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I'm not robot!

But you cannot just drehen. So... German uses its normal verbs in a reflexive way so much often because grammar wants it. And it is similar for other languages like Spanish or Russian.

English is incredibly liberal with that kind of stuff. Anyway...are all those reflexive verbs?

In my eyes, no. They are just verbs that can be used in a reflexive context.... and that was group 1.Now we get to the second group, which is probably the most interesting one. Those are the verbs that change their meaning when they are used reflexively. This change can be just a nuance or it can be complete... like a TOTAL change. Or it is somewhere in between and it is up to your mind yoga skills whether you find the meanings different or not. Let's do some examples. A very close pair in my eyes is entscheiden and sich entscheiden. Entscheiden means to decide and sich entscheiden means... to decide. The difference is subtle. Sich entscheiden always has a personal component. Suppose someone comes up to you and asks you to make a decision about something you are not personally involved in... like ... "Should I use Flamingos or Gibbons as a background for my phone?"... then you would just entscheiden. If you can't decide whether you want beer or wine, then you need to sich entscheiden.

The sich makes it more personal. Managers entscheiden a lot. Women on a shopping spree entscheiden sich a lot.... or... they don't. Either way... the two words are so close that we could actually put them in group 1.Let's look at one with a bigger difference. Aufhalten. Among other things, it means to stop... because a language can never have enough words for to stop ;) ... but it can also mean to hold up oneself. That would be the group 1 thing... you just use the verb in a reflexive context.

But sich aufhalten also means to linger, to stay, to be at a place.ich halte dich im Park auf.I stop you in the park.ich halte mich im Park auf.I sojourn/stay in the park.But are the two meanings really that different? Doesn't holding up someone imply that that person stays at a place? The reflexive version has just a different focus than the normal one. ... but that is always the case.I close the door.I close the deal/Also here, the words are not EXACTLY the same... the same idea taken from different perspectives. So... if we want to we could also put (sich) aufhalten into group 1. I guess it also makes sense to think of sich aufhalten as a verb of its own. Then I would call this a reflexive verb... because it is special in that it only means what it means when used WITH the reflexive pronoun. Anyway... no matter whether you think of them as separate verbs or not, it can definitely help to try and draw a connection between the normal version and the reflexive one. Now, I said that there are ones where the meaning change is complete, so let's look at one of those too.Er schickt es nicht.He doesn't send it.Schicken means to send. And used in a reflexive context it means to send oneself. But there is another meaning...Es schickt sich nicht.It is inappropriate.That is clearly something else. It can be explained when you look back at the history of the verb, but nowadays the second version totally like a verb of its own....

a reflexive verb.And thus we get to the third group... verbs that can ONLY be used with a self reference. Remember? English had only like 5 of those. German has more... way more, and many common ones among them. One example is sich beeilen. It means to hurry up but in German you can't use it without a self reference.Ich beeile... WRONG!ich beeile meinen Bruder... WRONG!ich beeile mich... correct.I hurry up. There is NO logical reason why there is a self reference. It just has to be there.It is part of the verb pretty much. Like a prefix.There is no verb beeilen as there is no verb to clude. There is just conclude and sich beeilen. And other than prefixes, this purely grammatical self reference doesn't even carry reso meaning. It is just part of the verb. In books these verbs are often called "echt reflexiv" (genuine reflexive) as opposed to the phony ones we had earlier. Had we called the other ones just verbs, then we could call these ones reflexive verbs... which would make sense to me because the "reflexiveness" is their essence... but

jargon is jargon and I can't just change it I guess. There is also something you can't change... the fact that you have to learn these reflexive verbs by heart... hehe... that was mean... but it is true. There is no way around it.

