Don´t be sooooo Impersonal! Impersonal SE (and the passive SE) in Spanish

You are used to seeing SE on reflexive verbs, but SE also has another usage ….. to mean *everyone* and *no one*.

**So what is the Impersonal SE?** The impersonal SE is part of an **Impersonal expression.** Impersonal expressions are used when the subject of a verb is unspecified or unknown (but is human). Passive se is pretty much the same. It means that something is done without saying who exactly does it.

Often translated as: ONE, THEY, YOU, WE (but no specific people are indicated)

They are mostly used to make general informative statements and to express rules, but also are very useful for asking other stuff.

* **Se debe** trabajar mucho para tener buenas notas. *(One must work hard to have good grades.)*
* **Se habla** español en Costa Rica. *(They speak Spanish in Costa Rica.)*
* ¿Cómo **se escribe** “chocolate”? *(How do you/one spell “chocolate”?)*
* ¿Cómo **se dice** “beach” en español? *(How do you / one say “beach” in Spanish?)*

Notice that while the English translation contains “one,” “they,” or “you,” there is no subject specified in Spanish.

**Impersonal Se / Passive Se Formation**

Sooooo nice and easy! To form the impersonal *se*, **verbs are always 3rd person singular or plural.** The singular and plural of the verb depends on the direct object or rest of sentence…

**se + 3rd person singular or plural**

**Examples**

* **Se necesita** estudiar mucho. *(They need / one needs to study a lot.)*
* **Se habla** español aquí. *(Spanish is spoken here.)*
* **Se compran los carros** (We buy cars)
* **Se prohibe** fumar. *(Smoking is prohibited.)*
* Se permiten las mascotas (Pets are permitted)
* No se permiten fotos *(Photos are not permitted)*
* Se prohíben los carros (Cars are prohibited)

Notice the plural verb examples above!

1. They celebrate Dia de los Muertos in Mexico
2. Apples are sold at the fruit stand

3. One leaves a tip when there is good service. (buen servicio)

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&sa=N&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=HjxrhbhLitpGKM:&imgrefurl=http://kendaves.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/spanish-iii-impersonal-se/&docid=YN6T5BbVnbl5VM&imgurl=http://kendaves.wikispaces.com/file/view/se_vende_pollo.jpg/260479512/se_vende_pollo.jpg&w=500&h=333&ei=GRMuUZP1BI7rqAG6joCACw&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:2,s:0,i:91&iact=rc&dur=763&sig=105716007425955782372&page=1&tbnh=183&tbnw=266&start=0&ndsp=15&tx=104&ty=104)[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&sa=N&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=RP5M5E3huH78hM:&imgrefurl=http://koollink.net/spanish/default20100911.html&docid=C_CGxxyXJE-07M&imgurl=http://koollink.net/spanish/img/SiSePuede.jpg&w=288&h=288&ei=GRMuUZP1BI7rqAG6joCACw&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:9,s:0,i:112&iact=rc&dur=857&sig=105716007425955782372&page=1&tbnh=196&tbnw=196&start=0&ndsp=15&tx=112&ty=54)

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&sa=N&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=A44JbC8l6FjMnM:&imgrefurl=http://www.spanishdict.com/answers/234191/estn-permitido-traer-perros-are-dogs-allowed-&docid=UIslEYuVPuTB6M&imgurl=http://capl.washjeff.edu/13/m/161.jpg&w=400&h=300&ei=GRMuUZP1BI7rqAG6joCACw&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:21,s:0,i:158&iact=rc&dur=532&sig=105716007425955782372&page=2&tbnh=194&tbnw=259&start=15&ndsp=23&tx=147&ty=71)[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&sa=N&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=tIT95N2A0txHPM:&imgrefurl=http://estudiafeliz.com/tag/se-impersonal/&docid=L7OokwZMUErQJM&imgurl=http://estudiafeliz.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/se-impersonal-hielo-muy-muy-frio.jpg?w=630&w=550&h=800&ei=GRMuUZP1BI7rqAG6joCACw&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:28,s:0,i:179&iact=rc&dur=927&sig=105716007425955782372&page=2&tbnh=189&tbnw=130&start=15&ndsp=23&tx=123&ty=59)

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=zM-mhgOg5r6OVM:&imgrefurl=http://profesoraswann.com/resources-ideas/?p=233&docid=8hpb7XAI-2AjnM&imgurl=http://profesoraswann.com/resources-ideas/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Bilingual-Parking-Sign-K-4496.gif&w=400&h=271&ei=lRMuUeeJK8XprAHbooCoDA&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:2,s:0,i:88&iact=rc&dur=959&sig=105716007425955782372&page=1&tbnh=185&tbnw=273&start=0&ndsp=18&tx=132&ty=95)[](http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&biw=1366&bih=622&tbm=isch&tbnid=xHLRIbWr9utXEM:&imgrefurl=http://www.spanishdict.com/answers/235329/impersonal-se-vs.-reflexive-se&docid=d-UyElhKBrkaBM&imgurl=http://www.eyeonspain.com/spain-magazine/images/se-alquila.jpg&w=400&h=400&ei=5hMuUZHAIojkrQH2-YH4Cg&zoom=1&ved=1t:3588,r:2,s:0,i:88&iact=rc&dur=863&sig=105716007425955782372&page=1&tbnh=190&tbnw=222&start=0&ndsp=17&tx=79&ty=115)