Frenchpronominal verbs are accompanied by the reflexive pronoun *se* or *s'* preceding the infinitive, thus, the grammatical term "pronominal," which means "relating to a pronoun." All conjugated verbs, with the exception of the [imperative](https://www.thoughtco.com/introduction-french-imperative-mood-1368858) form, require a [subject pronoun](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-subject-pronouns-1369322). Pronominal verbs also need a reflexive pronoun, like this:

* *Nous nous habillons.* = We're getting dressed (dressing ourselves).
* *Tu te baignes. =*You're taking a bath (bathing yourself).

There are a few kinds of French pronominal verbs. But in general, we can say the action and, thus construction, of the pronominal verb is reflexive, reciprocal or idiomatic.

Three Types of Pronominal Verbs

1. Reflexive verbs
2. Reciprocal verbs
3. Idiomatic pronominal verbs

There are two steps in conjugating pronominal verbs. First, take the reflexive pronoun *se*, make it agree with the subject of the verb, and place it directly in front of the verb. Then, as with all verbs, conjugate the infinitive according to whether it's a regular *-er, -ir, -re* verb or an irregular verb.

*Elle se brosse les dents.* = She's brushing her teeth.  
*Vous vous levez tard.* = You get up late.

Review what pronominal verbs look like when conjugated in all the simple tenses and use examples to practice recognizing and using them.

French Reflexive Verbs

The most common pronominal verbs are reflexive verbs (*verbes à sens réfléchi*), which indicate that the subject of the verb is performing the action upon himself, herself, or itself. Reflexive verbs mainly have to do with parts of the body, clothing, personal circumstance or location. Note that when referring to parts of the body, the French possessive pronoun is rarely used; instead, the owner is indicated with a reflexive pronoun and a definite article precedes the body part. Some common reflexive verbs:

* *s'adresser à =* to address, speak to
* *s'approcher de* = to approach
* *s'asseoir* = to sit down
* *se baigner* = to bathe, swim
* *se brosser (les cheveux, les dents)* = to brush (one's hair, one's teeth)
* *se casser (la jambe, le bras)* = to break (one's leg, one's arm)
* *se coiffer* = to fix one's hair
* *se coucher* = to go to bed
* *se couper* = to cut oneself
* *se dépêcher* =  to hurry
* *se déshabiller* = to get undressed
* *se doucher* = to take a shower
* *s'énerver* = to get annoyed
* *s'enrhumer* = to catch a cold
* *se fâcher* = to get angry
* *se fatigue* = to get tired
* *se fier* = to trust
* *s'habiller* = to get dressed
* *s'habituer à* = to get used to
* *s'imaginer* = to imagine
* *s'intéresser à*  = to be interested in
* *se laver* *(les mains, la figure)* = to wash (one's hands, one's face)
* *se lever* = to get up
* *se maquiller* = to put on makeup
* *se marier (avec) =* to get married (to)
* *se méfier de* = to mistrust, distrust, beware of/about
* *se moquer de* = to make fun of (someone else)
* *se moucher* = to blow one's nose
* *se noyer* = to drown
* *se peigner* = to comb one's hair
* *se promener* = to take a walk
* *se raser* = to shave
* *se refroidir =* to cool down, get cold
* *se regarder* = to look at oneself
* *se reposer* = to rest
* *se réveiller* = to wake up
* *se soûler* = to get drunk
* *se souvenir de* = to remember
* *se taire =* to be quiet

**Examples:**

* *Tu te reposes. =*You're resting.
* *Il se lève à 8h00.* = He gets up at 8:00.

Reflexive Verbs With a Nonreflexive Use

Note that many reflexive verbs also have a nonreflexive use; that is, they can describe someone performing the action of the verb on someone or something else:

*Elle se promène.* = She's taking a walk.  
vs.  
*Elle promène le chien.* = She's taking the dog for a walk; She's walking the dog.  
*Je me lave les mains.* = I'm washing my hands.  
vs.  
*Je lave le bébé. =* I'm washing the baby.

