

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

Lesson Plan Overview

Target Audience

This lesson is designed for high school students of all ability levels.

Total Duration

This lesson should last about an hour. Teachers may consider making it a 2-part lesson, with Practice 2 scheduled as a review on a different day.

Summary of lesson

Students are introduced to/review the use and purpose of reflexive pronouns. They have practice using them once with 10 pre-generated sentences and once with sentences of their own creation. The lesson especially targets nonstandard use of *myself*.

Procedures

Teacher Preparation

- Handout “Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns” (2 pages)
- Most native speakers pick up correct use of the reflexive from reading and listening. This lesson will make them more aware of what they already know on some level. For ELL students this lesson will provide additional information about the language they are learning.
- The metaphor of “reflecting” is designed as a mnemonic device to help students remember that a reflexive pronoun can’t stand on its own, avoiding sentences like “My boss decided to give the promotion to myself.”

Objective for the lesson

Students will identify and correct nonstandard use of reflexive and intensive pronouns. They will also use reflexive and intensive pronouns correctly in their own writing.

Lesson

Beginning (large group activity)

Bring a mirror to class. Hold it up to a student and ask, “What do you see?” Most students will respond with, “I see myself.” If they don’t, prompt them: “Do you see yourself?” and elicit a response that uses a reflexive pronoun, “Yes, I see myself.”

Ask other students questions that involve the mirror and that will elicit a response that uses a reflexive pronoun:

- “If I put this mirror in front of Ian, do you think he will see himself?”
- “Would you agree that a mirror itself is fragile, even though its frame might be strong?”
- “Why do you think people like to look at themselves in a mirror?”
- “When we look in a mirror, do we tend to be critical or positive about ourselves?”

Do this a few times until curiosity is piqued.

Direct the students’ attention to the words they have been using: *myself*, *himself*, etc. Ask if anyone knows what part of speech they are. Write the term *reflexive pronoun* on the board. Underneath the word *reflexive*, write the word *reflects* as a mnemonic and state, “A reflexive pronoun reflects back on its antecedent noun or pronoun.”

Ask students to define the word *intense*. What would they expect an intensifier to do? Write *intensive pronoun* on the board and tell students that intensive pronouns add emphasis.

Middle (Small group/independent work)

Distribute the 2-page handout, “Reflexive Pronouns.” If this is a review lesson, consider permitting students to read and work through Practice 1 either individually or with a partner. If this is a new material, you might wish to read the explanatory material together and work through the first 2 or 3 sentences in Practice 1 together before allowing students to complete the practice with a partner. As students work, walk around the room to address questions as they come up.

If possible, make the answer key available for students to check their own answers to Practice 1 when they are ready. (Consider taping it to the board at the front of the room, covered with another sheet of paper.) As students check their answers, have them record anonymously which sentences were incorrect using the Practice One Results Chart (“My answers were all correct except for ...”). This chart could also be taped to the board, next to the answer key. This chart will record informal assessment data for use in reteaching later.

When students have recorded their results from Practice 1, they can move to Practice 2 at their own pace. As they work on Practice 2, walk around the room to answer questions and to coach. If possible, invite each student to write their best sentence on the board. (Depending on time, Practice 2 may serve as homework.)

End (Large group)

Return to the results students reported via the Practice One Results Chart and review any sentences students found especially challenging.

Suggested Assessment

Ask students to write sentences or a paragraph correctly using these reflexive pronouns: *myself, yourself, himself, ourselves, and themselves.*

Extension Activity

Invite students to bring to class examples of reflexive pronouns used correctly in print or digital media or hear on radio or TV. Create a bulletin board of these examples.

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

A reflexive pronoun is easy to spot: it ends in either *-self* or *-selves*. Standard English recognizes 9 reflexive pronouns: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, *themselves*, and the very formal *oneself*. (The words *hissself* and *theirselves* are like the word *ain't*: they are considered nonstandard usage and should be avoided in formal writing.)

