Modern Italian Grammar
A practical guide
Third Edition

Anna Proudfoot and
Francesco Cardo
Modern ITALIAN Grammar

Modern Italian Grammar is an innovative reference guide to Italian, combining traditional and function-based grammar in a single volume.

The Grammar is divided into two parts. Part A covers traditional grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs and adjectives. Part B is carefully organised around language functions and contexts such as:

- giving personal information
- social interactions
- register and style
- oral communication and telephone skills
- formal and informal written communication, including SMS and email.

With a strong emphasis on contemporary usage, all grammar points and functions are richly illustrated with examples. Implementing feedback from users of the second edition, this text includes clearer explanations, as well as a greater emphasis on areas of particular difficulty for learners of Italian.

This is the ideal reference grammar for learners of Italian at all levels, from beginner to advanced. No prior knowledge of grammatical terminology is needed and a glossary of grammatical terms is provided.

This third edition of the Grammar continues to be complemented by the Modern Italian Grammar Workbook, Second Edition, which features related exercises and activities.

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Modern ITALIAN Grammar

A practical guide
Third Edition

Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo
In memory of Franco Cardo,
1951–2006
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Introduction

Modern Italian Grammar follows an entirely new approach to learning Italian. It looks at grammar not as the ultimate goal, but as the tool with which to construct a dialogue or a piece of writing.

Modern Italian Grammar is specifically designed to be accessible to the English reader not brought up in the Italian tradition of grammar and language analysis. It is unique both in its combination of formal grammar reference section and guide to usage organised along functional lines, and the fact that it was compiled by an English mother-tongue teacher of Italian and an Italian native speaker, working closely together.

It is the ideal reference text to use with newer language courses, for both beginners and advanced learners.

The course books and textbooks published over the last two decades are based on the principles of the communicative approach to language learning, which recognises that the objective of any language learner is to communicate, to get one’s message across, and that there can be many different ways of doing this, rather than a ‘right’ way and a ‘wrong’ way.

The communicative approach emphasises language functions rather than structures. Traditional reference grammars present language by structure, making them inaccessible to learners who have no knowledge of grammatical terminology. Modern Italian Grammar presents language by function, with examples of usage and full explanations of how to express specific functions in Part B. At the same time it retains the traditional presentation of language by structure in Part A, which illustrates language forms and grammatical systems in a schematic way: word formation and morphology, verb conjugations, tenses, use of conjunctions and verb constructions.

The language functions included have been based on the communicative functions listed in Nora Galli de Paratesi’s Livello Soglia (1981), itself based on J.A. van Ek’s The Threshold Level (1975), the statement of key language functions supported by the Council of Europe. We have expanded them to provide a richer variety of examples more suited to our target readership. The division into functional areas also takes account of general linguistic notions, which can occur in more than one function; these include notions such as presence or absence, time and space, cause and effect. Notions and functions are integrated throughout Part B, while the structures illustrated in Part A are accessed through extensive cross-referencing.

In our choice of examples, we have included as many different contexts as possible. Some examples are typical of everyday dialogue or writing; some have been taken from the press or television, others from contemporary texts.

Our guides and inspiration in putting together this grammar have been some of the recognised authorities in the area of Italian grammar in the last few decades: to them go our thanks and our recognition of the great debt we owe them: Anna-Laura and Giulio Lepschy (The Italian Language Today, Routledge, 1991); Marcello Sensini (Grammatica della lingua Italiana, Mondadori, 1990); Maurizio Dardano and Pietro Trifone (Grammatica Italiana, 3rd edition, Zanichelli, 1995); Luca Serianni (Grammatica italiana. Italiano comune e lingua letteraria, 2nd edition, UTET, 1991); Giampaolo Salvi and Laura Vanelli (Grammatica essenziale di riferimento della lingua italiana, De Agostini/Le Monnier, 1992).
Introduction to the third edition

This third edition of *Modern Italian Grammar* incorporates suggestions from readers and reviewers and updates texts taken from the press, particularly those in the later chapters. It builds on the work done jointly with my colleague and close friend Franco Cardo on the first two editions. Sadly, Franco died soon after the second edition of *Modern Italian Grammar* came out. As a result, this third edition was prepared by me as sole author. I am grateful therefore to Italian friends and colleagues who agreed to look at new material and made the writing process less lonely. I would like to thank students and tutors of Italian at the Open University, on both Andante (Beginners’ Italian) and Vivace (Intermediate Italian), for their useful and positive suggestions, and I would like to thank the Open University for allowing me study leave in order to finish this edition. Lastly, thanks to my family for their patience during the writing process. Finally I wish all our readers ‘Buono Studio’.

Anna Proudfoot
How to use this book

Part A of the book (Chapters 1–7) is a reference guide to the grammatical structures or ‘building blocks’ of Italian: noun group, verbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs. Where possible, tables are used to illustrate forms and patterns.

Part B of the book (Chapters 8–42) shows how grammar structures are used to express communicative ‘functions’ such as giving personal information, asking someone to do something, describing something, etc. The chapters are divided into five broad sections: I Giving and seeking factual information; II Actions affecting ourselves and others; III Expressing emotions, feelings, attitudes and opinions; IV Putting in context; and finally V Expanding the horizons, which looks at special types of language, for example the formal register, bureaucratic language, and the language of telephone and letter.

The table of contents at the front of the book shows the content of each section and chapter, for Part A and Part B. It is not in alphabetical order but set out according to the layout of the book.

At the end of the book, there is a full index: grammar structures, communicative functions and keywords are all listed in alphabetical order, using both Italian and English terms.

If you want to know how to express a particular function, for example ‘Asking if something is available’ or ‘Introducing yourself’, simply look it up in the index or in the table of contents. In Part B, you will find all the different ways in which you can say what you want, with an indication of where you can find further information on the grammar structures used, and references to related functions found in other parts of the book.

If, on the other hand, you know the grammatical name for the structure you want to use, for example personal pronouns or impersonal si, you can look that up in the index instead. You will find each grammar structure explained in Part A. Part A is also useful as an easy-to-use quick reference section, where you can remind yourself of the correct form, or check on a verb ending, for example. A glossary, which immediately follows this short guide, gives definitions of the grammatical terms used in this book, with examples.

Note that throughout the book an asterisk is used to denote a form or wording that does not actually exist or is incorrect, shown only to demonstrate a point.

Lastly, Italian and English keywords are indexed to make it easier for the reader to look up a particular point. Grammar terminology as well as Italian examples are listed in the index (for example you will find both lei and ‘personal pronouns’).

We hope you enjoy learning Italian using this book as a guide. Remember that some spoken skills such as pronunciation, intonation and stress cannot simply be learned from a book. But grammar structures are the foundation of any language, and this book will teach you how to use these structures to express what you want to say.

Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo, 2005
Glossary

Abstract noun
One which refers to a concept or quality rather than a person or object. Examples are la felicità ‘happiness’, la miseria ‘poverty’.

Active construction
An active construction is a sentence in which the subject of the sentence is the person carrying out the action, or the event taking place (as opposed to a passive construction where the subject is the person affected by the action): mio marito fuma troppo ‘my husband smokes too much’, gli ospiti rimangono fino a sabato ‘the guests are staying until Saturday’. A verb can therefore have an active form: (chiudiamo la porta a mezzanotte ‘we shut the door at midnight’) or a passive form (la porta viene chiusa a mezzanotte ‘the door is shut at midnight’).

Adjective
Adjectives describe or give information about a noun. They can be descriptive (such as grande ‘big’, bianco ‘white’, vecchio ‘old’, italiano ‘Italian’), demonstrative (questo ‘this’, quel ‘that’), indefinite (qualche ‘some’, alcuni ‘some, a few’, certo ‘certain’), interrogative (quale ‘which’, quanto ‘how much, many’) or possessive (mio ‘my’, tuo ‘your’ etc.): alcuni nostri amici ‘Some friends of ours’, la vecchia casa in campagna ‘the old house in the country’.

Adverb
Adverbs give information about a verb, saying how, for example, something is done: bene ‘well’, male ‘badly’, subito ‘immediately’, cortesemente ‘politely’. They can also add further information about an adjective or another adverb: tanto stanco ‘so tired’, poco bene ‘not very well’, molto male ‘very badly’.

Agreement
In Italian, adjectives, articles and, in some cases, past participles have to ‘agree with’ the noun or pronoun they accompany or refer to. This means that their form varies according to whether the noun/pronoun is masculine or feminine (gender), singular or plural (number): la casa bianca ‘the white house’, i miei sandali sono rotti ‘my sandals are broken’, loro sono andati ‘they went’.

Article
Italian has three types of article: the definite article il, lo (etc.) ‘the’, the indefinite article un, una (etc.) ‘a’, and the partitive dei, delle, degli (etc.) ‘some, any’: il ragazzo ‘the boy’, una lezione ‘a lesson’, dei bambini ‘some children’.

Auxiliary verb
Auxiliary verbs such as avere, essere are used in combination with the past participle to form compound tenses, both active, Ho mangiato ‘I have eaten’, siamo andati ‘we have gone’, and passive, è stato licenziato ‘he was sacked’. See also MODAL VERB.

Cardinal number
A number used in counting or to talk about quantities, for example uno, due, tre. See also ORDINAL.

Clause
A clause is a section or part of a sentence which contains a subject and a verb. Complex sentences are made up of a series of clauses. The main clause (or clauses) is the part of a sentence which makes sense on its own and does not depend on any other element in the sentence. A subordinate clause always depends on another clause, and is often introduced by a
conjunction such as che. There are different types of subordinate clause, for example relative clauses: Ho visto il ragazzo che piace a mia sorella ‘I saw the boy that my sister likes’; or purpose clauses: Ha portato la macchina dal meccanico perché controllasse i freni ‘I took the car to the mechanic so that he could check the brakes’.

**Comparative**

When one person, object or activity is compared with another, a comparative form is used. This can be a comparative adjective as in la pasta napoletana è migliore di quella siciliana ‘Neapolitan pasta is better than Sicilian pasta’, or a comparative adverb as in mia figlia nuota meglio della sua ‘my daughter swims better than hers’.

**Compound noun**

A compound noun is a noun formed by joining together one or more words, either nouns or other parts of speech: asciugamano ‘a towel’ (verb asciugare ‘to dry’ + noun mano ‘hand’), capotreno ‘chief guard on train’ (noun capo ‘chief’ + noun treno ‘train’).

**Compound tenses**

Compound tenses are tenses consisting of more than one element. In Italian, the compound tenses are formed by the auxiliary avere or essere, and the past participle: ho mangiato troppo ‘I have eaten too much’, saremmo andati a casa ‘we would have gone home’. See also SIMPLE TENSES.

**Conditional**

The conditional is not strictly a tense, but a verb mood. It can be used on its own, particularly as a polite way of expressing a request: Le dispiacerebbe aprire la finestra? ‘Would you mind opening the window?’ It can also be used in conditional sentences, where the meaning of the main sentence is dependent on some condition being fulfilled: Andrei in vacanza anch’io, se avessi tempo ‘I would go on holiday too if I had the money’.

**Conjunction**

A linking or joining word, usually linking two words, phrases or clauses within a sentence: Marco e Davide ‘Marco and Davide’, con amore ma con disciplina ‘with love but with discipline’, sono andata a letto perché ero stanca ‘I went to bed because I was tired’, i giudici dicono che bisogna cambiare la legge ‘the judges say that the law should be changed’. Conjunctions can either be coordinating, linking two phrases or clauses of equal weight, or subordinating, linking main clause and subordinate clause.

**Countable**

A noun is countable if it can normally be used in both singular and plural, and take the indefinite article un, una (etc.): un bicchiere ‘a glass’, una pizza ‘a pizza’; whereas an uncountable noun is one which is not normally found in plural, for example zucchero ‘sugar’ and abstract nouns such as tristezza ‘sadness’.

**Declension**

This means the way in which nouns and adjectives decline, in other words, change their endings according to whether they are singular or plural, masculine or feminine: un ragazzo ‘a boy’, una ragazza ‘a girl’, due ragazzi ‘two boys’, due ragazze ‘two girls’. This pattern of endings is known as the declension.

**Definite article**: see ARTICLE.

**Demonstrative**

A demonstrative adjective or pronoun is one which demonstrates or indicates the person or object we are talking about: questo carrello ‘this trolley’, quel professore ‘that teacher’, quelle case ‘those houses’.
GLOSSARY

Direct object
A direct object, whether noun or pronoun, is one which is directly affected by the action or event. A direct object can be living or inanimate. It is always used with a transitive verb: 

- **I miei figli hanno mangiato tutti i cioccolatini** ‘my children ate all the chocolates’.
- **Li ho visto in città ieri sera** ‘I saw them in town yesterday evening’.

Feminine: see Gender.

Finite verb
A verb which has a subject and is complete in itself, as opposed to infinitives or participles which have to depend on another verb: 

- **ieri siamo andati in piscina** ‘Yesterday we went to the swimming pool’.
- **Domani i ragazzi torneranno a scuola** ‘Tomorrow the kids will go back to school’.

Gender
All nouns in Italian have a gender: they are either masculine or feminine, even if they are inanimate objects. Even where living beings are concerned, grammatical gender is not always the same as natural gender: 

- **una tigre** ‘a tiger’ (either sex unless specified).
- **un ippopotamo** ‘a hippopotamus’.

Gender is important since it determines the form of noun, the article and adjective.

Gerund
A gerund is a verb form ending in -ando or -endo: **parlando** ‘speaking’, **sorridendo** ‘smiling’, **finendo** ‘finishing’. The gerund is most often used in Italian along with the verb **stare** to express a continuous action or event: 

- **sto finendo** ‘I’m just finishing’.
- **stavano ancora mangiando** ‘they were still eating’.

The nearest equivalent in English is the ‘-ing’ form but it is not used in exactly the same way.

Idiomatic
An idiomatic expression is one which cannot normally be translated literally, for example **ubriaco fradicio**, literally ‘soaking drunk’ but more idiomatically ‘dead drunk’.

Imperative
The imperative mood is the verb mood used to express orders, commands or instructions: 

- **state fermi** ‘keep still’.
- **si accomodi** ‘sit down’.
- **andiamo** ‘let’s go’.

(See also Subjunctive.)

Impersonal (verbs, verb forms)
Impersonal verbs or verb forms do not refer to any one particular person. They can generally be translated by the English ‘it’ form and use the third person form: 

- **Occorre pulire prima la casa** ‘It is necessary to clean the house first’.
- **Non serve protestare** ‘It’s no good protesting’.

These verbs can be personalised by the addition of a personal pronoun, usually the indirect object: 

- **Non mi occorre questo maglione** ‘I don’t need this thick sweater’.

Indefinite article: see Article.

Indefinites
An adjective or pronoun used to refer to a person or thing in a general way, rather than a definite person or thing. Examples are: 

- **alcuni** ‘some’.
- **certi** ‘certain, some’.
- **qualche** ‘some’.

Indicative (verbs)
The verb mood we use most in speaking and writing is the indicative mood. Within this mood are a full range of tenses: 

- present **mangio** ‘I eat’.
- past **ho mangiato** ‘I have eaten’.
- future **mangerò** ‘I will eat’.

The verb mood used to express uncertainty is the subjunctive, which also has a full range of tenses. See Subjunctive.

Indirect object
An indirect object, whether noun or pronoun, is one which is indirectly affected by the action or event. An indirect object can be found with a transitive verb which already has one direct object: 

- **ho mandato delle cartoline ai miei amici** ‘I sent some postcards to my friends’.

It can be used with an intransitive verb which does not take a direct object, in which case it may be found together with a preposition such as 

- **a, da**: Marco telefonava a sua madre ogni sera ‘Marco used to phone his mother every evening’.
GLOSSARY

Infinitive
The infinitive of a verb is the form always given in a dictionary and is recognised by its endings -are, -ere, -ire: for example chiacchiereare ‘to chat’, sorridere ‘to smile’ and partire ‘to leave’. It cannot be used on its own but depends on a finite verb form, often a modal verb: vorrei ringraziare i telespettatori ‘I would like to thank the TV audience’; or else is found linked with a preposition: abbiamo fatto un salto in centro per comprare dei regali ‘we took a quick trip into town to buy some presents’.

Interrogative
Interrogative words are used to ask questions or indirect questions. They include chi ‘who’, come ‘how’, cosa ‘what’, dove ‘where’, quale ‘which’, quando ‘when’, perché ‘why’.

Intransitive (verbs)
See also TRANSITIVE VERBS. Intransitive verbs are verbs which cannot be used with a direct object. Some intransitive verbs can be used with an indirect object: Ho telefonato a Maria Teresa ‘I telephoned (to) Maria Teresa’. Some can only be used without any object: Siamo arrivati alla stazione con un’ora di ritardo ‘we arrived at the station an hour late’. Many of these verbs take the auxiliary essere, but some take avere: Abbiamo camminato molto ‘We walked a lot’. Sometimes a verb which can be used transitively in English (‘to walk the dog’) cannot be used transitively in Italian (camminare). Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively (see TRANSITIVE VERBS).

Invariable
Invariable nouns are nouns that have the same form for both singular and plural: un film, dei film ‘a film, some films’; or for both masculine and feminine: un artista, un’artista ‘an artist’. An invariable adjective is one which does not change form to agree with the noun, whether masculine or feminine, singular or plural: un vestito rosa, una giacca rosa ‘a pink jacket’, dei pantaloni rosa ‘some pink trousers’, delle calze rosa ‘some pink stockings’.

Irregular (noun or verb)
A noun or verb which does not follow one of the standard patterns of forms or endings: un uovo ‘one egg’, due uova ‘two eggs’; andare ‘to go’, vado ‘I go’, vai ‘you go’, va ‘he/she goes’, andiamo ‘we go’, andate ‘you (pl) go, vanno ‘they go’.

Masculine: see GENDER.

Modal verb
A verb which is used with a verb infinitive to modify what is being said: in Italian the modal verbs are potere ‘to be able to’, dovere ‘to have to’, volere ‘to want to’: posso lavorare domani ‘I can work tomorrow’, devo lavorare domani ‘I have to work tomorrow’, voglio lavorare domani ‘I want to work tomorrow’.

Mood
The seven main ways in which verbs can express actions or events are known as mood. The four finite moods – all of which, except the imperative, have a full range of tenses – are the indicative (for example vado ‘I go’), subjunctive (for example che io vada ‘that I may go’), conditional (for example andrei ‘I would go’) and imperative (vada! ‘go!’). The other three moods are: infinitive, gerund, participle.

Negative
A statement is negative when it specifies an action or event which has not taken place or will not take place. Negative words or phrases turn a positive statement or question into a negative one. Examples of negative words in Italian include: nessun ‘no’, nessuno ‘nobody’, niente ‘nothing’, non . . . mai ‘not . . . ever, never’, non . . . ancora ‘not yet’, non . . . più ‘no longer, no more’.

Noun
A noun indicates a person, place, thing, or event, for example Italia ‘Italy’, assistente ‘language assistant’, la festa ‘the party’. Nouns are inextricably linked to the articles (il, un, etc.) and any adjectives that accompany them. All nouns have a gender and this determines the form of the adjectives and articles that go with them.
Number
Number is the distinction between singular and plural. Verb forms alter according to the number of the subject: il ragazzo nuota ‘the boy swims’, i ragazzi nuotano ‘the boys swim’.

Object
In grammatical terms, an object is the person or thing affected by the action or event, as opposed to the subject, which is the person or thing responsible for it. See direct object, indirect object.

Ordinal number
A number which indicates position in a series or sequence, for example primo, secondo, terzo.

Participle (present, past)
Verbs normally have a present participle and a past participle. Unlike other (finite) verb forms, it cannot be used on its own but is found together with other verb forms. The past participle is used with the verb avere or essere to form the passato prossimo tense: Non abbiamo mangiato gli hamburgers ‘We didn’t eat hamburgers’. When used with essere, it agrees with the subject: Nel 2004 siamo andati a Los Angeles ‘In 2004 we went to Los Angeles’. The present participle, less frequently used, changes form when used as an adjective i .  .  .  cantanti.

Partitive article: see article.

Passato prossimo
The passato prossimo is a compound tense formed by participle and auxiliary avere or essere: ho mangiato ‘I ate’, sono andato ‘I went’. It is known in English as the ‘perfect tense’ because it refers to an action which is ‘perfect’ or complete. Its name in Italian suggests that it refers to a recent action or event. In the north of Italy, however, it is used to refer to actions or events further back in the past.

Passato remoto
The passato remoto is a past tense which is simple, not compound (andai rather than sono andato). It is known in English as ‘past definite’, ‘past historic’ or ‘past absolute’. Its name in Italian suggests that it refers to an event far back in the past, but this is not always accurate. In Tuscany and the south of Italy, it is used in spoken Italian to refer also to recent events, which in the north would be referred to using the passato prossimo.

Passive (verb forms)
A passive construction is a sentence in which the subject of the sentence is the person or thing affected by the action or event taking place (as opposed to an active construction where the subject is the person carrying out the action): tutti gli studenti vengono promossi ‘all the students get moved up a class’, il concerto è stato anticipato ‘the concert was put forward’.

Person
The verb subject can be a first person (io ‘I’), second person (tu ‘you’), third person (lui, lei ‘he, she’) and so on. Most verbs have three singular persons (English ‘I, you, he/she’), and three plural (English ‘we, you, they’).

Personal pronouns
See also pronouns. Personal pronouns can be subject pronouns io, tu, lui ‘I, you, he’ etc.; direct object pronouns mi, ti, lo, la ‘me, you, him, her’ etc.; indirect object pronouns mi, ti, gli, le ‘to me, to you, to him, to her’ etc.; disjunctive pronouns, used as stressed direct object or after a preposition (con) me, te, lui, lei ‘(with) me, you, him, her’ etc.

Plural: see number.

Possessive
Possessive adjectives and/or pronouns denote ownership: il mio orologio ‘my watch’, la nostra macchina ‘our car’.

Preposition
A word that introduces further information about a person, action or event, for example information about time or place, value or purpose: ci siamo sposati nel 1975 ‘we got married in 1975’, sono nata a Milano ‘I was born in Milan’, una macchina da caffè ‘a coffee machine’,
un francobollo *da 2 euro* ‘a two euro stamp’, *siamo venuti per imparare l’italiano* ‘we came to learn Italian’.

**Pronoun**
A word which stands in for and/or refers to a noun. There are various categories of pronoun: demonstrative, such as *Hai visto quello?* ‘Have you seen that man?’; indefinite, such as *alcuni* ‘a few people’; interrogative, such as *Chi?* ‘Who?’; personal, such as *io* ‘I’, *noi* ‘we, us’, *lo* ‘it’; possessive, such as *il mio* ‘my, mine’, *i suoi* ‘his, hers’ (masc pl form); reflexive, such as *mi, ti, si* ‘myself, yourself, himself/herself’; relative, such as *quello che* ‘the one who’.

**Question**
Direct questions sometimes begin with a question word: *Dove vai stasera?* ‘Where are you going this evening?’; but sometimes not: *Hai tempo di parlarmi?* ‘Do you have time to speak to me?’ Indirect questions are introduced by words such as *chiedere* ‘to ask’: *Mi ha chiesto se avevo tempo di parlargli* ‘He asked me if I had time to speak to him’.

**Reflexive verb**
A verb that can be used with a reflexive pronoun, equivalent of English ‘myself, himself’, indicating that the subject and the object are one and the same: *mi lavo* ‘I wash’, *si è fatto male* ‘he hurt himself’. Sometimes the verb can only be used reflexively, and no object is actually present: *Molte volte i drogati si vergognano di quello che fanno* ‘Often drug addicts are ashamed of what they do’.

**Regular**
A regular noun or verb is one which follows one of the main noun or verb patterns, in other words whose forms and endings can be predicted, for example *-are, parlare* ‘to speak’, *-ere, sorridere* ‘to smile’ *-ire, partire* ‘to leave’.

**Relative**
A relative pronoun introduces a relative clause, which gives more information about a person or thing mentioned specifically, or even an event referred to: *ho visto la studentessa che veniva sempre nel mio ufficio* ‘I saw the student who was always coming to my office’, *è andato alla discoteca senza chiedere il permesso, ciò che mi ha fatto arrabbiare* ‘he went to the disco without asking permission, which made me angry’.

**Reported speech**
Also known as indirect speech, this is a way of relating words spoken or written by someone else. Reported speech is usually introduced by verbs such as *dire* ‘to say, to tell’, *scrivere* ‘to write’, *annunciare* ‘to announce’, and the conjunction *che*: *i giornali annunciano che i soldati hanno massacratomigliaia di bambini* ‘the newspapers say that the soldiers have massacred thousands of children’.

**Sentence**
A sentence must have a verb and a subject. It can either be a simple sentence (one subject, one verb): *gli ospiti dormivano* ‘the guests were asleep’; or a complex sentence (main clause and one or more subordinate clauses): *mentre dormivano, i ladri hanno portato via tutto* ‘while they were asleep, the thieves took everything’.

**Simple tenses**
Verb tenses which are formed of one word only. See also **compound tenses**.

**Singular**: see **number**.

**Stem**: see **verb stem**.

**Subject**
The subject is usually a noun, pronoun or proper name denoting the person or object performing the action or the event taking place: *mia madre ha comprato un tailleur* ‘my mother bought a suit’, *la festa si svolge a maggio* ‘the festival takes place in May’. In the case of a passive construction, the subject is the person or thing affected by the action: *gli studenti sono stati criticati dagli insegnanti* ‘the students were criticised by their teachers’. With Italian verbs, it
is not always essential to have a subject mentioned since it is understood from the verb form: *abbiamo mangiato a mezzogiorno* ‘we ate at midday’.

**Subjunctive**
The subjunctive mood is used to express doubt or uncertainty. It is almost always used in complex sentences where one clause depends on another: *Abbiamo comprato un cagnolino in modo che i bambini imparino a prendere cura degli animali* ‘We bought a puppy so that the children can learn how to look after animals’; or where the subjunctive clause depends on a main verb expressing uncertainty: *Dubito che lui possa farcela* ‘I doubt if he can manage it’. However it can be found standing on its own, when used as an imperative form: *Vada via!* ‘Go away!*

**Subordinate (clauses)**
See *conjunction*. A subordinate clause is one which depends on another clause, usually the main clause in a sentence. It can be introduced by a conjunction such as *che* ‘what’, *perché* ‘because’, or a relative pronoun such as *che* ‘who, which’. (See *clauses.*)

**Superlative**
(See also *comparative*). When one or more persons, objects or activities are compared with others, or a comparison is implied, a superlative form is used to express the one which is superior to all the rest: *La casa della mia amica Matilde era la più grande del paese* ‘My friend Matilde’s house was the biggest in the village’, *Abbiamo fatto il meglio possibile* ‘We did as well as we could’.

**Tense**
A finite verb form which normally provides a clue as to the time setting (present, past, future) for an action or event: *andremo a New York* ‘we will go to New York’, *i miei amici ci sono stati* ‘my friends have been there’. Occasionally the grammatical verb tense does not correspond to the time setting, for example the future can be used for a present time setting: *Sono le 4.00. Mio marito sarà già a Palermo* ‘It’s 4 o’clock. My husband will be at Palermo by now’; and the imperfect can be used to express a polite request: *Volevo un francobollo da 2 euro* ‘I wanted a 2 euro stamp’.

**Transitive verbs**
Transitive verbs are verbs which *can* always be used transitively, in other words with a direct object: *ho fumato una sigaretta* ‘I smoked a cigarette’. Sometimes no object is used: *ho fumato* ‘I smoked’; but the verb is still a transitive verb since it can – and often does – take an object. Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, for example *aumentare* ‘to increase’, *diminuire* ‘to decrease’, *cambiare* ‘to change’: *abbiamo aumentato il prezzo del biglietto* ‘we have increased the price of the ticket’, *il prezzo del biglietto è aumentato* ‘the price of the ticket has increased’.

**Verb**
A verb describes an action, event or state. It always has a subject and can also have an object. Its form varies according to mood and tense, and the person, gender and number of its subject.

**Verb stem**
The stem of a verb is its ‘base’, the part of the verb which is left when you take away -*are*, -*ere*, -*ire* from the infinitive form. In a regular verb the ending changes but the stem does not normally change. In an irregular verb, the stem may change too.

**Voice**
Verbs normally have two voices: *active* and *passive*. 
Part A

Structures
The noun group

1.1 Introduction

Nouns are generally used together with definite or indefinite articles (in English the, a) and/or adjectives (describing physical or other characteristics), which provide information about the entity or concept. Together they form a group of words called the noun group as in the two examples shown below:

- **una** (article) **grande** (adjective) **casa** (noun) a big house
- **la** (article) **ragazza** (noun) **inglese** (adjective) the English girl

Although the noun group may contain other elements (for example, adverbs, prepositional phrases), in this chapter we will only look at the three basic elements of noun/article/adjective, analysing them one by one. In Italian the three components of the noun group also have to be considered as a ‘whole’, in which the three components ‘agree’, so we will also look at how the three elements are used together.

1.2 The noun

1.2.1 What is a noun?

The main function of nouns in any language is to denote an entity (person, object, etc.) or concept (situation, abstract idea, etc.). The noun is the focus of the noun group, so the article and adjectives always agree with the noun in gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural). The two grammatical features of gender and number determine the form of noun, article and adjective.

1.2.2 Gender

All Italian nouns have either a masculine or a feminine gender. Gender is a purely grammatical term. Nouns referring to human beings or animals sometimes have the same grammatical gender as their natural gender, but not always (see below). Italian native speakers rarely find this a problem. However speakers of other languages often find it difficult to remember the gender of nouns and this creates a problem when it comes to making the other components of the noun group ‘agree’ with the noun.

With non-animate objects, there is not always an obvious explanation for their gender. Why, for example, should **sera** ‘evening’ be feminine, while **giorno** ‘day’ is masculine? Learners of Italian either have to learn and memorise the genders of words or consult a dictionary. Italian dictionaries usually indicate the gender of nouns with abbreviations such as s.m. (sostantivo maschile) and s.f. (sostantivo femminile).
Grammatically speaking, Italian does not always have a male and a female of each animal species, for example:

- **una tigre** (tiger) is always feminine.
- **un ippopotamo** (hippopotamus) is always masculine.

In order to provide the other half of the species, you have to say:

- **una tigre maschio** a male tiger
- **un ippopotamo femmina** a female hippopotamus

Some animals – as in English – have two distinct names for the male and the female of the species:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine noun</th>
<th>feminine noun</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un cane</td>
<td>una cagna</td>
<td>dog, bitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un gallo</td>
<td>una gallina</td>
<td>cock, hen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some, but not all, professional and other titles may have a distinct form for the feminine. Nouns whose masculine form ends in -e have a feminine form ending either in -a or in -essa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine noun</th>
<th>feminine noun</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cameriere</td>
<td>cameriera</td>
<td>waiter/waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infermiere</td>
<td>infermiera</td>
<td>nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padrone</td>
<td>padrona</td>
<td>master/mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barone</td>
<td>baronessa</td>
<td>baron/baroness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conte</td>
<td>contessa</td>
<td>count/countess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presidente</td>
<td>presidentessa</td>
<td>president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principe</td>
<td>principessa</td>
<td>prince/princess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studente</td>
<td>studentessa</td>
<td>student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most nouns with masculine form ending in -tore have a feminine form ending in -trice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine noun</th>
<th>feminine noun</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ambasciatore</td>
<td>ambasciatrice</td>
<td>ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attore</td>
<td>attrice</td>
<td>actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autore</td>
<td>autrice</td>
<td>author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direttore</td>
<td>direttrice</td>
<td>director, manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperatore</td>
<td>imperatrice</td>
<td>emperor/empress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pittore</td>
<td>pittrice</td>
<td>painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scultore</td>
<td>scultrice</td>
<td>sculptor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrittore</td>
<td>scrivitrice</td>
<td>writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senatore</td>
<td>senatrice</td>
<td>senator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But note the following masculine nouns with a feminine equivalent ending in -essa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine noun</th>
<th>feminine noun</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dottore</td>
<td>dottoressa</td>
<td>doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professore</td>
<td>professoresse</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of the masculine/feminine forms of professional titles is fully illustrated in 20.9.

### Number

Unlike gender, the grammatical concept of singular or plural (‘number’) causes no problem for speakers of English. Occasionally (as in English) a singular noun is used to refer to a collective entity that one might expect to be grammatically plural, for example, **la gente** ‘people’. On the other hand, some objects that are singular in English may be plural in Italian, for example, **i capelli** ‘hair’ and most types of pasta: **i cannelloni, le lasagne, gli spaghetti, le tagliatelle, i tortellini**, which an English speaker would refer to in the singular (‘This spaghetti is delicious’).

### Common noun patterns

The gender and number determine the ending of the noun. These patterns of endings are called *inflexions*. Italian nouns can be divided into several different groups, according to their patterns
THE NOUN GROUP

of inflexion. The three most common patterns, also followed by most adjectives (see 1.4 below), are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>-o</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine or feminine</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE Nouns ending in -e in the singular, -i in the plural, have the same ending whatever their gender.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender ending in -o</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tavolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>albero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sbaglio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender ending in -a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>donna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scuola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender ending in -e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>padre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bicchiere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender ending in -e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>madre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occasione</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some nouns, while still following these patterns, present slight variations in their plural endings, as shown below.

Masculine nouns ending in -io

In the plural, nouns ending in -io sometimes double the final i. Here are some guidelines to help you.

When the i is stressed, the plural form has double ii:

ziò uncle zii
rinviò postponement rinviì

When the i is unstressed, the final i does not double in the plural:

studio study studi

In words where the i is not doubled, the final i may have a written accent on it, indicating where the stress lies, to distinguish it from a similar plural form with a different pronunciation:

principio principle principi or principi
(principe prince principi)
The noun

**Tempio** (temple) also has an alternative plural ending which distinguishes it from the plural of **tempo** (time):

| noun | word | stress
| --- | --- | ---
| tempio | temple | tempî or templî
| tempo | time | tempî

(In the following sets of examples, the written accent is only there to demonstrate where the stress falls.)

**Masculine nouns ending in -co, -go**

Masculine nouns ending in -co or -go in the singular normally form the plural as follows:

- in -chi and -ghi, with the hard c, g sound, if the stress falls on the penultimate syllable:
  
  | singular | plural | meaning
  | --- | --- | ---
  | fuoco | fuochi | fire
  | ago | aghi | needle
  | buco | buchi | hole
  | albergo | alberghi | hotel
  | sacco | sacchi | sack
  | sugo | sughi | sauce

This also applies to a few nouns where the stress does not fall on the penultimate syllable, for example:

| singular | plural | meaning
| --- | --- | ---
| catàlogo | catàloghi | catalogue
| diàlogo | diàloghi | dialogue

- in -ci and -gi, with a soft c, g sound, if the stress falls on the third last syllable (the written accent is only there to demonstrate where the stress falls):

  | singular | plural | meaning
  | --- | --- | ---
  | mèdico | mèdici | doctor
  | aspàrago | aspàragi | asparagus
  | mònaco | mònaci | monk
  | biòlogo | biòlogi | biologist

This also applies to a few nouns where the stress falls on the penultimate syllable, for example:

| singular | plural | meaning
| --- | --- | ---
| amico | amici | friend
| nemico | nemici | enemy
| greco | greci | Greek

**Masculine and feminine nouns ending in -ca, -ga**

Feminine nouns ending in -ca, -ga form their plural in -che, -ghe, with a hard c, g sound:

| singular | plural | meaning
| --- | --- | ---
| amica | amiche | friend
| lega | leghe | league

In 1.2.5 below, we look at nouns ending in -a, which can refer to either men or women. If these nouns end in -ca or -ga, they normally form their plural in -chi, -ghi for male and -che, -ghe for female:

| singular | plural | meaning
| --- | --- | ---
| collega | colleghe (f.) | colleague

But note this variation:

| singular | plural | meaning
| --- | --- | ---
| belga | belgi (m.) belgh (f.) | Belgian

**Feminine nouns ending in -cia, -gia**

Feminine nouns ending in -cia, -gia form their plural as follows:

- in -cie, -gie when the stress falls on the i (as indicated in the examples below), and when the last syllable is preceded by a vowel:
THE NOUN GROUP

1.2

farmaça  farmacie  pharmacy
bugia   bugie  lie
camìcia  camìcie  shirt
ciliègia  ciliègie  cherry
acàcia  acàcie  acacia
valigia  valigie  suitcase

- in -ce, -ge when the ending is preceded by a consonant:
  arànça  arànce  orange
  spiàggia  spiàgge  beach
  provìnzia  province  province
  frangia  frange  fringe
  faccia  facce  face
  pioggia  piogge  rain

Learners often pronounce the endings above incorrectly. The pronunciation of -cia is like the ‘cha’ in English ‘charm’, -gia is like the ‘ja’ in ‘jacket’, -cie like the ‘chai’ in ‘chair’, -gie like the ‘jay’ in ‘jaywalker’. There is absolutely no difference in pronunciation between the -cie of camìcie and the -ce of arance. The i is only pronounced and given its full value as a syllable when it is stressed as in farmacie and bugie.

1.2.5 Other noun patterns

A large number of Italian nouns do not follow the patterns shown above. Here are some other noun patterns.

**Masculine or feminine nouns with singular ending in -a**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular -a (m. or f.)</th>
<th>Plural -i (m.)</th>
<th>Plural -e (f.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>atleta  (m. or f.)</td>
<td>athlete</td>
<td>atleti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artista</td>
<td>artist</td>
<td>artisti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autista</td>
<td>driver</td>
<td>autisti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giornalista</td>
<td>journalist</td>
<td>giornalisti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nouns in the above group refer to categories of people. The singular ending -a is used whether they are male or female, but the plural form is different according to the ‘natural’ gender. A very large number of these nouns end in -ista (English ‘-ist’) indicating an ideology (socialista, marxista), profession (dentista, giornalista), musician (chitarrista, pianista, violinista) or sport (ciclista, tennista). See also nouns ending in -ca, -ga in 1.2.4 above.

**Masculine nouns with singular ending in -a**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular -a (m.)</th>
<th>Plural -i (m.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monarca</td>
<td>monarch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poeta</td>
<td>poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problema</td>
<td>problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programma</td>
<td>programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sistema</td>
<td>system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa</td>
<td>Pope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pattern is similar to that of masculine and feminine nouns ending in -a shown above, but only has masculine forms in both singular and plural.

**Feminine nouns with singular ending in -o, plural in -i**

The two nouns shown below are both feminine in the singular, but have different genders in the plural: mani is feminine, while echi is masculine:
The noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mano (f.)</td>
<td>mani (f.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eco (f.)</td>
<td>echi (m.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See 1.2.6 for invariable feminine nouns ending in -o.

Nouns with masculine singular in -o, feminine plural in -a

A number of nouns which are masculine in the singular become feminine in the plural, with an irregular ending in -a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular (m.)</th>
<th>Plural (f.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uovo</td>
<td>uova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miglio</td>
<td>miglia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paio</td>
<td>paia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nouns with masculine singular in -o, masculine plural in -i and feminine plural in -a

Some nouns which are masculine in the singular have both regular masculine plural in -i and irregular feminine plural in -a. Many of these denote parts of the body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular (m.)</th>
<th>Plural in -i (m.)</th>
<th>Plural in -a (f.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dito</td>
<td>diti</td>
<td>dita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>braccio</td>
<td>bracci</td>
<td>braccia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ginocchio</td>
<td>ginocchi</td>
<td>ginocchia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labbro</td>
<td>labbrì</td>
<td>labbra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>osso</td>
<td>ossì</td>
<td>ossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesto</td>
<td>gestì</td>
<td>gesta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lenzuolo</td>
<td>lenzuolì</td>
<td>lenzuola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muro</td>
<td>muri</td>
<td>mura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urlò</td>
<td>urlì</td>
<td>urla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are differences in the meaning of the two different plurals: the -a plural generally emphasises the collective nature of the plural, while the -i ending tends to denote either a more figurative sense or the plural as a collection of separate and/or individual elements.

For example, le dita are the fingers of your hand, when talked about collectively (ho le dita gelate ‘my fingers are frozen’), while i diti are the fingers considered individually or separately (ho due diti rotti ‘I have two broken fingers’). Le mura are the walls of a city (Lucca è una città circondata da mura romane ‘Lucca is a city surrounded by Roman walls’), while i muri refer to all other kinds of walls. Le ossa is the plural form normally used when talking about the skeletal system (mi fanno male le ossa ‘my bones ache’), while the masculine plural gli ossi is used when talking about separate bones, for example broken bones or dog bones (ho dato due ossi al cane ‘I gave the dog two bones’).

Invariable nouns

Invariable nouns have the same form in the plural as in the singular. These include the following groups.

Nouns with stress falling on last syllable

With few exceptions, these are feminine in gender, coming from an older form of the word, of Latin origin, ending in -tate (civitate, libertate), now abbreviated and ending in -tà:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>città</td>
<td>città</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>università</td>
<td>università</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>libertà</td>
<td>libertà</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caffè</td>
<td>caffè</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feminine nouns ending in -i

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>crisi</td>
<td>crisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ipotesi</td>
<td>ipotesi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analisi</td>
<td>analisi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feminine nouns ending in -ie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>serie</td>
<td>serie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specie</td>
<td>specie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But note:

| moglie | mogli |

Feminine nouns with abbreviated singular

These end mainly in -o and are usually abbreviations, derived from longer or compound words (automobile > auto, fotografia > foto):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>auto</td>
<td>auto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moto</td>
<td>moto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio</td>
<td>radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foto</td>
<td>foto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bici</td>
<td>bici</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nouns of one syllable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>re</td>
<td>gru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words borrowed from another language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bar, café</td>
<td>reclame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport</td>
<td>gaffe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>film</td>
<td>brioche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reclame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaffe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brioche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember not to add -s in the plural (il film – i film).

Nouns with extremely irregular plurals

Here are a few nouns whose plural forms are extremely irregular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uomo</td>
<td>ala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dio</td>
<td>arma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uomini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 The article

What is an article?
There are two main types of article in Italian, as there are in English: the indefinite article (articolo indeterminativo) and the definite article (articolo determinativo). They distinguish the generic from the specific, the known from the unknown (see also 9.2):

**In giardino c’è un cane.**
There is a dog in the garden. (*unknown dog – indefinite article*)

**In giardino c’è il cane.**
There is the dog in the garden. (*your own dog or a dog you know about – definite article*)

In Italian the form of the article (whether definite or indefinite) has to agree with the gender and number of the noun it relates to, but also depends on the initial letter of the word immediately following it, whether noun or adjective. This rule applies also to a third type of article, the partitive article.

1.3.2 Indefinite article *un, uno, una, un’*
Indefinite articles only apply to singular nouns and therefore only have singular forms. The form of the indefinite article varies according to the gender of the noun it relates to, but also whether it comes immediately before a word beginning with a vowel, a consonant or a certain combination of consonants, as shown below.

**Masculine nouns**
The correct form of indefinite article before a vowel or most consonants is **un**:

- un espresso — an espresso
- un telefono — a telephone
- un nuovo studente — a new student

The correct form of indefinite article before a word starting with *s* + a consonant, *gn, pn, ps, x, z* and the semivowel *i* (*j, y*) is **uno**:

- uno studente — a student
- uno stupido errore — a stupid mistake
- uno gnomos — a gnome
- uno pneumatico — a tyre
- uno psichiatra — a psychiatrist
- uno xenofobo — a xenophobe (someone who hates foreigners)
- uno zoo — a zoo
- uno yogurt — a yogurt

**Feminine nouns**
The correct form of indefinite article before a word starting with a consonant is **una**:

- una bottiglia — a bottle
- una spremuta — a fresh fruit juice
- una grande aranciata — a large orangeade

Before a word starting with a vowel (*a, e, i, o, u*), the indefinite article **una** is elided to **un’**:

- un’aranciata — an orangeade
- un’ampia distesa di neve — a wide expanse of snow
Here are all the indefinite articles shown in table form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>un</strong></td>
<td><strong>una</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before a vowel or most consonants</td>
<td>before a consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>uno</strong></td>
<td><strong>un’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before <em>s</em> + consonant, <em>gn, pn, ps, x, z</em> and semivowel <em>i (j, y)</em></td>
<td>before a vowel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Masculine nouns (singular)**

The correct form of definite article before a word beginning with a consonant is *il* (but there are exceptions – see below):

- *il cantante* the singer
- *il famoso albergo* the famous hotel

The correct form of definite article before a word starting with *s* + a consonant, *gn, pn, ps, x, z* and semivowel *i (j, y)* is *lo*:

- *lo strano inglese* the strange Englishman
- *lo Ionio* the Ionian (sea)
- *lo yogurt* the yogurt

The correct form of definite article before a word starting with a vowel is *l’*:

- *l’albergo* the hotel
- *l’insegnante* the teacher (*male*)
- *l’incauto atto* the incautious act

**Masculine nouns (plural)**

The correct form of definite article before most consonants is *i*:

- *i ragazzi italiani* the Italian boys
- *i fiori bianchi e rossi* the white and red flowers

The correct form of definite article before a word beginning with a vowel or with *s* + a consonant, *gn, pn, ps, x, z* and semivowel *i (j, y)* is *gli*:

- *gli alberghi a cinque stelle* the five star hotels
- *gli stranieri* the foreigners
- *gli zii americani* the American uncles
- *gli yacht* the yachts
Feminine nouns (singular)
The correct form of definite article before a word beginning with a consonant is **la**:

- *la cioccolata calda*  
  the hot chocolate
- *la spremuta*  
  the fresh fruit juice

The correct form of definite article before a word beginning with a vowel is **l’**:

- *l’aranciata*  
  the orangeade
- *l’insegnante*  
  the teacher (*female*)

Feminine nouns (plural)
The correct form of definite article before a word beginning with either vowel or consonant is **le**, which is *never* abbreviated:

- *le automobili bianche*  
  the white cars
- *le studentesse*  
  the students (*female*)

Here are all the definite articles shown in table form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine singular</th>
<th>Masculine plural</th>
<th>Feminine singular</th>
<th>Feminine plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>il</strong></td>
<td><strong>i</strong></td>
<td><strong>la</strong></td>
<td><strong>le</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before most consonants</td>
<td>before most consonants</td>
<td>before consonant</td>
<td>before consonant or vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before s + consonant, gn, pn, ps, x, z and semivowel i (j, y)</td>
<td>before a vowel and before s + consonant, gn, pn, ps, x, z and semivowel i (j, y)</td>
<td>before vowel</td>
<td>before vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>il ragazzo</strong></td>
<td><strong>i ragazzi</strong></td>
<td><strong>la ragazza</strong></td>
<td><strong>le ragazze</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo sbaglio</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli spagetti</strong></td>
<td><strong>la bella insegnante</strong></td>
<td><strong>le studentesse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo gnomo</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli gnochhi</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’autmobile</strong></td>
<td><strong>le automobili</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo pneumatico</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli pneumatici</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’eccellente cena</strong></td>
<td><strong>le belle automobili</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo psicologo</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli psicologi</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’albergo</strong></td>
<td><strong>l’albergo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo xilofono</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli xilofoni</strong></td>
<td><strong>lo yogurt</strong></td>
<td><strong>lo yogurt</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo zoo</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli xenofobi</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lo yogurt</strong></td>
<td><strong>gli yogurt</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partitive article *dei, degli, delle*

The *partitive* article indicates some *part* (an unspecified number) of a group or category of things/people; it is formed by the preposition **di** combined with the *definite article* and, following a similar pattern, changes according to gender, number and the word that follows.

A partitive article can be used in the plural, indicating ‘some’:

- **Vorrei dei biscotti.**  
  I’d like some biscuits.
- **Vorrei delle lasagne.**  
  I’d like some lasagne.

A partitive article can also be used in the singular, indicating a quantity of something or else an abstract concept:
1.3

Use of definite, indefinite or partitive articles

The use of the definite, indefinite or partitive article depends on whether the person or object is known or unknown, or whether an individual or class/species is being referred to, as in the examples below.

- A particular, clearly identified thing or things, known or visible to the speaker and to the person(s) addressed (definite article):

  Dammi gli stuzzicadenti.
  Give me the toothpicks.

- Referring to any toothpicks, without reference to a particular or known set, using partitive article:

  Dammi degli stuzzicadenti.
  Give me some toothpicks.

Known or unknown, specified or unspecified

(a) The **definite** article is used to specify known people or things:

  **Flavia vuole portare l’amico alla festa.**
  Flavia wants to take her friend to the party. (= particular friend or boyfriend)

  **Vorrei la camera che abbiamo avuto l’anno scorso.**
  I would like the room we had last year. (= specific room)

(b) The **indefinite** article is used, as in English, for an unknown or unspecified individual or thing:

  **Flavia vuole portare un amico alla festa.**
  Flavia wants to take a friend to the party. (= an unspecified friend)

  **Vorrei una camera per stasera, per favore.**
  I would like a room for tonight. (= any old room, unspecified)
Individual or class/species
(a) The *definite* article is used when you want to identify a whole class, category or species of things or creatures, distinct from other species or categories, for example an animal species or a category of films:

*Il delfino è un mammifero.*
   The dolphin is a mammal. (= dolphins are mammals)

*Mi piacciono i film americani.*
   I like American films.

Italian usage is different from English, which uses the definite article ‘the’ in the singular (‘the dolphin’) but not in the plural (‘dolphins’).

(b) The *indefinite* article is used to talk about an individual dolphin or film (unless it is a particular dolphin or film known to us):

*Guarda! C’è un delfino!*
   Look! There is a dolphin!

*Ho visto un bel film americano alla televisione.*
   I’ve seen a nice American film on television.

These are only general guidelines. In many cases the use or omission of the article depends on different linguistic habits.

Some particular uses of the definite article

Towns, countries and geographical features
In Italian the definite article is always used with the proper names of geographical features such as mountains, rivers, etc.:

*le Alpi, gli Appennini* the Alps, the Appenines

*il Tamigi, la Senna* the Thames, the Seine

but *not* with the names of cities:

*Firenze* Florence

*Londra* London

except when qualified in some way:

*la Firenze del Settecento*
   eighteenth-century Florence

The definite article is used with the names of countries or nations:

*Amo l’Italia.*
   I love Italy.

*Il Brasile è campione del mondo.*
   Brazil is world champion.

To talk about living in or going to a country, using the preposition *in*, the definite article is not normally used:

*Vivo in Italia.* I live in Italy.

*Andiamo in Spagna.* We go to Spain.

*Vivo in Brasile* I live in Brazil.

unless the country is qualified in some way, for example by an adjective:

*Si vive meglio nell’Italia meridionale.*
   One lives better in southern Italy.

The combined form of preposition and definite article is usually used when the name of the country is plural:

*Vivo negli Stati Uniti.* I live in the USA.
THE NOUN GROUP

For the combined forms of the definite article with the prepositions in, a, etc., see 4.2.

Professions
When speaking of somebody’s profession, you should use the article with fare:

Faccio l’ingegnere. I am an engineer.

but omit it with essere:

Sono ingegnere. I am an engineer.

► See also 8.3.3 and 8.3.4 for further examples of these points.

We can summarise these patterns as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class/group/species</td>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>Il cavallo è un animale docile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual member of class</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>Ho comprato un cavallo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known</td>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>Il mio cavallo si chiama Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>C’è un cavallo nel campo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adjective

What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that qualifies the meaning of a noun by adding some specification or description to it. There are many different categories of adjective including demonstrative (questo, quello), indefinite (alcuni, qualche) including adjectives of quantity (molto, poco, tanto, troppo), interrogative (quale), negative (nessun), and possessive (mio, tuo).

In this section however we only cover aggettivi qualificativi: descriptive adjectives that describe qualities (physical or otherwise) of a person or object, and classifying adjectives, such as nationality, which describe the category or classification that the person or thing belongs to (see also Chapter 10). The other types of adjectives will be shown in Chapter 3, together with the corresponding pronouns.

Common adjective patterns

Almost all descriptive adjectives follow the same basic patterns as the nouns (see 1.2.4 above), with their endings depending on gender (masculine/feminine) and number (singular/plural). There are two main groups of adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>ending in -o / -a</th>
<th>ending in -o / -a</th>
<th>ending in -e</th>
<th>ending in -e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>-o</td>
<td>-i</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>-i</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Masculine

Feminine

Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>ending in -o / -a</th>
<th>ending in -o / -a</th>
<th>ending in -e</th>
<th>ending in -e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>piccolo</td>
<td>piccoli</td>
<td>grande</td>
<td>grandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>piccola</td>
<td>piccole</td>
<td>grande</td>
<td>grandi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The adjective

The gender and number of the adjective must agree with the noun to which it refers (see 1.2.2 and 1.2.3). Here are some examples of how this looks in practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine (-o)</td>
<td>libro piccolo</td>
<td>libri piccoli</td>
<td>libro grande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine (-e)</td>
<td>balcone piccolo</td>
<td>balconi piccoli</td>
<td>balcone grande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine (-a)</td>
<td>penna piccola</td>
<td>penne piccole</td>
<td>penna grande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine (-e)</td>
<td>stazione piccola</td>
<td>stazioni piccole</td>
<td>stazione grande</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4.3 Exceptions to these patterns

Only a few descriptive adjectives have a different pattern from those shown above. Adjectives with singular -a (for both masculine and feminine) have masculine plural in -i and feminine plural in -e. Many of these have endings such as -ista, -asta, -ita, -ida, -ota (for nouns with similar endings, see 1.2.5 above):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine/feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socialista</td>
<td>socialisti</td>
<td>socialiste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entusiasta</td>
<td>entusiasti</td>
<td>entusiaste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ipocrita</td>
<td>ipocriti</td>
<td>ipocrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suicida</td>
<td>suicidi</td>
<td>suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idiota</td>
<td>idioti</td>
<td>idiole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il partito socialista</td>
<td>I paesi socialisti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La bandiera socialista</td>
<td>Le idee socialiste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4.4 Invariable adjectives

Invariable adjectives have the same ending, whatever their gender and number, and retain the same form whatever noun they are referring to. The most common invariable adjectives are:

• Certain colours: beige, blu, lilla, marrone, rosa, viola:
  
  un pantalone blu  |  navy trousers |
  una gonna beige  |  a beige skirt |
  una giacca lilla |  a lilac jacket |
  i sandali rosa  |  pink sandals |
  le scarpe marrone |  brown shoes |

• Colours indicated by two words: verde bottiglia, giallo canarino, bianco latte:
  
  camicia verde bottiglia | bottle green shirt |
  pantaloni giallo canarino | canary yellow trousers |
  lampadine bianco latte | milk white light bulbs |

• Pari ‘even, equal’, dispari ‘odd’ and impari ‘uneven, unequal’:
  
  numero pari | even number |
  carte dispari | odd-numbered playing cards |
  pari condizioni | equal conditions |
  una lotta impari | an unequal struggle |

• Arrosto (roast):
  
  pollo arrosto | roast chicken |
  patate arrosto | roast potatoes |
  carne arrosto | roast meat |
1.4.5 Position of adjectives

Unlike English, and many other languages, the most common position for the adjective in the Italian noun group is after the noun. This is the usual position occupied by the adjective, when it is not emphatic and simply expresses a basic, intrinsic characteristic of the noun:

- Ho visto un film interessante  
  I saw an interesting film
- Abbiamo visitato una città storica  
  We visited a historic city

Adjectives of shape, colour and nationality almost always come after the noun. Note that adjectives of nationality never have a capital letter in Italian:

- una tavola rotonda  
  a round table
- una maglia bianca  
  a white sweater
- uno studente francese  
  a French student

There are a few exceptions, for idiomatic phrases:

- un bianco Natale  
  a white Christmas

Adjectives qualified, for example by an adverb or a prepositional phrase, also come after:

- una persona enormemente simpatica  
  a really nice person
- un viaggio pieno di problemi  
  a journey full of problems

As do participles used as adjectives:

- le mele cotte  
  cooked apples
- le patate fritte  
  fried potatoes

However in Italian, unlike in English, where adjectives almost always come before the noun (‘an interesting film’), the order of the noun group is flexible, and changing the position of the adjectives can change the emphasis of the sentence.

Although Italian descriptive adjectives, particularly the most common (for example, nuovo, vecchio, giovane, piccolo, bello, brutto), are placed after the noun when used to specify it or distinguish it from similar objects, they can be placed before the noun when you need to change the emphasis:

- Dammi il cacciavite piccolo.  
  Give me the small screwdriver. (not the big one)
- Sul tavolo c’era un piccolo cacciavite.  
  There was a small screwdriver on the table. (description of screwdriver)
- Sandra è una ragazza bella.  
  Sandra is a beautiful girl. (not merely nice)
- Sandra è una bella ragazza.  
  Sandra is a really beautiful girl.
- Ho comprato una macchina nuova.  
  I bought a new car. (rather than a second-hand one)
- Paola si è messa un nuovo vestito.  
  Paola put on a new dress. (another, a different one)

Some adjectives have a completely different meaning when their position is changed, expressing their literal meaning when used after, but a quite different, often figurative, meaning when used before. Here we look at alto, bello, certo, grande and povero:

- un film bello  
  a nice film
- un bel problema  
  a pretty difficult problem
- un ufficiale alto  
  a tall officer
- un alto ufficiale  
  a high-ranking officer
- un uomo grande  
  a big man (for example, Pavarotti)
- un grande uomo  
  a great man (for example, Napoleon)
The adjective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ci sono molti studenti poveri.</td>
<td>There are many poor students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poveri studenti! L'esame sarà duro!</td>
<td>Poor students! The exam will be hard!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferisco avere regole certe.</td>
<td>I prefer to have reliable rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non capisco certe regole.</td>
<td>I don’t understand certain (some) rules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bello, buono

The adjective bello, when positioned before the noun (see example above, un bel problema), changes its endings in the same way as the definite article il, lo, l’, la, etc. (see 1.3.3), the partitive article del, dello, dell’, della (see 1.3.4) and the demonstrative adjective quel, quello, quell’, quella, etc. (see 3.8.1): un bel libro, un bello specchio, un bell’uomo, una bell’esperienza, una bella ragazza.

The adjective buono, on the other hand, follows the pattern of the indefinite article un, uno, una, un’ (see 1.3.2): buon esempio, buon film, buono studio, buona fortuna, buon’esperienza, etc.

Comparative adjectives

Più, meno

In making a comparison between two elements (whether people, objects or other), you can use a comparative adjective to express the concept of ‘more’ or ‘less’. The words più (‘more’) and meno (‘less’) make a descriptive adjective into a comparative adjective:

- La mia macchina è più veloce della tua.
  My car is faster than yours.
- La mia macchina è meno veloce della tua.
  My car is less fast than yours.

Quanto, come

The concept of ‘same as’ is expressed by using quanto or come to introduce the second element of the comparison:

- La mia macchina è veloce quanto la tua.
  My car is as fast as yours.
- In Italia le melanzane non sono care come in Inghilterra.
  In Italy aubergines are not as dear as in England.

As a reinforcement, you can also use the words tanto, altrettanto or così before the first element of the comparison:

- La mia collega è tanto carina quanto efficiente.
  My colleague is as pretty as she is efficient.

Di, che

Either di or che introduces the second element of the comparison, where English would use ‘than’:

- Sandro è più bravo di Angelo a bridge.
  Sandro is better than Angelo at bridge.
- È stato meno facile di quanto pensassi.
  It was less easy than I expected.
- È più facile criticare che risolvere i problemi.
  It’s easier to criticise than to solve problems.
- Sara è più carina che intelligente.
  Sara is prettier than she is intelligent.
The choice of *di* or *che* depends on what part of speech the second element of the comparison is, and on its position in the sentence:

- **più/meno** . . . *di* (before noun, pronoun, adverb, numeral)
- **più/meno** . . . *che* (before adjective, verb, noun/pronoun preceded by preposition)

Further examples of usage are shown in 17.2 and 17.3.

**Special forms of comparative**

Four of the most common Italian adjectives have a special form of comparative:

- **buono**
- **cattivo/brutto**
- **grande**
- **piccolo**

The regular comparative form (shown in brackets) is also possible. While there is little difference between *più buono/migliore* and *più cattivo/peggiore*, there can be a difference in meaning between *migliore* and *più grande*. *Migliore* can mean ‘bigger, older/elder’ in a physical sense, but can also mean ‘greater’ in an abstract sense. Similarly, *minore* can mean ‘smaller’ or ‘younger’, but can also mean ‘less, the lesser’ when referring to an abstract quality:

**I.4.7 Relative superlatives**

To refer to something or somebody as having ‘the most’ of a certain quality, in relation to other objects or people, you use *il più* together with the relevant adjective. This is called the *relative superlative*:

- **Silvia è la più brava studentessa della nostra classe.**
- **Pavarotti era il tenore italiano più famoso del mondo.**
- **Il Po è il più lungo fiume italiano.**

As with the comparative, the four most common Italian adjectives have a special form of relative superlative, as well as the regular one:

- **buono**
- **cattivo**
- **grande**
- **piccolo**

As with the comparative, there can be a difference of meaning between the two forms *il maggiore/il più grande* and *il minore/il più piccolo*:

**Secondo me, il problema maggiore dei giorni nostri è la droga.**

In my opinion, the greatest problem in our time is that of drugs.
Absolute superlatives

Absolute superlatives indicate the greatest possible degree of a quality, but without any comparison being made. Superlative adjectives are formed in Italian by adding the suffix -issimo to the end of the adjective:

- un uomo bellissimo — a very handsome man
- un’organizzazione efficientissima — a very efficient organisation
- degli importantissimi clienti — some very important clients

However, it is also possible in Italian to use the adverb molto to modify the adjective, in a similar way to the English ‘very’:

- un uomo molto bello — a very handsome man
- un’organizzazione molto efficiente — a very efficient organisation
- dei clienti molto importanti — some very important clients

As seen above, when modified by any adverb (molto, poco, troppo, abbastanza, piuttosto) the adjective generally follows the noun:

- dei clienti piuttosto importanti — some rather important clients

Notice how when modified by the superlative suffix -issimo, the endings of the adjectives always have the pattern of adjectives ending in -o/a/i/e (see 1.4.2), even if they belong to the other group of adjectives ending in -e/i. So we have:

- Adjective in the first group: bello/i/a/e
- Adjective in the second group: importante/i

The common adjectives buono, cattivo, grande, piccolo, mentioned above, also have two possible forms of absolute superlative:

- buono (good) — ottimo/buonissimo (best)
- cattivo (bad) — pessimo/cattivissimo (worst)
- grande (big) — massimo/grandissimo (biggest, greatest)
- piccolo (small) — minimo/piccolissimo (smallest, least)

For the comparative and superlative of adverbs, see 6.4.

Agreement of noun, article and adjective

Nearly all Italian descriptive adjectives have the same pattern of endings as the nouns (the two patterns are shown above); only a few are invariable (see 1.2.6). Nouns, adjectives and articles used together in a noun group must agree in number and gender.

For example, if you use a feminine singular noun such as borsa ‘bag’, you have to use a feminine singular article la and adjective rossa:

- La borsa rossa — The red bag

If you use a masculine plural noun such as sandali ‘sandals’, you have to use a masculine plural article i and adjective rossi:

- I sandali rossi — The red sandals

The English articles and adjectives are identical in both examples (‘the red . . .’) while in Italian they have very different forms depending on the gender and number of the noun to which they are attached:

- Il vestito rosso I sandali rossi
- La borsa rossa Le scarpe rosse
1.5.1 **Noun and adjective of same pattern**

When noun and adjective belong to the same pattern of endings, the agreement will be obvious:

*Sul tavolo c’è un piatto rotondo.*
On the table there is a round dish.

*Ho conosciuto due ragazze italiane.*
I met two Italian girls.

1.5.2 **Noun and adjective of different patterns**

It is more difficult to remember how to make the agreement when the noun and adjective belong to different patterns and therefore have different endings:

*Sul tavolo c’è un piatto grande.*
There is a large dish on the table.

*Ho conosciuto due ragazze inglesi.*
I met two English girls.

*Il programma era noioso.*
The programme was boring.

*La radio era rotta.*
The radio was broken.

1.5.3 **More than one noun (same gender)**

If an adjective refers to more than one noun of the same gender, it will be plural and have the same gender as the nouns:

*Ho comprato un libro e un vocabolario tedesco.*
I bought a German book and German dictionary.

*Ho comprato una grammatica e un’agenda tedesche.*
I bought a German grammar and a German diary.

1.5.4 **More than one noun (different genders)**

If the two nouns are of different genders then the adjective is generally masculine plural:

*Ho comprato un vocabolario e una grammatica tedeschi.*
I bought a German dictionary and a German grammar.

However if the second of the two nouns – the one nearest to the adjective – is feminine plural, the adjective may sometimes agree with it:

*Ho comprato un vocabolario e due grammatiche tedesche.*
I bought a German dictionary and two German grammars.
2

Verbs

2.1 General features of verbs

2.1.1 Introduction

Actions, events and situations are expressed by the use of verbs. Italian has a complex system of verb forms. In the first section of this chapter (2.1), we introduce and explain the main features of Italian verbs: grammatical subject; persons; conjugations; regular and irregular verbs; auxiliary and modal verbs; moods and tenses; transitive and intransitive verbs; active, passive and reflexive voice; si passivante and impersonal si.

In the second section of the chapter (2.2), we look at each individual verb mood (indicative, conditional and subjunctive) and tense with brief explanations and illustrations of their use. The most common irregular verb forms are also explained and illustrated. Part B of the book illustrates usage more fully.

For easy reference, Appendix II illustrates all the forms of the regular verbs in table form (both active and passive) while Appendix III illustrates the most common irregular verb forms.

2.1.2 Grammatical subject

Usually the subject of a verb is the ‘agent’ or ‘doer’ of an action, or the ‘protagonist’ of an event:

Noi partiamo per l’America.
We leave for America.

Franco e Teresa partono per l’America.
Franco and Teresa leave for America.

Sometimes you want to talk about facts rather than actions. In this case, the ‘subject’ of the verb is not carrying out an action, but is the theme or main topic expressed by the verb:

Giulia è bionda.
Giulia is blonde.

Questo film dura due ore.
This film lasts two hours.

The grammatical subject of the verb may be different from the real subject or agent of the action. This is the case with passive constructions (see 2.1.10 and 19.2).

2.1.3 Persons of the verb

The different forms of the verb, determined by its grammatical subject, are called the persons (this is a purely grammatical term, not necessarily referring to human beings):

1. Singular first person (the speaker) I
2. Singular second person (the person addressed) you
3. Singular third person (the third party) he, she, it
2.1

Verbs

4. Plural first person (the speaker + other people) we
5. Plural second person (the people addressed) you
6. Plural third person (the third parties) they

In each tense, Italian verbs have six different endings, depending on who or what is carrying out the action. The different endings immediately identify the ‘person’ – the subject of the action – unlike in English where only the third person singular has a distinctive ending (‘I eat’, ‘you eat’, ‘he eats’) and we have to rely on the subject pronouns (‘I, you, he’ etc.) to identify the person.

The first and second persons are usually evident in the context of communication (speaker/writer and person addressed):

Quanti anni hai? Ho trent’anni.
How old are you? I am thirty.

Using a subject pronoun to refer to the third person is often unnecessary too, for example where the person (or thing) has already been mentioned:

Quanti anni ha Maria? Ha venticinque anni.
How old is Maria? She is twenty-five.

In general, it is not necessary to use subject pronouns in Italian, unless you need to give particular emphasis to the subject (see also 8.4).

2.1.4 Conjugations

Italian verbs have a pattern of six distinct verb endings in each of the tenses which creates a large number of different forms for every verb (almost a hundred in total). Fortunately, most verbs follow one of three common patterns known as conjugations. Knowing which of the three conjugations a verb belongs to makes it easier to find and use the correct verb form. Each verb has an invariable part (the stem), which carries its meaning, and an inflected part (the ending), which identifies the person, the tense, the mood and other features. Traditionally we distinguish the three conjugations by the form that the verb takes in the infinitive (the form used in dictionary entries):

1st conjugation ending in -are as parl-are ‘to speak’
2nd conjugation ending in -ere as cred-ere ‘to believe’
3rd conjugation ending in -ire as dorm-ire ‘to sleep’

The verbs of the 3rd conjugation (ending in -ire) follow two distinct patterns, the second of which, with endings in -isco, as in fin-ire / fin-isco ‘to finish’, is the most common. Both patterns, despite their differences, belong to the same conjugation.

2.1.5 Regular verbs

We call the verb patterns described above regular because the stems of these verbs (the invariable part) remain constantly the same throughout the whole system of moods and tenses. Understanding the way the endings (the variable part) change will allow us to learn all the possible forms of most Italian verbs. The regular conjugation patterns (for both active verb forms and passive verb forms across the full range of moods and tenses) are shown in the verb tables in Appendix II for easy reference.

2.1.6 Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs are those that not only change their endings, but also change the stem in one or more of their tenses. Italian has a large number of irregular verbs, or verbs with some irregular forms, most of them in the 2nd conjugation, including many verbs used frequently in everyday language. Sometimes the irregular changes of the stem are unique to one verb (as in
General features of verbs

the case of *essere*). Sometimes several verbs share a common pattern of irregularity, and this can help you to memorise the many deviations from the ‘norm’. In 2.2, the most common irregular verb forms are shown for each individual tense. In Appendix III all the irregular forms of the most common verbs are shown in alphabetical order.

### 2.1.7 Verbi ausiliari e verbi servili (avere, essere, dovere, potere, volere)

The verbs *avere* ‘to have’ and *essere* ‘to be’ are often used as auxiliary verbs, combining with the past participles of other verbs to form compound tenses (see also 2.1.9).

**Avere** is used with all transitive verbs (but see 2.1.10) but also with many intransitive verbs:

- *Ho capito il messaggio.* (transitive)
  I’ve understood the message.
- *Ho viaggiato per tutto il paese.* (intransitive)
  I’ve travelled all over the country.

**Essere** is used with a large number of intransitive verbs, reflexive verbs and verbs used mainly impersonally or in the third person, such as *piacere:*

- *Sono arrivata alle 19.00.* (intransitive)
  I arrived at 7 pm.
- *Mi sono alzata presto.* (reflexive)
  I got up early.
- *Il film è piaciuto molto.*
  The film was much liked.

For further information on transitive/intransitive verbs, see 2.1.9.

The verbs *dovere* ‘to have to’, *potere* ‘to be able to’ and *volere* ‘to wish to’ are very often used in combination with another verb in the infinitive form, to complement its meaning. When used in this way, they are called verbi servili ‘modal verbs’. Here are some examples:

- *Ieri ho dovuto chiudere io l’ufficio.*
  I had to lock the office, yesterday.
- *Quando potremo incontrare il Dott. Salvi?*
  When can we meet Dr Salvi?
- *Voglio tornare a casa presto stasera.*
  I want to go home early tonight.

For further examples of their use, see 22.1.5, 23.3.5, 34.6 (dovere), 22.1.1, 22.3.1, 22.4.1 (potere) and 21.2.1, 23.2.1 (volere).

### 2.1.8 Moods and tenses

#### Moods (modi)

The different forms and uses of Italian verbs are traditionally grouped in seven moods. These convey the different ways in which the speaker or writer wants to communicate: with certainty or doubt, politeness or straightforwardness, in a request or a command form, etc.

The seven moods are:

- indicative
- conditional
- subjunctive
- imperative
- infinitive
- participle
- gerund

Each individual verb mood and tense is described separately in section 2.2 below. Verb tables for regular verbs are given in Appendix II and for irregular verbs in Appendix III. The ways in which moods are used to express distinct communicative functions and meanings are illustrated in Part B.
Tenses (tempi)
The word tense denotes the different verb forms that indicate the relationship between the time of the action or event and the time of speaking or writing (or other reference point in time). There is a range of tenses for each mood of verbs (except the imperative).

In Italian different tenses are sometimes used to distinguish features other than time relationships. For example, perfect and imperfect tenses can express the aspect of the action (see 13.5.3), while different subjunctive and conditional tenses can express different degrees of doubt, possibility, politeness, etc. (see Sections III and IV).

Compound tenses (tempi composti)
Many Italian verb tenses are formed using the past participle of the main verb along with either avere or essere as the auxiliary verb. These are called compound tenses. All passive forms of verbs (see 2.1.10 below) are compound forms, commonly formed with the auxiliary essere. Students of Italian often find it difficult to know which verbs use avere in compound tenses, and which use essere. To know which one to use, it helps to understand the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs (see 2.1.9 below).

Transitive and intransitive verbs (verbi transitivi e intransitivi)

Transitive verbs
The actions expressed by verbs can be ‘completed’ with an object. A transitive verb is one that takes a direct object as in the examples below:

Lucia scrive una lettera. Lucia writes a letter.
Cerchiamo una casa. We look for a house.

In these sentences, the action of the verb can be completed by answering the question che cosa? ‘what?’ The direct object of the verb is the noun that can answer this question directly (in this case una lettera and una casa):

Che cosa scrive Lucia? What is Lucia writing?
Lucia scrive una lettera. Lucia is writing a letter.
Che cosa cerchiamo? What are we looking for?
Cerchiamo una casa. We’re looking for a house.

Intransitive verbs
Some Italian verbs, however, cannot be completed by a direct object. If the question che cosa? cannot be answered, or does not make sense, the verb is intransitive:

Andiamo in ufficio alle 9. We go to the office at 9.
Il treno per Napoli parte alle 6. The train to Naples leaves at 6.

Compound tenses: auxiliary avere or essere
Because it determines the way they are used, it is important to know whether verbs are transitive or intransitive. It is particularly important in compound tenses such as passato prossimo, since it helps to determine whether to use the auxiliary avere or the auxiliary essere.

If the verb is transitive, it will always use the auxiliary avere in compound tenses:

Lucia ha scritto una lettera. Lucia wrote a letter.
Abbiamo cercato una casa. We looked for a house.

If the verb is intransitive, it will often – but not always – use the auxiliary essere in compound tenses:

Siamo andate in ufficio alle 9. We went to the office at 9.
Il treno per Napoli è partito alle 6. The train to Naples left at 6.

Check whether you can ask and answer the question che cosa? ‘what?’ You can also check in a dictionary. Verb entries in dictionaries usually carry the following indications:
General features of verbs

v.t. or v.tr.  verbo transitivo
v.i. or v.intr.  verbo intransitivo

Speakers of English find it difficult to distinguish transitive from intransitive verbs, because English compound tenses only use the auxiliary ‘to have’ in the active forms and the auxiliary ‘to be’ in passive forms (‘I have criticised my colleagues’; ‘I am criticised by my colleagues’). Problems also arise from the fact that many English verbs used transitively and intransitively have an Italian equivalent which can only be used intransitively. Below we show examples of English phrases which cannot be translated directly into Italian, since the verbs camminare and volare are not used transitively; you cannot camminare il cane or volare il mondo.

• I’m going to walk the dog.
• Fly the world with Silverwings!

Intransitive verbs that use the auxiliary avere

Generally in Italian transitive verbs use the auxiliary avere, while many intransitive verbs use the auxiliary essere in the compound tenses. However, there are quite a few intransitive verbs that use the auxiliary avere. Here are a few of the most common:

- camminare  to walk
- piangere  to cry
- dormire  to sleep
- riposare  to rest
- giocare  to play
- volare  to fly
- passeggiare  to walk

_Ho camminato per due ore._
I walked for two hours.

_Come hai dormito?_
How did you sleep?

_Avete giocato a carte?_
Did you play cards?

Verbs that can be used both transitively and intransitively

Some verbs can be used both transitively (with a direct object) and intransitively (without a direct object), for example, aumentare, cambiare, cominciare, crescere, diminuire, finire, passare.

In the first two examples that follow, the subjects of these actions – beginning and finishing – are people and both verbs have direct objects (‘the lesson’, ‘the holidays’). So in these examples, they are used transitively.

_Il professore comincia la lezione alle 11.00._
The teacher begins the lesson at 11.00.

_Finiamo le vacanze in agosto._
We finish our holidays in August.

In the next two examples, the same verbs have ‘the lesson’ and ‘the holidays’ as their respective subjects and cannot have a direct object. So in these examples they are used intransitively.

_La lezione comincia alle 11.00._
The lesson begins at 11.00.

_Le vacanze finiscono in agosto._
The holidays finish in August.

In simple tenses, for example present, imperfect or future, the forms of the verbs are identical, whether they are transitive or intransitive. But in compound tenses such as the passato prossimo, their forms vary according to whether they are used transitively or intransitively, with verbs used transitively taking avere and verbs used intransitively taking essere:

_Il professore ha cominciato la lezione._ (transitive)
The teacher began the lesson.
La lezione è cominciata alle 11.00. (intransitive)
The lesson began at 11.00.

Abbiamo finito le vacanze in agosto. (transitive)
We finished the holidays in August.

Le vacanze sono finite in agosto. (intransitive)
The holidays finished in August.

Another verb with both transitive and intransitive functions is mancare, which has different meanings depending on whether it is used transitively or intransitively.

When used intransitively mancare means ‘to fail, to be lacking, to be missing’ and uses essere. It is used like piacere, so that the person or object missed or lacking is the subject of the sentence and the person missing them is expressed by an indirect pronoun (mi):

Volevo fare la pista nera ma mi è mancato il coraggio.
I wanted to do the black (ski) run but I lacked the courage.

Mi sei mancata tanto.
I missed you so much.

When used transitively (for example, in the phrase mancare il bersaglio) mancare means ‘to miss a target’ and uses avere:

Gli screening per il colesterolo hanno mancato il bersaglio.
The screening tests for cholesterol have missed their target.

For some other verbs, such as correre ‘to run’, saltare ‘to jump’, vivere ‘to live’, the rules are less rigid. When used transitively, they always take avere:

Hanno corso un grosso rischio. They ran a great risk.
Oggi ho saltato il pranzo. Today I skipped lunch.
Ho vissuto una vita d’inferno. I have lived a life of hell.

When used intransitively, however, the choice of avere or essere as auxiliary tends to be a question of personal choice and linguistic habit, with both options possible:

Ho vissuto / Sono vissuto a Londra per 10 anni.
I lived in London for 10 years.

Giuliana ha corso / è corsa a casa.
Giuliana ran home.

I bambini hanno saltato / sono saltati giù dal letto.
The children jumped down from the bed.

Verbs like these are marked in dictionaries as v.tr. e intr. (verbi transitivi e intransitivi).

Verbs describing the weather are intransitive and usually take essere but can also take avere:

È (ha) piuovuto tanto. It rained a lot.

2.1.10 Voice: active, passive, reflexive

‘Voice’ describes the relationship of the verb action with its subject and object. These relationships are:

(a) Active voice

Normally the grammatical subject of the verb (see 2.1.2) is the agent or doer of the action or the main theme of the event, in which case the verb construction (‘voice’) is active:

Gianni guarda Luisa.
Gianni watches Luisa.

Il meccanico ripara la macchina.
The mechanic repairs the car.
(b) Passive voice
Sometimes the person or object on the receiving end of the action is the grammatical subject, and in this case the verb construction is passive:

Luisa è guardata da Gianni.
Luisa is watched by Gianni.

La macchina è riparata dal meccanico.
The car is repaired by the mechanic.

In the second example, the agent or doer of the action is clearly the mechanic (the one who repairs the car), but the grammatical subject of the verb is the car. The construction is passive.

(c) Reflexive and pronominal voice
A verb form is reflexive when its subject and object are the same:

Gianni si guarda allo specchio.
Gianni looks at himself in the mirror.

There are other verb forms that are not strictly speaking reflexive but are similar in form. These are called pronominal. The following paragraphs look at the passive, reflexive and pronominal verb forms in detail.

Passive constructions are used when you want to focus on the action itself or the object of an action, rather than on the agent or doer of an action. The passive of Italian verbs is formed by the past participle and the auxiliary essere, using the same tense as the corresponding active form. The participle agrees with the gender and number of the subject. The passive conjugation of verbs is shown in the verb tables in Appendix II. The passive can also be formed using venire or andare as auxiliary instead of essere (see 19.2) or by using the si passivante construction (see 2.1.11 and 19.4). Only transitive verbs (see 2.1.9) can have a passive form. For more examples of the passive, see 19.2.

Reflexive verb forms are active verb forms accompanied by a reflexive pronoun (see 3.4.3). Look at these two examples:

Il Sig. Franchi sta lavando la macchina.
Mr Franchi is washing the car.

Il Sig. Franchi si sta lavando.
Mr Franchi is washing himself.

In the first example, the direct object of the action of washing is the car. The person who is doing it is the subject of the action. In the second example, the subject and the object of the action are the same person (Il Sig. Franchi). This is the reflexive verb form; the reflexive pronoun si refers to the person carrying out the action (the subject), but is grammatically the object of the action. You probably already know one reflexive verb: chiamarsi ‘to call oneself’.

The position of the reflexive pronoun is the same as that of the other unstressed personal pronouns (see 3.4.7): it usually comes before the verb, but is sometimes attached to the end of it, for example with infinitives, gerunds and tu, noi, voi imperatives:

Prego si accomodi.
Please, have a seat (make yourself comfortable).

In genere i giovani italiani si vestono alla moda.
In general young people in Italy dress fashionably.

Sono le 9.00. Dovete prepararvi a uscire.
It’s 9.00. You must get yourselves ready to go out.

Prepara/i ad uscire!
Get yourself ready to go out!

In the compound tenses, reflexive verbs are always conjugated with the verb essere, even though the verbs are transitive (cf. lavare, alzare) and normally take avere in their compound tenses. The past participle has to agree with the subject:
Stamattina i bambini si sono alzati alle 6.
This morning the children got (themselves) up at 6.

Mi sono vestita con calma.
I got dressed slowly.

**Pronominal verb forms** are verb forms which use the reflexive pronoun but are not true reflexives. In Italian they are used much more frequently than in English not only in a true reflexive pattern but also in many other ways. In true reflexives (see above), the subject and object of the verb are one and the same. This is not the case with pronominal verb forms, but they still embody the concept of ‘reciprocal’ or ‘reflexive’ action (an action relating or reflecting back to the subject).

The different uses of the *pronominal verb form* are illustrated in the examples below:

(a) **Indirect reflexive (action carried out on oneself)**

The reflexive always indicates an action which is related to the person carrying out the action (the subject). Note the use of the auxiliary *essere* in the compound tense in the last example:

- **Giulio si lava le mani.**
  Giulio washes *his* hands.
- **Mi metto la giacca.**
  I put on *my* jacket.
- **Stamattina non mi sono fatto la barba.**
  This morning I didn’t shave (*myself*).

In the examples above, the actions are not truly reflexive, since the subjects and the objects of the actions are not exactly identical: **Giulio . . . le mani, io . . . la giacca, io . . . la barba.** However the reflexive pronoun is used to stress the fact that the object of the action is closely related to the person who does it, and indeed is either part of his/her body (**le mani, la barba**) or a personal belonging (**la giacca**) (see also 3.7.2).

In the last example, the participle can also agree with the object:

- **Stamattina non mi sono fatta la barba.**

The reflexive pronoun can also be omitted, in which case the construction no longer takes *essere* in the compound tenses, as shown in the final example:

- **Giulio lava le mani.**
- **Metto la giacca.**
- **Non ho fatto la barba.**

(b) **Reciprocal reflexive (action carried out on each other)**

A reciprocal action is when two people jointly carry out an action that affects each of them:

- **Arrivederci. Ci vediamo domani.**
  Bye. See you tomorrow.
- **Mario e Nicoletta si sposano domani.**
  Mario and Nicoletta are getting married tomorrow.
- **Dove vi siete conosciuti tu e Maria?**
  Where did you and Maria meet (each other)?
- **Io e il Dottor Rossi ci siamo incontrati in Spagna.**
  Dr Rossi and I met (each other) in Spain.

In the examples above the reflexive pronoun marks an event or action involving the same people; the two people are at the same time both subject and object of a reciprocal action. The same actions can also be expressed by the active form, where one person is the subject and the other is the object:

- **Domani Mario sposa Nicoletta.**
  Tomorrow Mario will marry Nicoletta.
General features of verbs

Dove hai conosciuto Maria?
Where did you meet Maria?

Ho incontrato il Dottor Rossi in Spagna.
I met Dr Rossi in Spain.

(c) Emotional involvement expressed with reflexive pronouns
In Italian you can use the reflexive pronoun simply to stress the subjective side of an event, the importance of the event to the person involved or the emotional involvement of the person who is the (grammatical) subject:

Stasera ci vediamo un bel film.
Tonight we’ll watch a nice film.

Ho fame! Voglio mangiarmi una pizza!
I’m hungry! I really want a pizza!

Mannaggia! Mi sono dimenticata le chiavi!
Damn! I forgot the keys!

In the examples above, the objects of the verbs are totally separate from, and not part of, the subjects, so the construction is not truly reflexive. However the reflexive pronoun shows the emotional involvement felt by the persons carrying out these actions. The same sentences can be expressed without using the reflexive pronouns, but then the statements will sound much less emotionally involved and more objective:

Stasera vediamo un bel film.
Voglio mangiare una pizza.
Ho dimenticato le chiavi.

There are a few Italian verbs that are always (or almost always) used with a reflexive pronoun, because of the ‘psychological’ and subjective meaning they convey, for example:

accorgersi to realize, to be aware
arrabbiarsi to get angry
divertirsi to have fun
innamorarsi to fall in love
pentirsi to regret, repent
vergognarsi to be ashamed

Sbrigati! Non ti accorgi che è tardi?
Hurry up! Don’t you realize that it’s late?

Non arrabbiarti!
Don’t be angry!

Vi siete divertiti a Roma?
Did you have a good time in Rome?

Giulia si è pentita di aver accettato quel lavoro.
Giulia regretted having accepted that job.

Non vergognarti di questo errore, non è colpa tua.
Don’t be ashamed of this mistake. It’s not your fault.

2.1.11 Si passivante
The reflexive pronoun si can be used to give a passive meaning to the active form of the verb (see also 19.4):

Sì parla italiano.
Italian is spoken.

Nella mia famiglia si parlano tre lingue.
In my family three languages are spoken.

Dal terrazzo si vedono i tetti della città.
From the terrace the roofs of the city can be seen (one can see the roofs).
In the first example, the *si passivante* form appears identical to the *si impersonale* form (‘one’ speaks Italian) mentioned in 2.1.12 below. However, when there is a plural subject, as in the second two examples, the verb is plural, making it clear that the construction is passive (‘three languages are spoken’, ‘the roofs can be seen’).

**Impersonal si**

The pronoun *si* is also used to express the *impersonal* form of verbs (see also 19.5), i.e. in cases where no subject is mentioned, or rather where the subject cannot be identified with a particular person or thing (English would use the indeterminate subject ‘one’ or perhaps ‘everyone’):

- *Si lavora meglio con il fresco.*
  One works better in cool weather.

- *Stasera si va a ballare.*
  Tonight everybody is going dancing.

- *A tavola non si invecchia.*
  One doesn’t get old at the dinner table.

(This last example is a popular saying, meant to discourage people from rushing their food.)

Unlike the *si passivante* (see 2.1.11), the impersonal form is always formed with *si* and the third person *singular* of the verb.

**Individual verb moods and tenses**

In this section, we look at each mood and tense of verbs individually, with a brief illustration of their use. We also mention the most common irregular verb forms in each tense. For a complete table of the regular verbs and the most common irregular verbs, see Appendices II and III respectively.

**Infinito (infinitive mood)**

The infinitive is the basic form of verbs and the form used as a dictionary entry (in other words, the ‘name’ of the verb). The infinitive form (*-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*) indicates which conjugation a verb belongs to. The infinitive has both present and past forms.

**Forms of the infinito (present and past)**

The forms of the *present infinitive* are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st conjugation</th>
<th>2nd conjugation</th>
<th>3rd conjugation</th>
<th>3rd conjugation (in -isc-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>vendere</td>
<td>partire</td>
<td>finire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *past infinitive* is formed by the past participle and the infinitive *avere* or *essere*. When formed with *essere*, the past infinitive changes form to agree with the verb subject (see examples below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st conjugation</th>
<th>parlare</th>
<th>to speak</th>
<th>avere parlato</th>
<th>to have spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st conjugation</td>
<td>andare</td>
<td>to go</td>
<td>essere andato/a/i/e</td>
<td>to have gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd conjugation</td>
<td>vendere</td>
<td>to sell</td>
<td>avere venduto</td>
<td>to have sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd conjugation</td>
<td>vivere</td>
<td>to live</td>
<td>essere vissuto/a/i/e</td>
<td>to have lived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd conjugation</td>
<td>sentire</td>
<td>to hear</td>
<td>avere sentito</td>
<td>to have heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd conjugation</td>
<td>partire</td>
<td>to leave</td>
<td>essere partito</td>
<td>to have left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Irregular forms of the infinito

There are three groups of 2nd conjugation verbs with an irregular infinitive (i.e. not with the usual *-ere ending). In most cases the infinitive is a contracted form of the original infinitive and several of the tenses (for example, imperfect) are based on the original verb stem.

(a) Verbs with infinitive in *-urre

Several verbs have an infinitive ending in *-urre, which is a contracted form of the original infinitive ending in *-ucere (*producere, etc.). In fact several of the tenses are based on the original stem in *-duc- (see 2.2.3 below for the present indicative forms). These verbs include:

- condurre to conduct, lead
- dedurre to deduct
- indurre to induce
- introdurre to introduce, insert
- produrre to produce
- sedurre to seduce
- tradurre to translate

(b) Verbs with infinitive in *-orre

Several verbs have an infinitive ending in *-orre. Their infinitive is a contracted form of the original *ponere. (Their irregular present indicative forms are also based on this older verb stem.) These verbs include:

- comporre to compose
- deporre to depose
- imporre to impose
- porre to place, put
- opporre to oppose
- proporre to propose
- supporre to suppose

(c) Bere, dire, fare

Bere is a contracted form of an older infinitive *bevere and many of the forms of this verb follow the original verb stem (see 2.2.3 below for the present indicative forms and 2.2.4 for the imperfect forms). Dire (originally *dicere) and fare (originally *facere) also come into this category.

Uses of the infinito

Infinitive depending on a verb

The infinitive can be linked to – and depend on – another verb:

Present infinitive:
Dobbiamo partire alle 7.00.
We must leave at 7.00.

Sai usare il computer?
Can you use the computer?

Non riesco a sentire la tua voce.
I can’t hear your voice.

Past infinitive:
Penso di avere capito.
I think I have understood.

Si ricorda di aver visto il ragazzo vicino a casa sua.
He remembers having seen the boy near his house.

The infinitive is normally linked to the preceding verb by a preposition such as di or a as in the last three examples above (see list of verbs and prepositions in Appendix IV). With dovere, potere, volere and amare, desiderare, osare, preferire, sapere, however, no preposition is
needed, as in the first two examples above. For particular uses of the infinitive with a preposition, see 4.4. See also 33.2 (purpose), 34.3.2 (cause), 35.4 (result), 38.5.3 (condition).

In Italian the subject of the infinitive must be the same as that of the verb on which it depends. Otherwise two separate finite verbs must be used, usually linked by che. So sentences in English such as ‘I want you to come soon’ cannot be translated directly into Italian using the infinitive (*voglio tu venire presto), but have to use che, as in voglio che tu venga presto, making clear that the two different verbs have different subjects (see also 21.5.3).

