



# How to Use “Myself” and Other Reflexive Pronouns

by [Legal Lad](#) February 9, 2007

Today’s topic is how to use the word *myself*. Grammar Girl says that how to use *myself* is among the top 10 or 20 questions that people send in to the show. Here’s an example:

*Hi, Grammar Girl. I hear and see examples of the misuse of the word myself all the time. For example, an e-mail went out from HR like this, “Please contact Squiggly, Aardvark, or myself with questions.” Could you please help listeners know when the word myself is appropriate and when to use a more appropriate word?*

Let’s dissect what’s wrong with that sentence: “Please contact Squiggly, Aardvark, or myself with questions.” The simplest way to think of it is like this: How would you say the sentence without Squiggly and Aardvark? Then it usually becomes obvious! You would say, “Please contact *me* with questions,” not, “Please contact *myself* with questions.” So when you add in Squiggly and Aardvark that doesn’t change anything. It’s still correct to say, “Please contact Squiggly, Aardvark, or *me* with questions.”

## What Are Reflexive Pronouns?

Digging into the topic a little deeper, *myself* is what’s called a *reflexive pronoun*. That can be hard to remember, but just think about looking into a mirror and seeing your reflection. You’d say, “I see myself in the mirror.” You see your reflection, and *myself* is a *reflexive* pronoun.

Other reflexive pronouns include *himself*, *herself*, *yourself*, *itself*, and *themselves*. A reflexive pronoun is always the object of a sentence; it can never be [the subject](#). Grammar Girl has talked about it before, but a subject is the one doing something in a sentence, and the object is the one having something done to it. If I step on Squiggly, I am the subject and Squiggly is the object.

You would never say, “Myself stepped on Squiggly,” so you would also never say, “Aardvark and myself stepped on Squiggly.”

Another case where it is correct to use *myself* is when you are both the subject and the object of a sentence. For example, “I see myself playing marimbas,” or, “I’m going to treat myself to a mud bath.” In both of these cases you are the object of your own action, so *myself* is the right word to use.

## Use Reflexive Pronouns to Add Emphasis

Reflexive pronouns can also be used to add emphasis to a sentence. (In case you care, they are then called intensive pronouns.) For example, if you had witnessed a murder, you could say, “I myself saw the murder.” Sure, it’s a tad dramatic, but it’s grammatically correct. Or, for example, if you want to emphasize how proud you are of your new artwork, you could say, “I painted it myself.” Again, *myself* just adds emphasis. The meaning of the sentence doesn’t change if you take out the word *myself*; it just has a different feeling because now it lacks the added emphasis.

There you go! The quick and dirty tip is to think about how you would write the sentence if you were the only one in it, and then use that pronoun. For example, “Please contact me.” That’s where people get most hung up using *myself*. And then you can also remember that it’s OK to use reflexive pronouns for emphasis and when you are the object of your own action.