Reflexive pronouns rename a noun or pronoun that occurs earlier in the sentence. The noun or pronoun that is being renamed is called the antecedent. Here are some examples:

- Kayla fell during the soccer game, but she picked herself up and kept going. (*Herself* refers to *she*.)
- I accidentally burned myself while working at Pizza To Go. (*Myself* refers to *I*.)
- The automatic vacuum cleans the carpet and then puts itself away. (*Itself* refers to *vacuum*.)

Intensive pronouns emphasize or intensify their antecedents. Here are some examples:

- Jayden changed the oil himself. (*Himself* emphasizes *Jayden*.)
- The programmers themselves played the game before they released it for beta testing. (*Themselves* emphasizes *programmers*.)
- Jaxon is a New Orleans Saints fan; I myself prefer the Indianapolis Colts. (*Myself* emphasizes *I*.)

Unlike a personal pronoun, a reflexive pronoun cannot stand on its own in a sentence. It must have a noun or pronoun for which it serves as either an antecedent or an intensifier.

Nonstandard: The principal presented the award to another guy and myself.

Standard: The principal presented the award to another guy and me.

Nonstandard: Chloe couldn't find the necklace she wanted at the mall, so herself made one.

Standard: Chloe couldn't find the necklace she wanted at the mall, so she made one herself.

Reflexive Pronoun Practice

Directions: Indicate whether the pronoun is correct in each sentence below. If the sentence is incorrect, rewrite it at the bottom of the page so that it will be correct.

- _____ 1. Sometimes it is hard for Dylan to tear himself away from a video game, especially when he is close to the next level.
- _____ 2. I myself enjoy Guitar Hero, but my brother prefers World of Warcraft.
- _____ 3. Myself and a friend thought the President looked impressive as he took the Oath of Office.
- _____ 4. The girls kept the surprise party a secret among themselves.
- _____ 5. An elderly woman defended herself from a purse snatcher on the sidewalk.
- _____ 6. When I was ten, my aunt gave a copy of Super Mario to my little brother and myself.
- _____ 7. It's easy for us to imagine ourselves in a greener world. What would it take to make it happen in real life?
- _____ 8. Damián said very little himself, but his little sister never stopped talking.
- _____ 9. The videographer for the soccer game was myself.
- _____ 10. A video game may be seen as a metaphor for life itself. Aren't we all playing games, in a sense, with one another?

Practice 1 Results

My answers were all correct except for ...

Put a check in the box next to the number of any sentence that was incorrect on your paper. If you think your answer might have been correct, just different from the key, check with your teacher. If all of your answers were correct, do not put anything on this chart.

1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

Reflexive Pronoun Practice: Answer Key

Directions: Indicate whether the pronoun is correct in each sentence below. If the sentence is incorrect, rewrite it at the bottom of the page so that it will be correct.

- Correct 1. Sometimes it is hard for Dylan to tear himself away from a video game, especially when he is close to the next level.
- Correct 2. I myself enjoy Guitar Hero, but my brother prefers World of Warcraft.
- Incorrect** 3. Myself and a friend thought the President looked impressive as he took the Oath of Office.
A friend and I thought the President looked impressive as he took the Oath of Office.
- Correct 4. The girls kept the surprise party a secret among themselves.
- Correct 5. An elderly woman defended herself from a purse snatcher on the sidewalk.
- Incorrect** 6. When I was ten, my aunt gave a copy of Super Mario to my little brother and myself.
When I was ten, my aunt gave a copy of Super Mario to my little brother and me.
- Correct 7. It's easy for us to imagine ourselves in a greener world. What would it take to make it happen in real life?
- Correct 8. Damián said very little himself, but his little sister never stopped talking.
- Incorrect** 9. The videographer for the soccer game was myself.
I was the videographer for the soccer game. (Best)
The videographer for the soccer game was me. (Informal)
- Correct 10. A video game may be seen as a metaphor for life itself. Aren't we all playing games, in a sense, with one another?

Reflexive Pronoun Practice 2

Directions: Standard English recognizes 8 reflexive pronouns: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves*. Write 5 sentences of your own, each one using a different reflexive pronoun correctly.

Reflexive Pronoun Practice 2 Answer Key

Directions: Standard English recognizes 8 reflexive pronouns: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves*. Write 5 sentences, each one using a different reflexive pronoun correctly.

Answers will vary.