An exception to this is when the main verb of the clause is fare or lasciare (see also 21.7). These are followed directly by the infinitive:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Fammi passare.} & \text{Let me pass.} \\
&\text{Lascialo parlare.} & \text{Let them speak.} \\
&\text{Ho fatto entrare i signori.} & \text{I allowed the gentlemen to come in.}
\end{align*}
\]

Infinitive used as imperative
The present infinitive form can be used to tell somebody not to do something, i.e. as a negative imperative, either second person singular, as in the first example below, or with an impersonal meaning, as in the second example (see 21.3):

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Zitto, non parlare.} & \text{Be quiet, don’t speak.} \\
&\text{Non sporgersi dal finestrino.} & \text{Don’t lean out of the window.}
\end{align*}
\]

Note how a phrase that was originally the imperative of a reflexive verb non ti scordare ‘do not forget’ has now become the name of a flower:

\[
\text{Nontiscordardimé} \quad \text{Forget-me-not}
\]

Infinitive used as a noun
Infinitive verbs are often used as nouns, with or without the masculine singular definite article, as in the last example (il sapere):

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Lavorare stanca.} & \text{Work is tiring.} \\
&\text{Mangiare è necessario per vivere.} & \text{Eating is necessary for life.} \\
&\text{Il sapere degli antichi si trasmette di generazione in generazione.} & \text{The wisdom of the ancients is handed down from generation to generation.}
\end{align*}
\]

Infinitive used after a preposition
The infinitive can be found after prima ‘before’ and dopo ‘after’:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Prima di andare a casa, devo passare dal panettiere a prendere il pane.} & \text{Before going home, I have to pass by the baker’s and get some bread.} \\
&\text{Dopo aver cucinato, non ho voglia di mangiare.} & \text{After having cooked, I don’t feel like eating.}
\end{align*}
\]

For further uses of the infinitive and past infinitive, see also 30.6.1, 30.6.2 and 36.4.2.

### Indicative mood: introduction

The indicative mood is used to express straightforward statements of facts, objective descriptions, real and definite situations, etc. We look here at each of the eight tenses of the indicative mood, both regular and irregular forms, with a brief reference to their use, covered in detail in Part B.

### Indicativo presente (present indicative)

**Forms of the presente**
The forms of the present indicative of the three regular conjugations are shown below:
Individual verb moods and tenses

### Conjugations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parl-are</td>
<td>cred-ere</td>
<td>dorm-ire</td>
<td>fin-ire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-o</td>
<td>cred-o</td>
<td>dorm-o</td>
<td>fin-isco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-i</td>
<td>cred-i</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
<td>fin-isci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-a</td>
<td>cred-e</td>
<td>dorm-e</td>
<td>fin-isce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-iamo</td>
<td>cred-iamo</td>
<td>dorm-iamo</td>
<td>fin-iamo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-ate</td>
<td>cred-ete</td>
<td>dorm-ite</td>
<td>fin-ite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parl-ano</td>
<td>cred-ono</td>
<td>dorm-ono</td>
<td>fin-iscono</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Irregular forms of the presente

**1st conjugation (-are)**

Some verbs in the 1st conjugation, while not irregular, present potential difficulties with spelling and/or pronunciation.

First, verbs ending in -care, -gare, such as **cercare**, **pagare**: in those forms that have an i in them (cerci, **cerchiamo**), the ‘h’ indicates that they are pronounced with hard g:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cercare</th>
<th>pagare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cerco</td>
<td>pago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cerchi</td>
<td>paghi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cerca</td>
<td>paga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cerchiamo</td>
<td>paghiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cercate</td>
<td>pagate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cercano</td>
<td>pagano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, verbs ending in -ciare and -giare, such as **cominciare**, **mangiare**: the i found before o, a indicates that the verb forms should be pronounced with a soft c or g; the i is not pronounced as a separate vowel. In the forms that already have i in them (2nd person singular **cominci**, **mangi** and 1st person plural **cominciamo**, **mangiiamo**) there is no doubling of the i:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cominciare</th>
<th>mangiare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comincio</td>
<td>mangio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cominci</td>
<td>mangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comincia</td>
<td>mangia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cominciamo</td>
<td>mangiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cominciate</td>
<td>mangiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cominciano</td>
<td>mangiano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only verbs of the 1st conjugation with a truly irregular present indicative are: **andare** (‘to go’), **dare** (‘to give’), **fare** (‘to do’) and **stare** (‘to stay’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>andare</th>
<th>dare</th>
<th>fare</th>
<th>stare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vado</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>faccio</td>
<td>sto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vai</td>
<td>dai</td>
<td>fai</td>
<td>stai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>va</td>
<td>dà</td>
<td>fa</td>
<td>sta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andiamo</td>
<td>diamo</td>
<td>facciamo</td>
<td>stiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andate</td>
<td>date</td>
<td>fate</td>
<td>state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vanno</td>
<td>danno</td>
<td>fanno</td>
<td>stanno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2nd conjugation (-ere)**

There are more irregular verbs in the 2nd conjugation than in any other conjugation.

Some verbs in the 2nd conjugation, while not irregular, present potential difficulties with spelling and/or pronunciation. Verbs ending in -cere, -gere, -scere have a hard c, g, sc sound before the vowel o but a soft c, g, sc sound before the vowels e, i:
Although some verbs appear irregular, their forms are in fact regular but based on an older form of the verb (see 2.2.1 above), for example the forms of bere are based on the older verb form *bevere (bevo, bevi, etc.) while the forms of tradurre are based on the older verb form *traducere (traduce, traduci, etc.).

Dire also originates from an older infinitive form *dicere so some of its tenses (e.g. present indicative shown below) follow the pattern of a second conjugation verb (ending in -ere):

dire ‘to say’
dico
dici
dice
diciamo
dite
dicono

The most common 2nd conjugation verbs with a truly irregular present indicative are the modal verbs (verbi servili) and also sapere:

There are several verbs which share a similar pattern of alternating forms in the present indicative, for example cogliere (colgo/cogli), piacere (piaccio/piaci), porre (pongo/poni), rimanere (rimango/rimani), scegliere (scelgo/scegli). Some verbs change not only their endings but the verb stem itself, for example tenere (tengo/tieni).

All these common irregular verb forms are fully illustrated in Appendix III.

3rd conjugation (-ire)
Three important irregular verbs of the 3rd conjugation are salire (‘to go up’), uscire (‘to go out’), venire (‘to come’). Salire has alternating forms (salgo/sali) and both uscire and venire also have stem changes. Other verbs which follow these patterns can be found in Appendix III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>salire ‘to go up’</th>
<th>uscire ‘to go out’</th>
<th>venire ‘to come’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>salgo</td>
<td>esco</td>
<td>vengo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sali</td>
<td>esci</td>
<td>vieni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sale</td>
<td>esce</td>
<td>viene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saliamo</td>
<td>usciamo</td>
<td>veniamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salite</td>
<td>uscite</td>
<td>venite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salgono</td>
<td>escono</td>
<td>vengono</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Uses of the presente

Verbs in the present indicative express actions, facts and situations that happen or are going on at the moment of speaking or writing. This applies to:

(a) Actions and facts happening at the precise moment of speech:

   **Mara, il telefono **suona**. Rispondi, per favore.**
   Mara, the phone is ringing. Please answer it!

(b) Something that happens regularly, with continuity or which is always true (in the present as well as in the past and future):

   **Nel mio ufficio il telefono **suona** continuamente di mattina.**
   In my office the phone rings continuously in the mornings.

   **La domenica le campane della chiesa suonano alle 8 meno 10.**
   On Sundays the church bells ring at 10 to 8.

   **Gli italiani fumanò più degli inglesi.**
   Italians smoke more than English people.

   **Le balene sono mammiferi.**
   Whales are mammals.

There are two situations in which the present indicative is used to refer to facts that are not in the present time:

(c) Referring to the future, as happens frequently in conversational situations (see 14.3):

   **Domani arrivano gli ospiti spagnoli.**
   Tomorrow the Spanish guests are coming.

   **L’anno prossimo compriamo una macchina nuova.**
   Next year we’ll buy a new car.

(d) As a historical present in order to render the description of past events more vivid (see 13.7). This is done when the events are described in a narrative way and is very common in history books and news reports:

   **Nel 1870 Roma diventa capitale d’Italia.**
   Rome became the capital of Italy in 1870.

   **Al quinto rigore Baggio sbaglia e l’Italia perde il Campionato del Mondo.**
   At the fifth penalty Baggio missed the penalty kick and Italy lost the World Cup.

(e) The present indicative of **stare** can be used in combination with the gerund to form a present progressive (see also 12.3):

   **Sto scrivendo** I am writing

Indicativo imperfetto (imperfect indicative)

Forms of the imperfetto

The imperfect indicative is formed by adding the imperfect endings shown below in bold to the stem of the verb. It is the most regular of all the tenses of Italian verbs. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the **dormire** and verbs of the **finire** pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugations</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>parl-are</td>
<td>cred-ere</td>
<td>dorm-ire, fin-ere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parl-avo</td>
<td>cred-evo</td>
<td>dorm-ivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parl-avi</td>
<td>cred-evi</td>
<td>dorm-ivi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parl-ava</td>
<td>cred-eva</td>
<td>dorm-iva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parl-avamo</td>
<td>cred-evamo</td>
<td>dorm-ivamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parl-avate</td>
<td>cred-evate</td>
<td>dorm-ivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parl-avano</td>
<td>cred-evano</td>
<td>dorm-ivano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Irregular forms of imperfetto

There are few irregular imperfect forms.

The imperfect of the 2nd conjugation verbs with contracted infinitive in -urre is regular, but follows the pattern of its original stem in duc-, giving condurre (*conducere): conducevo, etc.

Similarly, the verbs with contracted infinitive in -orre have a regular imperfect based on the stem in pon-, giving porre (*ponere): ponevo, etc.

The contracted infinitive bere has a regular imperfect bevevo based on the older verb stem (as in infinitive *bevere).

For other verbs that follow this pattern, see Appendix III.

Finally, dire and fare both have imperfect forms based on older stems and follow the pattern of 2nd conjugation verbs: dicevo, facevo.

The only truly irregular imperfect is that of essere: ero, eri.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>essere ‘to be’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>ero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>eri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>eravamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>eravate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>erano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uses of the imperfetto

The imperfect indicative is mainly used to refer to the past (see 13.5). In using past tenses, one should always consider the context or aspect. The question of aspect and the choice of imperfect or perfect is very important when referring to the past in Italian, particularly in situations where the two past forms are used in the same sentence (see 13.6). Here is a summary of the most common cases when the imperfect indicative is used:

(a) To describe a past action or fact in its duration (ongoing and not completed):

   Guardavo la televisione quando c’è stato il terremoto.
   I was watching TV when the earthquake struck.

(b) To describe situations, compose a ‘picture’ with facts or events happening at the same time in the past (see also 13.5.1):

   Era mezzanotte, pioveva e la macchina correva silenziosa.
   It was midnight, it was raining and the car ran silently.

(c) For past actions repeated regularly as a habit (see also 13.5.2):

   Prendevamo sempre il caffè alle 11.00.
   We used to have a coffee at 11.00.

(d) To relate the background, cause or situation in which an event happened (see also 13.6.1–4 and 34.8):

   Non ho mangiato perché non avevo fame.
   I didn’t eat because I wasn’t hungry.

   Erano già le 5.00 quando hai telefonato.
   It was already 5.00 when you phoned.

(e) To refer to the ‘future seen from the past’, instead of using the compound conditional (see 14.8.3 and 30.5.2):

   La settimana scorsa mi hanno detto che tu venivi (saresti venuto) ieri.
   Last week I was told that you would come yesterday.
(f) To express a polite request or statement in place of the present conditional (see 23.3.1) or to express slight embarrassment:

_Volevo_ (vorrei) delle rose.
I’d like some roses.

_Buongiorno, cercavo un libro di Umberto Eco._
Good morning, I’m looking for a book by Umberto Eco.

_Mi scusi, non volevo disturbare._
Excuse me, I don’t want to disturb you.

(g) In hypothetical clauses (‘if’ clauses) where the ‘if’ condition is unlikely to happen, or can no longer happen, as a replacement for the compound conditional and subjunctive (see 38.4). This is more common in _spoken_ than in written Italian.

_Se andavi più piano non facevi l’incidente._
If you had gone more slowly, you wouldn’t have had the accident.

For the use of the imperfect of modal verbs _dovere, potere, volere_, see 13.6.8.

2.2.5 Passato prossimo (present perfect)

**Forms of the passato prossimo**

The _passato prossimo_ is formed by the past participle and the present indicative of the auxiliary _avere_ or _essere_ (see also 2.1.7, 2.1.9). In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the _dormire_ and verbs of the _finire_ pattern. In the table below, only forms with _avere_ are shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>Parlare</td>
<td>Credere</td>
<td>Dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>ho parlato</td>
<td>ho creduto</td>
<td>ho dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>hai parlato</td>
<td>hai creduto</td>
<td>hai dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>ha parlato</td>
<td>ha creduto</td>
<td>ha dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>abbiamo parlato</td>
<td>abbiamo creduto</td>
<td>abbiamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>avete parlato</td>
<td>avete creduto</td>
<td>avete dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>hanno parlato</td>
<td>hanno creduto</td>
<td>hanno dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uses of the passato prossimo**

The _passato prossimo_ is the tense most frequently used to talk about past events or actions, especially in spoken language. The uses of the _passato prossimo_ and the other past tenses are more fully illustrated in Part B.

The _passato prossimo_ refers to facts that are seen as completed, but have some relation to the present, generally in one of the following two contexts:

(a) The past events are very close to the present time:

_Ho appena preso un caffè._
I’ve just had a coffee.

_Avete capito quello che ho detto?_
Did you understand what I said?

(b) The facts or events, even if they are in the distant past, still have some relationship with the present time or with the person who is speaking:

_Siamo venuti in Inghilterra vent’anni fa._
We came to England twenty years ago (and we are still here).

_La Basilica di S.Pietro è stata costruita nel ’500._
St Peter’s Basilica was built in the 16th century (and you can still see it now).

Because of these characteristics the _passato prossimo_ is very frequently used in conversational Italian, allowing the speaker to relate the facts of the past to the present.
Passato remoto (past definite)

Forms of passato remoto

The forms of the passato remoto of the three regular conjugations are shown below, with the endings shown in italics. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>-are</td>
<td>-ere</td>
<td>-ire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parl-ai</td>
<td>cred-etti (cred-ei)</td>
<td>dorm-ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parl-asti</td>
<td>cred-est</td>
<td>dorm-isti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parl-ò</td>
<td>cred-ette (cred-é)</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parl-ammo</td>
<td>cred-emmo</td>
<td>dorm-immo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parl-aste</td>
<td>cred-este</td>
<td>dorm-iste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parl-arono</td>
<td>cred-ettero (cred-erono)</td>
<td>dorm-irono</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the passato remoto of certain 2nd conjugation verbs (for example, credere) has alternative forms for the first person singular and third person singular and plural:

- credé/credette: he/she believed
- crederono/credettero: they believed

Irregular forms of passato remoto

Two of the most frequently used verbs in the Italian language (avere, essere) have irregular passato remoto forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avere</td>
<td>ebbi</td>
<td>fui</td>
<td>fui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essere</td>
<td>fui</td>
<td>fui</td>
<td>fui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avestì</td>
<td>fusi</td>
<td>fosti</td>
<td>fusti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avemmo</td>
<td>fummo</td>
<td>foste</td>
<td>fusti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aveste</td>
<td>fusti</td>
<td>fu</td>
<td>fusti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ebbero</td>
<td>furono</td>
<td>furono</td>
<td>furono</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The passato remoto is often irregular, particularly in 2nd conjugation verbs. The most common pattern of irregular verb forms is the short verb form ending in -si alternating with the longer verb form based on the stem of the infinitive as in the four examples shown below (chiedi/chiiedesti, diss/diicesti, presi/prendesti, vissi/vivesti):

- chiedere: ‘to ask’
- dire: ‘to say’
- prendere: ‘to take’
- vivere: ‘to live’
- chiedesti: ‘to ask’
- dicesti: ‘to say’
- prendesti: ‘to take’
- vivesti: ‘to live’
- chiedemmo: ‘to ask’
- dicemmo: ‘to say’
- prendemmo: ‘to take’
- vivemmo: ‘to live’
- chiedeste: ‘to ask’
- diceste: ‘to say’
- prendeste: ‘to take’
- viveste: ‘to live’
- chiesero: ‘to ask’
- diesserro: ‘to say’
- prenderso: ‘to take’
- vissero: ‘to see’

In some cases (for example, mettere, muovere, sapere, vedere) the stem has a vowel change as well:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mettere</td>
<td>muovere</td>
<td>piacere</td>
<td>sapere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to put’</td>
<td>‘to move’</td>
<td>‘to please’</td>
<td>‘to know’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misi</td>
<td>mossi</td>
<td>piaquì</td>
<td>seppi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mettessi</td>
<td>muovessi</td>
<td>piacesti</td>
<td>sapessi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mise</td>
<td>mosse</td>
<td>piaque</td>
<td>seppe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mettemmo</td>
<td>muovemmo</td>
<td>piacemmo</td>
<td>sapemmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metteste</td>
<td>muoveste</td>
<td>piaeste</td>
<td>videro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misero</td>
<td>mossero</td>
<td>piaquero</td>
<td>sepperro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dare, fare, venire show a similar alternating pattern with a stem change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dare</th>
<th>fare</th>
<th>venire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diedi</td>
<td>feci</td>
<td>venni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desti</td>
<td>facesti</td>
<td>venisti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diede</td>
<td>fece</td>
<td>venne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demmo</td>
<td>facemmo</td>
<td>venimmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deste</td>
<td>faceste</td>
<td>veniste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diedero</td>
<td>fecero</td>
<td>vennero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dovere, potere, volere

In the verb forms below, the written accent on vòll-i, vòll-e, vòll-ero indicates where the stress is placed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dov-ei (dovetti)</th>
<th>pot-ei</th>
<th>vòll-i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dov-esti</td>
<td>pot-esti</td>
<td>vol-esti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dov-é (dovette)</td>
<td>pot-é</td>
<td>vòll-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dov-emmo</td>
<td>pot-emmo</td>
<td>vol-emmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dov-este</td>
<td>pot-este</td>
<td>vol-este</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dov-erono (dovettero)</td>
<td>pot-erono</td>
<td>vòll-ero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the passato remoto is not used in everyday spoken Italian in much of Italy, many speakers are not familiar with the correct forms, so it is always best to check in the list of irregular verb forms in Appendix III or in your dictionary.

**Uses of passato remoto**

The passato remoto is used whenever you want to express the distance of past events, not just in terms of time, but mainly in terms of their ‘separateness’ (remoteness) from the present situation (see 13.4.1):

**Vissi male a Milano. Perciò sono tornato a Napoli.**
I had a bad time living in Milan. That’s why I came back to Naples (and I am still here).

**I dinosauri scomparvero 65 milioni d’ànni fa.**
Dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago.

In spoken Italian, the passato remoto tends to be used very rarely in the north of Italy, where the passato prossimo is preferred. Northern Italian speakers tend to consider use of the passato remoto in spoken Italian as incorrect, but it is used quite often both in Tuscany and in central and southern Italy, where it would not be considered incorrect.

In written Italian, the passato remoto is far more common, especially in narrative and historical language, because of the precise way in which it defines the past (see 13.4.2). Typically it is the tense of fairy tales, when events are placed in a far and abstract past, in a different dimension, separate from the reality of the present:

**Come andò che maestro Ciliegia, falegname, trovò un pezzo di legna che piangeva e rideva come un bambino.**

Appena maestro Ciliegia ebbe visto quel pezzo di legno, si rallegrò tutto e, dandosi una fregatina di mani per la contentezza, borbottò a mezza voce:

– Questo legno è capitato a tempo: voglio servirmene per fare una gamba di tavolino.

Detto fatto, prese subito l’ascia arrotata per cominciare a levargli la scorza e a digrossarlo; ma quando fu lì per lasciare andare la prima asciata, rimase col braccio sospeso in aria, perché sentì una vocina sottile che disse raccomandandosi:

– Non mi picchiar tanto forte!

*(Collodi, Pinocchio, I Libri di Gulliver, 1983)*
**Trappassato prossimo (pluperfect)**

**Forms of trappassato prossimo**
The *trappassato prossimo* is formed by the past participle and the imperfect of *avere* or *essere*. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the *dormire* and verbs of the *finire* pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>avevo parlato</td>
<td>avevo creduto</td>
<td>avevo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>avevi parlato</td>
<td>avevi creduto</td>
<td>avevi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>aveva parlato</td>
<td>aveva creduto</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>avevamo parlato</td>
<td>avevamo creduto</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>avevate parlato</td>
<td>avevate creduto</td>
<td>avevate dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>avevano parlato</td>
<td>avevano creduto</td>
<td>avevano dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uses of trappassato prossimo**
This tense – a past within the past – is used to refer to an event previous to an event in the past. See also 30.5.2 (sequence of tenses), 31.3.1 (indirect or reported speech), 34.3.1 (expressing reason), 36.4.2 (time clause).

Ricordo che tu *eri arrivato* da poco quando Maria ha telefonato.
I remember that you had just arrived when Maria called.

Penso che alle 7.00 Franco *aveva* già *chiuso* il negozio.
I think Franco had already closed the shop at 7.00.

If we place the two examples on a ‘time line’ it is easy to see where the *trappassato prossimo* stands in the sequence of events:

```
trappassato prossimo    passato prossimo    presente
eri arrivato            quando Maria ha telefonato    ricordo
aveva chiuso            alle 7                         penso
```

**Trappassato remoto (past anterior)**

**Forms of trappassato remoto**
The *trappassato remoto* is formed by the past participle and the *passato remoto* of the auxiliary *avere* or *essere*. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the *dormire* and verbs of the *finire* pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>ebbi parlato</td>
<td>ebbi creduto</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>avesti parlato</td>
<td>avesti creduto</td>
<td>avesti dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>ebbe parlato</td>
<td>ebbe creduto</td>
<td>ebbe dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>avemmo parlato</td>
<td>avemmo creduto</td>
<td>avemmo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>aveste parlato</td>
<td>aveste creduto</td>
<td>aveste dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>ebbero parlato</td>
<td>ebbero creduto</td>
<td>ebbero dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uses of trappassato remoto**
The *trappassato remoto* is a pluperfect tense used *only* when the main event or action is expressed by a verb in the *passato remoto*. Its use is rare and generally limited to the literary and more formal registers of the written language. It is always introduced by a conjunction such as *(non)* appena, *dopo* (see also 36.4.2–3), *finché*, *quando* (see also 36.5.2, 36.2.1):
Individual verb moods and tenses

**Dopo che ebbe salutato, usci in fretta.**
After he had said goodbye, he went out in a hurry.

**Appena fu uscita, tutti si misero a ridere.**
As soon as she had gone out, everybody started laughing.

### 2.2.9 Indicativo futuro (future indicative)

#### Forms of futuro

The forms of the future indicative of the three regular conjugations are shown below, with the endings shown in italics. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parl-erò</td>
<td>cred-erò</td>
<td>dorm-irò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parl-erai</td>
<td>cred-erai</td>
<td>dorm-irai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parl-erà</td>
<td>cred-erà</td>
<td>dorm-irà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parl-eremo</td>
<td>cred-eremo</td>
<td>dorm-iremo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parl-erete</td>
<td>cred-erete</td>
<td>dorm-irete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parl-eranno</td>
<td>cred-eranno</td>
<td>dorm-iranno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Irregular forms of futuro

Several verbs have an irregular future indicative. In most cases, the irregularity consists in the contraction of the stem (e.g. *andò* to *andrò*, etc.). In some cases there is not only a contraction but an assimilation of the consonant groups *nr*, *lr* etc. to *rr* as in *berrò*, *rimarrò*, *verrò*, *vorrò*. In the case of *essere*, there is a stem change (*sarò*). The verb forms then follow the regular pattern of the future tense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Future Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>andare</td>
<td><em>andrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avere</td>
<td><em>avrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bere</td>
<td><em>berrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cadere</td>
<td><em>cadrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dovere</td>
<td><em>dovrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essere</td>
<td><em>sarò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potere</td>
<td><em>potrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rimanere</td>
<td><em>rimarrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sapere</td>
<td><em>saprò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tenere</td>
<td><em>terrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedere</td>
<td><em>vedrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venire</td>
<td><em>verrò</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volere</td>
<td><em>vorrò</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar contracted pattern can be seen in the present conditional of these verbs (see 2.2.11 below).

#### Uses of futuro

The future indicative tense is naturally mainly used to refer to facts that will happen in the future in relation to the time when you are speaking or writing. However Italians use this verb tense sparingly, often preferring to use the present tense instead (see 14.3). The future tense is also used in Italian to express probability, as in English ‘it will be . . .’, with no relation to the future time (see 26.4.2):
Che ore sono? Saranno le tre meno dieci.
What time is it? It must be (about) ten to three.

Suona il telefono. Chi sarà? Sarà Davide.
The phone is ringing. Who could it possibly be? It will be Davide.

**Futuro anteriore (future perfect)**

**Forms of futuro anteriore**
The future perfect is a compound tense formed of the future tense of the auxiliary avere or essere together with the past participle of the verb. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugations</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>avrò parlato</td>
<td>avrò creduto</td>
<td>avrò dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>avrai parlato</td>
<td>avrai creduto</td>
<td>avrai dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>avrà parlato</td>
<td>avrà creduto</td>
<td>avrà dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>avremo parlato</td>
<td>avremo creduto</td>
<td>avremo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>avrete parlato</td>
<td>avrete creduto</td>
<td>avrete dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>avranno parlato</td>
<td>avranno creduto</td>
<td>avranno dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uses of futuro anteriore**
The futuro anteriore is used to indicate facts or actions that will take place in the future (in relation to the moment when you are speaking or writing), but before facts or actions that will happen even later; it is a sort of ‘past projected into the future’:

**Non so se avrò finito il lavoro quando arriverà il cliente.**
I don’t know whether I will have finished the job by the time the customer comes.

**Stiamo aspettando la fattura. Quando avremo ricevuto la fattura, Le invieremo i soldi.**
We are waiting for the invoice. When we’ve received the invoice, we’ll send you the money.

Each of the three verbs in each sentence could be illustrated by a time sequence:

```
now  future perfect  future
non so  avrò finito  arriverà
stiamo aspettando  avremo ricevuto  invieremo
```

The examples show the position in time of the actions expressed by the future perfect (avrò finito/avremo ricevuto): they are in the future with reference to the moment of speaking, but are in the past in relation to a second reference point placed in the future (arriverà, invieremo). More examples of the use of the future perfect can be found in 14.7 and 26.4.2.

**Condizionale (conditional): introduction**
The condizionale is used to express a fact, action or event which can/will only take place subject to some condition being met. There are two tenses of the conditional mood: the present and the past.

**Condizionale presente (present conditional)**
Forms of condizionale presente

For the regular verbs, the condizionale presente is formed by adding the conditional endings, shown in italics, to the stem of the verb. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.
Individual verb moods and tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parlerei</td>
<td>crederei</td>
<td>dormirei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parleresti</td>
<td>crederesti</td>
<td>dormiresti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parlerrebbe</td>
<td>crederebbe</td>
<td>dormirebbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parlemmo</td>
<td>credemmo</td>
<td>dormemmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parleste</td>
<td>credeste</td>
<td>dormeste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parlerebbero</td>
<td>crederebbero</td>
<td>dormerebbero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular forms of condizionale presente

The verbs with an irregular present conditional show the same pattern already seen in the future indicative (see 2.2.9 above). In most cases, the irregularity consists in the contraction of the stem (*anderei* to andrei, etc.). In some cases there is not only a contraction but an assimilation of the consonant groups nr, lr, etc. to rr as in berrei, rimarrei, verrei, vorrei. In the case of essere, there is also a stem change (sarei).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>irregular verbs</th>
<th>regular forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>andare</td>
<td>andrei, andresti, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avere</td>
<td>avrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bere</td>
<td>berrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cadere</td>
<td>cadrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dovere</td>
<td>dovreire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essere</td>
<td>sarei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potere</td>
<td>potreire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rimanere</td>
<td>rimarrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sapere</td>
<td>sapreire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedere</td>
<td>vedrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venire</td>
<td>verrei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volere</td>
<td>vorrei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uses of condizionale presente

(a) The condizionale presente is used in conditional sentences. The condition may be explicitly mentioned, usually by using a clause beginning with se ‘if’. In Italian this is called periodo ipotetico (see 38.2–4). This type of sentence is made up of two parts: the condition and the consequence. The condition is introduced by se (‘if such and such were to happen’) and expressed by a verb in the indicative or, more often, the subjunctive mood. The consequence, if the condition were to be met, is expressed by a verb in the indicative or, more often, conditional mood (‘this would be the result’).

**Se fossi ricco, non lavorerei.**
If I were rich, I wouldn’t work.

**Se Lei mi stimasse davvero, mi darebbe più responsabilità.**
If you really valued me, you would give me more responsibility.

(b) The present conditional is often used to express politeness, when making a request. The politeness of these requests lies in their being subject to some implicit condition: ‘I’d like a coffee (if it is available)’, ‘Could you open the window (if it isn’t too much trouble)’. For further examples, see 22.1.1, 22.4.1, 22.4.3 and 23.2.1.

**Vorrei un caffè.**
I would like a coffee.

**Potrebbe aprire la finestra?**
Could you open the window?
(c) The present conditional is also used in many other contexts to ‘soften’ a statement, for example to express an opinion less forcefully:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Secondo me} & \quad \text{dovresti riposarti}. \\
\text{I think you should rest.} \\
\text{Io sarei per la soluzione più facile}. \\
\text{I would be for the easier option.}
\end{align*}
\]

(d) It is also used to express hearsay or an unconfirmed report where English would use the word ‘apparently’ (see 31.4):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{La ragazza sarebbe la figlia di Beckham}. \\
\text{Apparently, the girl is the daughter of Beckham.}
\end{align*}
\]

### 2.2.13 Condizionale passato (past conditional)

#### Forms of condizionale passato

The condizionale passato is formed by the past participle of the verb and the present conditional of avere (as in the examples shown here) or essere. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st person sing</th>
<th>2nd person sing</th>
<th>3rd person sing</th>
<th>1st person pl</th>
<th>2nd person pl</th>
<th>3rd person pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>avrei parlato</td>
<td>avrebbe parlato</td>
<td>avremmo parlato</td>
<td>avreste parlato</td>
<td>avrebbero parlato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>avrei creduto</td>
<td>avrebbe creduto</td>
<td>avremmo creduto</td>
<td>avreste creduto</td>
<td>avrebbero creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avrei dormito</td>
<td>avrebbe dormito</td>
<td>avremmo dormito</td>
<td>avreste dormito</td>
<td>avrebbero dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Uses of condizionale passato

The condizionale passato is used in a similar way to the present conditional shown above, but mainly referring to past time:

(a) It is used to express a consequence in a conditional sentence (see also 38.4):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ieri non sarei arrivato in ritardo se avessi preso il treno}. \\
\text{I wouldn’t have been late yesterday if I had taken the train.}
\end{align*}
\]

(b) It is used to convey a statement or request more politely:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Avrei preferito un caffè}. \\
\text{I would have preferred a coffee.}
\end{align*}
\]

(c) It is used to ‘soften’ a statement, for example to express an opinion less forcefully:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Penso che la Sig.ra Prati avrebbe dovuto pagare in contanti}. \\
\text{I think signora Prati should have paid in cash.}
\end{align*}
\]

(d) It is used to express hearsay or an unconfirmed report, particularly in the press (see 31.4):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Secondo La Repubblica, sarebbero arrivati duecento clandestini sull’isola}. \\
\text{According to La Repubblica, two hundred illegal immigrants arrived on the island.}
\end{align*}
\]

(e) This tense is also used to express an action which took place or was to take place after a point referred to in the past, the so-called ‘future in the past’ (see 30.5.2, 31.1.2, 31.3.1):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{La mia segretaria mi ha detto che avrebbe prenotato l’albergo subito}. \\
\text{My secretary told me that she would reserve the hotel immediately.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Dieci anni fa non immaginavo che tu avresti fatto una carriera così brillante}. \\
\text{Ten years ago I didn’t imagine that you would have such a brilliant career.}
\end{align*}
\]
2.2.14 **Congiuntivo (subjunctive mood): introduction**

The congiuntivo is mainly used to express something which is subjective rather than objective, uncertain rather than definite, a concept rather than a reality. Verbs in the subjunctive mood always depend directly or indirectly on another verb, to which they are linked by *che*, or by a conjunction, thereby forming a complex sentence of at least two verbs. Only in a few cases is the subjunctive used by itself, without depending on another verb.

The ‘indefinite’ or ‘subjective’ nature of the verb phrase may be suggested by something that comes before. This could be any of the following.

The *main verb* on which the subjunctive depends, for example:

*Mi pare che tu abbia esagerato.*
I think you’ve gone a bit over the top.

The *conjunction* that links the two verbs, for example:

*Ti scrivo affinché tu sappia la verità.*
I write to let you know the truth.

The *pronoun* or *adjective* that introduces the verb phrase, for example:

*Qualsiasi canzone lei canti è sempre un piacere ascoltarla.*
Whatever song she sings, it is always a pleasure to listen to her.

The choice of indicative or subjunctive to convey the same facts can determine whether a sentence is objective or subjective.

Look at the two statements below. The first refers to a known, existing, person (as shown also by the use of the definite article ‘*l’* assistente’) and the statement sounds objective, referring to a concrete need that can be met. The second refers to a person needed, who may or may not exist, and therefore the need is presented as ‘subjective’, a wish that cannot necessarily be met.

*Ho bisogno dell’assistente che *parla* italiano.*
I need the assistant who speaks Italian.
(that particular assistant who is known to speak Italian)

*Ho bisogno di un assistente che *parli* italiano.*
I need an assistant who can speak Italian.
(any assistant who might be able to speak Italian, not a particular one)

In the first of the two sentences below, the news is presented as almost certain, while the second sentence, by using the subjunctive, implies a higher degree of doubt or uncertainty about the reliability of the news:

*Sembra che Apple *sta* per lanciare un nuovo computer.*
It seems that Apple is about to launch a new computer.

*Sembra che Apple *stia* per lanciare un nuovo computer.*
It seems that Apple is about to launch a new computer.

These and other uses of the subjunctive in different contexts are illustrated fully in Sections III and IV. It is often said that the subjunctive mood is becoming less common in modern Italian. It is true that Italians tend to associate the frequent use of subjunctive with the more formal, sophisticated registers of language, in particular the written register, to express nuances of meaning. However using the indicative instead of the subjunctive does not only convey a more informal style; it also conveys a different meaning, and may well change substantially the message that you want to communicate.

2.2.15 **Uses of the subjunctive**

In some cases, it is almost compulsory to use the subjunctive, even in the most familiar context of communication. This is particularly true of the following contexts:

(a) After a range of verbs and other expressions expressing hope, doubt, expectation, desire, fear, emotion, including:
desiderare to wish
dubitare to doubt
illudersi to delude oneself
pensare to think
sospettare to suspect
sperare to hope
temere to fear

Spero che abbiate capito.
I hope you understood.

Temo che sia troppo tardi.
I'm afraid it is too late.

Non illuderti che il Napoli possa vincere il campionato.
Don’t delude yourself that ‘Napoli’ can win the championship.

Non avrei mai sospettato che tu fossi capace di mentire.
I would never have suspected you of being able to lie.

See also Sections III and IV in Part B of the book.

(b) With a range of conjunctions, including:

come se as if
malgrado, benché, sebbene although
nonostante despite
prima che before
se if
tranne che, a meno che unless

Prima che sia troppo tardi, dobbiamo pagare il telefono.
We must pay the phone bill, before it is too late.

Parlava come se avesse il raffreddore.
He was speaking as if he had a cold.

Dovete sbrigarvi, a meno che non vogliate fare tardi.
You must hurry up, unless you want to be late.

Malgrado fossero in tre non sono riusciti a sollevare l’armadio.
Although there were three of them, they couldn’t lift the cupboard.

Sebbene siano stanchi, i ragazzi vogliono uscire stasera.
The kids want to go out tonight, although they’re tired.

Se fossi in te, non le parlarrei.
If I were you I wouldn’t speak to her.

See also Part B, Sections III and IV. Se is the conjunction most often used to introduce the subjunctive, usually in the context of a conditional sentence. However, even here, whether to use the subjunctive or not is a matter of personal choice (see 38.2).

(c) After impersonal phrases such as bisogna che, (mi) pare che, (mi) sembra che:

Bisogna che riparino la casa appena possibile.
They need to repair the house as soon as possible.

Mi sembra che il telefono non funzioni.
I think the telephone must be out of order.

Mi pareva che ieri il telefono non funzionasse.
It seemed to me that the phone must have been out of order yesterday.
(d) After an indefinite pronoun or adjective (see 3.9.1) such as chiunque, qualunque, qualsiasi:

Chiunque bussi alla porta, non aprire.
Whoever knocks at the door, don’t open up.

Sono pronta a fare qualsiasi cosa tu mi chieda.
I’m ready to do whatever you ask me.

(e) After a superlative in a dependent clause:

Venezia è la più bella città che io abbia mai visto.
Venice is the most beautiful city I have ever seen.

(f) After a relative clause which restricts the category of person or object you are looking for, with a main verb such as aver bisogno di, cercare, chiedere, volere:

Cerco un assistente che sappia guidare la macchina.
I am looking for an assistant who knows how to drive.

Even in some of the examples shown above, many Italians, speaking informally, might use the indicative instead of the subjunctive. However it is useful to get into the habit of using the subjunctive where it is essential and it is especially important for those who need to communicate formally in Italian. There are four tenses of the subjunctive: present, perfect, imperfect, pluperfect. In 2.2.16–19 we look at each tense individually, both its forms and its uses. The most common irregular subjunctive forms are also shown.

### Congiuntivo presente (Present Subjunctive)

#### Forms of congiuntivo presente

The regular conjugations of the present subjunctive have the same ending for all three singular persons. Note the variation between verbs of the dormire pattern and those of the finire pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>3rd (-isc-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parli</td>
<td>creda</td>
<td>dorma</td>
<td>finisca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parli</td>
<td>creda</td>
<td>dorma</td>
<td>finisca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parliamo</td>
<td>crediamo</td>
<td>dormiamo</td>
<td>finiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parliate</td>
<td>crediate</td>
<td>dormiate</td>
<td>finiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parlino</td>
<td>credano</td>
<td>dormano</td>
<td>finiscano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Irregular forms of congiuntivo presente

As is often the case, the verbs most frequently used have irregular forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>avere</th>
<th>essere</th>
<th>dare</th>
<th>dire</th>
<th>fare</th>
<th>stare</th>
<th>andare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abbia</td>
<td>sia</td>
<td>dia</td>
<td>dica</td>
<td>faccia</td>
<td>staia</td>
<td>vada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbia</td>
<td>sia</td>
<td>dia</td>
<td>dica</td>
<td>faccia</td>
<td>staia</td>
<td>vada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbia</td>
<td>sia</td>
<td>dia</td>
<td>dica</td>
<td>faccia</td>
<td>staia</td>
<td>vada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbiamo</td>
<td>siamo</td>
<td>diamo</td>
<td>diciamo</td>
<td>facciamo</td>
<td>stiamo</td>
<td>andiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbiate</td>
<td>siate</td>
<td>diate</td>
<td>diciate</td>
<td>facciate</td>
<td>stiate</td>
<td>andiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbiano</td>
<td>siano</td>
<td>diano</td>
<td>dicano</td>
<td>facciano</td>
<td>stiano</td>
<td>vadano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Uses of congiuntivo presente

The present subjunctive is used when you want to mention something that is in the same time context or the future (there is no future tense in the subjunctive). It is almost always linked to a main verb in the present tense (see also 30.5.1):
Spero che tu capisca.
I hope you understand.

Credo che l’agenzia di viaggio ci prenoti l’aereo oggi stesso.
I think the travel agency is booking our flight today.

**Congiuntivo passato (perfect subjunctive)**

**Forms of congiuntivo passato**
The perfect subjunctive is formed by past participle and the present subjunctive of the auxiliary avere or essere. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugations</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>abbia parlato</td>
<td>abbia creduto</td>
<td>abbia dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>abbia parlato</td>
<td>abbia creduto</td>
<td>abbia dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>abbia parlato</td>
<td>abbia creduto</td>
<td>abbia dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>abbiamo parlato</td>
<td>abbiamo creduto</td>
<td>abbiamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>abbiate parlato</td>
<td>abbiate creduto</td>
<td>abbiate dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>abbiano parlato</td>
<td>abbiano creduto</td>
<td>abbiano dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uses of congiuntivo passato**
The perfect subjunctive is used to refer to a past fact linked to a main verb, usually but not always in the present tense:

Credo che l’agenzia di viaggio ci abbia prenotato l’aereo ieri.
The travel agency should have reserved our flight yesterday, I think.

Marco penserà che tu sia uscito.
Marco will think you have gone out.

**Congiuntivo imperfetto (imperfect subjunctive)**

**Forms of congiuntivo imperfetto**
Here are the endings of the imperfect subjunctive. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern. Note how 1st and 2nd persons have the same ending (-assi, -essi, -issi).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>part-assi</td>
<td>cred-essi</td>
<td>dorm-issi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>part-assi</td>
<td>cred-essi</td>
<td>dorm-issi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>part-asse</td>
<td>cred-esse</td>
<td>dorm-isse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>part-assimo</td>
<td>cred-essimo</td>
<td>dorm-issimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>part-aste</td>
<td>cred-este</td>
<td>dorm-iste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>part-assero</td>
<td>cred-esser</td>
<td>dorm-isser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Irregular forms of congiuntivo imperfetto**
The following verbs have either stem changes (as in the case of dare, essere, stare) or forms that relate to an older infinitive (as in the case of bere, dire, fare). Their endings then follow the regular pattern of imperfect subjunctive endings.
Individual verb moods and tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Imperfect subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bere (*bevere)</td>
<td>bevessi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dare</td>
<td>dessi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dire (*dicere)</td>
<td>dicessi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essere</td>
<td>fossi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fare (*facere)</td>
<td>facessi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stare</td>
<td>stessi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uses of congiuntivo imperfetto

The imperfect subjunctive is used for events or actions taking place in the same time context as the action of the main verb in the past:

Credevo che l’agenzia di viaggio *prenotasse* l’aereo il giorno stesso.
I assumed that the travel agency was booking our flight that same day.

The imperfect subjunctive is also used to express a present or future action, which depends on a main verb in the present conditional:

Sarebbe bene che domani *arrivasse* in orario.
It would be better if he arrived on time tomorrow.

Compreresti una Rolls Royce, se *avesse* i soldi?
Would you buy a Rolls Royce, if you had the money?

2.2.19

Congiuntivo trapassato (pluperfect subjunctive)

Forms of congiuntivo trapassato

The pluperfect subjunctive is formed by the past participle and the imperfect subjunctive of *avere* or *essere*. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the *dormire* and verbs of the *finire* pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>avessimo parlato</td>
<td>avessimo creduto</td>
<td>avessimo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>aveste parlato</td>
<td>aveste creduto</td>
<td>aveste dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>avessero parlato</td>
<td>avessero creduto</td>
<td>avessero dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uses of congiuntivo trapassato

The pluperfect subjunctive is used to refer to an earlier event referred to by a main verb in the past tense:

Speravo che *avesse capito*.
I hoped you had understood.

Credevo che l’agenzia di viaggi ci *avesse prenotato* l’aereo già da un mese.
I assumed the travel agency had already reserved our flight a month ago.

2.2.20

The subjunctive used as a main verb

In a few cases the subjunctive is used by itself as a main verb without depending on another verb.
(a) To give an order or invite somebody to do something, when using the polite **Lei/Loro** form. In this function the present subjunctive serves as the 3rd person form of the imperative, both singular and plural (see below):

**Prego, dica!**
Can I help you? (literally: Please, tell me)

**Prego, si accomodi.**
Please, have a seat.

**Esca immediatamente!**
Get out immediately!

**Prego signori, vengano di qua.**
Please come over this side, gentlemen.

(b) In exclamations, to express a wish or a threat:

**Dio salvi la Regina.**
God save the Queen.

**Viva l’Italia!**
Long live Italy!

**Dio ti benedica.**
God bless you.

**Ti venga un accidente.**
Drop dead.

When expressing a wish, the imperfect subjunctive can be introduced by **magari** ‘if only’ or **se** ‘if’:

**Magari potessi andare in vacanza . . .**
If only I could go on holiday . . .

**Se avessi vent’anni!**
If I were twenty years old!

In these examples, the subjunctive, although used alone, still depends on a main verb, although it is implicit rather than actually stated:

**(Spero che) ti venga un accidente!**
(I hope that) something horrible happens to you!

**(Mi auguro che) Dio ti benedica.**
(I wish that) God would bless you.

**Se avessi vent’anni (farei tante cose) . . .**
If I were young (I would do lots of things) . . .

---

**Imperativo (imperative)**

**Introduction**
The imperative is the mood you use when you want to give orders or to ask somebody to do something, so it has no 1st person singular form. The 2nd person singular (**tu**) and 2nd person plural (**voi**) are used to address someone informally, while the 3rd person form (**Lei**) is used to address someone formally. The 1st person plural form (**noi**) is more of an exhortation than a command. The 3rd person plural form (**loro**) is used only to address more than one person formally (for example, a hotel receptionist addressing clients) and is now almost always replaced by the **voi** form.

**Forms of the imperativo**
The polite ‘you’ forms of the imperative (singular **Lei** and plural **Loro**) are actually present subjunctive forms (see 2.2.16). Note too the variation between verbs of the **dormire** pattern and those of the **finire** pattern:
Individual verb moods and tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tu</strong></td>
<td>parl-a</td>
<td>cred-i</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
<td>fin-isci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lei</strong></td>
<td>parl-i</td>
<td>cred-a</td>
<td>dorm-a</td>
<td>fin-isca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>noi</strong></td>
<td>parl-iamo</td>
<td>cred-iamo</td>
<td>dorm-iamo</td>
<td>fin-iamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>voi</strong></td>
<td>parl-ate</td>
<td>cred-ete</td>
<td>dorm-ite</td>
<td>fin-ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>loro</strong></td>
<td>parl-ino</td>
<td>cred-ano</td>
<td>dorm-ano</td>
<td>fin-iscano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular forms of the imperativo

A few verbs have an irregular imperative with stem change. Here we show only the main forms of imperative (tu, Lei, voi):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>avere</th>
<th>essere</th>
<th>sapere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>abbi</td>
<td>sii</td>
<td>sappi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lei</td>
<td>abbia</td>
<td>sia</td>
<td>sappia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voi</td>
<td>abbiate</td>
<td>stiate</td>
<td>sappiate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the five verbs andare, dare, dire, fare, stare, the shortened tu imperative forms are normally marked with an apostrophe (va’, da’, di’, fa’, sta’), to distinguish them from the prepositions di, da or the third person singular of the present indicative da, fa, sta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>andare</th>
<th>dare</th>
<th>dire</th>
<th>fare</th>
<th>stare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>va’</td>
<td>da’</td>
<td>di’</td>
<td>fa’</td>
<td>sta’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lei</td>
<td>vada</td>
<td>dia</td>
<td>dica</td>
<td>faccia</td>
<td>stia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voi</td>
<td>andate</td>
<td>date</td>
<td>dite</td>
<td>fate</td>
<td>state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *Abbi pazienza!* Be patient!
- *Sii prudente!* Be prudent (drive carefully)!
- *Dammi la penna, per favore!* Please give me the pen.
- *Fammi un piacere.* Do me a favour.
- *Vallo a trovare.* Go to see him.

The last example is very colloquial use; normally the direct object pronoun would be attached to the end of the infinitive, rather than the first verb (Va’ a trovarlo).

Uses of the imperativo

- *Ama il prossimo tuo come te stesso.* Love your neighbour like yourself.
- *Prendimi l’ombrello, per favore.* Please, get my umbrella for me.
- *Dott. Bianchi, finisca quella lettera e poi venga da me.* Dr Bianchi, could you please finish that letter and then come to see me.
- *Mi dia il telefono, per favore.* Give me the telephone, please.
- *Aiuto, datemi una mano.* Help, give me a hand.
- *Credetemi, sono sincero.* Believe me, I am sincere.

Note how in the examples above the tu or voi imperative is combined with any pronoun used, whether direct or indirect object or reflexive (see also 3.4.7), while with the Lei imperative, the pronoun comes before.
The imperative form of the verbs dare, fare, stare, andare is sometimes replaced by a request, using the second person indicative forms dai, fai, stai, vai, since these sound less abrupt.

For more illustrations of the use of the imperative, see 21.2.

### Negative imperative

To ask somebody not to do something, addressing someone with the tu form, use non + verb infinitive. For all other persons of the imperative, simply add non.

**Tu:**
Teresa, non giocare in casa con la palla.
Teresa, don’t play indoors with the ball.

Franco, non preoccuparti.
Don’t worry, Franco

**Lei:**
Non si preoccupi, signora Rossi.
Don’t worry, signora Rossi.

**Voi:**
Bambini, non andate lontano.
Children, don’t go far away.

### Gerundio (gerund): introduction

The gerund (whether present or past) is always used in connection with another verb on which it is closely dependent. The subject of the gerund must be the same as that of the main verb (unless explicitly stated). The gerund is invariable: it does not change form whether its subject is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. It has two forms: present and perfect.

### Gerundio presente (present gerund)

#### Forms of gerundio (presente)

The gerundio is formed by adding the endings -ando for the 1st conjugation and -endo for the 2nd and 3rd conjugations, to the verb stem. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Gerundio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parlando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>credendo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormendo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>finendo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Irregular forms of the gerundio (presente)

The gerund forms of verbs such as bere, dire, fare are based on the older long verb stem:

- bere – bevendo
- dire – dicendo
- fare – facendo

When the gerund has an unstressed pronoun as direct or indirect object, the pronoun is attached to the end of the verb (see 3.4.7):

Guardandoli bene ho capito che quei francobolli erano falsi.
Looking at them carefully I realized that those stamps were false.

Dandole più fiducia otterrai migliori risultati da lei.
By putting more trust in her, you will get better results from her.
Individual verb moods and tenses

### Uses of gerundio (presente)
The gerund is used as follows:

(a) To indicate an action happening at the same time as that of the main verb, be it past, present or future:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Il Prof. Neri parla leggendo gli appunti.} & \quad \text{Prof. Neri speaks reading from notes.} \\
\text{Il Prof. Neri ha parlato leggendo gli appunti.} & \quad \text{Prof. Neri spoke reading from notes.} \\
\text{Il Prof. Neri parlerà leggendo gli appunti.} & \quad \text{Prof. Neri will speak reading from notes.}
\end{align*}
\]

(b) With stare (in present or imperfect tense) to describe an action in progress:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sto preparando il caffè.} & \quad \text{I'm making coffee.} \\
\text{Non ho risposto al telefono perché stavo facendo la doccia.} & \quad \text{I didn't answer the phone because I was having a shower.}
\end{align*}
\]

(c) The gerundio cannot be used to translate the English -ing form. In Italian you would use a relative clause with che:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{C'è un uomo che bussa alla porta.} & \quad \text{There is a man knocking at the door.} \\
\text{Ho visto uno studente che leggeva 'Panorama'.} & \quad \text{I saw a student reading ‘Panorama’.}
\end{align*}
\]

### Gerundio passato (past gerund)

#### Forms of gerundio al passato
The past gerund is formed by the gerund of the auxiliary avere or essere (as in the case of partire) and the past participle. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the dormire and verbs of the finire pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>avendo parlato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedere</td>
<td>avendo visto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avendo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partire</td>
<td>essendo partito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Uses of gerundio al passato
The past gerund indicates an action that took place before that of the main verb, whatever the tense:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Avendo distribuito gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri parla in italiano.} & \quad \text{Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri speaks in Italian.} \\
\text{Avendo distribuito gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri ha parlato in italiano.} & \quad \text{Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri spoke in Italian.} \\
\text{Avendo distribuito gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri parlerà in italiano.} & \quad \text{Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri will speak in Italian.}
\end{align*}
\]

### Participio presente (present participle)

#### Forms of participio presente
The present participle is formed by the endings -ante/i in the 1st conjugation and -ente/i in the 2nd and 3rd conjugations. In modern Italian this form is very rarely used as a verb, and has taken on the function of adjective or noun:
Uses of *participio presente*

As a verb it is sometimes used in very formal and bureaucratic language:

**Gli impiegati perdenti il posto riceveranno una pensione.**
The employees losing their jobs will receive a pension.

**Vivente il padre, i figli non ricevono l’eredità.**
The father being alive, the children shall not receive the inheritance.

But in general it is preferable to use a gerund, a relative clause (**che** . . .) or a time clause (**quando** . . . or **mentre** . . .):

**Gli impiegati che perdono il posto riceveranno una pensione.**
**Mentre il padre è in vita, i figli non ricevono l’eredità.**

**Participio passato** (past participle)

Unlike the present participle, the past participle is one of the most frequently used forms of Italian verbs. It is found in all *compound tenses* of verbs, together with the auxiliary *avere* or *essere*.

**Forms of participio passato**

The regular past participle is formed by the endings -*ato* for the 1st, -*uto* for the 2nd, and -*ito* for the 3rd conjugation. In this tense, there is no difference between verbs of the *dormire* and verbs of the *finire* pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>guardare</td>
<td>guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Its endings have to agree with the subject (in the case of verbs taking the auxiliary *essere*) or sometimes the object of the verb (see below), following the pattern of adjectives in o/a/i/e (see 1.5).

**Irregular forms of participio passato**

There are many verbs with an irregular past participle. All verbs with irregular past participles are listed in Appendix III. But some basic groups can be identified:
### Individual verb moods and tenses

#### 2.2

(a) Verbs (mainly 2nd conjugation) with past participle ending in -so such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accendere</td>
<td>acceso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apparire</td>
<td>apparso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiudere</td>
<td>chiuso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correre</td>
<td>corso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decidere</td>
<td>deciso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mettere</td>
<td>messo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perdere</td>
<td>perso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prendere</td>
<td>preso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scendere</td>
<td>sceso</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Verbs of the 2nd and 3rd conjugation with past participle ending in -to or -tto such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aprire</td>
<td>aperto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiedere</td>
<td>chiesto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dire</td>
<td>detto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essere</td>
<td>stato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leggere</td>
<td>letto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morire</td>
<td>morto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nascere</td>
<td>nato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offrire</td>
<td>offerto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>porre</td>
<td>posto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>produrre</td>
<td>prodotto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rispondere</td>
<td>risposto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rompere</td>
<td>rotto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scegliere</td>
<td>scelto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrivere</td>
<td>scritto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedere</td>
<td>visto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradurre</td>
<td>tradotto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venire</td>
<td>venuto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vivere</td>
<td>vissuto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Uses of participio passato

The past participle is used in two ways:

(a) In compound tenses

Compound tenses are formed with auxiliary avere or essere. When the auxiliary is avere, the participle ends in -o (masculine singular), and does not change to agree with the subject of the verb:

L’Avv. Serpe non aveva capitato il suo problema e la Sig.ra Brandi gli ha scritto un pro-memoria.

Dr Serpe didn’t understand her problem so Mrs Brandi wrote a memorandum for him.

Sandro e Lucia hanno lavorato bene.

Sandro and Lucia did a good job.

But if the verb is preceded by a direct object pronoun the participle changes to agree with the gender and number of this pronoun (see also 3.4.9):

**Avete visto quelle pratiche?**
Did you see those files?

**Si, le abbiamo viste.**
Yes, we’ve seen them.

**Hai visto Elisa?**
Did you see Elisa?

**Si, l’ho vista.**
Yes, I saw her.

When the auxiliary is essere the past participle always agrees with the gender and number of the subject:
È arrivato il mio stipendio?
Has my salary arrived?
È arrivata la posta?
Has the mail arrived?
Ci siamo accorti troppo tardi del nostro errore.
We realised our mistake too late.
Le fatture non sono state ancora ricevute dal cliente.
The invoices haven’t yet been received by the customer.

(b) As a verb form on its own
As a verb form on its own it can have the same function as an adjective (i.e. qualifying a noun) and its ending is in agreement with the gender and number of the noun it qualifies:

Oggi non c’era posta indirizzata a Lei, Sig. Sini.
There was no mail addressed to you today, Mr Sini.
Oggi non c’erano lettere indirizzate a Lei, Sig. Sini.
There were no letters addressed to you today, Mr Sini.
Dove sono i pacchi arrivati oggi?
Where are the parcels that arrived today?

It can also have the function of a verb in its own right, expressing an action completed before the action expressed in the main clause; the subject can be the same as that of the main verb or a different one:

Appena arrivati, abbiamo preso un caffè.
As soon as we arrived, we had a coffee.
Appena arrivato Franco, prendiamo un caffè.
As soon as Franco has arrived, we’ll have a coffee.
Sconfitto l’esercito borbonico a Calatafimi, Garibaldi avanzò verso Palermo.
After defeating the Bourbon army at Calatafimi, Garibaldi advanced towards Palermo.

The past participle can also take an unstressed pronoun (direct or indirect) as its object, in which case the pronoun is attached to the end of the participle (see also 3.4.7).

Vistala arrivare, ho chiamato Sara dal balcone.
As I saw her arriving, I called Sara from the balcony.
Consegnatigli i documenti, sono tornato in ufficio.
After delivering the documents to him, I came back to the office.
Pronouns

What is a pronoun?
A pronoun (pro + noun) is literally a word that takes the place of, or fulfils the function of, a noun in certain specific circumstances.

There are several types of pronouns in Italian (as in English): demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, personal, possessive, relative. Each type of pronoun is covered separately in this section.

In order to complete the picture, for the demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative and possessive pronouns, we also look at the corresponding adjectives at the same time.

Personal pronouns: introduction

Personal pronouns are the main thread of any spoken or written discourse. Their function is to refer to somebody or something known to both speaker and listener, either when they are present or when they have already been mentioned in the conversation or in the text. In Italian personal pronouns have the same gender and number as the noun to which they refer.

Stressed personal pronouns

Stressed pronouns are only used when you want to identify clearly the person to whom you are referring, usually to distinguish him/her from somebody else (see 8.3 and 8.4). Stressed pronouns almost always refer to people, rather than to things or animals.

Stressed pronouns are normally quite separate from other words, and in particular from the verb. For this reason they are sometimes called disjunctive (non-joined) pronouns. This separateness gives them a more emphatic position in the sentence. They are distinguished from the more common unstressed pronouns by three main characteristics: (a) their form; (b) their position; (c) the stress that falls on them.

Subject pronouns

Subject pronouns are used to emphasise the person or thing responsible for the action (see 8.3 and 8.4). The forms of the subject pronouns are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>io</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lui</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei</td>
<td>she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lei</td>
<td>you (formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noi</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voi</td>
<td>you (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loro</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loro</td>
<td>you (formal, plural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other subject pronouns, sometimes found in formal written language and older texts, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>egli</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essa</td>
<td>she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essi</td>
<td>them (masculine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esse</td>
<td>them (feminine)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Italian it is not essential to use subject pronouns with verbs, unlike in English (see 2.1.3), since the endings of Italian verbs always show who the subject (or person) is, without the need for a pronoun. So the use of pronouns is limited to situations where you need to give special emphasis to the subject (see also 8.4, 18.3):

**Chi te l’ha detto?**
Who told you that?

**Me l’ha detto lui.**
*He* told me.

**Io sono scozzese, lei è gallese.**
*I* am Scottish, *she* is Welsh.

### Object pronouns

Object pronouns are used to refer to the person or thing that is the target of an action, and stressed object pronouns place particular emphasis on it. For this reason they are generally much less used than the corresponding unstressed forms (see 3.4).

The forms of the stressed object pronouns are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>me</th>
<th>te</th>
<th>lui</th>
<th>lei</th>
<th>Lei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>you (formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noi</td>
<td>voi</td>
<td>loro</td>
<td>lei</td>
<td>you (plural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These pronouns can be used as the *direct object* of a verb, for example:

**Vorrei vedere te al posto mio!**
I’d like to see *you* in my place!

or, preceded by a preposition, as the *indirect object* or other complement of a verb:

**Dai a me quei soldi.**
Give that money *to me."

**Devi parlare più forte con lui, perché è duro d’orecchi.**
You have to speak louder *to him*, because he’s hard of hearing.

For more on the uses of stressed object pronouns, see 18.4.1 and 24.2.1.

Indirect object pronouns (indicating the person or thing *at which* the action of the verb is directed) also have an unstressed form, used without the preposition *a* (see 3.4.2). With a preposition, only stressed pronouns can be used.

### Reflexive pronouns (stressed)

Reflexive pronouns refer to the object or other complement of a verb, when it is the same person as the subject. This is expressed in English by the use of ‘-self’ (‘himself, ourselves’, etc.).

Here are the stressed (emphatic) forms (for the unstressed forms, see 3.4.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>me (stesso/a)</th>
<th>te (stesso/a)</th>
<th>sé (stesso/a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>myself</td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>him/herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noi (stessi/e)</td>
<td>voi (stessi/e)</td>
<td>sé (stessi/e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ourselves</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
<td>themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of *stesso*, to increase the emphasis given to the pronoun, is optional. It is not necessary to omit the accent on *sé* when it is followed by *stesso*, although many writers do.

**Dovrebbe criticare sé stesso invece di dare la colpa agli altri.**
He ought to be more critical of himself instead of putting the blame on others.

**Ama il prossimo tuo come te stesso.**
Love thy neighbour as thyself.

**Sei arrabbiata con te stessa, perché hai fatto un errore.**
You are angry with yourself, because you made a mistake.
Unstressed personal pronouns

The most common way to refer to somebody or something, without mentioning them explicitly, is to use unstressed pronouns (see 18.4.2–3). Because they are always used in conjunction with a verb, they are also called conjunctive pronouns. The unstressed pronouns can be direct object, indirect object or reflexive, depending on their relationship with the verb. The unstressed pronouns are always used without a preposition. (With a preposition, for example a, da, di, con, per, only the stressed forms can be used.) The unstressed pronouns normally come after the verb with some exceptions: they come after and are attached to the infinitive, the gerund, the participle and the tu, noi, voi imperative forms (see 3.4.7 below).

3.4.1 Direct object pronouns

Direct object pronouns are those used with transitive verbs such as amare, comprare, leggere, mangiare, odiare, sentire, vedere, to name just a few (see 2.1.6). They indicate the thing, person or entity that the action of the verb directly affects, in other words, its ‘object’, and are much more frequently used than the stressed object pronouns seen above (see also 18.4.1 and 18.4.2).

- **mi** me
- **ti** you
- **lo** him, it
- **la** her, it
- **La** you (formal)
- **ci** us
- **vi** you (plural)
- **li** them
- **le** them

Oggi ho fatto una discussione con il capo. Lui **mi** odia.

Today I had an argument with my boss. He hates me.

**Ti** amo più di ogni altra cosa al mondo.

I love you more than anything else in the world.

I ragazzi non vogliono la pizza, non **la** mangiano mai.

The kids don’t want pizza, they never eat it.

Scendiamo dalla macchina, così Giancarla **ci** vede.

Let’s get out of the car, that way Giancarla will see us.

3.4.2 Indirect object pronouns

The indirect object pronouns are used to indicate that the action of a verb is aimed at or to something or somebody (see 18.4.1–3, 24.1–2, 25.3.2). They are used, therefore, with verbs which take an indirect object, such as dare, mandare, telefonare. When used alongside a direct object, they produce combined pronoun forms (see 3.4.6). One of their most common uses is with the verb piacere to express likes and dislikes.

The indirect object forms are as follows:

| **mi** | to me |
| **ti** | to you |
| **gli** | to him |
| **le** | to her |
| **vi** | to you (plural) |
| **gli (loro†)** | to them |
| **ci** | to us |

Note: In written Italian, and occasionally in formal spoken Italian, the pronoun loro (coming after the verb) can be used instead of gli.

**Ti** telefono domani mattina.

I’ll call you tomorrow morning.

**Le** do la chiave della stanza, signora.

I’ll give you the room key, signora.

**Il** caffè **mi** piace dolce.

I like my coffee sweet.

I bambini sono contenti. **Gli** piace il cioccolato!

The children are happy. They like chocolate.
Reflexive pronouns refer to the object or other complement of a verb, when it is the same person as the subject. This is expressed in English by the use of ‘-self’ (‘himself, ourselves’, etc.). We have already looked at the stressed form of the reflexive pronouns (see 3.3.3 above). The unstressed reflexive pronouns are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mi</td>
<td>myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si</td>
<td>himself/herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ti</td>
<td>yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se</td>
<td>themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reflexive pronouns have the same function as the direct object pronouns seen above, but are used when the object and the subject of the verb are the same person.

Io mi lavo tutte le mattine alle 7.
I wash (myself) every morning at 7.

Guarda ti allo specchio!
Look at yourself in the mirror!

I miei figli si stanno preparando per gli esami.
My children are getting (themselves) ready for the exams.

In addition to this genuinely reflexive use, these pronouns are also used with the various pronominal forms of verbs (see 2.1.10).

Although it might seem as if there are a lot of different pronoun forms to learn, in the first and second person the unstressed pronouns (mi, ti, ci, vi) are all the same, whether indirect object, direct object or reflexive. The indirect object, direct object and reflexive pronouns differ from each other only in the third person singular and plural, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine sing</td>
<td>gli</td>
<td>lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine sing</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine pl</td>
<td>gli</td>
<td>li</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine pl</td>
<td>gli</td>
<td>le</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.4 Ne

Ne used as partitive
The pronoun ne is called partitive when it refers to a part or quantity of something or somebody. Ne is almost always used with an indication of quantity. It may be a number, a specification of weight or length, or an indefinite pronoun, for example molto, poco (un po’, un pochino), troppo, abbastanza (see also 11.6.5, 11.7):

Desidera del pane? Si, ne vorrei un chilo.
Would you like some bread? Yes, I would like one kilo (of it).

È squisito questo gelato. Vuoi assaggiarne un po’?
This ice cream is delicious. Would you like to taste a little bit (of it)?

Ne is invariable (does not change form) and can refer to any noun (masculine, feminine, singular or plural). It occupies the same position in the sentence as the other unstressed pronouns: either before the verb or after and attached to the infinitive, the gerund, the participle and the tu, noi, voi imperative forms (see 3.4.7).

Although invariable, ne reflects the number and gender of the noun to which it refers. In the compound tenses, therefore, the past participle generally agrees with the noun that ne represents, as in the two examples below (see also 3.4.8):

Oggi sono arrivate molte telefonate. Solo Carmen ne ha ricevute dieci.
Today there have been a lot of telephone calls. Carmen alone has had ten (of them).

Oggi sono arrivati molti clienti. Solo il capo ne ha ricevuti cinque.
Today there have been a lot of customers. The boss alone has dealt with five (of them).
Other uses of *ne*
There are a few cases in which *ne* is used without a ‘partitive’ meaning, in other words, without any reference to quantity:

(a) With a verb which takes *di* (for example, *pentirsi di*, *lamentarsi di*), expressing ‘of it, about it’:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Non ho comprato quella macchina e me } ne \text{ pento.} \\
& \text{I didn’t buy that car and I regret it.} \\
\text{Franco lavora troppo, ma non se } ne \text{ lamenta.} \\
& \text{Franco works too much, but he doesn’t complain about it.}
\end{align*}
\]

(b) Expressing ‘from, out of’:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I miei affari vanno bene. } Ne \text{ ricavo un buon profitto.} \\
& \text{My business is going well. I’m making a good profit (out of it).} \\
\text{Questo ufficio è male organizzato e } ne \text{ deriva molta confusione.} \\
& \text{This office is badly organized and a great deal of confusion arises (from this fact).}
\end{align*}
\]

(c) With *andarsene*, *starsene* and other idiomatic verb phrases:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{V atte } ne! \quad \text{Andateve } ne! \\
& \text{Go away! (plural)} \\
\text{Non ce la faccio più. } Me \text{ ne vado!} \\
& \text{I can’t stand it any more. I’m going away!} \\
\text{Oggi ho la febbre. } È \text{ meglio che me } ne \text{ stia a casa.} \\
& \text{Today I’ve got a high temperature. I’d better stay at home.} \\
\text{Chi se } ne \text{ frega!} \\
& \text{Who cares! (} fregarsene \text{ is rather coarse)} \\
\text{Non me } ne \text{ importa niente!} \\
& \text{I don’t care at all! (colloquial but not vulgar or coarse)} \\
\text{Non } ne \text{ posso più!} \\
& \text{I can’t bear it any more!} \\
\text{Non } ne \text{ vale la pena!} \\
& \text{It is not worth the effort!}
\end{align*}
\]

For examples of *ne* used as adverb of place, see 6.2.5.

**3.4.5 Particle *ci***

Like *ne*, *ci* can be used as a pronoun, as an adverb of place, or idiomatically in several expressions. Like the other conjunctive pronouns, it is normally positioned before the verb, but comes after and is attached to an infinitive, gerund, participle, or the *tu, noi, voi* form of the imperative:

(a) As an adverb of place, either static or implying movement, with verbs such as *abitare*, *andare*, *mettere*, *venire* and of course *essere*:

\[
\begin{align*}
C’è \ldots & \quad Ci sono \ldots \\
& \text{There is . . . There are . . .} \\
C’era una volta (una principessa) \ldots & \quad Ci vado quest’estate. \\
& \text{Once upon a time there was (a princess) . . . I’m going there this summer.} \\
\text{Napoli mi piace molto. } Ci \text{ abito da dieci anni.} \\
& \text{I like Naples a lot. I’ve been living here for ten years.}
\end{align*}
\]

When used as an adverb of place, along with an unstressed direct object pronoun or *ne*, *ci* occupies a different position according to the pronoun it is found with:
3.4 PRONOUNS

- It comes after the direct object pronouns mi, ti, vi to form combinations mi ci, ti ci, vi ci. The combination ci ci is not used; vi ci is used in its place, with vi as an adverb of place coming before the direct object pronoun ci.

  **Chi mi porta all’aeroporto?**       **Ti ciporto io.**
  Who’s taking me to the airport? I’ll take you there.
  **Chi ci porta alla stazione?**    **Vi ciporto io.**
  Who’s taking us to the station? I’ll take you there.

- It comes before the direct object pronouns lo, la, li, le and before ne and changes its form to ce to form the combinations ce lo, ce la, ce li, ce le, ce ne.

  **Voglio portare il gatto in aereo, ma come ce lo porto?**
  I want to take my cat on the plane, but how do I carry him on there?

For further examples of ci used as an adverb of place, see 6.2.5.

(b) As a pronoun, used with a verb taking a, to replace either a + noun or a + verb infinitive:

  **Fumi ancora? Perché non ci rinunci veramente? (ci = a fumare)**
  Are you still smoking? Why don’t you really give it up?

  **L’Italia mi manca molto. Ci penso spesso. (ci = all’Italia)**
  I miss Italy a lot. I often think about it.

(c) Used idiomatically with certain verbs (see also 11.5.1):

  **Non ci vedo.** I can’t see.
  **Non ci sto.** I’m not up for it.

(d) With the verb avere when accompanied by a direct object pronoun such as lo, la, li, le, changing its form to ce:

  **Ce l’hai?**
  Have you got it?
  **Ce le ho.**
  I have them.

(e) With a reflexive verb, to replace impersonal si (see also 2.1.12):

  **In campagna ci si alza presto.**
  In the countryside one gets up early (people get up early).

  If the impersonal si were used with the third person of a reflexive verb si alza, this would produce *In campagna si si alza presto. To avoid repetition and confusion, the first si changes to ci, as shown in the example above.

3.4.6 Combined pronouns (indirect + direct)

Unstressed pronouns are often used in combination with each other and with ne. When the indirect pronouns mi, ti, gli, le, ci, vi and the reflexive pronoun si are combined with the third person direct object pronouns lo, la, li, le, the indirect object pronoun always comes first. In the case of mi, ti, ci, vi, si, the -i ending changes to -e. Both gli and le combine with the direct object pronoun to form a single word. For combinations with ci used as adverb of place, see 3.4.5.

The table below shows the possible combinations of indirect pronouns (the column on the left), direct pronouns and ne.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>lo</th>
<th>la</th>
<th>li</th>
<th>le</th>
<th>ne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mi:</td>
<td>me lo</td>
<td>me la</td>
<td>me li</td>
<td>me le</td>
<td>me ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ti:</td>
<td>te lo</td>
<td>te la</td>
<td>te li</td>
<td>te le</td>
<td>te ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gli, le:</td>
<td>glielo</td>
<td>gliela</td>
<td>glieli</td>
<td>gliene</td>
<td>gliene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si:</td>
<td>se lo</td>
<td>se la</td>
<td>se li</td>
<td>se le</td>
<td>se ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci:</td>
<td>ce lo</td>
<td>ce la</td>
<td>ce li</td>
<td>ce le</td>
<td>ce ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi:</td>
<td>ve lo</td>
<td>ve la</td>
<td>ve li</td>
<td>ve le</td>
<td>ve ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gli:</td>
<td>glielo</td>
<td>gliela</td>
<td>glieli</td>
<td>gliene</td>
<td>gliene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unstressed personal pronouns

These combined pronouns, like all the other unstressed pronouns, are normally placed before the verb (me la dai, gliel’ho detto), but they come after and are attached to the infinitive, participle, gerund and tu, noi and voi imperative forms, combining in a single word (dartela, dammelo):

Che bella rosa! Me la dai?
What a beautiful rose! Will you give it to me?

Gliel’ho detto io.
I told her (it).

No non voglio dartela!
No, I don’t want to give it to you!

Per favore, diglielo tu.
Please tell her it.

3.4 Position before and after verb

The normal position of the unstressed pronouns (whether direct, indirect or combined) is before the verb:

Mi passi lo zucchero?
Me lo passi?

With the infinitive, gerund, participle or tu, noi, voi imperatives, however, the pronouns are attached to the end of the verb form, as in the examples below:

Vengo a trovarvi a Natale.
I’ll come and see you at Christmas.

Conoscendoti bene, direi che ti troverai bene in Sicilia.
Knowing you well, I’d say that you will like Sicily.

Alzati!
Get up!

Chiamiamolo!
Let’s call him.

Chiamatemi!
Call me!

In the case of the imperative forms da’, di’, fa’, sta’, the first letter of the object pronouns mi, ti, lo, la, ci, vi, li, le is doubled:

Dacci cinque minuti di tempo.
Give us five minutes.

Datti da fare.
Get a move on, get working

Dimmi cosa vuoi.
Tell me what you want.

Fammi un piacere.
Do me a favour.

Hai chiuso la porta? Fallo prima di andare a letto.
Did you close the door? Do it before going to bed.

Stammi a sentire. (colloquial)
Listen to me.

Although the pronouns before the verb are written as separate words, in speech they virtually combine with the verb, which comes immediately after, so that they sound like a single utterance [misènti, tisènto]:

Pronto! Mi senti?
Hello! Can you hear me?
Si, ti sento bene!
Yes, I can hear you well!

Glielo dirò io.
I’ll tell her (it).

When the pronouns follow the verb, they are truly attached to it, not only in speech but in the written form (dammi, dirglielo). This shows how closely pronoun and verb are linked.

Dammi lo zucchero. Give me the sugar.
Non dirglielo. Don’t tell her (it). I’ll tell her (it).

3.4.8 Dislocation: noun and pronoun used together

Although the object pronoun normally replaces a noun, it is quite common in spoken Italian to hear speakers use the pronoun (particularly the direct object pronoun) but keep the noun as well. This is known as ‘dislocation’. The reason for doing this is to put the emphasis on a particular element of the sentence, whether subject, object or other element (see also 19.6).

Left dislocation (noun comes first) is a way of emphasising what is being discussed but is not very common in Italian. The element that comes first becomes the theme of the sentence but keeps the same grammatical status.

La macchina, io non la prendo.
I’m not taking the car.

Il viaggio lo fa in treno.
He’s doing the journey by train.

L’intelligenza ce l’hai, devi solo studiare.
You’ve got the intelligence, you just need to study.

Right dislocation (noun comes last) is fairly common in spoken Italian. The speaker repeats the object already expressed by a pronoun (for example, li . . . i biglietti):

Ce li hai, i biglietti?
Do you have the tickets?

Lo vuoi, il caffè?
Do you want coffee?

Ce le hai, le chiavi?
Do you have the keys?

3.4.9 Agreement with past participle

When using compound tenses of the verbs, such as the passato prossimo, the past participle must agree with the gender and number of the direct object pronouns, including ne, which in turn agree with the gender and number of the noun they are replacing:

Hai visto la mia macchina nuova? Sì, l’ho vista. (= la)
Did you see my new car? Yes, I saw it.

Hai visto l’ultimo film di Moretti? No, non l’ho visto. (= lo)
Did you see the last Moretti film? No, I didn’t see it.

Hai visto i bambini? Sì, li ho visti.
Did you see the children? Yes, I saw them.

Hai visto le Olimpiadi? No, non le ho viste.
Did you see the Olympics? No, I didn’t see them.

Hai comprato le bibite? Sì, ne ho comprate due.
Have you bought the drinks? Yes, I bought two.

Hai comprato le pesche? Sì, ne ho comprate un chilo.
Have you bought peaches? Yes, I bought a kilo of them.
Relative pronouns

3.5 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns have a double function: (a) like the personal pronouns, they refer to a previously mentioned person or thing; (b) they act as a link between two sentences or clauses. The sentence introduced by a relative pronoun (che, cui) is called the relative clause (see 9.3).

**Puoi restituirmi la valigia che ti ho prestato?**
Can you give me back the suitcase that I lent you?

3.5.1 Che

*Che* is by far the most common of all relative pronouns in Italian, and indeed one of the most frequently used words in the Italian language. It is used to refer to people, animals or things, and it is *invariable* (does not change form). In the relative clause it can be either the subject or the direct object of the verb.

**Subject:**
L'**albero che** cresce davanti alla mia finestra è una quercia.
The tree that grows in front of my window is an oak.

**Ricordi lo scrittore che ha vinto il Premio Strega?**
Do you remember the writer who won the Strega Prize?

**Object:**
L'**albero che ho tagliato stamattina era una quercia.**
The tree that I cut down this morning was an oak.

**Ricordi lo scrittore che l'Università ha invitato a fare una conferenza?**
Do you remember the writer whom the University invited to give a talk?

When used as a relative pronoun *che* is never preceded by a preposition.

3.5.2 Cui

*Cui* is the relative pronoun used with the function of indirect object or other complement of the verb. It is usually preceded by a preposition (for example, a, con, da, di, in, per). Like *che*, *cui* is invariable and can refer to any noun (masculine, feminine, singular or plural) without changing form.

**Questo è l'ufficio in cui dobbiamo trasferirci l'anno prossimo.**
This is the office which we have to move into next year.

**Sto lavorando sulla pratica di cui ti ho parlato ieri.**
I am working on the file which I spoke to you about yesterday.

**Oggi quella signora a cui abbiamo mandato la fattura è venuta a pagare.**
Today the lady to whom we sent the invoice came to pay.

**Per cui** often expresses a reason:

**Il motivo per cui non andiamo in vacanza è che mancano i soldi.**
The reason we are not going on holiday is that we are short of money.

When *cui* is used as an *indirect object* indicating the person or thing *at whom/which* the action of the verb is directed, as in the last example above, the preposition *a* can be omitted:

**Vorrei gli indirizzi di tutte le ditte cui abbiamo inviato il nostro catalogo.**
I would like to have the addresses of all the companies to whom we sent our catalogue.

**Il problema cui ti riferisci è stato già affrontato.**
The problem to which you are referring has already been dealt with.

*Cui* is also used as a *possessive adjective* (English ‘whose’), placed between the definite article and the noun it refers to:

**Bisogna trovare la persona le cui chiavi sono rimaste sul mio tavolo.**
We have to find the person whose keys have been left on my table.
Verrà assunto il candidato il cui curriculum risulterà più adatto. The candidate whose CV turns out to be the most suitable will be employed.

3.5.3 Il quale, la quale, i quali, le quali

These are used in place of che and cui, when you need to specify more clearly which noun the relative pronoun is referring to. Unlike che and cui, these pronouns vary in gender and number, as too does the definite article used with them, making it clearer which noun is being referred to.

Il quale is often used to replace cui when there is a need for more clarity in the reference. In this context, it is always used with a preposition combined with definite article (for example, del quale, alla quale). Compare the examples below with the parallel examples above, in which cui was used:

Sto lavorando sulla pratica della quale ti ho parlato ieri.
I am working on the file which I spoke to you about yesterday.

Vorrei gli indirizzi di tutte le ditte alle quali abbiamo inviato il catalogo.
I would like to have the addresses of the companies to which we sent the catalogue.

Verrà assunto il candidato, il curriculum del quale risulterà più adatto.
The candidate whose CV turns out to be most suitable will be employed.

Il quale is used far less frequently, without a preposition, as a replacement for che, and then only in a formal context, for example in legal or bureaucratic language as in the example below:

Tutta la corrispondenza deve essere firmata dal direttore, il quale ne assume la responsabilità legale.
All correspondence must be signed by the manager, who assumes legal responsibility for it.

3.5.4 Chi

The most common use of chi is as an interrogative pronoun in questions or indirect questions (see 3.6.1 below). It is also used, however, as a relative pronoun, referring to people, never to things. In this context, although it always takes a singular verb, it has a plural meaning (‘people who, those who’):

Le Pagine Gialle online sono utili soprattutto a chi lavora nel commercio.
The online Yellow Pages are useful especially for those who are in business.

I nostri prodotti sono disegnati per chi apprezza la funzionalità.
Our products are designed for people who appreciate the functional approach.

Because of this generic meaning, it is frequently used in sayings and proverbs. Here are five sayings of popular wisdom, in which chi is used (see if you can find the equivalent proverb in English):

Chi cerca trova.
Chi va piano va sano e va lontano.
Chi di spada ferisce di spada perisce.
Chi tace acconsente.
Chi troppo vuole nulla stringe.

3.6 Interrogative pronouns and adjectives

Interrogatives are used to ask questions (see also Chapter 15). Some interrogatives can be used as both pronouns (standing on their own) and adjectives (attached to a noun), while others can be used only as pronouns. One interrogative (quanto) can also be used as an adverb. Two of these interrogatives (che, quanto) are commonly used in exclamations and we have given examples.
Interrogative pronouns and adjectives

3.6.1 Chi

Chi (who?) is used only as pronoun. It is used in direct and indirect questions, is invariable and can refer to masculine or feminine, singular or plural. It can be the subject of the verb, as in the first example, or the object, as in the second example:

**Chi viene con me?**
Who’s coming with me?

**Chi hai invitato?**
Whom did you invite?

**Non mi ricordo chi ha telefonato.**
I don’t remember who phoned.

**Chi crede di essere?**
Who does she think she is?

Chi can also be used in an exclamation:

**Ma guarda chi c’è!**
Look who’s here!

3.6.2 Che cosa/cosa?

Che cosa (what?) is used only as pronoun. Che cosa is invariable in both number and gender and can be either subject of the verb (as in the first example) or object (as in the second example):

**Che cosa succede domani?**
What is happening tomorrow?

**Che cosa volete fare oggi?**
What do you want to do today?

Che cosa can be replaced by cosa in spoken Italian. Cosa is also invariable:

**Cosa prendi da bere?**
What do you want to drink?

Che cosa can also be replaced by che (see also 3.6.5), which is also invariable and is used more frequently in the south of Italy:

**Che vuoi?**
What do you want?

**Che è successo?**
What’s happened?

3.6.3 Quanto

Quanto (how much, how many?) can be used both as pronoun (standing on its own) and as adjective (accompanying a noun). Whether pronoun or adjective, it changes form (quanto, quanta, quanti, quantale) according to the number (singular/plural) and gender (masculine/feminine) of the noun it refers to:

In **quanti** siete? (pronoun)   How many of you are there?
**Quanto zucchero prendi?** (adjective)   How much sugar do you take?
**Quante paia di scarpe hai?** (adjective)   How many pairs of shoes do you have?

Quanto can also be used in an exclamation:

**Ma quanta roba hai portato!**
What a lot of stuff you’ve brought!

**Quante storie!** (colloquial expression)   What a song and dance!

Quanto can also be used as an adverb (see 6.3.3).
3.6.4 Quale

Quale (which?) can be used both as pronoun (standing on its own) and as adjective (accompanying a noun). Whether as pronoun or adjective, it has both singular form (quale) and plural form (quali). Quale can be translated into English as either ‘which’ or simply ‘what’. Note that quale can be shortened to qual as in the example below, but should never be followed by an apostrophe.

*Quale vestito metto stasera? (adjective)*  
Which dress shall I put on tonight?

*Quali scarpe metto per la festa? (adjective)*  
Which (what) shoes shall I put on for the party?

*Qual è il Suo indirizzo? (pronoun)*  
What is your address?

*Mi piacciono le scarpe nere ma anche quelle viola. Tu quali preferisci? (pronoun)*  
I like the black shoes but also the purple ones. Which ones do you prefer?

3.6.5 Che

Che (what, which?) can be used both as pronoun, standing on its own (see 3.6.2 above), and as adjective (accompanying a noun). It is invariable:

*Che camera volete? La camera matrimoniale? (adjective)*  
What (which) room do you want? The double room?

*Che giornali leggi? (adjective)*  
What newspapers do you read?

Che as an adjective can also be used in an exclamation:

*Domani andiamo in Italia! Che bello!*
Tomorrow we’re going to Italy! Brilliant!

*Che bella notizia!*
What great news!

*Che brutto uomo!*
What an ugly man!

An additional che is inserted before the verb in this colloquial exclamative expression:

*Che brutto che sei!*
How ugly you are!

Here are a few more examples comparing the two different functions – pronoun or adjective – of quanto, quale and che (for more examples see Chapter 15):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quant’è?</td>
<td>Quanto pane hai comprato?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much is it?</td>
<td>How much bread did you buy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quante ne vedi?</td>
<td>Quante macchine vedi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many do you see?</td>
<td>How many cars do you see?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual è il tuo?</td>
<td>Quale bicchiere hai usato?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which one is yours?</td>
<td>Which glass have you used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quali preferisci?</td>
<td>Quali canzoni preferisci?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which ones do you prefer?</td>
<td>Which songs do you prefer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Che vuoi?</td>
<td>Che dolce vuoi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you want?</td>
<td>Which cake do you want?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Possessive pronouns and adjectives

Possessives indicate the person to whom something or somebody belongs. Like personal pronouns they have six grammatical ‘persons’ (‘my, your, his’, etc.). In Italian each of the six
Persons has four different endings which agree with the noun which they specify (except loro which is invariable), for example, il mio ragazzo, la mia macchina, i miei amici, le mie scarpe.

Possessive pronouns and adjectives are identical in form (whereas English has the variation ‘my/mine’, ‘your/yours’, etc.). The pronouns are used on their own to refer to something that has already been mentioned or that is actually present. The adjectives are always attached to a noun.

**Adjective:** Questa è la mia scrivania. This is my desk.

**Pronoun:** È questa è la tua. And this is yours.

The following table shows all the forms of the possessives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Masc sing</th>
<th>Fem sing</th>
<th>Masc pl</th>
<th>Fem pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>mio</td>
<td>mia</td>
<td>mie</td>
<td>mie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>tuo</td>
<td>tua</td>
<td>tuoi</td>
<td>tue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>suo</td>
<td>sua</td>
<td>suoi</td>
<td>sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>nostro</td>
<td>nostra</td>
<td>nostril</td>
<td>nostre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>vostro</td>
<td>vostra</td>
<td>vostri</td>
<td>vostre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>loro</td>
<td>loro</td>
<td>loro</td>
<td>loro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Use of article with possessives

While in English possessives are never accompanied by articles, in Italian the opposite applies: possessives are always preceded by an article, except in a few cases. Both article and possessive must agree in gender and number with the noun to which they are attached, not with the person who owns the object:

- **il suo computer**  
  - his/her computer
- **la sua macchina**  
  - his/her car
- **i suoi soldi**  
  - his/her money
- **le sue colleghi**  
  - his/her colleagues (female)

The only exception to this rule is with relatives, which do not take the definite article when they are used in the singular:

- **mia madre**  
  - my mother
- **mio padre**  
  - my father
- **mia sorella**  
  - my sister
- **mio fratello**  
  - my brother
- **mia cugina**  
  - my cousin (female)

Note the use of the article when there is more than one relative:

- **i miei genitori**  
  - my parents
- **le mie cugine**  
  - my cousins (female)

With loro ‘their’, the article is always used:

- **la loro madre**  
  - their mother
- **il loro zio**  
  - their uncle

Again, the article is always used when the noun is qualified in some way by a suffix (for example, as a term of affection) or an adjective:

- **la sua sorellina**  
  - his/her little sister
- **il mio amato zio**  
  - my beloved uncle

The article can also be used – although this is not a rule – with nonno ‘grandfather’, nonna ‘grandmother’, and with the affectionate terms babbo or papà ‘daddy’ and mamma ‘mummy’:

- **(il) mio nonno**  
  - my grandfather
- **(la) mia nonna Giuseppina**  
  - my grandmother Giuseppina
- **(la) mia mamma**  
  - my mummy
- **(il) mio babbo / (il) mio papà**  
  - my daddy
Finally, when used as possessive pronouns (i.e. not attached to a noun) the article is often omitted:

Di chi sono questi occhiali? Sono miei!
Whose spectacles are these? They are mine!

### Position and omission of the possessive

The possessive adjective is usually placed before the noun. When it follows the noun, it carries a strongly emphatic or emotional meaning:

- Mamma mia!  Dio mio!  Signora mia!  Figlio mio!
- Qui siamo in casa nostra!
Here we are in our own place!
- Questo dev’essere opera tua!
This must be your work! (ironical)

In English the possessive is commonly used to indicate personal belongings, or relationships, and parts of the body. In Italian, when the relationship or ownership is obvious, as in the examples shown, you don’t use the possessive. In particular the possessive is rarely used to refer to parts of the body:

- Porterò la macchina.
I’ll bring my car.
- Aveva una giacca sulle spalle.
She had a jacket over her shoulders.
- Lavati le mani!
Wash your hands!
- Mettiti il cappotto!
Put on your coat!

### Possessives as nouns

In a few cases possessives are used on their own, as nouns rather than as pronouns:

- i miei / i tuoi
  my parents / your parents
- La Sua / La Vostra del 20.6.12
  Your (letter) of 20.6.12 (*in business correspondence*).
- Alla tua! / Alla nostra!
  To your health! / To our health! (*making a toast*).

### Proprio

Proprio is used as a possessive in three particular contexts:

(a) To reinforce a normal possessive (as English ‘own’):

L’ho visto con i miei propri occhi!
I saw it with my very own eyes!

(b) In the third person to replace suo, loro, to avoid ambiguity (but only when it refers to the subject of the sentence):

Anna disse a Clara che aveva bisogno dei propri soldi.
Anna told Clara that she needed her (Anna’s) money.

Quando scrive le mail, Luciana preferisce usare il proprio computer.
When she writes emails, Luciana prefers to use her own computer.

(c) When the subject is an indefinite pronoun such as tutti, ognuno, nessuno (see 3.9.1) or impersonal si (see 19.5):
Tutti fanno i propri interessi.
Everybody looks after their own interests.
Nessuno ammette facilmente i propri errori.
Nobody easily admits to their mistakes.
In tempo di guerra si faceva il proprio dovere senza esitazione.
In times of war, one did one’s duty, without hesitation.

Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives

Demonstratives are used to indicate something or somebody actually present when you speak, as in the examples below:

Dammi questo libro.
Give me this book.
Metti quella bottiglia in frigorifero.
Put that bottle in the fridge.

