Other Functions of *se*
(Reflexive and Reciprocal Verbs)

Something that students are commonly confused about is the use of the word *se.* The trouble with *se* is that it appears in so many different contexts and under so many different names, that it can be very confusing.

It is important to remember that, in any language, just because two words look or sound the same, it doesn’t mean that they have the same meaning or behave in the same way if you change the context. English has a great example of this: **two, too,** and **to.** This is the case with the Spanish word, *se.*

In the worksheet “Object Pronouns and a Function of SE” we explained that sometimes *se* can be used as an **indirect object pronoun.**

**Ex:**  
Jack gave it to **him/her.**

There are many other uses, however, and two of the most common are in **reflexive** and **reciprocal verbs.** These two kinds of verbs are marked by the attached *se* at the end of the infinitive.

**Ex:** Vestirse (to dress oneself) and abrazarse (to hug each other).

When conjugating these verbs, *se* comes off the end and, sometimes, changes into another form. The chart below shows you all the forms of *se* that must be used with **reflexive verbs.** Since **reciprocal verbs** need more than one person in order to function, the plural column is the only one used with these verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>Te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>Se</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Los verbos reflexivos

**Reflexive verbs** are verbs that we use to express actions that ONE person does to *him/herself.*

- **Vestirse**  
  *To dress oneself*
- **Levantarse**  
  *To get oneself up*
- **Bañarse**  
  *To bathe oneself*

### Los verbos recíprocos

**Reciprocal verbs** look like reflexive verbs, but they express an action that TWO people do to **each other** – two people exchange an action.

- **Abrazarse**  
  *To hug each other*
- **Gritarse**  
  *To yell at each other*
- **Entenderse**  
  *To understand each other*
Ex: Yo me levanto a las 6 de la mañana.
I get (myself) up at 6 in the morning.

Ex: Mi mamá y yo nos queremos mucho.
My mom and I love each other very much.

In the two examples, note how reflexive and reciprocal verbs are conjugated in the same way. Here are five simple steps for conjugating these verbs:

1. Look at the complete infinitive.  Ex: levantarse
2. Separate se from the rest of the verb.  Ex: levantar + se
3. Conjugate the infinitive without se as you would normally do.  Ex: Yo levanto.
4. Look at the above chart and decide which form of se you are going to use (plural, singular, 1st person, 2nd person, etc.)  In the above example, it would be me.
5. Put the variation of se directly before the conjugated verb.  Ex: Yo me levanto.

More Examples

Los verbos reflexivos

Ella se pone una chamarra.
She puts on (herself) a jacket.

*Note that se doesn’t change its form in the third person.

Él se afeita antes de bañarse.
He shaves (himself) before bathing.

*Note that this sentence has two reflexive verbs, and that the second one is in the infinitive, so se stays attached to the end.

Nosotros nos ayudamos. *
We help ourselves.

*Note how, in the final example, the verb changes meaning when we add “el uno al otro” which means “to each other”.

More Reflexive Verbs

Remember, the person who does these actions is doing it to him/herself

Acostarse
Dormirse
Llamarse
Quitarase
Encontrarse
Casarse
Despertarse
Divirtirse
Sentarse
Enamorarse
Ezforsarse
Irse
Quedarse
Quejarse
Reunirse
Preocuparse
Llevarse
Comunicarse
Convertirse (en)
Transformarse (en)
Despedirse
Divorciarse

More Reciprocal Verbs

Remember, the people who do these actions do them to each other – they exchange the action.

Pelearse
Conocerse
Mirarse
Separarse
Enamorarse
Acariciarse
Reunirse
Encontrarse
Verse
Comunicarse

Ofenderse
Chocarse
Saludarse
Despedirse
Reconciliarse
Casarse
Divorciarse
Insultarse
Gritarse
Discutirse

*For more information on reflexive verbs, see Mosaicos, p. 142-143, 232-235, and for reciprocal verbs, see p. 451-453.