Let's take another example... to catch a cold.Ich erkälte mich.I catch a cold.There is no logical reason for the self reference other than it just happened that way. In a parallel universe it might be.and that would make just as much sense. But it's not. It needs a self reference. Period. This need is in fact so strong, every German thinks of it the verb as sich erkälten... not just erkälten with an optional sich... the sich is part of the verb. So learn sich erkälten... not erkälten. Sound like a lot of work but that is the bitter truth. Now... an interesting question is, why? Why does German have so many weird verbs that essentially have no meaning without a self reference. I don't know for fact but I think the answer might have to do with what we've already seen – the tendency that verbs that need an object REALLY NEED that object. And while not true for all the verbs it is especially true for verbs with prefixes. Among the German reflexive verbs, many are prefix verbs, like instance sich beeilen or sich erkälten or sich verspäten.All right. Let's recap.Just like in English, or in any other language I guess, you can use many German verbs in a reflexive context. In grammar books those are called "unecht reflexiv", a misleading name because they totally stay true to the reflexive idea. Then, there is a bunch of verbs that change their meaning if used in a reflexive context. For them, it is up to you if you want to see them as separate verbs or as one facet of the normal verb. The better you are at mind yoga, the easier it becomes. Some sources file those under group 1 but in high grammar they are actually filed under group 3.

Me personally, I file my nails. The third group, called group 3... okay, that was obvious... so, those are verbs that don't exist without a self reference. The self reference is like a prefix without meaning and is often just there for grammar's sake. In grammar books they are called "echt reflexiv". Those are the ones you need to learn and accept as they are.mir, mich, sich – what's up with this.Cool. So now that we know about what types of reflexive there are, let's take a look at the reflexive pronouns... the words that are the self reference. In English, it is pretty simple. You just add -self or -selves to the personal pronoun and you got it. Sometimes, when, there are several people involved, you'll have to use each other or one another but that's it. In German, the reflexive pronouns are pretty much the same as the personal pronouns. We do this:Du siehst mich (You see me) Ich sehe mich (I see me.)That is pretty cool, actually because we can just use the things we always use. The only difference is the third person... so he she it and they. For all those, the reflexive pronoun is sich. Now, why do we have to have an extra pronoun here? Wouldn't it be easier to just also use the personal ones? Well, yes it would be easier, but it wouldn't work. You see, if I say me... then who could I possibly refer to other than myself. Me is always clear and so is you in a given situation. Him is not clear. Him is not clear. Neither is her or them.

There are millions of third persons out there and if there are 2 guys in a room either one can be him. Can't context clear this up for us? Well, sometimes yes... but not always... and context is very busy with English anyways :).) so it makes sense to have a special reflexive pronoun for the third person.Mike mag sich.Mike likes himself... this is clear now!Mike mag ihn.Mike likes him (some other guy... oh crap... there are 3 guys... uh... hey, context... uh... do you have a minute?).The cool thing about sich is that it works for all of them... masculine, feminine, neuter...and even the plural.Thomas mag sich.Maria mag sich.Das Kind mag sich.Die Menschen mögen sich.So... this sich is the only true reflexive pronoun German has and it is so iconic that even indicates "reflexiveness" itself... just look in a dictionary... the default forms of reflexive verbs are sich something... sich beeilen, sich ärgern, sich erkälten. If you want to use such a verb then you just have to insert the appropriate self reference for sich... And with this we get to the last question we have to talk about.What about the whole mir-thing?We know that German has cases so ich can become mich (Accusative) at times and mir (date-if) at other times. Mir, dir and so on often (not always) communicate the same as to me, to you ...Du gibst mir ein Buch.You give a book to me. Du träumst von mir.You dream of me.And of course those can also be used in a reflexive way.Ich gebe mir Zeit.I give time to me. (lit.)I give myself time..Ich träume von mir.I dream of myself.Are those reflexive verb then? Well, based on the definitions in English and in German, the answer is yes. And at least they are verb used reflexively. But as a matter of fact,there are even real reflexive verbs that need Dative....

you know... the verbs that don't make sense without the self reference. One example is sich Mühe geben.Ich gebe mir Mühe.I give toil to myself (lit.)I make an effort.So if anyone ever tells you something is not reflexive because it is mir and not mich... that is not correct. Whether something is reflexive or not has NOTHING to do with whether there is mir or mich. So... things with mir can be reflexive too. And Germans have a soft spot for such mir-reflexives. We use them all the time, even if they are redundant.Ich kaufe mir eine Pizza.I by myself a pizza.This is even remotely understandable as I could theoretically buy a pizza for someone else. And English uses similar things sometimes.But we also say this:Wir gucken uns einen Film an.We watch a movie.This self reference makes NO sense. You cannot watch someone else a movie.I watch you a movie... uh... nope!n a discussion somewhere here (I don't remember where), a user mentioned that also this exists in English.We watch ourselves a movie.(lit.)I think someone in Oxford just shed a tear.