They can also refer to something or somebody not physically present, but previously mentioned in the discourse. In this function they are useful in connecting two different statements:

Ho comprato una macchina familiare, perché questa mi sembrava più adatta per la nostra famiglia.
I bought an estate car, because I thought this was more suitable for our family’s needs.

3.8.1 Questo, quello

These demonstratives can be used as adjectives (qualifying a noun as in the first two examples above), or on their own as pronouns (as in the last example).

Questo and quello correspond exactly to the English ‘this’ and ‘that’, indicating respectively something or somebody near to or far away from the speaker/writer (in terms of space, time or position in the discourse).

Questo – whether adjective or pronoun – has four different endings that agree with the gender and number of the noun to which it refers:

Adjective:
questo vestito this dress
questa cravatta this tie
questi pantaloni these trousers
queste scarpe these shoes

Pronoun:
Volevo un paio di scarpe e ho comprato queste.
I wanted a pair of shoes and I bought these.

Cambiati i pantaloni. Questi sono più comodi.
Change your trousers. These are more comfortable.

Quello behaves differently according to whether it is a pronoun or an adjective:

(a) As a pronoun it has four possible endings -o/-a/-i/-e, according to the noun to which it refers:

Questo vestito è mio. Quello è tuo.
This dress is mine. That one is yours.

 Questa cravatta è mia. Quella è tua.
This tie is mine. That one is yours.

Questi pantaloni sono miei. Quelli sono tuoi.
These trousers are mine. Those are yours.
Queste scarpe sono mie. Quelle sono tue.
These shoes are mine. Those are yours.

(b) As an adjective it changes its ending, depending on number, gender and the initial letter of the word that follows, following the same pattern as the definite article (see 1.3.4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definite article</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Definite article</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masc sing</td>
<td>Quel vestito</td>
<td>Fem sing</td>
<td>Quella scarpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’ombrello</td>
<td>Quell’ombrellolo</td>
<td>L’amica</td>
<td>Quell’amica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo scialle</td>
<td>Quello scialle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc pl</td>
<td>Quei vestiti</td>
<td>Fem pl</td>
<td>Quele scarpe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gli ombrelli</td>
<td>Quegli ombrelli</td>
<td>Le amiche</td>
<td>Quele amiche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gli scialli</td>
<td>Quegli scialli</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
The pattern of the demonstrative quello, and of the definite article, is also followed by bello (see 1.4.5). There is a third demonstrative adjective in Italian: codesto, used to refer to something far away from the speaker, but near to the person addressed. This is not commonly used except in Tuscany.

Dammi codesto libro.
Give me that book (the one you have).

In most of Italy, the use of codesto is restricted to written bureaucratic language, for example when you want to address an office, company or firm:

Informiamo codesta spettabile ditta che i nostri prezzi subiranno una variazione dal 30/6 p.v.
We would like to inform your company that our prices will change as from 30/6.

3.8.2 Other demonstrative pronouns: ciò, costui, costei, costoro, colui, colei, coloro

These demonstratives are used only as pronouns. They are used instead of questo/quello but mainly in written language.

(a) Ciò refers only to events or ideas, in particular to something that has just been mentioned, usually in the form of a whole phrase, clause or sentence such as:

Il treno è arrivato con un’ora di ritardo, e ciò ci ha fatto perdere l’appuntamento.
The train arrived one hour late, and this caused us to miss the appointment.

Sapete benissimo perché abbiamo preso questa decisione. Di ciò abbiamo già parlato nella riunione di ieri.
You know very well why we took this decision. We already talked about it at yesterday’s meeting.

Ciò che, ciò . . . cui is used when referring to something explained subsequently in a relative clause:

Non ho capito ciò che hai detto.
I didn’t understand what you said.

Vorrei spiegarvi ciò di cui ha parlato ieri il direttore.
I’d like to explain to you what the manager talked about yesterday.

(b) A more formal way to refer to people is to use costui/costei/costoro instead of questo/questa/questi and colui/colei/coloro instead of quello/quella/quelli:

Chi è costui?
Who is this gentleman?
Indefinite pronouns and adjectives

We sent a letter to all those who will take part in the congress.

Indefinite pronouns and adjectives

Indefinite pronouns and indefinite adjectives designate somebody or something without a definite specification. In Italian they take various forms.

Here we look at indefinites according to their different grammatical functions: (a) as pronouns only; (b) as adjectives only; (c) as pronouns and adjectives. Here we illustrate the indefinites most commonly used. In 3.10 we look specifically at those indefinite adjectives and pronouns used to specify quantity.

3.9.1 Pronouns: uno, qualcuno, chiunque, ognuno, qualcosa, niente, nulla

The indefinites listed above are used only as pronouns, on their own and not attached to a noun. All of them have singular forms only.

Uno/a ‘one’, ‘somebody’ can be masculine or feminine and refers to a single person or thing:

C’è uno che ti cerca.
There is a man looking for you.

Non ho mai conosciuto una come te.
I’ve never met anybody like you.

Che belle prugne. Me ne dai una?
What nice plums! Will you give me one?

Qualcuno/a ‘somebody’ can be masculine or feminine and refers to an undefined person (‘someone’):

C’è qualcuno alla porta.
There is somebody at the door.

It can also be used for objects, when it has the meaning ‘few’:

Ho fatto molte fotografie. Vuoi vederne qualcuna?
I took a lot of photographs. Do you want to see a few of them?

Ognuno/a ‘each one’ can be masculine or feminine and can refer to either people or objects:

Ho comprato un regalo ad ognuno.
I bought a present for each one.

Ci sono tre linee telefoniche, ognuna con un numero diverso.
There are three telephone lines, each with a different number.

The corresponding adjective is ogni (see 3.9.2 below).

Ciascuno has a similar meaning and can be used as both pronoun and adjective (see 3.9.3 below).

Chiunque ‘anyone’, ‘whoever’ is invariable and refers only to people. When introducing a relative sentence it is often followed by a verb in the subjunctive (see 2.2.15).

Chiunque può rivolgersi al direttore.
Anyone can speak to the manager.

Chiunque sia, non voglio rispondergli.
Whoever it may be, I don’t want to answer.

Non aprire mai la porta a chiunque chieda di entrare.
Never open the door to anyone who asks to come in.

Qualcosa ‘something’ is invariable and refers only to things. It is usually treated as masculine (although cosa itself is feminine):
Qualcosa è stato fatto, nonostante le difficoltà.
Something has been done, in spite of all the difficulties.

Qualcosa can also be used with da followed by a verb infinitive (qualcosa da fare) or with di followed by an adjective (qualcosa di buono):

C'è sempre qualcosa da fare.
There is always something to be done.

Vorrei qualcosa di buono da mangiare.
I'd like something good to eat.

Niente, nulla ‘nothing’ are also invariable. They are normally used as a double negative, in other words with non before the verb and niente or nulla after it. When niente or nulla come at the beginning of the sentence, they do not require non. Like qualcosa, niente can be followed by da and infinitive (niente da fare) or by di and an adjective (niente di particolare). (See also 16.3.)

Non c’è niente da fare.
There is nothing to do.

La cena? Niente di particolare!
The dinner? Nothing special!

Non fa niente!
It doesn’t matter!

Non succede niente.
Nothing happens.

Niente succede. (far less common than the version above)
Nothing happens.

Nulla è più bello di una giornata di sole.
Nothing is more beautiful than a sunny day.

Adjectives: ogni, qualche, qualunque, qualsiasi

The indefinites listed above are used only as adjectives, modifying a noun. They are all invariable and used only in the singular.

Ogni ‘every, each’:

Faccio la doccia ogni giorno.
I have a shower every day.

Ogni volta che entro in ufficio c’è sempre una telefonata per me.
Each time I come into my office, there is always a telephone call for me.

Dobbiamo fare la manutenzione della macchina ogni sei mesi.
We have to service the car once every six months.

Ogni with singular noun can usually be replaced by tutti and plural noun (see also 3.9.3).

Qualche ‘some’ is unique in always taking a singular noun, with a plural meaning:

Qualche volta anche tu sbagli.
Sometimes even you make mistakes.

Dammi qualche francobollo.
Give me a few stamps.

I soldi arriveranno fra qualche giorno.
The money will arrive in a few days.

Qualunque, qualsiasi ‘any, whatever’. The corresponding pronoun (referring to people) is chiunque (see 3.9.1).

Può venire a trovarmi in qualunque momento.
You may come to see me at any time.
Indefinite pronouns and adjectives

Bisogna essere preparati a qualsiasi eventualità.
One should be ready for any eventuality.

Both qualunque and qualsiasi can be followed by a verb in the subjunctive, as in the examples below:

Qualunque cosa dica, ha sempre ragione.
Whatever she says, she is always right.

Dobbiamo essere capaci di risolvere qualsiasi problema si presenti.
We should be able to solve any problem that might arise.

Note the different meaning of qualunque when used after the noun:

Oggi non è un giorno qualunque. È il mio compleanno.
Today is not just any old day. It's my birthday.

3.9.3 Pronouns and adjectives: alcuni, altri, certi, ciascuno, nessuno, tale, tutto

The indefinites listed above can be used both as pronouns and as adjectives.

Alcuni/e as a pronoun is only used in the plural with the meaning 'some people, a few people'. It can be masculine or feminine, depending on who it refers to:

Non tutte le donne vogliono lavorare fuori casa. Alcune preferiscono stare a casa e badare ai figli.
Not all women want to work outside the home. Some prefer to stay at home and look after their children.

Alcuni is often used in a pair with altri contrasting two groups of people:

Alcuni stavano seduti, altri erano in piedi.
Some people were sitting, others were standing.

Alcuno/a/i/e ‘some, a few’ is sometimes used as an adjective, with plural nouns, instead of the more common qualche, which is always singular (see above 3.9.2):

Sul mio tavolo ci sono alcune pratiche importanti.
There are a few important files on my desk.

The singular forms alcun/o/a are used only in negative sentences, either with non, as an alternative to the more common nessun/o/a, or after senza:

Non ho alcuna paura.
I have no fear.

Mia madre soffre di ansia ma senza alcun motivo.
My mother suffers from anxiety but without any reason for it.

Ha sbagliato, senza alcun dubbio.
He made a mistake, without any doubt.

Altro/a/i/e can be singular or plural, masculine or feminine. Used as an adjective it means 'other, another'. Used as a pronoun, it means 'the other, something else, someone else'. It can refer to people or things:

Desidera un altro caffè?
Would you like another coffee?

Sì, grazie, ne vorrei un altro.
Yes, please, I'd like another one.

Non mi interessa quello che dicono gli altri.
I am not interested in what others say.

Desidera qualcos'altro?
Would you like anything else?

As mentioned above, altro can be used along with alcuni, to contrast two groups of people:

Nel tempo libero, alcuni vanno al cinema, altri preferiscono andare al ristorante.
In their free time, some people go to the cinema, others prefer to go to the restaurant.

Used as a pronoun, altro can be used in idiomatic expressions, as in these two examples:

Senz’altro! Certainly!
Altro ché! No wonder!
Certo/a/i/e ‘a certain person’ can be singular or plural, masculine or feminine. As a pronoun, however, it is normally only found in plural form (certi, certe):

**Adjective:**

*Una certa persona mi ha snobbato.*
A certain person cut me dead.

*Certi studenti non meritano di essere promossi.*
Certain students don’t deserve to pass.

**Pronoun:**

*Certi non sanno come accendere il computer.*
Certain people don’t even know how to turn the computer on.

*Le donne sono state invitate alla partita ma certe hanno preferito rimanere a casa.*
The women were invited to the match but certain of them preferred to stay at home.

Ci/ascuno/a ‘each (one)’ – whether as pronoun or adjective – is only used in the singular. It can be used instead of the more common ognuno (pronoun, see 3.9.1 above) and ogni (adjective, see 3.9.2 above).

**Adjective:**

*Nel mio giardino ciascuna pianta ha un’etichetta.*
In my garden each plant has got a label.

**Pronoun:**

*Ho tre figli e devo sempre comprare un regalo a ciascuno.*
I have three children and I must always buy a present for each (one).

Nessun/o/a ‘no, no one, nobody’ can only be singular. As an adjective, it follows the pattern of the indefinite article un/uno/una/un. As a pronoun, it normally uses the masculine singular form nessuno but can use the feminine nessuna if the reference is clearly to a female person. Like niente and nulla (see 3.9.1 above), its normal position is after the verb, with non coming before. If positioned before the verb, it does not need non.

**Adjective:**

*Non c’è nessun dubbio.*
There is no doubt.

*Non ho visto nessuna macchina per la strada.*
I didn’t see any cars on the road.

**Pronoun:**

*Non c’è nessuno.*
There is nobody there.

*Le donne protestano. Nessuna vuole essere pagata meno dei colleghi maschi.*
The women are protesting. Nobody wants to be paid less than their male colleagues.

Tale/i ‘such’, ‘a certain’ can be singular or plural. When used as a pronoun it refers to an unidentified person (English ‘chap, bloke, fellow’), and is usually preceded by un or quel. When used as an adjective, it is preceded by the indefinite article (un etc.):

**Pronoun:**

*Di là c’è un tale che ti cerca.*
There is a bloke asking for you, next door.

*Dica a quel tale di aspettarmi.*
Tell that chap to wait for me.

**Adjective:**

*Ho avuto una tale paura, che sono rimasto paralizzato.*
I was so scared that I froze.

Tutto/a/i/e ‘all’ can be singular or plural, masculine or feminine. Whether pronoun or adjective, it has to agree with the noun to which it refers. Tutto can also be used as an adverb (see 6.3.5), in which case its form is invariable.
Pronouns and adjectives of quantity

This group of pronouns and adjectives is often considered together with indefinite pronouns and adjectives (see 3.9). They include molto (‘much’), parecchio (‘a lot’), poco (‘a small amount’), tanto (‘much, so much’), troppo (‘too much’). Both as pronoun and adjective, they vary their form according to the noun they refer to – masculine/feminine, singular/plural – though the masculine singular form is often used when no specific noun has been mentioned. All the pronouns in this group can also be used as adverbs, in which case they are invariable (see 6.3.5).

Pronoun:
La bambina ha solo sette mesi. Non mangia molto ancora.
The baby is only seven months old. She doesn’t eat a lot yet.

C’era parecchio da mangiare.
There was a lot to eat.

Non mi bastano le maglie. Sono poche.
I haven’t got enough sweaters. There are so few of them.

Il treno era pieno. Eravamo in tanti.
The train was full. There were so many of us.

Vuoi un po’ di fichi? Io ne ho troppi.
Do you want a few figs? I’ve got too many.

Adjective:
Ho molti amici.
I have many (boy)friends.

Era nella stessa casa da dieci anni e aveva parecchia roba.
She’d been in the same house for ten years and she had a lot of stuff.

Non legge molto, infatti ha pochi libri.
She doesn’t read very much, in fact she has few books.

Ho tante amiche.
I have many (girl)friends.

Hai messo troppa salsa.
You’ve put too much sauce on.
Prepositions

4.1 What is a preposition?

In Italian there are eight common prepositions which are used more than any others (see also 4.3 and 4.4 below):

- a, con, da, di, in, per, su, tra (or fra)

The basic function of a preposition is to introduce some additional information to a verb or a noun, in the form of a ‘complement’ (something which completes the verb):

**Abbiamo parlato di Anna.**
We talked about Anna.

**Qual è il numero di Teresa?**
What is Teresa’s phone number?

The complement can be either a noun:

**Vado a Roma.**
I go to Rome.

or a verb:

**Vado a lavorare.**
I go to work.

When prepositions introduce a verb, as in the last example above, their function is similar to that of conjunctions (see Chapter 5) except for the differences shown below.

Prepositions (for example, *di*) always introduce verbs in the *infinitive* (*parlare*):

**Spero di parlare con Carlo domani.**
I hope I’ll talk to Carlo tomorrow.

Conjunctions (such as *che*) introduce verbs in the *indicative, conditional or subjunctive* mood (*parli*):

**Spero che tu parli con Carlo domani.**
I hope you’ll talk to Carlo tomorrow.

4.2 Combined prepositions and articles

Five of the eight common prepositions listed above always combine with the *definite article* (see 1.3.3) to give the forms shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>il</th>
<th>lo</th>
<th>l’</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>gli</th>
<th>la</th>
<th>le</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>al</td>
<td>allo</td>
<td>all’</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>agli</td>
<td>alla</td>
<td>alle</td>
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<tr>
<td>con*</td>
<td>col</td>
<td>collo</td>
<td>coll’</td>
<td>coi</td>
<td>cogli</td>
<td>colla</td>
<td>colle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da</td>
<td>dal</td>
<td>dallo</td>
<td>dall’</td>
<td>dai</td>
<td>dagli</td>
<td>dalla</td>
<td>dalle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di</td>
<td>del</td>
<td>dello</td>
<td>dell’</td>
<td>dei</td>
<td>degli</td>
<td>della</td>
<td>delle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>nel</td>
<td>nello</td>
<td>nell’</td>
<td>nei</td>
<td>negli</td>
<td>nella</td>
<td>nelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su</td>
<td>sul</td>
<td>sullo</td>
<td>sull’</td>
<td>sui</td>
<td>sugli</td>
<td>sulla</td>
<td>sulle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note how *in* + the definite article changes into *nel, nella*, etc.
4.3 Common prepositions used with nouns

We now give a few detailed examples showing the basic uses of the most common prepositions. Some examples have been chosen to stress the difference between Italian and English usage. Note especially those cases in which no preposition is needed in English but a preposition is needed in Italian: for example, ‘I sent Maria a card’, ‘Ho mandato un biglietto a Maria’. A good dictionary can provide even more examples. For use of prepositions introducing dependent verbs, see 4.4.

4.3.1 A

The basic relationship expressed by the preposition a is that of an action directed towards some person, place or time (the indirect object of the action expressed by a verb). However, this preposition has many and varied uses, beyond its basic meaning of ‘to, at’:

As indirect object:
- dire qualcosa a qualcuno to say something to somebody
- ho scritto a mia sorella I wrote to my sister

To place:
- andiamo a Parigi we’re going to Paris
- vado a casa I’m going home

In/at place:
- vivo a Parma I live in Parma
- lavoro all’Università I work at the University

Time:
- alle tre at three o’clock
- a mezzanotte at midnight

Means:
- andiamo a piedi let’s walk
- lavorato a mano hand-made

Manner:
- spaghetti alle vongole spaghetti with clams
- ragù alla bolognese Bolognese meat sauce

Characteristics:
- televisione a colori colour TV
- pentola a pressione pressure cooker

Movement to a place can also be expressed by other prepositions, such as in and da:

- vado a scuola I’m going to school
- vado in ufficio I’m going to the office
- vado da Roberta I’m going to Roberta’s

Note that you always need to use a to express the indirect object even when the preposition can be omitted in English, unless using unstressed pronouns (see last example below):
PREPOSITIONS

Ho dato il libro a Paolo  I gave Paolo the book
Ho dato il libro a lui     I gave him the book
Gli ho dato il libro       I gave him the book

When followed by a word beginning with a vowel, a can change to ad to help pronunciation:

Ho dato il libro ad Anna  I gave the book to Anna

For further examples of a, see 18.4.1 (followed by stressed pronouns), 37.3 (expressing place) and 37.4.2 (expressing manner). For the use of a introducing a dependent verb, see 4.4 below.

4.3.2 Con

Con corresponds to English with.

It can express ‘together with’ (a person):

Stasera ceno con Gigi.  I’ll have dinner with Gigi tonight.

Con chi stai parlando?  Who are you talking to? (Literally: ‘with whom’)

Vieni con me al cinema?  Will you come with me to the cinema?

It can also express the means by which you do something:

Ho fatto la foto con il telefonino.  I took a photo with my mobile phone.

Si accende con il telecomando.  It’s switched on by remote control.

For further examples of con see 37.4.2.

4.3.3 Da

The basic meaning of da is direction from some point in space or in time, and in fact it is often used with venire, as shown below. However da has many other functions; it can indicate movement to somewhere, when used with andare (but only when the destination is an individual or his workplace, as in the second set of examples), or can refer to an action taking place at someone’s house or place of work, as in the third set of examples.

From a place:

veniamo da Genova       we come from Genoa
veniamo dall’Inghilterra we come from England

To a place:

andiamo da Giorgio       we go to Giorgio’s (home)
andiamo dal dentista     we go to the dentist’s (surgery)

Compriamo dal salumiere.  Let’s buy it at the deli.

At a place:

stasera dormi da me      tonight you’re staying at my place
Lucia è dal direttore     Lucia is in the manager’s office

Through a place:

il treno passa da Pisa    the train passes through Pisa
è uscito dalla finestra  he went out through the window

Agent:

fu colpito da una palla   he was hit by a ball
è amata da tutti          she’s loved by everyone
Common prepositions used with nouns

Since:
- lavoro *da* tre anni  I’ve been working for three years
- viaggiamo *dalle* sette  we’ve been travelling since 7 o’clock

Function:
- spazzolino *da* denti  toothbrush
- crema *da* barba  shaving cream

Cause:
- morte *da* infarto  death from heart attack
- stress *da* lavoro  work-related stress

Manner:
- vita *da* cani  dog’s life
- giochi *da* bambini  child’s play

Value:
- una moneta *da* un euro  a one euro coin

Note: For this use of *da* expressing time, see 13.7 and 36.5.1.

For further examples of *da*, see also 34.5 (expressing cause), 37.3 (expressing place) and 37.4.6 (expressing manner).

4.3.4 Di

*Di* is the most frequently used of all Italian prepositions. Although it is often translated by the English ‘of’, it has many more functions, some of which are shown below:

Specification:
- la difficoltà *di* lavoro  the difficulty of the job
- frutta *di* stagione  fresh fruit

Belonging:
- la macchina *di* Giulia  Giulia’s car
- la casa *di* mio padre  my father’s house
- *Di* chi è la giacca?  Whose jacket is this?

Origin:
- Franco è *di* Napoli.  Franco is from Naples.
- Anna è *di* Ayr  Anna is from Ayr

Comparison:
- sono più alto *di* te  I’m taller than you

Material:
- tavolo *di* legno  wooden table
- cavo *d’acciaio*  steel cable

Author:
- la ‘Divina Commedia’ *di* Dante  the ‘Divine Comedy’ by Dante
- ‘Amarcord’ *di* F. Fellini  ‘Amarcord’ by F. Fellini

Topic:
- parliamo *di* affari  let’s talk about business
- una lezione *di* storia  a lecture on history

Time:
- *di* giorno, *di* notte  by day, by night
- d’inverno, d’estate  in winter, in summer

Place/movement:
- *di* qui, *di* là  over here, over there
- *di* sopra, *di* sotto  upstairs, downstairs

Before a word beginning with a vowel, *di* is elided to *d’*, as shown above.
For further examples of *di*, see 10.2.4 (referring to materials), 17.3 (used in comparisons), 18.4.1 (followed by stressed pronouns) and 37.3.3 (expressing place). For *di* + article (*del, dello . . .*) as partitive article, see 1.3.4 and 11.6.1. For *di* with dependent verbs, see 4.4 below.

**In**

The basic meaning of *in* is similar to that of English ‘in’, but it indicates position in time as well as in physical space, as well as movement *into* somewhere:

*Place (‘in’):*
- *i bicchieri sono in cucina* the glasses are in the kitchen
- *abito in Francia* I live in France

*Place (‘to’):*
- *vado in Francia* I’m going to France
- *domani vengo in ufficio* I’ll come to the office tomorrow

*Time (‘in’):*
- *mi sono laureato nel ’76* I graduated in 1976
- *mi preparo in 5 minuti* I’ll get ready in 5 minutes

*Means:*
- *devo andare in macchina* I must go by car
- *pagheremo in dollari* we’ll pay in dollars

*Material:*
- *rifiniture in pelle* trimmings in leather
- *camicia in seta grezza* raw silk shirt

*Mood/style:*
- *in buona fede* in good faith
- *voglio vivere in pace* I want to live in peace

For further examples of *in*, see 37.3.2, 37.3.4 (place) and 37.4.2 (manner).

**Per**

In addition to its basic meaning of English ‘for’, *per* is used in several other contexts. Here are a few examples:

*Through, along, by:*
- *Siamo passati per Londra.* We passed through London.
- *Di solito andiamo per l’autostrada.* We usually go by the motorway.

*Parliamo per telefono.* Let’s talk on the phone.

*Destination:*
- *Parto per il Giappone.* I’m leaving for Japan.

*C’è posta per me?* Is there any mail for me?

*Limitation:*
- *Per me è sbagliato.* In my opinion it is wrong.

*Per ora aspettiamo.* We’ll wait, for the moment.

*Distribution:*
- *catalogo per autore* catalogue by author
Common prepositions used with verbs

4.4

**divisi per età**
divided by age group

5 per 5 fa 25
5 times 5 equals 25

► See also 34.3.2, 34.4 (cause).

For the use of per with dependent verbs, see 4.4.

4.3.7 **Su**

**Su** means ‘on, upon, above, about’:

*Position or location:*
I piatti sono sul tavolo.
The dishes are on the table.

Di solito andiamo a sciare sulle Dolomiti. *(Literally: ‘on the Dolomites’)*
We usually go skiing in the Dolomites.

‘On, about’ referring to a topic:
notizie sul mercato
market report

un articolo su Pirandello
an article on Pirandello

*Approximation, when used with a number:*
un uomo sui trent’anni
a man of around thirty

Costa sui due milioni.
It costs about two million.

When indicating a position (‘upon some place’), the preposition *sopra* is also commonly used (see 4.5):

I piatti sono soprà il tavolo.
The dishes are on the table.

4.3.8 **Tra, fra**

These two prepositions have exactly the same meaning of ‘between’ or ‘among’, both physically and otherwise:

Tra gli italiani, ci sono molti che non si fidano del governo.
Amongst Italians, there are many who don’t trust the government.

Fra me e te, l’unica differenza è la carriera.
Between you and me, the only difference is our careers.

However both *tra* and *fra* also have the meaning ‘in’, expressing the length of time or distance within which something will take place (see also 14.4 and 37.3.5):

tra un anno in a year’s time
fra tre chilometri in three kilometres

4.4 **Common prepositions used with verbs**

Prepositions often introduce a dependent clause with a verb infinitive as shown in the examples below with *a, di, per*:

Vieni a vedere. Come to see.

Cerca di capire. Try to understand.

Lavoro per guadagnare. I work in order to earn money.
In this function the role of the preposition is similar to that of a conjunction, although with some important differences (see below).

A, da, di and per are the prepositions most commonly used in this function. Use a dictionary to find out which different constructions are possible with each verb (or noun, in the case of da), or refer to the list of verbs and prepositions in Appendix IV. Meanwhile here are a few guidelines and examples.

4.4.1 A

A is mainly used to indicate the aim, end or intention of the main verb. It is also often used with a verb expressing ‘beginning’ or ‘starting’:

- *Vado a sciare.*  
  I’m going skiing.
- *Pensa solo a studiare.*  
  He only thinks about studying.
- *Cominciate a lavorare!*  
  Start working!

For further examples of a, see 21.8.1–2, 25.3.3 (after fare bene, fare male) and 33.2 (expressing purpose). The full list of verbs followed by a can be found in Appendix IV.

4.4.2 Da

Da follows a noun and indicates that ‘something must be done’ – a passive sense – rather than ‘someone has to do something’:

- *Ho molto da fare.*  
  I’ve got a lot to do (i.e. a lot to be done).
- *Ci sono due lettere da scrivere.*  
  There are two letters to write (i.e. to be written).
- *Cosa prende da bere?*  
  What would you like to drink?

For further examples of da, see 33.4.2 (expressing purpose), 35.5 (expressing result).

4.4.3 Di

Di is used after certain verbs introducing a dependent verb. Verbs that are followed by di (introducing a dependent verb) include verbs of completion or finishing (finire di), thinking or believing (credere, pensare, sperare, sembrare), hoping, fearing, doubting (sperare, temere, dubitare), remembering and forgetting (ricordare, dimenticare), as well as verbs involving another person, such as advising, suggesting, allowing, forbidding (consigliare, suggerire, permettere, vietare).

- *Penso di partire presto.*  
  I’m thinking of leaving early.
- *Ho finito di scrivere.*  
  I’ve finished writing.
- *Mi pare di impazzire.*  
  I feel as if I am going mad. (Literally: It seems to me to be going mad.)
- *Sforzati di mangiare.*  
  Make an effort to eat.

The full list of verbs followed by di can be found in Appendix IV.

There are also several phrases which use di to introduce a dependent verb infinitive. They include prepositional phrases (such as al fine di, allo scopo di), phrases combining essere and adjectives (for example, essere contento) and phrases combining verbs and nouns (avere bisogno, c’è bisogno). The verb phrases are also listed in Appendix IV.
Other prepositions

4.4.4 Per

*Per* is used to state explicitly the *aim* of an action (English ‘in order to’):

- *Sono venuto per parlarti.*  
  I came in order to speak to you.
- *Ho bisogno di tempo per finire il lavoro.*  
  I need time in order to complete the job.

For further examples of *per*, see 33.4 (expressing purpose), 34.3.2 (expressing cause).

Note how in Italian a verb infinitive introduced by a preposition must always have the same subject as the main verb. If the subject is different, a *conjunction* (for example, *che*) must be used, and the dependent verb has to be a *finite* verb in the indicative or subjunctive:

- *Credo di avere ragione.* *(verb infinitive)*  
  I think I am right.
- *Dice che tu hai ragione.* *(indicative)*  
  He says you are right.
- *Credo che tu abbia ragione.* *(subjunctive)*  
  I think you are right.

4.4.5 Verbs where no preposition is needed

Some very frequently used verbs introduce dependent verbs in the infinitive without the use of a preposition. The most important are: *dovere, potere, volere* (see 2.2.4), *amare, fare, osare, preferire, sapere*:

- *Vorrei dormire.*  
  I’d like to sleep.
- *Non so nuotare.*  
  I don’t know how to swim.
- *Preferisco vivere da solo.*  
  I prefer to live alone.

4.5 Other prepositions

In addition to the eight simple prepositions shown above, Italian has many other prepositions. We have grouped the most common ones according to their normal function in the sentence.

4.5.1 Indicating physical position, location

The following prepositions or prepositional phrases can also be used as adverbs expressing location (see also 6.2.7 and 6.3.2). For examples of how these prepositions are used to express location, see 37.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accanto (a)</td>
<td>next to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attraverso</td>
<td>across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>davanti a</td>
<td>before, in front of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dentro (di)</td>
<td>inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dietro (a, di)</td>
<td>behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di fronte (a)</td>
<td>opposite (see also 4.5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fuori (di)</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in mezzo (a)</td>
<td>in the middle of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lontano (da)</td>
<td>far from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oltre</td>
<td>beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sopra (di)</td>
<td>on, above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indicating position in time

The following prepositions or prepositional phrases indicate position in time. Both *dopo* and *prima* can also be used as adverbs expressing time (see 36.4.1, 36.3.1 and 14.4). For examples of how all these prepositions are used in a time context, see Chapter 36 as well as Chapter 14 (the future) and Chapter 13 (the past).

- **dopo** after
- **durante** during
- **entro** by
- **fino a** until, up to
- **prima** before
- **verso** towards

*Durante le vacanze estive, ho imparato a cucinare!*
During the summer holidays, I learnt to cook!

*Devo finire il libro entro la fine del mese.*
I have to finish the book by the end of the month.

Expressing other functions

The following prepositions have functions other than those of expressing time or place. Other examples of their use can be found by searching the Index.

- **come** as
- **contro** against
- **insieme (a)** together with
- **malgrado** despite
- **mediante** by means of
- **nonostante** despite
- **salvo** except
- **secondo** according to
- **senza** without
- **tramite** by

*Sono andata al cinema insieme a mio fratello e ai suoi amici.*
I went to the cinema with my brother and his friends.

Examples of use

The prepositions above have several distinguishing features:

- Unlike the common prepositions *a, da, etc.*, they all have more than one syllable.
- They are often found together with another preposition, for example, *davanti a, insieme a, prima di*.
- Some can be used both as preposition and as *adverb* (see Chapter 6) to modify a verb, as in the pairs of examples below:

  - **Arriverò dopo le cinque.** (*preposition*)
    I shall arrive after five o’clock.
  - **Arriverò dopo.** (*adverb*)
    I shall arrive afterwards.
  - **Prego, si sieda davanti al banco.** (*preposition*)
    Please, have a seat at the counter.
  - **Prego, si sieda davanti.** (*adverb*)
    Please, have a seat in front.
Other prepositions

• Some can be followed by either a noun ( cena ) or a verb ( cenare ):

  Partirò prima di cena. ( preposition ) I’ll leave before dinner.
  Partirò prima di cenare. ( preposition ) I’ll leave before having dinner.
  Partirò prima. ( adverb ) I’ll leave earlier.

4.5.5 Prepositional phrases which express other functions

There are several more phrases which have the same role as prepositions and which express many different functions. Since the functions are so varied, examples of their use can best be found by searching the Index.

  a causa di because of
  dalla parte di on behalf of
  di fronte a faced with ( both literally and not )
  grazie a thanks to
  in base a on the basis of
  in mezzo a in the middle of ( both literally and not )
  in vista di considering
  per via di because of

Di fronte ai problemi non si risponde con gli insulti.
When faced with problems, one shouldn’t respond with insults.

I posti in autobus verranno scelti dai partecipanti in base alla disponibilità.
The seats on the bus will be chosen by participants on the basis of availability.
Conjunctions

5.1 What is a conjunction?

The role of conjunctions (‘joining words’) is to link two or more sentences or parts of a sentence, whether clauses, phrases or simply groups of words. The conjunctions, together with other elements such as prepositions, pronouns and discourse markers, help to connect the thread of logic that runs through any discourse or text. The links formed by conjunctions can be of two different types: coordinating or subordinating.

5.2 Coordinating conjunctions

Two clauses, or groups of words, are called coordinated when they have the same syntactical status, for example:

- When they are both subjects of the same verb:
  
  **Luciano e Gianni sono italiani.**
  
  Luciano and Gianni are Italian.

- Or when they are clauses of equal weight or value:
  
  **Il cane dorme e il gatto mangia.**
  
  The dog is sleeping and the cat is eating.

The different types of coordinating conjunctions fulfil different functions, depending on the relationship between the two clauses or parts of the sentence (see also 30.2).

5.2.1 Simple coordinating conjunctions

‘and’ is the most common of the coordinating conjunctions. When followed by a word beginning with a vowel, it may change into **ed** to aid pronunciation (**tu ed io**). Other simple coordinating conjunctions are:

- anche, pure — also
- neanche, neppure — neither, nor
- o, oppure — or, or else

**Flavia parla italiano e spagnolo.**

Flavia speaks Italian and Spanish.

**Flavia parla italiano ed anche spagnolo.**

Flavia speaks Italian and also Spanish.

**Marina si iscriverà all’università di Siena oppure al Politecnico di Torino.**

Marina will enrol at Siena University or else at the Politecnico in Turin.
Double conjunctions

Sometimes two or more conjunctions link two or more corresponding elements of a clause or sentence:

- *e . . e*  
  *both . . and*
- *né . . né*  
  *neither . . nor*
- *o . . o*  
  *either . . or*
- *sia . . sia*  
  *both . . and*
- *non solo . . ma anche*  
  *not only but also*
- *Né io né mio marito abbiamo il tempo di pulire la casa.*  
  *Neither I nor my husband have time to clean the house.*
- *Vediamo le stesse persone sia in città sia al mare.*  
  *We see the same people both in town and at the seaside.*

(Nei . . ne is often substituted by the pair sia . . che.)

Napoli è una città interessante non solo dal punto di vista archeologico, ma anche dal punto di vista culturale.

Naples is an interesting city, not only from an archaeological point of view, but also from a cultural one.

Explanatory conjunctions

These conjunctions connect one clause, phrase or sentence with a second one which explains the meaning of the first more fully:

- *cioè,* infatti  
  *‘indeed’, ‘really’*
- *Arriveremo domani, cioè sabato.*  
  *We will arrive tomorrow, in other words Saturday.*
- *Non è andata bene l’ispezione. Infatti è andata malissimo.*  
  *The inspection didn’t go well. In fact it went very badly.*

Cioè can also be used to correct a previous statement, particularly in spoken language:

Vado io a prendere il pane, cioè no, vai tu, perché sai dove andare.

I’ll go and get the bread, no, you go, because you know where to go.

See also 30.2.5 (*cioè* as discourse marker in written language) and 41.4.5 (*cioè* as discourse marker in spoken language).

Contrasting conjunctions

These introduce a clause or sentence, whose content is in contrast with the preceding one (see also 30.2.4):

- *ma, però*  
  *but*
- *tuttavia*  
  *yet*
- *anzi, piuttosto*  
  *on the contrary, rather*
- *Diana non è stupida, anzi è molto intelligente.*  
  *Diana is not stupid, on the contrary she’s very intelligent.*
- *Se c’è traffico, non fate l’autostrada, piuttosto prendete le strade di campagna.*  
  *If there’s traffic, don’t go on the motorway, rather take the country roads.*

For a different meaning of piuttosto (adverb), see 6.3.5.

Conjunctions of sequence or consequence

These introduce a clause or sentence whose content follows naturally from, or is a consequence of, the preceding one (see also 35.2):
CONJUNCTIONS

5.3 Subordinating conjunctions

A sentence is subordinated to another one when it has the function of completing it. This relationship of dependence, with a main clause or sentence and one or more dependent clauses or sentences, is much more common in Italian than in English. Dependent clauses cannot stand alone, but exist only in relation to the main clause. Certain specific conjunctions are used to indicate this relationship. Their role is similar to that of prepositions (see 4.1) but with two key differences:

- The dependent verb introduced by a preposition (or following the verb directly) is always an infinitive and its subject must be the same as that of the main verb:

  Spero di vincere.
  I hope to win.

  Preferisco andare a casa.
  I’d prefer to go home.

- The dependent verb introduced by a subordinating conjunction, on the other hand, can be in the indicative, conditional or subjunctive mood (see 2.2.2, 2.2.11 and 2.2.14–15), and its subject may be a different one from that of the main verb:

  Indicative:
  So che loro hanno vinto.
  I know they have won.

  Conditional:
  Capisco che voi vorreste vincere.
  I understand that you would like to win.

  Subjunctive:
  Spero che la nostra squadra vinca.
  I hope our team wins.

The mood and tense of the dependent verbs, introduced by the conjunction che, or by other conjunctions, depend on the nature of the main verb (so, capisco, spero) and on the time relationship between the two verbs.

Some of the most common subordinating conjunctions are shown here, with a few examples.

5.3.1 Che

Che ‘that’ is the most frequently used of all subordinating conjunctions. This function of che differs from its function as a relative pronoun (see 3.5).

The different kinds of clauses introduced by che can be identified by their relationship with the main verb on which they depend. Here are just a few examples showing the different functions that dependent clauses introduced by che can have.
**Subordinating conjunctions**

As object of a verb (see also 31.3):

Ho detto che sono stanco.
I said that I am tired.

As subject of a verb (see also 32.4):

È probabile che l'albergo sia pieno.
It’s likely that the hotel is full.

Expressing purpose (see also 33.3.2):

Chiamo un meccanico che ci ripari la macchina.
I’ll call a mechanic who can repair the car.

Expressing a consequence (see also 35.4):

Sono così stanco che andrei a letto subito.
I’m so tired that I’d go to bed immediately.

Expressing a comparison (see also 17.3.4):

È più facile dirlo che farlo.
It’s easier to say it than to do it.

---

**5.3.2 Se**

Se can mean ‘if’ or ‘whether’. Here are the two main uses of se:

(a) Introducing an indirect question (see also 29.2, 31.3.2, 38.8.2):

Dimmi se capisci.
Tell me whether you understand or not.

(b) Introducing a condition in a conditional sentence, followed by either indicative or subjunctive, depending on the degree of probability (see also 38.2, 38.3):

Se piove non esco.
If it rains I won’t go out.

Se is followed by the subjunctive when the event is unlikely to take place (see also 38.2, 38.3):

Se avessi i soldi farei un viaggio negli USA.
If I had the money I’d go on a trip to the USA.

Conditional clauses are illustrated in more detail in Chapter 38.

For an idiomatic use of se, see also 26.4.6 (chissà se).

---

**5.3.3 Perché**

Perché can mean ‘because’, ‘why’ or ‘in order to’. There are three main types of clauses introduced by perché. Two of these have a verb in the indicative, while the third (purpose) requires a verb in the subjunctive. Here are examples of all three types of clause.

Expressing reason (see also 5.3.4 and 34.3.1):

Mio figlio piange perché ha fame.
My son is crying because he is hungry.

Introducing an indirect question (see also 31.1.2 and 31.3):

Dimmi perché vuoi andare via.
Tell me why you want to go away.

Expressing purpose (see also 5.3.5):

Ti parlo chiaro perché tu possa capirmi.
I am speaking to you clearly so that you can understand me.
5.3.4 Conjunctions introducing cause or reason clauses

Apart from *perché*, several other conjunctions and phrases introduce a clause of cause or reason and are also followed by the indicative. These include:

- considerato che
- dal momento che
- dato che
- giacché
- in quanto
- poiché
- siccome
- visto che

**Visto che mi vuoi lasciare . . .**

Since you want to leave me . . .

*(title of a song by Rino Gaetano)*

► See also 34.3.1.

5.3.5 Conjunctions introducing a purpose clause

Apart from *perché*, other conjunctions introducing a purpose clause include:

- affinché
- in modo che

**Ho dato il nuovo computer al mio collega affinché lavorasse meglio.**

I gave the new computer to my colleague so that he could work better.

**Facciamo in modo che tutti possano contribuire.**

Let’s do it in such a way that everyone can contribute.

► See also 33.3.1.

5.3.6 Conjunctions introducing a time clause: *quando, mentre, appena*

The three conjunctions most commonly used to introduce a time clause in the indicative (see also 36.2, 36.4) are:

- quando
- mentre
- appena

**Scrivimi appena arrivi.**

Write to me as soon as you arrive.

**Quando l’ho visto l’ho salutato.**

When I saw him I said hello.

**Sono arrivato mentre telefonavi.**

I got here while you were on the phone.

**Quando** can also be used to introduce an indirect question (see also 31.1.2 and 31.3):

**Non so quando mi pagheranno.**

I don’t know when they’ll pay me.

Similar to conjunctions, phrases expressing frequency (*ogni volta che* ‘every time that’, *tutte le volte che* ‘all the times that’) can also be used to introduce a time clause (see 3.9.2–3).

Some conjunctions introducing a time clause require the subjunctive, generally when the action or event has still to take place:

- prima che
- finché

**Salviamo il paese prima che sia tardi.**

Let’s save the country before it is too late.

**Rimanete seduti finché vi dico di alzarvi.**

Stay sitting until I tell you to get up.

► See also 36.3.2 (prima che), 36.4.2 (finché).
5.3.7 Conjunctions introducing a result clause

When introducing a result clause, the following conjunctions use the indicative:

- **così che** with the result that
- **di modo che** with the result that

They are also written **cosicché** and **dimodoché**. They are always separated from the main clause by a comma.

**Ho comprato cinque paia di scarpe, cosicché non avevo i soldi per comprare il vestito.**
I bought five pairs of shoes, so that I didn’t have any money to buy the dress.

See also 35.3.

For **in modo che** expressing purpose, see 5.3.5 above.

5.3.8 Conjunctions introducing a concessive clause

When introducing a concessive clause, the following conjunctions use the subjunctive, although **anche se** can be followed either by the indicative or by the subjunctive, depending on how likely the event is (see also 39.3.2):

- **anche se** even if
- **benché** although
- **neanche se** not even if
- **nonostante** although, despite
- **sebbene** even though

**Sono venuto in ufficio, nonostante avessi la febbre.**
I came to the office, although I had a fever.

**Non vorrei una motocicletta neanche se me la regalassero.**
I wouldn’t want a motorbike not even if I was given one for free.

**Anche se ci conosciamo da tanto tempo, non sono mai stata a casa sua.**
Even though we have known each other a long time, I have never been to his house.

**Non andrei alla festa neanche se tu mi pagassi.**
I wouldn’t go to the party even if you paid me.

See also 39.3.2.

5.3.9 Conjunctions introducing a restrictive or exception clause

- **a meno che** unless
- **nel caso (che)** just in case
- **purché** provided that
- **salvo che** unless, except for
- **senza che** without, unless
- **tranne che** except that

**Possiamo andare, a meno che tu non abbia ancora da fare.**
We can go now, unless you still have something to do.

**Ti lascio le chiavi della macchina nel caso tu ne avessi bisogno.**
I’ll leave you my car keys, just in case you might need them.

5.3.10 Conjunctions introducing a clause expressing manner

**Come se** is normally followed by the subjunctive:

- **Come se** as if, as though
- **E poi come se non bastasse, ha cominciato a piövere.**
And then, as if that was not enough, it started raining.

See also 37.4.7.
Adverbs

6.1 What is an adverb?

The main function of adverbs is to modify the meaning of a verb, in the same way that adjectives qualify a noun. Adverbs are invariable in form.

- Viviamo una vita tranquilla. (adjective) We live a quiet life.
- Viviamo tranquillamente. (adverb) We live quietly.

Certain adverbs such as molto, poco (see 6.3.5), however, can also be used to modify words other than verbs, for example adjectives or other adverbs:

- La mia vita è molto tranquilla.
  My life is very quiet.
- Viviamo molto tranquillamente.
  We live very quietly.

6.2 Formation of adverbs

Adverbs can be formed in different ways. Here we look at each in turn.

6.2.1 Adverbs formed with -mente

A large number of Italian adverbs are formed from an adjective, with the addition of the suffix -mente. This is similar to the way English adverbs are formed with the suffix -ly (‘quiet/quietly’, ‘slow/slowly’).

(a) For adjectives in the first group (-o/-a/-i/-e endings, see 1.4.2) the suffix -mente is added to the feminine singular form (ending in -a):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lento</td>
<td>lentamente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attento</td>
<td>attentamente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) For adjectives in the second group (-e/-i endings, see 1.4.2) -mente is simply added to the singular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>semplice</td>
<td>semplicemente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veloce</td>
<td>velocemente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With adjectives ending in -le and -re, however, the ‘e’ is dropped before adding -mente:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>facile</td>
<td>facilmente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particolare</td>
<td>particolarmente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2 Adverbs formed with -oni

This group of adverbs which refer to movements or positions of the body are formed by adding -oni to the base of a verb form, for example ciondolare ‘to dangle’ (see also 37.4.5). Here are just a few:

- **carponi** on all fours, crawling
- **ciondoloni** with arms dangling, like an ape
- **dondoloni** lolling about
- **gattoni** cat-like
- **penzoloni** dangling
- **tastoni** feeling your way, groping (for example, in the dark)
- **tentoni** proceeding tentatively, groping

La bambina aveva otto mesi e andava (a) carponi.
The toddler was eight months old and was crawling.

6.2.3 Adverbs not formed with -mente or -oni

Some adverbs are not derived from any adjective or noun. They are words used exclusively as adverbs, for example dappertutto (adverb of place), allora (adverb of time), certo (reinforcing adverb), nemmeno (adverb of negation), quando (interrogative adverb), quanto (adverb of quantity).

6.2.4 Adjectives used as adverbs

Adjectives which can be used as adverbs without any change in their form (keeping the masculine singular form) include:

- **certo** certain(ly)
- **chiaro** clear(ly)
- **dritto** straight ahead
- **duro** hard
- **forte** strong
- **giusto** just
- **lontano** far
- **piano** slow(ly)
- **proprio** precisely
- **solo** only
- **veloce** quick(ly)
- **vicino** near

Non ti capisco quando parli veloce. (instead of velocemente)
I don’t understand you when you speak fast.

Capisco benissimo quando parli chiaro. (instead of chiaramente)
I understand very well when you speak clearly.

Use of adjectives as adverbs is frequent in advertising slogans:

**Mangia sano, mangia Yoppo.**
Eat healthily, eat Yoppo.

6.2.5 Adverbial phrases

An alternative to the simple adverb is a phrase consisting of noun and preposition, for example con or senza:

Ha guidato con molta attenzione.
He drove with great care.
Ha lavorato senza impegno.
He worked without any commitment.

Other common adverbial phrases are based on modo or maniera:

Gli studenti devono imparare a lavorare in modo autonomo.
The students have to learn to work independently.

Utilizziamo il nostro tempo nel migliore dei modi.
Let’s use our time in the best possible way.

Sfruttiamo il soggiorno in Italia nella maniera migliore.
Let’s make the most of our stay in Italy in the best possible way.

Giancarlo si è sempre comportato in maniera esemplare.
Giancarlo has always behaved in an exemplary way.

See also 37.4.2.

6.2.6 Adverbs with suffix

A few of the most common adverbs can have a suffix (-ino, -uccio, etc.) added to them, which can convey a more limited intensity of meaning or a particular tone, such as affection. This usage is mainly limited to spoken Italian:

Ha solo due anni, ma parla benino.
She’s only two years old, but she speaks quite well.

Come ti senti adesso? Maluccio.
How do you feel now? Not too bad.

6.2.7 Adverbs used also as prepositions

Some adverbs of time and place can also be used as prepositions, before a noun or a verb infinitive (see also 4.5, 37.2). When used as a preposition, they sometimes need to be followed by a simple preposition (a, da, di):

Time:
dopo di
prima di

Place:
davanti a
dentro a
dietro a/di
fuori a/da
oltre a
sopra a
sotto a

Siamo arrivati dopo di voi.
We arrived after you.

Mi piace sedermi davanti al caminetto.
I like to sit in front of the fireplace.

Mettetevi la giacca prima di uscire.
Put your jacket on before you go out.

6.3 Functions of adverbs

Adverbs have different functions in the sentence. To help you understand what these are, we have grouped adverbs and adverbial phrases into various categories, according to their function in the sentence, as shown below.
Functions of adverbs

6.3.1 Adverbs of time

These adverbs or adverbial phrases help to indicate the time when an action or event took place or the frequency with which it takes/took place:

- **adesso** now
- **allora** then
- **ancora** still
- **dopo** after, afterwards
- **già** already
- **poi** then, after, afterwards
- **presto** soon, early
- **prima** before
- **subito** immediately
- **tardi** late
- **oggi** today
- **ieri** yesterday
- **domani** tomorrow
- **l’altro ieri** day before yesterday

Referring to frequency:

- **di solito** usually
- **generalmente** generally
- **mai** never
- **normalmente** normally
- **ogni tanto** every so often
- **qualche volta** sometimes
- **raramente** rarely
- **spesso** often
- **sempre** always

6.3.2 Adverbs of place

Adverbs of place include the following:

- **altrove** elsewhere
- **davanti** in front
- **dappertutto** everywhere
- **dentro** inside
- **dietro** behind
- **fuori** outside
- **laggiù** down there
- **lascù** up there
- **là**, **lì** there
- **oltre** further
- **qui**, **qua** here
- **quiaggìù** down here
- **quassù** up here
- **sopra** above
- **sotto** beneath

Unstressed adverbs of place: **ci**, **vi**, **ne**

One very common adverb of place is the unstressed particle **ci** (see also 3.4.5) or less commonly the form **vi** used with the meaning of ‘here’/’there’ in expressions such as:

- **ci è, ci sono** there is, there are
- **ci vado, ci vengo** I go there, I come here

**Ne** as an adverb of place has the meaning of ‘from here, from there’ (see also 3.4.4):

- **Me ne vado** I’m going away
- **Andatevene** Go away

Ci and **ne** are similar to the corresponding unstressed personal pronouns (see 3.4), in form and behaviour; they can also be combined with conjunctive pronouns, as in the examples above (see also 3.4.6), but their meaning and function are clearly those of an adverb.

6.3.3 Interrogative adverbs

The interrogative adverbs below are used in a question or indirect question (see also 15.3.2–15.3.3). **Quanto** is also used as an interrogative adjective and pronoun, in which case it has varying forms.

- **come?** how?
- **come mai?** how come?
- **dove?** where?
- **perché?** why?
ADVERBS

quando? when?
quanto? how much?
Come stai, Marco? How are you, Marco?
Dove vai in vacanza? Where are you going on holiday?
Perché vuoi sapere quest’informazione? Why do you want to know this information?
Dimmi quando vieni a Firenze. Tell me when you are coming to Florence.
Quanto resti in Italia? How long are you staying in Italy?

Come and quanto can also be used in an exclamation, in which case they are known as ‘avverbi esclamativi’ (exclamative adverbs):

Ma come sei bella! How lovely you look!
Ragazzi, quanto siete stupidi! Kids, how stupid you are!

6.3.4 Negative adverbs

Normally the three adverbs below are found in combination with non to form the double negative required in Italian (see also 16.2):

mai
neanche
neppure
(non)

Non vado mai al cinema.
I never go to the cinema.

Non mi ha telefonato neppure sabato sera.
He didn’t even call me on Saturday evening.

6.3.5 Adverbs of quantity

The common adverbs expressing quantity are: molto, parecchio, poco, tanto, troppo, tutto (see also 10.4.1, 17.5.2). All of these are also used as adjectives and pronouns (see 3.10). When used as adjectives or pronouns, they agree in gender and number with the noun that they qualify or refer to. When used as adverbs, however, they are invariable and remain identical to the masculine singular form. Other adverbs of quantity include abbastanza, piuttosto.

Giorgio lavora poco. Giorgio doesn’t work much.
Sua moglie studia tanto. His wife studies a lot.
Carla è molto stanca. Carla is very tired.
Sono troppo stanca per uscire. I’m too tired to go out.
Mi pagavano troppo poco. They paid me too little.

In un recente sondaggio il 19% degli italiani si dice “molto felice”, il 65% “abbastanza”. In a recent survey, 19% of Italians say they are ‘very happy’, 65% say ‘quite (happy)’.

La situazione è piuttosto complicata. The situation is rather complicated.

6.3.6 Adverbs of manner

This is the biggest group of adverbs. It includes all the adverbs ending in -mente (see 6.2.1), all the adverbs ending in -oni (see 6.2.2) and all the adverbs that use the masculine singular adjective form (see 6.2.4). All of these indicate how something is or was done. The group also includes adverbial phrases (see 6.2.5). As well as these groups, there are a few other adverbs of manner:

bene well
male badly
volentieri willingly
Adverbs affirming or denying

Known as avverbi di giudizio in Italian, these can have different purposes:

Affirming or backing up a statement:

- **appunto** exactly
- **certo** certainly
- **certamente** certainly
- **proprio** exactly, precisely, really
- **senza dubbio** without doubt
- **sicuro** surely, certainly
- **sicuramente** surely, certainly
- **certamente** certainly
- **sicuramente** surely, certainly

Adding doubt to a statement:

- **eventualmente** if it were to happen
- **forse** perhaps
- **possibilmente** possibly
- **probabilmente** probably
- **quasi** almost

Comparative and superlative adverbs

**6.4 Forms of comparative and superlative**

**Comparative: più, meno**

Adverbs have a comparative and superlative form, formed with più (‘more’) and meno (‘less’), in the same way that adjectives do (see 1.4.6–8). In making a comparison between two elements and the way they act (whether people, objects or other), you can use a comparative adverb to express the concept of ‘more’ or ‘less’:

- **sicuramente più** / **menosicuramente**
- **velocemente più** / **menovelocemente**

The comparative form normally applies to adverbs of manner:

- **Mario guidava molto più velocemente di me.**
  Mario drove much faster than me.

- **Gli inglesi cucinano meno bene degli italiani.**
  The English cook less well than the Italians.

But it can also apply to adverbs of time or frequency such as presto, spesso, tardi:

- **Io mi alzo molto più presto di te.**
  I get up much earlier than you.

- **Noi arriveremo più tardi di voi.**
  We will arrive later than you.

**The same as, as much as: quanto, come**

The concept of ‘same as, as much as’ is expressed by using quanto or come to introduce the second element of the comparison. The use of tanto or così before the adverb is optional:

- **Mario guida (tanto) velocemente quanto suo fratello.**
  Mario drives just as fast as his brother.

- **A casa vostra mangiamo (così) bene come al ristorante.**
  At your house we eat as well as we do at the restaurant.

**Superlative: più velocemente di tutti**

The superlative form of adverbs in Italian (e.g. ‘the most elegantly’) is similar to the comparative form, but with the addition of a phrase such as di tutti:

- **Mario guidava più velocemente di tutti.**
  Mario drove faster than everyone.
When no comparison is being made, the concept of ‘extremely’ can be expressed by the -issimo form, but this is more acceptable for the short simple adverbs, and less commonly used for the forms ending in -mente:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>-issimo</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>presto</td>
<td>prestissimo</td>
<td>very early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tardi</td>
<td>tardissimo</td>
<td>very late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forte</td>
<td>fortissimamente</td>
<td>very strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sicuramente</td>
<td>sicurissimamente</td>
<td>very surely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2 Irregular comparative and superlative forms

Some adverbs with ‘special’ comparative/superlative forms are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bene</td>
<td>meglio</td>
<td>benissimo (molto bene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>peggio</td>
<td>malissimo (molto male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>molto</td>
<td>più</td>
<td>moltissimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poco</td>
<td>meno</td>
<td>pochissimo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some examples of comparative and superlative adverbs in use (see also 17.2, 17.5.6):

- Si scrive più velocemente con il computer che a mano.  
  One can write faster with a computer than by hand.
- Ieri sera siamo andati a letto tardissimo.  
  Yesterday evening we went to bed very late.
- È meglio lavorare in gruppo che lavorare da soli.  
  To work in a team is better than to work alone.
- Oggi mi sento benissimo.  
  Today I feel very well.
- Teresa suona il piano peggio di Giovanni.  
  Teresa plays the piano worse than Giovanni.
- Per favore guida un po’ più piano.  
  Please drive a bit slower (a bit more slowly).
- Partiamo il più presto possibile.  
  Let us leave as early as possible.
- Controlli il contratto il più attentamente possibile.  
  Check the contract as carefully as possible.

The superlative adverbs il meglio ‘best’, il peggio ‘worst’ can also have the function of nouns, as in the expressions below:

- Do il meglio di me stesso quando posso lavorare in modo autonomo.  
  I give the best of myself when I can work independently.
- Il peggio deve ancora venire.  
  The worst is still to come.

Meglio is also used in an idiomatic expression:

- Ci sistemiamo alla meglio.  
  We’ll settle down as best we can.
7

Numbers

7.1 What is a number?

Grammatically, numbers can be considered as belonging to several categories, depending on their different functions.

A number can be used as:

(a) A noun:

Il cinque è un numero dispari.
Five is an odd number.

Ci vediamo alle nove.
See you at nine o’clock.

(b) An adjective (used with a noun):

Mi servono tre fogli di carta.
I need three sheets of paper.

(c) A pronoun (used on its own):

Quanti fogli di carta ti servono? Me ne servono tre.
How many sheets do you need? I need three.

7.2 Cardinal numbers

Cardinals are the basic numbers. A list of cardinal numbers is shown at the end of this chapter. Note in particular the elision of the vowel in ventuno, trentotto, and the acute accent in trentatré.

All cardinal numbers are invariable except uno/una, which is used also as indefinite article, and whose forms vary according to the word that follows (see 1.3.2). With numbers ending in -uno, the final vowel is often dropped:

- trentun giorni
  thirty-one days

- Ha compiuto ventun anni.
  She’s turned twenty-one.

Numbers with more than one element are joined together, for example:

4.944 4,944
quattromilanovecentoquarantaquattro

When the first element is cento or mille, these can remain separate, but joined by e:

1.002 1,002
mille e due
4.560 4,560
quattromilacinquecentosessanta
Un milione ‘one million’ and plural form milioni ‘millions’ can also remain separate from the figure which follows, and not joined by e:

- 1,250,000
- 2,350,000

Note how mille ‘one thousand’ becomes -mila in the plural, creating compound forms: duemila ‘two thousand’, tremila ‘three thousand’, centomila ‘one hundred thousand’.

In Italian usage, the decimal point is actually a comma (virgola), while the full stop (punto) is used to separate figures above a thousand:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>due virgola cinque</td>
<td>two point five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millecinquecento</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When describing how people or objects are arranged or distributed, use the prepositions a (a due a due) or per, as shown below:

- **Ragazzi, mettetevi in fila due per due.**
  - Kids, get in line (line up) two by two.
- **Signori, entrate uno per volta, per favore.**
  - Ladies and gentlemen, come in one at a time, please.

### Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers (except the first ten, whose special forms can be seen in 7.11) are formed by adding the suffix -esimo. The final vowel of the cardinal number is dropped before the suffix: undic-esimo, dodic-esimo, quarant-esimo, cent-esimo.

These numbers are basically used as adjectives and can be masculine or feminine, singular or plural, changing their ending (with the pattern -o/-a/-i/-e) to agree with the noun to which they are attached:

- **Sto scrivendo il sesto capitolo.**
  - I am writing the sixth chapter.
- **la dodicesima notte**
  - the twelfth night

They come after the noun when used with the names of rulers, always written as a Roman number:

- **Enrico VIII (Enrico ottavo)**
  - Henry the eighth

In some cases, however, they are used on their own, for example referring to something which is understood from the context, shown in brackets in the examples below:

- The gears of a car:
  - **la prima, la quarta (marcia)**
  - first, fourth gear
- The classes, grades or years in a school:
  - **Mio figlio frequenta la prima (classe) media, e mia figlia la terza.**
  - My son is in the first year of middle school, and my daughter is in the third.
- Units of time:
  - (minuti) primi, secondi
  - minutes, seconds
Ci vogliono due ore, quattro primi e trenta secondi.
It takes two hours, four minutes and thirty seconds.

**decimi, centesimi (di secondo)**
tenths, hundredths of a second

- Fractions:
  1/10 un decimo
  a tenth
  2/3 due terzi
  two-thirds
  5/12 cinque dodicesimi
  five-twelfths

► See also 17.5.5 (numbers and ranking).

Note also:

- la metà, il mezzo
  half (as a noun)
- mezzo, mezza
  half (as an adjective)

*La metà degli studenti è stata bocciata.*
Half the students failed.

- una mezza porzione di pasta al pomodoro
  a half portion of pasta with tomato sauce
- un mezzo litro di vino rosso
  half a litre of red wine

### 7.4 Calculations

Here is what the basic arithmetic symbols are called in Italian:

- **+** più  
  plus  
  5 + 6 = 11  
  cinque più sei uguale undici

- **−** meno  
  less  
  9 − 3 = 6  
  nove meno tre uguale sei

- **÷** diviso  
  divided by  
  8 ÷ 2 = 4  
  otto diviso due uguale quattro

- **×** per  
  multiplied by  
  3 × 8 = 24  
  tre per otto uguale ventiquattro

In informal speech, *fa* ‘makes’ is also used in place of *uguale*:

2 + 2 = 4  
*due più due fa quattro*

### 7.5 Percentages

Percentages are always preceded by an article:

*Il 15% del nostro fatturato consiste in prodotti alimentari.*  
15% of our turnover is in foodstuffs.

*L’euro si è svalutato del 20% (venti cento).*  
The euro has been devalued by 20%.

*Il mio reddito si è ridotto del 50%.*  
My income has been reduced by 50%.

The article *l’* is used with an initial vowel sound:

*l’ottanta per cento (80%)*  
eighty per cent

► See also 42.6 for use of percentages in written reports.
Collective and approximate numbers

Note the use of suffixes in the following:

- **una decina**
  about ten
- **una dozzina**
  about a dozen
- **un’oretta**
  just under an hour

The suffix -ina is used with numbers to express approximation:

- **C’era una ventina di spettatori.**
  There were about twenty spectators.
- **Passo una quindicina di giorni in montagna.**
  I’m spending a fortnight in the mountains.

The suffix -aio also expresses approximation:

- **un centinaio** di persone
  about a hundred people
- **un migliaio**
  about a thousand

These nouns are masculine in the singular but have an irregular feminine plural form:

- **Ho visto centinaia di incidenti stradali.**
  I have seen hundreds of road accidents.
- **La ditta ha varie migliaia di client.**
  The company has several thousand customers.

An approximate age is usually expressed in one of two ways:

- **Era una donna sui quaranta.**
  She was a woman of around forty.
- **Aveva una quarantina di anni.**
  She was around forty.

Other collective numbers are:

- **un paio**
  a pair (irregular feminine plural le paia)
- **una coppia**
  a couple

Dates

The dates of the month are referred to with cardinal numbers, except the first:

- **il primo gennaio**
  the first of January
- **il due aprile**
  the second of April
- **Partiamo il dieci marzo.**
  We’ll leave on the tenth of March.

Note how the article l’ is used before an initial vowel:

- **l’uno settembre**
  the first of September
- **l’otto giugno**
  the eighth of June
Years are usually written in figures but spoken in full:

**Sono nato nel 1951 (millenovecentocinquantuno).**
I was born in 1951.

**Mia figlia è nata il 29 luglio 1987 (millenovecentottantasette).**
My daughter was born on the 29th of July 1987.

**Viviamo in Gran Bretagna dall’89 (ottantanove).**
We have lived in Britain since '89.

All dates expressed in numbers are always preceded by the definite article, as in the examples above.

Note the two different ways in which to describe centuries:

- **il ventesimo secolo / il Novecento**
  the twentieth century (the 1900s)

- **il quindicesimo secolo / il Quattrocento**
  the fifteenth century (the 1400s)

- **il quinto secolo**
  the fifth century (the 400s)

And note the following phrases:

- **i primi anni trenta**
  in the early Thirties

- **agli inizi degli anni ’80**
  at the beginning of the ’80s

**Time**

Time is expressed using the definite article, normally in the feminine plural form since it refers to **le ore**:

- **Sono le otto di sera.**
  It’s eight o’clock in the evening.

- **Sono le otto di mattina.**
  It’s eight o’clock in the morning.

But in the case of midday, midnight or one o’clock, the singular is used:

- **È mezzogiorno.**
  It’s midday.

- **È mezzanotte.**
  It’s midnight.

- **È l’una.**
  It’s one o’clock.

Time ‘at which’ is expressed using **a** or more frequently the combined preposition and article forms:

- **Sono andata a letto a mezzanotte.**
  I went to bed at midnight.

- **Ci vediamo all’una.**
  We’ll see each other at one o’clock.

- **Passo a prenderti alle sette.**
  I’ll come by and get you at seven o’clock.
7.9 Weights and measures

Units of weight include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un etto</td>
<td>100 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chilo</td>
<td>a kilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un quintale</td>
<td>100 kilos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>una tonnellata</td>
<td>a metric ton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Units of distance/length include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un centimetro</td>
<td>a centimetre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un decimetro</td>
<td>10 cms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un metro</td>
<td>a metre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un chilometro</td>
<td>a kilometre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost per unit and speed per hour are expressed as follows:

I DVD costano €15 (quindici euro) l’uno.
The DVDs cost €15 (fifteen euros) each.

Le pere costano €4 (quattro euro) al chilo.
Pears cost €4 (four euros) per kilo.

Il limite di velocità su autostrada è di 130 chilometri all’ora.
The speed limit on motorways is 130 kilometres per hour.

7.10 Currency

Like other countries of the European Union, Italy currently uses the euro as the unit of currency. Previously the unit of currency was the Italian lira and you may very occasionally still hear prices quoted in lire.

Here is an article about ‘il caro-spiaggia’ – the increased cost of going to the private beach establishments that are popular all over Italy:

Il bel tempo è ormai arrivato e le famiglie si preparano a godersi qualche giorno di vacanza. Ma per trascorrere una giornata al mare sulle spiagge italiane, una famiglia di quattro persone spende in media 97 euro tra ingresso allo stabilimento, ombrellone, lettini o sedie a sdraio, parcheggio, cibi e bevande. A Portofino (Liguria) un ingresso singolo giornaliero può costare da un minimo di 5 euro a un massimo di 9 euro, il costo di un ombrellone e due sdraio per due persone varia tra 25 e 50 euro mentre per una cabina, con ombrellone e due sdraio si possono arrivare a spendere, al mese, ben 950 euro. A Varazze, invece, il costo varia da 22 a 30 euro per due persone con un ombrellone e due sdraio.

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, www.repubblica.it, retrieved 18 February 2012)

The fine weather has arrived and families are getting ready to enjoy a few days of holiday. But to spend a day at the seaside on an Italian beach, a family of four people spends on average 97 euros, between entrance to the beach establishment, umbrella, sun loungers or deckchairs, parking, food and drinks. In Portofino (Liguria), the daily entrance fee for one person can cost from a minimum of 5 euros to a maximum of 9 euros, the cost of an umbrella and two deckchairs for two people varies between 25 and 50 euros, while for a cabin, with umbrella and two deckchairs, you can spend as much as 950 euros a month. In Varazze, on the other hand, the cost varies from 22 to 30 euros for two people, with an umbrella and two deckchairs.
Note that we have only shown all the possible endings (-o/-a/-i/-e) for the first two ordinal numbers, but all the others follow this pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Cardinal</th>
<th>Ordinal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>uno/una</td>
<td>primo/a/i/e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>due</td>
<td>secondo/a/i/e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tre</td>
<td>terzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>quattro</td>
<td>quarto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>cinque</td>
<td>quinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>sei</td>
<td>sesto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>sette</td>
<td>settimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>otto</td>
<td>ottavo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>nove</td>
<td>nono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>dieci</td>
<td>decimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>undici</td>
<td>undicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>dodici</td>
<td>dodicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>tredici</td>
<td>tredicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>quattordici</td>
<td>quattordicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>quindici</td>
<td>quindicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>sedici</td>
<td>sedicesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>diciasse</td>
<td>diciassettesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>diciotto</td>
<td>diciottesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>diciannove</td>
<td>diciannovesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>venti</td>
<td>ventesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>ventuno</td>
<td>ventunesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>ventidue</td>
<td>ventiduesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>ventitré</td>
<td>ventitreesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>trenta</td>
<td>trentesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>trentuno</td>
<td>trentunesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>trentadue</td>
<td>trentaduesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>trentatré</td>
<td>trentatreesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>quaranta</td>
<td>quarantesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>quarantuno</td>
<td>quarantunesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>quarantadue</td>
<td>quarantaduesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>quarantatré</td>
<td>quarantatreesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>cinquanta</td>
<td>cinquantesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>sessanta</td>
<td>sessantesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>settanta</td>
<td>settantesimo</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>novanta</td>
<td>novantesimo</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>cento</td>
<td>centesimo</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<td>trecentesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>mille</td>
<td>millesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>duemila</td>
<td>duemillesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.000</td>
<td>diecimila</td>
<td>diecimillesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.000</td>
<td>centomila</td>
<td>centomillesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000.000</td>
<td>un milione</td>
<td>milionesimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000.000.000</td>
<td>un miliardo</td>
<td>miliardesimo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part B

Functions
Giving and seeking factual information
8 Identification: giving personal information

8.1 Introduction

In Italian, as in other languages, one of the simplest ways of giving or eliciting information about yourself or others is by using the verb essere ‘to be’ (see 2.2.3), as shown in this simple dialogue:

A Buongiorno, io sono Monica. Sono la nuova assistente di marketing. E voi?
B Io sono Carlo, sono il direttore tecnico. E questo è il mio collega, Gerardo. Siamo colleghi da più di dieci anni!
C Piacere, Monica.
A Piacere, Gerardo. Di dove sei?
C Sono napoletano. E tu?
A Io sono di Milano.
A Good morning. I’m Monica. I’m the new marketing assistant. What about you?
B I’m Carlo. I’m the technical director. And this is my colleague Gerardo. We’ve been colleagues for more than ten years!
C Pleased to meet you, Monica.
A Pleased to meet you, Gerardo. Where are you from?
C I’m from Naples. And you?
A I’m from Milan.

8.2 Tu or Lei?

There are two forms of address in Italian: the Lei (formal) form and the tu (informal) form. The Lei form is used when addressing someone you don’t know well, or don’t know at all, although young people meeting each other often use the tu form straightaway, as in the conversation above. You may at some point be invited to use the tu form with the words: Diamoci del tu.

When using Lei to address someone, the verb form used is the third person form (Lei) parla inglese? rather than the second person form (Tu) parli inglese? which you would normally use to address someone. In our examples, we have shown both ‘you’ forms.

8.3 Giving different kinds of personal information

The verb essere ‘to be’ is used in most of the functions illustrated below to supply the kind of personal information you might want to exchange when meeting someone for the first time. (For introductions, see also 20.2.)

In Italian the verb endings indicate which person is being referred to (see 2.1.3–4); this means you don’t need to use the subject pronouns io, tu, lui, etc. to indicate the person, so in our examples they are shown in brackets. The pronouns are also used in grammar books or textbooks to refer to the verb forms, for example the tu form, the Lei form, the noi form, the loro form.
8.3.1 Giving one's name

(Io) sono Anna.
I am Anna.

(Lui) è Franco.
He is Franco.

(Loro) sono Monica e Gerardo.
They’re Monica and Gerardo.

To introduce yourself, you can also use the verb chiamarsi (see 2.1.10) ‘to be called’:

(Io) mi chiamo Anna.
My name is Anna.

(Lui) si chiama Franco.
His name is Franco.

(Loro) si chiamano Monica e Gerardo.
They are called Monica and Gerardo.

Come si chiama?
What’s his name?

8.3.2 Indicating relationship to speaker

Introducing friends or colleagues

Lei è Giancarla. È una collega.
This is Giancarla. She is a colleague.

Lui è Franco. È un amico.
This is Franco. He is a friend.

You can also use the possessives mio, tuo, suo, etc.:

È un mio amico.
He’s a friend of mine.

Sono i miei colleghi.
They are colleagues of mine/my colleagues.

Introducing family

When you talk about your family, you will often need to use the possessives mio, tuo, etc. (see 3.7). With relatives, you don’t use the definite article il, la, etc. with the possessive, except with the plural forms (see 3.7.1):

È mio fratello.
He is my brother.

È suo marito.
It’s her husband.

Sono i suoi figli.
They’re her children.

Here is a list of close relations, with English translations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il padre</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il fratello</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il cugino</td>
<td>cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il marito</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il figlio</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo zio</td>
<td>uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il suocero</td>
<td>father-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il genero</td>
<td>son-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il cognato</td>
<td>brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il nonno</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il nipote</td>
<td>grandson, nephew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la madre</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la sorella</td>
<td>sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la cugina</td>
<td>cousin (f.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la moglie</td>
<td>wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la figlia</td>
<td>daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la zia</td>
<td>aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la suocera</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la nuora</td>
<td>daughter-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la cognata</td>
<td>sister-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la nonna</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la nipote</td>
<td>granddaughter, niece</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Giving different kinds of personal information

Note that certain words do need the definite article:

- *la mia famiglia* my family
- *il mio / la mia parente* my relative (m./f.)
- *il mio fidanzato / la mia fidanzata* my fiancé (m./f.)

Avoid confusing the following:

- *i miei parenti* my relatives
- *i miei genitori* my parents

Indicating profession

In Italian, when using *essere* to talk about one’s profession, the indefinite article *un, una* (see 1.3.2, 1.3.5) is not needed:

- *(Io) sono insegnante.* I am a teacher.
- *(Lui) è ingegnere.* He is an engineer.
- *(Loro) sono medici.* They’re doctors.

When, on the other hand, you use the verb *fare*, you do need to use the definite article *il, la* (see 1.3.3, 1.3.5), etc.:

- *Faccio l’insegnante.* I’m a teacher.

We have listed below some trades and professions you may come into contact with in Italy.

Professionals:

- *il medico* doctor
- *il/la dentista* dentist
- *il ragioniere* accountant
- *il/la pediatra* paediatrician
- *l’ingegnere* engineer
- *l’architetto* architect
- *l’insegnante* teacher (masculine or feminine)
- *il professore/la professoressa* lecturer, secondary school teacher
- *il maestro/la maestra* teacher (elementary school)

Builders and workmen:

- *il muratore* builder
- *l’operaio* workman
- *l’idraulico* plumber
- *l’elettricista* electrician

Shops, trades:

- *il pescivendolo* fish seller
- *il macellaio* butcher
- *il fruttivendolo* greengrocer
- *il droghiere* grocer
- *il salumiere* delicatessen shopkeeper
- *il fotografo* photographer
- *il bagnino/la bagnina* beach attendant

General:

- *l’impiegato/a* office employee
- *il/la dipendente statale* state employee
- *il/la giornalista* journalist
- *il commesso/la commessa* shop assistant

**NOTE**

*Lo statale* can also be used but only in the masculine form; *la statale* means a state highway. For more on the masculine/feminine forms of professions, see 1.2.2 and 20.9.
8.3.4 Indicating role or position

Where a specific individual post is referred to, the definite article il, la (see 1.3.3) is normally used, but see the last example:

Sono il direttore commerciale dell’agenzia di viaggio.  
I’m the commercial director of the travel agency.

È la nuova insegnante d’italiano.  
She’s the new Italian teacher.

Sono capo della sezione di Risorse Umane.  
I’m head of Human Resources.

8.3.5 Indicating nationality

Generally, nationality is indicated by using essere with the appropriate adjective (see 1.4.2, 1.4.5):

(Io) sono scozzese.  
I am Scottish.

Mia madre è italiana.  
My mother is Italian.

(Loro) sono francesi.  
They’re French.

Here are some common nationalities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>african</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>irlandese</th>
<th>Irish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>albanese</td>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>italiano</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>americano</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>libanese</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>australiano</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>libico</td>
<td>Libyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>austriaco</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>lussemburghese</td>
<td>Luxembourgeois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belga</td>
<td>Belgian</td>
<td>neozelandese</td>
<td>New Zealander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>britannico</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>norvegese</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canadese</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>olandese</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceco</td>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>polacco</td>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cinese</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>portoghese</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>croato</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>russo</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>danese</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>slovacco</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finlandese</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>sloveno</td>
<td>Slovenian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>francese</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>spagnolo</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gallese</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>sudafricano</td>
<td>South African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giapponese</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>svedese</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greco</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>svizzero</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indiano</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>tedesco</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inglese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>turco</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iracheno</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>ucraino</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

(a) In Italian, capital letters are generally not used either for adjectives denoting nationality or for people of that nationality:

un collega italiano  
an Italian colleague

un francese  
a French man

gli inglesi  
the English

(b) The singular form of the adjective belga ‘Belgian’ is the same for masculine and feminine, but the plural form has different endings for masculine and feminine:

degli amici belgi  
Belgian friends (m.)

delle amiche belghe  
Belgian friends (f.)

(c) Inglese (‘English’) is often incorrectly used by Italians to denote ‘British’.
### 8.3.6 Indicating marital status

**Essere** is used with an adjective to indicate marital status (see also 10.2). As past participles with the function of an adjective, **sposato** and **divorziato** have to agree with the person they refer to (masculine/feminine, singular/plural):

- *(Io) sono sposato/*a.
  - I am married.
- *(Lui) è divorziato/*.
  - He’s divorced.
- *(Noi) siamo sposati da venti anni/*.
  - We’ve been married for twenty years.

‘Single’ is usually expressed informally as **non sposato**. In the media, the English term ‘single’ (invariable) is often used. In more formal written contexts, such as CVs, passports, police documents, **celibe** ‘an unmarried man’ and **nubile** ‘an unmarried woman’ are used.

\[
\text{Ma i single sono felici?}
\]
But are singles happy?

(http://www.lastampa.it/_web/CMSTP/tmplrubriche/giornalisti/grubrica.asp?ID_blog=124-ID_articolo=105-ID_sezione=412, retrieved 23 February 2012)

**I single italiani sono giovani e con le idee chiare.**
Italian singles are young and have clear ideas.


**Giorgio non è sposato.**
Giorgio is single/not married.

**I miei fratelli non sono sposati; mia sorella invece è sposata e ha due figli.**
My brothers are not married; my sister however is married and has two children.

### 8.3.7 Indicating religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cattolico</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buddista</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anglicano</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ebreo</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protestante</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musulmano</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ortodosso</td>
<td>Orthodox</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**La mia amica Fatima è musulmana.**
My friend Fatima is Muslim.

**Religione: cattolica** (on a form)
Religion: Catholic

Details of other adjectives, for example those that describe physical appearance (age, shape, size, etc.), are found in 10.2.

### 8.3.8 Indicating place of origin

Note that while English uses ‘from’, Italian uses **di** (see 4.3.4) when referring to the city or town of origin:

- *(Io) sono di Napoli.*
  - I’m from Naples.
- *(Lui) è di Firenze.*
  - He’s from Florence.
- **I miei colleghi sono di Londra.**
  - My colleagues are from London.
To talk about the place where you come from, rather than the place where you were born, use the verb *venire*, along with the preposition *da* (see 4.3.3):

- **Vengo da Londra.**
  I come from London.

- **Gli attori vengono dalla Sicilia.**
  The actors come from Sicily.

### 8.4 Emphasising the person referred to

#### 8.4.1 Stressed subject pronouns

In Italian, the verb endings change or inflect; this means it is not necessary to use the *subject pronouns* io, tu, lui, etc. (see 3.3.1) to indicate who you are referring to. But the subject pronouns are sometimes used to contrast or emphasise the person or persons spoken about:

- **Io sono inglese.**
  I am English.

- **Lui è italiano.**
  He is Italian.

They are also used, particularly when using the polite Lei form of address (see 8.2 above), to make a question sound less abrupt:

- **Lei è inglese?**
  Are you English?

- **Lei è di Londra?**
  Are you from London?

#### 8.4.2 With *questo*

You can use the demonstrative pronoun *questo* ‘this’ (see 3.8) to introduce someone, although it is preferable to use the subject pronouns and sounds more polite:

- **Questi sono i miei studenti.**
  These are my students.

- **Queste sono le mie amiche.**
  These are my friends.

- **Lui è Franco.**
  He (This) is Franco.

- **Lei è una mia collega.**
  She is a colleague of mine.

### 8.5 Eliciting personal information

*Essere* is also used to elicit information, sometimes with a question word, as shown below (see also 3.6 and 15.3):

- **Chi è lui?**
  Who is he?

- **Di dove sei / è?**
  Where are you from?

- **Di dov’è Franco?**
  Where is Franco from?

- **Di dove sono gli studenti?**
  Where are the students from?

Normally the form of the sentence and the word order are exactly the same, whether statement or question. In spoken Italian, to turn a statement into a question, you need only alter the intonation of the sentence, usually by raising your voice towards the end of the sentence (see 15.2):

- **Lei è sposata?**
  Are you married?

- **Tu sei insegnante?**
  Are you a teacher?

- **È un collega?**
  Is he a colleague?
The following examples use quale (see 3.6.4) where English would use the question word ‘what’. Quale can be abbreviated to qual but must never be followed by an apostrophe:

qual è il Suo cognome? What is your surname?
qual è il Suo indirizzo? What is your address?

8.6 Dialoghi

Informal:

Un incontro con amici
A Ciao, Mariella!
B Ciao, Gianna. Che sorpresa!
A Questo è mio cugino, Aurelio. È siciliano. Aurelio, questa è la mia amica, Sara.
B Ciao, Aurelio. Benvenuto a Pisa. Di dove sei?
C Sono di Catania, ma mia madre è di Pisa.
B Ah, anche il mio fidanzato è di Catania. Si chiama Carmelo. È ragioniere. I suoi sono di Messina, ma sono a Catania da molto tempo.

Meeting friends
A Hi Mariella!
B Hi, Gianna. What a surprise!
A This is my cousin, Aurelio. He’s Sicilian. Aurelio, this is my friend Sara.
B Hi, Aurelio. Welcome to Pisa. Where are you from?
C I’m from Catania, but my mother is from Pisa.
B Ah, my boyfriend’s from Catania too. He’s called Carmelo. He’s an accountant. His parents are from Messina, but they’ve been in Catania for some time.

In the following dialogue several legal/bureaucratic terms are used: residenza ‘residence’ or ‘home address’, domicilio ‘the place where you are presently living’, stato civile ‘married status’. Note too how the polite form Suo (‘yours’) is generally written with a capital letter.

Formal:

All’ufficio di Polizia
A Prego si accomodi. Dobbiamo compilare questo modulo con le Sue generalità. Le farò alcune domande. Il Suo cognome?
B Smith
A Mi scusi. Come si scrive?
B Esse-emme-i-ti-acca (Savona, Mantova, Imola, Taranto, Hotel)
A E il nome?
B Richard
A La nazionalità?
B Australiana
A Residenza?
B 56 Ramsay Street, Sydney, Australia
A Qual è il Suo domicilio in Italia?
B Hotel Miramare, Napoli
A Numero di telefono?
B 081-271638
A E il Suo stato civile?
B Coniugato
A Qual è il numero del Suo passaporto?
B 0044998245
A Che professione fa?
B Commerciante
At the Police station

Please sit down. We have to fill in this form with your particulars. I have to ask you some questions. Your surname?

Smith

Sorry, how is that written?

S for Savona, M for Mantova, I for Imola, T for Taranto, H for Hotel

And your name?

Richard

Nationality?

Australian

Home address?

56 Ramsay Street, Sydney, Australia

What is your address in Italy?

Hotel Miramare, Naples

And the telephone number?

081-271638

And your marital status?

Married

What’s the number of your passport?

0044998245

What is your profession?

Businessman/salesman

That’s fine, thanks. That’s enough for now. We’ll call you as soon as we have some news of your application for a residence permit.
Specifying people or objects

9.1 Introduction

This dialogue shows how even at the simplest level, speakers can indicate their specific needs:

At the café

A  Buongiorno.
B  Buongiorno, un caffè per favore.
A  Va bene. E . . . per la signora?
C  Una birra piccola e un whisky.
A  Certamente. Una birra italiana, va bene?
C  Si, va bene. Ma . . . un whisky scozzese.
A  Naturalmente, signora.

As shown in the dialogue above, you can identify what you want by using a simple noun una birra or a combination of noun, indefinite article and adjective una birra piccola (see 1.1). In other situations, you can also identify what you want by using a verb such as aver bisogno di (see 23.3.2), volere (see 23.2.1) or cercare.

9.2 Specifying a known or particular person or object

9.2.1 Using the definite article il, la

When you have a particular person or thing in mind, you can express this by using the definite article il, la, etc. (see 1.3.3). As the examples show, we are generally referring to a known person or thing, for example ‘the speciality we’ve had before’ or ‘the English girl someone told us about’:

Prendo la specialità della casa.
I’ll have the speciality of the house.

Mi presenti la ragazza inglese?
Will you introduce me to the English girl?

Alternatively, you may want to refer to something or someone that is the only one possible, in this set of circumstances ‘the manager’, ‘the bill’:
SPECIFYING PEOPLE OR OBJECTS

Il direttore, per favore.
The manager, please.

Il conto, per piacere.
The bill, please.

9.2.2 Using questo, quello

Questo ‘this’ or quello ‘that’ (see 3.8) are demonstratives used to refer to this or that person or object. While questo refers to a person or object near the speaker, quello refers to a person or object near the person addressed or not near either the speaker or the person addressed.

Questo and quello can be used either as pronouns or as adjectives (see 3.8.1).

**Questo, quello as adjectives**

*Questo scontrino non è per la valigia che è andata smarrita.*
This baggage tag is not for the case that’s gone missing. (= this one in my hand)

*Questi pantaloni non mi stanno bene.*
These trousers don’t look good on me. (= the ones I have on)

*Vorrei assaggiare quel caffè speciale.*
I’d like to try that special coffee. (= the one you were just talking about)

*Conosci quelle ragazze inglesi?*
Do you know those English girls? (= the ones standing over there)

**Questo, quello as pronouns**

As pronouns, questo and quello are often accompanied by the verb essere:

*Questi sono i miei appunti. Sono abbastanza precisi.*
These are my notes. They’re quite accurate.

*Queste sono le due mie amiche che sono arrivate ieri sera.*
These are my two friends who arrived yesterday evening.

*Quello è il computer portatile che abbiamo comprato negli Stati Uniti.*
That is the laptop that we bought in the USA.

*Quelli sono i biscotti che ti ho portato da Siena.*
Those are the biscuits I brought you from Siena.

The question words cosa or che cosa ‘what?’ can be used to elicit specific information:

*Cosa sono (questi)?*  
What are they/these?  
*Che cosa sono quelle foglie secche?*  
What are those dry leaves?

*Sono funghi secchi.*  
They’re dried mushrooms.

*Sono foglie di basilico.*  
They’re basil leaves.

9.3 Specifying a category or type

Sometimes you want to indicate a specific type or category of person or thing.

9.3.1 Using an adjective

You can do this by using an adjective (see 1.4) or a combination of adjectives:

*Cerco un interprete italiano.*
I’m looking for an Italian interpreter.

*Gli studenti hanno bisogno di un libro semplice e chiaro.*
The students need a clear simple book.
9.3.2 Using a che clause

You can also indicate a specific type or category by using a relative clause beginning with che (see 3.5.1) to give more details.

The che clause can refer to an object or category that definitely exists and that you know about, in which case the indicative verb form is used:

- **In genere gli inglesi preferiscono bere le birre che conoscono.**
  On the whole the English prefer to drink the beers that they know.
- **Questa è la bicicletta che ho comprato l’anno scorso.**
  This is the bike I bought last year.
- **Il regista ha assunto l’attrice che aveva girato dei film con Pasolini.**
  The director employed the actress who had been in some of Pasolini’s films.

If the che clause refers to something which may or may not exist or be available, the subjunctive (see 2.2.14) should be used, particularly in more formal language; the examples here therefore show the subjunctive, with the indicative shown in brackets:

- **Vorrei una birra che non sia (è) troppo forte.**
  I would like a beer that is not too strong.
- **Cerco un interprete che sappia (sa) parlare inglese.**
  I’m looking for an interpreter who can speak English.

9.4 Specifying ownership

One of the most important aspects of identification is belonging. In Italian, you indicate the person to whom things belong by using **di** with the person involved; there is no equivalent of the English possessive form ‘Franco’s car’, ‘Anna’s motorbike’:

- **Metti il maglione verde di Alessandro.**
  Put Alessandro’s green sweater on.
- **Prendiamo la macchina di mio cugino.**
  Let’s take my cousin’s car.
- **Le ciabatte sono dei bambini.**
  The flip-flops are the children’s.

You can also use possessives such as mio, tuo, suo (see 3.7). Note that in Italian, the definite article il, la (etc.) is normally used with the possessive adjectives (see 3.7.1):

- **Questo è il mio lavoro.**
  This is my work.
- **Questa è la tua giacca?**
  Is this your jacket?

To ask who something belongs to, use:

- **Di chi è . . . ?** Whose is it? (Literally: Of who is it?)

When mio, tuo, suo, etc. are used as a pronoun (‘mine’, ‘yours’, etc.), the definite article il, la, etc. is optional:

- **Di chi è questa maglia?** È mia.
  Whose is this sweater? It’s mine.
- **Di chi è questo biglietto?** È (il) suo.
  Whose is this ticket? It’s his.

- **Quel libro è mio.**
  That book is mine.
- **Le carte da gioco erano sue.**
  The playing cards were hers.
10

Describing people or things

10.1 Introduction
The most common way of describing the characteristics of someone or something is to use an adjective or adjectives (see 1.4). This chapter illustrates some of the most frequently used categories of adjectives, some relating to people, some to things and some to both. We give just a few examples in each category. For the forms of adjectives, including those that are invariable, see 1.4.2–4.

10.2 Physical characteristics
Physical characteristics may be temporary or permanent, as seen in the examples below.

10.2.1 Size
Of the common adjectives describing size, some refer mainly to people (or animals), some to inanimate objects and some to both. Like all adjectives, they have to agree with the noun they describe in number and gender. Adjectives of size include the following.