Note that some verbs that are normally **not** pronominal may be used with a reflexive pronoun in order to avoid the passive voice. This construction is known as the passive reflexive.

Reflexive verbs are the most common type of pronominal verb. But there are also two lesser-known types: reciprocal verbs and idiomatic pronominal verbs.

French Reciprocal Verbs

While reflexive verbs tell you that one or more subjects are acting upon themselves, reciprocal verbs (*verbes à sens réciproque)* indicate that there are two or more subjects acting on one another. Here are the most common French reciprocal verbs:

* *s'adorer* = to adore (one another)
* *s'aimer* = to love
* *s'apercevoir* = to see
* *se comprendre* = to understand
* *se connaître* = to know
* *se détester* = to hate
* *se dire* = to tell
* *se disputer* = to argue
* *s'écrire* = to write to
* *s'embrasser* = to kiss
* *se parler* = to talk to
* *se promettre* = to promise
* *se quitter* = to leave
* *se regarder* = to look at
* *se rencontrer* = to meet
* *se sourire* = to smile at
* *se téléphoner* = to call
* *se voir* = to see

Reciprocal verbs can also be used without the pronoun for a nonreciprocal meaning:

*Nous nous comprenons. =*We understand each other.  
vs.  
*Nous comprenons la question.* = We understand the question.

*Ils s'aiment.* = They love each other.  
vs.  
*Ils m'aiment. =* They love me.

French Idiomatic Pronominal Verbs

Idiomatic pronominal verbs (*verbes à sens idiomatique)* are verbs that take on a different meaning when used with a reflexive pronoun. Here are the most common French idiomatic pronominal verbs (and their non-pronominal meanings):

* *s'en aller* = to go away   (to go)
* *s'amuser* = to have a good time (to amuse)
* *s'appeler* = to be named (to call)
* *s'approprier =* to appropriate (to suit, adapt to)
* *s'arrêter* = to stop (oneself) (to stop [s.o. or s.t. else])
* *s'attendre (à)* = to expect (to wait for)
* *se demander* = to wonder (to ask)
* *se débrouiller* = to manage, get by (to disentangle)
* *se dépêcher* = to hurry (to send quickly)
* *se diriger vers* = to head toward (to run, be in charge of)
* *se douter* = to suspect (to doubt)
* *s'éclipser* = to slip away/out (to eclipse, overshadow)
* *s'éloigner* = to move (oneself, s.t.) away
* *s'endormir* = to fall asleep (to put to sleep)
* *s'ennuyer* = to be bored (to bother)
* *s'entendre* = to get along (to hear)
* *se fâcher* = to get angry (to make angry)
* *se figurer* = to imagine, picture (to represent, to appear)
* *s'habituer à* = to get used to (to get in the habit of)
* *s'inquiéter* = to worry (to alarm)
* *s'installer* = to settle in (to a home) (to install)
* *se mettre à* = to begin to (to place, put)
* *se perdre* = to get lost (to lose)
* *se plaindre* = to complain (to pity, begrudge)
* *se refuser de* = to deny oneself (the opportunity)o   (to refuse)
* *se rendre à* = to go to (to return)
* *se rendre compte de* = to realize (to account for)
* *se réunir* = to meet, get together (to gather, collect)
* *se servir* = to use, make use of (to serve)
* *se tromper* = to be mistaken (to deceive)
* *se trouver* = to be located (to find)

See how the meaning changes when idiomatic pronominal verbs are used with and without the reflexive pronoun.

*Je m'appelle Sandrine.* = My name is Sandrine.  
vs.  
*J'appelle Sandrine.* = I'm calling Sandrine.

*Tu te trompes.* = You are mistaken.  
vs.  
*Tu me trompes.* = You are deceiving me.

Word Order with Pronominal Verbs

Placement of the reflexive pronoun is exactly the same as for [object pronouns](https://www.thoughtco.com/direct-object-pronouns-1368838) and [adverbial pronouns](https://www.thoughtco.com/y-french-pronoun-1368924):

*Je m'habille.* = I'm getting dressed.  
*Tu te reposeras.* = You will rest.  
*Il se levait quand...* = He was getting up when...

