

## 10.3

# Constructions with se


**ANTE TODO**

In **Lección 7**, you learned how to use **se** as the third person reflexive pronoun (**Él se despierta. Ellos se visten. Ella se baña.**). **Se** can also be used to form constructions in which the person performing the action is not expressed or is de-emphasized.

## Impersonal constructions with se

- ▶ In Spanish, verbs that are not reflexive can be used with **se** to form impersonal constructions. These are statements in which the person performing the action is not defined.

**Se habla** español en Costa Rica.  
*Spanish is spoken in Costa Rica.*

**Se puede leer** en la sala de espera.  
*You can read in the waiting room.*

**Se hacen** operaciones aquí.  
*They perform operations here.*

**Se necesitan** medicinas enseguida.  
*They need medicine right away.*

- ▶ **¡Atención!** Note that the third person singular verb form is used with singular nouns and the third person plural form is used with plural nouns.

**Se vende** ropa.

**Se venden** camisas.

- ▶ You often see the impersonal **se** in signs, advertisements, and directions.



**SE PROHÍBE  
NADAR**



**Se entra por la  
izquierda**

## Se for unplanned events

¿Te pusiste un suéter anoche?



No, mamá.  
Se me olvidó.



- ▶ **Se** also describes accidental or unplanned events. In this construction, the person who performs the action is de-emphasized, implying that the accident or unplanned event is not his or her direct responsibility. Note this construction.

**se** + [ **INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN** ] + [ **VERB** ] + [ **SUBJECT** ]  
**Se**            me            cayó            la pluma.

**AYUDA**

In English, the passive voice or indefinite subjects (*you, they, one*) are used where Spanish uses impersonal constructions with **se**.

- In this type of construction, what would normally be the direct object of the sentence becomes the subject, and it agrees with the verb, not with the indirect object pronoun.



- These verbs are the ones most frequently used with **se** to describe unplanned events.

**Verbs commonly used with se**

<b>caer</b>	<i>to fall; to drop</i>	<b>perder (e:ie)</b>	<i>to lose</i>
<b>dañar</b>	<i>to damage; to break down</i>	<b>quedar</b>	<i>to be left behind</i>
<b>olvidar</b>	<i>to forget</i>	<b>romper</b>	<i>to break</i>

**Se me perdió** el teléfono de la farmacia.  
*I lost the pharmacy's phone number.*

**Se nos olvidaron** los pasajes.  
*We forgot the tickets.*

- **¡Atención!** While Spanish has a verb for *to fall* (**caer**), there is no direct translation for *to drop*. **Dejar caer** (*To let fall*) or a **se** construction is often used to mean *to drop*.

El médico **dejó caer** la aspirina.  
*The doctor dropped the aspirin.*

A mí **se me cayeron** los cuadernos.  
*I dropped the notebooks.*

- To clarify or emphasize who the person involved in the action is, this construction commonly begins with the preposition **a** + [noun] or **a** + [prepositional pronoun].

**Al paciente** se le perdió la receta.  
*The patient lost his prescription.*

**A ustedes** se les quedaron los libros en casa.  
*You left the books at home.*

**CONSULTA**

For an explanation of prepositional pronouns, refer to **Estructura 9.4**, p. 318.

**¡INTÉNTALO!**

Completa las oraciones con **se** impersonal y los verbos en presente.

**A**

- Se enseñan (enseñar) cinco lenguas en esta universidad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (comer) muy bien en Las Delicias.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (vender) muchas camisetas allí.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (servir) platos exquisitos cada noche.

Completa las oraciones con **se** y los verbos en pretérito.

**B**

- Se me rompieron (I broke) las gafas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (You (fam., sing.) dropped) las pastillas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (They lost) la receta.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (You (form., sing.) left) aquí la radiografía.

**recursos**