Used mainly for people:
- grasso fat
- magro thin

Used mainly for inanimate objects:
- corto short
- largo wide
- lungo long
- stretto narrow

Used for either animate or inanimate:
- alto tall, high
- basso low, short or small in stature
- grande large, great
- piccolo small

Le case delle Isole Eolie sono piccole e basse.
The houses on the Aeolian islands are small and low.

La sua futura suocera era bassa e grassa.
His future mother-in-law was short and fat.

I ragazzi sono alti, con capelli lunghi.
The boys are tall, with long hair.
### Physical characteristics

**10.2**

#### 10.2.2 Shape

Common adjectives describing *shape*, referring mainly to inanimate objects, include:

- **ovale** oval
- **piatto** flat
- **quadrato** square
- **rettangolare** rectangular
- **rotondo** round

La tavola è *rotonda* ma va bene anche una tovaglia *quadrata*.
The table is round but a square tablecloth will do as well.

La Piazza del Campo a Siena è di forma *ovale*.
The Piazza del Campo in Siena is oval shaped.

Il soggiorno non è *quadrato*, è *rettangolare*.
The living room isn’t square, it’s rectangular.

#### 10.2.3 Colour

Common adjectives describing colour include:

- **bianco** white
- **nero** black
- **grigio** grey
- **marrone** brown
- **blu** navy
- **azzurro** sky blue
- **verde** green
- **rosso** red
- **giallo** yellow
- **rosa** pink

The intensity of colour can be modified by *chiaro* ‘light’ or *scuro* ‘dark’, which come after the adjective or colour and are invariable in form:

- **verde chiaro** light green
- **rosso scuro** dark red

Ho comprato un cappotto di lana *grigia scuro*.
I bought a dark grey wool coat.

La mia collana è composta di pietre *verdi scuro* e *rosse chiaro*.
My necklace is made up of dark green and light red stones.

Note that many adjectives of colour are *invariable*: they do not change form, regardless of whether they are masculine or feminine, singular or plural (see 1.4.4). These include *beige*, *blu*, *marrone*, *rosa*, *viola*:

Non vanno bene le scarpe *beige* con le calze *rosa*!
The beige shoes don’t go with the pink stockings!

When referring to skin colouring and hair colour, you normally use the adjectives *biondo* (fair, blonde, fair-haired), *bruno* (dark, dark-haired), while *castano* is used only for hair colour:

- È *bionda*, sui quaranta anni.
  She’s blonde, around forty.

- Alice è una ragazza alta e *bruna*.
  Alice is a tall dark-haired girl.

- I miei figli hanno occhi *azzurri* ma capelli *castani*.
  My children have blue eyes but chestnut brown hair.

#### 10.2.4 Composition and materials

Rather than use an adjective (English ‘metallic’, ‘wooden’), Italian often uses a prepositional phrase to describe what an object is made of (see 4.3.4): for example, the preposition *di* ‘of’ or *in* ‘in’ with a noun such as *metallo*, *legno*, *cotone*, etc.
DESCRIBING PEOPLE OR THINGS

**Textiles**
- di cotone: cotton
- di cuoio: leather
- di lana: wool
- di lino: linen
- di pelle: leather
- di poliestere: polyester
- di seta: silk
- di (materiale) sintetico: synthetic material
- di viscosa: viscose

**Metals**
- di acciaio: steel
- di alluminio: aluminium
- di argento: silver
- di bronzo: bronze
- di ferro: iron
- di metallo: metal
- di oro, d’oro: gold
- di ottone: brass

**Other materials**
- di ceramica: china
- di gomma: rubber
- di legno: wood
- di plastica: plastic

**Per il battesimo della nipotina, le abbiamo regalato una catenina di oro.** For the baptism of our little granddaughter, we gave her a little gold chain.

**La cucina è tutta in legno.** The kitchen is all in wood.

**Per la stagione estiva la moda sarà tutta di cotone.** For the summer season, the fashion will be all cotton.

**In montagna conviene mettere la maglia di lana.** In the mountains it’s best to put on a woollen sweater.

You can describe the object using fatto di ‘made of’ or another participle of similar meaning, such as:

- foderato di: lined with
- ricoperto di: covered with
- ripieno di: filled with
- rivestito di: covered with

**L’ascensore aveva le porte fatte di metallo.** The lift had metal doors.

**Ha preparato un dolce ricoperto di cioccolato.** She prepared a cake covered in chocolate.

**La camicia era foderata di seta.** The blouse was lined with silk.

The **authenticity** of the material is expressed by:

- autentico: authentic
- (al) cento per cento: hundred per cent
- falso: fake
- genuino: genuine
- puro: pure
- vero: real

**Ho comprato una maglia di pura lana.** I bought a sweater in pure wool.

**Questa giacca non è vera pelle, è finta.** This jacket is not real leather, it’s fake.

**La sciarpa è in lana vergine al cento per cento.** The scarf is a hundred per cent virgin wool.
**Physical characteristics**

*Characteristics* of the material include:

- duro: hard
- elastico: elastic, stretchy
- forte: strong
- liscio: smooth
- morbido: soft
- resistente: tough, long-lasting
- ruvido: rough
- soffice: soft

Il cashmere è molto morbido. Cashmere is very soft.

Questo tegame è resistente in lavastoviglie. This frying pan can be washed in the dishwasher.

Un bel piumone soffice in vera piuma d'oca. A nice soft duvet made of real goose feathers.

---

**10.2.5 Condition, state or appearance**

Other adjectives which describe a physical condition, state or appearance, whether permanent or temporary, and that can apply to a person, an object or both, include:

- acceso: (Literally: switched on)
- asciutto: dry
- bagnato: wet
- bello: pretty, nice, handsome
- bollente: boiling
- brutto: ugly, horrible
- caldo: hot
- calmo: calm
- carino: pretty
- denso: thick
- elegante: elegant
- fresco: fresh, cool
- freddo: cold
- ghiacciato: iced
- gelato: ice-cold
- gonfio: swollen
- macchiato: stained (also used in un caffè macchiato)
- malato: ill
- pulito: clean
- sciupato: worn-out
- secco: dry
- sottile: thin
- spento: switched off
- spesso: thick
- sporco: dirty
- squallido: squalid
- stanco: tired
- tranquillo: quiet

I bambini erano bagnati. The children were soaking wet.

Non mettete gli asciugamani bagnati sul letto. Don’t put the wet towels on the bed.

La professoressa era stanca. The teacher was tired.

La città è sporca e squallida. The town is dirty and squalid.

Prendo un caffè macchiato. I’ll have a coffee with a little milk.

Dopo la lunga passeggiata, avevo i piedi gonfi. After the long walk, I had swollen feet.

La luce era spenta. The light was off.
Describing People or Things

10.2.6 Taste and smell
Adjectives describing taste or smell include:

- amaro: bitter
- buono: good
- cattivo: bad
- dolce: sweet
- insipido: tasteless
- salato: salty
- saporito: tasty

10.2.7 Weather
Adjectives describing weather conditions include:

- afoso: stuffy, humid
- mosso: rough
- nuvoloso: cloudy
- piovoso: rainy
- sereno: calm, clear
- umido: damp, wet
- ventoso: windy

Il mare era mosso.
The sea was rough.

Il cielo era sereno.
The sky was clear.

A Milano c'era un tempo afoso.
In Milan the weather was humid.

10.3 Non-physical characteristics

10.3.1 Nationality
Adjectives of nationality are illustrated fully in 8.3.5.

Teresa parla bene il cinese, perché ha la mamma cinese.
Teresa speaks Chinese well, because she has a Chinese mother.

La Buick è una macchina americana.
The Buick is an American car.

Le scarpe che ho comprato al mercato sono italiane.
The shoes I bought at the market are Italian.

10.3.2 Marital status
Adjectives describing marital status (see also 8.3.6) have to agree with the person they refer to, apart from single which is invariable. They include:

- divorziato: divorced
- fidanzato: engaged
- separato: separated
- single: single
- sposato: married

Mio cugino Antonio è single.
My cousin Antonio is single.

Walter e Gloria sono sposati.
Walter and Gloria are married.

Gemma è separata.
Gemma is separated.
Non-physical characteristics

10.3

10.3.3 Age

Here are some common adjectives denoting age, referring to people or inanimate objects.

Describing a person:

- anziano: old
- giovane: young
- vecchio: old (but see below)
- un ragazzo giovane: a young boy
- una signora anziana: an elderly lady
- una vecchia signora: an old lady

Note that anziano is less likely to cause offence than vecchio.

More informally, you can also use:

- grande: big, old
- piccolo: small, young

These two adjectives are used mainly when comparing ages, for example with a sibling or friend:

- **Mio fratello è più grande di me.**
  My brother is older than me.

- **Io sono più piccolo di mio fratello.**
  I am younger than my brother.

For an inanimate object – but not a person – you can use:

- antico: old, antique

For both object and person, you can also use:

- vecchio: old

Remember that vecchio is a less positive quality than antico which can also mean ‘antique’.

The two examples below may help you understand the difference:

- **Le case vecchie sono difficili da pulire.**
  Old houses are hard to clean.

- **La mia casa è piena di mobile antichi.**
  My house is full of antique furniture.

10.3.4 Character, temperament or qualities

Other adjectives which describe character, temperament (person or animal) or other qualities (person or thing) are shown below. Some of these you have seen earlier with a literal, more concrete meaning (bello, brutto), while here they have a more abstract meaning or even an ironic meaning.

- aggressivo: aggressive
- allegro: happy, cheerful
- antipatico: unpleasant
- bello: nice
- brutto: horrible
- crudele: cruel
- disponibile: available, helpful
- dolce: gentle
- estroverso: extrovert
- fastidioso: annoying
- furbo: crafty
- gentile: kind
- gradevole: pleasant
intelligente
introversion
piacevole
pignolo
prepotente
sfacciato
gnardo
simpatico
spiacere
stupido
timo
tranquillo
vivace
È' un bel problema. (ironic)
È’ una brutta situazione.
Simonetta è antipatica.
È una ragazza simpatica, bella e intelligent.

10.3.5 Talents and skills
Adjectives referring specifically to talents or skills include:

- abile: skilled, talented
- dotato: gifted
- negato: with no talent for
- portato: naturally talented (in . . .)

Insisteva che Sara facesse lezioni di pianoforte, però la bambina era proprio negata.
Per parlare bene una lingua, forse bisogna essere proprio portati.

Abile and dotato can be used without any specific talent being mentioned. Dotato implies naturally gifted while abile suggests acquired skills:

Il direttore era una persona molto abile.
The director was a very skilled person.

Il figlio della mia amica era un bambino molto dotato.
My friend’s son was a very gifted child.

And when you are getting everything wrong, or dropping things:

Oggi sono proprio imbranata.
Today I am all fingers and thumbs.

10.3.6 Emotional condition or state
Adjectives describing an emotional or psychological state include:

- agitato: agitated, jumpy
- annoiato: bored
- arrabbiato: angry
- calmo: calm
- contento: happy
- felice: happy
- imbarazzato: embarrassed
- irritato: irritated
- nervoso: edgy
10.5 Intensifying the meaning of the adjective

There are various ways in which the meaning of the adjective can be intensified or strengthened (see also 17.5).

10.5.1 Using an adverb

The adverbs most commonly used for this purpose in Italian are:

- **molto** much
- **tanto** much, so much
- **troppo** too much

### Position of adjectives

Adjectives can form part of a close group with the noun and the article:

- **Mio nipote è un bel bambino.**
  My grandchild is a lovely little boy.

- **Taranto è una città interessante.**
  Taranto is an interesting city.

Or they can be used with the verb essere to complete the sentence:

- **Il falegname era molto abile.**
  The carpenter was very skilled.

- **Oggi il mare è mosso.**
  Today the sea is rough.

In English, in the noun group (article + adjective + noun), adjectives almost always come before the noun (‘an interesting film’, ‘a historic city’, ‘an elegant Italian woman’). In Italian, when found in the noun group, the most common position for descriptive adjectives – including adjectives of shape, colour and nationality – is after the noun:

- **un film interessante**
- **una tavola rotonda**
- **una maglia rossa**
- **una ragazza italiana**

This is also true for adjectives qualified by an adverb:

- **una casa veramente originale**

In Italian, the order of the noun group is flexible, and changing the position of the adjectives can change the emphasis of the sentence. This is particularly true for the common descriptive adjectives, for example nuovo, vecchio, giovane, piccolo, bello, brutto (see examples in 1.4.5).

Some adjectives actually change meaning depending on their position in the noun group. These include alto, bello, certo, grande and povero (see examples in 1.4.5).
These are used before the adjective in the same way as ‘very, greatly, extremely’ in English. You can also use:

- **abbastanza**  
  enough, a bit, quite
- **alquanto**  
  rather
- **assai**  
  very
- **ben(e)**  
  well, quite, much, pretty
- **estremamente**  
  extremely
- **parecchio**  
  greatly, much
- **piuttosto**  
  rather
- **veramente**  
  really

Alcuni leghisti erano molto preoccupati dal patto con Forza Italia.  
Some members of the Lega were very worried by the agreement with Forza Italia.

È una situazione estremamente instabile.  
It's an extremely unstable situation.

Il cane era ben contento di vederci.  
The dog was really happy to see us.

### 10.5.2 Using the suffix -issimo

The suffix **-issimo** (see 1.4.8) is normally used only for shorter or more common adjectives:

I ragazzi sono contentissimi di andare in vacanza senza la mamma.  
The kids are really happy to be going on holiday without their mother.

Ha un marito simpaticissimo.  
She has a really nice husband.

### 10.5.3 Using a prefix

There are several prefixes which can be added to the beginning of an adjective, and although these are not very common, they are found more and more in the press and in the spoken language. Always check with a dictionary before using one of these. The form you want may not exist, or else it may mean something different. The hyper forms in particular (**arci-**, **ultra-**) are used for effect, for example in journalistic writing:

- **arci-**  
  È arcicontento  
  he’s over-the-moon
- **extra-**  
  l’olio extravergine  
  extra-virgin (olive) oil
- **iper-**  
  una madre iperprotettiva  
  an overprotective mother
- **sovra-**  
  un camion sovraccarico  
  an overloaded lorry
- **stra-**  
  un whisky stravecchio  
  an aged/vintage whisky
- **su-**  
  il pesce surgelato  
  frozen fish
- **super-**  
  superbianco  
  whiter than white
- **ultra-**  
  l’ultrasinistra  
  the far left

### 10.5.4 Using a second adjective

There are several fixed phrases in which a second adjective is used to intensify the meaning of the first adjective. In general, the second adjective also has to agree with the noun it refers to. Here are some examples:

- **bianco pallido**  
  white as a sheet
- **freddo gelato**  
  icy cold
- **caldo bollente**  
  boiling hot
- **ricco sfondato**  
  filthy rich
- **stanco morto**  
  dead tired
- **ubriaco fradicio**  
  dead drunk
10.6 Diminishing the intensity of the adjective

Using an adverb

In the same way that certain adverbs can be used to intensify or strengthen the meaning of the adjective, a few adverbs can be used to produce the opposite effect. The adverb most commonly used for this purpose is poco ‘a little’:

Gli studenti sono poco motivati.
The students are not very motivated.

Other adverbs which can be used include:

appena  barely, hardly
leggermente  slightly
scarsamente  barely

10.6.2 Using a suffix

Suffixes which can be used to diminish the strength of the adjective include -etto, -ino:

bellino  pretty (rather than beautiful)
magrolino  skinny (rather than thin)
piccolino  little, small
poveretto  poor little . . .

They can only be used for the shorter more common adjectives, and, as for the suffixes used to intensify meaning, you should avoid using them unless you are certain of the meaning conveyed. For example, although they sound similar, there is a difference between poverino and poveretto. If you want to express sympathy, use only the first one.
10.6.3 Using a prefix

Prefixes which can be used to imply the opposite of any adjective include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Opposite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-, an-</td>
<td>anormale</td>
<td>abnormal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>analcolico</td>
<td>non-alcoholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dis-</td>
<td>disabile</td>
<td>disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadatto</td>
<td>unsuited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-</td>
<td>incapace</td>
<td>incapable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s-</td>
<td>scomodo</td>
<td>uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scontento</td>
<td>unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sgradevole</td>
<td>unpleasant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For other ways of expressing different degrees of intensity and comparison, see Chapter 17.

10.7 Essere, stare

To ask or describe how someone is (state of health), use stare (see 15.3.3 and 20.1):

- Come *sta* la tua amica?  How’s your friend?
- *Sta* molto meglio adesso. She’s a lot better now.

To ask what someone (or something) looks like, use essere (see 15.3.3):

- Com’è la tua amica?  What is your friend like?
- È bionda, con capelli lunghi. She’s blonde, with long hair.

10.8 Dialogo

Incontro con gli amici

A  Ciao Sergio, come stai?
B  Bene grazie e tu?
A  E Lucia come sta?
B  Non sta bene, è stanca e nervosa. Il suo lavoro è faticoso, ma per fortuna Lucia è una ragazza forte e sana e non sono preoccupato per lei.
A  Senti, oggi è una bella giornata. Usciamo insieme?
B  È una buona idea, Lucia sarà contenta.
A  Allora va bene. La mia macchina è comoda e grande. Guido io. Tu e Lucia potete stare rilassati e riposare.

Meeting with friends

A  Hi Sergio, how are you?
B  I’m fine and you?
A  How is Lucia doing?
B  She’s not well, she’s tired and edgy. Her job is hard, but luckily Lucia is a strong and healthy girl and I’m not worried about her.
A  Listen, it’s a beautiful day today. Shall we go out together?
B  It’s a good idea. Lucia will be pleased.
A  That’s fine then. My car is big and comfortable. I’ll drive. You and Lucia can relax and have a rest.
Talking about existence, occurrence and availability

11.1 Introduction

There are various ways of saying in Italian whether something or someone exists, takes place or is available. One of the simplest ways is to use *ci* ‘there’ and *essere* ‘to be’, while another way, often used in shops or restaurants, is to use the verb *avere* ‘to have’; both are shown in this simple dialogue:

All’ufficio turistico

T = Turista ‘tourist’, I = Impiegato ‘employee’

T Buongiorno, *avete* una piantina della città?
I Sì, *c’è* questa, che costa quattro euro; è compreso anche l’elenco dei monumenti. Oppure questa qua, che è gratuita.

T Prendo questa, grazie. Dunque, noi vorremmo vedere l’*Aida* all’Arena. *Ci sono* dei biglietti per stasera?
I Per stasera, no, purtroppo . . . *non ce ne sono*. Ma se per voi va bene, *ce ne sono* due nella platea per domani sera.

T Sì, per noi va bene. Quanto costano?
I Trenta euro ciascuno.

T Va bene, li prendo. Senta, *c’è* una trattoria vicino al teatro?
I Sì, *ce n’è* una molto buona proprio a due passi dal teatro. Si chiama ‘Da Alfredo’. Se vuole, posso chiamare e prenotare un tavolo.

T No, grazie, non fa niente.
I Prego, signore. Arrivederci.

At the tourist information office

T = Tourist, E = Employee

T Hello, do you have a map of the town?
E Yes, there’s this one, which is four euros; the list of monuments is included too. Or else this one, which is free.

T I’ll take this one, thanks. Now, we’d like to see *Aida* at the Arena. Are there any tickets for this evening?
E Not for this evening, no, unfortunately. But if it’s all right for you, there are two tickets in the stalls for tomorrow evening.

T Yes, that’s fine for us. How much are they?
E Thirty euros each.

T OK, I’ll take them. Listen, is there a restaurant near the theatre?
E Yes, there’s a very good one very near the theatre. It’s called ‘Da Alfredo’. If you want, I can call and book a table.

T No, thank you, it doesn’t matter.
E All right, sir. Goodbye.
Talking about existence and/or presence

Depending on the circumstances, you can use one or other of the following verbs or verb phrases:

- **esistere** to exist
- **essere + ci** to be there
- **essere presenti** to be present
- **trovarsi** to be there (position)

### 11.2.1 Essere + ci

The most common way of saying something is there (or not) is to use **essere** and **ci**. The present tense forms are **c’è** ‘there is’, **ci sono** ‘there are’ (see 2.2.3 and 6.2.5). Note how in the singular form, the **ci** before **è** is elided to **c’è**.

- **C’è** There is
- **C’è?** Is there?

The plural form is:

- **Ci sono** There are
- **Ci sono?** Are there?

You can ask about a specific person or thing, or one known to you, using the definite article **il/la** (see 1.3.3):

- **C’è il medico oggi?** Sì, **c’è**. Is the doctor here today? Yes, he’s here.
- **Ci sono i nostri amici?** Sì, **ci sono**. Sono arrivati mezz’ora fa. Are our friends here? Yes, they’re here. They arrived half an hour ago.

You can ask about an unknown or unspecified person or thing using the indefinite article **un/una** (see 1.3.2) in the singular and **dei/delle** (see 1.3.4) in the plural (optional):

- **Scusi, c’è un gabinetto?** Sì, **c’è** un gabinetto lì in fondo. Excuse me, is there a toilet? Yes, there’s a toilet over there.
- **Ci sono ospiti?** Sì, **ci sono** degli ospiti appena arrivati. Are there any guests? Yes, there are some guests just arrived.

Of course, **ci** can be used with all the other tenses of **essere**, for example:

- **Future**
  - **Ci sarà qualcuno in ufficio?** Will there be anyone in the office?
- **Imperfect**
  - **Il pomeriggio, non c’era mai nessuno in ufficio.** In the afternoon, there was never anyone in the office.
- **Passato prossimo**
  - **Ci sono stati problemi?** Have there been any problems?

### 11.2.2 Esistere

**Esistere** ‘to exist’ can be used in certain contexts:

- **Per quanto riguarda l’alloggio, esistono varie sistemazioni.** As for accommodation, there are various arrangements.
- **Ma sono esistiti i dinosauri o no?** But did the dinosaurs exist or not?
Talking about occurrence

11.2.3 Essere presente/i

The phrase essere presente/i is often used for resources found naturally, as well as for other more general contexts:

I giacimenti di metano sono presenti in grandi quantità nella valle padana.
Deposits of methane are present in large quantity in the Po Valley.

Mio marito non era presente quel giorno.
My husband was not present that day.

11.2.4 Trovarsi

Trovarsi is used mainly when referring to geographical position:

La mia casa si trovava vicino al mare.
My house was near the sea.

Oggi ci troviamo in un piccolo paese della Basilicata.
Today we are in a small village in Basilicata.

11.3 Talking about occurrence

The following verbs and verb phrases describe events occurring, regularly or on a one-off basis:

- accadere: to happen
- aver luogo: to take place
- capitare: to happen
- fare: to hold
- ricorrere: to recur, take place
- succedere: to happen
- svolgersi: to take place
- tenersi: to take place, to be held
- verificarsi: to take place
- ricorrere: to recur

11.3.1 Accadere, capitare, succedere

Three verbs in particular are used to talk about things happening. All three verbs take essere when used in compound tenses: è accaduto, è capitato, è successo.

Molti incidenti stradali accadono nel momento del rientro dalle vacanze.
Many road accidents take place when people come back from their holidays.

Il paese è molto tranquillo. Non succede mai niente.
The village is very quiet. Nothing ever happens.

È mai capitato un incidente del genere?
Has an accident like that ever happened?

Both succedere and capitare can be followed by a dependent clause introduced by che or by di and a dependent infinitive. In the final example, the subjunctive is used, in order to emphasise the improbability of such an event:

- Ti è mai successo di amare e odiare allo stesso tempo qualcuno?
(Literally) Has it ever happened to you to love and hate someone at the same time?
(Have you ever loved and hated someone at the same time?)

- Può succedere che si dimentica di spegnere il gas.
(Literally) It can happen that one forgets to turn off the gas.
(One sometimes forgets to turn off the gas.)

- Ti è mai capitato di vedere un fantasma?
(Literally) Has it ever happened to you to see a ghost?
(Have you ever seen a ghost?)

- Ti è mai capitato che il parrucchiere ti abbia rovinato i capelli?
(Literally) Did it ever happen to you that the hairdresser ruined your hair?
(Have you ever had the hairdresser ruin your hair?)
**EXISTENCE, OCCURRENCE AND AVAILABILITY**

### 11.3.2 Aver luogo, svolgersi, tenersi

When talking about an event which is taking place or has taken place, you can use the verbs aver luogo, svolgersi, tenersi:

- **I funerali avranno luogo giovedì alle 17.00.**
  The funeral will take place on Thursday at 5pm.

- **Il Palio di Siena si svolge due volte all’anno nella Piazza del Campo.**
  The Palio of Siena takes place twice a year in the Piazza del Campo.

- **La settimana scorsa si è svolto il congresso dei giovani democratici.**
  Last week the congress of young democrats took place.

- **La Fiera di Milano si tiene nel quartiere di San Siro.**
  The Milan Trade Fair takes place in the San Siro district.

### 11.3.3 Fare

**Fare** in the 3rd person plural form is often used specifically to refer to films, TV programmes, etc. which are being shown or broadcast:

- **Che fanno stasera alla televisione?**
  What’s on TV tonight?

- **Cosa facevano al cinema Ariston?**
  What were they showing at the Ariston cinema?

You can also use the verb **fare** with the **si passivante** to make a passive construction meaning ‘to be held’:

- **Le gare si facevano ogni anno nello stesso periodo.**
  The competitions were held every year at the same time.

### 11.3.4 Verificarsi/ricorrere

The verb **ricorrere** (‘to recur’) is used when an event occurs regularly, for example every year:

- **La festa dell’Assunzione ricorre il 15 agosto.**
  The feast day of the Assumption is on the 15th of August every year.

When talking about either a single occurrence or a regular event, you can use **verificarsi**:

- **A Napoli il miracolo di San Gennaro si è verificato anche quest’anno davanti a migliaia di fedeli.**
  In Naples the miracle of San Gennaro took place again this year in front of thousands of the faithful.

### 11.4 Talking about presence, attendance and participation at an event

In addition to **essere** (ci), or **trovarsi** (see above), you can use the verbs listed below. Although intransitive, both **assistere** and **partecipare** take **avere** in compound tenses: **ho assistito**, **ho partecipato**.

- **assistere**
  to be at, to take part in
- **frequentare**
  to go to, to attend (*e.g.* school)
- **partecipare**
  to be at, to take part in

### 11.4.1 Assistere

This verb can have the same meaning as the English ‘assist’ but here it is used meaning ‘to watch’ or ‘to be present’.
All’ultimo concerto di Pavarotti, hanno assistito 30.000 spettatori.
30,000 spectators were at Pavarotti’s final concert.

11.4.2 Partecipare
This verb implies a more active role:

Il Capo di Stato ha partecipato al Vertice del G7 a Napoli.
The Head of State took part in the G7 Summit in Naples.

11.4.3 Frequentare
Regular attendance at a place, for example school or a café, can be expressed by frequentare:

I miei figli frequentano una scuola privata.
My children go to a private school.

I miei colleghi frequentavano il bar di fronte.
My colleagues always went to the café opposite.

11.5 Talking about availability
When talking about availability or non-availability, most of the verbs and verb phrases listed below, with the exception of avere, can be used to refer either to a person or to a thing:

avere to have (e.g. in shop or restaurant)
essere disponibile to be available
essere libero/occupato to be free/engaged
rimanere to be left (over)

11.5.1 Avere
In shops, restaurants, hotels or similar situations, c’è, ci sono can be replaced by the verb avere ‘to have’ to express or enquire about availability:

Avete una mappa della città? Do you have a map of the town?

Abbiamo questa qui, che costa €6.
We have this one, which costs six euros.

When avere is used with a direct object pronoun such as lo, li, the particle ci is usually added (see 3.4.5); this is a purely idiomatic use and does not change the meaning. Ci becomes ce before direct object pronouns or ne:

Avete la Repubblica? No, non ce l’abbiamo oggi.
Do you have the ‘Repubblica’? No, we haven’t got it today.

Ha il passaporto, signora? Si, ce l’ho.
Do you have your passport, madam? Yes, I do have it.

11.5.2 Rimanere
The concept of ‘quantity remaining’ is expressed by rimanere (see Appendix III Irregular verb forms):

È rimasto un po’ di dolce? Is there any cake left?

Del vecchio paese di prima, non è rimasto più niente.
There’s nothing left now, of the old village that was.

Sono rimaste ancora due o tre persone nella sala.
There are still two or three people left in the hall.
11.6 Expressing ‘some, any’

There are various ways of saying how much is available and of expressing ‘some’ in Italian, depending on whether you are referring to countable nouns or uncountable nouns.

A ‘countable’ noun refers to people or things that can be counted; you can put a number in front of them and they can be singular (un biscotto) or plural (due biscotti). An ‘uncountable’ noun is something that cannot usually have a number before it and therefore is normally singular, for example pane ‘bread’, zucchero ‘sugar’, vino ‘wine’ (although of course it is possible to talk about i vini italiani ‘Italian wines’).

11.6.1 Del, dei, etc.

The partitive article del (plural dei) etc. (see 1.3.4) can be used with both countable nouns and uncountable nouns.

With ‘countable’ nouns, the plural forms dei, delle, degli are used, the form varying according to the noun they accompany (see also 1.3.4 and 4.2):

- Ci sono dei fichi?
  Are there any figs?

- Ci sono delle sedie?
  Are there any chairs?

- Ci sono degli studenti italiani all’Università.
  There are some Italian students at the University.

- Ci sono degli alberghi economici a Bologna?
  Are there any cheap hotels in Bologna?

With ‘uncountable’ nouns, the singular forms del, dello, della, dell’ are used:

- C’è del vino?
  Is there any wine?
Expressing ‘some, any’

11.6.2 Un poco di, un po’ di

This phrase is used with uncountable nouns such as caffè, pane, vino, zucchero in the singular:

È rimasto ancora un po’ di vino.
There’s still a little wine left.

C’è un poco di caffè anche per me?
Is there some coffee for me too?

It can also be used with countable nouns such as monete, libri in the plural:

Dammi un po’ di monete!
Give me some coins!

Porto un po’ di libri in vacanza.
I’m taking a few books on holiday.

11.6.3 Qualche

Qualche (see 3.9.2) can only be used with countable nouns, not with uncountable nouns like ‘zucchero’. Qualche means ‘a few, some’, but although it has a plural meaning, it is always used with a singular noun. Its form is the same for both masculine and feminine nouns:

C’è qualche programma interessante alla televisione stasera?
Are there any interesting programmes on TV tonight?

Tra i meccanici c’è anche qualche donna.
There are even some women amongst the mechanics.

11.6.4 Alcuni, alcune

The adjectives alcuni/alcune ‘some, a few’ (see 3.9.3) can be used with countable nouns, in the plural only:

Ci sono alcuni programmi televisivi educativi, ma i bambini preferiscono guardare i cartoni animati.
There are a few educational TV programmes, but children prefer to watch cartoons.

Tra i meccanici ci sono anche alcune donne.
There are even a few women amongst the mechanics.

11.6.5 With ne

Both alcuni/alcune (see 3.9.3) and un po’ di can be used on their own, meaning ‘a few things, a few people’, and ‘a little’, with or without the pronoun ne (see 11.7 below and 3.4.4):

Ci sono dei ragazzi italiani al corso estivo?  Ce ne sono alcuni.
Are there any Italian kids on the summer course? There are a few (of them).

Avete delle guide in italiano?  Si, ne abbiamo alcune.
Do you have any guide books in Italian? Yes, we have a few.

Ne is elided before è to form ce n’è:

C’è del parmigiano?  Sì, ce n’è un po’.
Is there any parmesan?  Yes, there’s a little.
11.7 Specifying the quantity available

Avere (see 11.5), essere (see 11.2) or rimanere (see 11.5) can be used with a number or other indication of quantity:

**Quanti giorni di vacanza hai?**  
How many days’ holiday do you have?  
**Ho trenta giorni all’anno.**  
I have thirty days a year.

**Da Roma a Napoli ci sono 190 chilometri.**  
From Rome to Naples is 190 km.

**Sono rimasti solo due panini. Li buttiamo?**  
There are only two rolls left. Shall we throw them away?

With an indication of quantity, you can use the pronoun **ne** (see 3.4.4) to avoid repeating the noun previously mentioned:

**Sono rimasti dei panini?**  
Are there any rolls left?  
**Si, ne sono rimasti due.**  
Yes, there are two (of them) left.

When *c’è* and *ci sono* combine with *ne*, the *ci* changes to *ce* to give *ce n’è* or *ce ne sono*:

**C’è del caffè?**  
Is there any coffee?  
**Si, ce n’è tanto.**  
Yes, there’s lots (of it).

**C’è una banca?**  
Is there a bank?  
**Si, ce ne sono due in centro.**  
Yes, there are two (of them) in the centre.

**C’erano molti spettatori al cinema?**  
Were there many spectators at the cinema?  
**Si, ce n’erano almeno 300.**  
Yes, there were at least 300.

**Ne** can also be used where there is *no* indication of number or quantity, although this is less common:

**C’è del latte?**  
Is there any milk?  
**Si, ce n’è.**  
Yes, there is some.

**Ci sono fichi?**  
Are there figs?  
**Si, ce ne sono.**  
Yes, there are some.

11.8 Expressing ‘something/anything’, ‘someone/anyone’

While *qualche* ‘some’ (see 3.9.2 and 11.6.3) is always used with a noun, *qualcosa* ‘something, anything’ and *qualcuno* ‘someone, anyone’ (see 3.9.1) are used on their own:

**C’è qualcosa da leggere?**  
Is there anything to read?  
**C’è qualcosa da leggere?**  
Is there anything to read?

**C’è qualcuno?**  
Is anyone there?

*Qualcuno, qualcosa* can be followed by a ‘qualifying’ *che* clause (‘someone/something, anyone/anything *that* . . .’). This can be followed either by the *indicative* (particularly in spoken Italian or informal writing) or by the *subjunctive* (see 2.2.14 and 9.3). The English translation is the same in both cases:

**Cerco qualcuno che sa tradurre le lettere commerciali.**  
I’m looking for someone who can translate commercial letters.

11.9 Specifying location, time or frequency

You can specify where something/someone is, or when or *how often* something happens.
11.9.1 Specifying location

You can indicate where the action is taking place, or where something is, by using adverbs or adverbial phrases referring to place, such as vicino, lontano, or position, such as dietro, davanti (see 6.3.2):

La mia casa si trova qui vicino.
My house is near here.

La sede è a due km. dal centro.
The Head Office is 2 km from the centre.

Nella riunione, il direttore era seduto davanti a me.
In the meeting, the director was sitting in front of me.

Or phrases with prepositions (see 6.2.7) which function as adverbs, such as:

C’è un ufficio cambio?
Is there a bureau de change?
Si, ce n’è uno in centro.
Yes, there’s one in the centre.

C’è un Consolato Britannico?
Is there a British Consulate?
Si, ce n’è uno a Roma.
Yes, there’s one in Rome.

11.9.2 Specifying time or date

You can indicate when the action takes place by adding an indication of date or time (see 7.7 and 7.8):

C’è un treno alle cinque.
There’s a train at five o’clock

C’è il telegiornale stasera?
Is there a news bulletin this evening?
Si, c’è alle 8.00.
Yes, there’s one at 8 o’clock.

Quando si svolge il Palio?
When does the Palio take place?
Si svolge a luglio e ad agosto.
It takes place in July and in August.

11.9.3 Specifying frequency

You can indicate how often the event or action takes place with phrases of frequency (see 36.5):

una volta alla settimana
once a week
due volte al mese
twice a month
una volta all’anno
once a year
il martedì, ogni martedì
on Tuesdays, every Tuesday

C’è un servizio medico al campeggio?
Is there a medical service at the campsite?
Si, c’è due volte alla settimana,
Yes, there’s one twice a week, on Tuesdays
il martedì e il venerdì.
and Fridays.

11.10 Expressing non-existence or non-availability

11.10.1 Non

The easiest way of saying that something does not exist or is not available is to add non to any of the verbs or phrases shown in the sections above, for example:

Non ci sono serpenti velenosi in questa zona.
There are no poisonous snakes in this area.

C’è il medico?
No, mi dispiace. Non c’è.
Is the doctor here?
No, I’m sorry. He isn’t here.
11.10.2 Mancare

The verb mancare means ‘to be missing, to be short’. (It can also be used in the emotional sense of missing a person or a place.) In this context, it is similar to piacere in that the object which is lacking (i fondi, il personale) becomes the grammatical subject of the sentence:

Vorremmo migliorare i nostri servizi, ma mancano i fondi.
We would like to improve our services, but funds are short.

L’ufficio rimarrà chiuso venerdì. Manca il personale.
The office will be shut on Friday. There is a shortage of staff.

Manca solo Giorgio.
Only Giorgio is missing.

Mancano i dati.
There are no facts or figures.

11.10.3 Essere assente

Chi è assente stamattina?
Who’s absent this morning?

Someone who has sent his/her excuses and apologies in advance is called:

un assente giustificato
(Literally) an explained absentee

The noun l’assente can also mean ‘the dear departed’ (see 11.10.6 below).

Note the very colloquial use of the verb partire to express the idea that someone is ‘not all there’ mentally:

È partito!
He’s off his head!

11.10.4 Non . . . più, essere esaurito, essere finito

When talking about supplies that are finished, or have run out, you can use any of the expressions listed above. Both esaurito and finito are past participles used with essere:

Non c’è più posto per stasera. È tutto esaurito.
There’s no more room for tonight. It’s all sold out.

Purtroppo sono esaurite le nostre scorte di candele.
Unfortunately, our supplies of candles have run out.

È finita la carta nella stampante.
The paper in the printer is finished.

11.10.5 Estinguersi, scomparire, sparire, spegnersi, sradicare

The verbs above all mean ‘to disappear’, literally or metaphorically. Sparire and scomparire are the most colloquial of these. Note how all these verbs use essere in the compound tenses.
Expressing non-existence or non-availability

_Sono scomparse le chiavi di casa._
The house keys have disappeared.

_Dov'è Alessandro? E' sparito nel nulla!_
Where's Alessandro? He's disappeared into thin air!

_Il morbillo è praticamente scomparso dagli USA._
Measles has practically disappeared from the USA.

The verb _sradicare_ ‘to eradicate’ is used in the passive form to talk about a disease or other evil which has been eradicated:

_Il morbillo è stato quasi completamente sradicato negli USA._
Measles has been almost completely eradicated in the USA.

When talking about a species that has died out or become extinct, use the verbs _estinguersi_ or _sparire_. Note that _estinto_ also means ‘the departed’ (see 11.10.6).

_Fra 500 anni, alcune specie di animali potrebbero estinguersi._
In 500 years time, some species of animals could die out.

_I dinosauri sono spariti dalla terra milioni di anni fa._
The dinosaurs disappeared from the earth millions of years ago.

Both _estinguersi_ and _spegnersi_ can be used with their literal meaning ‘to be extinguished’, so are often used to refer to fires, volcanoes, and – metaphorically – the fires of love:

_L’amore si spegne e la passione si raffredda._
Love dies out and passion grows cold.

11.10.6 Euphemisms for death

Italian, as other western languages, has a wide range of euphemisms to express the concept of death and dying. Any of the following verbs can be used: _estinguersi_, _mancare_, _scomparire_, _spegnersi_.

The participle _scomparso_ is the form most often used in death announcements:

_È scomparso il nostro caro Alfredo._
Our dear friend Alfredo has passed away.

The noun _la scomparsa_ ‘death’ is also used frequently in announcements placed in memory of someone who has died:

_Nel terzo anniversario della scomparsa di Carlo, la mamma lo ricorda con grande amore._
On the third anniversary of the death of Carlo, his mother remembers him with love.

The verb _spegnersi_ ‘to be extinguished’ can be used as a euphemism for _morire_:

_Il conte si spense a mezzanotte, con i familiari attorno al letto._
The count died at midnight, with his family around the bed.

So can _mancare_:

_È improvvisamente mancato all’affetto dei suoi cari Marco Strada._
_(Literally) Marco Strada has suddenly been lost to the affection of his dear ones._

Note the use of the following present and past participles respectively:

_l’assente_ the absent one _literally_
_il caro estinto_ the dear departed
Talking about the present

12.1 Introduction
Situations, actions and events are expressed by the use of verbs (see Chapter 2). Here we look at how to describe situations, actions and events taking place at the present time (i.e. in the same period of time when you are speaking or writing). The verb tense most commonly used for this is the present indicative (see 2.2.3), as shown in our examples. The examples here are mainly in the affirmative; interrogative and negative statements are covered more fully in Chapters 15 and 16 respectively.

12.2 Describing present situations, actions and events
The present tense is used to describe a fact or situation, action or event that is in effect or taking place at the present time, although not necessarily at the exact moment when you speak or write. Here are some examples:

12.2.1 Facts, situations or descriptions

L’Avv. Bianchi lavora alla FIAT.
Mr Bianchi the lawyer works at FIAT.

Questo film dura due ore.
This film lasts two hours.

Molti italiani amano il calcio.
Many Italians love football.

Mi piace molto passeggiare.
I like walking a lot.

Mia madre è malata. Ha una malattia cardiaca.
My mother is ill. She has a heart disease.

Le autostrade sono invase da turisti stranieri che vengono in vacanza in Italia.
The motorways are invaded by foreign tourists who come on holiday to Italy.

Il turismo in Calabria è poco sviluppato.
Tourism in Calabria is not very developed.

Il tempo è brutto.
The weather is bad.

I gemelli non sono identici.
The twins are not identical.
12.2.2 Actions or events

Single actions and events

Perché non telefoni all’Ufficio Vendite?
Why don’t you phone the Sales Department?

Oggi cucina Walter.
Today Walter is cooking.

In Italian, the present tense of the verb is used to describe actions or events which are happening at the time of speaking or writing (‘The Boat Show is taking place this week’, ‘Isabella is teaching this morning’), and those that may not be happening right now, but are a regular occurrence (‘The Boat Show takes place every year’, ‘Isabella teaches every Tuesday’).

Isabella insegna stamattina.
Isabella is teaching this morning.

Isabella insegna ogni martedì.
Isabella teaches every Tuesday.

Il Salone Nautico si svolge questa settimana a Genova.
The Boat Show is taking place this week in Genova.

Il Salone Nautico si svolge ogni anno ad aprile.
The Boat Show takes place every year in April.

L’infermiera non viene oggi.
The nurse isn’t coming today.

L’infermiera non viene il giovedì.
The nurse doesn’t come on Thursdays.

Regular actions or events

Often, in fact, the only feature that distinguishes habitual actions or events from single ones is the use of adverbs or phrases of frequency (see 6.3.1) which convey the notion of habit or regular occurrence, such as:

- di solito usually
- generalmente generally
- normalmente normally
- ogni every (see also 3.9.2, 36.5.2)
- tutti i, tutte le every (see also 3.9.3, 36.5.3)

Ogni mese, andiamo a trovare i parenti in campagna.
Every month, we go to see our relatives in the country.

Ogni giovedì mattina, c’è il mercato a Postiglione.
Every Thursday morning there’s the market at Postiglione.

Tutte le settimane facciamo la spesa al Centro Commerciale ‘Globus’.
Every week we do the shopping at the ‘Globus’ shopping centre.

Normalmente mio marito torna a casa prima di me.
Normally my husband comes home before me.

With days of the week, use of the article il, la also conveys the idea of a regular weekly action:

Il venerdì mangiamo il pesce.
Every Friday we eat fish.

La domenica mia madre va a messa.
On Sundays my mother goes to Mass.

For other phrases of frequency and repetition, see 36.5.
12.3 Expressing ongoing actions

If you need to express something more immediate, or an action that is still going on at the present time and is not yet completed, you can use the progressive form of the present tense. The progressive present, similar to the English ‘to be doing something’, is formed by using the present tense of the verb stare together with the gerund (see 2.2.24) of the verb expressing the action (lavorando, leggendo, partendo):

- **I ragazzi stanno leggendo.**
  - The boys are reading.

- **Il signor Rossi sta partendo.**
  - Mr Rossi is just leaving.

- **Stiamo lavorando.**
  - We are working.

Note that stare and the gerund cannot be used to translate the English ‘to be doing’ construction when it refers to the future, even if it’s the very near future. For this you use the regular present indicative or the future:

- **Il Dott. Cuomo arriva fra mezz’ora.**
  - Dr Cuomo is arriving in half an hour.

- **Dove andrete domani?**
  - Where are you going tomorrow?

12.4 Words and phrases indicating present time

The present time is also indicated by using adverbs or phrases specifying time (see 6.3.1). For more complex time contexts, see 30.4 and Chapter 36. Here are some examples:

- **ora, adesso**    now
  - È tardi. *Ora* andiamo a casa.
  - It’s late. Let’s go home now.

- **Scusami, adesso non voglio parlare.**
  - Excuse me, I don’t wish to talk now.

- **Ho cambiato ufficio. *Adesso* lavoro al terzo piano.**
  - I changed my office. I’m working on the third floor now.

- **subito, immediatamente**    right now, immediately
  - **Vieni subito qua!**
  - Come here right now!

- **Attendere un attimo, per favore. Le passo immediatamente il direttore.**
  - Hold on a second, please. I’ll put you through to the manager immediately.

- **oggi**    today
  - **Oggi mi sento felice!**
  - I feel happy today!

- **Oggi è sabato.**
  - Today is Saturday.

- **ancora**    still
  - **È ancora presto per partire.**
  - It’s still early to be leaving.

- **Ho ancora fame!**
  - I am still hungry!
Dialogo

questo  this

Quest’anno le vendite vanno bene.
This year the sales are going well.

Questa settimana lavoro fino a tardi.
This week I’m working till late.

Questo pomeriggio fa freddo.
It’s cold this afternoon.

Note the shortened forms stamattina ‘this morning’, stanotte ‘this/last night’, stasera ‘this evening’:

Stasera Monica è nervosa.
Tonight Monica is edgy.

Stanotte non sono riuscita a dormire.
I couldn’t sleep last night.

Incontro di lavoro

Mario Adinolfi è impiegato alla Camera di Commercio di Bari, ma in questi giorni sta lavorando a Roma per organizzare la partecipazione di alcune industrie romane alla Fiera del Levante di Bari. La Ditta Cosmetici 2000 Spa vuole presentare alla Fiera un nuovo prodotto per la cura dei capelli e il Sig. Luca Violli, direttore delle vendite, incontra il Sig. Adinolfi per chiedere informazioni sui servizi della Fiera. Ecco un brano della loro conversazione:

Violli Quanto costa l’affitto di un ufficio per il periodo della Fiera?
Adinolfi Quest’anno abbiamo uffici attrezzati con servizi di segreteria, che costano €2.500 per 5 giorni.

Violli Quando posso visitare gli uffici?
Adinolfi Gli uffici si possono visitare dopo il 10 settembre. Ora stiamo ancora completando i lavori, ma Lei può fare una prenotazione adesso. Deve solo riempire questo modulo.

Violli Va bene. Chi deve firmare il modulo?
Adinolfi Può firmare Lei, o un altro responsabile della ditta, come preferisce.

A business meeting

Mario Adinolfi is an employee at the Chamber of Commerce in Bari, but at present he is working in Rome making arrangements for several Roman companies in the ‘Fiera del Levante’ Trade Fair in Bari. The company ‘Cosmetics 2000’ Ltd wants to present its new hair care product and Mr Luca Violli, Director of Sales, meets Mr Adinolfi to ask for information on the services offered by the Fair. Here is a snatch of their conversation.

Violli How much does it cost to rent an office for the duration of the Fair?
Adinolfi This year we have ready-equipped offices with secretarial services, which cost 2,500 euros for 5 days.

Violli When can I visit the offices?
Adinolfi After the 10th of September. We are just finishing the work, but you can book now. You only need to fill in this form.

Violli All right. Who needs to sign the form?
Adinolfi You can sign it, or else some other representative of the company, as you prefer.
13
Speaking and writing about the past

13.1 Introduction

Deciding which verb tense to use to describe the past in Italian, and in particular whether to use a perfect or an imperfect tense, is one of the most difficult points for learners to master. Here we look at the three tenses used to describe the past (passato prossimo, passato remoto, imperfetto), and the way in which they are each used, individually and together:

Passato prossimo ‘perfect’
Ieri ho lavorato fino alle 5.00 e poi sono andata al bar.
Yesterday I worked until 5.00 and then I went to the bar.

Passato remoto ‘past definite’
Ieri lavorai fino alle 5.00 e poi andai al bar.
Yesterday I worked until 5.00 and then I went to the bar.

Imperfetto ‘imperfect’
Di solito lavoravo fino alle 5.00 e poi andavo al bar.
Usually I worked until 5.00 and then I went to the bar.

Combination of imperfetto and passato prossimo
Quando lavoravo lì, sono andata molte volte nell’ufficio del direttore.
When I worked there, I went several times to the director’s office.

All the examples here are of verbs in the indicative mood; for details of past tenses in the subjunctive mood, see 2.2.17–19, Appendix II (Regular verb forms) and Appendix III (Irregular verb forms). See also 25.4, 26.2–4, 27.1–2, 29.3–5, 30.5, 31.4.2, 32.2, 33.3, 35.4, 36.3.2, 38.3–5, 39.2–3 in particular, for examples of how the subjunctive is used in complex sentences of different kinds.

13.2 Passato prossimo and passato remoto

When talking about events in the past, regarded as complete, Italian uses the passato prossimo (see 2.2.5) or the passato remoto (see 2.2.6). Both these tenses are perfect tenses and in fact some grammar books refer to them as compound perfect and simple perfect respectively.

The passato prossimo (literally ‘near past’) is often called the present perfect in English, while the passato remoto (literally ‘distant past’) is sometimes called the past historic, leading to the belief that the first is only used to talk about recent events or actions, while the second is only used to talk about historic events. This is only partially true and quite misleading.

The tense most frequently used in spoken and informal written Italian to describe a past action or event is the passato prossimo, a compound tense formed of an auxiliary (avere or essere) and past participle (see 2.1.9):
Using the passato prossimo

_Sono arrivato_ la settimana scorsa.
I arrived last week.

_Ieri ho comprato_ una camicia rossa.
Yesterday I bought a red shirt.

_Ti è piaciuto_ il film?
Did you like the film?

_Avete conosciuto_ il direttore?
Have you met the director?

In some areas of Italy, however, the passato remoto (see 2.2.6) is used instead. Here are the same examples as above, this time using the passato remoto:

_Arrivai_ la settimana scorsa.
I arrived last week.

_Ieri comprai_ una camicia rossa.
Yesterday I bought a red shirt.

_Ti piacque_ il film?
Did you like the film?

_Conosceste_ il direttore?
Have you met the director?

The difference between the two sets of examples is _not_ one of _time_, but of regional variation. Across Italy, the passato remoto is much less frequently used than the passato prossimo. You are unlikely to hear the passato remoto used in everyday conversation in northern or most of central Italy (see also 13.4 below). You may, however, hear it in Tuscany and in southern Italy, including Sicily, where it is considered perfectly acceptable.

The different functions and uses of these two past tenses in standard Italian are best explained by example.

The passato remoto represents events in the past which have _no connection with the present_, i.e. with the time when the sentence is spoken or written. So, when talking about the date someone was born, you would use the passato remoto if that person is no longer alive:

_Dante nacque_ nel 1265. _Visse_ per molti anni a Firenze.
Dante was born in 1265. He lived for many years in Florence.

_Pier Paolo Pasolini nacque_ nel 1922. _Fu_ uno dei più famosi scrittori del Neorealismo.
Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in 1922. He was one of the most famous Neorealist writers.

However, if stressing the relationship of Dante or Pasolini with the present, in other words their continuing influence today, you would use the passato prossimo (see 2.2.5):

_Dante è nato_ nel 1265, _e oggi si festeggia_ l’anniversario della nascita.
Dante was born in 1265, and today we celebrate the anniversary of his birth.

_Pier Paolo Pasolini è nato_ nel 1922, _e i suoi film più famosi sono ancora molto popolari._
Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in 1922, and his best-known films are still very popular today.

The passato prossimo is always used if the person is still alive at the present time:

_Mio figlio Giovanni è nato_ nel 1983.
My son Giovanni was born in 1983.

---

### 13.3 Using the passato prossimo

The passato prossimo (see 2.2.5) is very similar to the English present perfect (‘I have eaten’, etc.); however the past tenses do not always correspond exactly in their use, as shown below:

_Gli ho parlato_ apertamente.
I have spoken openly to him.

_Siamo partiti_ alle 5.00.
We left at 5 o’clock.

Here is an example of a passage in which you will recognise many examples of the passato prossimo. Some of the past participles shown do not follow a regular pattern (see 2.2.27 and Appendix III Irregular verb forms).
**Using the passato remoto**

Although the passato remoto (see 2.2.6) is much less frequently used than the passato prossimo in spoken and informal written Italian, there are certain contexts in which it is used to describe events or actions, in all regions of Italy:

### 13.4.1 In a historical context

The passato remoto is used frequently in historical narration, as can be seen from this example, taken from a history textbook for primary schools (Strumenti, ed. Alfio Zoi, Editrice La Scuola, 1991, pp. 188–189):

*Quando nel 1152, Federico I detto Barbarossa divenne re di Germania, decise di sottomettere i Comuni ribelli. Compì cinque discese in Italia: nella prima (1154) soffocò la ribellione di Roma e si fece incoronare imperatore; nella seconda conquistò Milano e riaffermò solennemente i diritti dell’Imperatore sui Comuni (1158); nella terza assediò e distrusse Milano (1163); nella quarta occupò Roma (1168) e nella quinta fu sconfitto a Legnano dalla Lega Lombarda (Alleanza tra i Comuni, decisa a Pontida nel 1167, e appoggiata dal Papa Alessandro III). Per questo dovette riconoscere la libertà dei Comuni con il trattato di pace di Costanza (1183).*

When, in 1152, Frederick I, known as Redbeard, became King of Germany, he decided to suppress the rebellious City States. He carried out five raids in Italy; in the first (1154) he suppressed the rebellion in Rome, and had himself crowned emperor; in the second he conquered Milan and with due ceremony reaffirmed the rights of the emperor over the City States (1158); in the third he besieged and destroyed Milan (1163); in the fourth he occupied Rome (1168) and in the fifth he was defeated at Legnano by the Lombard League (an alliance between the City States, set up in Pontida in 1167, and supported by Pope Alexander III). For this reason he was forced to recognise the freedom of the City States, with the peace treaty of Constance (1183).

Note however that when historical events are seen in their relevance to the present time, the passato prossimo is more likely to be used, even if the events happened a long time ago. Here is another example, again from the same textbook Strumenti (p. 248):

*La storia moderna di Roma è iniziata nel 1870 quando la città è diventata capitale del giovane Regno d’Italia. Allora Roma contava appena 200.000 abitanti ed anche il suo aspetto urbanistico non era molto diverso da quello dei secoli precedenti . . .

Anche nel nostro secolo, e in particolare negli ultimi decenni, Roma ha continuato a espandersi per l’afflusso di lavoratori provenienti da tutto il Lazio e dalle regioni centro-meridionali.*

The modern history of Rome began in 1870 when the city became the capital of the young Kingdom of Italy. At that time Rome counted scarcely 200,000 inhabitants, and as a town it did not appear very different from previous centuries . . .
In our own century, and particularly in the last few decades, Rome has continued to grow, because of the influx of workers coming from all over Lazio, and the central and southern regions.

Here the events described, some of which happened more than 100 years ago, are relevant to today’s situation (Rome is still the capital of Italy and its population is still expanding because of the influx of immigrants).

13.4.2 In a narrative

Here is another example of the use of the passato remoto, this time not in a historical context but in a narrative literary passage (from the novel Requiem by Antonio Tabucchi, Feltrinelli, 1992):

E allora vieni avanti, disse la voce di Tadeus, ormai la casa la conosci. Chiusi la porta alle mie spalle e avanzai per il corridoio. Il corridoio era buio, e inciampai in un mucchio di cose che caddero per terra. Mi fermai a raccogliere quel che avevo sparso sul pavimento: libri, un giocattolo di legno, un gallo di Barcelos, la statuetta di un santo . . .

Well, come on through, said Tadeus’ voice, you know the house by now. I shut the door behind me, and headed along the corridor. The corridor was dark and I stumbled into a pile of things which fell on the ground. I stopped to pick up what I had spread over the floor: books, a wooden toy, a Barcelos cock, the statuette of a saint . . .

13.5 Using the imperfetto

The final tense used in Italian to describe actions or events in the past is the imperfetto (see 2.2.4). This section looks at the use of the imperfetto by itself, while 13.6 considers its use together with the passato prossimo.

The imperfetto is used to describe the following situations.

Parallel events or actions

Two past actions or events can be viewed in a symmetrical relationship, taking place within the same time span:

Mentre lavorava, Anna pensava alle vacanze in Sardegna.
While she was working, Anna was thinking about the holidays.

Il direttore parlava e gli invitati ascoltavano annoiati.
The director was talking and the guests were listening, bored.

Each of the examples above has two parallel actions that take place at the same time and are part of the same situation, described as if seen or experienced from within the situation itself, rather than a set of events viewed in relation to the present time (the time when you are speaking or writing).

— Action 1
— Action 2

Habitual or repeated actions

In the following examples, the actions are not separate individual actions taking place at the same time; they describe the same action repeated, in other words an action that was carried out regularly during the period concerned. In English, this situation can be expressed with the form ‘used to . . .’.

A Roma andavo tutti i giorni a mangiare in trattoria.
In Rome I went to eat in a trattoria every day.
### 13.5.3 Aspect

Another issue to consider is that of ‘aspect’. The general function of the imperfect aspect is to represent past events and actions as if seen from within the past itself.

The following two sentences illustrate how the same event, happening at the same time, can be seen from two different points of view, in other words from two different aspects:

*Ieri faceva molto caldo a Napoli.*

Yesterday it was very hot in Naples.

*Ieri ha fatto molto caldo a Napoli.*

Yesterday it was very hot in Naples.

The first example (the imperfect aspect) talks about the hot weather as the condition experienced by people during that particular span of time; the statement could be spoken, for instance, by someone who was actually in Naples yesterday and wants to talk about his/her own experience of the weather.

The second example (the perfect aspect) sees yesterday’s weather from outside; the statement could be made, for example, by someone who was not in Naples (for example a weather forecaster) and who wants to tell people about the weather in a more objective detached way.

### 13.5.4 Describing past events or situations

Here is an example of a narrative, in informal written or spoken Italian, using the imperfetto:

*All’Università c’era una gran confusione. Gli studenti, che volevano iscriversi, cercavano di capire che cosa fare mentre gli impiegati della Segreteria non riuscivano a farsi sentire nel gran chiasso. Faceva molto caldo e molti si riparavano all’ombra degli alberi nel cortile.*

At the University, there was a great deal of confusion. The students, who wanted to enrol, were trying to find out what to do, while the staff in the Administration Office couldn’t make themselves heard in the racket. It was very hot, and many people took refuge in the shade of the trees in the courtyard.

Here we have a descriptive ‘picture’ of a situation, recounted by someone who was there, where the verbs are the elements inside the picture, rather than a completed event or action.

Compare the situation above with a narrative description, which uses the perfect aspect to recount the events taking place one after the other, i.e. when they are not seen as details inside a picture, but as a sequence of single separate actions, as shown in the example below:

*Ieri sono andato all’Università e ho trovato una gran confusione. Ho chiesto informazioni in Segreteria e mi hanno detto di aspettare. Faceva molto caldo e mi sono riparato sotto gli alberi nel cortile.*

Yesterday I went to the University and I found a great deal of confusion. I asked for information in the Administration office and they told me to wait. It was very hot, and I took refuge under the trees in the courtyard.

Each of these actions had to be carried out before the following one could take place:

- ho chiesto
- hanno detto
- mi sono riparato

### 13.5.5 Narrative using imperfect

Here is a passage from the novel *La Delfina Bizantina* by Aldo Busi (Mondadori, 1992, p. 53), which uses almost entirely verbs in the imperfect, because it is describing a scene,
Combinations of perfect and imperfect tenses

13.6

Scene-setting: introduction

In the sections above, we saw how the imperfect expresses the elements of a past situation, in contrast with the perfect tenses (passato prossimo or passato remoto) which see actions or events in their entirety and ‘separateness’. To understand more clearly how the two aspects interact to depict the past we can use the metaphor of a play seen at the theatre: where the scenery or stage set is the background of the play and is represented by the imperfect. The actors, their actions, and the events of the play are in the foreground and represented by the perfect tenses, whether passato prossimo or passato remoto.

13.6.2 Scene-setting in novels

A traditional technique of novelists is to set a scene, using the imperfetto, and to let the characters act within it, using the passato remoto. In each of the following two passages, taken from Leonardo Sciascia’s Il Giorno della Civetta (Einaudi, 1981, pp. 9 and 57), it is easy to identify the two aspects, perfect and imperfect:

the background to the action. The description then ends with two verbs in the passato remoto: finì, girò:

Era entrata nella stanza adiacente dove adesso i giornali toccavano il soffitto o comunque la sovrastavano penzolanti e minacciosi. Era una vera e propria foresta di carta con striscioli sottoboschi in fondo ai quali vide farsi larga la luce del giorno e lei, la vecchia striminzita imbacuccata in un mucchio di stracci maschili e di coperte. Era in piedi davanti alla finestra rottana le presentava la schiena. Stava incollando con impasto di acqua e farina bianca un foglio di giornale sul riquadro senza vetro. E contemporaneamente lo stava bisbigliando dalla a alla zeta. Doveva certo essere così assorta da non averla sentita, non si decideva a girarsi. Brunilì finì con calma il duplice lavoro e poi si girò . . .

She had gone into the adjacent room, where the newspapers now touched the ceiling, or at least towered over her, swaying and threatening. It was an absolute forest of paper, with creaking undergrowth at the other side of which she saw the light of day penetrating and then her, the shabby old woman all muffled up in a heap of tattered men’s clothes and blankets. She was standing in front of the broken window with her back turned to her. She was using flour and water paste to glue a sheet of newspaper on the window frame with no glass. And at the same time she was whispering the newspaper text to herself from A to Z. She must have been so absorbed that she hadn’t heard her, she didn’t give any sign of turning around. Brunil calmly finished her twofold task, and then turned around . . .

13.5.6
Progressive imperfect (stare + gerundio)

One very common form of the imperfect is the progressive form. This is formed using the imperfetto of the verb stare together with the gerund of the main verb. This form is fairly familiar to English speakers, being similar in form and use to the English ‘to be -ing’.

Che cosa stavate facendo ieri sera?
What were you doing yesterday evening?

Stavo lavorando quando mi ha telefonato Andrea.
I was working when Andrea called me.

The progressive form expresses an action in progress, i.e. not completed, at a certain moment in time. It cannot be used to convey, for example, the aspects of repetition or description of past events (as mentioned above), where the simple imperfetto is used instead. The progressive form in Italian, as in English, can be used not only in the past, but also in the present and future (see 12.3 and 14.5 respectively).
13.6.3 Scene (an ongoing action or event) and a new action or event

A less obvious example of scene-setting is the way in which Italian, even in everyday speech or writing, distinguishes between actions in the past, using the imperfect to describe certain actions that are seen as a background to others. Here are a few examples, where the pattern is that of an action/event happening at a certain moment, set against the background scene of something that was going on at the same moment in time (but also before and possibly after):

Paola è arrivata (event), mentre preparavo la cena (scene).
Paola arrived while I was preparing dinner.

Gli impiegati lavoravano (scene) quando è suonato l’allarme (event).
The staff were working when the alarm went.

Passeggiavamo (scene) lungo il mare, ma all'improvviso è scoppiato (action) un temporale.
We were walking along the sea front but suddenly a storm broke.

13.6.4 Scene (a situation) and a new action or event

Erano le 5.25 quando è esplosa la bomba.
It was 5.25 when the bomb went off.

Sono arrivato alla stazione proprio quando il treno partiva.
I arrived at the station just when the train left.

In both these examples, the imperfect represents a fact that, although happening in an instant (il treno partiva), can still be seen as the situation, context or background against which something happened.

13.6.5 Cause (imperfetto) and effect (passato prossimo)

Non sono venuto a trovarti perché avevo troppo lavoro da fare.
I didn’t come to see you, because I had too much work to do.

Avevamo fame e abbiamo deciso di fare due spaghetti.
We were hungry and (so) we decided to cook a bit of spaghetti.

In these sentences the role of the imperfect is clearly that of the background to, or cause of, an event.

13.6.6 Same verbs, different patterns

To illustrate the explanations above, here is an example of how the same two verbs can be used in three different patterns:
Parallel actions:
Mentre io riposavo Sandro telefonava a sua sorella.
While I was resting, Sandro was on the phone to his sister.

Sequence of actions:
Ho riposato e poi ho telefonato a Sandro.
I rested and then I telephoned Sandro.

Situation and action/event:
Mentre riposavo mi ha telefonato Sandro.
While I was resting, Sandro telephoned me.

Further examples of passato prossimo/imperfetto
Here are some further examples illustrating the different functions of passato prossimo and imperfetto; read them carefully and see if you can link them to the explanations above:

Ho ordinato gli articoli che mi interessavano.
I ordered the items that I was interested in.

Ieri sera pensavo a quello che mi hai detto e ho capito che avevi ragione.
Yesterday evening I was thinking about what you said to me, and I realised that you were right.

Mi dispiace, non volevo offenderti quando ti ho rimproverato.
I’m sorry, I didn’t want to offend you when I told you off.

Ho visitato Firenze con quell’amico che lavorava al Museo.
I visited Florence with that friend who worked in the Museum.

Abbiamo imparato l’italiano a Roma con un professore che non parlava nemmeno una parola d’inglese.
We learnt Italian in Rome with a teacher who didn’t speak a word of English.

Quando abitavo a Napoli ho visitato tre volte il Museo Nazionale.
When I lived in Naples, I visited the National Museum three times.

Per quanto tempo hai vissuto in Cina?
How long did you live in China for?

Ho vissuto a Shanghai per tre anni.
I lived in Shanghai for three years.

Quando vivevo in Cina mangiavo il riso tre volte al giorno.
When I lived in China, I ate rice three times a day.

Ieri ho mangiato riso tre volte.
Yesterday I ate rice three times.

Passato prossimo/imperfetto: dovere, potere, volere
With certain verbs, particularly the auxiliary verbs dovere, potere, volere, the choice of past tense is even more important, since it can distinguish an obligation or intention that was not carried out from one that was, as in the examples below:

Volevo andare in banca, ma era chiusa.
I wanted to go to the bank, but it was shut.
(So I couldn’t go after all.)

Ho voluto andare in banca.
I wanted to go to the bank.
(The implication is that I did go there.)

Dovevano venire ieri, ma c’era sciopero dei treni.
They should have come yesterday, but there was a train strike.
(They should have come but they didn’t.)
13.7 Present tense expressing past

There are two situations in which past events are not expressed either by *imperfetto* or *passato prossimo* but by the *present indicative* tense:

### 13.7.1 When the event in question is still going on

When the event, action or situation in question is still going on, the present tense is used with *da*, the equivalent of the English *since*, to indicate how long it has been going on for:

**Studio l’italiano da cinque anni.**
I have been studying Italian for five years.  
(Implication: And I’m still trying!)

(Literally: I study Italian since five years.)

Compare this with the following example:

**Ho studiato l’italiano per cinque anni.**
I studied Italian for five years.  
(Implication: But now I’ve given up!)
Indicators of past time

13.8

13.8.1 Time indicators

To say how long ago the action took place, use fa (‘ago’) and the appropriate length of time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>due giorni fa</td>
<td>two days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un mese fa</td>
<td>a month ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poco tempo fa</td>
<td>a short time ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To express ‘last’ meaning ‘the one just past’, use the adjectives scorso or passato (note that while scorso can come either before or after the noun, passato can only come after):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la scorsa settimana</td>
<td>last week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il mese scorso</td>
<td>last month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’anno passato</td>
<td>last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’estate passata</td>
<td>last summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some common time phrases which can be used to refer to the past:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ieri</td>
<td>yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’altro ieri</td>
<td>day before yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ieri mattina</td>
<td>yesterday morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ieri sera</td>
<td>yesterday evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stamattina</td>
<td>this morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.8.2 Negative indicators of past time

When the double negative phrases non . . . ancora, non . . . mai, non . . . più (see 16.6) are used with the passato prossimo, non goes before the whole verb, while the second negative element will normally go after the auxiliary avere or essere, but before the participle:

La consegna non è ancora arrivata.
The delivery hasn’t arrived yet.

Non ho ancora mangiato.
I haven’t eaten yet.

Non è più venuto.
He didn’t come any more.

Non c’è mai stata la pace in quel paese.
There has never been peace in that country.

Alternatively, the second negative element can be placed after the whole verb:

La consegna non è arrivata ancora.
The delivery hasn’t arrived yet.

Non ho mangiato ancora.
I haven’t eaten yet.

Non è venuto più.
He didn’t come any more.

Non c’è stata mai la pace in quel paese.
There has never been peace in that country.
14

Talking about the future

14.1 Introduction

Learners often assume that in order to talk about future events, actions or situations, they need to use the future tense of Italian verbs (see 2.2.9). This is not always the case. As seen in the following examples, you can use either the future tense or the present tense, to refer to the same event or facts. Finally, to talk about the very near future in Italian, we can use the construction stare per.

14.2 Using the future tense

In the examples below, the future tense of the verbs is used to imply firm intention or plans or a future event which is certain:

- Fra pochi giorni sarò in Italia.
  In a few days I’ll be in Italy.
- Spero che tu non cambierai idea.
  I hope you won’t change your mind.
- La settimana prossima mio marito partirà per gli Stati Uniti.
  Next week my husband will leave for the USA.
- Arriveremo non appena possibile.
  We’ll get there as soon as possible.

14.3 Using the present tense

The future tense is not always used or needed in colloquial Italian. The present tense can be used in its place in almost every situation, just as it can in English:

- Fra poco sono a casa.
  Soon I’ll be home.
- La settimana prossima cambia ufficio, vero?
  Next week you are changing office, aren’t you?
- Domani mio marito parte per Genova.
  Tomorrow my husband is leaving for Genoa.
- Arriviamo alle dieci di sera.
  We’ll get there at ten o’clock at night.

Even events in the distant future can be expressed using the present tense. However an explicit indication which places the events firmly in the future (such as la settimana prossima, l’anno prossimo, fra un mese, etc.) helps to avoid misunderstanding, as in the following examples:

- L’anno prossimo passeremo le vacanze a New York.
  Next year we are spending the holidays in New York.
- Fra un mese siamo in Italia.
  In a month we’ll be in Italy.
Indicators of future time

It is generally preferable to use the future tense when speaking or writing in a more formal context.

Indicators of future time

As mentioned above, markers of future time are important in order to set statements firmly in the future context. Here are some of the most common.

**Domani** ‘tomorrow’:

*Domani* porto Filippo dal pediatra.
Tomorrow I’m taking Filippo to the paediatrician.

**Dopodomani** ‘day after tomorrow’:

*Dopodomani* l’ufficio rimarrà chiuso.
The day after tomorrow the office will be closed.

**Prossimo** ‘next’:

*Prossimo* agrees in gender and number with the noun it refers to. Remember that the days of the week – with the exception of *domenica* – are masculine.

*Prossimo* generally comes after the noun, in phrases such as *sabato prossimo* ‘next Saturday’, *la settimana prossima* ‘next week’, *il mese prossimo* ‘next month’, *l’anno prossimo* ‘next year’. It can also come before but this is less common.

*Le telefonerò il mese prossimo.*
I’ll phone you next month.

*Domenica prossima* andiamo al mare.
Next Sunday we’ll go to the sea.

*Prossimo* generally comes before the noun in phrases such as *nei prossimi giorni* ‘over the next few days’, *nei prossimi mesi* ‘over the next few months’. It can also come after but this is less common.

*Nei prossimi giorni cerco di pulire la casa.*
In the next few days, I’ll try and clean the house.

*Dovremo lavorare molto nei prossimi mesi.*
We’ll be very busy in the next months.

**Fra (tra)** ‘within a certain time’:

The prepositions *fra / tra* are identical in meaning (see also 4.3.8).

*Ci vediamo fra una settimana.*
We’ll see each other in a week.

*Sandro deve partire tra poco.*
Sandro has to leave in a moment.

*Mi scusi, sono occupata. La richiamo fra cinque minuti.*
Excuse me, I’m busy at the moment. I’ll call you back in five minutes.

**Entro** ‘by, within’:

The preposition *entro* is used in a more formal context than *fra, tra*:

*Il pagamento va effettuato entro un mese dalla data della fattura.*
Payment must be made within a month from the date of the invoice.

**Prima o poi** ‘sooner or later’:

*Prima o poi riusciranno a risolvere il problema.*
Sooner or later they’ll manage to solve the problem.
Verrò a trovarti, prima o poi!
I’ll come to see you, sooner or later.

D’ora in poi ‘from now on’:

D’ora in poi non mi sentirò più sola. Ci sei tu.
From now on I won’t feel lonely. You’re here.

The next group of time markers alla fine, dopo, poi, stasera can refer to a present or past time context as well as a future time context, depending on the verb tense used.

Alla fine ‘at the end’:

Il vertice durerà cinque giorni; alla fine verrà offerto un pranzo dall’ambasciatore britannico.
The summit will last five days; at the end there will be a dinner offered by the British ambassador.

Dopo ‘after, afterwards, later’:

Andiamo a fare una passeggiata e dopo andiamo a casa tua.
Let’s go for a walk and afterwards we’ll go to your place.

Poi ‘then, later’:

Poi is often used in a pair with prima ‘first’. It is almost interchangeable with dopo:

Prima parleremo della riunione poi passeremo all’argomento principale.
First we’ll talk about the meeting, then we’ll go on to the main subject.

Stasera ‘this evening, tonight’:

Stasera si trasmetterà la prossima puntata di ‘Commissario Montalbano’.
The next episode of ‘Inspector Montalbano’ will be shown this evening.

Presto ‘soon’:

Presto cambieremo casa.
We’ll soon move house.

Le manderò presto una risposta.
I’ll send an answer to you soon.

Presto can also mean ‘early’, in which case it can refer to present, past or future.

Expressing the immediate or very near future

There are two particular ways of talking about actions that are imminent or ‘about to happen’.

14.5.1 Stare per

The verb stare (see 2.2.3) is used with per and the verb infinitive:

Siamo per partire.
We are about to leave.

La conferenza sta per cominciare.
The talk will begin soon.

14.5.2 Essere sul punto di

The expression essere sul punto di . . . corresponds approximately to the English ‘to be on the verge of . . .’:

Il professore è sul punto di avere un esaurimento nervoso.
The teacher is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.
14.6 Expressing the English ‘going to’

The English ‘going to’ can be a way of expressing future plans or intention, or it can mean ‘physically going to’. You have to know which meaning it conveys before you can translate it into Italian.

In the first example, ‘going to’ expresses future plans or intention and is translated into Italian using a future tense or using **aver intenzione di**:

> When I’m on holiday, I’m **going to** learn Italian.
> Quando sarò in vacanza, **imparerò** l’italiano.
> Quando sarò in vacanza, **ho intenzione di imparare** l’italiano.

In the second example, ‘going’ means physically going to a place and is translated into Italian using the verb **andare**:

> Tomorrow I’m **going** shopping.
> Domani **vado a fare** le spese.

For other ways to talk about future planning and intention, see 14.9 below.

14.7 The ‘past in the future’

The diagram below is intended to illustrate the ‘past in the future’. Sometimes when you talk about a point in the future (3), you need to describe events/actions that have not yet happened at the moment of speaking (1) but that will have happened at an unspecified point (2) before that future point (3).

1. (moment of speaking) 2. (action or event) 3. (future point)

*I giornali dicono che il Governo **avrà deciso** il bilancio prima di agosto.*

The newspapers say the Government will have decided on the budget before August.

*Franco dice che avremo già **finito** il lavoro quando **arriverà** il contratto.*

Franco says that we will have finished the work before the contract arrives.

This reference to the *past in the future* – often called the *future perfect* in English – is expressed in Italian by a tense called **futuro anteriore** ‘compound future’ (see 2.2.10). Here are some examples:

*Domani l’ufficio **chiuderà** alle 12.00. A quell’ora **avranno finito** la nostra relazione.*

Tomorrow the office will close at 12.00. By then we’ll already have finished our report.

*È tardi. Quando **arriveremo** allo stadio, la **partita sarà già iniziata**.*

It’s late. When we reach the stadium, the match will already have started.

*Potrai **superare** l’esame soltanto dopo che **avrai migliorato** il tuo italiano.*

You will be able to pass the exam only after improving your Italian.

14.8 The future seen from the past

You do not just talk of future events with reference to the moment when you are speaking or writing (‘the present’). You may also be talking **now** about a point in the **past**, when the particular events referred to were still in the **future**. How you express this situation in Italian depends on the sequence of events and on the probability of their happening. You can use a variety of verb tenses and moods to do this (see also 30.5 and Appendix V).
14.8.1 **Present or simple future tense**

When the future moment has not yet come, and it is still possible for the action or event to take place, you can use either present or future tense:

- **Carlo ha detto che passerà più tardi.**
  Carlo said he will pass by later.

- **Carlo ha detto che passa più tardi.**
  Carlo said he will pass by later.

14.8.2 **The condizionale passato ‘past conditional’**

The past conditional (see 2.2.13) indicates the future *from a past point of view*. This tense is used after the moment has passed, regardless of whether Carlo came or not:

- **Carlo ha detto che sarebbe passato (ed è venuto).**
  Carlo said he would pass by later (and he did).

- **Carlo ha detto che sarebbe passato (e non è venuto).**
  Carlo said he would pass by later (and he didn’t).

14.8.3 **The imperfetto ‘imperfect’**:

In colloquial Italian, the *imperfect* (see 2.2.4) is often used in place of the past conditional:

- **Carlo ha detto che passava più tardi.**
  Carlo said he would pass by later.

For more examples of putting events in a time context, and the sequence of tenses, see 30.5 and Appendix V.

14.9 **Expressing intention and future plans**

As seen above, the English ‘going to’ can be expressed in Italian by *aver intenzione di*:

- **Ho intenzione di noleggiare una macchina.**
  I intend hiring a car.

Other expressions of intention and planning for the future include:

- **aspettarsi** to expect
- **aver in progetto di** to have planned to
- **decidere di** to decide to
- **decidersi a** to make one’s mind up to
- **desiderare** to wish, desire
- **fare progetti per** to make plans for
- **non vedere l’ora di** to not be able to wait for
- **promettere di** to promise to
- **sperare di** to hope to

- **Mi sono decisa a passare le feste natalizie in famiglia.**
  I’ve made up my mind to spend the Christmas celebrations with my family.

- **Gli studenti stanno facendo progetti per venire a studiare in Inghilterra.**
  The students are planning to come and study in England.

- **Il professore si aspetta di ricevere i nostri compiti domani.**
  The lecturer expects to receive our homework tomorrow.

- **I bambini non vedono l’ora di andare in vacanza.**
  The children can’t wait to go on holiday.

▶ See also 26.2 and 33.3 for further expressions of intention and future plans.
15

Asking questions

15.1 Introduction

There is no specific verb form in Italian to distinguish a statement from a question, such as the English question form ‘Does he . . . ?’ ‘Is he . . . ?’ In Italian the form of the verb and the word order of the sentence generally remain the same. In the last example the interrogative word at the beginning of the sentence makes it clear that this is a question:

Devo chiudere la porta.
I must shut the door.

Devo chiudere la porta?
Should I shut the door?

Perché devo chiudere la porta?
Why do I have to shut the door?

15.2 Asking a question using interrogative intonation

Very often the only difference between a statement and a question in spoken Italian is the intonation of the voice, which therefore becomes particularly important in getting your message across (see 8.5). The pitch of the voice is raised on the word that is the focus of the question. In the sentence above you can raise your voice on any one of the components, depending on what the main focus of your question is:

Devo chiudere la porta? (o la finestra?)
Should I shut the door? (or the window?)

Devo chiudere la porta? (o devo aprirla?)
Should I shut the door? (or should I open it?)

Devo chiudere la porta? (o non devo?)
Should I shut the door? (or should I not?)

15.3 Asking a question using interrogative words

When you ask questions, you often use interrogative words (see 3.6). We now look at three different types of questions and the question words used to introduce them.

15.3.1 Questions about identification (of people and/or things)

Chi?
Chi (who?) can be used in questions or indirect questions (see also 3.6.1). It can be used with a preposition, as shown in the last two examples below; the preposition always comes before chi, unlike the equivalent construction in English (‘who is it for?’). Chi is invariable: it does not change form regardless of whether it is the subject of the verb (as in the first example), the
**ASKING QUESTIONS**

*direct object* (as in the second example), or preceded by a preposition (as in the last two examples).

**Pronto, chi parla?**
Hello, who’s speaking?

**Mi dica chi deve vedere oggi.** *(indirect question)*
Tell me who you have to see today.

**Per chi è questo pacco?**
Who is this parcel for?

**Di chi è questa giacca?**
Whose jacket is this?

**Che cosa?**
*Che cosa* ‘what?’ (see also 3.6.2) can be used in direct or indirect questions. It can be used with a preposition, as in the last example below:

**Buongiorno, che cosa desidera?**
Good morning, how can I help you? *(Literally: What would you like?)*

**Dimmi che cosa vuoi fare stasera.** *(indirect question)*
Tell me what you want to do tonight.

**Di che cosa parliamo con l’avvocato?**
What shall we talk about with the solicitor?

You can also use *che* or *cosa* (see also 3.6.2) instead of *che cosa*, especially in a more familiar or informal context:

**Che vuoi?**
What do you want?

**Che fai?**
What do you do?

**Cos’è questo?**
What is this?

**Cosa stai mangiando?**
What are you eating?

**Di cosa ti occupi?**
What do you do?

**Quale?**
*Quale* can be used both as pronoun, meaning ‘which one?’, or as adjective, meaning ‘which?’ (see also 3.6.4):

**Qual è il mio bicchiere?** *(pronoun)*
Which (one) is my glass?

**Quale computer devo usare?** *(adjective)*
Which computer should I use?

Apart from its meaning of ‘which’, *quale* as a pronoun is frequently used with the meaning of English ‘what’:

**Qual è il Suo indirizzo?**
What is your address?

**Quali sono i particolari della macchina?**
What are the details of the car?

In spoken informal Italian, *quale* – when used as an adjective – can be replaced by *che*:

**Che computer devo usare?**
*Which* computer should I use?
Quale is elided to Qual before the verb form è, but never found with an apostrophe:

**Qual è il tuo cognome?**
What is your surname?

### Questions about quantity

Quanto can be used either as an adjective or pronoun (see 3.6.3) or as an adverb (see 6.3.3). As an adjective or pronoun, quanto agrees with the gender and number of the noun it refers to (masculine/feminine, singular/plural). As an adverb, it is invariable. It can be elided (quant’) before a vowel.

**As adjective:**
- **Quante stanze ci sono in questa casa?**
  How many rooms are there in this house?
- **Quanto zucchero vuole nel caffè?**
  How much sugar do you want in your coffee?
- **Di quanta carta ha bisogno?**
  How much paper do you need?
- **Fra quanti giorni sarai a Roma?**
  In how many days’ time will you be in Rome?

**As pronoun:**
- **In quanti siete?** (Note idiomatic use of ‘in’)
  How many people are you?
- **Anche le amiche di Laura vogliono venire. Quante sono?**
  Laura’s friends want to come too. How many are they?

**As adverb:**
- **Quanto costa? Quant’è?**
  How much is it?
  Scusi, quanto ci vuole per Palermo?
  Excuse me, how long does it take to get to Palermo?
- **Quanto pesa la tua valigia?**
  How much does your case weigh?

Quanto is also used as an exclamative to express surprise or admiration or amazement, whether it is an adverb (see 6.3.3), an adjective or a pronoun (see 3.6.3):

- **Quanto siete stupidi voi ragazzi!** (adverb)
  How stupid you boys are!
- **Quanto mi piace questo posto!** (adverb)
  How I love this place!
- **Guarda quante persone sono venute!** (adjective)
  Look how many people have come!

Finally, quanto is used in the comparative expression tanto . . . quanto ‘as . . . as’ (see 17.2.4).

### Other types of questions

There are several other words commonly used to introduce questions. These include come, dove, quando and, lastly, perché. All of these can be used both in direct and in indirect questions, as shown in the examples below. Some can also be used with a preposition.

**Come? ‘How?’**

**Direct question:**
- **Come si dice “bank account” in Italiano?**
  How do you say ‘bank account’ in Italian?
Indirect question:
Ditemi come avete fatto a dormire.
Tell me how you managed to sleep.

In the next two examples, compare the use of come with stare and with essere.

Come sta? is used to ask how someone is:
Come sta il marito di Daniela?
How is Daniela’s husband?

Com’è? is used to ask what someone looks like:
Com’è il marito di Daniela? Alto? Basso?
What is Daniela’s husband like? Tall? Short?

Like quanto, come is also used as an exclamative (see 6.3.3) to express surprise or admiration or amazement:

Come sei bella stasera!
How lovely you are tonight!

See also come mai as an alternative to perché (see below).

Dove? ‘Where?’

Direct question:
Dove va Paolo in vacanza?
Where does Paolo go on holiday?

Indirect question:
Non capisco dove hanno trovato la casa a questo prezzo.
I don’t understand where they found a house at this price.

With preposition:
Di dove sei?
Where are you from?

Dove can be elided before a vowel and used with an apostrophe:

Scusi, dov’è il bagno?
Excuse me, where is the toilet?

Quando? ‘When?’

Direct question:
Quando comincia la scuola?
When does school begin?

Indirect question:
Non ho capito quando è arrivato questo pacco.
I don’t understand when this parcel came.

With preposition:
Fino a quando resti a Napoli?
Until when are you staying in Naples?

Perché? ‘Why?’

Direct question:
Perché non vai in ufficio oggi?
Why aren’t you going to the office today?

Indirect question:
Dimmi perché piangi.
Tell me why you are crying.
Note that perché also means *because*, and can be used to answer a question as well as to ask it:

*Perché hai mangiato il pane?*  
Why did you eat the bread?  
...perché avevo fame.  
...because I was hungry.

**Come mai? ‘How come?’**
The idiomatic expression *Come mai?* is often used, instead of perché, in a familiar context:

*Come mai torni a casa così presto?*  
How come you’re going home so early?

**Dialogo**

Un esame di storia

**Professore**  
Si accomodi. Cominciamo con una domanda generale. *Che cosa* è il Risorgimento italiano?

**Candidato**  
È il movimento di indipendenza e unità nazionale dell’Italia.

**Prof**  
E *quando* è avvenuto questo movimento?

**Cand**  
Nel XIX secolo.

**Prof**  
Mi dica... *chi* era Giuseppe Mazzini?

**Cand**  
Mazzini è stato un grande leader democratico e repubblicano. Insieme a Giuseppe Garibaldi lottò per realizzare la partecipazione popolare al movimento nazionale.

**Prof**  
Quindi *chi* sono stati gli altri grandi protagonisti del Risorgimento?

**Cand**  
I più importanti sono stati Camillo Cavour, il Re Vittorio Emanuele II, il Papa Pio IX...e tanti altri...

**Prof**  
Senta... saprebbe dirmi *come* e in *quale* anno Roma divenne capitale d’Italia?

**Cand**  
Nel 1870. Roma fu presa con la forza.

**Prof**  
Perché fu necessaria la forza?

**Cand**  
Perché il Papa non voleva perdere la sua autorità politica e la sovranità su Roma.

**Prof**  
Per concludere...*come mai* Garibaldi ebbe il soprannome di ‘eroe dei due mondi’?

**Cand**  
Perché aveva combattuto sia in Italia che in America Latina per la causa della libertà e indipendenza dei popoli.

**Prof**  
Bene, complimenti! Si accomodi pure, l’esame è finito.

A history exam

**Professor** Sit down. Let’s begin with a general question. *What* is the Italian Risorgimento?

**Candidate** It was the movement for independence and national unity in Italy.

**Prof** And *when* did this movement take place?

**Cand** In the 19th century.

**Prof** Tell me... *who* was Giuseppe Mazzini?

**Cand** Mazzini was a great democratic and republican leader. Together with Giuseppe Garibaldi he fought to achieve popular participation in the national movement.

**Prof** *Who* were the other great characters in the Risorgimento?

**Cand** The most important were Camillo Cavour, King Vittorio Emanuele II, Pope Pius IX...and many others...

**Prof** Listen... could you tell me *how* and in *what* year Rome became capital of Italy?

**Cand** In 1870. Rome was taken by force.

**Prof** *Why* was force necessary?

**Cand** Because the Pope didn’t want to lose his political authority and sovereignty over Rome.

**Prof** To conclude... *how come* Garibaldi was known as the “hero of the two worlds”?

**Cand** Because he had fought both in Italy and in Latin America for the cause of freedom and independence for the people.

**Prof** Good, well done! You may go, the exam is finished.
16

Negative sentences

16.1 Introduction

The most common way to form a negative statement or question is to use non before the verb. There is usually no specific word order that distinguishes a negative sentence from an affirmative one.

Sono stanca.
I’m tired.

Non sono stanca.
I am not tired.

Potete venire alla festa?
Can you come to the party?

Non potete venire alla festa?
Can’t you come to the party?

Mio marito ha due fratelli.
My husband has two brothers.

Mio marito non ha fratelli.
My husband has no brothers.

C’erano molti studenti in aula.
There were lots of students in the classroom.

Non c’erano molti studenti in aula.
There weren’t many students in the classroom.

To answer a question with a negative, simply use no. You can also repeat the verb but use an object pronoun such as lo, la or ne, or the particle ci, to avoid repetition of the noun or other element (see 3.4.1, 3.4.4–5):

Hai dieci euro?
Have you got ten euros?

No! (No, non li ho.)
No, I haven’t.

Sa guidare la macchina?
Can you drive a car?

No! (No, non la so guidare.)
No, I can’t.

Vai in centro stasera?
Are you going to the cinema this evening?

No. Non ci vado.
No, I’m not going.

16.2 Reinforcing a negative statement

Several other words expressing negation can be used to reinforce a negative statement. Since these are generally used together with non, they form a double negative (two negative words in the same sentence). See 16.8 for exceptions to this.
Reinforcing a negative statement

16.2.1 Affatto, per niente, mica

A negative statement can be reinforced by using affatto, per niente, mica (the last is rather colloquial) along with non:

Non ho affatto paura!
I am not afraid at all!

“No. Non mi disturba affatto . . . nemmeno in bagno.”
(Article about Italians and mobile phones)
‘No, you’re not disturbing me at all . . . not even in the bathroom.’
(http://lucanews.tv/no_non_mi_disturba_affattonemmeno_in_bagno-4137.html, retrieved 24 February 2012)

Il film non era per niente interessante!
The film was not at all interesting!

Non sono mica scema!
I am not stupid!

Notice how all the reinforcing adverbs come after the verb. With a compound tense such as passato prossimo, they can either come after the whole verb or come after the auxiliary (avere, essere) and before the participle:

Non è stata per niente una bella serata.
It wasn’t a nice evening at all.

Non ho affatto detto una bugia.
I certainly didn’t tell a lie.

Non ho mica preso le tue cose.
I certainly didn’t take your things.

Affatto can also be used on its own to reply to a question in the negative:

Hai speso tutti i soldi che ti ho dato? No, affatto!
Did you spend all the money I gave you? No, certainly not!

16.2.2 Neanche, nemmeno, neppure

These adverbs, used with non, can be used to reinforce or expand a negative statement, with the specific meaning of ‘not even’, ‘neither’ or ‘not either’. They are often closely linked to a noun, either person or object, as in the examples below:

Non ho neanche un centesimo!
I haven’t even got a penny! (Literally: a cent)

Non viene neanche mio fratello.
My brother isn’t coming either.