In German this is pretty much standard, though. People talk that way all the time. Nor does it sound bad in anyway. Without the mir these things would sound a little dry. The mir or dir or uns makes it sound... cozy. That's what it feels like to me sometimes. Like little Hobbits who got themselves some nice pipe-weed.

In fact we love it so much that we sometimes even prefer it over saying my... in particular in combination with body parts. In German you don't sayyou say!ch wasche mir die Hände.I wash (to) myself THE hands.You can say!t's not wrong. But it sounds mechanical. You could use that in a novel if someone gets home in some kind of catatonic daze.Ich komme nach Hause und schließe die Tür. Ich wasche meine Hände, gehe in die Küche. Ich öffne eine Dose Bohnen und schütte den Inhalt auf einen Teller. Dann setze ich mich an den Tisch. Und dann weine ich.I come home and close the door. I wash hands, go into the kitchen. I open a can of beans and pour the content onto a plate. Then I sit down at the table. Then, I cry.That's how life would be without our comfy mir :).Other examples for this mir-usage are sich die Zähne putzen (instead of brushing one's teeth), sich den Arm brechen (instead of break one's arm) or sich das Gesicht eincremen (instead of put cream on one's belly). And there are more. And for all of them, this version sounds sooooo much better than the respective version with my.

All right. Now, this whole mir-thing doesn't always work. We don't sayor! don't think there is a real rule though. It is just language in use. You'll pick it up over time. So... this was the mir-aspect of reflexive. There is one last thing to say about it and that is some good news. Yeaay. The reflexive pronoun sich actually covers both cases. It is always the same... gender, case, plural... there is just one reflexive sich for all of them.Ich sehe mich.I see myself. Sie sieht sich.He sees himself.Ich kaufe mir ein Buch.I my myself a book.Er kauft sich ein Buch.He buys herself a book.And I think that's it for to... what?.. oh THAT... oh that's not a mistake. Her pronouns are he and her.Anyway, so this was a run through reflexive in German. We didn't tackle ALL there is to say but I hope you got an impression of what's going on and what the terminology is. German uses a lot of its normal verbs in a reflexive context. Then, it has some verbs that change their meaning when used that way. And there are quite a few verbs that don't even work without the self reference. Those and the "changelings" are the ones I would call reflexive verbs but the official definition calls everything with a reflexive pronoun a reflexive verb. English can use a lot of its verbs in a reflexive way, but often prefers to just not use an object altogether. And English has only a handful of verbs that don't work outside a reflexive context.As usual, if you have any questions or suggestions, just leave me a comment.

I hope you liked it and we'll see each other next time :o) 4.8 33 votesArticle Rating Home » German Vocab and Grammar » German Reflexive Verbs: Types, Conjugation and Grammar Essentials Did you know that in German, you can—and often have to—talk about yourself out loud? Yes, it's true! The way to do it is through reflexive verbs, a kind of verb that allows you to reference yourself—or other selves—with the help of a reflexive pronoun. But let's not get too ahead of ourselves (see what we did there?). Before we delve further into the selves, let's take a look at why they matter in German. Contents Why You Should Learn German Reflexive Verbs You've probably come across German reflexive verbs quite often in your studies.

A few of them are commonplace and describe some of the daily tasks we complete. German reflexive verbs are also crucial to referencing the self—and others—in order to express the proper sentiment. Know that reflexive verbs and their corresponding pronouns build upon the knowledge base you've hopefully already established when it comes to the accusative and dative cases. And like always, adding a new component to your German grammar toolbox will help you get closer to fluency. The Basics of German Reflexive Verbs In English, verbs are only reflexive when they're paired with a reflexive pronoun such as themselves and ourselves. For example: "The dog licks himself." In German, it's much easier to recognize reflexive verbs. This infinitive form of the verb will be accompanied by a reflexive pronoun, typically written as sich. A common German reflexive verb is sich waschen , which means "to wash oneself." German reflexive verbs can be accusative and/or dative, depending on the context of the sentence. It's important to know the case of the verb so that you can choose the correct reflexive pronoun, which, of course, refers back to the subject of the sentence. How to Determine the Correct Reflexive Pronoun In German, reflexive pronouns reflect the case of the reflexive verb. Some reflexive verbs have a determined case, while others can change between accusative and dative, depending on what's going on in the sentence. We'll touch more on that in a second—first, here's a list of the accusative and dative reflexive pronouns you'll use: The only difference between the two sets of reflexive pronouns lies in the "myself" and "yourself (informal)" forms. Mich changes to mir and dich changes to dir.