The pronoun directly precedes the verb in all tenses and moods, except the affirmative [imperative](https://www.thoughtco.com/introduction-french-imperative-mood-1368858), when it follows the verb, attached by a hyphen:

*Repose-toi. = Rest.  
Habillons-nous. =*Let's get dressed.

Pronominal Verbs in the Negative

With [negation](https://www.thoughtco.com/types-of-french-negation-1368880), *ne* precedes the reflexive pronoun:

*Je ne m'habille pas.* = I'm not getting dressed.  
*Tu ne te reposes jamais.* = You never rest.

Pronominal Verbs in the Interrogative

[Questions](https://www.thoughtco.com/questions-in-french-1368935) with pronominal verbs are usually asked with *est-ce que* and the [reflexive pronoun](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-grammar-4133074) once again stays directly in front of the verb. If you use [inversion](https://www.thoughtco.com/uses-of-french-inversion-4086442), the reflexive pronoun precedes the inverted subject-verb:

*Est-ce qu'il se rase ? Se rase-t-il ?*  
Is he shaving?

*Est-ce que tu te laves les mins ? Te laves-tu les mains ?*  
Are you washing your hands?

Pronominal Verbs in the Negative Interrogative

To ask a negative question with pronominal verbs, you sort of have to use inversion. The reflexive pronoun stays directly in front of the inverted subject-verb, and [the negative structure surrounds that whole group:](https://www.thoughtco.com/formal-french-negation-1368882)

*Ne se rase-t-il pas ?*  
Isn't he shaving?

*Ne te laves-tu jamais les mains ?*  
Don't you ever wash your hands?

Pronominal Verbs in Compound Tenses

In [compound tenses](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-compound-tenses-and-moods-1368821) like the *passé composé*, all pronominal verbs are [être verbs](https://www.thoughtco.com/etre-verbs-french-auxiliary-verbs-1368843), which means two things:

1. The auxiliary verb is *être.*
2. The past participle may need to agree with the subject in gender and number.

In compound tenses, the reflexive pronoun precedes the auxiliary verb, not the past participle:

*Elle s'est couchée à minuit.*  
She went to bed at midnight.

*Ils s'étaient vus à la banque.*  
They had seen one another at the bank.

*Après m'être habillé, j'ai allumé la télé.*  
After getting dressed, I turned on the TV.

Agreement with Pronominal Verbs

When pronominal verbs are [in the compound tenses](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-compound-tenses-and-moods-1368821), the past participle has to agree with the reflexive pronoun when the pronoun is a direct object but not when it's an [indirect object](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-indirect-objects-1368865). So the trick is to figure out whether the reflexive pronoun is direct or indirect.

**1.** For most pronominal verbs that are not followed by a noun, the reflexive pronoun is the direct object, so the past participle needs to agree with it. See number five below for instances when the reflexive pronoun is an **indirect** pronoun.

*Nous nous sommes douchés.*  
We showered.

*\Marianne s'est fâchée.*  
Marianne got mad.

**2.** Likewise, with a pronominal verb plus a preposition plus a noun, the reflexive pronoun is the direct object, so you need agreement.

*Elle s'est occupée du chien.*  
She took care of the dog.

*Ils se sont souvenus de la pièce.*  
They remembered the play.

**3.** When a pronominal verb is followed directly by a noun with *no preposition in between*, the reflexive pronoun is indirect, therefore there is no agreement.

*Nous nous sommes acheté une voiture.*  
NOT *Nous nous sommes achetés une voiture.*  
We bought ourselves a car.

*Elle s'est dit la vérité.*  
NOT *Elle s'est dite la vérité.*  
She told herself the truth.

**4.** When you have a sentence with a reflexive pronoun plus [an object pronoun](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-object-pronouns-1368886), the reflexive pronoun is always the [indirect object](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-grammar-4133074), so there is no agreement with it. However, there **is** agreement with the object pronoun, per the rules of [direct object pronoun agreement](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-agreement-compound-verbs-works-4086482).