Guardo poco la TV. Non guardo nemmeno il telegiornale.
I don’t watch much TV. I don’t even watch the news.

L’inverno non risparmia neppure la Sicilia.
Not even Sicily is being spared the winter weather.

Nemmeno can also be used with the meaning of ‘neither, not either’:

Non abbiamo mangiato bene nemmeno in albergo.
We didn’t eat well in the hotel either.

Neanche and nemmeno do not need non when they come before the verb or in a phrase without a verb (see also 16.8).
Negation Sentences

16.3 Expressing negation using *niente, nulla*

*Niente* (and the less common *nulla*) mean ‘nothing’ and are normally used together with *non* (see also 3.9.1):

- *Non ho niente da dire.*
  I have nothing to say.
- *Non vedo niente.*
  I can’t see anything.
- *Non c’è nulla di buono da mangiare.*
  There isn’t anything good to eat.

*Niente, nulla* can also come before the verb, in which case the *non* is not needed (see 16.8).

16.4 Expressing negation using the pronoun *nessuno/a*

*Nessuno* is a negative pronoun, standing on its own; it has a masculine form *nessuno* (occasionally abbreviated to *nessun*) and feminine form *nessuna*:

- *A questo numero non risponde nessuno.*
  Nobody answers on this number.
- *In casa non c’è nessuno.*
  There isn’t anybody at home.

*Nessuno* is usually found with *non*, but if it comes before the verb, *non* is not needed (see 16.8 below, see also 3.9.3).

16.5 Expressing negation using the adjective *nessun/o/a*

You can reinforce the idea that a person or object is not available by adding the negative adjective *nessun/o/a* (‘no’, ‘not any’). *Nessun/o/a* (see 3.9.3) follows the pattern of the indefinite article *un, uno, una* (see 1.3.2):

- *Non c’è nessuna guida.*
  There is no guidebook.
- *Non c’è nessun’automobile disponibile.*
  There are no cars available.
  *(Literal: There is no car available.)*
- *Non c’è nessun posto.*
  There is no space free.
- *Non c’era nessuno scrittore italiano presente.*
  There were no Italian writers present.

*Nessun* (*nessuno, nessuna, nessun’*) can also come before the verb, in which case *non* is not needed (see 16.8).

Particularly in more formal written Italian, *nessun* may be replaced by *alcun* in the singular (*alcuno, alcuna, alcun’*), as in the examples below. *Alcun* can also be used after *senza* ‘without’ with the meaning ‘any’. For the various uses of *alcun*, see also 3.9.3.

- *Non c’è alcun motivo per offenderti.*
  There’s absolutely no reason to take offence.
- **Due settimane senza alcuna traccia.** *(newspaper headline)*
  Two weeks without a single trace.

Other alternatives to *nessun* include *minimo* ‘the slightest’, which has to agree with the noun it refers to:
Expressing negation using né . . . né

Non ha la minima intenzione di finire quel progetto.
He hasn’t the slightest intention of completing that project.

Or the more colloquial expression il più pallido, where the adjective also has to agree with the noun it refers to:

Non ho la più pallida idea di quello che sta facendo.
I haven’t got the faintest idea what he’s doing.

Other negative elements: non . . . mai, non . . . ancora, non . . . più

Non . . . mai ‘never’, non . . . ancora ‘not yet’ and non . . . più ‘no longer’ are used to express negation, with reference to present, past or future time (see also 13.8.2):

Non leggiamo mai i giornali.
We never read the newspapers.

Non sei ancora pronta?
Aren’t you ready yet?

Non lavora più alla Fiat.
He doesn’t work at Fiat any longer.

With a simple verb, such as those in the examples above, non comes before the verb, while any other negative elements come after. With a compound tense such as passato prossimo, these elements can generally either come after the whole verb or – more commonly – after the auxiliary (avere, essere) and before the participle:

Non sono mai stato in America.
I’ve never been to America.

I nostri ospiti non sono ancora arrivati.
Our guests have not arrived yet.

Il mio ex-marito non mi ha più telefonato.
My ex-husband hasn’t phoned me any more.

Non . . . più can also be used with the meaning ‘no more’:

Non c’è più benzina.
There isn’t any more petrol.

Non ci sono più mele.
There are no more apples.

Expressing negation using né . . . né

A negative statement about two (or more) related words or sentences can be introduced by non . . . né . . . né (see 5.2.2), corresponding to the English ‘neither . . . nor’ or ‘either . . . or’ preceded by ‘not’.

Sto bene. Non ho né fame né sete.
I’m fine. I’m neither hungry nor thirsty.

Di domenica non voleva né lavorare né studiare.
On Sundays he didn’t want either to work or to study.

Questo bicchiere non è né mio né tuo, è di Andrea.
This glass is neither mine nor yours. It’s Andrea’s.

Like other negative phrases, né . . . né can also come before the verb, in which case non is not needed (see 16.8).
**NEGATIVE SENTENCES**

16.8 Omitting *non*

*Neanche* and *nemmeno* (see 16.2.2) can come before the verb or in a phrase without a verb, in which case they do not need *non*:

*Neanche mia sorella mi ha fatto gli auguri.*

Not even my sister wished me happy birthday.

*Non vai a sciare quest’anno? Neanch’io.*

Aren’t you going skiing this year? Me neither.

*Non hai la patente di guida? Nemmeno io.*

Don’t you have a driver’s licence? Neither do I.

*Niente* or *nulla* (see 16.3) can also come before the verb, in which case *non* is not needed. This word order is rather dramatic in style, however, and perhaps more common in Sicily and the south:

*Niente succede.*

Nothing happens.

*Nulla lo preoccupa.*

Nothing worrie him.

*Nessuno* as pronoun or adjective (see 16.4–5) can come before the verb, in which case *non* is not needed. (It is more common to find *nessuno* in this word order than *niente*.)

*As a pronoun:*

*Nessuno viene dopo le 4.00.*

No one comes after 4.00.

*Nessun dorma!* ([from Puccini’s opera Turandot])

Let nobody sleep!

*As an adjective:*

*Nessun compito gli era difficile.*

No task was difficult for him.

*Nessuna guida ti spiega queste cose.*

No guidebook explains these things to you.

*Né . . . né* (see 16.7) can also come before the verb, in which case *non* is not needed. The verb used can be either singular or plural:

*Né Marco né Luisa sapeva come far funzionare la fotocopiatrice.*

Neither Marco nor Luisa knew how to make the photocopier work.

*Né io né lui sapevamo dove andare.*

Neither I nor he knew where to go.

16.9 Specifying negation with a *che* clause

When *nessun*, *nessuno*, *niente* (see 16.3–5) are followed by a clause that more closely defines or specifies the negative (‘no guidebook . . . that explains clearly’), Italian uses a relative clause introduced by *che*, normally followed by the subjunctive (see 2.2.15):

*Non c’è nessuna guida che spieghi la storia della città in modo chiaro.*

There is no guidebook that explains the history of the town clearly.

*Non c’è nessuno che sappia fare la pizza come mia cugina.*

There is no one that can make pizza like my cousin.

*Non c’è niente che possa soddisfarlo.*

There’s nothing that can satisfy him.
Comparisons and degrees of intensity

17.1 Introduction

Comparisons between objects or people, or situations, can be defined in terms of more, less or the same as.

In Part A the comparative forms of adjectives (see 1.4.6) and adverbs (see 6.4.1) are shown. Here we look at the ways in which these forms are used, and also at other ways of expressing degrees of intensity.

17.2 Using comparative adjectives and adverbs

17.2.1 Più

To express ‘more’, use the comparative form più + adjective (see 1.4.6) or adverb (see 6.4.1):

Adjective:
La situazione economica è più grave in Italia che in Inghilterra.
The economic situation is more serious in Italy than in England.

Adverb:
Gli inglesi guidano più prudentemente degli italiani.
The English drive more carefully than the Italians.

You can also make a comparison using one of the irregular forms of comparison of adjectives (see 1.4.6) or adverbs (see 6.4.2):

Adjective:
La situazione economica è peggiore in Italia che in Inghilterra.
The economic situation is worse in Italy than in England.

Il rischio sismico è maggiore in Abruzzo che in Lombardia.
The risk from earthquakes is greater in the Abruzzo than in Lombardy.

Secondo me, il corso serale d’italiano è migliore di quello di tedesco.
In my opinion, the Italian evening class is better than the German one.

Adverb:
D’estate si sta meglio in montagna che al mare.
In the summer it’s better to stay in the mountains than at the sea.

Mio marito parcheggia la macchina molto peggio di me.
My husband parks the car much worse than me.

17.2.2 Meno

To express ‘less’, use the comparative form meno + adjective (see 1.4.6) or adverb (see 6.4.1):
Comparisons and Degrees of Intensity

Adjective:
Enrico era meno intelligente di Enrica.
Enrico was less intelligent than Enrica.

Adverb:
Bisogna guidare meno velocemente del solito.
You should drive less fast than usual.

17.2.3 Using an adverbial phrase
With adverbs, you can also make a comparison by using the irregular forms maggiore or minore in an adverbial phrase (see 6.2.5):

Guido ha sempre lavorato con maggiore impegno di Franca.
Guido has always worked in a more committed way than Franca.

Il pilota brasiliano ha guidato ad una velocità minore del pilota italiano.
The Brazilian driver drove at a slower speed than the Italian driver.

17.2.4 Tanto . . . quanto or così . . . come
To express comparison between two equal elements, use tanto . . . quanto or così . . . come either with an adjective (see 1.4.6) or with an adverb (see 6.4.1):

Adjective:
Non troverà mai una moglie tanto comprensiva quanto Angelica.
He will never find a wife as understanding as Angelica.

Adverb:
Non guidi così attentamente come me.
You don’t drive as carefully as me.

The first adverbs of each pair (tanto, così) can be omitted:

Non troverà mai una moglie comprensiva quanto Angelica.
He will never find a wife as understanding as Angelica.

Non guidi attentamente come me.
You don’t drive as carefully as me.

17.3 Expressing ‘than’
English ‘than’ is translated by di or che (see examples in 17.2.1–2 above), depending on which elements are being compared and on their position in the sentence.

17.3.1 Comparing two nouns
When comparing two nouns or proper names, you normally use di or its combined form del (but see 17.3.3–6 below):

Luciano scrive più lentamente di Alessandra al computer.
Luciano writes more slowly than Alessandra on the computer.

In classe, i maschi sono meno estroversi delle ragazze.
In class, the boys are less extrovert than the girls.

17.3.2 Comparing two pronouns
As with nouns, when comparing two pronouns, you normally use di.

Personal pronouns
The stressed object pronoun forms (see 3.3.2) are used:
Expressing ‘than’

Io sono meno stressata di te.
I am less stressed than you.

Lui guida più velocemente di te.
He drives more quickly than you.

**Demonstrative pronouns**
To compare two objects, one near the speaker and one further away, use questo and quello respectively (see 3.8.1):

- Questa stanza è più spaziosa di quella.
  This room is more spacious than that one.
- Quello è più saporito di questo.
  That one is more tasty than this one.

**Possessive pronouns**
To compare objects belonging to two different people, use possessive pronouns (see 3.7):

- Lo stipendio di mio marito è più basso del mio.
  My husband’s salary is lower than mine.
- La nostra automobile è meno comoda della vostra.
  Our car is less comfortable than yours.

### 17.3.3 Comparing two adjectives
To compare two adjectives that refer to the same person or same thing, use che:

- I genitori del bambino rapito erano più preoccupati che arrabbiati.
  The parents of the kidnapped child were worried more than angry.
- Questi mobili sono più vecchi che antichi.
  This furniture is not so much antique as old.

The same applies when comparing two nouns referring to the same person or thing:

- La casa è più rudere che rustico!
  The house is more ruin than cottage!

### 17.3.4 Comparing two verbs
When comparing two verb infinitives, use che:

- Andare a ballare è più divertente che andare al cinema.
  Going dancing is more fun than going to the cinema.
- Spendere è più facile che risparmiare.
  Spending is easier than saving.

### 17.3.5 Comparing phrases of time or place
When comparing adverbs of time/place, use di:

- Adesso mi stanco più di prima.
  Now I get tired more than (I did) before.

But use che if the adverbs are next to each other, separated only by ‘than’:

- Sono più stanca adesso che prima.
  I am more tired now than before.
- Fa meno freddo oggi che ieri.
  It is colder today than yesterday.

When at least one of the terms of comparison is a prepositional phrase of time/place, use che:
COMPARISONS AND DEGREES OF INTENSITY

17.4 Expressing ‘which’

Use the interrogative quale (see 3.6.4) as adjective or pronoun to express ‘which’ or ‘which one’.

As an adjective:

Quale città è più interessante, Roma o Firenze?
Which city is more interesting, Rome or Florence?

Quali fichi sono più dolci, quelli bianchi, o quelli neri?
Which figs are sweetest, the white ones or the black ones?

As a pronoun:

Qual è la regione più interessante, l’Abruzzo o la Toscana?
Which is the most interesting region, Abruzzo or Tuscany?

Compriamo dei fichi? Quali sono i più dolci?
Shall we buy some figs? Which ones are the sweetest?

17.5 Expressing different degrees of intensity

17.5.1 Adjectives: superlative (compared to others)

When one person or object has more of a particular quality than all the other ones, you use the superlative followed by di (see 1.4.7):

I ragazzi italiani sono i più viziati d’Europa.
Italian kids are the most spoilt in Europe.
Expressing different degrees of intensity

È stato il più bel viaggio della mia vita.
It was the best trip of my life.

Per me, venerdì è il giorno meno stressante della settimana.
For me, Friday is the least stressful day of the week.

17.5.2 Adjectives: superlative (no comparison)

When no comparison is being made, use the superlative form ending in -issimo (see 1.4.8 and 10.5.2):

I vestiti di Armani sono costosissimi.
Armani clothes are really expensive.

Il viaggio è stato bellissimo.
The trip was really wonderful.

Often Italians prefer not to use this -issimo form, seeing it as a little exaggerated, but to use a simple qualifying adverb such as così, molto, tanto or an adverb such as estremamente, veramente:

Sono tanto stanca.
I’m so tired.

Le sono estremamente grato.
I’m extremely grateful to you.

17.5.3 Adjectives: reducing the intensity

You can reduce the intensity of the adjective by using the adverb poco (see 6.3.5):

Ha fatto una mossa poco intelligente.
He made a not very intelligent move.

17.5.4 Adjectives: expressing moderate intensity

The adverbs piuttosto and abbastanza (see 6.3.5) express only a moderate degree of intensity:

Il processo elettorale è piuttosto lento.
The electoral process is rather slow.

Siamo abbastanza soddisfatti del suo lavoro.
We are quite satisfied with his work.

17.5.5 Numbers and ranking

The superlative form il . . . più / il . . . meno, la . . . più / la . . . meno (see 1.4.6) that you saw used with adjectives can be used also with ordinal numbers primo, secondo, etc. (see 7.3) to indicate ranking:

Milano è la seconda città più grande d’Italia.
Milan is the second biggest city in Italy.

17.5.6 Adverbs

With adverbs (see 6.4.1), the superlatives are less commonly used.

The equivalent of English ‘as . . . as possible’ is expressed as shown:

Per favore, parla il più lentamente possibile.
Please, speak as slowly as possible.

Ho fatto il meglio possibile. Speriamo bene.
I’ve done the best I could. Let’s hope it goes well.
When no comparison is being made, you can express the absolute superlative by using qualifying adverbs such as molto, tanto, così, veramente, estremamente, in the same way as for the adjectives (see 17.5.2 above):

- **Ha guidato molto attentamente.**
  He drove very carefully.

As for the adjectives, the intensity of the adverbs can be reduced by using poco:

- **Ha seguito la lezione poco attentamente.**
  He followed the lesson not very attentively.

In the case of adverbial phrases using con, nel modo or in/nella maniera, the comparative and superlative are formed in a similar way to those shown above.

Using a qualifying adjective such as molto, tanto, poco:

- **Ha suonato la chitarra con tanta passione.**
  She played the guitar with great passion (very passionately).

  **Ha studiato con poco impegno.**
  He studied with little commitment.

Using a comparative or superlative adjective form (più, meno):

- **Ha parlato nella maniera più calma possibile.**
  She spoke in the calmest possible manner.

  **Cerchiamo di fare tutto nel modo meno complicato possibile.**
  Let’s try to do everything in the least complicated way possible.
18

Referring to objects and people

18.1 Introduction

When talking or writing, you often need to refer to somebody or something without naming them, usually to avoid repeating a name or object already mentioned earlier; in English you can do this by using ‘this’ or ‘that’, ‘he’ or ‘she’ or ‘it’. In Italian, too, you can use pronouns (see Chapter 3) to refer back to someone or something mentioned already.

18.2 Using a pronoun to refer back

There are many different kinds of pronoun (demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, personal, possessive, relative), and all of them can be used to refer to a noun already mentioned. Here we look in detail at personal pronouns, the pronouns that describe people and also objects. For details of all the personal pronoun forms (stressed, unstressed and combined), see 3.3 and 3.4 respectively.

18.3 Using a pronoun: referring to the subject of the action

In Italian, when talking about the person or entity carrying out an action (‘the subject’), you do not usually need the subject pronoun, as you do in English (‘he, she’, etc.); the verb ending indicates who or what is carrying out the action (see 2.1.3 and 3.3.1). But sometimes you want to emphasise who is carrying out an action, to distinguish him/her from someone else or to emphasise the contrast:

Io vado a scuola, lui va a lavorare.
I’m going to school, he’s going to work.

Noi andiamo al cinema. Vo i dove andate?
We’re going to the cinema. Where are you going?

18.4 Using a pronoun: referring to the object of the action

When you want to refer to somebody who is the object of the action, use an object pronoun (English me, you, her, him, us, them). These can be either stressed or unstressed. The forms of stressed and unstressed object pronouns are shown in 3.3.2 and 3.4.1 respectively.

18.4.1 Using stressed object pronouns

When you want to emphasise the identity of the person you are referring to, use the stressed or emphatic pronouns (see 3.3.2). You also use these if you want to contrast or compare, or to distinguish him/her from somebody else. The three sets of examples below show the different emphasis given, depending on whether you use an unstressed object pronoun (examples A) or a stressed object pronoun (examples B):
18.4

### Using unstressed object pronouns

The most common way to refer to somebody or something – when no particular emphasis is required – is to use unstressed object pronouns (3.4.1–2).

The pronouns can be *direct object pronouns* (used when the action directly involves or affects the person or thing):

**Conosci Paola?**  
*Si, la conosco.*  
Do you know Paola?  
Yes, I know her.

**Pronto, mi senti?**  
*No, non ti sento bene!*  
Hello, can you hear me?  
No, I can’t hear you very well!

**Mi piace il caffè italiano, lo bevo tutti i giorni.**  
I like Italian coffee, I drink it every day.

**Hai la chiave? Si, ce l’ho.**  
Have you got the key? Yes, I’ve got it.

Alternatively, they can be *indirect object pronouns* (used when the action is aimed at or directed to them). Common verbs which often use indirect pronouns include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dare</td>
<td>to give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dire</td>
<td>to say, tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inviare</td>
<td>to send</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandare</td>
<td>to send</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presentare</td>
<td>to present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prestare</td>
<td>to lend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raccontare</td>
<td>to tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrivere</td>
<td>to write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using a pronoun: referring to the object of the action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>offrire</td>
<td>to offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spedire</td>
<td>to send</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passare</td>
<td>to pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telefonare</td>
<td>to telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paola è rimasta senza soldi. Domani le mando duecento euro.
Paola’s got no money left. Tomorrow I’ll send two hundred euros to her.

A che ora gli telefoni?
At what time will you call (to) him?

Ciao. Scrivimi presto!
Bye. Write to me soon.

Dimmi!
Tell me!

Dammi lo zucchero!
Give (to) me the sugar!

Both indirect and direct object pronouns can be found in the same sentence:

Mi piacciono le poesie di Montale e le ho lette tutte.
I like Montale’s poems and I’ve read them all.

The direct and indirect pronouns can also be combined (see 3.4.6):

Se vedi Anna, dille di telefonarmi.
If you see Anna, tell her to ring me.

Va bene, glielo dirò, non preoccuparti.
All right, I’ll tell her, don’t worry.

Ho lasciato le chiavi della macchina a casa tua!
Don’t worry, I’ll bring you them tonight.

Remember that occasionally the correct pronoun might not be the one you think. An English ‘it’ might be plural li, le in Italian, if it refers to a plural noun such as hair, furniture, spaghetti, tagliatelle or other sorts of pasta:

Odio questi mobili. Li brucerei.
I hate this furniture. I’d burn it.

Quanto erano buone le lasagne! Le ho mangiate tutte!
How good the lasagne was! I ate all of it!

One of the main problems for English speakers is remembering that the unstressed pronouns usually come before the verb (but see 3.4.7).

18.4.3 Direct or indirect object?

Another problem for English speakers is knowing when to use the indirect object pronoun in Italian. This is because in English direct object and indirect object are not always distinguishable. Sometimes English uses the word to before the pronoun, showing clearly that it is an indirect object, for example ‘I’ll give the parcel to him’ or ‘He lent the novel to me’. But it is equally possible to say in English: ‘I’ll give him the parcel’, ‘He lent me the novel’, as if the pronoun were a direct object.

Look at these examples, where Italian distinguishes between direct and indirect object pronouns, depending on the choice of verbs, but where English uses identical pronoun forms (‘him’, ‘them’) for both direct and indirect:

Direct:
Chiamalo subito.
Call him now.

Indirect:
Telefonagli subito.
Ring him now.
**Direct:**  
*Li accompagnno all’aeroporto.*  
I’ll take them to the airport.

**Indirect:**  
*Gli do un passaggio.*  
I’ll give them a lift.

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### 18.4.4 Piacere, servire

**Piacere** sometimes presents difficulties for learners of Italian. With *piacere* (see 28.2.1), the object liked is the grammatical subject of the verb, while the person who likes it is referred to by an indirect pronoun, for example *mi* (literally ‘Music pleases to me’, ‘The shoes please to me’). You don’t need to add a pronoun to refer to the person or object liked, since he, she or it is implicit in the verb form. Look at these examples:

- *Ti piace la musica moderna?*  
  Do you like modern music?  
  *Sì, mi piace.*  
  Yes, I like it. (*Literally: It pleases me.*)

- *Ti piacciono queste scarpe?*  
  Do you like these shoes?  
  *Sì, mi piacciono.*  
  Yes, I like them. (*Literally: They please me.*)

Similarly, when we use *servire* ‘to be of use to’ (see 23.3.6) or similar verbs, the object needed (*le forbici*) is the grammatical subject of the verb (‘the scissors are of use to me’), while the person needing them is expressed by the indirect pronoun, either stressed or unstressed. When you want to refer to the objects without mentioning them again, simply miss them out: in the first example, this applies to *le forbici* and in the second example, *la calcolatrice*.

- *Ti servono le forbici?* (unstressed object pronoun)  
  Do you need the scissors?  
  *Sì, mi servono (le forbici).*  
  Yes, I need them (the scissors).

- *Le forbici servono a te?* (stressed object pronoun)  
  Do you need the scissors?  
  *Sì, mi servono (le forbici).*  
  Yes, I need them (the scissors).

**Signora, Le serve la calcolatrice?** (unstressed object pronoun)  
Do you need the calculator, signora?

- *La calcolatrice serve a Lei, signora?* (stressed object pronoun)  
  Do you need the calculator, signora?

- *Sì, mi serve (la calcolatrice).*  
  Yes, I need it (the calculator).

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### 18.5 Referring to someone or something using *questo, quello*

The demonstrative pronouns *questo, quello* can also be used to avoid naming or repeating the object or person (see 3.8.1). Often, however, the use of *quello, quella* without naming the person involved indicates dislike or contempt:

- *Non c’è nessuno più egoista di quella.*  
  There is no one more self-centred than that woman.

- *È questo il tuo nuovo amico?*  
  Is this your new friend?

- *Non ho mai mangiato una torta come questa.*  
  I’ve never eaten a cake as good as this one.

- *Hai visto quello?*  
  Did you see that man?
Referring to what has been said or will be said

18.8

Particularly in business or formal letters, Italian makes use of expressions such as come sopra, sopraindicato, sopracitato, sopradetto, referring back, or il seguente, come segue, quanto segue, to refer forward:

Per eventuali chiarimenti, si prega di telefonare al numero sopraindicato.
For eventual clarification, please telephone the above number.

Prima di accendere il vostro frigorifero, vi suggeriamo di leggere il seguente:
Before turning on your fridge, we suggest you read the following:
Focusing on the action

19.1 Introduction

Sometimes you want to focus on the action, or on the person or thing affected by the action, rather than on the person carrying out the action. In Italian there are various ways in which you can do this.

19.2 Focusing on the action using the passive

Normally, the focus of attention and the grammatical subject of the verb is the person carrying out an action; the verb form is therefore an active verb form:

*I camerieri hanno servito la cena.*
The waiters served dinner.

If you want to focus on the action or on the person/thing affected, you can use a passive verb form (see 2.1.10) and make the person or thing affected by the action (the object) the grammatical subject of the verb instead, so that it becomes more important than the ‘doer’:

*La cena è servita alle ore 20.00.*
Dinner is served at 8 pm.

19.2.1 With essere

The passive is normally formed with essere and the past participle (see 2.1.10). It has a full range of tenses in the same way as the active verb does. There may or may not be an agent (person carrying out the action) mentioned, but even when there is, the agent is at the end of the sentence, in a secondary position compared to the action or person affected:

*Agent not mentioned:*
*Le destre sono state fermate.*
The Right has been stopped.

*La merce era stata scaricata a Genova.*
The goods had been unloaded at Genoa.

*Agent mentioned:*
*Stamattina il Vesuvio è ricoperto da un bianco manto di neve.*
This morning Vesuvio is covered by a white mantle of snow.

*Ogni mattina, quando mi alzo, i bagni sono sempre occupati dai miei figli.*
Every morning, when I get up, the bathrooms are always occupied by my children.

*Domani la Principessa sarà ricevuta dal Papa.*
Tomorrow the Princess will be received by the Pope.

*Nel 1943 Napoli è stata bombardata dagli Alleati.*
In 1943 Naples was bombarded by the Allies.

*I ladri furono scoperti dalla guardia mentre entravano da una finestra.*
The thieves were discovered by the guard as they came in through a window.
I risultati delle elezioni erano attesi da una grande folla per le strade della città.
The results of the elections were awaited by a great crowd in the streets of the city.

Se avessi più pazienza, forse saresti ascoltato di più dai tuoi figli.
If you had more patience, perhaps you would be listened to more by your children.

Secondo i giornali, i quadri sarebbero stati rubati da una banda di ladri professionisti.
According to the newspapers, the pictures were stolen by a band of professional thieves.

NOTE
For this use of the conditional mood to express report or rumour, see Chapter 31.

19.2.2 With venire
In the examples above, the passive construction is formed with the verb essere and the past participle. You can also use venire instead of essere. This is used only in a more formal register and only when the verb in the active sentence is in one of the simple tenses: presente, imperfetto, passato remoto, futuro semplice, condizionale presente, congiuntivo presente, congiuntivo imperfetto.

Venire tends to express the idea of something that happens regularly:

La cena viene servita da camerieri vestiti di giacca bianca.
Dinner is served by waiters dressed in white jackets.

Gli ordini ci venivano trasmessi dai nostri rivenditori italiani.
The orders were sent on to us by our Italian dealers.

Gli studenti verranno ammessi solo se muniti di tessera.
Students will be admitted only if in possession of a membership card.

The other reason for using venire is to avoid ambiguity. The passive, used with certain verbs, for example chiudere, aprire, can sound static (‘the door is already closed’) rather than expressing an action (‘the door is being closed’); this is particularly true when there is no agent mentioned, as shown by the examples below:

La porta è chiusa da Marco.
The door is shut by Marco. (action)

La porta è chiusa.
The door is shut / is being shut. (action or state: ambiguous)

This ambiguity can be avoided by using the verb venire:

La porta viene chiusa.
The door is being shut/gets shut. (action)

19.2.3 With andare
The passive can also be formed with andare, in which case it has a prescriptive sense, in other words talking about how things should be done:

Eventuali riparazioni vanno effettuate solo dai nostri tecnici qualificati.
Any repairs should be carried out only by our qualified technicians.

Il vino bianco va servito fresco, mentre il vino rosso va servito a temperatura ambiente.
White wine should be served chilled, while red wine should be served at room temperature.

19.2.4 In scientific papers, news reports, etc.
While Italians tend to avoid the use of passive sentences in everyday speech, there are certain special contexts where the passive is preferred, for example scientific papers, news reports and bureaucratic language where it is used to express detachment and impartiality (see 42.7–9).

Sometimes the passive is used without mention of any agent, because the agent is not known, has already been mentioned, is unimportant, or is too obvious to be stated, especially in scientific writing.
FOCUSING ON THE ACTION

Scientific papers
In the case of scientific papers, the intention is to stress the objectivity of experimental procedures; a passive sentence puts emphasis on the results of an action, rather than on the person who has carried it out (see also 42.8). When scientific observations are described, the ‘agent’ (i.e. the person or research group that carries them out) is often omitted, to stress the objective nature of the findings:

Il nuovo vaccino contro l’Aids è stato sperimentato presso l’Università di Pisa.
The new Aids vaccine has been tested at Pisa University.

L’eclissi è prevista alle 15.23 del 10 agosto.
The eclipse is expected at 15.23 on the 10th of August.

Il tasso medio di inflazione è calcolato sulla base di rilevazioni che vengono effettuate nelle principali città.
The average inflation rate is calculated on the basis of surveys which are conducted in the main cities.

There can be exceptions where the discovery has made the scientist or inventor famous:

La penicillina fu scoperta da Fleming nel 1928.
Penicillin was discovered by Fleming in 1928.

News reports
Passive statements are widely used in the reporting of news by the press (see also 42.9). Again this is due to the need to present events as facts and to suggest they are true, impartial and accurately verified:

La legge finanziaria è stata approvata dal Parlamento.
The budget bill has been approved by Parliament.

I due ostaggi saranno liberati domani.
The two hostages will be released tomorrow.

Media headlines often omit the avere/essere element of the passive and use the subject and the past participle only:

Somalia: liberati due ostaggi occidentali.

Omofobia: bocciata la proposta di legge.

Bureaucratic language
Legal and bureaucratic language uses passive statements to emphasise the impersonality of rules and duties (see also 42.7). Here dovere is used along with a dependent passive infinitive (essere timbrato, essere comunicato):

Il biglietto deve essere timbrato all’inizio del viaggio.
The ticket must be stamped at the beginning of the journey.

Ogni cambiamento di indirizzo dovrà essere comunicato per iscritto.
Any change of address should be reported in writing.

19.3 Situations when the passive is not used

19.3.1 Verbs with an indirect object only

Unlike English verbs, in Italian only a transitive verb (a verb taking a direct object) can be turned into a passive in Italian, as shown below:
In English the active sentence

Anna *told* Franco to call the plumber.

can be rephrased using the passive:

Franco *was told* by Anna to call the plumber.

In Italian you can use the active form

Anna *ha detto* a Franco *di chiamare l'idraulico*.

but you cannot turn this sentence round into a passive construction. You can only turn a sentence into the passive when there is a *direct* object which can become the subject of the action. An *indirect* object (English ‘to Franco, to her’) cannot be turned into the grammatical subject. Verbs which take an indirect object include *telefonare, dire, raccontare*, where the action does not affect the person directly, but indirectly (‘to telephone *to me*, ‘to say to him’, ‘to tell to them’).

Here are some more examples where an English passive sentence cannot be translated directly into a passive form in Italian, because the person affected is *not* the direct object. No agent is mentioned, so Italian uses the ‘anonymous’ *third person* verb form, for example *hanno telefonato* ‘they phoned’ (see 19.3.3):

Mi *hanno telefonato* a casa.

I was telephoned at home.

Gli *hanno detto* di sbrigarsi.

He was told to hurry up.

### 19.3.2 Verbs with a direct and indirect object

In the case of verbs such as *dare, dire, inviare, mandare, passare, presentare, prestare, raccontare, regalare, rubare, spedire*, there is often a direct object and an indirect object. The equivalent verbs in English have two direct objects (‘to send you it’, ‘to lend you it’, etc.).

Take as an example this sentence in English:

I’ve had my watch stolen.

You cannot make the person who has had his/her watch stolen the subject of the action in Italian. In this example, *mi* is an indirect object and cannot be made the subject of a passive sentence. So you have two options.

The direct object *can* become the subject of a passive verb:

**Mi è stato rubato l’orologio.**

(*Literally: My watch has been stolen from me.*)

Alternatively, you can use the third person plural active verb form (see 19.3.3). In informal spoken or written Italian, this is probably the more common of the two options:

**Mi hanno rubato l’orologio.**

(*Literally: They have stolen my watch from me.*)

The same applies to the next example. You cannot make the person (gli) the subject of a passive sentence. So you have two options.

English sentence:

He was offered a good job.

You can either make the direct object (*un buon posto*) the subject of a passive verb:

**Gli è stato offerto un buon posto.**

Or you can use the third person plural active verb form (see 19.3.3 below):

**Gli hanno offerto un buon posto.**

Of the two options, the use of the third person plural active verb form is probably the most common in informal spoken or written Italian.
Use of third person plural instead of passive

In Italian the passive construction is used very sparingly. In everyday language an Italian native speaker would almost always prefer to use the corresponding active sentence, if at all possible. Often the third person verb forms are preferred, even where the passive would technically be possible.

So instead of using the passive construction:

*Sono stata invitata a una festa.*
I’ve been invited to a party.

most Italians would prefer to use the active construction:

*Mi hanno invitata a una festa.*
They (some unspecified people) have invited me to a party.

The same applies to this second example.

Passive construction:

*Sono state mandate dieci casse di spumante.*
Ten crates of spumante were sent.

Most Italians would prefer to use the active construction:

*Hanno mandato dieci casse di spumante.*
They sent ten crates of spumante.

Focusing on the action using *si passivante* (passive form with *si*)

Another way of emphasising the action – rather than the subject of the action – is to use the *si passivante* (see 2.1.11), where the pronoun *si* is added to the active form to give the verb (in this case, *possono vedere*) a passive meaning. This is only possible with the third person form, singular or plural.

The *si passivante* can be used only when there is no mention of the *agent* or author of the action. This construction is very common in Italian, because of the reluctance to use the plain passive forms, especially in the more colloquial register.

Like the passive, *si passivante* can only be used with verbs taking a direct object.

So instead of the passive construction

*Da Manfredonia, le isole Tremiti possono essere viste.*
From Manfredonia, the Tremiti islands can be seen.

you can use the *si passivante*:

*Da Manfredonia si possono vedere le isole Tremiti.*
From Manfredonia, the Tremiti islands can be seen.

When the object or person affected is plural, use a plural verb:

*Qui si parla italiano.*
Italian is spoken here.

*In Alto Adige si parlanosia l’italiano che il tedesco.*
In Alto Adige both Italian and German are spoken.

*In quel concessionario Lancia si vendono 25 automobili al giorno.*
At that Lancia dealer, 25 cars are sold every day.

*Le vendite si registrano su questo libro.*
Sales are recorded in this book.

*In questo club si deve mettere la cravatta.*
In this club a necktie must be worn.
Focusing on the object of the action

Al centro di Milano, si vende un appartamento di quattro vani per lo stesso prezzo di una villa.
In the centre of Milan, a four-room apartment is being sold for the same price as a villa.

Often in the ‘small ads’ a reverse combination of verb + si is used to give forms such as affittasi, vendesi. In the plural form, the final vowel is dropped before si is attached (affittano > affittan):

Vendesi appartamento di quattro vani.
Four-room apartment for sale.

Affittasi monolocale.
One-room apartment for rent.

Affittansi camere.
Rooms for rent.

Si impersonale (impersonal si)

The si impersonale structure (see 2.1.12), equivalent of English ‘one’, is often confused with si passivante (see 19.4 above). Whereas the si passivante is always used with a transitive verb, and has both singular and plural forms, the si impersonale is used with an intransitive verb and is only singular.

In genere, quando si va all’aeroporto, si parte un po’ in anticipo.
In general, when one is going to the airport, one leaves a little ahead of time.

Often the si impersonale is not really impersonal but is used to indicate ‘we’:

Domenica si va al mare.
On Sundays we go to the seaside.

Both past participle and adjectives, when used with si impersonale, are plural. The compound tenses such as passato prossimo take essere:

La sera dopo una giornata di lavoro, si è stanchi.
In the evening, after a day at work, one is tired.

Si è partiti la mattina presto, e si è arrivati la sera tardi.
We left in the morning early, and we arrived in the evening late.

Focusing on the object of the action

Italian has more freedom to change word order than English does (see also 40.6). The normal sentence order of subject, verb, object either does not emphasise any particular element of the sentence or else puts a little more emphasis on the subject. It does not put any emphasis on the object.

You can emphasise the object of an action simply by reversing the order of a sentence. You keep the active form of the sentence, but by placing the object in a more prominent position (before the verb), you give more emphasis to it. This is known as ‘dislocation’.

Compare the two examples below. In the second example, the pronoun (lo) is used as well (see 3.4.8) to mark the unusual and emphatic position of the object:

(Normal order: subject–verb–object)

Il direttore ha già firmato il contratto.
The manager has already signed the contract.

(Reverse order: object–pronoun–verb–subject)

Il contratto lo ha già firmato il direttore.
The contract has already been signed by the manager.
II

Actions affecting ourselves and others
Social interactions

Greeting, welcoming

Saying ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’:

- **Buon giorno** used to greet people during daytime
- **Buona sera** used to greet people in the evening (after dark or after siesta time in the south)
- **Buona notte** used only when taking leave of one’s companions to go to bed or to go home at the end of the evening
- **Ciao** a more informal and very common way to say ‘hello’ as well as ‘goodbye’
- **Salve** another informal greeting, used only when meeting somebody, but less common and limited to certain regions and certain social contexts

When enquiring about someone’s state of health, use the verb **stare**.

- **Come stai?** or **Come va?** are used when addressing somebody with the familiar **tu**:
  
  - **Ciao Paolo. Come stai?**
  - Hello Paolo. How are you?

- **Come sta?** is the formal (**Lei**) form of address (see 3.3.1 and 41.2), both for men and for women:
  
  - **Buon giorno Dottoressa Serra. Come sta?**
  - Good morning Dr Serra. How are you?

A normal reply might be one of the following (providing some brief information about one’s physical state):

- **(Molto) bene, grazie e tu/Lei?**
  - Very well, thank you. And you?

- **Bene grazie, non c’è male.**
  - Thanks, not bad.

- **Insomma . . . non c’è male.**
  - Not bad. (*but said without conviction*)

- **Non molto bene purtroppo.**
  - Not very well, unfortunately.

**Benvenuto** means ‘welcome’ but is used mainly on relatively formal occasions. When welcoming someone into a room, Italians often say:

- **Si accomodi, signora.**
  - Please come in, signora.
  - *(Literally: Make yourself comfortable.)*

- **Accomodate! / Accomodatevi!**
  - Come in! *(familiar form of address, using tu/voi)*

- **Avanti!**
  - Come in! *(Literally: Forward!)*
When inviting guests to sit down, you can use **accomodarsi**, as above, or else **sedersi**:

- **Prego, si sieda, signora.**
  - Please take a seat, signora.

- **Siediti, Angela.**
  - Sit down, Angela.

- **Sedetevi, ragazzi.**
  - Sit down, boys.

When sending your greetings to someone’s family, use **salutare**:

- **Mi saluti Sua madre.**
  - Say ‘hello’ to your mother for me.

- **Salutami la tua mamma.**
  - Say ‘hello’ to your mum for me.

You can also use **salutare** to pass on greetings from someone else:

- **Mio marito La saluta.**
  - My husband sends (you) best wishes.

- **Giorgio ti saluta.**
  - Giorgio sends (you) best wishes.

### Introducing oneself and others

You might want to introduce yourself to someone you have just met, or introduce someone else (see also 8.1). Here are the phrases most commonly used, with approximate translations:

- **Permette . . . ?**
  - Allow me . . . *(rather formal first approach, followed by your own name)*

- **Mi chiamo Peter Green.**
  - My name is Peter Green
  - *(Literally: I am called . . .)*

- **Piacere, Sally Parker.**
  - My name is Sally Parker. It’s a pleasure to meet you.

- **Molto lieta/o.**
  - Glad to meet you . . .

Here are two examples of typical introductions, the first rather formal (for example, a business situation), the second more informal (for example, two young students):

**Dialogue 1**


B *Molto lieto . . . io sono Andrea Fulgenzi . . . sono l’agente della ditta Caroli.*

A *Molto lieto, ho sentito parlare spesso di Lei. Io lavoro per il Ministero degli Esteri canadese.*

B *Questo è il mio biglietto da visita.*

A *Grazie, ecco il mio . . .*


B *Very pleased to meet you. My name’s Andrea Fulgenzi. I’m the agent for Caroli.*

A *Very pleased (too), I’ve often heard speak of you. I work for the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

B *This is my card.*

A *Thanks, here’s mine.*

**Dialogue 2**

A *Ciao, come ti chiami?*

B *Mi chiamo Sandra, e tu?*
20.3 Saying goodbye

The commonest ways to say goodbye in Italian are arrivederci or (to friends) ciao.

A more formal form is arrivederLa, although arrivederci is appropriate in almost all circumstances.

Other very common familiar forms of leave-taking are:

- a domani  see you tomorrow
- a presto  see you soon
- buona notte  good night (used only when taking leave at the end of an evening)
- ci vediamo  see you
- di nuovo  see you again (less familiar)

20.4 Wishes

Here is a series of expressions used as good wishes in various circumstances. These may be exchanged both when meeting and when leaving people:

- auguri  best wishes (used in virtually all situations, for example birthdays, Christmas, but never before exams... see below)
- buon compleanno  happy birthday
- buon viaggio  bon voyage
- buone vacanze  have a nice holiday
- buon Natale  merry Christmas
- buon Anno  happy New Year
- Felice Anno Nuovo  Happy New Year (on Christmas cards etc.)
- buona Pasqua  happy Easter
- in bocca al lupo  good luck (idiomatic, literally means ‘in the mouth of the wolf’, used before exams, tests or competitions. In such circumstances Auguri! is considered to bring bad luck. The traditional reply is Crepi! ‘May the wolf die!’
- buona fortuna  good luck (generic)
- buon divertimento  enjoy yourself
salute  
bless you (when someone sneezes)

cin cin or salute  
cheers (raising glasses for a toast)

alla tua, alla vostra  
to your health (as a toast)

buon appetito  
enjoy your meal (very common before beginning a meal, in both formal and informal situations: as a reply you can say grazie altrettanto although nowadays most people just repeat buon appetito instead)

20.5 Expressing and receiving thanks, appreciation

Saying thank you:

grazie  
thanks

molte grazie  
many thanks

grazie mille  
many thanks

Informal ('tu' form):
ti ringrazio Paola  
(I) thank you, Paola

Formal ('Lei' form):
La ringrazio, Professore  
(I) thank you (Literally: ‘teacher’)

Receiving thanks:

prego  
you are welcome

di niente  
don’t mention it

non c’è di che  
don’t mention it

per carità, non è nulla  
please, it’s nothing

Expressing a more intense appreciation:

Grazie, molto gentile.  
Thank you, very kind of you.

Molto gentile da parte Sua.  
How kind of you.

La ringrazio molto per la Sua ospitalità.  
Thank you very much indeed for your hospitality.

Le sono molto grata/o per l’assistenza che ho ricevuto.  
I am very grateful to you for the assistance I received.

Ho apprezzato molto il Suo regalo.  
I much appreciated your present.

Ho gradito molto i Suoi fiori.  
I very much appreciated your flowers.

Ancora mille grazie. Lei è stata/o veramente gentile.  
Thank you again. You have been extremely kind.

20.6 Compliments and congratulations

Here are some expressions that can be used to convey your compliments to somebody in various circumstances.

Bravo/a!  
Well done! (friendly and informal)

Complimenti!  
Congratulations!

Complimenti per la laurea!  
Congratulations on your degree!
Expressing commiseration, sympathy

Congratulazioni!
Congratulations! (more formal)

Felicitazioni per il vostro matrimonio / anniversario.
Congratulations on your marriage / anniversary.

Che bello!
How beautiful!

Che bel vestito!
What a nice dress!

Che begli occhi che hai!
What beautiful eyes you have!

Come sei elegante!
How elegant you are!

Le sta molto bene questa giacca.
This jacket looks really good on you.

Come parli bene l’italiano!
How good your Italian is!

Making and accepting excuses, apologies

The following examples show the most usual ways to say ‘excuse me’ or ‘sorry’ in Italian.

Speaking formally, using the Lei form of address:

Mi scusi     Excuse me
Scusi        Excuse me
Chiedo scusa I apologise

La prego di scusarmi.
I beg your pardon.

La prego di accettare le mie scuse. (more formal)
I hope you will accept my apologies.

Sono spiacente che non ci sia abbastanza caffè per tutti. (very formal)
I regret there is not enough coffee for everybody.

Speaking informally, using the tu form of address:

Scusami     Excuse me
Mi dispiace / Mi spiace I’m sorry
Spiacente   I’m sorry (formal)

To accept someone’s apologies, you may say:

Per carità You don’t need to apologise (Literally: For pity’s sake . . .
Non si preoccupi Don’t worry
Non fa niente It doesn’t matter
Prego       It’s all right

Expressing commiseration, sympathy

To express sympathy for someone’s death, whether speaking or in writing, you can use condoglianze ‘condolences’:

Desidero esprimere le mie condoglianze per la perdita di Suo marito.
I wish to express my sympathy for the loss of your husband.
Some common expressions of commiseration or regret are the following:

**(Che) peccato!**
What a pity! It’s a shame!

*Peccato che lei sia arrivata in ritardo.*
It’s a pity that she arrived late.

*È un peccato che non abbia visto quel film.*
It’s a pity you haven’t seen that film.

*Poveretto/a!*
Poor him/her!

See also 10.6.2.

*Povero Mario!*
Poor Mario!

*Che pena!*
What a shame!

*Poveretti, mi fanno pena!*
Poor things. I feel sorry for them.

*Mi dispiace che abbia avuto questo brutto incidente.*
I’m sorry you had this bad accident.

### 20.9 Using titles, salutations

As mentioned above (see 20.2), in Italy professional titles and qualifications are commonly used when addressing somebody, either speaking or in writing. Failing to do so, or using the wrong title, may result in embarrassment or offence.

Here we present the titles most commonly used. (See 42.2.3 for details of abbreviations and other conventional forms used in correspondence.) The titles shown below are general forms of address used when the person addressed has no special title, but also when you don’t know whether he/she has other titles or not. Italians would tactfully try to find out whether any other title is appropriate, before addressing somebody with *Signor(e)*. A title may be used on its own or followed by the person’s surname, in which case the final -e is dropped from the masculine form, for example *Signore* is abbreviated to *Signor* (*Signor Rossi)*:

- **Signore** — Mister
- **Signora** — Madam
- **Signorina** — Miss (*if unmarried*)

The final -e is also dropped before a surname with many of the following titles (as indicated by the brackets):

- **Dottor(e)** — Doctor (*used both for medical doctor and for anybody with a university degree, or when there is not a more specific professional title*)
- **Dottorezza** — Doctor (*female equivalent of above*)
- **Professor(e)** — Professor (*used for male university and secondary school teacher*)
- **Professorezza** — Professor (*female equivalent of above*)
- **Avvocato** — Lawyer, solicitor (*Avvocatessa exists but see note below*)
- **Ingegner(e)** — Engineer (*only if holding a university degree*)
- **Ragionier(e)** — Accountant
- **Architetto** — Architect
- **Maestro** — Master (*used for all male artists and conductors; in southern Italy it is also used for highly skilled manual labourers and artisans*)
Using titles, salutations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onorevole</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministro</td>
<td>Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padre</td>
<td>Father (for priest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madre / Sorella</td>
<td>Mother / Sister (for nun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monsignor(e)</td>
<td>Monsignor (for high-ranking Catholic priest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally used on its own, not with a surname, is:

**Direttore**
Director, manager (or other person high up in a company)

In some professions (such as military or diplomatic), the specific title indicating the rank should be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generale</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitano</td>
<td>Captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambasciatore</td>
<td>Ambassador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In some cases, but not always, there are both masculine and feminine forms. For a list of the most common titles or professions with distinct feminine equivalents (for example *professoressa*, *dottoressa*), see 1.2.2 and 8.3.3. Where there is no feminine form, women should be addressed with the same title as their male counterparts: *Ingegner Maggioni, Avvocato Parma*.

In some cases the feminine form exists but follows the rather old-fashioned tradition of indicating the *wife* of the professional person: *ambasciatrice* ‘the ambassador’s wife’, *presidentessa* ‘the president’s wife’. In these cases, it is common practice not to use the feminine form but to use instead the masculine form to indicate women working in this profession as well:

*La presidentessa della Regione è stata intervistata dal giornale La Repubblica.*
The President of the Region was interviewed by the newspaper La Repubblica.

Generally speaking, when there is a choice of forms, the use of the masculine form is perceived as putting less emphasis on the gender aspect and more on the profession of the person, and is therefore seen as less sexist.

The masculine form is used for all those professions for which there is no commonly used feminine form, for example *il ministro* ‘minister’:

*Anna Maria Cancellieri è stata nominata ministro degli Interni.*
Anna Maria Cancellieri was nominated Minister of the Interior.

Some feminine titles have been created in reaction to the increase of women entering what were traditionally male-only jobs. But use of titles such as *poliziotta* ‘policewoman’, *avvocatessa* ‘female lawyer’, *soldatessa*, ‘female soldier’ and *vigilessa* ‘female traffic warden’ is perceived as ironic and patronising (see 1.2.2 and 8.3.3).
21

Getting other people to do things

21.1 Introduction

Possibly the most important transactional function in any language is to get people to do things for you. Indeed after ‘mamma’, one of the first words some Italian children learn is Dammi! ‘Give me!’ There are various ways of getting others to do things, ranging from a polite request or question to an order or command using an imperative verb form (see 2.2.21). The question form with tu may be used when asking your friend to pass the salt (Mi passi il sale? ‘Can you pass me the salt?’) while the imperative form with Lei may be used for something as simple as calling the waiter in the restaurant or bar (Senta! Mi porti il conto! ‘Listen! Bring me the bill!’).

21.2 Giving orders and commands

The imperative can take the familiar tu form or the more formal Lei form. Examples are shown below along with the alternative option of using the indicative in a question form. All the imperative forms of regular verbs and of the common irregular verbs andare, dare, dire, fare, stare are shown in 2.2.21.

21.2.1 Lei

To give an order to someone you don’t know, or don’t know well, use the Lei form of the imperative. Here are some imperative forms you may want to use regularly or just to recognise:

- Senta! Excuse me! (Literally: Listen!)
- Si accomodi! Come in / make yourself comfortable!
- Scusì! Excuse me!
- Mi dia il passaporto, signora. Give me your passport, madam.

If you prefer to make a request rather than give a command, you can use the present indicative, or even the verb volere ‘to wish to’:

- Mi dà il passaporto, signora? Would you give me your passport, madam?
- Vuole accomodarsi, signora? Would you like to sit down, madam?

You can also make a polite request using the phrase Le dispiace . . . ? (see 22.4.3) followed by a verb infinitive:

- Le dispiace aprire la finestra? Would you mind opening the window?

21.2.2 Tu

To give a command or instruction to someone you are on familiar terms with, use the tu form of the imperative:
Giving orders and commands

**Mangia!**
Eat up!

**Passami il pane!**
Pass me the bread!

**Dagli un colpo di telefono!**
Give him a call!

**Vieni a casa mia alle 6.00.**
Come to my house at 6 o’clock.

**Siediti qui accanto a me.**
Sit here next to me.

As seen already, some speakers may prefer to use the less abrupt indicative form of the verb. This means making a request rather than giving an order. The imperative form is shown in brackets:

**Mangi un altro po’ di dolce?** (Mangia un altro po’ di dolce!)
Would you eat another little bit of cake? (Eat another bit of cake!)

**Mi passi il pane, per favore?** (Passami il pane!)
Would you pass me the bread? (Pass me the bread!)

**Mi dai un passaggio?**
Would you give me a lift?

The one-syllable imperatives (see 2.2.21) of the verbs **andare**, **dare**, **dire**, **fare**, **stare** (**va’**, **da’**, **di’**, **fa’**, **sta’**) can sound particularly abrupt:

**Da’ retta a me.**
Listen to me.

**Fa’ come vuoi.**
Do as you please.

Some speakers therefore prefer to use a straightforward statement or question:

**Dai retta a me.**
You listen to me.

**Fai come vuoi.**
You do as you please.

Even with friends, you can make a request politely using **ti dispiace...** (see 22.4.3):

**Ti dispiace prestarmi la giacca da sci?**
Would you mind lending me your ski jacket?

### 21.2.3 Voi

To give a command or instruction to more than one person, use the **voi** form of the imperative. The **voi** form is the imperative form most frequently used in recipes:

**Venite a cena da me sabato prossimo!**
Come to dinner at my house next Saturday!

**Tagliate i pomodori a pezzi piccoli.**
Cut the tomatoes into small pieces.

### 21.2.4 Loro

**Loro** is a polite form of ‘you’ plural, corresponding to the singular **Lei**. **Loro** is however far less common than **Lei**, being used mainly by waiters or hotel staff to address customers. **Loro**, like **Lei** above, takes a third person verb form:

**Si accomodino, signore.**
Make yourselves comfortable, ladies.

**Vengano di qui, signori.**
Come this way, ladies and gentlemen.

### 21.2.5 Noi

When you are personally involved in the action, you use a proposal or exhortation rather than a command. The **noi** form of the imperative is identical to the regular present indicative form:

**Controlliamo questi conti adesso.**
Let’s have a look at these accounts now.

**Usciamo.**
Let’s go out.
21.3 Making negative requests and commands

All the imperative forms shown in 21.2 can also be expressed in a negative form, to tell someone not to do something (see also 2.2.22):

Lei
*Non si preoccupi*!
Don’t worry!

tu
*Non fumare tanto, Walter.*
Don’t smoke so much, Walter.

voi
*Non andate lontano, ragazzi.*
Don’t go far away, kids.

Loro
*Non si stanchino, signorine.*
Don’t get tired, ladies.

noi
*Non usciamo stasera, restiamo a casa.*
Let’s not go out tonight, let’s stay in.

When it comes to the present *indicative* forms, adding *non* to your request doesn’t make any real difference to the meaning, except to sound more persuasive:

*Non mi porti a cena?*
Aren’t you taking me to dinner?

*Non andiamo al cinema?*
Aren’t we going to the cinema?

21.4 Written instructions and recipes

21.4.1 Instructions

Everyone has to cope with written instructions (nowadays often online) varying from recipes to tourist guidebooks, instructions for household or other appliances, getting money out of an ATM or cashpoint or taking medicine. Being addressed to the non-specialist reader, these kinds of instructions are usually very simple in structure, with a series of short sentences (sometimes numbered), and simplified terminology often accompanied by illustrations.

Written instructions often use the infinitive form of the verb (see 2.2.1), rather than one of the imperative forms shown above, to convey a sense of impersonality both as regards the source (often an unnamed authority or expert) and as regards the target reader (the general public). Here is one example which uses the infinitive:

**Al Bancomat**

1. *Inserire la tessera*
2. *Digitare il codice personale*
3. *Digitare PRELIEVO*
4. *Scegliere la cifra desiderata*
5. *Premere CONFERMA*
6. *Ritirare il denaro*
7. *Ritirare la tessera*

At the cashpoint (ATM)

1. Insert your card
2. Key in your PIN
3. Press ‘WITHDRAWAL’
Written instructions and recipes

4 Select the amount required
5 Press ‘CONFIRM’
6 Take your money
7 Retrieve your card

Here is a second example, using the infinitive:

**ANNAFFIARE LE PIANTE**

Quando è possibile usare acqua piovana.
In primavera e in autunno annaffiare al mattino.
In inverno annaffiare nel tardo mattino.
Non usare acqua eccessivamente fredda.
Dare sempre l’acqua gradualmente.
Assicurarsi che l’acqua non sia inquinata da sostanze nocive.

**WATERING PLANTS**

Whenever possible, use rainwater.
In spring and autumn, water in the mornings.
In winter, water late morning.
Do not use excessively cold water.
Always give water gradually.
Ensure that the water is not contaminated by harmful substances.

In this third example, the instructions for using a manual pasta-making machine also use the infinitive:

**Prima di utilizzare la macchina per la prima volta, pulirla perfettamente con un panno asciutto. Non usare acqua. Fissare la macchina al tavolo. Fare un impasto di una certa consistenza. Introdurre dei pezzi d’impasto tra i rulli e girare lentamente la manovella.**

Before using the machine for the first time, clean it thoroughly with a dry cloth. Do not use water. Fix the machine to the table. Make a pasta dough of suitable consistency. Introduce pieces of pasta dough between the rollers and turn the handle slowly.

### 21.4.2 Recipes

For recipes too, instructions are often given using the infinitive, as in example A below. But the same recipe can be given using verbs in the voi imperative form (see 21.2.3 above) in order to express a more informal and direct relationship with the reader, as in example B below. The translation into English is exactly the same for both.

**La Ricetta di Franco (A)**

**Pasta e fagioli**

*(per 4 persone)*

*Rosolare* in 3 cucchiai di olio extra-vergine d’oliva mezza cipolla tritata finemente ed *aggiungere* 300 grammi di fagioli cannellini.

*Bagnare* con un litro di brodo, *aggiungere* due patate a pezzetti e *lasciare* cuocere per 15 minuti.

Quindi *cuocere* 200 gr. di pasta mista nella zuppa e *aggiustare* di sale e pepe.

*In un pentolino a parte* friggere una noce di burro con un rametto di rosmarino e uno spicchio d’aglio.

*Prima della fine della cottura della pasta, unire* alla zuppa il burro, dopo averlo filtrato, e 2 pomodori pelati, tagliati a pezzetti.

*Buon appetito!*

**La Ricetta di Franco (B)**

**Pasta e fagioli**

*(per 4 persone)*

*Rosolate* in 3 cucchiai di olio extra-vergine d’oliva mezza cipolla tritata finemente ed *aggiungete* 300 grammi di fagioli cannellini.
**Bagnate** con un litro di brodo, **aggiungete** due patate e lasciate cuocere per 15 minuti.
Quindi **cuocete** 200 gr. di pasta mista nella zuppa e **aggiustate** di sale e pepe.
In un pentolino a parte **friggete** una noce di burro con un rametto di rosmarino e uno spicchio d'aglio.
Prima della fine della cottura della pasta, **unite** alla zuppa il burro, dopo averlo **filtrato**, e 2 pomodori pelati, tagliati a pezzetti.
**Buon appetito!**

**FRANCO’S RECIPE**

Pasta and bean soup
(for 4 people)
Sauté in 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil half an onion finely chopped and add 300 grams of cannellini beans.
Add a litre of stock and two potatoes cut in pieces and leave to cook for 15 minutes.
Then cook 200 grams of mixed pasta in the soup and adjust seasoning if necessary.
In a small separate pan, fry a knob of butter with a sprig of rosemary and a clove of garlic in it.
Before the pasta has finished cooking, add the butter, after straining it, to the soup, along with two peeled tomatoes cut in pieces.
Bon appetit!

---

**Informal instructions**

When giving instructions in an informal context (for example, to friends) the **tu** form of address is used (see 8.2). In the example below, a guidebook to Pozzuoli written in an informal style uses the **tu** form of imperative (see 21.2.2 above).

**Visita alla Solfatara di Pozzuoli**

**Parcheggia** la macchina nel piazzale davanti all’ingresso. Dopo aver comprato il biglietto **attraversa** il campeggio e entra nell’area del cratere. **Attraversalo** tutto lungo il diametro centrale e poi **fa’** un giro lungo il margine esterno. Potrai osservare accuratamente lo spettacolo infernale delle fumarole.

Visit to the Solfatara in Pozzuoli

Park the car in the area in front of the entrance. After buying a ticket, cross the car park and go in to the crater area. Walk all the way across the central part and then walk around the outside edge of it. You will be able to see the fiery spectacle of the ‘fumarole’ (smoke emissions).

---

**NOTE**

† Note the forms of the imperative of **fare** (see 2.2.21). Note too how the unstressed pronoun **lo** is attached to the **tu** imperative form **attraversa** + **lo** (see 3.4.7).

---

**Asking someone to do something**

An alternative to the imperative forms shown above is a strongly worded request (one that you expect to be met) using a verb such as **chiedere**, **volere**.

**21.5.1 Chiedere with **di**

**Chiedere** can be linked to the action (what someone is being asked to do) by **di** followed by a verb in the infinitive (see also 4.4.3). The person who is being asked is indicated by a noun introduced by **a** (**agli student italiani**) or by an indirect object pronoun (**Le**) (see also 3.4.2):

**Bisogna chiedere agli studenti italiani di stare un po’ più zitti.**
We have to ask the Italian students to keep a little quieter.

**Le chiedo di rispettare l’orario di lavoro.**
I ask you to respect working hours.
Far fare, lasciar fare

21.5.2 Chiedere with che

Chiedere can also be followed by che and a dependent clause using the subjunctive (see 2.2.14). The people being asked to do something (i dipendenti) become the subject of this dependent clause (che i dipendenti rispettino):

*Chiedo soltanto che i dipendenti rispettino l’orario di lavoro.*

I only ask that the employees respect the working hours.

21.5.3 Volere with che

Volere, like chiedere, can also be followed by che and the subjunctive. The present indicative voglio is used to make a firm request, while the present conditional vorrei sounds rather more polite. The subjunctive tense used depends on which tense of volere is used in the first part of the sentence (see also 30.5 and Appendix IV):

*Voglio che tu faccia uno sforzo per ricuperare il tempo perso.*

I want you to make an effort to recover the time lost.

*Vorrei che tu facessi uno sforzo per ricuperare il tempo perso.*

I would like you to make an effort to recover the time lost.

21.6 Giving an order using ‘command’ verbs

More explicit command forms such as comandare, ordinare, as well as dire, can also be used, as an alternative to the imperative forms or the verbs shown above. Most take an indirect object, either a noun governed by a, as in the first example below, or an indirect object pronoun, as in the other two examples (see also 3.4.2), and are followed by di and the verb infinitive (see 21.5.1 above):

*I carabinieri hanno comandato ai mafiosi di uscire dalla casa.*

The police ordered the Mafia men to come out from the house.

*La padrona di casa ci ha ordinato di pulire le scale.*

The landlady ordered us to clean the stairs.

*Gli ho detto di sbrigarsi.*

I told him to hurry up.

21.7 Far fare, lasciar fare

When asking someone to do something, you can also use the verb fare ‘to make’ with a verb infinitive expressing the action you are making the person carry out. The person carrying out the action becomes the direct or indirect object, expressed by a noun or pronoun (see 3.4.1–2).

When there is no other object in the sentence, the noun or pronoun is the direct object:

*Faccio venire Isabella.*

I’ll call Isabella.

*Abbiamo bisogno di Isabella. La faccio venire.*

We need Isabella. I’ll have her come.

*Ha fatto entrare il poliziotto.*

He let the policeman in.

In the example below, the second verb (riparare) already has a direct object (il computer), so the person (whether noun or pronoun) who is being made to do something (il fidanzato di Giovanna) becomes the indirect object:

*Ho fatto riparare il computer al fidanzato di Giovanna.*

I got Giovanna’s boyfriend to repair the computer.
**GETTING OTHER PEOPLE TO DO THINGS**

*Gli ho fatto riparare il computer.*  
I got him to repair the computer.

Similarly, to allow someone to do something is expressed by *lasciare(e)* and a verb infinitive, with the person as direct object:

*Sono tornati gli operai. *Li lascio entrare?*  
The workmen are back. Shall I let them in?*

*Non lo lascia parlare.*  
She doesn’t let him speak.

In the first example below, when there is a second direct object (*quello lavoro*) the person being asked to carry out the action (*mio marito*) becomes the *indirect* object, in the same way as it did with *fare* (above). Both for *fare* and *lasciare*, the indirect pronoun can be either stressed *a lui* (see 3.3.2) or unstressed *gli* (see 3.4.2):

*Ho lasciato fare quello lavoro a mio marito.*  
*Ho lasciato fare quello lavoro a lui.*  
*Gli ho lasciato fare quello lavoro.*
I let him do that job.

*Il capo ha fatto scrivere la relazione a me.*  
*Il capo mi ha fatto scrivere la relazione.*  
The boss got me to write the report.

**21.8 Using persuasion**

Other ways of getting something done include invitation, encouragement, begging, and gentle persuasion.

**21.8.1 Using invitare ‘to invite’, incoraggiare ‘to encourage’**

These verbs use a direct object (person or pronoun), and are followed by a verb in the infinitive, linked by *a* (see 4.4.1):

*Il preside invitò i ragazzi a riflettere sulle loro azioni.*  
The headmaster invited the boys to reflect on their actions.

*Il mio supervisore mi ha incoraggiato a finire la mia tesi.*  
My supervisor encouraged me to finish my thesis.

**21.8.2 Using persuadere, convincere ‘to persuade’**

These verbs also use a direct object (person or pronoun), and are followed by a verb in the infinitive, introduced by *a*:

*La mia amica cerca di persuadermi a comprare una macchina sportiva.*  
My friend is trying to persuade me to buy a sports car.

*Convincerò Donatella a cambiare idea.*  
I’ll persuade Donatella to change her mind.

**21.8.3 Using pregare ‘to beg’**

*Pregare* uses a direct object (person or pronoun) and is followed by a verb in the infinitive, linked to it by *di*:

*Il direttore mi pregò di sedermi.*  
The manager begged me to sit down.
Monologo

Mia madre ha pregato mia sorella di rimanere ferma.
My mother begged my sister to stay still.

Signora, La prego di ricordarsi della patente.
Signora, please remember your driving licence.

Monologo

And finally, since the tu and voi imperative verb forms (see 21.2.2, 21.2.3 above) are quite commonly used in the relationship between adults and children, we reproduce two typical, if somewhat exaggerated, ‘conversations’ between a mother and a group of children (adapted from Il libronuovo by B. Reggiani and A. Salvatore, IGDA, Novara). The first takes place on the beach, in summer, and the second, also reproduced in Chapter 40 as an example of informal communication, takes place in the winter, when the children are getting ready for school. The imperative forms are in italic, to help you identify them:

Mia moglie, d’estate, è così:
Valentina, spogliati. Franco non buttarti in acqua vestito. Roberta lascia stare il secchiello e togliti le scarpe. Roberta sta’ ferma, Franco dov’è? Franco vieni a spogliarti, Valentina metti il costumino a Lorenzo, Franco dov’è? Roberta, vieni qui, il bagno si fa più tardi! Franco, dov’è Franco? Valentina acchiappa Roberta che si butta in acqua! Franco, perché hai fatto il bagno? Lorenzino di mamma sua, non si mangia la sabbietta, brutta la sabbietta! Franco, non vedo più Franco! Franco! Torna indietro, senno’ niente gelato! Valentina corri a prendere Franco. Roberta non ti muovere!
Franco, dov’è Franco?

This is my wife, in the summer:
Valentina, get undressed. Franco, don’t jump in the water with your clothes on. Roberta, leave the bucket alone and get your shoes off. Roberta keep still, where’s Franco? Franco come and get undressed, Valentina, put Lorenzo’s costume on, where’s Franco? Roberta, come here, you can go swimming later! Franco, where’s Franco? Valentina grab hold of Roberta, she’s jumping in the water! Franco, why did you go swimming now? Lorenzino, mummy’s treasure, you mustn’t eat the sand, nasty sand! Franco, I can’t see Franco any more! Franco! Come back, otherwise no ice cream! Valentina run and get Franco. Roberta don’t move! Franco, where’s Franco?

D’inverno, invece, è così:

This is my wife, in the winter:
Valentina, wake up, Roberta wake up . . . Franco get out of bed. Kids, it’s five past seven! Franco, quick, go and have a shower. Valentina get dressed. It’s ten past seven! Kids, your caffelatte is ready! Franco, have you had a shower? Dry the floor. Roberta, why are you crying? Valentina, come on, let her put your yellow skirt on. It’s quarter past seven! Come on, are you coming to drink this caffelatte or not? It’s all getting cold! Roberta if you keep on crying, I’ll come over there and kill you! Francoooooooo! Where’s Franco? Roberta don’t cry, go and comb your hair, instead of crying. It’s half past seven. You’ll miss the bus. Honestly, what sort of kids have I got!
Permission and possibility

In English, the verb ‘can’ may convey many different meanings, for example: possibility, permission, ability or opportunity. A similar function is expressed in Italian by the verb *potere*, seen below in the examples, but there are many other ways of expressing possibility, also illustrated below.

### 22.1 Asking or granting permission

#### 22.1.1 Using *potere*

*Posso andare in bagno?*
Can I go to the bathroom?

*Potete andare a giocare fuori, bambini.*
You can go and play outside, kids.

*Puoi lasciare qui la giacca, se vuoi.*
You can leave your jacket here, if you want.

The examples illustrated above use the *present indicative* of *potere* ‘to be able to’ (see 2.2.3), but to formulate a request more politely, the *present conditional* (see 2.2.12) is often used:

*Potrei andare in bagno?*
Could I go to the bathroom?

*Potrebbe accompagnarmi in ufficio, signora?*
Could you please come with me to my office, signora?

#### 22.1.2 Using *è possibile*

*Potere* can often be replaced by the impersonal expression *è possibile* followed immediately (without prepositions such as *di* or *a*) by a verb in the infinitive (see 32.4):

*È possibile lasciare qui la giacca?*
Is it possible to leave one’s jacket here?

*È possibile andare in bagno?*
Is it possible to use the bathroom?

#### 22.1.3 Using *permettere*

Another way of asking or granting (*someone*) permission (*to do something*) is to use the verb *permettere a (qualcuno) di (fare qualcosa)*. The person being allowed to do something – or not – is the indirect object of the verb *permettere* while the second verb, always in the infinitive, expresses what the person is allowed to do (or not), and is linked to *permettere* by the preposition *di*.

*La legge non ci permette di importare i prodotti direttamente dalla Cina.*
The law does not allow us to import the products directly from China.
Speaking about the ability or opportunity to do something

I genitori non permettono a Marina di andare in vacanza con le amiche.
Her parents won’t let Marina go on holiday with her friends.

22.1.4 Granting permission, using pure

Pure, best translated by the English expression ‘by all means’, can be added to an imperative to imply not only permission but encouragement to do something:

Posso dire qualcosa?   Dica pure!
Can I say something?   Go ahead, (speak) by all means.
Faccia pure!
Go ahead, do it! (Be my guest.)

Prego! also invites someone to do just what they have requested:

Posso andare in bagno?   Prego, si accomodi.
May I use the bathroom?   Please, go ahead.

22.1.5 Asking permission not to do something

If you don’t want to do something, use the verb dovere and the intensifier proprio:

Devo proprio andare a letto?
Do I really have to go to bed?

22.2 Denying permission

22.2.1 Using vietare or proibire

Denying someone permission to do something uses a similar grammatical construction to permettere (see 22.1.3): a verb such as vietare or proibire combined with a person (expressed by either noun or pronoun as indirect object) and followed by a verb in the infinitive, linked by di:

La polizia ha vietato ai non residenti di parcheggiare in questa strada.
The police have banned non-residents from parking in this street.

Gli ho proibito di firmare le lettere per conto mio.
I have forbidden him to sign letters on my behalf.

I bambini mi hanno proibito di mangiare il loro cioccolato.
The children have forbidden me to eat their chocolate.

22.3 Speaking about the ability or opportunity to do something

22.3.1 Using potere

Potere expresses the ability or the opportunity to do something:

Puoi arrivare per le sette?
Can you arrive by 7 pm?

Potete vedere ancora oggi la grotta dove viveva il santo.
You can still see the cave where the saint lived.

Sometimes the verb potere is omitted, when the English ‘can’ means ‘to be able to’, especially when used with verbs of ‘seeing, hearing, feeling’:

Sentite la musica?
Can you hear the music?

Non sento niente.
I can’t hear anything.
PERMISSION AND POSSIBILITY

Ci vedi?
Can you see?
(Ci is often used with verbs such as sentire, vedere but has no specific meaning.)

22.3.2 Using è possibile

Potere can be replaced by the impersonal expression è possibile (see 32.4):

È possibile prendere l’autobus per andare all’aeroporto?
Is it possible to get the bus to go to the airport?

A Malta, è possibile vedere le catacombe di San Paolo.
In Malta, it is possible to see the catacombs of Saint Paul.

22.3.3 Using sapere

The English ‘can, to be able to’ can very often be expressed in Italian by the verb sapere (see Appendix III), which does not express permission or possibility, but rather knowledge or ability to do something, referring to a learnt skill:

Sai nuotare?
Can you swim? (Do you know how to swim?)

Il direttore non sa parlare inglese, e quindi si deve rivolgere all’interprete.
The manager can’t speak English, and so he has to rely on the interpreter.

The choice of sapere rather than potere changes the meaning of a phrase entirely:

Sai fare questo esercizio?
Do you know how to do this exercise? (i.e. do you have the correct skills to do it?)

Puoi fare questo esercizio?
Can you do this exercise? (i.e. do you have the time or energy to do it?)

22.3.4 Using essere in grado di

The expression essere in grado di has the meaning ‘to be up to’ or ‘to be fit to’:

Non è in grado di gestire l’ufficio da solo.
He’s not up to managing the office on his own.

Non eravamo in grado di prendere una tale decisione.
We weren’t able to take a decision of this kind.

22.4 Making a request

22.4.1 Using potere

Either the present indicative (see 2.2.3) or the present conditional (see 2.2.12) of potere can be used to make a request:

Può indicarmi la fermata del tram?
Can you show me the tram stop?

Potrebbe aiutarmi a portare giù i bagagli, per favore?
Could you help me to get the luggage down, please?

22.4.2 Using si può, è possibile

A more formal or general request, not necessarily referring to one specific person, is sometimes expressed using the impersonal form si può ‘one can’ / ‘can one?’ or again è possibile:
Making a request

**Si può prenotare?**
Can one book?

**Si può partire adesso?**
Can one (we) go now?

**È possibile prenotare?**
Is it possible to book?

**È possibile telefonare in Inghilterra?**
Is it possible to phone England?

### 22.4.3 Using Le/ti/vi dispiace

A more formal or polite request can be expressed by the verb forms dispiace or dispiacerebbe followed either by se and a finite verb or by a verb infinitive (see 21.2.1–2). The person to whom you are making the request is indicated by the appropriate indirect pronoun: ti (informal ‘you’), Le (formal ‘you’) or vi (plural ‘you’).

- **Le dispiace se fumo?**
  Do you mind if I smoke?

- **Le dispiacerebbe aprire la finestra?**
  Would you mind opening the window?

- **Ti dispiace se vado via un po’ prima?**
  Do you mind if I leave a little earlier?

- **Ti dispiace darmi una mano?**
  Would you mind giving me a hand?

- **Vi dispiace aspettare cinque minuti?**
  Would you mind waiting five minutes?
23

Expressing need, obligation or desire

23.1 Introduction

Sometimes in Italian, as in other languages, there is little difference between a desire, expressed by the verb *volere*, and a need, expressed by the phrase *aver bisogno di* or a similar expression:

*Ho bisogno di un caffè. / Voglio un caffè.  
I need a coffee. / I want a coffee.*

23.2 Expressing wants

23.2.1 Using *volere*

The verb *volere* can be used both with a noun (something you want) and with a verb (something you want to do), in its role as an auxiliary verb (see 2.1.7):

*Gli operai vogliono un aumento di stipendio.*  
The workmen want a wage increase.

*Volete parlare del contratto?  
Do you want to talk about the contract?*

*Vuoi andare a cena?  
Do you want to go to dinner?*

*Vuoi una mano?  
Do you want a hand?*

Using the *present indicative* form of *volere* can sometimes sound rather demanding, or even discourteous, especially in the first person ‘I’:

*Voglio un francobollo.*  
I want a stamp.

*Il direttore vuole parlarLe.*  
The manager wants to speak to you.

A request or wish can be expressed more politely by using the *present conditional* (see 2.2.12) rather than the present indicative of *volere*:

*Vorrei due biglietti per stasera, per favore.*  
I would like two tickets for tonight, please.

*La signora Giannini vorrebbe parlarLe.*  
Signora Giannini would like to speak to you.

*Vorrei un appuntamento per domani.*  
I would like an appointment for tomorrow.*
Expressing needs

It is also possible to use the imperfect indicative *volevo* to express a polite request (see 2.2.4):

_Volevo_ duecento grammi di prosciutto.
I would like two hundred grams of ham. (Literally: ‘I wanted’)

### 23.2.2 Using _aver voglia di_

Another way of expressing ‘want’ is the phrase _aver voglia di_, used either with a _verb_ or a _noun_:

**Gli studenti avevano voglia di andare a casa.**
The students wanted to go home.

**Non ha voglia di scherzare.**
He’s not in the mood for joking.

**Ho voglia di un gelato.**
I fancy an ice-cream.

### 23.2.3 Using _mi va_

A very idiomatic way of saying what one wants to do or feels like doing is to use the verb _andare_ (see 2.2.3) and an indirect pronoun (see 3.4.2), either with a _noun_ or with _di_ and a _verb infinitive_:

**Ti va un gelato?**
Do you fancy an ice-cream?

**Non mi vanno queste domande.**
I don’t like these questions.

**Ti va di mangiare la pizza?**
Do you feel like (having) a pizza?

**Non gli andava di seguire le mie istruzioni.**
He didn’t want to follow my instructions.

### 23.2.4 Using _me la sento_ (sentirsela)

Another idiomatic way to say what you feel like doing is _sentirsela_ (the verb _sentire_, a reflexive pronoun and the pronoun _la_). Although the reflexive pronoun changes, the _la_ element is invariable. _Sentirsela_ can also be linked to a verb infinitive by _di_:

**Faccio i compiti domani. Non me la sento stasera.**
I’ll do my homework tomorrow. I don’t feel like it tonight.

**Te la senti di uscire stasera?**
Do you feel like going out tonight?

### 23.2.5 Making a request in a shop

To request something in a shop or restaurant, use either the present conditional form _Vorrei_ (see 23.2.1) or the question form _Mi dà ..._? (see 2.2.3) ‘Please would you give me . . . ?’ You can also use an imperative form _Mi dia_ ‘Give me’ (see 2.2.21) but this might sound a little demanding.

_Mi dà_ dieci biglietti per l’autobus, per favore?
Would you give me ten bus tickets, please?

### 23.3 Expressing needs

#### 23.3.1 Using _bisogna_

The verb _bisogna_ ‘it is necessary’ can be followed by a verb infinitive, or by _che_ and subjunctive, but _not_ by a noun. _Bisogna_ is generally used only in the 3rd person singular and confined to
EXPRESSING NEED, OBLIGATION OR DESIRE

the simple tenses: present indicative (bisogna), imperfect indicative (bisognava), future (bisognerà) and present conditional (bisognerebbe):

Bisogna farlo subito.
It needs to be done straightaway.
(Literally: It is necessary to do it straightaway.)

Bisognava vedere qual era la soluzione migliore.
We had to see what the best solution was.

Bisognerebbe che loro capissero la situazione.
They would have to understand the situation.
(Literally: It would be necessary for them to understand the situation.)

23.3.2 Using aver bisogno di

The phrase aver bisogno di ‘to have need of’ can be used with either a noun or a verb infinitive, to express what you need or what you need to do:

Ho bisogno di tempo per studiare.
I need time to study.

Avete bisogno di me?
Do you need me?

Avevamo bisogno di riposare.
We needed to rest.

23.3.3 Using c’è bisogno

The phrase c’è bisogno di (literally: ‘there is need of’) can be followed by a noun (object or person), a verb infinitive linked by di, or che + subjunctive:

Ci sarà bisogno di un interprete. Il direttore parla solo italiano.
We will need an interpreter. The director only speaks Italian.

Non c’era bisogno di spiegare. Avevamo già capito.
There wasn’t any need to explain. We had already understood.

Non c’è bisogno che Lei mi accompagni. Penso di trovare l’ufficio senza problemi.
There’s no need for you to accompany me. I think I can find the office without any problem.

23.3.4 Using è necessario

Another impersonal phrase expressing need is è necessario ‘it is necessary’ which can be followed directly by a verb infinitive or che + subjunctive:

È necessario iscriversi prima di venire alla lezione.
It’s necessary to enrol before coming to the lesson.

Era necessario collaborare per avere i fondi.
It was necessary to collaborate in order to get funding.

È necessario che i gruppi collaborino per avere dei buoni risultati.
It’s necessary for the groups to collaborate in order to get good results.

23.3.5 Using dovere

The verb dovere (see 2.1.7) expresses a personal obligation as well as a need:

Devo prendere il treno delle 8.00 per arrivare in tempo per la riunione.
I have to get the 8 o’clock train to arrive in time for the meeting.

Gli studenti devono impegnarsi di più.
The students must make more of an effort.
Expressing needs

The present conditional of *dovere* expresses what one *ought* to do, rather than what one *must* do:

*Dovremmo organizzare la prossima riunione prima di Natale.*

We ought to organise the next meeting before Christmas.

23.3.6 Using *servire*, *occorrere*

To express *need*, the verbs *servire* and *occorrere* are used.

**Needing an object**

The third person singular and plural forms (*serve*, *servono*; *occorre*, *occorrono*) are used to talk about an object (or objects) needed. The construction is similar to *piacere* (see 28.2.1): the person needing something is expressed by an indirect pronoun *mi*, *ti*, *gli*, etc. (see 3.4.2 and 18.4.2) while the object needed becomes the grammatical subject of the verb and the verb has to be either singular or plural to agree with it:

- *Mi serve* un cacciavite.
  I need a screwdriver.
- *Quanti fogli ti servono?*
  How many sheets do you need?
- *Quanto tempo vi occorre?*
  How much time do you need?
- *Per fare la torta, occorrono sei uova.*
  Six eggs are needed to make the cake.

**Needing to do something**

Both *servire* and *occorrere* can also be used *impersonally* (‘it is necessary’) followed by a verb infinitive (see 2.2.1) or by *che* + subjunctive (see 2.2.14). *Occorrere* tends to be used in more formal contexts, while *servire* is more widely used.

*Occorrere* is generally followed by a verb infinitive when no subject is mentioned (as in the first example), or by *che* + subjunctive when the subject is mentioned (as in the second example):

- *Occorre controllare prima di consegnare la traduzione.*
  One should check before handing in the translation.
- *Occorre che lei mi dia un documento.*
  She has to give me a document.

*Servire* can be used *impersonally*, meaning ‘it is necessary, it’s useful’. *Servire* is generally followed by a verb infinitive when no particular person is mentioned (as in the first example), or by *che* + subjunctive when the person involved is mentioned, particularly in a more formal context (as in the second example). It can also be followed by a verb infinitive even when a person is mentioned (as in the last example).

- *Non serve a niente studiare.*
  There’s no point in studying.
- *Non serve che Lei mi dia il documento.*
  It’s not necessary/useful for you to give me your document.
- *Non mi serve imparare l’italiano.*
  Learning Italian is not any use to me.

When used impersonally, as here, both *servire* and *occorrere* can be replaced by phrases such as *bisogna* (see 23.3.1), *c’è bisogno* (see 23.3.3), *è necessario* (see 23.3.4).
Suggesting, proposing, advising and recommending

24

Giving advice

24.1

Introduction

There are lots of ways of giving advice, some formal, some informal. Advice can range from encouragement or a recommendation to a firm order or stern warning. Here we look at some ways of expressing these functions in Italian.

One of the most common ways to give advice in Italian is to use a suitable verb with a direct or indirect object (the person or people advised) and a preposition (a, di) to link the verb to a verb infinitive. Verbs that can be used in this way include: consigliare, raccomandare and raccomandarsi (see 24.1.2–4 below). Dire can sometimes be used to give advice, though less specific in meaning (see 24.4.1 below).

24.1.2 Consigliare

With di and a verb infinitive

In the act of advising or recommending, there are usually two people involved: the person giving advice and the person receiving it. Consigliare (“to advise, to recommend”) can be used with an indirect object indicating the person receiving the advice (agli italiani) and linked by di to the verb infinitive (di lasciare). (See Appendix IV.)

Gli addetti consolari consigliavano agli italiani di lasciare il paese al più presto possibile.
The consular officials were advising Italians to leave the country as soon as possible.

Sometimes the person receiving advice is represented by a pronoun, normally an unstressed indirect object pronoun such as mi, ti, gli (see 3.4.2):

Gli addetti consolari gli consigliavano di lasciare il paese al più presto.
The consular officials were advising them to leave the country as soon as possible.

Mia madre mi ha consigliato di studiare lingue.
My mother advised me to study languages.

Occasionally there might be a reason to emphasise the person who is receiving the advice, or to contrast him or her with another person; in this case the emphatic stressed forms of indirect object pronouns a me, a te, a lui, etc. (see 3.3.2) are used:

Mia madre ha consigliato a me di studiare lingue, ma a mio fratello di studiare medicina.
My mother advised me to study languages but (advised) my brother to study medicine.

With a noun

Consigliare can also be used with a noun as direct object (the thing which is being advised or recommended):
24.2 Making a suggestion

Verbs used to make a suggestion include *suggerire* (see 24.2.1) and *proporre* (see 24.2.2).
SUGGESTING, PROPOSING, ADVISING AND RECOMMENDING

24.2.1 Suggerire

With *di* and a verb infinitive
The verb *suggerire* can be used in a similar construction to *consigliare* (see 24.1.2). The person making the suggestion is normally the grammatical *subject* of the verb *suggerire*, the person receiving it is the *indirect object* (preceded if necessary by a), while the suggestion being given is in the infinitive, linked by *di*:

*Le compagnie aeree suggeriscono ai passeggeri di non portare troppi bagagli a mano.*
The airlines suggest to passengers that they should not bring too much hand luggage.

Here the indirect object is expressed by an indirect pronoun (*ci*):

*L'impiegata ci ha suggerito di prenotare subito il traghetto per la Sardegna, perché non c'erano tanti posti disponibili.*
The sales assistant suggested we should book the ferry for Sardinia straightaway because there weren’t so many places left.

With *che* and the subjunctive
Like *consigliare* and *raccomandare*, *suggerire* can also be used with *che* + subjunctive (see 2.2.15):

*Suggeriamo che i cani siano identificati tramite un microcif.*
We suggest that dogs should be identified by a microchip.

24.2.2 Proporre

The verb *proporre* ‘to propose’, ‘to suggest’ can be used with two possible constructions, in the same way as *consigliare*, *raccomandare*, *suggerire*.

With *di* and a verb infinitive
You can use *proporre* with a verb infinitive linked by *di*, with the person receiving the proposal as an indirect object. Generally this construction is used when the person proposing is himself part of the action and proposing that he/she and others do something together:

*Antonio mi ha proposto di fare una passeggiata lungo il fiume.*
Antonio suggested (to me) taking a walk along the river.

*Vorrei proporre agli azionisti di accettare l’offerta.*
I would like to suggest to the shareholders that they accept the offer.

With *che* and subjunctive
Generally this construction is used when there is someone or something (*l’ufficio*) other than the proposer and the person receiving the proposal:

*Propongo che l’ufficio rimanga chiuso per due giorni prima dell’ispezione.*
I propose that the office stays closed for two days before the inspection.

24.3 Choices

24.3.1 *Di* and infinitive or *che* and subjunctive?

Whichever verb is used, deciding which of these constructions to use is often a question of register. So long as there are only two parties involved (the person advising and the person being advised) the *che* and subjunctive construction can always be replaced by *di* and the infinitive, with the person advised as indirect object. In fact in informal spoken or written Italian, the simpler construction is always preferred:

**Formal:**
*I professori consigliano che gli studenti controllino le fonti prima di citarli.*

**Informal:**
*I professori consigliano agli studenti di controllare le fonti prima di citarli.*
More expressions of advising or suggesting

24.3.2 Stressed or unstressed pronoun?
The people receiving the suggestion or advice, whatever verb is used, are often represented by indirect object pronouns, which have two different forms.

Unstressed forms mi, ti, gli, etc. (see 3.4.2):

Il suo capo le ha suggerito di fare una breve pausa.
Her boss suggested she take a short break.

Stressed (emphatic) forms a me, a te, a lui, etc. (see 3.3.2):

Il capo ha suggerito a lei di fare una breve pausa, ma ha detto agli altri di continuare a lavorare.
The boss told her to have a short break but he told the others to carry on working.

24.4 More expressions of advising or suggesting

24.4.1 Dire
The verb dire ‘to say’ can sometimes be used to give advice or make a suggestion. It is most commonly used in the present conditional form direi etc. (see 2.2.12) followed either by di and the infinitive or by che and the subjunctive:

Ti direi di portare l’impermeabile.
I would say (to you) to take a raincoat.

Direi che sia meglio rinviare a domani.
I would say that it is better to postpone until tomorrow.

Direi che Giovanni debba impegnarsi di più.
I would say that Giovanni needs to show more commitment.

24.4.2 Dare indicazioni, dare informazioni, dare suggerimenti
The expression dare un’indicazione means to give advice or information, usually on one particular thing; un’indicazione is just one piece of advice, whereas delle indicazioni and qualche indicazione mean advice in general. The same applies to dare informazioni and dare un’informazione.

Vorrei trovare un albergo vicino al centro. Mi può dare qualche indicazione?
I would like to find a hotel near the centre. Can you give me some suggestions?

Mi ha dato delle indicazioni per il congresso.
My colleague gave me some suggestions for the conference.

Almost synonymous are dare suggerimenti / un suggerimento and dare consigli / un consiglio:

Mi daresti un consiglio per arredare questa stanza?
Would you give me advice for furnishing this room?

24.4.3 Fare una proposta
The phrase fare una proposta, depending on the context, can mean a business proposition or similar. Occasionally, however, it can also mean a proposal of an unwanted kind:

L’azienda aveva delle difficoltà economiche, e il direttore ha fatto una proposta di riorganizzazione finanziaria all’assemblea generale.
The company had some economic difficulties and the director made a proposal for financial reorganisation at the general meeting.

Preferirei non stare nello stesso albergo di Marco. L’altra volta mi ha fatto una proposta.
I would prefer not to stay in the same hotel as Marco. The last time he propositioned me.
**24.4.4 Stressing a personal point of view**

In spoken Italian, advice is often preceded by the expression Se (io) fossi in te (‘If I were you . . . ’):

*Se io fossi in te, farei la domanda per aver quel posto a Milano.*

If I were you, I would apply for that post in Milan.

The same thing can be expressed more plainly and less emphatically:

*Per me, è pericoloso.*

(If you want to know what I think) it’s dangerous.

*Secondo te, non dovrei chiedere un aumento di stipendio?*

In your opinion, shouldn’t I ask for a rise?

▶ See also 27.1.5.

**24.4.5 Other ways of making suggestions**

To propose or suggest something for yourself and others you can use perché non?

*Perché non facciamo una gita in montagna?*

Why don’t we have a trip to the mountains?

Or an imperative verb form:

*Vieni a prendere un caffè a casa mia!*

Come and have a coffee at my house!