The rest stays the same. That being said, don't confuse these reflexive pronouns with accusative and dative personal pronouns, which aren't reflexive. How to Conjugate German Reflexive Verbs Like any other German verb, reflexive verbs have an infinitive form, which is conjugated to the subject. However, though the conjugated verb takes the second position, as is normal, the reflexive pronoun follows directly after. Let's take a look at some examples. Accusative Reflexive Verbs and Pronouns The verb sich duschen means "to shower." It's an accusative reflexive verb.

If we wanted to say, "I showered yesterday," we'd use ich and the corresponding accusative form of the "myself" reflexive pronoun (mich) to complete the sentence. After conjugating duschen to the ich form, say in simple past, we'd have: Ich duschte mich gestern. (I showered yesterday.) But let's say you wanted to tell someone, "They showered yesterday," so that they need to shower again today. We can use the same sentence structure, but just replace the subject and reflexive pronoun, and conjugate the verb duschen to the "they" plural form: Sie duschten sich gestern. (They showered yesterday.) Dative Reflexive Verbs and Pronouns In the dative case, the formula is similar. We need the dative forms of the reflexive pronoun, rather than the accusative forms. Let's use sich etwas brechen , or "to break something," as an example since it's dative. Ich brach mir das Bein heute Morgen. (I broke my leg this morning.) Again, we use the simple past tense of brechen, conjugated to the ich form, and place the dative reflexive pronoun (mir) directly after the reflexive verb.

Notice, however, that we didn't use mein Bein. This is because the reflexive pronoun mir indicates whose leg was broken. Directly translated, the German sentence above reads, "I broke myself the leg today morning." It's a bit like a sentence map, where the speaker points back at themselves and to the specific body part to let the audience know what the action is referring to.

It can be a bit tricky to get used to first, but you'll get it with practice. Remember not to use a possessive pronoun when indicating a direct object with German dative reflexive verbs! Two-way German Reflexive Verbs Some German reflexive verbs can actually take both the accusative and dative cases. One example of this is our old friend, sich waschen, meaning "to wash oneself." Check if there's an indirect object—this means that the reflexive verb is being used in the dative case.

When no indirect object is present, the reflexive verb is accusative. Ich wasche mich. (I wash myself.) Ich wasche mir die Hände. (I wash my hands.) The first sentence uses the accusative reflexive pronoun mich because there is no indirect object present. The ich, or "I," is doing the washing to mich or "myself," but there's nothing else receiving the action. However, in the second sentence, die Hände or "the hands" are the direct object, while "myself" or mir is the indirect object. This one is hard to translate fully into English. The sentence "I wash my hands" takes "my hands" as the direct object, but in German, we have to include the self-referencing mir, which shows whose hands are being washed. Since "the hands" are already the direct object, mir must take the dative case. Separable Prefix Reflexive Verbs Separable prefix reflexive verbs behave just as typical separable prefix verbs, except that the reflexive pronoun follows the conjugated part of the verb—and then the prefix. For example, take a look at this sentence using sich hinlegen , which means "to lie down." It's an accusative separable prefix reflexive verb. Ich lege mich hin. (I lie down.) Though the sentence technically translates to "I lie myself down," we don't often include the "myself" part when speaking in English. We just say that we're going to lie down and leave it at that. The verb "to imagine something," or sich etwas vorstellen , works in a similar way, though it's a dative separable prefix reflexive verb: Sarah stellte sich ein Einhorn vor.

(Sarah imagined a unicorn.) If you'd like to add a few German reflexive verbs to your vocabulary studies, check out this list of common reflexive verbs. Remember to include the case in your memorization practice.

Where to Find Practice Resources Check out these online resources for further instruction and practice exercises: Taking about yourself out loud or in your head in German should be a bit easier now that you know about the German reflexive verbs. Learning is all about exploring the world around you—and the one within you.