily in the kitchen.*
- I had to content myself with a few Euros.
- = *I had to be satisfied with a few Euros.*

We do **not** use a reflexive pronoun after verbs which describe things people **usually** do for themselves, such as **wash, shave, dress**:

- He washed [himself] in cold water.
- He always shaved [himself] before going out in the evening.
- Michael dressed [himself] and got ready for the party.

We only use reflexives with these verbs for **emphasis**:

- He dressed himself **in spite of his injuries**.
- **She's old enough** to wash herself.
- As **indirect object** when the **indirect object** is the **same** as the **subject** of the verb:
 - Would you like to pour **yourself** a drink.
 - We've brought **ourselves** something to eat.
- As the object of a preposition when the object refers to the subject of the clause:

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- They had to cook for themselves.
- He was feeling very sorry for himself.

Warning

But we use personal pronouns, not reflexives, after prepositions of place...

He had a suitcase beside him.

...and after *with* when it means "accompanied by":

She had a few friends with her.

We use a reflexive pronoun...

- with the preposition **by** when we want to show that someone did something alone and/or without any help:

He lived **by himself** in an enormous house.

She walked home **by herself**.

The children got dressed **by themselves**.

I prepared the whole meal **by myself**.

- to **emphasise** the person or thing we are referring to:

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Kendal **itself** is quite a small town.

especially if we are talking about someone very famous:

Sir Paul McCartney **himself** sang the final song.

We often put the reflexive pronoun at the end of the clause when we are using it for emphasis:

I baked the bread **myself**.

She mended the car **herself**

Reference:

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar/pronouns/reflexive-pronouns#sthash.y96a3RYL.dpuf>