**24.5 Advising someone not to do something, giving a warning**

When advising someone not to do something, use avvertire. With this verb, the person being warned or advised is the direct object:

*Il portiere mi ha avvertito che l’acqua non è potabile.*

The porter warned me that the water is not drinkable.

*La maestra dovrebbe avvertire i ragazzi che domani non c’è scuola.*

The teacher should warn the children that tomorrow there is no school.

When warning people to be careful, use stare attento or one of the other expressions below:

*Gli operai dicono al pubblico di stare attenti a non cadere.*

The workmen are telling the public to be careful not to fall.

**24.5.1 Attenzione!**

*Attenzione a non bruciare la cravatta con la candela.*

Watch you don’t burn your tie on the candle.

**24.5.2 Fare attenzione**

*Faccia attenzione al semaforo.*

Look out for the traffic light.

**24.5.3 Stare attento**

*State attenti a non cadere.*

Be careful you don’t fall.
Asking for advice

All the verbs seen above (consigliare, raccomandare, proporre, suggerire) can also be used to ask for advice:

*Cosa mi consiglia di fare?*
What do you advise me to do?

Other ways of asking for advice include:

*Cosa faccio?*
What shall I do? (**Literally**: What do I do?)

*Cosa devo fare?*
What shall I do? (**Literally**: What must I do?)

*Secondo te, cosa dovrei fare?*
In your opinion, what should I do?
Expressing emotions, feelings, attitudes and opinions
Expressing emotions: positive, negative, other

25.1 Introduction

The ways in which emotion can be expressed vary from straightforward vocal interjections (see 25.2 below), for example Ah, oh, ahimé . . . , to exclamations such as Che bello! 'That’s lovely!' or Quanto mi piace questa casa! 'I like this house so much!', through to more complex statements, for example Mi dispiace che tu abbia avuto tanti problemi 'I’m sorry that you’ve had so many problems'.

Here are some of the ways in which we use language to express emotion in Italian, whether positive, negative or neutral.

25.2 Interjections (positive, negative, other)

Emotions can often be conveyed with very simple utterances, which have no specific meaning in themselves, but can be inserted at any point in the conversation and can express a variety of emotions according to the context. These include:

Simple vowel sounds, in general expressing surprise, amazement, shock or horror:
Ah! Oh! Eh! Uh!

Sounds indicating doubt, uncertainty:
Boh!
Di chi è questa macchina? Boh!
Whose car is this? Who knows?

Expressing perplexity and sometimes exasperation:
Mah!
Mah! Chissà come andrà a finire!
Well, I don’t know! Who knows how it will end up!

Expressing embarrassment:
Ehm!

Expressing doubt but sounding almost challenging:
Beh! Cosa volete?
So? What do you want?

Painful feelings (physical or psychological):
(Note that the h is silent – it is not pronounced – in all these interjections.)
Ahi! Ahimè! Ohimè!
Ahi! Mi sono scottato! Ouch! I’ve burnt myself!

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello
Alas, Italy enslaved, wherein dwells grief
(Dante, Purgatorio VI, 76)

Ahimè è finito il vino!
Oh no, the wine is finished!
(Literally: Alas!)

Expressing boredom, impatience, irritation:
Uffa! Non ce la faccio più!
Enough! I can’t stand it any longer!
(no exact translation exists in English)
Expressing positive emotions

Exclamations

Common adjectives (see 1.4), sometimes accompanying nouns, can be used as exclamations, expressing for example pleasure, admiration, enthusiasm, approval, gratitude. Obviously there is a wide range of adjectives that can be used, though only a few are shown here:

- Bello! Beautiful!
- Bravo! Bravissimo! Well done!
- Buon’idea! Good idea!
- Eccellente! Excellent!
- Eccellente! Excellent!

Adjectives can be used with the verb essere to convey positive feelings about someone or something:

- È magnifico! It’s magnificent!
- È bello! How nice!
- È bravo! How clever!
- È buono! How good!
- È un regalo stupendo! It’s a splendid present!

Che (see 3.6.5) can be used with common adjectives such as bello, buono and also with nouns to express a positive emotion:

- Che bel bambino! What a beautiful child!
- Che bello! How nice!
- Che meraviglia! How wonderful!
- Che buono! How good!
- Che bello stasera! How lovely you look tonight!

Another exclamation, which is untranslatable but expresses admiration as well as amazement, is:

- Caspita! Wow! (the translation is approximate)

Satisfaction, admiration, happiness, pleasure

Essere, rimanere

The verbs essere and rimanere can both be used with a past participle or an adjective to express feelings or reactions. Rimanere takes essere in the compound tenses.

- Il direttore era molto soddisfatto del mio lavoro. The manager was very satisfied with my work.
- I ragazzi erano contenti dei regali che gli ho portato dagli USA. The kids were pleased with the presents I brought them from the USA.
- Siamo rimasti veramente delusi della nostra esperienza. We were really disappointed with our experience.
Expressing positive emotions

*Sei rimasta contenta dei voti che hai preso?*  
Were you happy with the marks you got?

Contento, felice, soddisfatto  
The adjectives *contento*, *felice*, *soddisfatto* can either be followed by *di* and the verb infinitive (see 2.2.1) or by *che* introducing a dependent clause. The verb in this clause is normally in the subjunctive (see 2.2.14) in a more formal context or in the indicative (see 2.2.2) in a less formal context:

- **Era contento di venire con voi.**  
  He was happy to come with you.
- **Gli studenti erano soddisfatti di aver superato gli esami.**  
  The students were satisfied at having got through the exams.
- **Sono felice che Lei possa venire al convegno. (subjunctive)**  
  I’m glad you can come to the conference.
- **Sono contento che vieni anche tu stasera. (indicative)**  
  I’m happy you’re coming too tonight.

Fare piacere  
The phrase *fare piacere* means ‘to give pleasure’ (*literally* ‘to make pleasure’). The subject of the verb is the action, event or item giving pleasure, expressed by a noun, a verb infinitive or *che* and the subjunctive, as shown in the three examples below. The person who takes pleasure in the action or event or item – here shown in italics – is indicated by a name or a noun (with a) or an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2):

- **Questa notizia farà molto piacere a Marco.**  
  (Subject: *Questa notizia*)  
  This news will make Marco very happy.
- **Al professore ha fatto piacere sentire le nostre notizie.**  
  (Subject: *sentire le nostre notizie*)  
  The teacher was happy to hear our news.
- **Ci fa piacere che i ragazzi stiano tutti bene.**  
  (Subject: *che i ragazzi stiano tutti bene*)  
  We’re happy that the kids are all well.

> See also 28.2.

25.3 Approval, appreciation, gratitude

Some expressions of approval, appreciation and gratitude include:

**Simple phrases**

| D’accordo! | (Va) Bene! | Benissimo! |
| Agreed! | All right! | Very good! |
| Giusto! | Certo! | Esatto! |
| Right! | Sure! | Chiaro! |
| Sono trenta euro. | Va bene così? | Si, va bene. |
| That’s thirty euros. | Is that all right? | Yes, fine. |

> See also 27.2.1.

**Fare bene**  
The phrase *fare bene* addressed to someone expresses satisfaction or approval of their action:

- **Fai bene a dirmelo.**  
  You are right to tell me.
- **Daniela ha fatto bene a scegliere l’Università di Viterbo.**  
  Daniela did well to choose the University of Viterbo.
25.3.4 Relief

Some expressions of relief include:

- Grazie al cielo!
  Thank heavens!
- Meno male!
  Just as well! Thank goodness!
- Per fortuna!
  Luckily!
- Meno male che ti sei informato.
  Just as well you took the trouble to find out.
- Per fortuna è arrivato subito il medico.
  Luckily the doctor arrived straightaway.

25.3.5 Support

Some expressions of support and solidarity include:

- Evviva!
  Hooray!
- Viva gli sposi!
  Long live the bride and groom!

25.3.6 Interest or enthusiasm

The following expressions express interest and enthusiasm of varying degrees.

**Interessare** (verb used both transitively and intransitively)

Interessare ‘to interest’ can be used either transitively or intransitively and the meaning in each case is very similar. When interessare is used intransitively, the construction is similar to that of piacere (see 18.4.4): the grammatical subject of interessare is the object of interest (il tuo lavoro), while the person interested becomes the indirect object (ti).

- Ti interessa il tuo lavoro?
  Does your work interest you?

**Interessarsi di / a** (verb used reflexively)

When used reflexively, meaning ‘to be interested in’, interessarsi is followed by di or a:

- Il professore si è interessato molto della ricerca degli studenti.
  The professor took a great interest in the students’ research.
- Ci siamo interessati alle storie dei bambini.
  We were interested in the children’s stories.

The same expressions can be used with non to express a lack of enthusiasm or interest:

**Interessato** (adjective)

- Alfredo non si è mai interessato dei figli.
  Alfredo never showed any interest in the children.

**Interessante** (adjective)

- Sono interessanti i lavori di quest’artista, ma non mi piacciono.
  The works of this artist are interesting, but I don’t like them.

**Enthusiasmarsi di** (verb used reflexively)

Entusiasmarsi is normally followed by di:

- Dopo un mese mi sono veramente entusiastata del mio lavoro.
  After a month I got really enthusiastic about my work.

**Enthusiasta** (adjective)

Enthusiasta, which takes the same form whether masculine or feminine, is normally followed by di:
Expressing negative emotions

Mio padre ha novanta anni ma è sempre entusiasta della musica.
My father is ninety but he is still enthusiastic about music.

I turisti sono sempre entusiasti di Venezia.
Tourists are always enthusiastic about Venice.

Appassionarsi (verb used reflexively)
Due anni fa mi sono appassionata della cultura giapponese e ho deciso di trasferirmi a Tokyo.
Two years ago I developed a passion for Japanese culture and I decided to move to Tokyo.

Appassionato (adjective)
Gianni e Luisa sono appassionati di mobili antichi.
Gianni and Luisa are passionate about antique furniture.

Motivato (adjective)
Bisogna essere motivati per fare il dottorato di ricerche.
You have to be motivated to do a Ph.D.

25.4 Expressing negative emotions

25.4.1 Regret, sorrow, unhappiness

Purtroppo expresses regret at a fact:

Purtroppo il treno è in ritardo.
Unfortunately the train is late.

The verb dispiacere (see 28.3.1) can be used with an indirect object noun or pronoun, indicating the person who is expressing regret. It is normally followed by che and the subjunctive:

Ci dispiace che tu non abbia avuto il posto. Mi dispiace che tu la pensi così.
We’re sorry that you didn’t get the job. I’m sorry you feel like that.

You can also use the expression (è un) peccato che, again followed by the indicative in informal spoken Italian but the subjunctive in formal language:

Peccato che voi dovete studiare. (indicative)
Pity (shame) you have to study!

È un peccato che i suoi genitori abitino così lontano. (subjunctive)
It’s a pity (shame) that her parents live so far away.

25.4.2 Desperation

Examples of expressions of despair or desperation are shown below:

Sono disperata, è partito il mio fidanzato per un viaggio di sei mesi.
I’m in despair, my fiancé has left for a six-month-long journey.

Non so più come fare. Non ce la faccio più.
I don’t know what to do any more. I can’t go on.

25.4.3 Disappointment

Simple expressions of disappointment include:

Che delusione! How disappointing!
Che disastro! What a disaster!
Per amor del cielo! Heaven forbid!
EXPRESSING EMOTIONS: POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, OTHER

You can use the verb *deludere* to talk about your disappointment:

*Sono veramente delusa del tuo comportamento.*  
*I’m really disappointed with your behaviour.*

Mi hai proprio deluso.
*You’ve really disappointed me.*

The verb *dispiacere*, seen above, can also be used to express disappointment, followed by *che* and the subjunctive:

*Sono proprio dispiacuto che i nostri amici non siano (sono) venuti.*
*I’m really upset that our friends didn’t come.*

**Dispiacere** can also be used as a noun:

*Che dispiacere mi ha fatto vederlo così mal ridotto!*
*I found it so hard to see him in such bad shape!*

## 25.4.4 Dissatisfaction

Examples of expressions of dissatisfaction are shown below:

*Così non va bene.*
*That won’t do.*

Il tuo supervisore non è molto soddisfatto del tuo lavoro.
*Your supervisor isn’t very satisfied with your work.*

A volte i clienti rimangono insoddisfatti della qualità del prodotto.
*Sometimes customers are dissatisfied with the quality of the product.*

## 25.4.5 Disapproval, disagreement

Examples of expressions of disapproval or disagreement are shown below:

*Sono contrario all’idea di andare al mare solo per la giornata.*
*I’m against the idea of going to the seaside just for the day.*

*Mia madre non approva le mie scelte.*
*My mother doesn’t approve of my choices.*

*Hai fatto male a scegliere Giurisprudenza.*
*You made a mistake choosing law.*

► See also 27.2.2.

## 25.4.6 Irritation, annoyance, displeasure

Irritation, annoyance or displeasure can be expressed in many different ways, ranging from mild to extreme, as in the examples below:

*Non mi piace il tuo comportamento.*
*I don’t like your behaviour.*

*Non mi va!*
*I don’t like it!*

*Basta!*
*That’s enough!*

*Il mio fidanzato era proprio seccato con me.*
*My boyfriend was really fed-up with me.*

*Se mia madre venisse a sapere, sarebbe furiosa.*
*If my mother were to find out, she would be furious.*

*I professori sono furibondi con gli studenti che non hanno partecipato al seminario.*
*The lecturers are furious with the students who didn’t take part in the seminar.*

*Quando ha saputo della macchina, è andato su tutte le furie.*
*When he found out about the car, he went wild.*
25.4 Expressing negative emotions

25.4.7 Boredom

Boredom is expressed by an adjective such as noioso or a noun such as noia:

È un libro veramente noioso. Che noia!
It’s a really boring book. What a bore!

È noioso imparare i verbi irregolari. Che noia!
It’s boring learning irregular verbs.

Other more colloquial expressions include:

Che barba! Che palle! (vulgar)
What a bore! What a bore!

25.4.8 Anger

Anger can be conveyed with stronger language, such as the interjections below. These kinds of words do not always have an exact translation in English and should be used with care:

Mannaggia! Accidenti! Porca miseria!

There is an infinite variety of curses and swear words used by Italians of different age groups, regions and dialects. We leave it to the reader to investigate further.

Less harsh but more explicit ways of expressing anger include:

Che rabbia! Che nervi!
That’s really infuriating! It gets on my nerves!

Mi fa una rabbia pensare che ha vinto lui invece di me.
It makes me angry to think that he won instead of me.

Le fanno venire i nervi tutti questi spostamenti.
All these moves get on her nerves.

25.4.9 Antipathy, hostility

A variety of idiomatic expressions can be used to indicate the speaker’s antipathy towards somebody. Mild dislike can be expressed as follows:

Non mi piacevano gli amici di mia madre.
I didn’t like my mother’s friends.

Non ci va il nuovo preside.
We don’t like the new headmaster.

Alfredo le è sempre stato antipatico.
She’s always disliked Alfredo.

Non lo trovi un po’ antipatico?
Don’t you find him rather unlikeable?

Se viene Caterina, io non vengo. Non la sopporto.
If Caterina is coming, I’m not coming. I can’t stand her.

You can express your hostility with a range of appropriate curses:

Al diavolo! Va al diavolo! Che gli venga un accidente!
To hell! Go to hell! Damn him!

You can use adjectives such as antipatico, aggressivo, ostile:

Sei proprio antipatico. Vattene.
You’re really horrible. Go away.

Leonardo è una persona molto aggressiva.
Leonardo is a really aggressive person.
A volte gli inglesi possono sembrare addirittura ostili.
Sometimes the English can seem downright hostile.

You may want to employ a certain degree of courtesy and formality:

Per favore, mi lasci in pace. Si accomodi fuori!
Please, leave me alone. Leave the room now.

25.4.10 Disgust

Disgust is usually conveyed by the following expressions, rather informal and vulgar, but very common:

Che schifo! Mi fa schifo!
Disgusting! I’m disgusted! It makes me sick.

Mi fa schifo dover lavorare con gente del genere!
It makes me sick having to work with this sort of people!

Questi episodi di razzismo fanno schifo.
These episodes of racism are sickening.

25.5 Expressing other emotions

In this section we look at ways of expressing emotions which are neither positive nor negative. Some expressions are neutral, some can be used in either a positive or a negative context and some express a mixture of emotions.

25.5.1 Indifference

Ways of expressing indifference to a person, object or proposal include the following:

è lo stesso it’s the same
è uguale it’s the same
fa lo stesso it’s the same
non fa differenza it doesn’t make any difference
non ha importanza it’s not important
non importa it’s not important (can be used with indirect pronoun)
non interessa it’s of no interest, I don’t care (used with indirect pronoun)

Look at these examples:

A me non interessa se vieni o no. Fai come vuoi.
I don’t care if you come or not. Do what you want.

Se per te è uguale, rimaniamo fino al 15 dicembre.
If it’s all the same for you, we’ll stay until the 15th of December.

Scegli quello che vuoi, tanto per me è lo stesso.
Choose what you want, it’s all the same for me anyway.

Fa lo stesso se viaggiamo in treno o in macchina?
Does it matter whether we travel by train or by car?

Che lui venga o no per me fa lo stesso.
Whether he comes or not, it’s the same for me.

Non importa se finisci l’esercizio o no.
It doesn’t matter if you finish the exercise or not.

Non mi importa niente della tua vita personale.
I don’t care about your personal life.

I voti che danno i professori non importano a nessuno.
The marks the teachers give don’t matter to anyone.
Expressing other emotions

Scusa, che t’importa di quello che dice lui?
Excuse me, what do you care about what he says?

Mangiamo dove vuoi tu, per me è indifferente.
Let’s eat where you want, for me it’s the same.

Quello che pensano loro non mi interessa.
I don’t care what they think.

Non me ne importa niente.
I don’t care a bit about it.

Non ha importanza.
It doesn’t matter.

Non fa nessuna differenza.
It doesn’t make any difference.

The lack of positive qualities such as interest and enthusiasm (see 25.3.6) can also convey indifference:

Gli manca proprio l’entusiasmo.
He’s really lacking enthusiasm.

Non ha interesse (nel suo lavoro).
He has no interest (in his work).

Gli studenti sono poco motivati.
The students are not very motivated.

Or, more forcefully:

Non gliene frega niente. Chi se ne frega?
He couldn’t give a damn. Who cares?

In the expression non me ne importa niente, niente can be replaced by un corno / un fico (secco), both very colloquial expressions:

Non me ne importa un fico (secco).
(Literally) I don’t care a (dried) fig.

25.5.2 Resignation

When you are resigned to a situation, or feel you can do little about it:

Pazienza!
Never mind! (Literally: Patience!)

Mi dispiace, sono finite le lasagne.
Sorry, the lasagne is finished.

Fa lo stesso. Prendo i tortellini.
It doesn’t matter. I’ll have the tortellini.

Non c’è niente da fare.
There’s nothing to be done.

Cosa vuoi! Hanno sedici anni.
What do you expect? They’re sixteen years old.

25.5.3 Puzzlement, perplexity

Cosa faccio? Non so (più) cosa fare.
What shall I do now? I don’t know what to do (now).

25.5.4 Pity

Pity for others is conveyed by expressions such as fare pena or far pietà:
Questi bambini mi fanno pena.
I feel sorry for these children.

Faceva pena vedere i mendicanti per la strada.
It was pitiful to see the beggars on the street.

I profughi fanno pietà a tutti.
Everyone feels sorry for refugees.

The exclamation Poveretto! also expresses pity, as does the adjective povero used with a noun, proper name or stressed object pronoun (see 3.3.2):

La professoressa ha lavorato anche durante l’intervallo. Poveretta!
The teacher worked during the interval as well. Poor thing!

Povero Mario, gli va tutto storto.
Poor Mario, everything goes wrong for him.

Povero me! Devo preparare due conferenze in una settimana.
Poor me! I have to prepare two talks in a week.

25.5 Trust

Verbs and verb phrases conveying trust and confidence – or lack of it – in someone or something include: fidarsi (di), avere fiducia (in):

Mi posso fidare di lui?
Can I trust him?

Non hai fiducia in me.
You don’t have any confidence in me.

In Italia, non c’è fiducia nelle banche.
In Italy, there is no trust / confidence in the banks.

25.6 Surprise, shock, amazement

The following expressions can express either positive or negative emotions according to the context:

Che sorpresa! Veramente?
What a surprise! Really?

Che bella sorpresa! Mamma mia!
What a nice surprise! (untranslatable)

Che brutta sorpresa! Non ci credo!
What a horrible surprise! I don’t believe it!

Davvero? Roba da pazzi!
Really? You must be joking! (approximate meaning)

Some verbs or verb phrases can also be used:

Il film mi ha fatto impressione.
The film shocked me.

25.7 Expectation

The expression non vedere l’ora means that you are looking forward to something:

Non vedo l’ora di finire questo libro!
I can’t wait to finish this book!

I bambini non vedono l’ora di andare in vacanza.
The children can’t wait to go on holiday.

See also 25.2 for an interjection expressing impatience in a less positive way.
26

Expressing emotions: hope, fear, doubt

26.1 Introduction

Emotions you might want to express in Italian include hope, fear and doubt. Like the other subjective utterances, they are often represented by a verb construction requiring the subjunctive (see 2.2.14).

26.2 Expressing hope

26.2.1 Sperare

The verb *sperare* is used to express ‘hope’, followed either by *di* and a verb infinitive (see 2.2.1) or by *che* and a subjunctive (see 2.2.14).

The construction *di* + verb infinitive can only be used where the subject or implied subject is the same in both parts of the sentence (‘I hope that *I* will see you tomorrow’):

*Spero di vederti domani.*
I hope to see you tomorrow.

Otherwise, when the two verbs have a different subject (‘I hope that your mother feels better now’), *che* must be used, followed by the subjunctive:

*Spero che tua madre si senta meglio adesso.*
I hope your mother feels better now.

*Speriamo* is often used as a kind of imperative form (‘let’s hope’), thus conveying a certain anxiety or pessimistic expectation:

*Speriamo di farcela!*
Let’s hope we can manage it! (*but it’s going to be hard*)

**Arriverai in tempo?**
Will you arrive in time?

**Speriamo di sì!**
Hopefully yes! (*or I’ll be in trouble*)

**Sta finendo la benzina?**
Are we running out of petrol?

**Speriamo di no!**
Let’s hope not!

26.2.2 Augurarsi

In formal conversation and greetings you can use *mi auguro* instead of *spero* to convey a combination of hoping and wishing. It is most often followed by *che* and the subjunctive but can also be followed by *di* and the infinitive, in the same way as *sperare* is:

**ArrivederLa. Mi auguro che faccia un buon viaggio.**
Goodbye. I hope you’ll have a nice journey.

**Mi auguro che il vostro progetto abbia successo.**
I hope your project will be successful.
EXPRESSING EMOTIONS: HOPE, FEAR, DOUBT

Mi auguro di vederti presto.
I hope to see you soon.

26.3

Expressing fear, pessimism or regret

Both avere paura and temere express fear but can also convey anxiety, pessimism or even regret.

26.3.1 Fear

When expressing real fear, temere is normally followed by a direct object, while the more common avere paura is followed by di then the object of fear:

Ho paura dei temporali.
I am scared of thunderstorms.

Mia nonna teme anche le più piccole malattie.
My grandmother is afraid of even the slightest illness.

26.3.2 Pessimism or anxiety

When expressing pessimism or anxiety, both avere paura and temere can be followed by di and a verb infinitive or by che and the subjunctive, in the same way as the verbs expressing emotion in Chapter 25.

Ho sempre paura di sbagliare.
I am always afraid of making a mistake.

I genitori hanno sempre paura che i ragazzi vengano bocciati.
Parents are always afraid that their children will fail their exams.

La mia amica teme di essere incinta.
My friend is afraid she might be pregnant.

Gli italiani temono che l’euro perda valore.
The Italians fear that the euro will lose value.

Quattro genitori su cinque temono che i loro figli diventino “Facebook-dipendenti”.
Four parents out of five fear that their children will become ‘Facebook-dependent’.

Sperare can also be used to express anxiety:

Speriamo che non succeda niente di brutto.
Let’s hope nothing awful happens.

See also 26.2.1.
Expressing fear, pessimism or regret

26.3.3 Regret

In the following examples temere and avere paura are used, in the same way as the English ‘to be afraid’, as an expression of regret rather than fear. They are followed either by di and the infinitive or by che and the subjunctive:

Temo di disturbare.
I am afraid I am disturbing (you).

Si è roatta la macchina?  Ho paura di sì!
Has the car broken down? I am afraid so!

Ho paura che sia troppo tardi per disdire l’appuntamento.
I am afraid it is too late to cancel the appointment.

26.3.4 Terror, panic

Stronger feelings such as terror or panic can be represented by nouns such as:

fifa  ‘fear’ (rather ironical)
panico  ‘panic’
spavento  ‘fear’
terrore  ‘terror’

Che fifa!
What a fright! (said scathingly, if someone is exaggerating their fear)

Che spavento!
What a fright!

Various phrases use these nouns or a variation of them:

avere fifa  to be scared
lasciarsi prendere dal panico  to get in a panic
prendere uno spavento  to get a fright
essere in preda al panico  to be in the grip of panic
avere il terrore  to be terrified
essere terrorizzato  to be terrified

Tutti gli studenti hanno una fifa eccessiva degli esami.
All students have an exaggerated fear of exams.

Non lasciarti prendere dal panico.
Don’t panic.

A grandi altezze mi prende il panico.
I get panicky at heights.

Durante i bombardamenti la popolazione era in preda al panico.
During the bombardments, the population was in a panic.

Quando l’aereo è atterrato nella tempesta ho preso uno spavento che non dimenticherò mai più!
When the plane landed in the storm, I was so scared that I’ll never forget it!

Here the pronominal verb form (mi sono presa) is used to express emotional involvement:

Mi sono presa uno spavento.
I got a fright.

Spavento can also be used as the grammatical subject of prendere:

Mi ha preso uno spavento.
I got a fright. (Literally: Fear gripped me.)

Il mio collega ha il terrore di essere licenziato.
My colleague is terrified of being sacked.

Mia moglie è terrorizzata dai topi.
My wife is terrified of rats.
Expressing doubt

26.4.1 With a verb followed by the subjunctive

As you have seen in several parts of this book, the use of verbs in the subjunctive mood (see 2.2.14), as an alternative to the indicative mood (see 2.2.2), is the most common way to express doubt or uncertainty in Italian. The subjunctive is frequently found linked with verbs indicating doubt, opinion, guessing and possibility such as credere, dubitare, immaginare, pensare, ritenere, sembrare, while the indicative is used where there is more certainty:

- Ritengo che Luigi potrà laurearsi il prossimo luglio. (quite certain)
- Ritengo che Luigi possa laurearsi il prossimo luglio. (possible)
- Immagino che sei stanco. (quite certain)
- Immagino che tu sia stanco. (possible/ probable)

Information on the forms of the subjunctive can be found in 2.2.14, while other examples of how it is used will be found throughout Sections III and IV.

26.4.2 With the future indicative

The future indicative (see 2.2.9) is also often used to express something that is probable but not definite. The future perfect is used in a similar way but referring to the past.

- Non ho l’orologio. Saranno quasi le otto. (I don’t have a watch. It must be almost eight o’clock.)
- Che bella macchina. Costerà un occhio della testa. (What a beautiful car. It must cost a fortune.)
- Marco non c’è. Sarà uscito. (Marco’s not there. He must have gone out.)

26.4.3 With specific verbs such as dubitare

The verb dubitare expresses doubt in an explicit way. It is followed by che and the subjunctive, or by di and a verb infinitive (see also 26.2.1 above):

- Il tecnico dubita che il problema si risolva così facilmente. (The technician doubts whether the problem will be solved so easily.)
- Dubito di poter risolvere facilmente il problema. (I doubt whether I’ll be able to solve the problem easily.)

26.4.4 Forse, possibilmente, probabilmente, eventualmente

The adverbs listed above (see also 6.3.7) can be used to imply an element of doubt in anything you say.

Forse is the most colloquial and also generic in meaning. Possibilmente is similar in meaning but less used. Probabilmente implies something more likely to happen. Eventualmente expresses an option or a possible alternative. It must not be confused with the English ‘eventually’ which conveys the idea of something that will happen in the future. Eventualmente expresses something that is only a possibility (‘if something were to happen’).

- Non so se avrò tempo. Eventualmente passerò a salutarti verso le 5.00. (I don’t know whether I’ll have time. Possibly (if I have the time) I’ll pop in to say hello around 5 o’clock.)
Expressing doubt

In frigorifero non c’è quasi nulla. Eventualmente possiamo uscire a mangiare una pizza.
There is almost nothing in the fridge. We can (if you agree with the idea) go out and eat a pizza.

26.4.5 Può darsi

This expression also indicates doubt or possibility. It is normally followed by che and the subjunctive, but can also be used on its own in answer to a question. It is possible to replace the subjunctive with a future indicative, depending on how likely the event is to happen, as in the second example below.

Non rispondono al telefono. Può darsi che siano usciti.
They’re not answering the phone. They might have gone out.

Può darsi che stasera venga/verrà Marinella a cena.
It’s possible that Marinella will come for dinner tonight.

Ci sarà la Divina Commedia in biblioteca?
Do you think there is a copy of the Divine Comedy in the library?  Può darsi!
Possibly!

26.4.6 Chissà se . . .

This expression means ‘who knows whether . . .?’ and is followed by a verb in the indicative. It carries a strong sense of doubt.

Chissà se c’è ancora qualcuno in ufficio?
Is it possible that someone is still in the office?

Chissà se sono già partiti?
Could they have already left?

Chissà can also be used as the answer to a question, expressing considerable doubt:

Pensi che ci pagheranno in tempo?  Chissà?!
Do you think they will pay us in time?  God knows!
Expressing an opinion or belief, agreement or disagreement

27.1 Expressing or seeking an opinion or belief

There are many ways of expressing your own opinion, whether hesitantly or forcefully. You can also seek someone else’s opinion using a similar range of expressions.

27.1.1 Pensare, credere expressing an opinion

The verb pensare can be used in three different ways to express an opinion.

Pensare di and a noun:

*Cosa pensate di questo cantante?*
What do you think of this singer?

Pensare di followed by a verb infinitive (see 2.2.1):

*Pensi di essere infallibile?*
Do you think you are infallible?

Pensare che followed by the subjunctive (see 2.2.14):

*I clienti pensavano che il direttore fosse molto in gamba.*
The customers thought that the manager was very good.

Where pensare means ‘to think’, ‘to believe’ (not ‘to think of’ as in the first example), it can be replaced by credere:

*Lo credevano un genio.*
They thought he was a genius.

*I clienti credevano che il direttore fosse onesto.*
The customers thought that the manager was honest.

Another verb which expresses opinion is ritenere which can be followed by di and an infinitive or che and a subjunctive:

*Ritengo di avere i requisiti da voi richiesti.*
I believe I have the qualities you are looking for.

*Mio padre riteneva che le vacanze fossero una perdita di tempo e denaro.*
My father thought that holidays were a waste of time and money.

For ways in which you can make a point in a discussion or argument, see 41.4.3.

27.1.2 Credere expressing a belief

Credere can also be used to convey religious, political, ideological or other strong belief. In this context it is generally used with in:
Expressing or seeking an opinion or belief

_Credo in Dio Padre onnipotente, creatore del cielo e della terra._
I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
(adapted from the Creed)

_I buddisti credono nella reincarnazione dell’anima._
Buddhists believe in the reincarnation of the soul.

_I musulmani credono nella rivelazione del Corano._
Muslims believe in the revelations of the Koran.

_Se non credi in te stesso non raggiungerai mai il tuo scopo._
If you don’t believe in yourself, you will never reach your goal.

_Molti italiani credono in un sistema educativo pubblico e gratuito._
Many Italians believe in an education system that is public and free.

27.1.3 **Sembrare, parere expressing an opinion**

The verbs _sembrare, parere_ are used impersonally (‘it seems . . .’) with an indirect object or object pronoun (see 3.4.2) to express an opinion. They are slightly more tentative in expressing a view than _pensare_ or _credere_:

 Cá sembra che sia una iniziativa valida.
It seems to us that this is a worthwhile initiative.

_Ti pare giusto escludere Teresa?_  
Do you think it’s fair to exclude Teresa?

As well as this impersonal use, _sembrare_ and _parere_ can also be used to say how a person or object seems, in which case the person or object becomes the grammatical subject of the sentence:

_Il suo ragionamento non mi è sembrato molto valido._
His reasoning didn’t seem very sound to me.

_Come ti sembra questo progetto?_  
What do you think of this project?

_Come vi è parso il direttore d’orchestra?_  
How did the conductor seem to you?

_I bambini non mi sembravano molto contenti._
The children didn’t seem very happy to me.

27.1.4 **Nouns meaning ‘opinion’**

There are lots of words meaning ‘opinion’: _il giudizio, l’opinione, il parere, la valutazione_.  
Probably the most frequently used is _il parere_. They are followed by _di_ or _su_.

_Vorrei conoscere il Suo parere sulla qualità dei nostri prodotti._
I would like to know your opinion of the quality of our products.

_Qual è la tua valutazione della situazione?_  
What is your evaluation of the situation?

You can also use the expression _essere del parere_ ‘to be of the opinion (that)’:

_Mio marito è del parere che dovremmo andare a sciare nelle Dolomiti quest’anno._
My husband is of the opinion that we ought to go skiing in the Dolomites this year.

_Noi siamo del parere opposto._
We are of the opposite opinion.

27.1.5 **Phrases meaning ‘in my opinion’**

Any of the following phrases can be used as an adjunct to the main message of the sentence, with the meaning ‘in my opinion’: _a mio parere, a parer mio, nella mia opinione, per me, secondo me, secondo la mia opinione_. The phrases do not alter the verb tense or mood. The
An important linguistic function in any language is to be able to express or indicate agreement or disagreement with a person or a statement. Not surprisingly, there are many ways of doing this in Italian, some more polite than others.

### Expressing agreement, disagreement

Simple expressions of agreement include:

- **OK**
- **va bene**
- **essere d’accordo** (to be) agreed / in agreement
- **essere favorevole** to be in favour (of)
- **è vero / è giusto** that’s true / that’s correct

Note how these expressions are used:

- **È vero quello che dici tu.**
  
  What you say is true.

- **Era vero che c’erano pochi dipendenti disposti a lavorare anche il sabato.**
  
  It was true that there were few employees willing to work on Saturdays too.

- **Sono d’accordo che bisogna cambiare la struttura del reparto.**
  
  I agree that we need to change the structure of the department.

**Essere d’accordo** is followed by **con** when saying you agree with someone:

- **Sono d’accordo con te.**
  
  I agree with you.
Expressing agreement, disagreement

**Essere d’accordo** can be followed by **con** or **su** with a noun, to say what you agree with:

- **I dipendenti saranno d’accordo con la decisione del sindacato.**
  The employees will agree with the decision of the trade union.

- **I clienti sono d’accordo sul prezzo.**
  The customers are in agreement on the price.

The expression **mettersi d’accordo** (to come to an agreement) can also be used (see also **27.2.2**):

- **I paesi islamici devono mettersi d’accordo per aiutare a risolvere i problemi in Siria.**
  The Islamic countries have to come to an agreement, in order to help solve the problems in Syria.

Other ways of expressing agreement, particularly in the spoken language, include:

- **Hai proprio ragione.** You’re absolutely right.
- **Sì, anch’io la vedo così.** Yes, I see it like that too.
- **Naturalmente.** Naturally. (Of course.)

**Expressing disagreement**

Expressions of disagreement include:

- **essere contrario a** to be against
- **non condividere (una scelta, una decisione)** not to agree with (a choice, a decision)
- **non essere d’accordo** not to be in agreement
- **non è vero** it’s not true
- **per niente** not at all
- **sbagliare** to be wrong

Here are some examples of how these expressions are used:

- **Non condivido la tua scelta di partner.**
  I don’t agree with your choice of partner.

- **Su questo aspetto del Trattato di Maastricht gli Eurodeputati inglesi non sono mai stati d’accordo con gli Eurodeputati francesi.**
  On this aspect of the Treaty of Maastricht the English Euro MPs have never been in agreement with the French Euro MPs.

- **Sbagli. Vincerà la Juventus, non il Milan.**
  You are wrong. Juventus will win, not Milan. (*Italian football teams*)

The phrase **non è vero** can be used to correct a statement or deny an accusation. In formal language, the construction **non è vero** takes the verb in the subjunctive:

- **Non è vero che l’abbiano licenziato. È stato lui a dare le dimissioni.**
  It’s not true that they’ve fired him. It was he who resigned.

Often in less formal language, the indicative is used instead:

- **Non è vero che Marco è stato fuori per una settimana.**
  It’s not true that Marco has been away for a week.

Another way of expressing disbelief is:

- **Non ci credo per niente.**
  I don’t believe a word.

**Agreeing in part: non dico che**

**Non dico** takes **che** followed by a verb in the subjunctive:

- **Non dico che vada bene il suo comportamento, ma lo capisco.**
  I’m not saying that his behaviour is all right, but I can understand it.
28

Indicating preference, likes and dislikes

28.1 Introduction

One of the communicative functions that you need to master in Italian is how to express likes, preferences, and, on occasions, dislikes. Some of the ways of expressing likes or dislikes are more appropriate for people, others for objects.

28.2 Expressing likes

28.2.1 Things and people, using piacere

Probably the commonest way of expressing likes or dislikes is to use the verb piacere (see 18.4.4) and an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2). Piacere means ‘to please’, so the English sentence ‘I like music’ becomes in Italian ‘Music is pleasing to me’ La musica mi piace. Since Italian word order is flexible, you can also say mi piace la musica. Whichever way round, the item or person giving pleasure is the grammatical subject of the sentence and the person receiving pleasure is the indirect object:

Mi piace la musica.
I like music.

To emphasise the person who likes music, you can use a stressed indirect object pronoun (see 3.3.2):

La musica piace a me.

Piacere is equally suitable for people, objects or activities. If the person or item liked is plural, the verb must be plural too:

Ci piace la pasta.
We like pasta.

Ci piacciono gli spaghetti.
We like spaghetti.

Piacere can be used in a full range of tenses and uses essere in all compound tenses:

Mi piaceva andare a trovare i nonni.
I liked going to see my grandparents.

Quella ragazza mi è piaciuta tanto.
I really liked that girl.

Mi piacerebbe andare in Sicilia.
I would like to go to Sicily.

The indirect object (the person receiving pleasure) can be a proper name or a noun governed by a:

A Marco piaceva andare in bicicletta.
Marco used to like going by bike.
Expressing likes

Il caldo piace solo alla gente che è in vacanza.
Only people who are on holiday like the heat.

Ai ragazzi italiani piacciono le magliette americane.
Italian kids like American T-shirts.

An unstressed indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2), here indicated in bold italic, can be used in place of the person:

Come può piacerti una persona così superficiale?
How can you like such a superficial person?

Vi sono piaciuti i cannelloni fatti con spinaci?
Did you like the cannelloni made with spinach?

The following example uses the emphatic (stressed) form of indirect pronoun (see 3.3.2) to contrast and compare differing tastes:

A noi piaceva fare delle lunghe passeggiate, a loro piaceva stare fermi.
We liked going for long walks; they liked staying still.

Molto, tanto, poco, abbastanza

The extent of like or dislike can be indicated with an adverb of quantity such as molto ‘a lot’, tanto ‘a lot’, ‘so much’, poco ‘not very much’, ‘a little’, abbastanza ‘fairly’, ‘enough’, ‘sort of’, etc. (see also 6.3.5):

Mi piace molto questo paese.
I like this village a lot.

Gli piaceva tanto andare in barca.
He used to love going in the boat.

Ti piacciono queste scarpe? Abbastanza.
Do you like these shoes? Sort of.

Liking a person

Because likes and loves are a subject much discussed in everyday life, there is no shortage of phrases used to express them:

amare to love
prendere la/una cotta per to get a crush on
trovare simpatico to find someone likeable
volere bene a to love, to like

Ho conosciuto il nuovo insegnante; l’ho trovato molto simpatico.
I’ve met the new teacher; I found him very nice.

Amare and volere bene a can be used for any friendly or loving relationship, whether romantic or not:

Vogliamo bene a tutti i nostri figli.
We love all our children.

Ti amo più di ieri, meno di domani.
I love you more than yesterday, less than tomorrow.

(a romantic declaration often engraved on medallions and lockets)

Prendere la/una cotta always has a romantic/sexual connotation:

Pino mi ha telefonato di nuovo stasera; ha proprio preso una cotta.
Pino rang me again tonight; he’s really got a crush on me.

Liking an object or activity

Apart from piacere, you can use one of the following expressions to say what you like or what you like doing:
indicating preference, likes and dislikes

amare  to love
andare b(ene)  to be all right, OK, acceptable
gradire  to please (mainly used when offering food and drink and considered rather old-fashioned)

I miei genitori amano la musica classica.

Gradisce un aperitivo?  Would you like an aperitif?

Like piacere, andare (bene) can be used with an indirect object pronoun, referring to the person doing the liking, and either a noun or di and a verb infinitive, to say what he/she likes or likes doing:

Ti va bene questo posto?  Is this place all right for you?
Vi va di mangiare fuori stasera?  Do you feel like eating out tonight?

To talk about enjoyment, you can use verbs such as:

divertirsi  to enjoy oneself
godersi  to enjoy (something)

Divertirsi and godersi are pronominal verbs (see 2.1.10) which act like reflexives, in other words they are always used with the reflexive pronoun:

Vi siete divertiti a Londra?  Did you enjoy yourselves in London?
Ti diverti a giocare a carte?  Do you like playing cards?

Unlike true reflexive verbs, however, godere can also take a direct object, either noun (le vacanze) or direct object pronoun. The past participle can either agree with the direct object (as in the second example below) or with the grammatical subject (as in the first example below):

I ragazzi si sono goduti le vacanze al mare.
The boys enjoyed their holiday at the seaside.
Me la sono proprio goduta, la vacanza.
I really enjoyed it, the holiday.

▶ See also 3.4.8 on dislocation.

La vita è una sola. Goditela!
You've only got one life. Enjoy it!

28.3 Expressing dislikes

Most of the expressions conveying dislikes can be used equally for a person, object, event or activity.

28.3.1 Non ... piacere

If you really don’t like something or someone, you can say so just by using piacere and adding non:

Non mi è piaciuto il tuo comportamento.
I didn’t like your behaviour.
Gli spinaci non piacevano ai ragazzi.
The boys didn’t like spinach.
Al direttore non piace scrivere delle relazioni.
The manager doesn’t like writing reports.
Non mi piacciono le persone maleducate.
I don’t like bad-mannered people.
Expressing dislikes

Note that dispiacere is not the exact opposite of piacere; it does not mean ‘to dislike’. It expresses a polite request, as in Ti dispiace passarmi il sale? ‘Would you mind passing me the salt?’, or an apology, as in Mi dispiace ‘I am sorry’ (literally: ‘It is displeasing to me’) (see 20.7).

Dispiacere uses a construction similar to that of piacere; the indirect pronoun mi, ti, gli, etc. (see 3.4.2) indicates the person who is apologising:

Scusi, mi dispiace disturbilarla.
Excuse me, I’m sorry to disturb you.

28.3.2 Conveying mild dislike

Sometimes it is better to be tactful and tell someone that you ‘don’t like something very much’ by using the adverb poco (see 6.3.5):

Le piace questo libro? A me piace poco.
Do you like this book? I don’t like it very much.

The adverb abbastanza (see 6.3.5, 28.2.1) expresses a distinct lack of enthusiasm:

Le piacciono le vongole? Abbastanza.
Do you like clams? A bit. (Literally: enough)

28.3.3 Other expressions of dislike

trovare antipatico to find (someone) unpleasant, disagreeable
(non) andare (bene) to be not all right, not acceptable

Trovare antipatico is normally used to refer to a person, expressed as direct object of trovare:

Trovo il mio capo proprio antipatico.
I find my boss really disagreeable.

The verb (non) andare (bene) is normally used with an object or activity and can be followed by a noun or by di and an infinitive:

Non mi va il tuo comportamento.
I don’t like your behaviour.

Non le va di uscire stasera.
She doesn’t feel like going out this evening.

It is occasionally used to refer to a person:

Non gli va bene Marco al posto di Giorgio.
He’s not happy about Marco (being) in place of Giorgio.

28.3.4 Conveying strong dislike

Here are some stronger ways of conveying dislike, of a person or object:

detestare to hate
fare schifo a qualcuno to make somebody sick
fare effetto a qualcuno to make somebody sick (mainly referring to an object that makes someone sick)
non sopportare to not be able to stand
non tollerare to not be able to stand
non potere vedere to not be able to bear
odiare to hate

Non sopporto il mio collega, lo trovo proprio antipatico.
I can’t bear my colleague, I find him really unpleasant.

Il direttore non poteva vedere Berlusconi.
The manager couldn’t stand Berlusconi.
Mio padre detesta i fannulloni.
My father detests layabouts.

Non mi piacciono le vongole. Mi fanno effetto.
I don’t like clams. They make me want to throw up.

Vedere le mosche sulla carne mi ha fatto schifo.
Seeing the flies on the meat made me feel sick.

Odio gli spinaci.
I hate spinach.

Expressing a preference

To express a preference, you can use piacere, with (di) più ‘more’ or (di) meno ‘less’:

Noi andiamo al mare quest’estate, ma ci piacerebbe di più andare in montagna.
We’re going to the sea this summer, but we would prefer to go to the mountains.

Secondo un sondaggio recente sui personaggi famosi, sono i politici che piacciono di meno alla gente.
According to a recent survey on famous people, it’s the politicians who are the least liked by people.

You can also use preferire ‘to prefer’, followed by a noun or a verb infinitive:

I professori preferiscono gli studenti che si impegnano di più.
Lecturers prefer students who are more committed.

Oggi si preferisce mangiare meno carne, più verdura e frutta fresca.
Today people prefer eating less meat, more vegetables and fresh fruit.
29

Expressing certainty and knowledge

29.1 Introduction

This section of the book is about expressing states of mind and emotions. In this particular chapter we look at ways of expressing degrees of certainty, including knowing, remembering and forgetting. The various degrees of uncertainty are reflected in the choice of verb mood: indicative for statements that are concrete or certain, subjunctive for those statements that have an element of uncertainty.

29.2 Sapere

The verb sapere ‘to know’ (see 2.2.3) can be used in four different ways.

With a noun or noun equivalent (a fact or piece of information):

Lei sa quanto è il cambio con la sterlina?
Do you know how much the exchange with sterling is?

Bisogna sapere queste date a memoria.
These dates must be known by heart.

Non so niente di questo.
I don’t know anything about this.

With a verb infinitive:

Per chi sa usare il computer, è facile fare acquisti in internet.
For those who know how to use the computer, it’s easy to shop online.

With a dependent clause introduced by se:

Sai se arrivano oggi i nostri amici?
Do you know if our friends are arriving today?

With a dependent clause introduced by che:

Saevamo che lui veniva, ma non l’ora precisa del suo arrivo.
We knew he was coming, but not the precise time of his arrival.

Normally, sapere che and sapere se are followed by a verb in the indicative:

Il direttore sa che c’è ancora molto da fare.
The manager knows there’s still a lot to do.

Sappiamo se lui vuole il posto?
Do we know if he wants the job?

When sapere is negative, it is often followed by the subjunctive to stress uncertainty, as shown below (see also 32.3). However this is not essential in informal conversation or writing, where the indicative is often used, as shown in the last example:
**Non sapevo che tu cantassi così bene.**
I didn’t know you sang so well.

**Non so se si possa rimborsare il biglietto.**
I don’t know if the ticket can be refunded.

**Non so se questa sia una mossa intelligente.**
I don’t know if this is an intelligent move.

**Il mio collega non sa che sta per essere licenziato.**
My colleague doesn’t know he’s about to be sacked.

At the end of a sentence expressing uncertainty, you can add the phrase **o no**, for example:

**Non so se questa sia una mossa intelligente, o no.**
I don’t know if this is an intelligent move, or not.

### Essere certo, sicuro, convinto

Certainty or uncertainty can be expressed using the verb **essere** and one of the following adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>certo</td>
<td>certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convinto</td>
<td>convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sicuro</td>
<td>sure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Convinto** is the past participle of the verb **convincere**.

The message that follows can be introduced either by **di** and the infinitive or by **che**.

The construction **di** + infinitive can be used only if the subject of the two parts of the sentence is the same (‘you . . . you’):

**Siete sicuri di trovare la strada?**
Are you sure you’ll find the road?

Otherwise use **che** followed by either the subjunctive or the indicative. The **indicative** (see 2.2.2) is used when you are reasonably certain of something, as in the first example below. The **subjunctive** (see 2.2.14) is used when the sentence is negative or interrogative, expressing doubt or uncertainty, as in the second example:

**Siamo sicuri che questa è la strada giusta.** *(indicative)*
We are sure that this is the right road.

**Siete sicuri che questa sia la strada giusta?** *(subjunctive)*
Are you sure that this is the right road?

Here are further examples showing the different uses of indicative and subjunctive after **certo** and **sicuro**:

**Sono certo che hanno già ricevuto la merce.** *(indicative)*
I am certain they have already received the goods.

**Non sono certo che abbiano ricevuto la nostra fattura.** *(subjunctive)*
I’m not certain if they have received our invoice.

**Sono sicura che questa è la casa di Cristina.**
I’m certain that this is Cristina’s house.

**Non sono sicura che questa sia la casa di Cristina.**
I’m not certain that this is Cristina’s house.

In the following two examples, the difference is one of register. The first example uses informal spoken language, and the indicative is used. The second example is a more formal register so the subjunctive is preferred.

**Sei sicura che il ristorante è aperto di domenica?**
Are you sure that the restaurant is open on Sundays?
29.6 Ricordare, dimenticare

‘Remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ are expressed in Italian by the verbs ricordare and dimenticare respectively. Ricordare can express both ‘to remember’ and ‘to remind’.

29.6.1 Ricordare

When ricordare means ‘to remember’, it can be used with or without the reflexive pronoun (see 3.4.3) depending on how involved the person is (see also 2.1.10). It can be followed by a noun (the person or thing remembered) either directly or preceded by di, by di + infinitive, or by che + indicative:

I professori ricordano solo gli studenti più bravi.
The teachers only remember the cleverest students.
Daniela ha aspettato mezz’ora davanti all’Università perché non ci siamo ricordati di lei.
Daniela waited half an hour in front of the University because we didn’t remember her.

Non ti ricordi dove hai messo quella cartella?
Don’t you remember where you put that file?

Ricordati di comprare il giornale.
Remember to buy the newspaper.

Il vigile si ricordava di aver visto la macchina parcheggiata vicino all’incrocio.
The traffic warden remembered seeing the car parked near the crossroads.

Mia moglie si è ricordata che io avevo lasciato i biglietti sul comodino.
My wife remembered that I had left the tickets on the bedside cabinet.

When ricordare means ‘to remind’, it takes as indirect object a noun or pronoun, to indicate the person or people being reminded:

Il direttore ha ricordato agli impiegati la riunione generale alle 6.00.
The director reminded the employees of the general meeting at 6 o’clock.

Questa casa ci ricorda le vecchie case di montagna.
This house reminds us of the old houses in the mountains.

Ricordare can also be followed by di and a verb infinitive:

Stasera cambia l’ora. Ricordami di aggiustare l’orologio.
Tonight the clocks change. Remind me to adjust my watch.

Un ricordo conveys the idea of nostalgia rather than a practical reminder:

Questo orsacchiotto è un ricordo della mia infanzia.
This teddy bear is a reminder/souvenir of my childhood.

Finally ricordare can also be used with the sense of ‘to commemorate’:

Oggi ricordiamo il nostro caro compagno Enrico.
Today we remember our dear companion Enrico.

Like ricordare, dimenticare ‘to forget’ can be used, with or without a reflexive pronoun, with a noun (‘something, someone’) or with a verb, followed either by di + infinitive or by che + indicative:

Scusi, ho dimenticato il Suo nome.
I’m sorry, I’ve forgotten your name.

Marco, non dimenticare di prendere le chiavi.
Marco, don’t forget to take your keys.

Carla, ti sei dimenticata di comprare la carta igienica.
Carla, you forgot to buy toilet paper.

Mio marito si era dimenticato che oggi è il nostro anniversario.
My husband had forgotten that today is our anniversary.

It can also mean ‘to leave something behind’:

Mia moglie ha dimenticato la borsa in ufficio.
My wife left her briefcase in the office.

Lastly, verbs of ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ (ricordare, dimenticare) can also convey uncertainty, by use of the subjunctive or conditional mood:

Non mi ricordo se Carlo abbia già compiuto 40 anni.
I don’t remember if Carlo has already reached 40 or not.

La direttrice aveva dimenticato che la segretaria sarebbe stata in vacanza.
The manager had forgotten that the secretary would be on holiday.
Putting in context
30

Combining messages

30.1 Introduction

Many of the early sections in Modern Italian Grammar show how to get your message across: communicating information, completing a transaction, expressing a feeling or emotion.

In this section of the book, ‘Putting in context’ (Chapters 30–39), we deal with the various ways of conveying a more complex message, of combining more than one message, and of putting our message in a context. The examples chosen are taken from various sources including the press and contemporary literature.

Some chapters look at specific contexts, such as expressing certainty (Chapter 32), purpose (Chapter 33), reason (Chapter 34), result (Chapter 35), place and manner (Chapter 37), condition and hypothesis (Chapter 38), and reservation and concession (Chapter 39). Chapter 31 illustrates time relationships in the context of relating or reporting an event or action, while Chapter 36 illustrates sentences where there is a specific time reference, such as mentre, quando, prima or dopo.

In this introductory chapter ‘Combining messages’, we look at some general points that need to be borne in mind when combining messages: for example, the structure of the sentence and the tenses and moods of the verbs used. When the message is more complex, the sentence structure also tends to become more complex. The possible sentence structures can be summarised in two broad categories: sentences where there are two or more clauses of equal weight (coordinated clauses), and sentences where there is a main clause and one or more dependent (subordinate) clauses.

30.2 Combining statements of equal importance

30.2.1 Separate sentences

Two statements of equal importance are conveyed by using two clauses or groups of words of equal weight. These can be completely separate sentences:

Non è essenziale l’ammorbidente. I detersivi oggi sono più delicati.
It’s not essential to use softener. Detergents today are more delicate.

30.2.2 Basic coordinated clauses

Alternatively they can be separate clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions or other elements (see 5.2) such as e ‘and’, ma ‘but’, in which case they are known as coordinated clauses:

I detersivi oggi sono più delicati e non induriscono i tessuti.
Today’s detergents are more delicate and they don’t make fabrics harsh.

Lavo quasi tutto in lavatrice ma lavo le maglie di lana a mano.
I wash almost everything in the washing machine but I wash wool sweaters by hand.
30.2.3 Common coordinating elements

Other common coordinating elements, with varying meanings, include:
- *anche* also, as well
- *inoltre* besides
- *né* nor
- *neppure* not even
- *nonché* not to mention
- *o, oppure* or, or else
- *pure* also, as well

Non ho i soldi per andare in vacanza e *inoltre* non ho neanche il tempo per andarci.
I haven’t got the money to go on holiday and besides I don’t even have the time to go.

Non l’ho comprato *né* lo voglio.
I haven’t bought it nor do I want it.

Possiamo andare a vedere i templi *oppure* se preferisci andiamo al mare.
We can go to see the temples or if you prefer we’ll go to the seaside.

30.2.4 Contrasts

Coordinating conjunctions and elements that express *contrast* (adversative conjunctions) include:
- *bensì* but
- *invece* on the other hand
- *mentre* whereas
- *però* however
- *piuttosto* rather (*can be followed by che* or *di*)
- *tuttavia* however

Pensavo che avrei avuto difficoltà a seguire i corsi in inglese. *Invece* non ho avuto problemi.
I thought I would find it difficult to follow courses in English. But I didn’t have any problems.

A Milano ho trovato subito un posto *mentre* il mio ragazzo ha avuto un po’ di difficoltà.
In Milan I found a job straightaway while my boyfriend had a bit of difficulty.

Bettina si impegnava al massimo negli studi. *Però* i professori le davano sempre voti alquanto bassi.
Bettina studied as hard as she could. However her lecturers always gave her rather low marks.

*Piuttosto* che aumentare il numero di canali televisivi, penso che sia il caso di aumentare la qualità dei programmi televisivi già esistenti.
Rather than increasing the number of TV channels, I think it would be a good idea to improve the quality of the existing TV programmes.

Non spetta a me preparare i corsi. *Piuttosto* aspetto che il mio collega mi passi il materiale.
It’s not up to me to prepare the courses. Rather I’m waiting for my colleague to give me the material.

Preferirei non riscrivere questo capitolo, *tuttavia* lo farò se proprio insisti.
I would prefer not to rewrite this chapter, however I will do it if you insist.
COMBINING MESSAGES

30.2.5 Confirmation and affirmation

Difficult to translate into English, anzi can mean ‘on the contrary’ but can also express confirmation of what has just been said:

Luisa era veramente brava. Anzi, era la studentessa più brava della classe.
Luisa was really clever. In fact she was the cleverest student in the class.

Il turismo non è ancora molto sviluppato, anzi le infrastrutture sono praticamente inesistenti.
Tourism isn’t very developed yet; in fact the infrastructures are almost non-existent.

The following are conjunctions and discourse markers that affirm what has just been said or written (declarative conjunctions):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anzi</td>
<td>in fact (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cioè</td>
<td>in other words, that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infatti</td>
<td>indeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vale a dire</td>
<td>in other words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Le scoperte scientifiche possono essere anche pericolose cioè possono avere conseguenze negative – basta pensare alla bomba atomica.
Scientific discoveries can even be dangerous, in other words they can have negative consequences – one need only think of the atomic bomb.

Gli studenti laureati devono imparare ad essere autonomi, infatti l’autonomia è la qualità più importante per un ricercatore.
Graduate students must learn to be independent, in fact independence is the most important quality for a researcher.

30.2.6 Conclusion, results

For details of conclusive conjunctions such as allora ‘and so’, dunque ‘therefore’, per cui ‘and so’ and quindi ‘therefore’, which express conclusion, result or consequence, see 35.2.

30.3 Combining statements of unequal importance

When there are two messages that are not of equal importance, one message usually expresses a main event or action, while the other expresses an action or event linked to it. The main action or event is normally expressed by a main clause (one that can stand on its own without another clause) while the linked action or event is expressed by a clause that cannot stand on its own but is dependent on or subordinate to the main clause. There are many types of dependent clauses, for example relative clauses, clauses of purpose, clauses of reason, all of which are illustrated in other chapters of Section IV (see also 30.5).

30.4 Setting events in a time context

30.4.1 Simple time context

When facts or events are related only to the moment of speaking or writing, the time context is simple. Section I gives examples of simple time contexts: the present (Chapter 12); the past (Chapter 13); the future (Chapter 14). Usually the verb tense alone (present, past, future) is enough to indicate the time when the action took place, although the sentence sometimes includes a more specific marker of time (phrase, adverb or noun group):

(Oggi) è il compleanno di Marta.
(Today) it is Marta’s birthday.
Siamo andati a Londra (la settimana scorsa).
We went to London (last week).
(L’anno prossimo) ci trasferiremo negli Stati Uniti.
(Next year) we will be moving to the USA.
Complex time context

In a complex sentence, where two or more messages are combined, the verbs used are closely interlinked in a relationship of time, which determines the mood and tense of the verbs used. When the sentence is composed of main clause and dependent clause, the choice of verb mood and tense in the dependent clause is determined by the verb in the main clause. Italian has a set of ‘rules’ known as the concordanza dei tempi (‘sequence of tenses’) which demonstrate this, shown in Appendix V and illustrated below in 30.5. These are only guidelines, and how rigidly they are applied depends on the type of dependent clause; they are particularly important when the dependent clause acts as the object of a verb (for example, Spero che tu possa venire; lui dice che partiranno più tardi) or as its subject (as in Mi sembra assurdo che tu debba fare il lavoro della segretaria). In 30.5, therefore, we look only at this type of dependent clause, often known as noun clauses. You will meet the sequence of tenses again in Chapter 31, in the context of reported or indirect speech. In Appendix V, we summarise all the ‘rules’ of the sequence of tenses, in easy-to-read table form.

The choice of verb mood and tense used depends on the relationship between the event or act referred to and the moment of speaking or writing: this may be the same time context (where the event or action takes place at the same time as the moment of writing or speaking), an earlier time context (where the event or action takes place in the past in relation to the moment of speaking or writing) or a later time context (where the event or action takes place in the future in relation to the moment of speaking or writing).

Sequence of tenses

Here we look at the way in which the sequence of tenses works in practice. We take as a starting point the different tenses used in the main clause (present, past or future), then look at each of the different time contexts (same, earlier, later) in turn. Focusing on noun clauses (which are either the subject or the object of the main verb), we see how the sequence of tenses works for verbs such as dire, sapere which are normally followed by a verb in the indicative mood, and also how it works for verbs such as credere, pensare, sembrare, volere which are normally followed by a verb in the subjunctive. (See also Appendix V.)

Main verb in present tense

When the verb in the main clause is in the present tense (present indicative, present conditional), the verb in the dependent clause can be in any of the moods or tenses shown in the tables below, depending on the time context (same, earlier, later) and on whether the verb normally takes the indicative or the subjunctive.

Same time context

Speaking about events or actions taking place at the same time as the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in present tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</td>
<td>Present indicative: che l’aereo parte sempre in orario. Present conditional: che i miei amici verrebbero volentieri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</td>
<td>Present subjunctive: che sappiate tutto. Imperfect subjunctive: che i miei figli fossero qui.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sembra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present conditional: Vorrei</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The *indicative mood* (see 2.2.2) expresses certainty or objectivity:

I passeggeri sanno che devono arrivare due ore prima della partenza.
Passengers know they have to arrive two hours before departure time.

The *conditional mood* (see 2.2.11) is often used to indicate an unconfirmed report (see also 31.4.1). Italian uses the present conditional, where English would use simply the present indicative:

Gli esperti dicono che la situazione economica sarebbe più grave di quanto sembra.
The experts say that the economic situation *is* more serious than it seems.

The *subjunctive mood* (see 2.2.14–15) indicates a relationship of uncertainty or subjectivity and is always used after certain verbs, for example verbs expressing an opinion, such as *pensare*, *sembra*, or wishing or hoping, such as *chiedere*, *volere*, *sperare*. In accordance with the sequence of tenses shown above, either present subjunctive (see 2.2.16) or imperfect subjunctive (see 2.2.18) can be used:

Pare che mio cugino sia pronto a partire.
It seems my cousin is ready to leave.

Vorrei che tu fossi meno prepotente.
I wish you were less domineering.

**Earlier time context**
Speaking about events or actions which took place *in the past* in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in present tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present indicative:</td>
<td>Perfect:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>che si sono sposati nel 1992.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che abitavano a Londra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past definite:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che suo marito morì nel 1978.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pluperfect:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che avevano comprato la casa in Italia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past conditional:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che avrebbero preferito un figlio maschio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present indicative:</td>
<td>Perfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sembra</td>
<td>che abbia vinto un premio importante.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che avessero fretta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pluperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che lui avesse detto la verità.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present conditional:</td>
<td>Perfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direi</td>
<td>che tu abbia fatto bene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che il professore fosse troppo stanco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pluperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che tu mi avessi detto la verità.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *indicative mood* (see 2.2.2) describes an action or event in the past and expresses a fact or certainty. After a main verb in the present tense, any of the past tenses (imperfect, perfect, past definite or pluperfect) can be used in the dependent clause:
Sappiamo che migliaia di nordafricani hanno perso la vita nel tentativo di raggiungere le coste europee. We know that thousands of North Africans have lost their lives trying to reach the European coasts.

A scuola ci insegnano che gli antichi romani costruirono ponti e strade su tutto il loro territorio. At school they teach us that the ancient Romans built bridges and roads throughout their territory.

Mia madre sa che mio fratello fumava di nascosto. My mother knows that my brother smoked in secret.

The past conditional (see 2.2.13) is often used to indicate a report which has not been confirmed (expressed in English by a simple past indicative, sometimes with a caveat or disclaimer such as ‘apparently’):

I giornali dicono che Berlusconi avrebbe organizzato molte feste anche alla sua villa privata. The newspapers say that Berlusconi (apparently) organized lots of parties at his private villa too.

The subjunctive mood (see 2.2.14–15) is used after verbs such as pensare, sembrare, etc. to express uncertainty; either perfect or imperfect subjunctive are used to talk about events or actions which took place in the past but the pluperfect subjunctive can also be used, as shown in the third example:

Sembra che la regina abbia voluto incontrare i responsabili del progetto. It seems the queen wanted to meet those responsible for the project.

Penso che da piccolo mio fratello mangiasse solo la pasta. I think my brother only ate pasta when he was little.

Vorrei che mio marito mi avesse chiamato prima di decidere. I wish that my husband had called me before taking a decision.

Later time context
Speaking about events or actions taking place in the future in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in present tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</td>
<td>Present indicative: che il medico viene domani. Future indicative: che prenderà il posto a Padova. Present conditional: che vorrebbe lavorare a Padova.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</td>
<td>Present indicative: Sembra che darà le dimissioni. Present subjunctive: che venga domani. Present conditional: che vorrebbe dare le dimissioni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present conditional: Direi</td>
<td>Present conditional: che Paolo sarebbe il candidato ideale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The indicative mood (see 2.2.2) used to talk about future events expresses a fact or certainty. The example below uses the future indicative (see 2.2.9):

Non mi vuole dire quanto costerà.
He doesn’t want to tell me how much it will cost.

The present tense (see 2.2.3) can also be used, especially in less formal language, when talking of the very near and immediate future, and when using a marker of future time such as domani:

Mi spiega che suo figlio arriva domani.
She explains to me that her son is arriving tomorrow.

The conditional mood (see 2.2.11) is used when it is not yet certain that the event or action will take place. The example below uses the present conditional:

Penso che mia madre sarebbe disposta a fare la baby sitter sabato sera.
I think that my mother would be willing to babysit on Saturday evening.

The subjunctive mood (see 2.2.14–15) is used where there is more uncertainty about whether the statement is true or whether the event will take place. This example uses the present tense of the subjunctive (the subjunctive does not have a future tense):

Molti italiani sperano che il Presidente del Consiglio si dimetta anche prima delle elezioni.
Many Italians hope that the Prime Minister will resign even before the elections.

30.5.2 Main verb in past tense

Same time context
Speaking about events or actions taking place in the same time context as the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in past tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect / Perfect / Past definite / Pluperfect:</td>
<td>Present indicative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefano mi diceva / mi ha detto / mi disse / mi aveva detto</td>
<td>che tu lavori in centro adesso.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive:</td>
<td>Imperfect indicative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensavo / ho pensato / pensai / avevo pensato</td>
<td>che tu lavoravi in biblioteca.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past definite:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che i soldati distrussero i ponti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che sua moglie avesse un ruolo importante nella ditta.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Giacomo mi ha detto che Stefano è sposato. (implies fact or certainty)
Giacomo told me that Stefano is married.

Giacomo mi ha detto che Stefano era sposato. (implies fact or certainty)
Giacomo told me that Stefano was married.

Pensavo che Stefano fosse sposato. (implies uncertainty)
I thought Stefano was married.

Earlier time context
Speaking about events or actions which took place in the past in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:
Sequence of tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in past tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pluperfect indicative:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect / Perfect / Past definite / Pluperfect:</td>
<td>che tu avevi lavorato in Italia prima di venire a Londra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefano mi diceva / mi ha detto / mi disse / mi aveva detto</td>
<td>che tu eri andata a Milano per Natale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pluperfect subjunctive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect / Perfect / Past definite / Pluperfect:</td>
<td>che sua moglie lo avesse sposato per motivi economici.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginavo / ho immaginato / immaginai / avevo immaginato</td>
<td>che lui fosse tornato in Italia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indicative mood (see 2.2.2) is used to recount a fact or objective statement:

Il direttore ha rivelato che almeno 30 milioni di euro erano spariti dal conto.
The manager revealed that at least 30 million euros had disappeared from the account.

The subjunctive mood (see 2.2.14–15) is used after certain verbs which require it:

Il cameriere attendeva che avessimo finito di mangiare prima di portare il conto.
The waiter was waiting until we had finished eating before bringing the bill.

Later time context

Speaking about events or actions taking place in the future in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in past tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</strong></td>
<td><strong>Future indicative:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect / Perfect / Past definite / Pluperfect:</td>
<td>che arriverà domani mattina presto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefano mi diceva / mi ha detto / mi disse / mi aveva detto</td>
<td>Past conditional: che avrebbe finito i compiti prima di cena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect indicative (in informal speech replacing past conditional):</td>
<td>che finiva i compiti prima di cena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The subjunctive has no future tense so the past conditional is normally used. In informal speech it is possible to use the imperfect indicative in its place.</td>
<td>Past conditional: che tu saresti venuta con me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</strong></td>
<td>che mia madre mi avrebbe accompagnato in macchina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect / Perfect / Past definite / Pluperfect:</td>
<td>Imperfect: che tu venivi con me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefano pensava / ha pensato / aveva pensato</td>
<td>che mia madre mi accompagnava in macchina.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the events still have to take place, the future indicative is used, even when the verb depends on a main clause in a past tense:

Mia mamma mi ha promesso che verrà a trovarmi domani mattina.
My mother has promised me that she will come to see me tomorrow morning.
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The past conditional (see 2.2.13) is used when the events will already have taken place (or not) at the moment of speaking/writing:

Il Presidente ha dichiarato che avrebbe posto il veto a una decisione del Congresso in favore dell’abolizione dell’embargo.
The President declared that he would impose a veto if Congress were to decide to lift the embargo.

In colloquial Italian, the past conditional is sometimes replaced by the imperfect indicative:

Mia mamma mi aveva promesso (mi ha promesso) che sarebbe venuta a trovarmi ieri sera.
My mother had promised me that she would come to see me yesterday evening.

Main verb in future tense
The future tense is far less commonly used than the present tense, in Italian. In fact there is very little difference between sentences where the main clause has a verb in the present tense (see 30.5.1) and those where the main clause has a verb in the future tense, as shown below.

Same time context
Talking about events or actions taking place in the same time context:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verb in future tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</td>
<td>Present indicative: che sei stanca dopo il viaggio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future indicative: Dirò</td>
<td>Present conditional: che vorresti avere due camere separate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs normally followed by subjunctive</td>
<td>The subjunctive has no future tense so the present subjunctive is normally used in its place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future indicative: Penserà</td>
<td>Present subjunctive: che tu sia stanca dopo il viaggio.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The future indicative (see 2.2.9) is used when an outcome is definite:

Dirò che arriverai alle 9 di sera.
I will say that you will get here at 9 o’clock in the evening.

The present conditional (see 2.2.12) is used when the outcome is possible but not definite:

Le dirò che sarebbe meglio lavorare in gruppo.
I’ll tell her that it would be better to work in a team.

The present subjunctive (see 2.2.16) is used after certain verbs that require it, for example verbs of hoping, wishing, requesting and ordering:

La manager chiederà che le cameriere puliscano le camere prima di mezzogiorno.
The manager will ask the maids to clean the bedrooms before midday.

Earlier time context
Talking about events or actions which took place in the past in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:
Infinitives and gerunds

Main verb in future tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future indicative:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dirò</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbs normally followed by subjunctive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future indicative:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penserà</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later time context

Talking about events or actions taking place in the future in relation to the moment of speaking or writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs normally followed by indicative or conditional</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future indicative:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gli dirò</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbs normally followed by subjunctive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future indicative:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penserà</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The future indicative (see 2.2.9) is used in a more formal context. Otherwise the present tense can be used here, just as it is when it is in the main clause not the dependent clause:

Gli comunicheremo che dovrà pagare entro una settimana.
We’ll inform him that he will have to pay within one week.

The present conditional (see 2.2.11) is used when a condition is implied:

Gli dirò che verremmo molto volentieri (se avessimo tempo).
I will tell him that we would come very willingly (if we had time).

Since there is no future subjunctive, the present subjunctive (see 2.2.16) can be used after those verbs that require the subjunctive, for example verbs of hoping, wishing, requesting and ordering:

Penserà che domani non ci siano problemi di traffico.

**Infinitives and gerunds**

In this section, we look at how gerunds (see 2.2.23–5) and infinitives (see 2.2.1) can also be used to complement main verbs.
30.6.1 Dependent clauses using infinitive or gerund

Both the infinitive (present or past) and the gerund (present or past) can be used to express actions and situations in a dependent clause, *whatever the tense and mood of the main verb*. You can only use the infinitive or the gerund when the grammatical subject of the dependent clause is *the same as* that of the verb in the main clause, as in the examples below.

**Infinitive (present)**

* Cerco di risparmiare soldi per andare in vacanza a luglio.
  I’m trying to save money to go on holiday in July.

**Infinitive (past)**

In the example below, Italian uses the past infinitive, while English uses the gerund.

* Dopo aver lavorato tutto l’anno, ora posso andare in vacanza! 
  After working all year, now I can go on holiday!

**Gerund (present)**

* Risparmiando soldi sulla casa posso permettermi di andare in vacanza.
  By saving money on the house, I can go on holiday.

**Gerund (past)**

* Avendo risparmiato soldi, posso andare in vacanza!
  Having saved some money, I can go on holiday!

30.6.2 Dependent clauses using *che*

If the grammatical subject of the main clause is different from that of the dependent clause, then you cannot use a dependent gerund or infinitive but have to use a clause introduced by *che* or other conjunction. Here are some examples based on those in 30.6.1 above, with the different grammatical subjects in bold in the English sentences:

* Cerco di risparmiare soldi in modo che possiamo permetterci una vacanza.
  I try and save money so that we can afford a holiday.

* Se risparmio soldi questo mese, potremo permetterci di andare in vacanza.
  If I save money this month, we will be able to afford to go on holiday.

30.6.3 Contrast with use of gerund and infinitive in English

Many learners make the mistake of trying to translate an English sentence directly into Italian. But because English and Italian have very different sentence structures, this doesn’t always work. One example of this is the way in which the gerunds and infinitives are used.

**Infinitive (present/past)**

Where Italian uses a past infinitive, English can use a gerund:

* Dopo aver studiato tutto l’anno, ora posso rilassarmi.
  After studying all year, now I can relax.

**Gerund (present)**

While English can use a preposition (for example, ‘by, on’) with the gerund form, Italian can’t. The ‘by’ or ‘on’ is implicit in the Italian gerund and does not need to be added:

* Vedendo arrivare mio cugino, sono andata ad aprire la porta.
  On seeing my cousin arrive, I went to open the door.

**Gerund, infinitive or *che* clause**

English often uses a gerund form (-ing) after verbs such as ‘seeing, hearing’. In Italian you cannot use the gerund form after verbs such as *sentire, vedere*. You have to use either the infinitive or else a *che* clause with a finite verb:
Relationship of tenses in complex texts

All’alba sentivo gli uccelli che cantavano.
All’alba sentivo cantare gli uccelli.
At dawn I used to hear the birds singing.

Alle quattro di pomeriggio, vedevo i bambini che uscivano dalla scuola.
Alle quattro di pomeriggio, vedevo uscire i bambini dalla scuola.
At four o’clock in the afternoon, I saw the children coming out of school.

Examples from the press

The examples here show how the gerund and the infinitive can be used where the grammatical subject of both actions or events is the same:

Example 1
This first press extract uses the past infinitive (per aver identificato):

Nel 1962, lo scienziato inglese Francis Crick, è stato insignito del premio Nobel per la medicina, insieme a James Watson, per avere identificato la struttura a doppia elica del Dna.

In 1962 the English scientist Francis Crick was awarded the Nobel prize for medicine, along with James Watson, for having identified the double helix structure of DNA.

Example 2
In this second press extract, there is a succession of dependent present infinitives (a prendere, per uscire, a non riuscire, per andare in vacanza, comprarmi vestiti, andare a cena). The past infinitive (aver fatto) refers to a past action or non-action. The gerunds (lavorando, limitandomi, guadagnando) provide information which complements the main verb (for example the means by which something was done) by expressing actions or events that take place in the same time context as the main event. The extract ends with a conditional sentence where the condition is expressed by an imperfect subjunctive (se tornassi) and the possible outcome is described by a present conditional (i risultati sarebbero gli stessi). Look at how all these verbs work together in the text:

Vivere con 988 euro al mese
Vivo da sola, in Italia, da circa 3 anni. Da gennaio, lavorando con contratto Co.Co. Co, senza aver fatto un singolo giorno di ferie, riesco a prendere circa 988 euro al mese. Lavoro 8–9 ore per 5 o 6 giorni a settimana, non ho tempo e soldi per uscire, sono sempre stanca e continuo a non riuscire a mettere da parte un centesimo per andare in vacanza, comprarmi vestiti, andare a cena fuori. Se tornassi a vivere con mamma e papà, limitandomi a fare qualche lavoretto saltuario, i risultati sarebbero esattamente gli stessi, guadagnando addirittura qualcosa in tempo libero e salute.

(Adapted from letter to ‘Italians’ by Beppe Severgnini, Corriere della Sera online)

Living on 988 euros a month
I have been living on my own, in Italy, for about 3 years. Since January, working on a temporary contract, without having taken a single day’s holiday, I’ve managed to take home about 988 euros a month. I work 8–9 hours for 5–6 days a week, I haven’t got the time or money to go out, am always tired, and am still unable to set aside a single penny to go on holiday, buy myself clothes, or eat out. If I went back to mum and dad, restricting myself to the odd temporary job, the result would be exactly the same, gaining something, even, in terms of my free time and my health.

Relationship of tenses in complex texts

Here we look at some extracts from the media which illustrate the way in which different time contexts are handled in current journalistic Italian and the way in which tenses relate to one another in complex texts. In real life examples, the link between main and dependent clauses
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is not always obvious. Some of the sentences contain only main clauses, while sometimes the main verb is implied but not stated. The same basic ‘rules’ of the sequence of tenses seen in 30.5, however, still apply. In this section, the examples are arranged by time context (present, past, future), not by the tense used in the main clause.

30.7

Present time context

Example 1
This article about the ‘new homeless’ shows how present indicative verb forms (see 2.2.3) are used in the main clauses (vivono, si incontrano, troviamo, non possono permettersi), and in a series of dependent relative clauses (che non ce la fanno, che non riescono, che devono passare) to express events happening in the same time context (present). A gerund (see 2.2.24) is used to express concession (pur avendo), while another gerund expresses the reason behind the main statement (avendo).

L’identikit dei nuovi senzatetto
Padri separati e anziani soli
Padri separati, anziani con la pensione minima, giovani immigrati in cerca di lavoro, working poor, interi nuclei familiari. È l’identikit dei nuovi senzatetto: vivono nelle grandi città, ma si incontrano anche in provincia. Oltre agli “storici” homeless italiani, tra i 45 ed i 65 anni, spesso con problemi psichiatrici o di alcolismo o tossicodipendenza troviamo giovani stranieri in cerca di un’occupazione, anziani che non ce la fanno più con la sola pensione a far fronte a tutte le spese, working poor che, pur avendo un lavoro, non riescono a farcela ad arrivare a fine mese, uomini e padri separati che devono passare gli alimenti alla moglie e ai figli e avendo solo un reddito modesto non possono permettersi una casa propria.

(www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2012/01/20/news/polchi_povert-28493875/, retrieved 1 March 2012)

Separated fathers, old people with the minimum pension, young immigrants in search of work, the working poor, entire family groups. This is the profile of the new homeless: they live in the big cities, but you can find them in the provinces too. As well as the ‘traditional’ homeless (Italians between the ages of 45 and 65, often with psychiatric problems or problems of alcoholism or drug addiction), we find young foreigners in search of work, old people who find that their pension alone can’t cover all their expenditure, working poor who, despite having a job, can’t make it to the end of the month, separated men and fathers who have to pay maintenance for their wives and children and with just one modest income, can’t afford a house of their own.

Example 2
This text, about a possible future event involving the computer company Apple, shows how the present conditional (see also 2.2.11) is used in Italian to express an unconfirmed report. It would be expressed in English by a plain present indicative:

Apple starebbe pianificando un evento per gennaio
Secondo quanto riporta TechCrunch, Apple starebbe pianificando un’evento per gennaio, focalizzato su possibili miglioramenti che riguarderebbero la distribuzione di media attraverso i suoi canali. L’evento dovrebbe essere tenuto da Eddy Cue, Senior Vice President of Internet Service e Software. Come riportato durante l’evento non dovrebbe essere annunciato nessun tipo di nuovo hardware. Restiamo in attesa di una conferma da parte di Apple, ed eventualmente della data e del luogo in cui dovrebbe tenersi l’evento; New York è data come la possibile location.

According to TechCrunch, Apple is planning an event in January, focusing on possible upgrades which relate to the distribution of media through its channels. The event is to be held apparently by Eddy Cue, Senior Vice President of Internet Service and Software. According to the report, no new hardware should be announced during the event. We await confirmation from Apple, and if possible the date and place where the event will take place. New York has been given as a possible location.
Relationship of tenses in complex texts

30.7.2 Past time context

Example 1
In this eyewitness account by two survivors from the sinking of the *Costa Concordia* off the island of Giglio (Tuscany), the actions or events all take place in the same time context, the past. Since this is an interview rather than just a third person account, however, the text is interspersed with references to the present time (*Francesca racconta*). The first two linked sentences express the background to this tragedy (*erano passeggeri, facevano parte*) using the *imperfetto* (see 2.2.4), while the next sentence expresses an action (*sono tornati*), using the *passato prossimo* (see 2.2.5), but also expresses the survivors’ present condition (*stanno bene, vogliono raccontare*) using the present tense (see 2.2.3). In the next sentences there is a mix of *imperfetto* describing the background (*l’equipaggio non parlava italiano, c’erano problemi di comunicazione*) and *passato prossimo* to describe actions and events (*ci hanno diviso, la gente non ci ha fatto passare, abbiamo tentato*):

Enrico e Francesca *erano* passeggeri della *Costa Concordia* affondata vicino all’isola del Giglio; *facevano* parte di una comitiva di nove persone, tutte di Anacapri, tra loro anche tre bambini di un anno. *Sono già tornati* tutti a casa, e per fortuna *stanno bene* ma *vogliono* raccontare la loro esperienza personale. “La maggior parte dell’equipaggio non parlava italiano e c’erano problemi di comunicazione”. Francesca *racconta* la drammatica ricerca di una scialuppa per salvarsi. “Ci hanno diviso dagli altri nostri amici con i bambini, perché la gente non ci ha fatto passare avanti. *Abiamo tentato* di prendere un’altra scialuppa, ma *era* rottा”.


Enrico and Francesca were passengers on the *Costa Concordia* which sank near the island of Giglio; they were part of a group of nine people, all from Anacapri, with three one-year-old children amongst them. They have all gone back home already, and luckily are all fine, but they want to talk about their own personal experience. ‘Most of the crew didn’t speak Italian and there were communication problems.’ Francesca talks about the dramatic search for a lifeboat to escape on. ‘We got separated from our other friends with children, because people wouldn’t let us get past. We tried to take another lifeboat, but it was broken.’

Example 2
This passage is also about the sinking of the *Costa Concordia* and in particular a video clip which shows that the ship stayed upright for two hours, so all the passengers could have been saved, if the captain had raised the alarm straightaway. The references to the video clip are in the present tense (*segna, dimostra*), and the statement that the Guardia di Finanza motor launch filmed it (*lo ha realizzato*) is therefore in the *passato prossimo*, a past tense which has a close relationship to the present. The main action or event, however, is in the *passato remoto* (see 2.2.6) and describes what the ship did (*rimase*). There is a past infinitive (see 2.2.1) which refers to the grammatical subject, the motor launch (*dopo aver captato*). Finally there is a conditional sentence which uses a verb in the past conditional (see 2.2.13) to say what would have happened (*avrebbe consentito*) and a pluperfect subjunctive (see 2.2.19) for the ‘if’ clause (see l’*ordine di sbarco fosse stato dato per tempo*):

The film clip shows the time 22.30: 45 minutes after the Costa Concordia hit the rocks. It was filmed by the motor launch of the Guardia di Finanza, the first to reach the ship, after picking up the concerns expressed by the Livorno coastguard, who were in radio contact with the bridge of the Costa Concordia. And (the film clip) demonstrates a simple fact: for almost two hours the ship did not tilt. If the order to evacuate had been given in time, it would have allowed (the crew) to use all the lifeboats. And, more importantly, it would have allowed them to get all the passengers and crew to safety.

30.7.3 Future time context

A variety of verb moods and tenses can be used to express related actions taking place in the future time context. These include the present indicative, the future indicative, the present conditional and the present subjunctive.

Example 1

This passage on possible travel problems caused by heavy snow uses a combination of future indicative (see 2.2.9), to say what will happen (saranno), and present conditional (see 2.2.11), to say what should or should not happen (dovrebbe):

4 febbraio 2012 22:00
Continua a nevicare ma gli aeroporti di Heathrow, Stansted e Gatwick sono sempre aperti. La neve dovrebbe continuare a cadere tutta la notte e si prevede che molti voli saranno cancellati o in ritardo.

5 febbraio 2012 9:00
Non dovrebbe nevicare più per oggi. L’aeroporto di Stansted è aperto ma ci saranno ritardi e forse voli cancellati.

(Adapted from www.londranews.com, retrieved 14 February 2012)

4 February 2012, 22.00
It is still snowing but the airports of Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick are still open. The snow is expected to continue to fall all night and it is expected that many flights will be cancelled or delayed.

5 February 2012, 9.00
There should be no more snow today. The airport of Stansted is open but there will be delays and perhaps cancelled flights.

Example 2

In this next example, about the summer ‘exodus’ from the cities, there is a series of verbs in the future tense (see 2.2.9) in main clauses (si metteranno, sarà, saranno, partirà), in a dependent relative clause (che oggi raggiungerà) and in a dependent clause expressing reason (perché anche i treni risulteranno strapieni).

È’ iniziato ieri pomeriggio il grande esodo estivo, che oggi raggiungerà il suo apice. Secondo una prima stima circa 11 milioni di italiani si metteranno al volante per raggiungere le località di vacanza e anche sulle autostrade liguri il traffico sarà notevole, soprattutto nelle ore di punta. Ma non saranno solo le strade e le autostrade ad essere prese d’assalto, perché anche i treni risulteranno strapieni. Secondo Ferrovie dello Stato, infatti, oltre un milione di persone partirà in treno.


The great summer exodus began yesterday afternoon, and will reach its peak today. According to an early estimate, around 11 million Italians will get behind the steering wheel to get to their holiday destination and on the motorways of Liguria too, the volume of traffic will be high, especially in the peak hours. But it won’t only be the roads and motorways which are under siege, because the trains will be overcrowded as well. According to the State Railways, in fact, over a million people will set off by train.
31

Quoting or reporting events and hearsay

31.1 Introduction

There are two main ways of reporting what somebody has said (or what we ourselves may have said).

31.1.1 Direct speech

Direct speech (see also 31.2) quotes verbatim what someone has said, using quotation marks or virgolette in Italian:

“Lo spirito del ’68”, afferma il regista Bertolucci, “metteva insieme politica, cinema, arte, musica, rock’n’roll e sesso . . .”

(Adapted from Il Venerdì di Repubblica, 29 August 2003)

‘The spirit of ’68’, states the film director Bertolucci, ‘put together politics, cinema, art, music, rock’n’roll, and sex . . .’

Il direttore mi ha detto: “Può andare a casa”.
The manager said to me ‘You can go home’.

Gli ho chiesto: “Quando mi restituisi i soldi?”
I asked him: ‘When are you giving me back the money?’

“Eravamo amici, lui è parte di Bologna. Adesso è come arrivare a Bologna e non trovare più le torri”, dice Red Ronnie.

‘We were friends, he was part of Bologna. Now it’s like coming to Bologna and finding its towers have gone’, says Red Ronnie. (on the death of the singer-songwriter Lucio Dalla)

(http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2012/03/02/news/oggi_la_salma_a_bologna_domenica_i_funerali-30802179/?ref=HREC1-6, retrieved 2 March 2012)

31.1.2 Indirect speech

Indirect speech or reported speech (see also 31.3) reports what the person said. No quotation marks are needed and various features of the original statement have to change: verb tense, pronouns, adverbs of place, and so on. Some of the examples above are shown below as reported speech. Note the changes in verb tense: the main verb in the present tense or passato prossimo is followed by the imperfetto, trapassato or past conditional in the dependent clause. Note too the changes in pronouns (ti > mi) and possessives (tuo > mio).

Imperfetto (imperfect):

Il regista Bertolucci afferma che lo spirito del ’68 metteva insieme politica, cinema, arte, musica, rock’n’roll e sesso.

The film director Bertolucci states that the spirit of ’68 put together politics, cinema, art, music, rock’n’roll and sex.
Il direttore mi ha detto che _potevo_ andare a casa.
The manager told me that I could go home.

Trapassato (pluperfect):
Mio marito mi ha detto che mi _aveva comprato_ un bel regalo per il mio compleanno.
My husband told me that he had bought me a lovely present for my birthday.

Condizionale al passato (past conditional):
_Gli ho chiesto quando_ mi _avrebbe restituito_ i soldi.
I asked him when he would give me back the money.

### 31.2 Quoting: direct speech

The form of _direct speech_ is used for all kinds of quotations, whenever we want to report something that has been said or written, with exactly the same words used by the quoted person or text. It is very common in newspaper titles; here are a couple of examples from _La Repubblica_:

**Arbitri: “Vogliamo più soldi”**.
Football referees: ‘We want more money’.

**Vasco Rossi: “Era il nostro padre famiglia”**.
Vasco Rossi: ‘He was our father figure’.

(on the death of the singer-songwriter Lucio Dalla)

(http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2012/03/01/news/de_gregori_morte_dalla_momento_tristissimo_jovanotti_davvero_non_posso_crederci-30758018/?ref=NRCT-308022179-8, retrieved 2 March 2012)

Written Italian normally uses a pair of _virgolette_ (‘. . .’) to open and close a quotation. Sometimes, however, writers use pairs of _frecce_ (« . . . »), as shown below. When the quotation is interrupted by a phrase such as ‘he said’ or ‘they asked’, the convention is to use a pair of dashes or hyphens:

«Bene – ha detto Marco – andiamo a letto.»

Written texts, too, are often quoted directly. This is very common not only in essays and scientific literature, but also in everyday language, business correspondence and newspapers:

**Ho ricevuto una cartolina di Venezia con un bel cuoricino rosso e la scritta: “Manchi solo tu”**.
I got a postcard of Venice with a lovely little red heart on it and the words ‘All it needs is you’.

**Nel suo libro ‘Gli Inglesi’ (Rizzoli, 1990) Beppe Severgnini afferma che: “Gli anni Ottanta sono stati per la Gran Bretagna gli anni di Margaret Thatcher, come gli anni Sessanta furono gli anni dei Beatles”**.
In his book _The English_ (Rizzoli, 1990) Beppe Severgnini states that ‘The eighties were for Great Britain the years of Margaret Thatcher, just as the sixties were the years of the Beatles’.