*Nous nous le sommes acheté.* (*Le livre* is masculine.)  
We bought it (the book) for ourselves.

*Nous nous la sommes achetée.* (*La voiture* is feminine.)  
We bought it (the car) for ourselves.

*Elle se l'est dit.* (*Le mensonge* is masculine.)  
She told it (the lie) to herself.

*Elle se l'est dite.* (*La vérité* is feminine.)  
She told it (the truth) to herself.

**5.** For the following verbs, the reflexive pronoun is always an indirect object, so the past participle does not agree with it. In the abbreviations below, "e.o." means each other and "o.s." means oneself.

* *s'acheter* = to buy (for) o.s.
* *se demander* = to wonder
* *se dire* = to say (to o.s./e.o.)
* [*se donner*](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-expressions-with-donner-1368666) = to give (to e.o.)
* *s'écrire* = to write (to e.o.)
* *se faire mal* = to hurt o.s.
* *s'imaginer* = to imagine, think
* *se parler* = to talk (to o.s./e.o.)
* *se plaire (à faire...)* = to enjoy (doing...)
* *se procurer* = to obtain (for o.s.)
* *se promettre* = to promise (o.s./e.o.)
* [*se raconter*](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-expressions-with-vouloir-1368728) = to tell (e.o.)
* *se rendre compte de* = to realize
* *se rendre visite* = [to visit](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-equivalents-for-verb-to-visit-4083759) (e.o.)
* *se reprocher =* to criticize, blame (o.s./e.o.)
* *se ressembler* = to resemble (e.o.)
* *se rire* *(de qqun)* = to mock (someone)
* *se sourire* = to smile (at e.o.)
* *se téléphoner* = to call (e.o.)

*Nous nous sommes souri.*  
NOT *Nous nous sommes souris.*  
We smiled at each other.

*Elles se sont parlé.*  
NOT *Elles se sont parlées.*  
They talked to each other.

Pronominal Verbs in the Infinitive or Present Participle

When using pronominal verbs in the [infinitive](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-infinitive-linfinitif-1368866) or [present participle](https://www.thoughtco.com/french-present-participle-1368923), there are two things to keep in mind:

1. The reflexive pronoun directly precedes the infinitive or present participle.
2. The reflexive pronoun agrees with its implied subject.

Pronominal Verbs in Dual-Verb Constructions

[Dual-verb constructions](https://www.thoughtco.com/order-of-words-french-sentence-4083777) are those where you have a verb like *aller* (to go) or *vouloir* (to want) followed by an infinitive. When using a pronominal verb in this construction, it's important to remember that the reflexive pronoun goes directly in front of the infinitive, not the conjugated verb, and that the reflexive pronoun has to agree with the subject.

*Je vais m'habiller.*  
I'm going to get dressed.

*Nous voulons nous promener.*  
We want to go for a walk.

*Tu devrais te laver les cheveux.*  
You should wash your hair.

Pronominal Verbs after Prepositions

When you use pronominal verbs in the infinitive after prepositions, remember to change the reflexive pronoun to agree with the implied subject of the verb.

*Avant de te coucher, range ta chambre.*  
Before you go to bed, clean your room.

*Il faut trouver un juge pour nous marier.*  
We have to find a judge to get married.

Pronominal Verbs Used as Subjects

To use pronominal verbs in the infinitive as subjects at the beginning of a sentence, remember to change the reflexive pronoun to agree with the implied subject of the verb:

*Me lever tôt est une règle de ma vie.*  
Getting up early is a rule for me.

*Te moquer de ton frère n'est pas gentil.*  
Making fun of your brother isn't nice.

Pronominal Verbs as Present Participles

Once again, the reflexive pronoun always has to agree with the subject, including when pronominal verbs are used as present participles:

*En me levant, j'ai entendu un cri.*  
While getting up, I heard a scream.

*C'était en vous inquiétant que vous avez attrapé un ulcère.*  
It was by worrying that you got an ulcer.