

Reflexive Pronouns in the Accusative



A reflexive pronoun is used together with a verb to indicate that **the action is done to oneself or for oneself**. Adding the reflexive pronoun can change the meaning of the verb. Compare the following two sentences:

Ich wasche den Hund. (I wash the dog.)

Ich wasche mich. (I wash myself.)

If you add another element to the sentence to specify what you are doing, that element is in the accusative. The reflexive pronoun is now an indirect object and therefore in the dative:

Ich wasche mir die Haare. (I'm washing my hair.)

Don't worry about this for now, we will discuss it later in 5.10.

There is a different reflexive pronoun for each person, just like in English. The accusative reflexive pronoun differs from the accusative personal pronoun only in a few forms:

**Personal Pronouns:
Nominative**

ich
du
er/sie/es
wir
ihr
sie/Sie

**Personal Pronouns:
Accusative**

mich
dich
ihn/sie/es
uns
euch
sie/Sie

**Reflexive Pronouns:
Accusative**

mich
dich
sich/sich/sich
uns
euch
sich/sich

Here are some examples of verbs that are frequently used with reflexive pronouns in German:

• **sich waschen**

(Sie wäscht sich jeden Morgen./ She washes herself every morning.)

• **sich duschen**

(Ich dusche mich jeden Tag./ I take a shower every day.)

• **sich kämmen**

(Die Kinder kämmen sich./ The children comb themselves.)

• **sich rasieren**

(Er rasiert sich nicht jeden Tag./ He doesn't shave every day.)

• **sich schminken**

(Schminkst du dich immer?/ Do you always put on make-up?)

• **sich anziehen**

(Morgens zieht ihr euch an./ In the morning, you are getting dressed.)

• **sich umziehen**

(Wir ziehen uns schnell um./ We are quickly changing our clothes.)

• **sich ausziehen**

(Abends zieht Klara sich aus./ In the evening, Klara takes off her clothes.)

When a sentence starts with the subject, the reflexive pronoun is placed right after the verb:

z.B. *Ich dusche mich jeden Tag.*

When a sentence starts with a different element, the reflexive pronoun usually follows the subject:

z.B. *Jeden Tag dusche ich mich.*

There are some verbs in German that always have to be used with a reflexive pronoun (the English equivalents do not have a reflexive pronoun). These verbs are called **reflexive verbs**.

Here are some examples:

- **sich ausruhen**

(*Heute ruhe ich mich aus./ Today I'm resting.*)

- **sich erkälten**

(*Tim erkältet sich jeden Winter./ Tim catches a cold every winter.*)

- **sich aufregen**

(*Mein Vater regt sich über das schlechte Wetter auf./ My father is getting upset about the bad weather.*)

- **sich ärgern**

(*Ärgerst du dich oft?/ Are you often getting angry?*)

- **sich freuen**

(*Freut ihr euch auf den nächsten Sommer?/ Are you looking forward to next summer?*)

- **sich entspannen**

(*Am Wochenende entspannen wir uns./ On the weekend, we relax.*)

- **sich erholen**

(*Oma war krank. Jetzt erholt sie sich./ Grandma was sick. Now she is recovering.*)