**“Confindustria deve cambiare”, si legge nella relazione.**
‘Confindustria must change’, says the report.

(http://www.100news.it/site/2012/02/23/si-scalda-la-campagna-elettorale-tra-i-verticali-della-confindustria/, retrieved 27 February 2012)

Notice how, when quoting a report (as in the last example above), an impersonal verb form (see 2.1.12 and 19.5) such as _si legge_ can be used to stress the objective nature of its content rather than its ‘author’. This and other impersonal expressions are often used when a quotation is included in formal or legal reports and correspondence, as below:
Nella Vostra lettera del 15 maggio u.s. *si dichiarava* quanto segue: “La consegna della merce avverrà entro e non oltre il 10 giugno p.v.”.

In your letter of 15 May last, the following was stated: ‘The delivery of the goods will take place no later than 10 June’.

See also the use of the impersonal verb form *si dice* in 31.4.2 below.

### Reporting: indirect speech

When using *indirect speech* to report what someone has said or written, the reported discourse is often introduced by the conjunction *che* (see 5.3.1).

*Le previsioni del tempo dicono che oggi farà caldo.*

The weather forecast says that today it will be hot.

*Sui manuali di enologia abbiamo trovato la notizia storica che la Vernaccia di San Gimignano è stato il primo vino a Denominazione d’Origine Controllata in Italia.*

In the wine-making manuals we found the historic information that Vernaccia of San Gimignano was the first DOC wine in Italy.

When referring to something that one has been told, you can sometimes use a passive construction similar to the English passive construction (‘I have been told ...’). Verbs such as *informare* which take a direct object can be used in their passive form (see 19.2.1), as shown below:

*Sono stata informata che la mia patente è scaduta.*

I have been told (informed) that my driver’s licence has expired.

If the verb in question takes an indirect object (verbs such as *dire*, *comunicare*) it is not possible to turn it round into a passive construction (see also 19.3.1). An alternative is to use a third person plural subject (*Mi hanno comunicato ...*), as shown below (see also 19.3.3):

*Mi hanno detto che dovevo rivolgermi a questo ufficio per il rinnovo del passaporto.*

I was told that I had to apply to this office for the extension of my passport.

*Mi hanno comunicato in ritardo che la data della partenza era stata cambiata.*

I was informed too late that the departure date had been changed.

An indirect quotation of the kind shown in the examples above is usually composed of a main clause containing the verb of ‘saying’, ‘stating’, etc. (for example *dicono*, *hanno detto*, *mi hanno comunicato*) and a dependent clause, introduced by *che*, in the indicative.

### Choosing the verb tense and mood

When deciding which tense and mood to use for the dependent verb, it is important to take into account the tense of the main verb, and the time context, and to apply the guidelines of the sequence of tenses (*concordanza dei tempi*), illustrated in 30.5 and in Appendix V.

Most examples of reporting and indirect speech involve verbs such as *dire*, *affermare*, *comunicare* which are followed by the indicative mood (see 2.2.2). In 31.4, however, we illustrate contexts in which the conditional or subjunctive moods are used instead, for example expressing hearsay and unconfirmed reports.

First let’s see how to transform a direct quotation into an indirect quotation, applying the sequence of tenses. The table below is a simplified version of the guidelines on the sequence of tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main clause</th>
<th>Dependent clause</th>
<th>Dependent clause</th>
<th>Dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario dice</td>
<td>“Finisco all’una”</td>
<td>“Ho finito all’una”</td>
<td>“Finirò all’una”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario dice che</td>
<td>finisce all’una</td>
<td>ha finito all’una</td>
<td>finirà all’una</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario ha detto</td>
<td>“Finisco all’una”</td>
<td>“Ho finito all’una”</td>
<td>“Finirò all’una”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario ha detto che</td>
<td>finiva all’una</td>
<td>aveva finito all’una</td>
<td>avrebbe finito/finiva all’una</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
31.3.2 Changing other elements

When transforming speech into the indirect form, other elements must change, as well as the tense of the verbs. Subject pronouns, indications of time, indications of place, and demonstratives such as questo (see 3.8) also need to be adapted when direct speech turns to indirect speech, as in the following examples:

**Subject pronouns (for example, io / lui)**

Mario dice: “Io finisco all’una”.
Mario says ‘I finish at 1 o’clock’.

Mario dice che (lui) finisce all’una.
Mario says that he finishes at 1 o’clock.

**Indicator of time (for example, domani / il giorno dopo)**

Mario ha detto: “Finirò la relazione domani”.
Mario said ‘I will finish the report tomorrow’.

Mario ha detto che avrebbe finito la relazione il giorno dopo.
Mario said that he would finish the report the next day.

**Indicator of place (for example, qui / lì)**

Ho detto al mio fidanzato: “Io e le mie amiche ci vediamo sempre qui per un caffè”.
I said to my boyfriend: ‘My friends and I always meet here for a coffee’.

Ho detto al mio fidanzato che io e le mie amiche ci vedevamo sempre lì per un caffè.
I said to my boyfriend that my friends and I always met there for a coffee.

**Demonstratives (for example, questo / quello)**

Mia madre mi ha chiesto: “Hai letto questo libro di Eco?”
My mother asked me: ‘Have you read this book by Eco?’

Mia madre mi ha chiesto se avevo letto quel libro di Eco.
My mother asked me if I had read that book by Eco.

Here is an illustration of how time references and other elements change when direct speech is transformed into indirect speech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Indirect speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mario ha detto:</td>
<td>Mario ha detto che . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Parto oggi.”</td>
<td>. . . partita quel giorno.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sono partito ieri.”</td>
<td>. . . era partito il giorno prima.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Partirò domani.”</td>
<td>. . . sarebbe partito il giorno dopo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Questo mese / quest’anno ho fatto buoni affari.”</td>
<td>. . . quel mese / quell’anno aveva fatto buoni affari.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Il mese / l’anno prossimo farò buoni affari.”</td>
<td>. . . il mese / l’anno successivo avrebbe fatto buoni affari.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31.4 Reporting information or quoting hearsay

Reporting information may be done with a greater or lesser degree of certainty and/or objectivity. For this purpose different moods of verbs can be used: indicative (see 2.2.2) to show objectivity, conditional (see 2.2.11) and subjunctive (see 2.2.14) to show uncertainty or subjectivity.
### 31.4.1 Using the conditional

The following example shows how the fact of an event is reported in the **indicative**, while something less certain – such as the possible causes of it – is in the **conditional**. In English, a plain indicative tense is used, sometimes accompanied by a word such as ‘apparently’ to indicate lack of proof or certainty. Here the first example, about an OCSE report, is in the present conditional to say what is (apparently) true while the second example, about the death of two journalists in Syria, is in the past conditional to say what (apparently) happened:

Dei 34 paesi che fanno parte dell’OCSE, un’organizzazione internazionale di studi economici, chi lavora di più sarebbero i sudcoreani, con 2.193 ore di lavoro all’anno.

Of the 34 countries that make up OCSE, an international organisation of economic research, the people who work the most are apparently the South Koreans, working 2,193 hours per year.


Oggi in Siria sono stati uccisi due giornalisti, l’americana Marie Colvin del *Sunday Times* e il fotografo francese Remi Ochlik. I due sarebbero stati uccisi a Homs, la città roccaforte dei ribelli.

Today in Syria two journalists have been killed, the American Marie Colvin, of the *Sunday Times*, and the French photographer Remi Ochlik. The pair were apparently killed in Homs, the stronghold of the rebels.


### 31.4.2 Using the subjunctive

Hearsay or highly doubtful information is usually introduced by such verbs as **pare che**, **sembra che**, **si dice che** followed by the subjunctive. These verbs, being impersonal, also convey information without referring to its source. Let’s see some examples:

*Pareva che andasse tutto troppo bene.*

It seemed it was all going too well.

*Sembra che i testimoni abbiano detto la verità.*

It seems the witnesses told the truth.

*Si dice che gli uomini facciano più incidenti stradali delle donne.*

They say that men have more road accidents than women.

Here is an example of how gossip about a star is reported in a music magazine, using the subjunctive to express a lack of certainty:

*E’possibile che sia la solita esagerazione dei tabloid britannici, ma pare che la lunga relazione di Leona Lewis col fidanzato sia finita.*

It might be the usual exaggeration by the British tabloid press, but it seems that the long relationship of Leona Lewis with her fiancé is over.

### 31.4.3 Secondo

When you want to refer to the source of some information, without endorsing its content, you use the preposition **secondo** (see also 4.5) followed by the source. The choice of mood – indicative or conditional – indicates how certain or otherwise the information is. Here is a further extract from the same news item about the singer Leona Lewis seen above. The past conditional is used to talk about the couple’s apparent decision to split up and the source is given as a London daily newspaper.

I due, secondo un quotidiano londinese, avrebbero deciso di lasciarsi quando hanno capito che gli impegni di lei non avrebbero più consentito loro di trascorrere insieme più di una giornata ogni tanto.

The couple, according to a London daily newspaper, decided to leave each other when they realised that her commitments would not have allowed them to spend more than an occasional day together.

When used to express one’s own opinion (secondo me, secondo noi), use of the conditional softens the forcefulness of our opinion and sounds more polite (see also 27.1.5):

...e secondo te tutte queste notizie sarebbero vere?

... and in your opinion, are all these news stories true?

Secondo me i giornalisti dovrebbero controllare meglio le informazioni.

In my opinion, the journalists should check their information more carefully.

The use of the indicative, on the other hand, conveys strong conviction or belief, presented as a fact, as in the following examples:

Secondo me tutte queste notizie sono false.

In my opinion, all these news stories are false.

Secondo un sondaggio 8 italiani su 10 tradiscono il coniuge.

According to an opinion poll, eight Italians out of ten betray their partner.

Another very simple way to convey an opinion is to use the preposition per (see also 4.3.6) with the indicative or the conditional:

Per me, hai torto.

In my opinion, you are wrong.

Per me, Andreotti ha commesso un errore.

In my opinion, Andreotti made a mistake.

Per la stampa italiana, la situazione economica del paese sarebbe in via di miglioramento.

According to the Italian press, the economic situation is improving.

Per gran parte del pubblico americano, OJ Simpson non avrebbe commesso nessun delitto.

According to a large sector of the American public, OJ Simpson did not commit any crime.
Expressing possibility and probability

32

32.1 Introduction

This section looks at ways of putting your message in context in a complex sentence. One important context is that of possibility and probability: saying how certain or how likely it is that something has happened/is happening/will happen.

On the whole, we can separate statements of possibility or probability into two broad categories: those which represent a personal opinion or subjective point of view (‘I think’, ‘we believe’), and those which represent an impersonal or objective point of view, whether proved or otherwise (‘it seems’, ‘it is likely’).

The first category – personal opinion or subjective point of view – is covered in Chapter 27 and in 29.2–5 and involves verbs such as credere, essere certo/sicuro, pensare, ritenere, sembrare, sapere.

In this chapter we look at the second category, the impersonal or objective point of view.

32.2 Certainty, uncertainty

The adjectives certo, sicuro can be used impersonally, along with essere, to express the English ‘it is certain’ (compare with their more personalised use illustrated in 29.3). They are followed by a verb in the indicative mood:

È certo che la vita è più cara in Italia.
It's certain that life is dearer in Italy.

È sicuro che lui prenda il posto.
It's certain that he will get the job.

When used in the negative (non è sicuro), they should be followed by a verb in the subjunctive:

Non è certo che la vita sia più cara in Italia.
It’s not certain that life is dearer in Italy.

Non è sicuro che lui prenda il posto.
It’s not certain that he will get the job.

È certo (che), è sicuro (che) can be replaced by the adverbs or adverbial phrases certamente, sicuramente, di sicuro:

Certamente la vita è più cara in Italia.
Certainly life is dearer in Italy.

Sicuramente non prende il posto.
Certainly he won’t get the job.

Di sicuro lo vediamo domani.
We’ll certainly see him tomorrow.
Note the difference in degree of certainty between the two negative statements: *Non è sicuro che lui prenda il posto*, where the subjunctive expresses doubt, and *Sicuramente non prende il posto*, in which no doubt is expressed and the indicative is used.

### Knowing, not knowing

*Sapere* can also be used with an impersonal subject *si* ‘one’, as in the expression *si sa* (see also 2.1.12 and 19.5). Normally it is followed by an indicative tense. As with *certo, sicuro*, however, when *sapere* is used in the negative, it should be followed by the subjunctive, expressing some uncertainty. In informal speech, some speakers may choose to use the indicative.

*Si sa che gli inglesi sono molto riservati.*
It is generally known that the English are reserved.

*Non si sa se gli ostaggi siano ancora vivi.*
It is not known if the hostages are still alive.

*Non sappiamo se la Ferrari sia migliorata.*
We don’t know if the Ferrari team has improved.

(www.tuttosport.com, retrieved 13 March 2012)

### Possible or impossible, probable or improbable

Certain adjectives can be used with the verb *essere* to form impersonal phrases, followed by a verb infinitive, in which no specific person or object is mentioned:

*È impossibile imparare l’italiano.*
It is impossible to learn Italian.

The most common impersonal phrases are the following:

- è possibile it’s possible
- è impossibile it’s impossible
- è facile it’s easy/likely
- è difficile it’s difficult/unlikely

These four adjectives can also be used simply to refer to a person or an object: *è una persona difficile* ‘she is a difficult person’, *è un compito impossibile* ‘it is an impossible task’.

The four impersonal phrases above can be followed either by a verb infinitive, or by *che* and a dependent clause.

In a *general statement*, where no individual subject is mentioned, these impersonal phrases are followed directly by a verb infinitive:

*È possibile mangiare fuori?*
Is it possible to eat outside?

*È impossibile completare questi ordini prima della fine del mese.*
It’s impossible to complete these orders before the end of the month.

*È facile imparare l’italiano.*
It’s easy to learn Italian.

*È difficile organizzare una vacanza per la famiglia.*
It’s difficult to organise a holiday for the family.

When a *specific subject* needs to be mentioned (for example ‘you’, ‘the hotel’), you need to use *che*, introducing a verb in the subjunctive to express uncertainty:

*È possibile che tu abbia dormito fino a mezzogiorno?*
Is it really possible that you slept to midday?

*È impossibile che i conti siano sbagliati.*
It’s impossible that the accounts are wrong.
È possibile che can be replaced by the idiomatic phrase può darsi (‘it may be, it may happen’), followed by a che clause, usually with a verb in the subjunctive:

Può darsi che la segretaria l’abbia già mandata.
It may be that the secretary has already sent it.

In addition to their literal meaning shown above (‘it’s easy’, ‘it’s difficult’), è facile, è difficile can also convey the meaning of ‘it’s likely’, ‘it’s unlikely’, in which context they are always followed by che and the subjunctive:

È facile che il contabile sbagli.
It’s easy (likely) for the accountant to make mistakes.

È difficile che loro arrivino prima di pranzo.
It’s unlikely that they will arrive before lunch.

Two further impersonal phrases can be followed by che and the subjunctive (but not by a verb infinitive):

è probabile it’s probable/likely
è improbabile it’s improbable/unlikely
È probabile che l’albergo sia pieno.
It is likely that the hotel will be full.
È poco probabile che lui l’abbia rubato.
It’s not very likely that he stole it.
È improbabile che facciano una vacanza in montagna.
It’s unlikely that they will have a holiday in the mountains.

The expressions si dice, dicono ‘one says’, ‘they say’ are used to report what someone said, but since this is hearsay (see also 31.4) rather than a fact, they are followed by the subjunctive:

Si dice che Joan Collins abbia fatto il lifting varie volte.
It is said that Joan Collins has had several facelifts.

Impersonal phrases which express certainty, rather than probability, include:

è chiaro it’s clear
è evidente it’s evident, obvious
è ovvio it’s obvious

These expressions, by their very nature, always express certainty, so are followed by the indicative:

È chiaro che l’autore scrive di una sua esperienza personale.
It is clear that the author is writing about a personal experience.

Era evidente che l’impiegato non era in grado di svolgere quella funzione.
It was obvious that the employee was not able to carry out that function.

NOTE For guidance on which tense to use in the dependent clauses, see 30.5 and Appendix V.
33

Expressing purpose

33.1 Introduction

Purpose involves an element of premeditation. A *purpose* clause tells us what the subject’s *intention* or *purpose* is, or was, in advance of the action. A *reason* clause tells us – after the event – why someone did something or why something happened. Both ‘reason’ clauses and ‘purpose’ clauses are introduced by conjunctions (see 5.3) or other connecting words. Generally, clauses of reason (see also 34.3.1) have a verb in the *indicative* (see 2.2.2), while clauses of purpose have a verb in the *subjunctive* (see 2.2.14). The difference between them is best illustrated by the conjunction *perché* which is used to express both *reason* (see 15.3.3) and *purpose* (see below), followed by the indicative and the subjunctive respectively.

Reason: *perché* and verb in indicative:

*Ho parlato lentamente perché l’interprete doveva tradurre.*
I spoke slowly because the interpreter had to translate.

Purpose: *perché* and verb in subjunctive:

*Parlerò lentamente perché l’interprete possa tradurre.*
I will speak slowly so that the interpreter can translate.

In grammatical terms, the most important factor in expressing *purpose* is to determine whether only the subject of the first verb is affected by the action or whether another person or object is affected as well. These two different situations are explained in 33.2 and 33.3 respectively.

33.2 Purpose involving only the subject of the action

In Italian, when the aim or purpose involves *only the subject of the action*, it is expressed by one of the following:

(a) Prepositions *per*, *a* and infinitive (see 2.2.1)

The preposition most frequently used to express purpose is *per* (see 4.3.6, 4.4.4) ‘in order to’:

*Lucia ha lavorato per pagarsi le vacanze.*
Lucia worked to pay for her holidays.

*Lo facciamo per risparmiare tempo.*
We are doing it to save time.

*Mi sono alzata presto per prendere il treno delle 5.00.*
I got up early to catch the 5.00 am train.

*Chiudi la porta per non far entrare il gatto.*
Shut the door so as not to let the cat in.

With verbs expressing *movement*, such as *andare*, *venire*, *correre*, you can use either *a* or *per* (see 4.4.1, 4.4.4). Whereas *a* tends to focus on *where* you are going, *per* has more of a sense of purpose and indicates *the reason why* you are going there:

*I turisti vanno a Roma per vedere il Papa.*
Tourists go to Rome to see the Pope.
Mentre eravamo a Roma, siamo andati a vedere il Papa.
While we were in Rome, we went to see the Pope.

Devo andare a Londra per rinnovare il passaporto al Consolato italiano.
I have to go to London to renew my passport at the Italian Consulate.

I ragazzi sono andati a casa di Edoardo a guardare un DVD.
The boys went to Edoardo’s house to watch a DVD.

Teresa veniva da me per fare lezioni d’italiano.
Teresa used to come to me to do Italian lessons.

(b) Prepositional phrases al fine di, allo scopo di and infinitive
Phrases used to express purpose include:
allo scopo di (con lo scopo di) with the aim of . . .
al fine di with the aim of . . .

Lucia ha lavorato allo scopo di pagarsi gli studi universitari.
Lucia worked to pay for her university studies.

Abbiamo lanciato il nuovo prodotto al fine di conquistare il mercato italiano.
We have launched the new product with the aim of conquering the Italian market.

Other phrases expressing future intention can be found in 14.9.

(c) Pur di
An element of desperation is implied by use of the phrase pur di ‘just to’:

È disposto a tutto pur di non fare il servizio militare.
He’s willing to do anything just to get out of military service.

La signora Ferri avrebbe fatto di tutto pur di essere invitata all’ambasciata.
Signora Ferri would have done anything to be invited to the embassy.

Purpose involving someone or something else

Where the aim or purpose expressed involves another person or object, other than the one carrying out the original action (the subject of the main verb), Italian uses a conjunction (see 5.3) to introduce a subordinate clause in which the person involved or affected is the subject of a verb in the subjunctive.

33.3.1 Conjunctions

Examples of conjunctions and phrases used to introduce a purpose clause are, in order of frequency, perché ‘in order that’, affinché ‘in order that’, in modo che ‘in such a way that’, in maniera che ‘in such a way that’ (see also 5.3.3 and 5.3.5).

The subjunctive is used after these conjunctions because it is not certain that the purpose can be achieved. When the main verb is a present or future tense, the present subjunctive (see 2.2.16) is used; when the main verb is a past tense or present conditional, the imperfect subjunctive (see 2.2.18) is used:

Chiediamo agli albergatori di mettere a disposizione alcune camere al pianterreno perché i clienti disabili possano venire ospitati.
We ask hotel-owners to make available a few rooms on the ground floor so that disabled clients can be put up.

Il governo si impegnerà affinché la guerra civile non diventi un massacro.
The government will take steps so that the civil war does not become a massacre.

Volevamo organizzare il congresso per settembre in modo che venissero tutti i rappresentanti.
We wanted to organise the congress for September so that all the representatives came.
The normal order in sentences of this kind is to have the main clause followed by the subordinate clause (the purpose clause). But it is possible to reverse the order so that the purpose clause comes first:

*Perché* i clienti disabili *possano venire ospitati* in albergo, chiediamo agli albergatori di mettere a disposizione alcune camere al pianterreno.

So that disabled clients can be put up in hotels, we ask hotel-owners to put at their disposal a few rooms on the ground floor.

**Alternatives to a purpose clause**

In everyday speech and writing, in order to avoid a ‘heavy’ construction such as those above, Italians prefer alternative ways of expressing purpose.

**Che expressing purpose**

Where another person (or an object) is involved, you can use the relative pronoun *che* (see 3.5) to express what your intention is for that person or object, i.e. what you want him/it to do. The implication of ‘purpose’ is marked by the use of the subjunctive:

- Facciamo venire un meccanico *che* ripari la lavatrice.
  
  We’ll call a mechanic who can repair the washing machine.

- Volevamo prenotare una vacanza *che* ci permettesse di rilassarci e di visitare dei posti d’interesse.
  
  We wanted to book a holiday which would allow us to relax and to visit some places of interest.

In spoken Italian, when the objective is more likely to be met, an *indicative* verb is sometimes used:

- Chiamiamo il cameriere *che* ci porta una bella bibita fresca.
  
  Let’s call the waiter, who’ll bring us a nice cold drink.

The use of the subjunctive to express purpose also implies that the speaker is looking for a *type* of person or object and not one specific person or object known to him or her. Note the difference between these two sentences:

- Il direttore cerca un’assistente *che* possa tradurre le lettere commerciali e scrivere mail in inglese. *(a type of person)*
  
  The manager is looking for an assistant who can translate commercial letters and write emails in English.

- Il direttore cerca l’assistente nuova *che* può tradurre le lettere commerciali e scrivere mail in inglese. *(a particular known person)*
  
  The manager is looking for the new assistant who can translate commercial letters and write emails in English.

**Fare + infinitive**

Another way to mention or bring into the conversation the person affected by your plans, is to use *fare*, with a direct or indirect object pronoun identifying the person affected either directly or indirectly (see 21.7). Study the examples below.

In this sentence ‘us’ is the *indirect* object of *portare*:

- Telefoniamo alla Reception, *per farci* portare la colazione in camera.
  
  Let’s ring Reception to have breakfast brought to us in the room.

In this sentence ‘him’ is the *direct* object of *fare*:

- Valentina ha chiamato il fidanzato *per farlo* venire alle 7.00.
  
  Valentina called her boyfriend to have him come at 7 pm.

In the sentence below, ‘him’ is the *indirect* object of *fare*. This is because there is already a *direct* object in the sentence (*macchina*) and the person involved can only be expressed by an indirect object:
Valentina called her boyfriend to have him bring the car.

To summarise, there are three different ways of expressing purpose, depending on the register used. Ranging from highly formal to informal, they are:

**Perché** followed by the subjunctive (see 33.3.1):

Chiamo mia figlia perché prepari la cena.
I’ll call my daughter so that she can make supper.

**Per . . . fare**, with a direct or indirect object pronoun and an infinitive (see above):

Chiamo mia figlia per farle preparare la cena.
I’ll call my daughter to get her to make supper.

**Che** followed by an indicative (see above):

Chiamo mia figlia che prepara la cena.
I’ll call my daughter who will make supper.

### 33.4 Purpose attached to a person or object

#### 33.4.1 Per

Per can also describe the purpose of an object or person, for example:

Questo è un nuovo prodotto per liberare il bagno dagli scarafaggi.
This is a new product to free the bathroom of cockroaches.

Gli studenti hanno formato un’organizzazione per proteggere i diritti delle minoranze etniche.
The students formed an organisation to protect the rights of ethnic minorities.

Adesso che ho deciso di tornare al lavoro, devo trovare una persona per tenermi la bimba.
Now that I’ve decided to go back to work, I have to find someone to look after my child for me.

#### 33.4.2 Da

Da can be used to express the purpose or use of an object in the passive sense, for example ‘a magazine to be read’, ‘something to be eaten’:

Vorrei comprare una rivista da leggere sul treno.
I’d like to buy a magazine to read on the train.

Dopo averci fatto aspettare 12 ore all’aeroporto, finalmente ci hanno offerto qualcosa da mangiare.
After making us wait 12 hours at the airport, they finally gave us something to eat.
Expressing causes and reasons

34

34.1 Introduction

You often need to explain the reason behind an event or action, or to justify your actions or those of someone else. There are various ways in which you can do this in Italian. Sometimes one person or thing is responsible, sometimes the cause is a factor or set of circumstances.

34.2 Specific people, factors or events responsible

Sometimes the cause of an event can be attributed to just one person, thing or event (expressed by a noun or pronoun), in which case one of the following prepositional phrases can be used:

- a causa di because of
- grazie a thanks to
- per via di because of

A causa degli scioperi, l’aereo è arrivato a Catania con due ore di ritardo.
Because of the strikes, the plane was two hours late arriving in Catania.

È grazie al chirurgo che mio figlio è ancora vivo oggi.
It’s thanks to the surgeon that my son is still alive today.

Per via del traffico, siamo arrivati a casa stanchi e nervosi.
Because of the traffic, we arrived home tired and edgy.

34.3 General cause or reason

Sometimes the cause of an event or action is a situation or combination of factors. There are several ways of expressing such a cause.

34.3.1 Using a causal clause

A conjunction (see 5.3.4) or similar phrase can be used to introduce a causal clause (clause of reason). The most common conjunctions are:

- considerato che considering that
- dal momento che since
- dato che given that
- giacché since
- in quanto inasmuch as
- per il fatto che for the fact that
- per il motivo che for the reason that
- perché because
- poiché since
- siccome since
- visto che seeing as
General cause or reason

By far the most common of these conjunctions is *perché*, followed by *poiché*, *giacché*, with *siccome* frequently used in the spoken language (see also 5.3.4). These all use the *indicative* (see however the note on *non perché* below). Compare this use of *perché* with *perché* expressing ‘purpose’ (see 33.1, 33.3.1). The position of the ‘since’/‘because’ clauses differs according to the conjunction used.

A causal clause introduced by *perché* always comes after the main clause:

*Sono stata bocciata perché non avevo studiato per niente.*

I failed because I didn’t study at all.

Clauses introduced by other conjunctions/phrases are more flexible, and can come either before or after the main clause:

*Poiché non avevano il capitale per formare una società, hanno deciso di cercare collaboratori.*

Since they didn’t have enough capital to form a company, they decided to look for collaborators.

*Ci metteremo subito al lavoro, giacché abbiamo cominciato con un po’ di ritardo.*

We will start work straightaway, since we began a little late.

*Siccome sei stato tu a comprare i calamari, adesso li puoi preparare.*

Since it was you who bought the squid, now you can prepare them.

*Dato che la situazione peggiorava, l’ONU ha deciso di ritirare le sue truppe.*

Since the situation was getting worse, the UN decided to withdraw its troops.

Sometimes *perché* is substituted by the shortened form *ché*, considered rather old-fashioned, but still seen in written texts:

*Non far rumore, ché ho mal di testa.*

Don’t make a noise because I’ve got a headache.

In informal spoken language, you often find the connecting word *che* used with a causal meaning:

*Vieni con me, che vado a vedere cosa succede.*

Come with me (since) I’m going to see what’s happening.

The phrases *visto che*, *considerato che*, *visto e considerato che*, *in quanto* tend to be used particularly in bureaucratic or legal language:

*Visto che non si è concluso niente, sarebbe meglio rimandare la riunione a domani.*

Since nothing has been decided, it would be better to put off our meeting until tomorrow.

*Visto e considerato che non stati rispettati i termini del contratto, possiamo procedere all’annullamento dello stesso.*

In view of the fact that the terms of the contract have not been fulfilled, we can proceed to the annulment of the same.

*È in parte responsabile il direttore di marketing in quanto non aveva pensato a come realizzare il progetto.*

The director of marketing is partially responsible in that he hadn’t thought about how to put the plan into effect.

Note that *in quanto* can also be used *without* a verb, for example:

*Dopo il disastro, l’Ingegnere è stato criticato in quanto responsabile della manutenzione della diga.*

After the disaster, the Chief Engineer was criticised as the person responsible for the upkeep of the dam.

*Non perché* and *non ché* are used to say that something is *not* the real reason behind an event or action; both are usually followed by the subjunctive, although the indicative is frequently used in everyday speech:

*Non perché ti voglia offendere, ma forse la danza classica non è il tuo forte.*

Not that I want to offend you, but perhaps classical dance isn’t your strong point.
EXPRESSING CAUSES AND REASONS

If the real reason is given as well, this is in the indicative:

Il capo vuole mandarla via, non perché gli sia antipatica (not the real reason), ma perché proprio non sa fare il suo lavoro (the real reason).

The boss wants to get rid of her, not because he doesn’t like her, but because she really doesn’t know how to do her job.

34.3.2 Using *per* + infinitive

When the same person is the subject of both cause and effect, *per* (see also 4.4.4) and an infinitive (usually a past infinitive) can be used:

Un nostro collega fu licenziato per aver portato a casa un computer.

A colleague of ours was sacked for having taken a computer home.

Per can be expanded into *per il fatto di*:

Mio fratello è rimasto stupito per il fatto di aver vinto il premio.

My brother was amazed at having won the prize.

Il direttore è arrabbiato per il fatto di dover riprogrammare tutto.

The director is angry at having to reschedule everything.

Il ragazzo viene giudicato male per il fatto di essere timido.

The boy is judged harshly because of being shy.

34.3.3 Using the gerund

The gerund, present or past (see 2.2.25), can also have a causal meaning. The subject of the gerund must also be the grammatical subject of the ‘result’ clause, as in the first two examples, or should be mentioned explicitly, as in the last example:

Sapendo che saremmo tornati in montagna a Natale, abbiamo lasciato gli sci a casa dei nostri amici.

Knowing that we would be coming back to the mountains at Christmas, we left our skis at our friends’ house.

Avendo già chiesto il prezzo della camera all’ufficio turistico, abbiamo capito subito che la padrona di casa ci faceva pagare troppo.

Having already asked the price of the room at the tourist office, we realised immediately that the landlady was charging us too much.

Essendo chiuso il negozietto, abbiamo comprato il latte al bar.

Since the corner shop was shut, we bought milk from the café.

34.3.4 Using the past participle

Similarly, the past participle (see 2.2.27) can also express a reason or cause. Like the gerund, the subject of the participle must be that of the main verb, as in the first example, or else must be specifically expressed, as in the second example:

Laureato con 110 e lode, Marco pensava di trovare subito un posto, ma non era così facile.

Having graduated with top marks, Marco thought he would find a job straightaway, but it wasn’t so easy.

Partiti i genitori, i ragazzi hanno organizzato una festa in casa.

With their parents away, the kids organised a party at their house.

34.4 Il motivo, la causa, la ragione

Italian, as English, has several nouns denoting cause or reason such as *il motivo*, *la causa* or *la ragione*:
Per quale motivo bisogna fare il check-in due ore prima del volo?
Why does one have to check-in two hours before the flight?

Il disaccordo tra i soci è stato la causa del fallimento dell’azienda.
The disagreement between the shareholders was the cause of the company’s bankruptcy.

Che ragioni aveva per agire in questo modo?
What reasons did she have to act in this way?

La causa, il motivo, la ragione can be used with per and a relative pronoun, for example cui (see 3.5.2) or il quale/la quale:

Il motivo per cui abbiamo scelto questa casa è la posizione tranquilla.
The reason we have chosen this house is its quiet position.

La ragione per la quale non sono venuti è che avevano dei compiti da finire.
The reason why they didn’t come is that they had homework to finish.

You can give more details by adding an adjective, for example:
per ragioni familiari for family reasons
per motivi finanziari for financial reasons
per motivi personali for personal reasons

Ha dato le dimissioni per motivi familiari. She resigned for family reasons.

Causare, provocare, suscitare

Verbs meaning ‘to cause’ include causare, portare a, produrre, provocare, stimolare, suscitare (see also 35.5.1):

Una sigaretta buttata per terra ha provocato l’incendio.
A cigarette thrown on the ground caused the fire.

All the above verbs except portare a can be used in a passive construction:

La sua malattia era causata dallo stress.
Her illness was caused by stress.

Le proteste erano suscitate dall’inerzia delle autorità.
The protests were caused by the inertia of the authorities.

Dovere, dovuto

The verb dovere (see 2.2.3 and Appendix III) can have the meaning ‘to be due to’ and can be used to express cause.

Here the impersonal construction si deve is used:

Si deve al tuo lavoro se abbiamo ottenuto buoni risultati.
If we had had good results, it’s due to your work.

Far more common is the use of the past participle dovuto. It must relate to one specific noun, shown in italics in our examples, with which it agrees in gender and number:

Il problema del traffico a Napoli è dovuto alla struttura della città.
The traffic problem in Naples is due to the structure of the city.

Abbiamo incontrato delle code sull’autostrada dovute a una manifestazione dei camionisti.
We met queues on the autostrada (motorway) due to a demonstration by lorry-drivers.

Where the reason is not a single factor but a whole set of circumstances, you can still use dovuto but need to incorporate the phrase il fatto che ‘the fact that’ to introduce the reason:

Marisa non si decideva a buttarsi in acqua. La sua indecisione era dovuta al fatto che non sapeva nuotare.
Marisa couldn’t make up her mind whether to jump into the water. Her indecision was due to the fact that she couldn’t swim.
**34.7 Asking why**

The question ‘why’ (see 15.3.3) can also be asked by using *come mai* or *perché*:

- *Come mai non sei venuto stasera?*
  How come you didn’t come tonight?
- *Perché non mi rivolge la parola?*
  Why isn’t she speaking to me?

You can also ask the reason using *quale*:

- *Qual è il motivo della sua gelosia?*
  What is the reason for her jealousy?
- *Qual è la spiegazione di questo comportamento?*
  What is the explanation for this behaviour?

Or using *come*:

- *Come si può spiegare questo fenomeno?*
  How can one explain this phenomenon?

**34.8 Using the imperfect tense to give reasons**

Often the *imperfect* tense (see 2.2.4 and 13.6.5) is used to supply the background to an action or event, expressed in the *passato prossimo*. Even without a specific conjunction of *cause*, the ‘reason’ aspect is clear from the context:

- *Siamo andati a casa. Eravamo stanchi.*
  We went home. We were tired.
- *Avevo fame. Ho mangiato due panini e un toast.*
  I was hungry. I ate two rolls and a toasted sandwich.
35

Expressing result, effect and consequence

35.1 Introduction

In narrative, and in everyday conversation, events can be seen as a sequence of purpose–action–result. In Chapters 33 and 34 we looked at purpose and reason respectively. Here we look at how to express results, effects and consequences in Italian.

35.2 Coordinating conjunctions

Conclusions and results can be expressed by two equal clauses of consequence or result introduced by simple coordinating conjunctions such as e, ma (see 30.2) and/or by other adverbs or phrases which link an action or event to its end result, for example:

- allora: therefore
- così: thus
- dunque: therefore
- in questo modo: in this way
- perciò: therefore
- per cui: and so
- pertanto: therefore
- quindi: therefore

Marco non fa mai niente in casa, e allora perché devo sempre lavare i piatti io?
Marco never does anything in the house, (and) so why do I always have to wash the dishes?

L’agricoltura ormai è in declino allora bisogna sfruttare le nostre risorse naturali per il turismo.
Agriculture is in decline now so we must exploit our natural resources for tourism.

Mi hanno rubato la borsetta con tutte le carte di credito e i soldi e così mi sono trovata senza soldi.
They stole my handbag with all my credit cards and cash, and so I found myself without any money.

Penso, dunque esisto.
I think, therefore I am.

Nell’ambiente di lavoro siamo tutti sotto pressione e dunque si creano delle tensioni.
In the work environment we are all under pressure and so tensions are created.

Ti sei comportato malissimo alla festa. In questo modo non avrai più amici.
You behaved really badly at the party. If you carry on like this, you won’t have any more friends.

La ditta versava in condizioni economiche disastrose e perciò ha licenziato più di duecento impiegati.
The company was in a disastrous economic condition and therefore they sacked more than two hundred employees.
Eravamo tutti stanchi per cui abbiamo preferito non uscire.
We were all tired so we preferred not to go out.

Il settore automobilistico è in crisi. Pertanto si potranno verificare dei ribassi nelle assunzioni in questo settore.
The automobile sector is in crisis. Therefore there may be some reductions in employment in this sector.

Non ho potuto fare una vacanza quest’anno e quindi mi sento veramente stanca.
I wasn’t able to have a holiday this year, so I feel really tired.

Used almost exclusively in spoken Italian is the phrase **ecco che** ‘and there you are’, as in the example below:

La gente corre, le strade sono bagnate. Ed **ecco che** succedono degli incidenti stradali.
People drive too fast, the roads are wet. And there you are with road accidents happening.

### 35.3 Conclusive (result) conjunctions

Consequence or result can also be expressed by a sequence of main clause (the original action) and dependent clause (the consequence) linked by conjunctions (see 5.3) such as **cosicché**, **di modo che**, **in modo che**, **perché**, **sicché** and informally **che**. The verb expressing the result or consequence can be in the indicative, especially if it refers to a past event:

La strada era bagnata **cosicché** quando mio marito ha frenato, la macchina ha sbandato.  
The road was wet, so that when my husband braked, the car skidded.

Andava troppo veloce **di modo che** arrivata alla curva la macchina è andata fuori strada.  
She was going too fast, so that when it got to the bend the car went off the road.

The verb expressing the result may be in the subjunctive, however, if the result is seen as unlikely or improbable, or, as in this example, where deliberate purpose is implied:

Ha versato da bere **in modo che** non vedessimo quello che faceva.  
He poured the drinks in such a way that we didn’t see what he was doing.

► See also 35.4 for an example using **perché** and the subjunctive.

### 35.4 Così, tale, tanto, troppo

Result and consequence are often linked to a main clause containing an adjective or adverb expressing **excess** or **extent**. Adjectives include **tale** ‘of such a kind (that, as to)’, **tanto** ‘so much, so great (that)’, **troppo** ‘too much (for)’. Adverbs include **così** ‘so, so much, so (that)’, **talmente** ‘so, so much (that)’, **tanto** ‘so, so much (that)’, **troppo** ‘too, too much (for)’ (see also 6.3.5).

The consequence can be expressed by an infinitive introduced by **da** or **per**. In this case, the subject of the infinitive must be the same as that of the main clause:

La sua intelligenza è **tale da** far paura.  
His intelligence is so great as to be frightening.

I miei amici americani hanno **tanti soldi da** non dovere mai lavorare.  
My American friends have so much money that they don’t have to work.

Ha bevuto **troppa birra per** poter guidare la macchina.  
He has drunk too much beer to be able to drive the car.

Sono **così demoralizzata da** non riuscire a prendere una decisione.  
I’m so demoralised that I can’t even make a decision.

Sono **talmente stanca da** volere solo dormire.  
I’m so tired that I just want to sleep.
È cambiato tanto da non essere più riconoscibile.
He’s changed so much that he isn’t recognisable any more.

Il direttore è troppo impegnato per riceverla oggi.
The manager is too busy to see you today.

Ha studiato troppo poco per potere superare l’esame.
He’s studied too little to be able to pass the exam.

Alternatively, consequence can be expressed by che and a dependent clause. The verb expressing the consequence or result is normally in the indicative or conditional:

Eravamo così stanchi che non riuscivamo a tenere gli occhi aperti.
We were so tired that we couldn’t keep our eyes open.

Provo una tale antipatia per Carlo che vorrei ucciderlo.
I dislike Carlo so much that I could kill him.

La soluzione mi sembra talmente facile che potrei anche cominciare domani.
The solution seems to me so easy that I could even start tomorrow.

Mi sento tanto male che non riesco a stare in piedi.
I feel so ill I can’t stand up.

The verb in the result clause may be in the subjunctive, however, if the result is seen as unlikely or improbable, as in this example, introduced by perché:

Gli studenti sono troppo giovani perché possano capire i nostri problemi.
The students are too young to be able to understand our problems.

Cause and effect, including the notion of extent, can also be expressed by using basta ‘it is enough to, one need only’ and solo ‘only’ in the main clause:

Basta un minimo di intelligenza per imparare una lingua straniera.
One only needs a minimum of intelligence to learn a foreign language.

Devi solo leggere i giornali per capire i problemi del mondo.
You only have to read the newspapers to understand the problems of the world.

In the example below, perché is followed by the subjunctive, to express the result or effect of an action:

Ci sono la radio, la televisione, basta aprire per un secondo perché il male ci raggiunga, ci entri dentro.
(Susanna Tamaro, Va dove ti porta il cuore)
There is radio and television. You only have to switch them on for one second, for the evil to reach us, to get inside us.

Words expressing result, effect

35.5

35.5.1 Nouns expressing result, effect, consequence

- la conclusione - conclusion
- la conseguenza - consequence
- l’effetto/gli effetti - effect(s)
- l’impatto - impact
- il risultato - result

L’iniziativa ha avuto risultati inattesi.
The initiative had unexpected results.

La mancanza di azione da parte dell’ONU ha avuto conseguenze disastrose per la popolazione.
The lack of action on the part of the UN had disastrous consequences for the population.

Questa medicina può avere effetti collaterali. Leggere attentamente le istruzioni.
This medicine can have side effects. Read the instructions carefully.
Expressing the extent of the effects or consequences

The extent of an effect or consequence is expressed by adjectives such as rilevante, importante, notevole or by phrases such as di lunga portata, di rilievo, if you want to stress its significance:

- L’effetto dello sciopero è stato minimo.
The effect of the strike was minimal.

- Il terremoto ha provocato poche morti, ma ha avuto conseguenze economiche di lunga portata.
The earthquake caused few deaths, but had far-reaching economic consequences.

- In Italia, la recessione ha avuto un impatto notevole.
In Italy, the recession has had a considerable impact.

If stressing the insignificance of the consequences, however, you can use adjectives such as irrilevante, minimo, insignificante or phrases such as di nessun rilievo, (di) nessuna importanza:

- Secondo il governo francese, gli effetti degli esperimenti nucleari a Mururoa sarebbero di nessuna importanza.
According to the French government, the effects of the nuclear experiments at Mururoa are of no importance.

Surveys and opinion polls

The results of surveys, opinion polls, etc. are often expressed by the verbs risultare, emergere:

- Stretto di Messina. Da un sondaggio sui traghetti, Metromare risulta la più soddisfacente. (http://www.costaviolaonline.it/, retrieved 14 March 2012)
Straits of Messina. From a survey on ferry companies, Metromare emerges as the most satisfactory.

- Risulta da un sondaggio che 16 milioni di italiani tiferanno Liverpool. (http://it.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080310072731AAogyRN)
It emerges from a survey that 16 million Italians will be cheering for Liverpool.

Emerge un quadro generale della situazione che non è molto positivo.
A general picture emerges of the situation which is not very positive.

See also 42.6 for more information on writing reports.
Specifying time

36.1 Introduction

When you need to indicate explicitly the time context in which different actions or events take place, or in which different facts are set, you use *time clauses* and/or *adjuncts of time* (phrases which specify a time context).

*Adjuncts of time* may be *adverbs* (see 6.3.1) such as *oggi* or *domani*, or *adverbial phrases* such as *fra dieci giorni, un anno fa, più tardi*. Examples are shown below.

*Time clauses* are dependent (subordinate) clauses (see 30.3) and their function is to expand the content of a main clause with a specification of time. They are usually introduced by a conjunction (see 5.3.6) such as *quando, mentre, dopo*. When using dependent clauses, the tenses of main and dependent verbs must follow the rules of the *sequence of tenses* (see Appendix V for the basic rules and 30.5 for a further illustration of how these rules are applied).

We have divided our examples into three time contexts: *same time context, actions happening earlier, actions happening later*. In all three time contexts, the relationship of one event to another may be that of two or more linked main clauses (see 30.2) or of main and dependent clause (see 30.3).

36.2 Expressing same time context

Actions happening at the same time as those of the main clause are generally marked by words such as those below, followed by a verb in the *indicative*:

- *quando* when
- *mentre* while
- *al tempo in cui* at the time when
- *nel momento in cui* at the moment when, just as, when

36.2.1 Quando ‘when’

This is by far the most frequently used specification of time, used for present, past or future time contexts:

- **Quando sono stanca, non mangio.**
  When I’m tired, I don’t eat.
- **Quando verrai in Inghilterra, vieni a trovarmi.**
  When you come to England, come and visit me.
- **Quando ero ragazzo giocavo a pallacanestro.**
  When I was a teenager I used to play basketball.
- **Ho visitato Siena quando sono stato in Italia.**
  I visited Siena when I was in Italy.
- **Quando ci hai telefonato stavamo cenando.**
  When you phoned us we were having dinner.
### Specifying Time

#### 36.2.2 Mentre ‘while’

Mentre introduces an action which takes place at the same time as the action in the main clause. It is followed by a verb in the indicative, in present, past or future tenses:

1. **Cerco di lavorare un po’ mentre i bambini giocano in giardino.**
   - I’m trying to do a little work while the children are playing in the garden.

2. **Mentre tu eri al telefono sono arrivati due clienti.**
   - While you were on the telephone two clients arrived.

3. **Mentre tu sarai al lavoro, io sarò in vacanza!**
   - While you are at work, I will be on holiday!

#### 36.2.3 Al tempo in cui ‘at the time when’

Al tempo in cui is used to talk about a period of time contemporary to that of the main clause. It is followed by a verb in the indicative, in present, past or future tenses:

- **Al tempo in cui noi abitavamo a Trieste, loro abitavano a Venezia.**
  - At the time when we were living in Trieste, they were living in Venice.

#### 36.2.4 Nel momento in cui . . . ‘at the same time as, just as, just when, when’

Nel momento in cui refers to a precise moment in time and is used to talk about what someone was doing, when the action in the main clause took place. It is followed by a verb in the indicative, in a present, past or future tense:

- **Il direttore mi ha chiamato proprio nel momento in cui stavo per uscire.**
  - The manager called me just when I was about to go out.

In the next example Italian uses the future tense after nel momento in cui, while English uses the present tense, after ‘when’ (the same applies to other time clauses in the future tense):

- **Pagheremo in contanti nel momento in cui riceveremo la merce.**
  - We’ll pay in cash when we receive the goods.

#### 36.2.5 Come ‘as, when, just as’

Although less common, come can also be used with the sense of ‘as soon as’ or ‘just as’:

- **Come sono arrivata a casa, ho fatto una doccia.**
  - As soon as I arrived home, I took a shower.

#### 36.3 Sequences of events

When talking about a series of events, we can use words such as prima, poi or dopo, to indicate the sequence they come in.

#### 36.3.1 Prima, poi, più tardi, dopo

The time relationship of one event happening earlier than another can be represented by two clauses, or groups of words, of equal weight, introduced by prima ‘first’, followed by poi ‘then, after, later’, più tardi ‘later’ or dopo ‘after, later’:

- **Prima siamo andati a Monaco e poi abbiamo visitato Salisburgo.**
  - First we went to Munich and then we visited Salzburg.

- **Prima andremo al mare e poi dopo Ferragosto andremo in montagna.**
  - First we’ll go to the seaside and then after the 15th of August we’ll go to the mountains.

- **Prima ho fatto lezione e più tardi sono andata in biblioteca.**
  - First I taught my class and later I went to the library.
Per cambiare valuta estera, bisogna andare prima allo sportello no. 6 e dopo alla cassa.
To change foreign currency, you have to go first to cashier no. 6 and then to the cash desk.

### 36.3.2 Prima di, prima che ‘before’

When the time relationship is represented by a combination of main clause and dependent clause, with one fact, action or event occurring earlier than the other, the action which takes place later is introduced by prima di or prima che.

**Prima di** is followed by the present infinitive. This construction can only be used when the subject of main and dependent clause is the same person (‘I have to do the shopping’, ‘I have to go back home’). In the third example below, the infinitive is in passive form.

- **Devo fare la spesa prima di tornare a casa.**
  I have to do some shopping before going back home.

- **Prima di venire in ufficio sono andata a trovare mia cugina.**
  Before coming to the office I went to visit my cousin.

- **Prima di essere nominata preside, la Dottoressa Belloni aveva insegnato al liceo ‘Parini’.**
  Before being appointed headmistress, Dr Belloni had taught at the ‘Parini’ high school.

**Prima che** introduces a dependent time clause containing a subjunctive. This construction is generally used when the two parts of the sentence have a different subject:

- **Prima che Lei arrivasse in ufficio ha telefonato il dott. Rosi.**
  Before you arrived in the office Dr Rosi phoned.

- **Devo informare Lucio di quello che è successo prima che sia troppo tardi.**
  I must inform Lucio of what happened before it is too late.

### 36.3.3 Dopo, dopo che ‘after’

When the time relationship is represented by a combination of main clause and dependent clause, with one fact, action or event occurring later than the other, the action which takes place earlier is introduced by dopo or dopo che:

**Dopo** is followed by a past infinitive:

- **Dopo aver cenato faremo una passeggiata.**
  After having dinner we’ll have a walk.

- **Andammo tutti insieme al cinema dopo essere stati da Franco un’ora.**
  We went all together to the cinema after being at Franco’s for an hour.

**Dopo che** is followed by a verb in the indicative in a range of tenses:

- **Partirò solo dopo che avrò finito il mio lavoro.**
  I’ll leave only after I’ve finished my work.

- **Vieni a trovarmi dopo che hai finito il tuo lavoro.**
  Come to see me after you’ve finished your work.

- **Andrea è venuto a trovarmi dopo che aveva finito il lavoro.**
  Andrea came to see me after he had finished his work.

### 36.3.4 Appena, non appena ‘as soon as’

**Appena** is used to indicate that the action of the main clause happens immediately after something else. Note the optional use of non:

- **Telefonami (non) appena hai finito.**
  Ring me as soon as you have finished.

- **Appena sei partito ci siamo accorti che avevi dimenticato le chiavi.**
  As soon as you left, we realised that you had forgotten the keys.
Note the use of the futuro anteriore (see 2.2.10) in the following example:

**Ti telefonerò non appena sarò arrivato a Tokyo.**  
I’ll ring you as soon as I have arrived in Tokyo.

Note in the following example the use of the trapassato remoto (ebbe visto), generally only used in written texts, and only when there is a passato remoto (corse via) in the main clause:

**Non appena ebbe visto l’orologio, corse via senza dire una parola.**  
As soon as he caught sight of the clock, he ran off without saying a word.

---

### Defining the limits of a period: ‘since’/‘until’

You can also define the period of time in which several facts happened, by specifying the moment when the period began (‘time from when’) and the moment when it ended (‘time until when’), as in the examples below.

#### 36.4.1 Time from when (since)

- (fin) da since
- da quando since when
- dal momento in cui since the moment when

**Fin dal momento in cui ti ho conosciuta ho sempre pensato che tu fossi la persona ideale per me.**  
Since the moment I first met you I’ve always thought you to be the ideal person for me.

**Da quando sono arrivata ho già letto la corrispondenza, risposto a due lettere, ricevuto due clienti, e ho perfino avuto il tempo di prendere il caffè con Sara.**  
Since I arrived I’ve already read the mail, answered two letters, received two clients, and I’ve even had the time to have a coffee with Sara.

**Dal 2011 abbiamo già cambiato tre macchine.**  
Since 2011 we have already changed car three times.

**Lavoro alla Fiat da cinque anni.**  
I've been working at Fiat for five years.

Note the use of the present tense, with *da*, in the last example, where English uses the perfect continuous (‘I have been working’). The present tense is used to stress that the action is still going on, or the situation still applies (see 2.2.3).

Similarly, *da* can be used with the imperfect tense to show that the action was still going on at that time:

**Vivevo in Italia già da due anni, quando ho conosciuto Carlo.**  
I had been living in Italy for two years when I met Carlo.

#### 36.4.2 Time until when

You can also define how long a period of time lasts, by specifying the moment _up to when_ the actions or events referred to continue/will continue/have continued, by using one of the following:

- fino a until
- finché (non) until, as long as
- fino a quando up to the moment when

The preposition *fino a* can be followed by a specific day (*fino a martedì, fino a ieri*) or by a specific date or year:

**Ho lavorato in questo ufficio fino al 2011 e ho realizzato molti progetti collaborando con numerose ditte e clienti.**  
I worked in this office up until 2011 and I carried out many projects collaborating with several companies and clients.

The conjunction *finché* is normally followed by *non* as well as the verb, when it expresses the meaning of ‘until something happens’:
Specifying repetition and frequency

Rimarremo in ufficio finché non avremo finito il nostro lavoro.
We’ll stay in the office until we finish the job.

It can be followed by a verb in the subjunctive rather than the more normal indicative form, but this tends to convey doubt as to whether the event or action will ever be complete:

Dovremo fare economie, finché la nostra situazione finanziaria non sia più sicura.
We will need to cut back, until our financial situation becomes more certain.

Finché can also convey the meaning of ‘during the length of time that’ or ‘during the whole period that’:

Finché l’avvocato Prati ha lavorato con noi non abbiamo mai avuto problemi e gli affari sono andati a gonfie vele.
In all the time Mr Prati, the lawyer, worked with us, we had no problems and business went very well.

When the starting and finishing point of the time context are specified (as in the last example), the verbs are in the passato prossimo (perfect) rather than the imperfetto (imperfect), even when the facts took place over a long span of time. In fact, as shown in 13.2, the perfect aspect stresses the completion of an action rather than its duration.

36.4.3 Duration of time

The phrase tutta la giornata expresses an action or event that went on all day. In fact the use of the feminine form ending in -ata tends to convey the meaning of a long stretch of time or a special day: una serata ‘an evening out’, ‘an evening together’, una mattinata ‘a whole morning’:

Abbiamo passato una bellissima serata.
We spent a beautiful evening.

Ci aspetta una mattinata di lavoro.
We’ve got a morning of work ahead of us.

36.5 Specifying repetition and frequency

There are various ways to indicate the repetition of a fact or action in certain circumstances.

36.5.1 Ogni volta che, tutte le volte che ‘every time that’

You can add a dependent time clause introduced by one of the following:

ogni volta che
every time (that)
tutte le volte che
every time
gnì qual volta (che)
every time

Non rimproverarmi ogni volta che accendo una sigaretta.
Don’t tell me off every time I light a cigarette.

Tutte le volte che andavamo a Londra, trovavamo sempre traffico.
Every time we went to London, we always used to find traffic.

Ogni qual volta ho avuto bisogno di aiuto, ho sempre trovato la massima collaborazione dei miei colleghi.
Every time I needed some help, I always had the greatest support from my colleagues.

Venga pure a trovarmi ogni volta che avrà bisogno di una mano.
Come and see me any time you need a hand.

36.5.2 Ogni ‘every’

The indefinite adjective ogni (see 3.9.2) followed by a unit of time can indicate the frequency of repetition, as in the example below. Ogni is invariable in form and always followed by a singular noun.
**SPECIFYING TIME**

- **ogni giorno**
  - every day
- **ogni mese**
  - every month
- **ogni cinque minuti**
  - every five minutes
- **ogni tanto**
  - every so often

*Ogni giorno riceviamo almeno venti telefonate.*
*We receive at least twenty telephone calls every day.*

*Il telefono suona ogni cinque minuti.*
*The telephone rings every five minutes.*

*Dose prescritta: due pillole ogni quattro ore.*
*Prescribed dose: two tablets every four hours.*

*Ogni tanto Franco perde la pazienza.*
*Every so often Franco loses patience.*

*Ogni lunedì giocchiamo a carte.*
*Every Monday we play cards.*

### 36.5.3 Tutti i, tutti gli, tutte le 'every...'

The indefinite adjective **tutti** (see 3.9.3) followed by a time element can also indicate the frequency of repetition, as in:

- **tutti i giorni**
  - every day
- **tutti gli anni**
  - every year
- **tutte le settimane**
  - every week

*Vado a scuola tutti i giorni.*
*I go to school every day.*

*Abbiamo pagato regolarmente le tasse tutti gli anni.*
*We paid taxes regularly every year.*

*Prendo lezioni d’italiano tutte le settimane.*
*I take Italian lessons every week.*

*Tutte le domeniche, andiamo a messa.*
*Every Sunday we go to Mass.*

### 36.5.4 Other expressions of frequency

- **un giorno sì e un giorno no**
  - every other day
- **Da ragazzo andavo al cinema un giorno sì e un giorno no.**
  - When I was a teenager I used to go to the cinema every other day.

*raramente***
*We go very seldom to the cinema.*

**spesso**
*often, frequently*

*Mia madre mi telefona spesso.*
*My mother telephones me frequently.*

**sempre**
*always*

*Mio fratello legge sempre i fumetti.*
*My brother always reads cartoons.*

### 36.6 Other expressions of time

Expressions of time which refer to a particular time context (*present, past or future*) can be found in the relevant chapters. Some expressions of time which are not specifically related to any one time context are:

- **man mano (che)**
  - gradually as
- **subito**
  - immediately
- **nel frattempo**
  - meanwhile

*Man mano che i lavori procedevano, il costo aumentava vertiginosamente.*
*As the works went on, the cost went soaring up.*

*Ha capitato subito cosa volevo.*
*He understood immediately what I wanted.*

*Pulisco io la cucina – nel frattempo tu prepara la cena!*
*I’ll clean the kitchen – meanwhile you prepare dinner!*
Chapter 36 showed how to put events in a time context, by saying *when* and *how frequently* something happened. Another way of setting an action or event in context is to say *where* it happened or *how* it happened, in other words to indicate place and manner. There are various ways of doing this, including using adverbs (see 6.2), prepositions (see Chapter 4) and adverbial phrases (see 6.2.5).

**37.2 Place: adverbs**

Adverbs of place indicate the place where an event or action happened. The most common adverbs of place are:

- **accanto**  
  next to
- **davanti**  
  in front of
- **dentro**  
  inside
- **dietro**  
  behind
- **fuori**  
  outside
- **lontano**  
  far, far away
- **sopra**  
  above, upstairs
- **sotto**  
  underneath, under, below, downstairs
- **vicino**  
  nearby, near

All of the adverbs listed above are also used as prepositions (see 37.3.6).

```
Mia madre abita a Via Carducci e mia zia ha comprato la casa accanto.
My mother lives in Via Carducci and my aunt has bought the house next door.

Ho freddo. Vado dentro.
I’m cold. I’m going inside.

Vai tu davanti. Io miiedo dietro.
You go in front. I’ll sit behind.

Mangiamo fuori stasera?
Shall we eat out tonight?

Il mio collega si deve alzare alle 6.00 perché abita lontano.
My colleague has to get up at 6 am because he lives far away.

In un condominio sente più rumori chi abita sotto o chi abita sopra?
In a block of flats, who hears the most noise – the person who lives underneath or the person who lives above?

Non ho bisogno della macchina. Abito qui vicino.
I don’t need a car. I live near here.
```

Adverbs and adverbial phrases indicating position include:
37.3 Place: prepositions

Prepositions of place can indicate the place where an action or event happens, the place to where an action or a person is directed, and the place from where something originates.

37.3.1 Forms of prepositions

There are many prepositions that relate to place (see 4.3). Full information on each specific preposition and on their forms when combined with the definite article (al, dal, del, nel, sul) can be found in 4.3 and 4.2 respectively.

37.3.2 To a place

The prepositions most often used to indicate to a place or other kinds of destination, including people, include a ‘at, to’, in ‘in, into’, per ‘for’, su ‘on, onto’, verso ‘towards’ and also da ‘at, to’ (see also 4.3.1, 4.3.5). While a is used for towns, cities and small islands, in is used for countries, regions and larger islands.

Quest’estate andiamo in Sicilia.
This summer we are going to Sicily.

Vorrei andare a Venezia per Carnevale.
I would like to go to Venice for Carnival.

A maggio si sono trasferiti negli Stati Uniti.
In May they moved to the USA.

Domani devo partire presto per Roma.
Tomorrow I have to leave early for Rome.

È arrivato un pacco per Lei.
There is a parcel for you.

Il passeggero ha cercato di saltare sull’autobus che però era già in partenza.
The passenger tried to jump onto the bus, which however was already leaving.

L’aereo stava scendendo verso l’aeroporto quando è caduta a terra una porta.
The plane was making its descent towards the airport when a door fell to the ground.
Da can indicate movement to somewhere, normally the place (shop, studio, surgery, house) of an individual indicated by name or by trade:

**Devo accompagnare i bambini dal dentista.**
I have to take the children to the dentist.

**Stasera andiamo da Gianni.**
Tonight we’re going to Gianni’s place.

### In or at a place

Prepositions that indicate in or at a place include a, da, in. While **a** is used for towns, cities and small islands, **in** is used for countries, regions and larger islands (see also 37.3.2 above).

**Ho fatto i miei studi a Padova.**
I carried out my studies at Padua.

**Abbiamo fatto una bellissima vacanza a Capri.**
We had a lovely holiday on Capri.

**Molti scozzesi hanno comprato casa in Garfagnana.**
Many Scottish people have bought a house in the Garfagnana region.

**Una grande percentuale dei lavoratori lavora in centro ma abita in periferia o anche in campagna.**
A large percentage of workers work in the city centre but live in the suburbs or even in the country.

**Da** (see also 4.3.3 and 37.3.2) has no equivalent in English but can roughly be translated as ‘at the house of’ or ‘at the shop/restaurant/office of’.

**Abbiamo mangiato benissimo da Gianni.**
We ate really well at Gianni’s.

**Ho comprato dei gamberi dal pescivendolo.**
I bought some prawns at the fishmongers.

**Facciamo il Cenone di Capodanno da mia sorella.**
We’re having the New Year’s Eve dinner at my sister’s house.

The combined form of prepositions is used for many phrases such as:

**al mare** at the seaside

**al cinema** at the cinema

With many common destinations, however, the simple preposition is used:

**a casa** at home

**a scuola** at school

**a teatro** at the theatre

### From a place

Prepositions which express movement from a place include **da** and less frequently **di**:

**Il treno da Trieste arriverà al binario 10.**
The train from Trieste will arrive on platform 10.

**Venendo dal centro, si prende Viale Cavour con direzione Ovest.**
Coming from the centre, you take Viale Cavour heading west.

**Per arrivare alle 7.00 all’aeroporto, bisognerà uscire di casa alle 6.00.**
To get to the airport by 7.00, we will have to leave the house at 6.00.

**Vai via di qua, brutto cane.**
Get away from here, you horrible dog.

**Esci di là, stupido.**
Get out of there, idiot.
37.3.5 Position (using prepositions)

Prepositions that indicate position include: **fra, tra** ‘between’, ‘among’ (there is no difference in meaning), **in** ‘in’, **su** ‘on’ (and their combined article and preposition forms).

- La mia macchina è parcheggiata **tra** due camion. Non si vede da qui.  
My car is parked between two lorries. You can’t see it from here.

- La farina per fare la pasta si trova **nell’armadietto**.  
The flour to make pasta is in the kitchen cupboard.

- **Quando vengono i nipoti, metto i vasi di porcellana sullo scaffale più alto.**  
When my grandchildren come, I put the china vases on the highest shelf.

37.3.6 Position (using prepositions and/or adverbs)

Many of the adverbs you saw earlier (see 37.2 above) can also be used as prepositions (see also 4.5.1). These include **accanto** ‘next to’, **davanti** ‘in front of’, **dentro** ‘inside’, **dietro** ‘behind’, **di fronte** ‘opposite’, **fuori** ‘outside’, **lontano** ‘far’, **sopra** ‘above’, **sotto** ‘underneath, under’, **vicino** ‘nearby, near’.

Some of these prepositions require a second preposition (for example, **a, da, di**) depending on whether they are followed by a noun or a pronoun. Others only require a preposition before a stressed pronoun such as **me, te**. For some prepositions, use of a second preposition is optional.

**accanto (a)**

- Siediti **accanto a me!**  
Sit next to me!

**Accanto** can also have the less literal meaning of ‘to be close to someone’:

- Sono sempre **accanto a te**.  
I’m always near you.

**davanti (a)**

- La macchina era parcheggiata **davanti alla casa**.  
The car was parked in front of the house.

- La signora **davanti a me** era molto elegante.  
The woman in front of me was very elegant.

**dentro (di)**

- Ci sono dei negozi anche **dentro la galleria**, ma sono costosi.  
There are some shops inside the shopping mall as well, but they’re expensive.

- **Dentro di me, mi sentivo molto triste.**  
I felt very sad inside.

**dietro (a, di)**

- La salumeria si trova **dietro l’angolo**.  
The delicatessen is just round the corner.

- **Il portafogli è caduto dietro all’armadio.**  
The wallet has fallen behind the cupboard.

- **Il signore dietro di me russava.**  
The man behind me was snoring.

**di fronte (a)**

- **Tragedia di fronte a un asilo – bimbo di 5 anni ucciso da un Suv.**  
Tragedy opposite a nursery – five year old killed by an SUV.
37.4 Manner

Manner

37.4.1 Introduction

The easiest way of stating how an action is carried out is to use an adverb. Full details of the formation and use of adverbs are found in Chapter 6. Here we look at other ways to specify or state how an action is carried out, using alternatives to adverbs.

37.4.2 Adverbial phrases

An adverbial phrase is composed of preposition (see Chapter 4) and noun and has the function of an adverb. We list the most common ones.

Adverbial phrases formed with maniera or modo indicate the way or manner in which something is done:

Nell’ultimo anno, le vendite degli smartphone (cellulari intelligenti) sono aumentate in una maniera incredibile.

Over the last year, sales of smartphones have increased at an incredible rate.
Mi ha risposto in maniera molto brusca.
He replied to me in a very abrupt manner.

Non parlarmi in questo modo.
Don’t speak to me in this way.

Adverbial phrase with con (see also 4.3.2):
Mariolina suonava il violino con molto entusiasmo ma con poca accuratezza.
Mariolina played the violin with great enthusiasm but with little accuracy.

Adverbial phrase with a (see also 4.3.1):
I bambini dormivano e noi parlavamo a bassa voce.
The children were asleep and we were speaking in a low voice.

I treni Interregionali corrono a grande velocità.
The Inter-regional trains run at high speed.

Adverbial phrase with in (see also 4.3.5):
Guardavano il programma in silenzio e senza commentare.
They watched the programme in silence and without commenting.

Ho preso un basso voto perché ho fatto il compito in fretta.
I got a low mark because I did the work in a hurry.

Adverbial phrase with senza (see also 4.5.3):
Ha fatto l’esame di guida cinque volte senza successo.
She’s taken the driving test five times without success.

Adverbial phrase composed of alla, all’ and either an adjective in feminine form or adverb (see also 4.3.1):
Saltimbocca alla romana
Saltimbocca Roman style

Scaloppe alla milanese
Escalopes Milanese style

Salutare all’inglese
To say goodbye English fashion (i.e. to leave without saying goodbye!)

This expression uses the adverb meglio to imply that you did things as well as you could but not perfectly:

Abbiamo sistemato la casa alla meglio.
We sorted the house out as well as we could.

The following expression meaning ‘sloppily, without much care’ apparently derives from the name of king Carlo Magno (‘Carlone’) who always did things in a rather haphazard way:

Fa le cose sempre alla carlona.
He always does things in a sloppy way.

Adverbial adjective
The so-called adverbial adjective, an adjective used with the force of an adverb, is becoming more and more common, for example in advertising language. The masculine singular form is the form always used: for example parlare chiare instead of chiaramente. Here are some more examples:

Mangiare sano. Mangiare Yomo.
Eat healthy. Eat Yomo.

Abbiamo lavorato sodo per una settimana.
We worked solidly for a week.

Chi va piano va sano e va lontano.
He who goes slowly goes healthily and goes far.
37.4.4 Benino, benone
Some common adverbs such as *bene* can also have suffixes such as *-ino, -one* added (see 6.2.6) to produce the forms *benino* ‘quite well’, *benone* ‘very well’.

**Come va Alessandro a scuola?**  Benino.
How is Alessandro doing at school?  Quite well.

**Nel villaggio turistico, abbiamo mangiato benone.**
In the tourist village, we ate very well.

37.4.5 Unusual adverbial forms
Unusual adverbial forms include those ending in *-oni* (see 6.2.2) which apply mainly to physical actions. Examples include:

- **bocconi**  face down
- **carponi**  crawling, on all fours
- **gattoni**  cat-like
- **penzoloni**  dangling
- **tentoni**  feeling one’s way

**Il bambino aveva cinque mesi e già andava carponi.**
The baby was five months old and was already crawling.

**Stare con i piedi penzoloni guardando il mondo girare.**
Sitting with your feet dangling down, watching the world go round.  *(from the lyrics of ‘Dolce far niente’, by Italian singer-songwriter Jovanotti)*

37.4.6 With *come* or *da*
You can use *come* (see also 4.5.3) or *da* (see also 4.3.3, 4.4.2) when you want to compare the way someone does something to a person or to an animal:

**Camminava con la testa alta, come una giraffa.**
She walked with her head high, like a giraffe.

**Si è comportato da pazzo.**
He behaved like a lunatic.

37.4.7 *Come se*
*Come se* ‘as if, as though’ takes the subjunctive, most commonly the imperfect:

**Vivi ogni giorno come se fosse l’ultimo.**
Live every day as if it were your last.

**Camminava come se avesse i tacchi alti.**
She walked as though she had high heels.

**Si comportava come se fosse la regina.**
She behaved as though she were the queen.
38

Expressing a condition or hypothesis

38.1 Introduction

In English you express a condition by using the word ‘if’. Normally, the second half of the sentence expresses what will or would happen if the condition is met, or what would have happened if it had been met. Look at these three examples:

- ‘If you are good, I will buy you an ice-cream’ (a genuine possibility)
- ‘If we win the Lottery, we will buy a house in Tuscany’ (possible but unlikely)
- ‘If you had drunk less wine, you wouldn’t have crashed the car’ (event has already occurred, so this is no longer a possibility)

Similarly, in Italian, se ‘if’ can introduce a hypothesis or condition (the periodo ipotetico). Conditional sentences can be split into three categories: real or probable, possible and impossible.

38.2 A condition which is likely to be met (probable or highly possible)

Here the condition is either likely to be met or may even be a reality already. The verb in the se clause is in the indicative (see 2.2.2), using the present, future or past tense, or a combination of tenses, to express certainty or reality. The imperative (see 2.2.21) may also be used. Most of the time, the se clause comes first in the sentence, but it can also come after the ‘result’ clause.

The choice of verbs used depends on the degree of probability, in other words, on how likely it is that the condition will be met. If you are expressing a near-certainty, rather than a condition (in the last example you may already know that your friends are going to Italy in October), you use a verb in the indicative for the se clause, and another indicative, in the appropriate tense, for the ‘result’ clause.

Present + present:

Se c’è qualche problema, mi puoi chiamare sul cellulare.
If there’s a problem, you can call me on the mobile phone.

Se piove, entra l’acqua.
If it rains, water gets in.

Present + imperative:

Se decidi di andare via, lasciami la chiave.
If you decide to go away, leave me the key.

Chiudi la porta, se esci.
Shut the door if you go out.
A condition which can no longer be met (impossible)

This type of conditional sentence uses the past conditional (see 2.2.13) to express what could or would have happened if the condition had been met, while the conditional or se clause uses the pluperfect subjunctive (see 2.2.19) to express the condition. Obviously, in the examples below, the moment of opportunity has passed and the condition can no longer be met.

Se il direttore fosse stato più gentile, non avrebbe licenziato il nostro collega in questo modo.
If the manager had been kinder, he wouldn’t have sacked our colleague in this way.

Se tu me l’avessi detto, avrei potuto aiutarti.
If you had told me, I could have helped you.

It is also possible to have a combination of present conditional (see 2.2.12) and pluperfect subjunctive (see 2.2.19) to express a condition which can no longer be met:

Se io avessi sposato un inglese, sarei più felice oggi.
If I had married an Englishman, I would be happier today.

In spoken language – rarely in written – the pluperfect subjunctive in the se clause is often replaced by the imperfect indicative (see 2.2.4). Compare the example below with the same sentence expressed more formally above:
EXPRESSING A CONDITION OR HYPOTHESIS

38.5 Expressing conditions with other conjunctions

Apart from se, there are several other conjunctions or phrases that can introduce a condition, such as:

- a condizione che  on condition that
- a patto che      on condition that
- ammesso che      given that
- nel caso (che)   if
- nell’eventualità che in the event that
- nell’ipotesi che in the event that
- posto che        given that
- purché           provided that
- qualora          if (ever)

Generally speaking, these phrases are used in the first and second types of conditional sentences (probable, possible), with the subjunctive:

- Nel caso che vi perdiate, chiedete informazioni ad un vigile.
  If you get lost, ask a traffic warden for information.

Similar in meaning, but followed by a noun rather than a verb, is the prepositional phrase in caso di ‘in case of’:

- In caso di incendio, rompete il vetro.
  In case of fire, break the glass.

The conjunction qualora is used in a hypothetical clause; its nearest translation in English is ‘if ever’:

- Qualora dovesse presentarsi l’occasione, Francesco e Chiara si trasferirebbero a Trieste.
  If ever the occasion were to arise, Francesco and Chiara would move to Trieste.

Both a patto che and a condizione che express the more specific meaning ‘on condition that’ and are always used with the subjunctive:

- Gli stiro le camicie a patto che lui lavi i piatti.
  I iron his shirts on condition that (if) he washes the dishes.
- La Madison firmerebbe il contratto solo a condizione che la commissione venga aumentata del 10%.
  Madison will sign the contract only on condition that the commission is increased by 10%.
Expressing conditions with gerund, infinitive or participle

Purché expresses ‘provided that’:

Mi piace tutti i tipi di musica purché siano originali.
I like all kinds of music provided that they are original.

The phrase anche se ‘even if...’ acts like se; it can express either a possible condition (using the indicative) or an improbable condition (using the subjunctive):

Anche se lui mi dice che va bene, aspetterò la conferma del direttore.
Even if he tells me that it is OK, I will wait for confirmation from the manager.

Anche se mi pagassero diecimila euro al mese, non accetterei il posto.
Even if they paid me ten thousand euros a month, I wouldn’t take the position.

Expressing conditions with gerund, infinitive or participle

Instead of using a conditional or se clause, you can also express a condition by using one of the following verb forms: gerund, infinitive, participle. This is slightly less common than using a se clause. In each case, the subject of the main verb either has to be the subject of the other verb form as well or else has to be explicitly mentioned.

38.6.1 Gerund

With the gerund (present) expressing a condition, a range of tenses is possible in the main clause (see also 2.2.23). There is no need for se since the condition is implied in the gerund:

Andando in macchina, ci metto due ore.
Going by car, it takes me two hours.
(If I go by car it takes me two hours.)

Andando in treno, risparmieresti un’ora.
If you went by train, you would save an hour.

Even when referring to a past context, only the present gerund can be used:

Guidando con più prudenza, non avresti preso la multa.
If you had driven more carefully, you wouldn’t have got a fine.

38.6.2 Past participle

The past participle (see 2.2.27) can be used with se to express a condition, as in the example below:

Se elaborato con attenzione, il questionario può essere uno strumento utile.
If designed carefully, the questionnaire can be a useful tool.

It can also be used without se, with the condition implicit in the past participle:

Fatto in modo incompleto, il sondaggio non sarebbe molto valido.
(If) done in an incomplete way, the survey wouldn’t be very valid.

38.6.3 Infinitive

The infinitive (see also 2.2.1) used with a can be used to express a condition:

A guardarla bene, sembra più vecchia di lui.
If you look at her closely, she seems older than him.

A reagire in modo eccessivo, rischi di allontanare tuo figlio.
If you over-react, you risk alienating your son.
38.7 Unfinished conditional sentence

Sometimes in English we express a half-finished thought, for example a desire or regret, with the words ‘if ... / if only ...’ (‘If only I had listened to my teacher . . .’). A similar construction is possible in Italian, either with imperfect subjunctive or with pluperfect subjunctive. Only the _se_ clause is expressed, while the ‘consequence’ or ‘result’ is left unspoken. In the examples below, we add suggestions for the possible consequence in brackets:

1. **Se si potesse tornare indietro nel tempo . . .** *(si potrebbero evitare tanti disastri).*
   *If only one could turn the clock back . . . (so many disasters could be avoided).*

2. **Se l’avessi saputo . . .** *(avrei fatto le cose in modo diverso).*
   *If only I had known . . . (I would have done things differently).*

3. **Se mia madre avesse saputo . . .** *(mi avrebbe ammazzata).*
   *If my mother had found out . . . (she would have killed me).*

Sometimes _se_ is replaced by *magari*:

4. **Magari me lo avesse detto . . .**
   *If he had only told me . . .*

Compare this use of *magari* with its use in 38.3 above.

Sometimes the half-finished thought is a tentative idea, a suggestion:

5. **Se prendessimo il treno invece di andare in macchina . . .?**
   *What if we took the train instead of going by car . . .?*

6. **Se gli dicessimo la verità . . .?**
   *What if we told him the truth . . .?*

38.8 Other uses of _se_

### 38.8.1 Contrast

The examples below refer to an action or event that clearly did take place (a _fact_ rather than a _hypothesis_). In this case the _se_ is not really expressing a condition, but has the _contrasting_ meaning of ‘while’, ‘whereas’:

7. **Se lui parlava molto, sua moglie parlava due volte tanto.**
   *If (‘while’) he spoke a lot, his wife spoke twice as much.*

8. **Se nell’Ottocento la gente usava ancora la carrozza, già agli inizi del Novecento si cominciava ad andare in treno.**
   *If (‘while’, ‘whereas’) in the nineteenth century people were still using carriages, already at the beginning of the twentieth century, they were starting to go by train.*

### 38.8.2 Indirect questions

In an indirect question, _se_ does not express a condition but means ‘whether’:

9. **Voleva sapere se noi avevamo visto sua moglie.**
   *He wanted to know if we had seen his wife.*
39

Expressing reservation, exception and concession

39.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we look at sentences expressing exception (a fact or circumstance that is true except for a particular detail), reservation (an event or action which will take place unless a particular circumstance prevents it) and concession (an event or action that takes place, although there are adverse circumstances or despite problems).

39.2 Expressing reservation or exception

39.2.1 Conjunctions or phrases expressing reservation or exception

You can express reservation or exception in Italian by using a conjunction or phrase followed by che and a dependent clause, by a verb infinitive or, in some cases, by a noun. Conjunctions and phrases expressing reservation or exception are shown below. Many of these can also have the function of a preposition and can be followed by a verb infinitive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction/Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a meno che (non)</td>
<td>unless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eccetto che</td>
<td>except that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fuorché</td>
<td>except</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salvo che</td>
<td>save for, unless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se non che</td>
<td>except that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tranne che</td>
<td>except, unless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39.2.2 Using a conjunction followed by che and a dependent clause

The phrases or conjunctions above introduce a dependent clause; the verb can be in the indicative (see 2.2.2) or the subjunctive (see 2.2.14).

The indicative expresses a reality rather than a possibility:

- **Avrei piacere di accompagnarti, se non che ho un appuntamento.**
  I would happily go with you, except that I have an appointment.

- **È tutto pronto per la cena, eccetto che non sono ancora arrivati gli ospiti.**
  Everything is ready for dinner, except that the guests haven’t arrived yet.

The subjunctive expresses something which may or may not happen or have happened:

- **Il Ministro non darà le dimissioni, tranne che il Presidente del Consiglio non lo costringa a farlo.**
  The Minister won’t resign unless the Prime Minister forces him to do so.

- **Le persone difficilmente cambiano salvo che siano costrette a farlo dalla legge.**
  People rarely ever change except when they are forced to do so by the law.
39.2 EXPRESSING RESERVATION, EXCEPTION AND CONCESSION

39.2.3 Using a preposition followed by a verb infinitive

Four of the conjunctions seen in 39.2.1 above, eccetto, fuorché, salvo, tranne, can also be used as prepositions followed by a verb infinitive. The most common of these is tranne:

Fanno tutto al rallentatore, eccetto guidare!
They do everything in slow motion except driving!

Lei fa tutto fuorché aiutarmi.
She does everything except help me.

Non è mai possibile evitare completamente il rischio di valanghe salvo rinunciare al piacere delle sciate fuori pista.
It’s never possible to avoid the risk of avalanches completely without giving up the pleasure of skiing off-piste.

Chiedetemi qualsiasi cosa, tranne cantare!
Ask me anything, but don’t ask me to sing!

39.2.4 Using a preposition followed by a noun or pronoun

The same four prepositions (eccetto, fuorché, salvo, tranne) can also be followed by a noun (object or person) or pronoun.

Eccetto is often followed by per:

La regola vale per tutti, eccetto per i minorenni.
The rule applies to everyone, except for minors.

Il viaggio era molto rilassante eccetto per il comportamento dei bambini.
The journey was very relaxing except for the behaviour of the children.

Eccetto can be replaced by fatta eccezione:

La regola vale per tutti, fatta eccezione per i minorenni.
The rule applies to everyone with the exception of minors.

“Tutto è perduto fuorché l’amore” è il titolo di un romanzo di Francesca Colosi.
‘All is lost except love’ is the title of a novel by Francesca Colosi.

Salvo often implies an unforeseen or unexpected consequence, something that is unlikely to happen. It is also often used in contracts or legal documents.

salvo errori e omissioni
save for errors and omissions (phrase found in contracts)

La merce arriverà domani salvo imprevisti.
The goods will arrive tomorrow, barring any unforeseen problems.

Tranne is probably the most common of all these expressions:

Non ho mangiato niente tranne quello che mi hai preparato tu.
I haven’t eaten anything except what you made for me.
Modifying a statement by concession

39.3

Modifying a statement by concession

39.3.1

Introduction

Using a clause or phrase of concession means that you are conceding the existence of a possible factor which can alter circumstances, but saying that the event or action expressed in the main clause will take place despite it:

*Per quanto* tu possa lamentarti, non cambierai niente.

However much you complain, you won’t change anything.

There are several ways in which a statement can be modified by an expression of concession in Italian (English ‘although, despite, even if’): some are explicit, some are implicit (in other words the idea of concession is understood or implied from the context, even without a specific conjunction being used).

39.3.2

Using a conjunction

Clauses of concession are often introduced by a conjunction or phrase such as:

- anche se: even if
- benché: although
- con tutto che: with all that
- malgrado: in spite of
- nonostante: despite
- per quanto: however
- quantunque: however (much)
- sebbene: although

Generally, these conjunctions are followed by the subjunctive:

*Benché fosse tardi, voleva presentarmi tutti i suoi amici e parenti.*

Although it was late, he wanted to introduce me to all his friends and relatives.

*Malgrado la segretaria abbia lavorato fino alle 8.00 di sera, non è riuscita a completare la relazione.*

Despite the secretary having worked until 8 pm in the evening, she wasn’t able to finish the report.

*Quantunque fosse preparato Marco, l’esame di guida si è rivelato più difficile di quanto si aspettasse.*

However well prepared Marco was, the driving test turned out to be more difficult than he expected.

*Sebbene non avessimo dormito tutta la notte, abbiamo deciso di andare a fare una passeggiata lungo il mare.*

Although we had not slept all night, we decided to go for a walk along the seafront.

Very occasionally *nonostante* is followed by *che*:

*Nonostante (che) sia piccolo, ha già cominciato a studiare il violino.*

Despite being young, he has already begun to study the violin.

*Anche se* can be followed by either indicative or subjunctive (imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive only), depending on how likely or unlikely the situation is:

**Likely:**

*Anche se tu sei la mia migliore amica, ci sono delle cose che non ti potrò mai raccontare.*

Even though you are my best friend, there are some things that I can never tell you.

**Unlikely:**

*Anche se fosse l’ultimo uomo su questa terra, non accetterei di uscire con lui.*

Even if he were the last man on earth, I wouldn’t agree to go out with him.
Expressing Reservation, Exception and Concession

Con tutto che is usually followed by the indicative:

Con tutto che aveva da fare 200 chilometri in macchina, ha voluto accompagnarmi prima all’aeroporto.
Despite the fact that she had 200 km to drive, she wanted to take me to the airport first.

39.3.3 Using a preposition

Malgrado, nonostante can also be used as prepositions followed by a noun:

Malgrado la nostra esperienza, torneremo in Calabria l’anno prossimo.
Despite our experience, we will go back to Calabria next year.

Se si votasse ora, dicono gli ultimi sondaggi pubblicati, il presidente americano vincerebbe nonostante tutto.
If people were to vote now, according to the latest surveys published, the American president would win despite everything.

Nonostante i suoi difetti la LionAir è la compagnia aerea inglese più importante.
Despite its faults, LionAir is the most important English airline.

39.3.4 Using the construction per... che

The combination of an adjective with per... che is followed by a dependent clause with a verb in the subjunctive:

Per intelligente che sia, non è stato promosso.
Bright though he is, he didn’t pass his exams.

Casa mia, casa mia, per piccina che tu sia, tu mi sembri una badia.
Home sweet home, however small you are, to me you seem like a fortress.
(Italian saying)

A similar construction is possible with a verb, although less common (see also 39.3.8 below):

Per studiare che lei faccia, sarà bocciata agli esami.
However she studies, she will fail the exams.

39.3.5 Using chiunque, qualunque, qualsiasi

Indefinite adjectives and pronouns (see 3.9), such as chiunque ‘whoever’, qualunque ‘whichever’ and qualsiasi ‘whatever’, can introduce a concessive clause and are followed by the subjunctive:

Non dire niente, chiunque ti chieda informazioni.
Don’t say anything, whoever asks you for information.

Qualunque risultato si ottenga, val la pena di provare.
Whatever result is achieved, it is worth trying.

Qualsiasi cosa io dico, mi dai sempre torto.
Whatever I say, you always say I’m wrong.

39.3.6 Using a past participle or adjective

A past participle or an adjective alone can have a concessive meaning, as shown below:

Nata in Inghilterra, Giuseppina si sentiva tuttavia italiana al cento per cento.
(Although) born in England, Giuseppina however felt 100 per cent Italian.

Benché, anche se, sebbene can be added to reinforce the meaning:

Anche se malato, volle partecipare alla gara.
Even though (he was) ill, he wanted to take part in the competition.

Benché invecchiato un po’, era ancora molto in forma.
Although (he had) aged a little, he was still very fit.
39.3.7 Using a gerund: pur essendo, pur avendo
Where the subject of the concessive clause is the same as that of the main verb, a gerund – normally present – can be used, preceded by pur ‘although’:

Pur avendo pochi clienti, la commessa ci ha messo mezz’ora a servirmi.
Although she had few customers, the shop assistant took half an hour to serve me.

Pur volendo aiutarmi, mio padre non era in grado di finanziare i miei studi.
Although wanting to help me, my father was unable to finance my studies.

39.3.8 Using the construction per essere, per avere
The construction per essere or per avere can be used only where the grammatical subject is the same for both verbs:

Per essere così giovane, è proprio in gamba.
Considering he’s so young, he’s really on the ball.

Per aver studiato l’italiano cinque anni, non lo parla tanto bene.
Considering he has studied Italian for five years, he doesn’t speak it so well.

39.3.9 Using the phrase a costo di
This means ‘even at the cost of’:

All’età di 75 anni, insisté per fare un’ultima scalata del Monte Bianco a costo di rimetterci la pelle.
At the age of 75, he insisted on making a last ascent of Mont Blanc even at the cost of losing his life.

39.3.10 Using manco a, neanche, nemmeno, neppure a
These negative expressions can be followed by se and a verb (subjunctive) or by a and then the infinitive. This construction can only be used when the main clause is a negative statement.

Manco a fare la coda per 24 ore, non si trovano i biglietti per quel concerto.
Not even if one queues for 24 hours, can one get tickets for that concert.

Io non lo farei, neanche se tu mi pagassi.
I wouldn’t do it, not even if you paid me.

Nemmeno a volerlo, non riuscirei a mangiare le lumache.
I couldn’t eat snails even if I wanted to.

39.3.11 Using tuttavia, nondimeno
Often the idea that the event will go ahead anyway is reinforced by the addition of the adverbs tuttavia ‘however’ or nondimeno ‘nonetheless’ in the main clause:

Sebbene stanchi, volevamo tuttavia andare a vedere il centro.
Although tired, we wanted however to go and see the centre.
Expanding the horizons
# 40

## Register and style

### 40.1 Introduction

Italy’s long and complex history has left its distinctive mark on the Italian language. Used almost exclusively as a written and literary language until Italy became one nation in the late 1800s, spoken only by an educated elite, it has preserved unchanged until recent years many features of its origins in the aristocratic society of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

These origins and the fact that the literary language existed side-by-side with a diversity of dialects, together with the influence of foreign domination (particularly Spanish and French), have contributed to the complexity of Italian syntax, the richness of vocabulary and the variety of stylistic forms.

The Italian language has inherited a fondness for elegance and eloquence, a sometimes excessive emphasis on precise terminology (often to the detriment of clarity), and an unabashed love of formality. These characteristics of the language of an educated elite are still strong today in certain sectors of Italian life, although there is a growing trend towards the modernisation and simplification of the language.

Today Italian is a modern and dynamic language, spoken by 60 million people, but it still retains certain features of its literary and aristocratic tradition. In this section of the book, we highlight just a few.

In this chapter we look at several points to consider in relation to the spoken and written language and the difference between them. Many of the points have been covered individually in earlier chapters but here we bring them all together to see how register and style affect the way you write and speak.

While this chapter looks at register and style in general, Chapter 41 looks specifically at spoken communication and Chapter 42 at written communication.

### 40.2 Spoken and written discourse

Just as any other language, Italian has different patterns of expression depending on whether it is being used as spoken or written means of communication. There are differences in the choice of words (lexis), as well as in the structures used (syntax), which distinguish spoken from written style. There are of course people who speak *come un libro stampato* ‘like a printed book’, whose speech is formal or elegant, just as there are people – including many present-day authors – who adopt the patterns of the spoken language in their writing.

In Italy, the gap dividing written from spoken language has traditionally been wider than in English-speaking countries. Until just over 100 years ago, Italian was almost exclusively used as a written language, while the language spoken was mainly dialect, even amongst the more educated social classes. In the next three sections, we provide some examples of how spoken Italian and written Italian can be very different, at the same time making a comparison with English, where applicable.
40.3 Differences in lexis

40.3.1 Exclamations

Many words are used frequently in everyday conversation, but rarely found in a written text. These include exclamations such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mannaggia!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Che casino!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damn!</td>
<td>What a mess!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caspita!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good gracious!</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult but not impossible to find a corresponding expression you can use in written Italian, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peccato.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Che confusione!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That's a pity.</td>
<td>What a muddle!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The written language is almost always associated with a greater formality and should avoid the kind of words used in everyday conversation, as well as the widespread and typically Italian use of regional or local languages.

Here are just a few examples of words commonly used in familiar contexts and spoken communication, with suggestions for alternatives suitable for written Italian. This list can be expanded by learners themselves, with the help of dictionaries and experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abbuffarsi</td>
<td>riempirsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balla</td>
<td>bugia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faticare</td>
<td>lavorare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fifa</td>
<td>paura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fregare</td>
<td>ingannare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tele</td>
<td>televisione</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>va bene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40.3.2 Vocabulary and synonyms

Italian is blessed with an extraordinary wealth of words drawn from its ancient literary tradition, enriched by the diversity of its regional and local varieties and by contributions from other languages, both in recent years as well as in the past. The written language cannot call on the intonation, gestures, pauses or repetitions that make oral communication easier and more effective. So a rich vocabulary is one way in which you can make your written messages effective.

Synonyms are an important tool in exploiting the rich and quickly evolving vocabulary of Italian. A good dictionary of Italian synonyms is useful for more complex communication needs.

One of the most common problems faced by students of Italian is how to choose from the variety of adjectives with identical or similar meanings. Here are just a few of the most commonly used adjectives with a choice of alternatives which have slightly different nuances of meaning:

- **bello** (**magnifico**, **meraviglioso**)
  beautiful (magnificent, marvellous)
- **grande** (**enorme**, **gigantesco**)
  big (enormous, huge)
- **piccolo** (**minuscolo**)
  small (tiny)

40.4 Differences in syntax

40.4.1 Coordination

The pattern of spoken discourse is generally that of coordinating phrases (see 30.2) which tend to be short, simple, similar in form and separated only by pauses. In spoken discourse,
phrases of different value, connecting links and time relationships can all be represented by pauses, changes in intonation or in the pitch of voice, gestures or repetitions. Eye contact is often a more effective channel of communication than words or . . . grammar.

Here is an example of this typical pattern of spoken language, in a very familiar situation: the short sharp bursts of communication between a mother and her three children at the beginning of a normal busy weekday.


(Adapted from Il libronuovo by B. Reggiani and A. Salvatore, IGDA, Novara, also reproduced in Chapter 21)

Valentina, wake up, Roberta wake up . . . Franco get out of bed. Kids, its five past seven! Franco, quick, go and have a shower. Valentina get dressed. It’s ten past seven! Kids, your caffelatte is ready! Franco, have you had a shower? Dry the floor. Roberta, why are you crying? Valentina, come on, let her put your yellow skirt on. It’s quarter past seven! Come on, are you coming to have this caffelatte or not? It’s all getting cold! Roberta if you keep on crying, I’ll come over there and kill you! Francooooooooo! Where’s Franco? Roberta don’t cry, go and comb your hair instead. It’s half past seven. You’ll miss the bus. Honestly, tell me, what sort of kids have I got!

Subordination

In written Italian, you do not have the same direct contact as in spoken Italian to help get your message across. Pauses must be represented by punctuation and emphasis and emotions must be expressed by a careful choice of words.

The organisation of written discourse is usually much more complex than that of speech, since you have to use a range of grammatical and syntactical devices to create a logical texture and facilitate communication. Phrases are usually more complex and there is a clear preference for a pattern of subordination involving main and dependent clauses (see 30.3).

Italian has a particularly complex system of relationships between clauses due to having existed for so long only as a written and literary language. For example the system of ‘sequence of tenses’ (see Chapter 30 and Appendix V), and the use of different verb moods (indicative, subjunctive, conditional, etc.), creates a network of relationships between clauses which is very effective in written communication, but also difficult for learners to master.

Let’s see how a spoken passage like the one above could be transformed into a piece of narrative description:

Ecco cosa succede a casa mia tutte le mattine all’ora del risveglio. Devo chiamare ad alta voce Valentina, Roberta e Franco, dicendo loro di svegliarsi, di alzarsi, di andare a fare la doccia e vestirsii!!! Alle sette e dieci la colazione è pronta, ma Franco non ha ancora fatto la doccia e deve asciugare per terra. Intanto Roberta piange e Valentina deve aiutarla a mettere la gonna. Alle sette e un quarto il caffelatte sta diventando freddo e Roberta piange ancora. Devo minacciarla per farle smettere di piangere e per farla pettinare, mentre, intanto, non trovo più Franco. A questo punto sono già le sette e mezzo e i ragazzi rischiano di perdere l’autobus. Ditemi voi che razza di figli ho!
Here is what happens in my house every morning when it’s time to get up. I have to call at the top of my voice Valentina, Roberta and Franco, telling them to wake up, get up, go and have a shower and get dressed. At ten past seven, breakfast is ready, but Franco has not yet had a shower and has to mop up the floor. Meanwhile Roberta is crying and Valentina has to help her to put her skirt on. At quarter past seven, the caffelatte is becoming cold and Roberta is still crying. I have to threaten her to make her stop crying and get her hair combed, while, meanwhile, I can’t find Franco any more. At this point it’s already half past seven and the kids risk missing the bus. Tell me what kind of kids have I got!

40.4.3 Pronouns

References to known persons or objects are made by using pronouns, which therefore create the thread of the discourse. The Italian system of pronouns is rather complex (see Chapter 3) including both stressed pronouns (see 3.3) and unstressed pronouns (see 3.4). For practice, see if you can identify all the pronouns used in the text above.

Questo, quello

Demonstrative pronouns like questo, quello and others (see 3.8) are largely used in spoken language where it is clear which person or object is being referred to because of their physical presence and the fact that the speaker can point to them, whether they are near him/her (questo) or further away (quello).

In written Italian, demonstrative pronouns can only make references to persons or things previously mentioned in the text, not to those seen. In the case of questo and quello, the first refers to something that has just been mentioned, while the second will be used when referring to something more distant in the text. Let’s see an example of this situation:

Stamattina ho incontrato Stefania sull’autobus, mentre andavo a scuola. Poi, quando ero già arrivato, ho incontrato anche Raffaella. Questa (Raffaella) mi ha salutato affettuosamente. Quella (Stefania), invece, ha fatto finta di non riconoscermi.

This morning I met Stefania on the bus, while I was going to school. Then when I had (already) arrived, I met Raffaella as well. She (Raffaella) greeted me affectionately. The former (Stefania) on the other hand pretended not to recognise me.

Although in written language questa simply means ‘the latter’ and quella ‘the former’, quella tends to express dislike or at least a lack of friendliness. Take care using these very common pronouns in writing; the pronouns must make it absolutely clear who or what is being referred to.

40.4.4 Conjunctions

Conjunctions (see Chapter 5) are also important words that allow you to construct the complex phrases typical of a written text. We can distinguish coordinating conjunctions (see 5.2) such as e, o, oppure, né, sia from subordinating conjunctions (see 5.3) such as che, se, sebbene, poiché. Written Italian has a preference for sentences made up of subordinating clauses which means that conjunctions are very important in constructing a text.

When using subordinating conjunctions it is important to know which verb mood (see 2.1.8) to use in the subordinate clause they introduce. Many conjunctions require the subjunctive (see 2.2.14), for example affinché, benché, perché, purché, sebbene (see 5.3.5, 33.3.1 and 39.3.2).

40.4.5 Adverbs

Adverbs (see Chapter 6) are also important for constructing complex phrases. This is especially true when having to create a time context, where adverbs play an essential role in creating a network of relationships of time among the actions, events or facts you are writing about (for examples see Chapter 36).
Formal and informal registers

40.4.6 Tenses and moods of verbs
To write fluently in Italian you need to be completely familiar with the complex system of verb tenses and inflexions. When constructing complex sentences, you need to understand and follow the ‘sequence of tenses’ (see Appendix V and also 30.5), which will allow you to write Italian accurately, elegantly and effectively. Finally you need to understand when to use the subjunctive mood and when you can get away with just using the indicative (see also 40.5.1).

40.4.7 Omission of elements
In the more casual pattern of the spoken language, elements are sometimes omitted, for example the non of the negative pair non . . . mica:

(Non) sai mica a che ora comincia la festa?
You don’t happen to know what time the party begins?

(Non) hai mica visto Giorgio a scuola?
You haven’t by chance seen Giorgio at school?

See also Chapter 41.

40.5 Formal and informal registers
The distinction between formal and informal registers is not a hard and fast one, rather a sliding scale. It applies mainly to written texts. At the informal end of the scale, the language of written texts tends to be similar to that of spoken Italian. Certain features separate the formal from the informal register.

40.5.1 Subjunctive or indicative?
An important marker of formality in Italian is the use of the subjunctive even in those cases where it is optional. The subjunctive tends to be used in a more formal style of text, while the spoken and informal register normally uses the indicative. Deciding whether to use indicative or subjunctive can often be a question of personal choice but is very dependent on the context. Here are some examples where there is a choice between subjunctive and indicative, depending on how formal or informal the context is. In the pairs of examples below, the first uses the subjunctive, the second the indicative.

In conditional sentences in the past context (see 38.3):

Se tu me l’avessi detto prima, avrei potuto accompagnarti.
If you had told me earlier, I could have given you a lift.

Se tu me lo dicevi prima, avrei potuto accompagnarti.

After pensare (see 27.1.1):

Penso che si debba prendere in considerazione questo fatto.
I think one must take this fact into consideration.

Penso che devi prendere l’autobus delle 7.00.
I think you should get the 7 am bus.

After sperare (see 2.2.15, 26.2.1):

Spero che la nostra collaborazione possa continuare.
I hope our collaboration can continue.

Spero che ti piacciono le lasagne.
I hope you like lasagne.

After qualunque (see 3.9.2):

Qualunque cosa fa, non vincerà mai le elezioni.
Whatever he does, he will never win the elections.
Qualunque cosa vuoi, non fare complimenti.
Whatever you want, don’t stand on ceremony.

**Passive, si passivante, si impersonale**

Another important marker of formality is the use of the passive, the *si impersonale* and the *si passivante*. The passive, *si impersonale* and *si passivante* are particularly common in instructional texts and scientific papers and also in the press (see 42.8 and 42.9 respectively) where they express objectivity and impersonality. These forms are far less common in the spoken language and in informal texts. Note the difference in the following texts:

*Si passivante, si impersonale*

*Cosa si fa al mare? Di giorno si fanno i bagni e la sera si fa una passeggiata sul lungomare.*

What does one do at the seaside? In the daytime one goes swimming and in the evening one goes for a walk along the seafront.

*Personal noi form*

*Cosa facciamo al mare? Di giorno facciamo i bagni e la sera facciamo una passeggiata sul lungomare.*

What do we do at the seaside? In the daytime we go swimming and in the evening we go for a walk along the seafront.

**Word order**

This final section looks at word order. Word order in both spoken and written Italian is extremely flexible. You can see examples of this throughout the book. Here are just a few points to look out for.

**Noun + adjective**

Unlike English where the *adjective + noun* order is rigidly fixed, in Italian the order is more flexible. You can say either:

*adjective + noun*

un grande giardino

*a big garden*

*or*

*noun + adjective*

un giardino grande

*a big garden*

The position of the adjective can make a difference in emphasis or even in meaning. (See 1.4.5)

**Subject – verb**

English learners tend to translate sentences directly from English into Italian. In Italian – as in English – the sentence can have the order *subject – verb*:

*Subject  Verb*

Gianni    ha chiamato.

Gianni called.

Il postino   è arrivato.

The postman’s arrived.
Word order

But it is equally possible to reverse the order, to give verb – subject:

Verb                      Subject
Ha chiamato               Gianni.
Gianni called.
È arrivato                il postino.
The postman’s arrived.

Often the ‘normal’ order is reversed or altered in order to emphasise who carried out the action:

Chi ha mangiato tutti i cioccolatini?
Who ate all the chocolates?

Verb                      Subject
Li ha mangiati            Sonia.
Sonia ate them.

But in the first examples above, no particular emphasis is given to the subject. It might just as well be the dustman who has called, or someone else who has telephoned.

In exclamative sentences, using che or come, the subject usually has to follow the verb:

Com’è bella la tua casa!
How lovely your house is!

Che begli occhi (che) ha quel bambino!
What lovely eyes that child has!

Similarly, in interrogative sentences, the subject often comes after the verb:

Finiranno mai questo libro Franco e Anna?
Will Franco and Anna ever finish this book?

And it has to come after the verb when the interrogative sentence is introduced by interrogative words such as che cosa, chi, come, dove, quale, quando, quanto:

Quando finiranno il progetto di ricerca i nostri colleghi?
When will our colleagues finish their research project?

40.6.3 Subject – verb – object

When there is a noun direct object, the normal sentence order in Italian is subject – verb – object:

Subject        Verb          Object
Gianni         vedrà         la sua amica stasera.
Gianni will see his friend tonight.

When you want to place emphasis on the object (in this case la sua amica), the normal order can be changed, so that the object is placed first in the sentence. There is a further direct object before the verb, in the form of a direct object pronoun (lo, la, li, le). This is called dislocation (see also 3.4.8).

Object        Subject      Verb
La sua amica   Gianni       la vedrà stasera.
Gianni will see his friend tonight.
(Literally: His friend, Gianni will see her tonight.)

It is equally possible to emphasise the object of the sentence by moving it to the end:

Lo vedrò domani all’aeroporto mio padre.
I will see my father tomorrow at the airport.
(Literally: Him I will see tomorrow at the airport my father.)

40.6.4 Split sentence

In Italian – as in English – it is also possible to split the sentence, using a phrase with essere, to emphasise the person or object in question, while the rest of the sentence stays in the same position.
Emphasising the *subject* of the action:

\textit{Sei tu che mi chiami?}
Is it you who is calling me?
\textit{È Luca che ci ha aiutato a fare trasloco.}
It was Luca who helped us move.

(Compare the last example with the non-emphatic sentence \textit{Luca ci ha aiutato a fare trasloco}.)

Emphasising the *object* of the action:

\textit{È lei che ho visto con mio marito.}
It was she that I saw with my husband.
\textit{È Naomi che sono andata a trovare a Genova.}
It was Naomi that I went to see in Genova.

(Compare this with the non-emphatic sentence \textit{Sono andata a trovare Naomi a Genova}.)
Oral communication and telephone skills

41.1 Introduction

Chapter 40 on register and style illustrates some differences between the spoken and written language. This chapter now looks specifically at the features of spoken Italian with which you need to become familiar, including the use of the Lei form, the use of discourse markers specific to spoken Italian, and the use of specific techniques needed to get your message across.

Another feature of spoken Italian not covered specifically here is the use of colloquialisms. You can consult one of the many texts on modi di dire to expand your grasp of colloquial expressions.

Making or receiving a telephone call in Italian is probably one of the most difficult tasks for a non-native speaker to carry out. The later sections of this chapter give some standard telephone phrases to help you, including how to spell your name.

For interjections used in different situations to express different reactions and/or emotions, see 25.2.

41.2 The Lei form

The formal form of address is known as the Lei form, while the informal form of address is known as the tu form. Although the use of the Lei form applies to written Italian too, it is most important in spoken interaction. The use of the Lei courtesy form to address people is probably the most important characteristic inherited from the period of Spanish domination (fifteenth to eighteenth century). The Lei form is an indirect way of addressing a person using the third person instead of the second person tu or voi, as if you were speaking not to ‘you’ but to ‘her’. Lei (‘she’) is a feminine pronoun but the Lei form of address is used both for men and for women.

The Lei form of address is one of the most difficult patterns of language for foreigners to learn, since it sounds slightly unnatural and confusing. It is particularly alien to English speakers, who are used to interacting with others in a simple, more direct fashion. Even students from an Italian background, who within the family have only ever used tu, sometimes find it difficult to use Lei.

Nonetheless the Lei form is an unavoidable part of everyday life and relationships in Italian society. Although the foreign learner will be treated with a certain amount of tolerance, failure to use it, amongst Italians, is perceived as an omission of a sign of respect and a serious infringement of good manners.

Here we highlight a few points to remember when using the formal (Lei) form.

41.2.1 Verb forms

The Lei form of address uses the third person verb form. Compare the two forms in the examples below:
ORAL COMMUNICATION AND TELEPHONE SKILLS

41.3

Tu
Prendi un caffè?
Would you like a coffee?

Lei
Prende un caffè?
You are right!

Hai ragione!
Ha ragione!

Particular care should be taken over the imperative forms (see 2.2.21). The Lei form uses the present subjunctive (see 2.2.16) as an imperative:

Tu
Vieni. Accomodati.
Come in. Have a seat.

Lei
Venga. Si accomodi.

Dammi quel libro.
Give me that book.

Mi dia quel libro.

The Lei forms of imperatives most commonly needed, even by tourists or visitors, are those used to attract someone’s attention or ask a question:

Senta! Scusì!
Listen! Excuse me!

41.2.2 Possessive

The possessive adjective or pronoun used (see 3.7) must be suo rather than tuo:

Tu
Dimmi il tuo nome.
Tell me your name.

Lei
Mi dica il suo nome.

È tua questa giacca?
Is this your jacket?

È sua questa giacca?

41.2.3 Pronouns

Personal pronouns (see 3.2) must be in the third person feminine form, whether subject pronoun (Lei), direct object (la), indirect object (le) or stressed object pronoun (Lei):

Tu
Tu sei inglese?
Are you English?

Lei
Lei è inglese?

Non ti sento.
I can’t hear you.

Lei
Non la sento.

Ti piace Mozart?
Do you like Mozart?

Lei piace Mozart?

A te piace sciare?
Do you like skiing?

A Lei piace sciare?

The formal (Lei) form of direct, indirect and combined pronouns (see 3.4.1–2) often has to be used when speaking on the telephone, in a business situation:

Vuole che La faccia richiamare?
Do you want to be called back?

Le mando il listino prezzi oggi pomeriggio.
I’ll send you the price list this afternoon.

Vuole il catalogo?
Do you want the catalogue?

Glielo spedisco domani.
I’ll send you it tomorrow.

41.3 Discourse markers

While discourse markers are found in both spoken and written Italian, some are more suited to the informal context of the spoken language.
Discourse markers

41.3.1 Discourse markers in conversation

Typical of spoken discourse are those phrases which try to involve the listener, for example vero, è vero? no? non è vero? and the northern Italian contraction nevvero?

- Ha studiato a Londra Lei, non è vero?
  You studied in London, didn’t you?

- Andiamo tutti con la tua macchina, no?
  We’re all going with your car, no?

- Quella ragazza è la nuova assistente, vero?
  That girl is the new assistant, isn’t she?

- Molto bella la fidanzata di Walter, nevvero?
  Very beautiful Walter’s girlfriend, isn’t she?

Some discourse markers summarise what you have just said:

- insomma in short
- allora so . . .
- in breve in short

Some reinforce what you have just said:

- anzi on the contrary, in fact

In spoken Italian – unlike in written Italian – anzi can be used entirely on its own, at the end of a discourse:

- Non ho nessuna intenzione di copiare il tuo tema. Anzi.
  I’ve got no intention of copying your essay. Quite the contrary.

Other discourse markers are also used in written communication to join the parts of complex sentences. These are explained in Chapter 30: Combining messages. They are however used in a slightly different way in spoken Italian and we have tried to illustrate them in the following two examples. The discourse markers are in italics.

41.3.2 Dialogo (informal conversation)

Carlo and Gianna are going to the seaside:

- Gita al mare

C Allora, siamo pronti? Sono già le 11.00.
G Ma vogliamo portare dei panini? Così mangiamo al mare a mezzogiorno senza dovere salire.
C Dunque se ci fermiamo prima in paese, possiamo comprare un po di prosciutto dal salumiere, anzi ci facciamo preparare i panini da lui.
G Va bene, facciamo così, si fa prima . . . dai, su, andiamo!
C E ora piove! Inutile andare al mare con questo tempo!
G E quindi cosa vuoi fare?
C Ma che ne so! Sei stata tu a volere andare al mare!
G Infatti le previsioni del tempo erano brutte. Perciò ti ho detto, andiamo presto!
C Cioè?
G Cioè verso le 8.00 di mattina!
C Si, grazie!

C Well, are we ready? It’s already 11 o’clock.
G Shall we take some sandwiches? That way we can eat on the beach at midday instead of having to come up again.
C Well, if we stop in the village first, we can buy a bit of ham at the salumiere, in fact we can have him make up some sandwiches for us.
G Ok, let’s do that, it’ll be quicker . . . come on, get a move on, let’s go!
C And now it’s raining! It’s pointless going to the seaside with this weather!
G So what do you want to do?
C What do I know! It was you who wanted to go to the seaside!
G In fact the weather forecast was bad. That’s why I said to you, let’s go early!
C In other words?
G In other words about 8.00 in the morning!
C Yes, thanks a lot!

41.3.3 Lecture (formal context)

A lecture on the reform of the universities in Italy:

La riforma universitaria in Italia

Dunque oggi parliamo del sistema scolastico in Italia e in modo particolare dell’Università. Allora la riforma universitaria prevede l’esistenza di due cicli: il cosiddetto ‘tre + due’ cioè tre anni di corso di laurea di base più due anni di specializzazione per il Master. Il sistema universitario diventa cioè più simile a quello inglese, anzi a quello europeo, perché in effetti tutti i paesi membri della Unione Europea dovrebbero aderire ai provvedimenti della riforma Bologna. In questo modo la mobilità europea diventa una realtà. Perciò le Università in Italia hanno dato il via ad una serie di cambiamenti, sia nell’organizzazione dei corsi, sia nel riconoscimento di esami superati all’estero.

So today we are talking about the education system in Italy and in particular about the Universities. Now the reform of the universities provides for the existence of two cycles: the so-called ‘three plus two’, in other words three years of undergraduate degree course plus two years of specialisation for the Masters. The university system, in other words, becomes more similar to the British one, or rather to the European one, because in fact all the member countries of the EU should follow the provisions of the Bologna reform. In this way European mobility is becoming a reality. The Italian universities, therefore, have started a series of changes, both in the organisation of their courses, and in the recognition of exams taken abroad.

41.4 Techniques of oral communication

Some specific techniques needed in oral communication with others are illustrated below. Sections 41.4.2–5 focus on effective ways of getting your point across in discussions and debates. A useful way of understanding and developing oral communication skills is to listen to debates and discussions on one of the many Italian TV channels now available online.

41.4.1 Attracting attention

In a restaurant or shop, the most normal way of attracting a waiter’s or assistant’s attention is to use the verb sentire:

Sentire, scusì! Listen, excuse me! (literally)

In the same context, the shop assistant wishing to start off a dialogue will say:

Dica, signora Tell me, signora (literally)

Similar phrases can be used to initiate or to join in a conversation in an informal social situation, using tu:

Sentì . . . Listen (literally)

Dimmi, Marco . . . Tell me, Marco
41.4.2 Interrupting

To interrupt while acknowledging points made by others, you can use:

- **Ecco.** There! (I told you so . . .)
- **Vedi,** You see,
- **Ho capito. Ma . . .** I’ve got the point, but . . .

**Vedi, io non sono d’accordo.**
Look, I don’t agree.

**Ho capito. Ma penso che le regole valgono per tutti.**
I understand. But I think the rules apply to everyone.

41.4.3 Getting your point across

To emphasise the point you are making strongly, use **dico che**:

**Dico che bisogna mandarli tutti in galera.**
I say we should send them all to jail.

For a range of ways of expressing opinion, see Chapter 27.

41.4.4 Asking/giving permission to speak

**Asking permission:**

- **Permetti? Permette?** May I speak? *(Literally: Will you allow . . .?)*
- **Una parola?** (May I have) a word?

**Giving permission or inviting to speak:**

- **Prego.** Please . . .
- **Dica (pure).** Please speak (please do)

41.4.5 Clarifying or explaining what has been said

**Explaining what you have said:**

- **Cioè** That is, in other words
- **Mi spiego** I’ll explain myself
- **Voglio dire** I mean
- **il cosiddetto ‘tre + due’ cioè tre anni di corso di laurea di base** the so-called ‘two plus three’, in other words, three years for the first degree course
- **Volevo sapere dove trovo lo zoom . . . mi spiego: apro la finestra per leggere la posta elettronica, ma è piccolissima . . . che faccio?** I wanted to know where I can find the zoom . . . I’ll explain: I open the window to read my e-mail, but it’s very small . . . what should I do?
- **Cosa c’è nel vostro frigorifero? Voglio dire: ora, in questo preciso momento.** What’s in your fridge? I mean, now, at this very moment.

**Checking someone has understood what you have said:**

- **È chiaro?** Is that clear?
- **Mi spiego?** Am I explaining myself?

**Giving examples:**

- **ad esempio, per esempio** for example

**Asking someone to repeat what he/she has said:**

- **Può ripetere?** Can you repeat?
- **Non ho capito** I didn’t understand
- **Non ho sentito** I didn’t catch what you said
- **Può spiegare?** Can you explain?
Spelling on the telephone

On the phone, you often have to spell your name or the name of the place where you live, using the Italian alphabet (see Appendix I). Italians often use the names of cities to represent the sounds they wish to clarify: A Ancona, G Genova, and so on.

Some letters such as J, K, X, Y (i lunga or i greca, cappa, ics, epsilon) do not exist in the traditional Italian alphabet but can be used for spelling foreign names. Here is a list of the cities which are most often used for spelling. The less common letters (H, J, K, Q, X, Y, Z) just go by their name. They do not need to be spelled out since they are not easily confused with other letters:

A Ancona  N Napoli
B Bologna  O Otranto
C Como    P Palermo
D Domodossola  Q cu
E Empoli   R Roma
F Firenze  S Salerno
G Genova  T Torino
H acca    U Udine
I Imola    V Venezia
J i lunga    W doppio/a vi/vu
K cappa   X ics
L Livorno  Y epsilon
M Milano  Z zeta

So to spell the name Jones you would have to say: i lunga, O come Otranto, N come Napoli, E come Empoli, S come Salerno.

Telephone phrases

Initial greetings, saying goodbye:

Pronto.
Hello.
Arrivederci.
Goodbye.

Asking to speak to someone:

Potrei parlare con il direttore?
Could I speak to the director?
C’è il medico, per favore?
Is the doctor there, please?
Mi passa il dottor Caselli, per favore?
Could you pass me Dr Caselli, please?

Being put through:

Attenda un momento. Gliela passo.
Wait a minute. I’ll put you through (to him/her).
Le passo la linea.
I’ll put you through.
Se vuole attendere . . .
If you want to hold . . .
. . . Le faccio il nuovo interno.
. . . I’ll dial the new extension for you.
Mi potrebbe passare . . .?
Could you put me through to . . .?
Saying someone is not there/not available:

Mi dispiace, non c’è in questo momento.
I’m sorry. He’s out at the moment.

È sull’altra linea.
He’s on the other line.

È in riunione.
She’s/he’s in a meeting.

Un momento. Non è in ufficio.
Just a minute. He’s not in his office.

Credo che sia nel palazzo.
I think he’s somewhere in the building.

Cercherò di rintracciarlo con l’intercom.
I’ll try and page him on the intercom.

Vuole attendere?
Do you wish to hold?

Vuole provare più tardi?
Do you want to try later?

Non riesco a rintracciarlo.
I can’t get hold of him.

Saying when someone is back:

Dovrebbe essere qui più tardi.
He/she should be back later.

Leaving a message:

Potrei lasciare un messaggio?
Could I leave a message?

Vuole lasciare un messaggio?
Would you like to leave a message?

Vuole ripetere il suo nome?
Could you repeat your name?

Come si scrive, per favore?
How is it spelt, please?

Dove posso rintracciarla?
Where can I get hold of you?

Va bene. Glielo dico.
I’ll tell him.

Calling back:

Gli chiedo di chiamarLa appena torna (appena rientra).
I’ll have him call you as soon as he gets back.

Vuole che la faccia richiamare?
Do you want me to have him call you back?

La faccio richiamare.
I’ll have him call you back.

Può lasciare il suo numero?
Can you leave your number?

La richiamiamo appena possibile.
We’ll get back to you as soon as possible.

Ho preso nota del suo numero.
I’ve made a note of your number.
Reasons for calling:

**Chiamo per fissare un incontro.**
I’m calling to arrange a meeting.

**E il motivo della chiamata?**
And the purpose of your call?

**Qual è il motivo della chiamata?**
What is the purpose of your call / what is it about?

**Mi può dire il motivo della sua chiamata?**
Can you tell me what it’s about?

Fixing an appointment:

**Le va bene domani a mezzogiorno?**
Would tomorrow at 12.00 suit you?

**Adesso controllo i suoi impegni sull’agenda . . .**
I’ll just check his/her appointments in the diary . . .

**Sarà disponibile giovedì . . .**
She’ll/he’ll be available Thursday . . .

**Facciamo alle due?**
Let’s make it 2 o’clock?

**Mi potrebbe chiamare per la conferma?**
Will you call me back for confirmation?

**Dovrei verificare . . .**
I would need to check . . .

**È abbastanza impegnato in questo periodo . . .**
She’s/he’s rather busy at the moment . . .

**Non sarà possibile nei prossimi giorni . . .**
It won’t be possible over the next few days . . .

**L’appuntamento fissato in precedenza non è più possibile/conveniente . . .**
The appointment arranged earlier is no longer possible . . .

Other useful phrases:

**numero interno / interno**
extension (number)

**Si può chiamare l’interno 329 componendo il numero 06 230 329.**
You can call extension 329 by dialling the number 06 230 329.

**L’interno del direttore è occupato.**
The manager’s extension is engaged.

**contattare**
to contact

**La linea è libera/occupata.**
The line is free/engaged.

---

**On the telephone**

When greeting somebody on the telephone Italians say **Pronto** (Hello). Here are two examples of simple telephone conversations, the first using the polite **Lei** forms, the second using the familiar **tu**.

**Call (A)**

*Pronto, sono Nicola Serra, vorrei parlare con l’avvocato Pira.*
Hello, it’s Nicola Serra, I’d like to speak to Mr (Lawyer) Pira.
Attend a minute, I’ll pass him to you straightaway.

\textit{Pronto. Con chi parlo?}
Hello, who am I speaking to?

\textit{Buongiorno avvocato, sono Serra.}
Good morning (lawyer), I’m Serra.

\textit{Buongiorno dottor Serra, mi dica.}
Good morning, Mr Serra, what can I do for you?

\textbf{Call (B)}

\textit{Pronto, sono Giulio Tramonti. C’è Andrea per favore?}
Hello, it’s Giulio Tramonti. Is Andrea there, please?

\textit{No, mi dispiace, è appena uscito.}
No, I’m sorry, he’s just gone out.

\textit{Posso lasciare un messaggio?}
Can I leave a message?

\textit{Certo, dimmi.}
Certainly, tell me.

\textit{Se possibile, Andrea dovrebbe richiamarmi stasera, dopo le 8. Devo dirgli una cosa importante.}
If possible, Andrea should call me back tonight, after 8.00. I have to tell him something important.

\textit{Va bene. Glielo dirò certamente.}
OK. I’ll certainly tell him.

\textit{Grazie, arrivederci.}
Thanks, goodbye.

\textit{Prego, arrivederci.}
Not at all. Goodbye.
42

Written communication

42.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at different forms of written communication and see how the grammar structures used vary according to the type of communication. We look at business correspondence, but also give some pointers for writing an essay or report. We also examine the types of written language you may come across in everyday life in Italy: bureaucratic language, scientific and technical language, and journalistic language. Lastly, we also look at informal forms of written communication such as emails and SMS.

42.2 Business letters

Business letters are very important in the world of commerce, even more so now that e-mails have become the accepted means of communication, replacing the telephone call. Faxes, which have almost disappeared in many European countries, are still an important means of communication in some small Italian businesses such as hotels. They follow the same style as letters but often use a cover sheet detailing the date, fax number and the number of pages being transmitted.

There is a set form for business letters in Italian, which tend to be more formal than their English equivalent. Here we look at just a few important features of letters. If you regularly need to send business letters in Italian, you should purchase one of the many books on corrispondenza commerciale (business correspondence) available on the market. Here we give just a few important points regarding the layout of a business letter.

42.2.1 Date

The name of the town or city is indicated top right, followed by the day (in figures), the month (written in full) and the year:

Milano, 14 ottobre 2012

This is often abbreviated in faxes and less formal letters to Milano, 14/10/12.

42.2.2 The recipient/addressee

The name and address of the recipient can be written either on the left or on the right. On the first line of the letter is the name of the addressee, with the appropriate title in full or in abbreviated form. On the second line is the street, with street number following it; on the third line, the CAP (Codice Avviamento Postale or postcode), followed by the name of the town or city. If the town is not the provincial capital, you may add in brackets the abbreviation for the province. Here is an example:
Egregio Dott. Augusto Parente  
Via G. Verdi, 42  
43035 FELINO (PR)

You may address a specific person within a company:
Ing. Carlo Biancardi  
Direttore Tecnico  
Metaldomus

When replying to an Italian business letter, the title of the addressee must be used even if he/she hasn’t used it when signing.

When writing to a company, the name of the company or organisation is preceded by the abbreviation Spett. (spettabile ‘worthy of respect’):
Spett. Bianchi S.p.A.†

or

Spett. Ditta Bianchi S.p.A.

NOTE † Società per Azioni or PLC.

The name of the office or department can be given either after the company name:
Spett. Bianchi S.p.A.  
Ufficio Contabilità

or as the addressee:
Spett. Ufficio Marketing  
Bianchi S.p.A.

If you want to mark the letter for the attention of someone specific (English ‘FAO’) you can use:
Alla cortese attenzione del Sig. Di Giacomo
Alla cortese attenzione dell’Amministratore Delegato

42.2.3 Academic, honorary and other titles

For a fuller discussion on when and how to use professional titles, see 20.9. Professional qualifications are not generally used to address people in English, with the exception of ‘Doctor’, but they are always used in Italy where it is normal to address people as Ingegnere, Avvocato both in speaking and in writing:

Sig. signore  
Sig. na signorina  
Sig. ra signora  
Sig. a See note  
Dott. Dottore  
Ing. Ingegnere  
Avv. Avvocato  
Rag. Ragioniere  
Prof. Professore

NOTE When you don’t know whether a woman is married or not, you should address her as Sig. a (signora).

If you know the name of the person, use their name and title:
Gentile Signora Bianchi, Egregio Signor Rossi
If you don’t know their name, use their title only:
Egregio Direttore

Usually Egregio (abbreviated Egr.) is used for a man, Gentile (abbreviated Gent.) for a woman:
Egregio Professore, Egregio Dottore, Egregio Signore  
Gentile Signora, Gentile Dottoressa, Gentile Professoressa
42.2.4 References

You may find the following references on a business letter:

Rif. Ref.
Vs. Rif. Your ref.
Ns. Rif. Our ref.

The word Oggetto indicates what the letter or fax is about:

Oggetto: Richiesta di campione, prezzi e condizioni di pagamento.
Re: Request for samples, prices and terms of payment.

42.2.5 Salutation (‘Dear . . . ’)

When addressing a letter to a company or organisation, no salutation is used. The name is given at the top of the letter along with the address, Egregio, Gentile, etc. (see 42.2.3) and is not repeated at the beginning of the letter.

42.2.6 Some common abbreviations in commercial letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>allegato/i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.</td>
<td>casella postale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.A.P.</td>
<td>codice di avviamento postale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c/c</td>
<td>conto corrente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corr.</td>
<td>corrente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.m.</td>
<td>corrente mese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lett.</td>
<td>lettera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. / N°</td>
<td>numero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.c.</td>
<td>per conoscenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.c.c.</td>
<td>per copia conforme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.v.</td>
<td>prossimo venturo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racc.</td>
<td>raccomandata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u.s.</td>
<td>ultimo scorso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enclosures/enclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>postbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>postcode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>current account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for information only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>copy to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>next (month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>registered post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>last (month)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42.2.7 Opening and closing phrases

In formal correspondence, you may use either the voi form, if addressing the company, or the Lei form, if addressing one person. The pronouns and possessives will correspond, with vostro for the voi form and Suo for the Lei form:

Opening:

In risposta alla vostra/Sua (lettera) . . .
In reply to your letter . . .

Riguardo alla vostra/Sua (lettera) . . .
With regard to your letter . . .

In riferimento all vostra/Sua del 10 c.m. . . .
With reference to your letter of the 10th of this month . . .

Abbiamo il piacere di informarvi/informarLa . . .
We have the pleasure to inform you . . .

Vi/Le comuniciamo che . . .
We inform you that . . .

Ci dispiace dovervi/doverLa informare . . .
We are sorry to have to inform you . . .

Closing:

Speriamo in una vostra/Sua sollecita risposta . . .
We look forward to a speedy reply . . .
In attesa di una vostra/Sua risposta . . .  
Awaiting your reply . . .

. . . siamo a vostra/Sua disposizione . . .  
. . . we are at your disposal . . .

Vi/La salutiamo distintamente  
Y ours faithfully

42.2.8 Signature

The signature at the bottom indicates the name and position of the writer. The actual signature is generally handwritten. The abbreviation p indicates that the person has been authorised to write on behalf of someone else.

42.3 Informal written communication

The popularity of more direct forms of communication such as email or SMS is encouraging the use of a simpler, more accessible language more akin to the spoken language. Here we look at some key features of emails and SMS.

42.3.1 Emails

Emailing (la posta elettronica) is now commonly used for both business and social communication. An email (un'email or una mail) can vary in formality, in the same way as letters. Generally, in emails people take less care over spelling and are more inclined to use an informal register, often more akin to spoken Italian. As seen in the email below, for example, this means using indicative rather than subjunctive verb forms (non so se ti è mai arrivato), disconnected clauses, informally phrased questions, abbreviations, numbers not written out (1 settimana), imperative forms (fatti viva):

Ciao Carla! sono secoli che non so niente di te. Ti avevo spedito un email, non so se ti è mai arrivato, rispondimi per vedere se è giusto l’indirizzo. Qui tutto normale (il che è tanto), siamo appena stati una settimana in Spagna, sulla spiaggia al sole, molto bello, lontano dal freddo. Cosa fate a Pasqua? Non avete voglia di venire a trovarci in Toscana? Avete già altri piani? Noi andremo 1 settimana. Fatti viva, bacioni.

Hi Carla! It’s ages since I’ve heard anything from you. I had sent you an email, I don’t know if you ever got it, answer my email so I can see if the address is correct. Here everything’s normal (which is saying something), we have just been a week in Spain, on the beach in the sunshine, really nice, far from the cold. What are you doing at Easter? Don’t you want to come and see us in Tuscany? Have you already got other plans? We’ll go there for a week. Get in touch, love.

Sometimes however an email can take the place of a formal or official letter and in this case the opening and closing phrases will be very similar to those used in a letter (see 42.2).

42.3.2 SMS (text messages)

The language of text messages (un SMS or un messaggino) on mobile phones is very similar to that of newspaper headlines, with verbs omitted, prepositions omitted and participles or adjectives used on their own. Here are some real life examples of SMS (text messages) received on a mobile phone. The ‘normal’ non-abbreviated version of each message is given underneath. In the English translation, the omitted words are shown in brackets:

(Bene. Sono contenta di aver festeggiato anche con te. Baci. Torna presto.)
Good. Glad (to have) celebrated with you too. Kisses. Come back soon.
Individuata giacca.
(La giacca è stata individuata.)
(The) jacket (has been) identified.

Fatto contratto nuova casa.
(Ho fatto il contratto per la nuova casa.)
(I have) done the contract for the new house.

Causa sciopero controllori di volo, arrivo domani mattina.
(A causa di uno sciopero dei controllori di volo, arrivo domani mattina.)
Because of an air traffic controllers’ strike, I’ll get there tomorrow morning.

As in English, there is a whole language made up of abbreviations and ‘codes’ you can use to speed up the process of messaging; these are especially popular with the under-21s. Here are just a few examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al7cie</td>
<td>A l’ setemcielo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Bacio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba&amp;ab</td>
<td>Baci e abbracci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6?</td>
<td>Ci sei?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are a couple of examples of SMS using abbreviations and codes:

Grazie ancora a te e a Massimo x ieri sera! 1 bella cena!
Thanks again to you and to Massimo for yesterday evening! A lovely dinner!

Dimmi quando sei libera!
Tell me when you are free!

42.4 Extended writing: differences between English and Italian

One of the main differences between English and Italian writing is the length of the sentences. Whereas English writers – and readers! – place high value on the ability to write concisely and without excessive flourishes, Italian writers especially in political commentary or in academic writing feel the need to embellish simple structures and to construct a tissue of complex phrases. As a learner, you should not attempt to reproduce these but should gradually build on your basic writing skills, to transform the simple sentences that most beginners use into something more complex. The main features of extended writing on which to focus are:

- The use of coordinated clauses, linked by a conjunction or other discourse marker (see 30.2).
- The use of main and subordinate clauses, linked by appropriate conjunctions (see 30.3).
- The use of discourse markers appropriate to written Italian (see also 42.5).
- The use of a more appropriate lexis, rather than that of spoken Italian (see also 40.3).

When writing a longer text, it should be remembered that punctuation may be used in a different way from that used in English; for example the use of quote marks differs (see 31.2).

42.5 Writing essays, making connections

Writing an essay tests your ability to link ideas in a language. All Italian children are taught at school to make a scalaletta or essay plan. This is also good practice for learners of Italian, who
have to find a way of making their essay sound fluent and natural. Italians tend to use longer sentence structures than English writers and it is essential to practise the different ways in which clauses can be joined (see also Chapter 30). Sentences may be composed of coordinated clauses or subordinated clauses.

Depending on how the ideas in the essay link together, the subordinate clauses (see 30.3) may be relative clauses, or clauses of cause and effect, purpose, time or manner, which may be introduced by conjunctions (see Chapters 31–39). Alternatively, connecting words, for example coordinating conjunctions (see 30.2) and other discourse markers, can be used to link your ideas in the essay. The different types of clauses can be used to make or emphasise your points, to contrast with what has been said earlier, to explain something said earlier, and so on.

Transforming facts and figures into cohesive text is a skill often required in a work situation or in business. There are certain standard phrases and verbs that are used in compiling a report based on statistics, in addition to the connecting words already mentioned above. Here are a few.

Describing figures:

- **Si aggira intorno ai 60 milioni.**
  The figure is around 60 million.

- **Al censimento erano poco più di 150,000 persone.**
  At the census, there were a little over 150,000 people.

Percentages and proportions:

- **Circa i quattro quinti / i due terzi / un quarto / la metà**
  About four-fifths / two-thirds / a quarter / half

- **I lavoratori autonomi per il 37% investono in immobili.**
  37% of self-employed workers invest in property.

- **Il 27% ha un conto in banca.**
  27% have a bank account.

- **Pochi, meno del 20 per cento, hanno una seconda casa.**
  Few, less than 20 per cent, have a second home.

- **Una percentuale più o meno analoga è titolare di un conto in banca.**
  More or less the same percentage have a bank account.

- **Un reddito pari al 10%.**
  An income equal to 10%.

Lower than, higher than; more than, less than:

In comparisons, you can use the words **superiore** ‘higher than’, **inferiore** ‘lower than’, **uguale** ‘same as’, with reference to another category, to estimates or to the average:

- **Era superiore alla media.**
  It was greater than average.

- **Erano tremila in più di quanti si pensava.**
  They were 3,000 more than expected.

- **Sono il 2,5 per cento contro una media del 9,5%.**
  They are 2.5% against an average of 9.5%.

- **Hanno un reddito inferiore del 34% a quello dei lavoratori autonomi.**
  They have an income 34% lower than that of self-employed workers.

- **Un tasso di nascita inferiore alla media.**
  A birth rate lower than the average.

- **Meno della media.**
  Less than average.
La stragrande maggioranza.
The overwhelming majority.

Avoiding essere:

Various verbs can be used instead of essere:

- **Il reddito individuale media risulta / è risultato di 50.000 euro.**
  The average income is/was 50,000 euros.
- **L'aumento maggiore si registra / si è registrato nel settore bancario.**
  The greatest increase is/was in the banking sector.
- **La spesa in questo settore ha raggiunto i 10 milioni.**
  The expenditure in this sector reached 10 million.
- **Sempre in crescita si dimostra la spesa per le automobili.**
  Still growing is the expenditure on cars.
- **La crescita ha interessato sia gli alberghi che le pensioni.**
  The increase was seen both for hotels and for guest houses.

Other verbs used in report-writing:

- **Un reddito alto caratterizza il 16% delle famiglie italiane.**
  A high income is a feature of 16% of Italian families.
- **I generi alimentari occupano il posto più importante.**
  Foodstuffs occupy the most important position.
- **Le voci più importanti riguardano i beni di lusso.**
  The most important categories relate to luxury goods.
- **I dati si riferiscono al 2003.**
  The figures refer to 2003.

Where does the money go?

- **Su ogni 100 euro spesi per i generi alimentari, gli italiani ne hanno destinati in media 40 alla carne.**
  Out of every 100 euros spent on foodstuffs, Italians spent on average 40 euros on meat.
- **Alle spese per la salute è stato destinato il 5,5% del totale.**
  5.5% of the total was spent on health.
- **Nel 2006 i generi alimentari incidono soltanto per il 42%.**
  In 2006 foodstuffs account only for 42%.
- **Le voci ‘Alimentari’ e ‘Arredamento’ coprono nel 2011 il 43% delle spese totali.**
  The categories ‘Foodstuffs’ and ‘Furnishings’ cover in 2011 43% of total expenditure.

Up or down?

- **La struttura dei consumi si è modificata notevolmente.**
  The structure of consumer expenditure has changed considerably.
- **Si è ridotta l’incidenza delle spese per l’alimentazione.**
  The proportion of expenditure on food has decreased.
- **È cresciuta del 18% la spesa per i beni di lusso.**
  The expenditure on luxury goods has grown by 18%.
- **Cresce dal 13 al 15% circa.**
  It is growing from 13 to 15% approximately.
- **Gli studenti sono aumentati; il numero di studenti è aumentato.**
  The students have increased; the number of students has increased.
- **Gli studenti sono diminuiti; il numero di studenti è diminuito.**
  The students have decreased; the number of students has decreased.
Order or position:

*Ha battuto la spesa per...*
It beat the expenditure on...

*In testa è...*
At the top (of the list) is...

*In cima alla graduatoria...*
At the top of the league table...

*Al primo posto...*
In first place...

*Vince la montagna come meta turistica, con il 15% dei turisti stranieri.*
The mountains win, as a tourist destination, with 15% of foreign tourists.

*Seguiti da...*
Followed by...

Comparison:

*contro i 10.000 del 2010...*
compared to the 10,000 in 2010...

*contro il 39% del 2012...*
compared to 39% in 2012...

*paragonato a*
compared to

*La situazione è cambiata molto rispetto a dieci anni fa.*
The situation has changed a lot compared to ten years ago.

*La disoccupazione giovanile in Italia è alta in confronto ad altri paesi europei.*
Youth unemployment in Italy is high compared to other European countries.

The interviewees, the Don’t know’s:

*Gli intervistati*
The interviewees

*I “non so” sono il 10 per cento.*
The ‘don’t knows’ are 10 per cent.

According to:

*Dalla ricerca i lavoratori dipendenti appaiono come scarsi risparmiatori.*
From the study, it seems that paid employees are poor savers.

*Ecco le sette categorie-tipo che emergono dalla ricerca.*
Here are the seven categories which emerge from the study.

*Stando ai risultati dell’indagine...*
According to the results of the study...

*L’indagine rivela...*
The study reveals...

*Risulta dalla tabella...*
It emerges from the table...

*Con riferimento (in riferimento) alle tabelle...*
With reference to the tables...

*In base ai dati (del 2012)...*
According to the figures from 2012...

*Dati recenti indicano...*
Recent figures indicate...

*Secondo le rivelazioni del 2012...*
According to the findings of 2012...
Bureaucratic language

Every day both Italians and foreign visitors are systematically confronted by the web of bureaucratic, highly technical and often mysterious language used by Italian public administration (and often by private enterprise as well) in order to provide the public with ‘information’.

The effect produced by this type of language is to make the average Italian feel like a defendant in a court of law, when in reality he/she is merely being given information as to where to stamp his/her bus or train ticket.

To illustrate this, we have chosen just one original example from the funicular station in Mergellina, Naples. Note the use of the *si passivante* in this official notice, *Si informano i Signori Viaggiatori* ‘The passengers are informed’, rather than the more normal *Informiamo i Signori Viaggiatori* ‘We inform the passengers’ or the passive form *I Signori Viaggiatori sono informati* ‘The passengers are informed’ (see Chapters 2 and 19, and also 40.5.2).

*Si informano i Signori Viaggiatori che, ai sensi del regolamento, articolo 567 del 19/11/1973, essi devono munirsi di titolo di viaggio precedentemente all’ingresso sulle vetture della Funicolare. I titoli di viaggio vanno timbrati nelle apposite obliteratrici collocate nell’androne della Stazione.*

The approximate translation is:

*The esteemed passengers are informed that, as prescribed by the relevant ruling, clause 567, of 19/11/1973, travel documents must be purchased in advance of boarding the carriages of the Funicular. The travel documents must be stamped in the specially provided obliterating machines, located in the entrance hall of the Station.*

The same concept could perfectly well be expressed by a few simple words, perhaps with an arrow indicating where passengers should insert the tickets:

*Obliterare il biglietto qui. Stamp your ticket here.*

Or alternatively:

*Timbrare il biglietto qui. Stamp your ticket here.*

Individuals are also prone to using over-formal language when they have to deal with a formal situation. In particular the third person is often used referring to oneself, as though speaking of someone else, instead of using the first person ‘I’ form. This is done in applications, requests, declarations, and often in CVs addressed to an institution or public office, in order to stress the objectivity and impersonality of the information given. It is also done in juridical documents. In such cases the formula used is *il sottoscritto* (for men) or *la sottoscritta* (for women), literally ‘the undersigned’; all verbs used are in the third person. Vocabulary too tends to be formal.

Scientific and technical language

Another feature of today’s written Italian, widespread in public administration, as well as in many professional areas (for example, medicine, finance, education), is the tendency to use a lavish sprinkling of obscure technical terminology. This applies not only to specialist texts or communication, but also to communications intended to provide information for the general public.

Although examples of this can be found in countries around the world, the extent to which the phenomenon has penetrated practically every area of life is perhaps unique to Italy. Road signs are one example; the ‘technical’ words are in italics:

*Inizio carreggiata a traffico canalizzato. Preselezionare corsia.*

Get in lane.

Another feature of scientific and technical language is the use of the passive form (see 19.2.4), a very common way to place less emphasis on the person who does something, and more on the action itself, or on its object. Here is an example:

*La struttura a doppia elica del Dna fu scoperta da Watson e Crick.*

The double helix structure of DNA was discovered by Watson and Crick.
Journalistic language

42.9 Journalistic language

The language of the press is a mixture of styles. The ‘Cronaca’ section for example tends to use the Italian equivalent of the language of the British tabloid press, for example exaggeration and hyperbole, and a simplification of syntax in the headlines. In other sections, for example ‘Politica’, the language can be obscure and difficult to access, not only because of the more complex syntax but because of the ‘coded’ references, historical, mythical, geographical, etc., that pepper the text. Features of journalistic language include the following.

42.9.1 Use of headlines without whole verbs

Newspaper headlines are kept as short as possible and are often composed entirely of nouns, participles or adjectives, without a complete verb:

- Domani bus fermi
- Minorenne arrestato a Cagliari
- Ragazza uccisa da clandestino
- Prodi stanco e deluso

- Buses on strike tomorrow
- Juvenile arrested in Cagliari
- Girl killed by illegal immigrant
- Prodi tired and disillusioned

42.9.2 Use of the passive, \textit{si impersonale}, \textit{si passivante}

As seen in 2.1.10 and 19.2, the passive form of verbs is a very common way to place less emphasis on the person who does something, and more on the action itself, or on its object. It is therefore very common to use passive constructions whenever the formality of a statement requires an impersonal approach. An example of the passive used in an official notice has already been shown above (see 42.7).

Similarly, the \textit{si impersonale} is often found in newspaper reports in phrases such as \textit{si dice}, \textit{si comunica} (see 2.1.12, 31.2).

42.9.3 Use of hyperbole and exaggerated language

Taking its cue from television, the press – and in particular the sports pages – uses hyperbole extensively. The style is intended to convey the excitement of the moment:

- LONDRA – Finisce tra gli applausi l’ultima partita di Gianfranco Zola con la maglia del Chelsea. \textit{Un diluvio di applausi} prima dell’incontro. E alla fine quando Zola è stato salutato da una vera e propria ovazione.

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, 8 August 2004)

London. The last match of Gianfranco Zola with the Chelsea strip on ends in applause. A flood of applause before the match. And again at the end when the crowd said goodbye to Zola with a real ovation.

- Deportivo \textit{“galactico”}, Milan \textit{horror} – il mesto addio alla Champions

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, 7 April 2004)

A Deportivo team of superstars, and a shocking performance by Milan – the sad goodbye to the Champions League.

\textit{Galactico} originates from the Spanish \textit{galacticos} used to describe very highly paid football players.

Hyperbole also extends to nouns and adjectives, where there is often a prefix such as \textit{arci-}, \textit{iper-}, \textit{stra-}, \textit{super-}, \textit{ultra-}, or a suffix such as \textit{-issimo}:

- In tutto lo stadio soltanto due striscioni: “Chelsea contro il razzismo” e “Tolleranza zero al razzismo”, slogan appropriati per una \textit{partitissima} “inglese”, dove gli stranieri in campo sono la \textit{stragrande maggioranza}.

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, 25 March 2004)

In the whole stadium only two banners: ‘Chelsea against racism’ and ‘Zero tolerance for racism’, appropriate slogans for an English super-match, where the foreign players are the overwhelming majority.
Sette minuti di straordinario Milan cancellano dal campo il Deportivo La Coruna, sommerso da un supergol di Sheva.

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, 23 March 2004)

Seven minutes of Milan extra time wipe from the field Deportivo La Coruna, sunk by a supergoal from Sheva.

Adriano ha segnato un bellissimo gol.

(Adapted from La Repubblica online, 2 August 2004)

Adriano scored a truly beautiful goal.

42.9.4 Use of references and rhetorical devices

Far more than the British press, Italian newspapers, which were never intended for a mass market, make use of a coded language that can be difficult for even the Italian reader to access. This includes historical and literary references, understood only by an elite. Take this example from the press where Berlusconi makes a reference to a humiliating episode in Roman history, the Forche Caudine, where in 314 BC at Caudium, the defeated Roman army were forced to march naked and defenceless under the lances of the victors, the Sannites. Here the reference is used to describe how businessmen are always being squeezed into impossible situations with no way out.

. . . un imprenditore come me deve passare sotto continue forche caudine.

. . . a businessman like me is continuously forced into impossible situations.


People are also referred to by their titles or characteristics. For example, Berlusconi, the ex-Prime Minister of Italy, was referred to as il Cavaliere ‘the Cavalier’, a reference to an honorary award given for services to industry. In the same way, Giovanni Agnelli, then head of Fiat, was referred to as l’Avvocato ‘the lawyer’.

The press also makes use of metaphor, metonym, synecdoche and other rhetorical devices. For example the use of il carroccio to refer to the Lega Nord party is a reference to the cart drawn by oxen which in medieval times used to carry the standard of the comune (district) into battle. Similarly, Via delle Botteghe Oscure was the headquarters of the political party PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra) but was commonly used to refer to the party itself.

42.9.5 Use of foreign words

Another example of ‘coded’ language is the use of foreign words, in particular English words. Many of these are now so much an accepted part of the language that they are barely regarded as foreign. Examples include il ticket ‘voucher’ or ‘amount payable for healthcare costs’, il budget ‘budget’, il welfare as in Ministero del Welfare. Most foreign words are masculine in gender and have no distinct plural form. Some are used in a different sense from the English original, for example il mobbing ‘bullying in the workplace’ or il footing ‘jogging’.

il mobbing sul posto di lavoro consiste in un comportamento ripetuto, irragionevole, rivolto contro un dipendente o un gruppo di dipendenti, tale da creare un rischio per la salute e la sicurezza.


Bullying in the workplace consists of repeated, unreasonable behaviour, aimed at an employee or a group of employees, to the extent that it creates a risk for health and safety.

Il footing è praticato da persone di varie età e non richiede particolare attrezzatura.

Jogging is practised by people of various ages and doesn’t require any particular equipment.

(http://www.lopinionista.it/notizia.php?id=687, retrieved 5 April 2012)
Appendix I

Spelling and pronunciation

Sounds and letters

It is often said that Italian is easy to learn, because it is spoken as it is written. This is not completely true, but certainly, compared with other languages such as English or French, Italian enjoys the advantage of a near ‘phonological’ system of spelling, in which each letter of the alphabet almost always corresponds to only one ‘sound’. Consequently it is usually easy to know how to pronounce an Italian word found in a written text, by simply following some straightforward general rules. The same is true when you need to write down words that you have heard in their spoken form.

However sounds and letters do not always correspond. There are some sounds (‘phonemes’) that are represented by two or three letters, for example [ʃ] = sc; there are also some letters that can represent two different sounds, for example c can be either [k] as in ca or [T] as in ce.

The alphabet

The Italian alphabet is composed of twenty-one letters. Below, you will find a table showing the relationship between the written letters of the alphabet and the sounds of the spoken language. The table shows each letter, the way the letter is written in Italian, its symbol in the International Phoneticians Association (IPA) alphabet, some examples of its use and, where necessary, notes on English words that use similar sounds, to help you with the pronunciation. Where there are no notes, the pronunciation of the letters is just the same as in English. Following the table there are a few practical tips on some difficulties of Italian pronunciation faced by native English speakers.

The letters j, k, w, x, y, shown after the main table, do not belong to the Italian alphabet, although they are often used to write words of foreign origin.
### APPENDIX I

#### Letter Phoneme Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>as in English ‘ah!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>before consonants and a, o, u: ‘k’ as in English ‘cat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>ci</td>
<td>before vowels e, i: ‘ch’ as in English ‘church’, see note 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>effe</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>gi</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>acca</td>
<td>naso, anno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>see note 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>elle</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>emme</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>enne</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>qu</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>erre</td>
<td>see note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>esse</td>
<td>see note 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>ti</td>
<td>see note 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>see note 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>vu/vi</td>
<td>see note 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>zeta</td>
<td>see note 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Foreign letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>i lunga</td>
<td>[j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>kappa</td>
<td>[k]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>doppio vu/vi</td>
<td>[w]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>ics</td>
<td>[ks]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>epsilon/i greca</td>
<td>[i]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Note: [a] as in English 'ah!', [e] see note 4, [k] before consonants and a, o, u: 'k' as in English 'cat', [j] before vowels e, i: 'j' as in English 'judge', [ts] see note 3.*
Consonant clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>‘c’ as in English ‘camera’, see note 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GH</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>‘g’ as in English ‘go’, see note 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLI</td>
<td>[ʎ]</td>
<td>the nearest equivalent in English is ‘lyi’ as in ‘million’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GN</td>
<td>[ɲ]</td>
<td>the nearest equivalent in English is ‘ny’ as in ‘canyon’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>before e, i: ‘sh’ as in English ‘shoot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>[sk]</td>
<td>before a, o, u: ‘sk’ as in English ‘school’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCH</td>
<td>[sk]</td>
<td>‘sk’ as in English ‘school’, see note 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

1 The letter ‘h’
The letter h does not represent any sound in Italian; it is not pronounced. It is used to distinguish different consonant sounds as in the case of c, g and sc before the vowels e and i. When followed by h, ‘c’ is pronounced [k] as opposed to [ʃ], g is pronounced [g] rather than [j], ‘sc’ is pronounced [sk] rather than [ʃ].

2 The letter ‘i’
The letter ‘i’ in the groups cia, cio, ciu; gia, gio, giu; scia, scio, sciu is not pronounced; it is a written way of representing the consonant sound.

3 The consonants ‘s’ and ‘z’
Each of the two letters s and z corresponds to two different sounds: voiced [z] and [dz] and voiceless [s] and [ts] respectively. This distinction is not considered important by Italian speakers themselves. A few tips may however help in the pronunciation of the two different sounds of each letter:

s is:
- voiceless [s] at the beginning of a word (spesa, scala, sale, sordo) after a consonant (falso, pensare, corso) when double (passo, assicurazione, messa)
- voiced [dz] before a voiced consonant, even at the beginning of a word (asma, smetti)

z is:
- voiceless [ts] after l (balzo, alzare, calze) in -ezza (bellezza, carezza, altezza) before -ia -ie -io (amicizia, pazienza, divorzio, zio, spazio)
- voiced [dz] in -izzare, -izzazione, etc. (nazionalizzare, privatizzazione) between vowels (ozono, azzalea)

4 Open and closed vowels
Both e and o have two different sounds: open and closed. For example, e has an open sound [ɛ] as in English pet and a closed sound [e] as in English hey! The letter o has open sound [ɔ] as in English or and a closed sound [o] as in English oh! Both open and closed sounds are represented in written Italian by the same letter e or o. The open vowels only occur in stressed syllables; when unstressed, vowels are always closed. The distinction between the two sounds is not very important in spoken Italian; Italians themselves may disagree on the ‘correct’ pronunciation of some words (especially when they speak different regional varieties of Italian).
Where necessary, the open and closed vowels can be distinguished by using the grave accent for the open sound è, ò and acute accent for the closed é, ó; many good dictionaries do this. However this is not done in normal written Italian, simply because usually the distinction is not considered very important.

Only in a few cases is the distinction important in avoiding confusion between two words. In such cases, the written language indicates the open vowel sound with an obligatory accent, as in, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>è</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>and</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ò</td>
<td>tea</td>
<td>te</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho</td>
<td>I have</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE** The letter h is silent in Italian. See note 1 above.

5 The consonant groups ‘gl, gn, sc’

The sounds [ʎ], [ɲ], [ʃ] have no corresponding letters in the alphabet and are therefore represented in written Italian by groups of two or three letters (see table above). In the sc clusters with a, o, u, the letter i is not pronounced as a separate sound (see note 2 above). When these consonants are in the middle of a word their pronunciation is always strong (see note 6 below).

6 Double consonants

‘Double’ or ‘strong’ consonants are a very common and frequent feature of the Italian language. Generally they are represented in writing by two letters (as in palla). In some cases however a consonant that is normally pronounced single is ‘reinforced’ and has a ‘strong’ sound in the spoken language, due to its position in the phrase. This happens in the case of consonants following certain monosyllabic words (particularly in central and southern varieties of Italian), as in:

| è vero | [evˈvero] | a casa | [akˈkasa] | sto bene | [st bˈbene] |

Likewise, the consonant clusters gl [ʎ], gn [ɲ], sci [ʃ] are always given a ‘strong’ sound in the middle of a word, although this is not represented in writing:

| figlio | [fiʎʎo] | ogni | [ɔɲni] | lasciare | [laʃʃare] |

Speakers of English as their mother tongue often find it difficult to reproduce exactly the sound of the Italian double consonants. It may help to know that a ‘strong’ consonant is always found after a short vowel, while the corresponding single consonant is always found after a long vowel, as in these examples:

| paˈla/paˈlla | seˈte/seˈtte | faˈto/faˈtto | caˈro/caˈrro |

7 Accent marks

In addition to the cases above, the accent mark is also used to distinguish between words with the same vowel sounds, but different meanings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sé</th>
<th>himself/herself</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>if</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>li/là</td>
<td>there</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>them (direct object pronoun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>né</td>
<td>nor</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>her (direct object pronoun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words with the stress on the last syllable are also written with an accent mark, as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>perché</th>
<th>why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>città</td>
<td>city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caffè</td>
<td>coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>università</td>
<td>university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>libertà</td>
<td>freedom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Italians have tended to have a fairly flexible attitude to (and occasional disagreements over) the question of whether accents should be grave or acute. In recent years, there has been a tendency to use the acute accent on all the closed vowels including a, i and u. Serianni (Grammatica Italiana, UTET, 1989) recommends adopting the grave accent for à, í, ù while keeping the option of grave and acute only in the case of è/é and ò/ó where it is needed to distinguish between open and closed vowels. This is the system adopted here.

Stress
Sometimes, particularly in dictionaries and textbooks, accent marks are used to indicate on which syllable the stress falls, in words where there might be some doubt:

- ancora/ancóra anchor/still
- pàgano/pagàno they pay/pagan
- chilogràmmo kilogram
- chilòmetro kilometre

8 Spelling conventions
On the whole, Italian spelling conventions follow English when it comes to capital letters. But note how Italian uses a capital letter for:

Names of centuries:
- il Duecento the thirteenth century
- il Duemila the year 2000

Names of titles unless accompanied by proper names:
- il Re the king
- il Papa the Pope
- il Conte the count
- re Vittorio Emanuele II King Victor Emanuel
Appendix II

Regular verb forms

Where they differ, the forms of the 3rd conjugation verb *finire* are shown in a separate column. Otherwise they are the same as those of *dormire*.

### Active verb forms

**Presente (present indicative)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugations</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>3rd (-isc-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>parl-are</td>
<td>cred-ere</td>
<td>dorm-ire</td>
<td>fin-ire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parl-o</td>
<td>cred-o</td>
<td>dorm-o</td>
<td>fin-isco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parl-i</td>
<td>cred-i</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
<td>finisci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parl-a</td>
<td>cred-e</td>
<td>dorm-e</td>
<td>finisce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>parl-iamo</td>
<td>cred-iamo</td>
<td>dorm-iamo</td>
<td>fin-iamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>parl-ate</td>
<td>cred-ete</td>
<td>dorm-ite</td>
<td>fin-ite</td>
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<tr>
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<td>parl-ano</td>
<td>cred-ono</td>
<td>dorm-ono</td>
<td>fin-iscono</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imperfetto (imperfect indicative)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugations</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parlavo</td>
<td>cred-evo</td>
<td>dorm-ivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>parl-avi</td>
<td>cred-evi</td>
<td>dorm-ivi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>parlava</td>
<td>cred-eva</td>
<td>dorm-iva</td>
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<td>cred-evamo</td>
<td>dorm-iva</td>
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<td>dorm-ivano</td>
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</table>

**Passato prossimo (present perfect)**

<table>
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<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>ho parlato</td>
<td>ho creduto</td>
<td>ho dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>hai parlato</td>
<td>hai creduto</td>
<td>hai dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>ha parlato</td>
<td>ha creduto</td>
<td>ha dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>abbiamo parlato</td>
<td>abbiamo creduto</td>
<td>abbiamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>avete parlato</td>
<td>avete creduto</td>
<td>avete dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>hanno parlato</td>
<td>hanno creduto</td>
<td>hanno dormito</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX II**

### Passato remoto (past definite)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parl-ai</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>cred-etti (cred-ei)</td>
<td>dorm-ii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dorm-istì</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>fin-erò</td>
<td>dorm-immo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dorm-istì</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parl-aste</td>
<td>cred-erò</td>
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<td>credere</td>
<td>cred-erai</td>
<td>dorm-erai</td>
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<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>fin-erò</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
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</table>

### Trapassato prossimo (pluperfect)

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>avevo parlato</td>
<td>avevo creduto</td>
<td>avevo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>aveva creduto</td>
<td>aveva creduto</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
<td>aveva dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>avevamo parlato</td>
<td>avevamo creduto</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
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<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>avevamo creduto</td>
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<td>avevamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
<td>avevamo dormito</td>
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</table>

### Trapassato remoto (past anterior)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parlato</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>creduto</td>
<td>ebbi creduto</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parlato</td>
<td>aveste parlato</td>
<td>aveste dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>creduto</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
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<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
<td>ebbi dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Futuro (future)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>parl-erò</td>
<td>cred-erò</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>cred-erai</td>
<td>dorm-irai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dorm-erò</td>
<td>dorm-irò</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>fin-erò</td>
<td>dorm-irato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parl-erato</td>
<td>cred-erato</td>
<td>dorm-irato</td>
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<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>cred-erare</td>
<td>dorm-irare</td>
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<td>dorm-erare</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>fin-erare</td>
<td>dorm-erare</td>
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<td>cred-erano</td>
<td>dorm-irano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dorm-irato</td>
<td>dorm-irato</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>fin-irato</td>
<td>dorm-irato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Futuro anteriore (future perfect)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>3rd person sing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>avrà parlato</td>
<td>avrai parlato</td>
<td>avrà parlato</td>
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<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>avrò creduto</td>
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<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avrò dormito</td>
<td>avrai dormito</td>
<td>avrà dormito</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Condizionale al presente (present conditional)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
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<th>3rd person sing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>parlerei</td>
<td>parlerei</td>
<td>parlerebbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>crederei</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormirei</td>
<td>dormirei</td>
<td>dormirebbe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Condizionale al passato (past conditional)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
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<th>2nd person sing</th>
<th>3rd person sing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>avrei parlato</td>
<td>avresti parlato</td>
<td>avrebbe parlato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>avrei creduto</td>
<td>avresti creduto</td>
<td>avrebbe creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avrì dormito</td>
<td>avresti dormito</td>
<td>avrebbe dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Congiuntivo presente (present subjunctive)

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>parlare</td>
<td>parliamo</td>
<td>parliamo</td>
<td>parliamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>crediamo</td>
<td>crediamo</td>
<td>crediamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormiamo</td>
<td>dormiamo</td>
<td>dormiamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>finisca</td>
<td>finisca</td>
<td>finisca</td>
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</table>
### Congiuntivo all'imperfetto (imperfect subjunctive)

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<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>parl-assi</td>
<td>cred-essi</td>
<td>dorm-issi</td>
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<td>cred-essi</td>
<td>dorm-issi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
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<td>cred-essi</td>
<td>dorm-issi</td>
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<td>cred-este</td>
<td>dorm-iste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>parl-assero</td>
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### Congiuntivo al trapassato (pluperfect subjunctive)

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<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire, finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person sing</td>
<td>avessi parlato</td>
<td>avessi creduto</td>
<td>avessi dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person pl</td>
<td>avessimo parlato</td>
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<td>avessimo dormito</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd person pl</td>
<td>aveste parlato</td>
<td>aveste creduto</td>
<td>aveste dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pl</td>
<td>avessero parlato</td>
<td>avessero creduto</td>
<td>avessero dormito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Imperativo (imperative)

| Conjugations | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd (-isc-)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>parlare</td>
<td>credere</td>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>finire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tu</strong></td>
<td>parl-a</td>
<td>cred-i</td>
<td>dorm-i</td>
<td>fin-isci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lei</strong></td>
<td>parl-i</td>
<td>cred-a</td>
<td>dorm-a</td>
<td>fin-isca</td>
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<td><strong>noi</strong></td>
<td>parl-iamo</td>
<td>cred-iamo</td>
<td>dorm-iamo</td>
<td>fin-iamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>voi</strong></td>
<td>parl-ate</td>
<td>cred-ete</td>
<td>dorm-ite</td>
<td>fin-ite</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>loro</strong></td>
<td>parl-ino</td>
<td>cred-ano</td>
<td>dorm-ano</td>
<td>fin-iscano</td>
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### Gerundio presente (present gerund)

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<td>finendo</td>
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### Gerundio passato (past gerund)

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedere</td>
<td>avendo visto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>avendo dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partire</td>
<td>essendo partito</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX II**

**Participio presente (present participle)**

(Forms still in existence as nouns or adjectives)

<table>
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<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Participle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>partecipante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>credente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agire</td>
<td>agente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participio passato (past participle)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>guardare</td>
<td>guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credere</td>
<td>creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormire</td>
<td>dormito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finire</td>
<td>finito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Passive verb forms**

Here is a simplified table (showing only the third person singular of each tense) of the passive forms of the three regular verb conjugations.

Notice how each passive tense is formed by the corresponding tense of the auxiliary *essere* and the past participle. In this table the participle is masculine singular, but in its actual use it agrees with gender and number of the subject (see below), as do all compound forms of verbs using *essere*.

**Infinitive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>3rd Person Singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>essere guardato/a/i/e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>essere stato guardato</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indicative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>3rd Person Singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>è guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>è creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passato prossimo</td>
<td>è stato guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passato remoto</td>
<td>è stato creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapassato prossimo</td>
<td>è stato guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapassato remoto</td>
<td>è stato creduto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple future</td>
<td>sarà guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future perfect</td>
<td>sarà stato guardato</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Subjunctive**

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>sia guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>fosse guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>sia stato guardato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluperfect</td>
<td>fosse stato guardato</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Conditional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sarebbe guardato</th>
<th>sarebbe creduto</th>
<th>sarebbe sentito</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>sarebbe stato guardato</td>
<td>sarebbe stato creduto</td>
<td>sarebbe stato sentito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Imperative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sia guardato</th>
<th>sia creduto</th>
<th>sia sentito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Gerund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>essendo guardato</th>
<th>essendo creduto</th>
<th>essendo sentito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>essendo stato guardato</td>
<td>essendo stato creduto</td>
<td>essendo stato sentito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III

Irregular verb forms

Italian has a large number of irregular verbs, most of them in the 2nd conjugation, including many verbs used frequently in everyday language. Sometimes the irregular changes are unique to one verb (as, for example, avere and essere). Sometimes several verbs share a common pattern of irregularity, and this can help to memorise the irregular forms.

While some verbs have irregular forms only in one or two tenses, others have irregular forms in more than one tense (see Chapter 2 for a full illustration of irregular verb forms for each tense). Here we provide a list of the most common irregular verbs in alphabetical order, showing only their irregular forms.

Only the tenses which show irregularities are given; any forms not shown are regular. Where two possible forms exist, this is indicated by the symbol /. Less common alternative forms are shown in brackets. Verbs marked with an asterisk take essere in compound tenses, either sometimes or always.

We have included the most common irregular verbs including some mentioned in detail in Chapter 2. If you want to check a verb not listed here, use a good dictionary or online dictionary to find out if any of its forms are irregular.

**accadere*** to happen
See cadere.

**accendere** to light
*Passato remoto*: accesi, accendesti, accese, accendemmo, accendeste, accesero
*Participio passato*: acceso

**accogliere** to welcome
*Indicativo presente*: accolgo, accogli, accoglie, accogliamo, accogliete, accolgono
*Passato remoto*: accolsi, accogliesti, accolse, accogliemmo, accoglieste, accolsero
*Participio passato*: accolto
*Congiuntivo presente*: accolga, accolga, accolga, accogliamo, accogliate, accolgano

Other verbs that follow this pattern include: cogliere, raccogliere, sciogliere, togliere.

**accorgersi*** to realise
*Passato remoto*: mi accorsi, ti accorgesti, si accorse, ci accorgemmo, vi accorgeste, si accorsero
*Participio passato*: accorto

**affliggere** to afflict
*Passato remoto*: afflisi, affliggesti, afflisse, affliggemmo, affliggeste, afflissero
*Participio passato*: afflitto

**aggiungere** to add
*Passato remoto*: aggiunsi, aggiungesti, aggiunse, aggiungemmo, aggiungeste, aggiunsero
*Participio passato*: aggiunto

Other verbs that follow this pattern include: congiungere, giungere, raggiungere, sopraggiungere.

**alludere** to allude
*Passato remoto*: allusi, alludesti, alluse, alludemmo, alludeste, allusero
*Participio passato*: alluso

**ammettere** to admit
See mettere.
APPENDIX III

andare* to go
Indicativo presente: vado, vai, va, andiamo, andate, vanno
Futuro: andrò, andrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: andrei, andresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: vada, vada, vada, andiamo, andiate, vadano
Imperativo: va, vada, andate

apparire* to appear (alternative forms shown in brackets are less common)
Indicativo presente: appaio, appari, appare, appariamo, apparite, appaiono
Passato remoto: apparvi (apparí, apparsi), apparisti, apparve (apparì, apparse), apparimmo, appariste, apparvero
Participio passato: apparso
Congiuntivo presente: appaia, appaia, appaia, appariamo, appariate, appaiano

appartenere to belong
See tenere.

appendere to hang
Passato remoto: appesi, appendestì, appese, appendemmo, appendeste, appesero
Participio passato: appeso

apprendere to learn
See prendere.

aprire to open (alternative forms shown in brackets are less common)
Passato remoto: aprii (apersi), apristi, aprì (aperse), aprimmo, apriste, aprirono (apersero)
Participio passato: aperto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: coprire, ricoprire, scoprire.

assalire to assault
See salire.

assistere to assist (note alternative forms)
Passato remoto: assisti / assistetti, assistesti, assisté / assistette, assistemmo, assisteste, assistero / assistettero
Participio passato: assistito
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: consistere, esistere, insistere, resistere.

assolvere to absolve
Passato remoto: assolsi, assolvesti, assolse, assolvemmo, assolveste, assolsero
Participio passato: assolto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: risolvere.

assumere to assume, to employ
Passato remoto: assunsi, assumesti, assunse, assumummo, assumeste, assunsero
Participio passato: assunto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: presumere, riassumere.

attendere to wait
See tendere.

avere to have
Indicativo presente: ho, hai, ha, abbiamo, avete, hanno
Passato remoto: ebbi, avesti, ebbe, avemmo, aveste, ebbero
Participio passato: avuto
Futuro: avrò, avrai, avrà, avremo, avrete, avranno
Condizionale presente: avrei, avresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: abbia, abbia, abbia, abbiamo, abbiate, abbiano
Imperativo: abbia, abbia, abbiate

avvenire to happen
See venire.

avvolgere to wrap
See rivolgere.
bere to drink
Passato remoto: bevvi, bevesti, bevve, bevemmo, beveste, bevvero
Participio passato: bevuto
Futuro: berrò, berrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: berrei etc.
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: bevessi etc.

cadere* to fall
Passato remoto: caddi, cadesti, cadde, cademmo, cadeste, caddero
Participio passato: caduto
Futuro: cadrò, cadrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: cadrei, cadresti, etc.

chiedere to ask
Passato remoto: chiesi, chiedesti, chiese, chiedemmo, chiedeste, chiesero
Participio passato: chiesto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: richiedere

chiudere to close
Passato remoto: chiusi, chiudesti, chiuse, chiedemmo, chiudeste, chiusero
Participio passato: chiuso

cogliere to gather, to pick
See accogliere.

coinvolgere to involve
See rivolgere.

comparire* to appear
See apparire.

comporre to compose
See porre.

comprendere to include, to understand
See prendere.

concedere to concede
Passato remoto: concessi, concedesti, concesse, concedemmo, concedeste, concessero
Participio passato: concesso, conceduto

concludere to conclude
Passato remoto: conclusi, concludesti, concluse, concluendemmo, concludeste, conclusero
Participio passato: concluso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: deludere.

condurre to conduct
Indicativo presente: conduco, conduci, etc.
Passato remoto: condussi, conducesti, condusse, conducemmo, conducese, condussero
Participio passato: condotto
Congiuntivo presente: conduca, conduca, conduca, conduciamo, conducaie, conducano
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: dedurre, indurre, introdurre, ridurre, sedurre, tradurre.

confondere to confuse
See fondere.

conoscere to know
Passato remoto: conobbi, conoscesti, conobbe, conoscemmo, conosceste, conobbero
Participio passato: conosciuto

consistere to consist
See assistere.

convincere to convince, to persuade
Passato remoto: convinsi, convincesti, convinse, convincemmo, convinceste, convinsero
Participio passato: convinto
coprire to cover
See aprire.

correggere to correct
Passato remoto: corressi, correggesti, corresse, correggemmo, correggeste, corressero
Participio passato: corretto

correre* to run
Passato remoto: corsi, corresti, corse, corremmo, correste, corsero
Participio passato: corso

costringere to force
Passato remoto: costrinsi, costringesti, costrinse, costringemmo, costringeste, costrinsero
Participio passato: costretto

crescere* to grow
Passato remoto: crebbi, crescesti, crebbe, crescemmo, cresceste, crebbero
Participio passato: cresciuto

cuocere to cook
Indicativo presente: cuocio, cuoci, cuoce, cociamo/cuciamo, cocete/cucete, cuociono
Passato remoto: cossi, cuocesti, cosse, cuocemmo, cuoceste, cossero
Participio passato: cotto
dare to give
Indicativo presente: do, dai, da, diamo, date, danno
Passato remoto: diedi, desti, diede, demmo, deste, diedero
Futuro: darò, darai, darà, daremo, darete, daranno
Condizionale presente: darei, daresti, darebbe, daremmo, dareste, darebbero
Congiuntivo presente: dia, dia, dia, diamo, diate, diano
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: dessi etc.
Imperativo: da’, dia, date
decidere to decide
Passato remoto: decisi, decidesti, decise, decidemmo, decideste, decissero
Participio passato: deciso
dedurre to deduct
See condurre.
deludere to delude, to disappoint
See concludere.
deporre to put down, to depose
See porre.
descrivere to describe
Passato remoto: descritti, descrivesti, descrisse, descrivemmo, descriveste, descrissero
Participio passato: descritto
difendere to defend
Passato remoto: difesi, difendesti, difese, difendemmo, difendeste, difesero
Participio passato: difeso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: offendere.
diffondere to spread
See fondere.
dipendere* to depend
Passato remoto: dipesi, dipendesti, dipese, dipendemmo, dipendeste, dipesero
Participio passato: dipeso
dipingere to paint
Passato remoto: dipinsi, dipingesti, dipinse, dipingemmo, dipingeste, dipinsero
Participio passato: dipinto
dire to say, to tell
Indicativo presente: dico, dici, dice, diciamo, dite, dicono
Passato remoto: dissi, dicesti, disse, dirigemmo, dirigente, diressero
Participio passato: detto
Congiuntivo presente: dica, dica, dica, diciamo, diciate, dicano
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: dicessi etc.
Imperativo: di’, dica, dite
dirigere to direct
Passato remoto: diressi, dirigesti, diresse, dirigemmo, dirigente, diressero
Participio passato: diretto
discutere to discuss
Passato remoto: discussi, discutesti, discusse, discutemmo, discuteste, discussero
Participio passato: discusso
disfare to undo
See soddisfare.
dispiacere* to be sorry
See piacere.
disperre to arrange, to lay out
See porre.
distendere to distend, stretch
See tendere.
distinguere to distinguish
Passato remoto: distinsi, distinguesti, distinse, distinguemmo, distingueste, distinsero
Participio passato: distinto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: estinguere
distrarre to distract
See trarre.
distruggere to destroy
Passato remoto: distrussi, distruggesti, distrusse, distruggemmo, distruggete, distrussero
Participio passato: distrutto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: struggere.
divenire* to become
See venire.
dividere to divide
Passato remoto: divisi, dividesti, divise, dividemmo, divideste, divisero
Participio passato: diviso
dovere to have to, to be obliged to
Indicativo presente: devo, devi, deve, dobbiamo, dovete, devono
Passato remoto: dovetti/dovei, dovesti, dovetti/dové, dovemmo, doveste, dovettero/doverono
Participio passato: dovuto
Futuro: dovrò, dovrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: dovrai, dovresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: debba, debba, debba, dobbiamo, dobbiate, debbano
emergere to emerge
Passato remoto: emersi, emergesti, emerse, emergemmo, emergeste, emersero
Participio passato: emerso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: immergere, sommergere.
escludere to exclude
Passato remoto: esclusi, escludesti, escluse, escludemmo, escludeste, esclusero
Participio passato: escluso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: accludere, includere, precludere.
esistere* to exist
See assistere.

esplodere* to explode
Passato remoto: esplodi, esploasti, esplose, esplosimo, esploseste, esplosero
Participio passato: esploso

essere* to be
Indicativo presente: sono, sei, è, siamo, siete, sono
Passato remoto: fui, fuisti, fu, fummo, fusti, furono
Participio passato: stato
Futuro: sarò, sarai, etc.
Condizionale presente: sarei, saresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: sia, sia, si, siamo, siate, siano
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: fossi etc.
Imperativo: sii, sia, siate

estendere to extend
See tendere.
estinguere to extinguish
See distinguere.
fare to do
Indicativo presente: faccio, fai, fa, facciamo, fate, fanno
Passato remoto: feci, facesti, fece, facemmo, faceste, fecero
Participio passato: fatto
Congiuntivo presente: faccia, faccia, faccia, facciamo, facciate, facciano
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: facessi etc.
Imperativo: fa, faccia, fate

fingere to pretend
Passato remoto: finsi, fingesti, finse, fingsimo, fingseste, finsi etc.
Participio passato: finto

fondere to melt
Passato remoto: fusii, fondesti, fuse, fondemmo, fondeste, fusero
Participio passato: fuso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: confondere, diffondere.

friggere to fry
Passato remoto: frissi, friggesti, frisse, friggemmo, friggeste, frissero
Participio passato: fritto

giungere to reach
See aggiungere.

illudere to deceive
Passato remoto: illusi, illudesti, illuse, illudemmo, illudeste, illusero
Participio passato: illuso

immergere to immerse
See emergere.

imporre to impose
See porre.

incidere to record, cut into
Passato remoto: incisi, incidesti, incise, incidemmo, incideste, incisero
Participio passato: inciso

indurre to induce
See condurre.

insistere to insist
See assistere.
intendere to intend
Passato remoto: intesi, intendesti, intese, intendemmo, intendeste, intesero
Participio passato: inteso
interrompere to interrupt
See rompere.
introdurre to introduce
See condurre.
invadere to invade
Passato remoto: invasi, invadesti, invase, invademmo, invadeste, invasero
Participio passato: invaso
iscrivere to enrol (someone)
See scrivere.
iscriversi to enrol oneself
See scrivere.
leggere to read
Passato remoto: lessi, leggesti, lesse, leggemmo, leggeste, lessero
Participio passato: letto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: reggere.
mantenere to maintain
See tenere.
mettere to put
Passato remoto: misi, mettesti, mise, mettemmo, metteste, misero
Participio passato: messo
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: ammettere, omettere, permettere, promettere, smettere, trasmettere.
mordere to bite
Passato remoto: morsi, mordesti, morse, mordemmo, mordeste, morsero
Participio passato: morso
morire* to die
Participio passato: morto
muovere to move
Passato remoto: mossi, muovesti, mosse, muovemmo, muoveste, mossero
Participio passato: mosso
nascere* to be born
Passato remoto: nacqui, nascesti, nacque, nascemmo, nasceste, nacquero
Participio passato: nato
nascondere to hide
Passato remoto: nascosi, nascondesti, nascose, nascondemmo, nascondeste, nascosero
Participio passato: nascosto
occorrere* to be needed (normally in third person singular or plural)
Passato remoto: occorsi, occorresti, occorse, occorremmo, occorreste, occorsero
Participio passato: occorso
offendere to offend
See difendere.
offrire to offer (alternative forms are in brackets)
Passato remoto: offersi/offrìi, offristi, offrì, offrimmo, offrìste, offersero/offrirono
Participio passato: offerto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: soffrire.
omettere to omit
See mettere.
opporre to oppose
   See porre.
ottenere to obtain
   See tenere.
parere* (normally used impersonally) to appear, to seem
   Indicativo presente: paio, pari, pare, paiamo, parete, paiono
   Passato remoto: parvi, paresti, parve, paremmo, pareste, parvero
   Partecipio passato: parso
   Futuro: parrò, parrai, etc.
   Condizionale presente: parrei, parresti, etc.
   Congiuntivo presente: paia, paia, paia, paiamo, paiate, paiano
perdere to lose
   Passato remoto: persi, perdesti, perse, perdemmo, perdeste, persero
   Partecipio passato: perso
permettere to allow
   See mettere.
persuadere to persuade
   Passato remoto: persuasi, persuadesti, persuase, persuademmo, persuadeste, persuasero
   Partecipio passato: persuaso
piacere* to please
   Indicativo presente: piaccio, piaci, piace, piacciamo, piacete, piacciono
   Passato remoto: piacqui, piacesti, pianse, piacemmo, piaceste, piaquero
   Partecipio passato: piaciuto
   Congiuntivo presente: piaccia
piangere to weep, to cry
   Passato remoto: piansi, piangesti, piangere, piangemmo, piangeste, piansero
   Partecipio passato: pianta
piovere* (used impersonally) to rain
   Indicativo presente: piove
   Passato remoto: piovve
   Partecipio passato: piovuto
porgere to offer
   Passato remoto: porsi, porgesti, porse, porgemmo, porgeste, porsero
   Partecipio passato: posto
   Other verbs that follow this pattern include: sporgere.
porre to place, to put
   Indicativo presente: pongo, poni, pone, poniamo, ponete, pongono
   Passato remoto: posi, ponesti, pose, ponemno, poneste, posero
   Partecipio passato: posto
   Congiuntivo presente: ponga, ponga, ponga, poniamo, poniate, pongano
   Other verbs that follow this pattern include: comporre, imporre, proporre, supporre.
potere to be able to
   Indicativo presente: posso, puoi, può, possiamo, potete, possono
   Passato remoto: poteti, potesti, poté, potemmo, poteste, poterono
   Partecipio passato: potuto
   Futuro: potrò, potrai, etc.
   Condizionale presente: potrei, potresti, etc.
   Congiuntivo presente: possa, possa, possa, possiamo, possiate, possano
prendere to take
   Passato remoto: presi, prendesti, prese, prendemmo, prendeste, presero
   Partecipio passato: preso
pretendere to claim
Passato remoto: pretesi, pretendesti, pretese, pretendemmo, pretendeste, pretesero
Participio passato: preteso

produrre to produce
See condurre.

promettere to promise
See mettere.

proporre to propose
See porre.

pungere to sting
Passato remoto: punsi, pungesti, punse, pungemmo, pungeste, punsero
Participio passato: punto

raccogliere to collect, to gather together
See accogliere.

radere to shave
Passato remoto: rasi, radesti, rase, rademmo, radeste, rasero
Participio passato: raso

raggiungere to reach
See aggiungere.

reggere to support
See leggere.

resistere to resist
See assistere.

respingere to reject
Passato remoto: respinsi, respingesti, response, respingemmo, respingeste, respinsero
Participio passato: respinto

ridere to laugh
See sorridere.

ridurre to reduce
See condurre.

riflettere to reflect
Passato remoto: riflettei, riflettesti, rifletté, riflettemmo, rifletteste, rifletterono
Participio passato: riflettuto / riflesso

rimanere* to remain
Indicativo presente: rimango, rimani, rimane, rimaniamo, rimanete, rimangono
Passato remoto: rimasi, rimanesti, rimase, rimanemmo, rimaneste, rimasero
Participio passato: rimasto
Futuro: rimarrò, rimarrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: rimarrei, rimarresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: rimanga, rimanga, rimanga, rimaniamo, rimaniate, rimangano

riprendere to blame, to tell off
See prendere.

risolvere to resolve
See assolvere.

rispondere to reply, to respond to
Passato remoto: risposi, rispondesti, rispose, rispondemmo, rispondeste, risposero
Participio passato: risposto

ritenere to retain
See tenere.
riuscire* to succeed
See uscire.

rivolgere to turn
Passato remoto: rivolsi, rivolgesti, rivolse, rivolgemmo, rivolgeste, rivolsero
Participio passato: rivolto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: avvolgere, coinvolgere, rivolgersi, svolgersi, volgere.

rivolgersi* to turn to
See rivolgere.

rompere to break
Passato remoto: ruppi, rompesti, ruppe, rompemmo, rompeste, ruppero
Participio passato: rotto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: interrompere.

salire* to go up
Indicativo presente: salgo, sali, sale, saliamo, salite, salgono

sapere to know
Indicativo presente: so, sai, sa, sappiamo, sapete, sanno
Passato remoto: seppe, sapesti, sapemmo, sapeste, seppero
Futuro: saprò, saprai, etc.
Condizionale presente: saprei, sapresti, etc.
Contrattativo presente: sappe, sappiate, sappiano
Imperativo: sappi, sappia, sappiate

scegliere to choose
Indicativo presente: scelgo, scegli, sceglie, scegliamo, scegliete, scelgono
Passato remoto: scelsi, scegliesti, scelse, scegliemmo, sceglieste, scelsero
Participio passato: scelto
Contrattativo presente: scelga, scegli, scegli, scegliamo, scegliate, scelgano

scendere* to go down, descend
Passato remoto: scesi, scendesti, scese, scendemmo, scendeste, scesero
Participio passato: sceso

sciogliere to dissolve
See accogliere.

scommettere to bet
See mettere.

sconvolgere to upset
See rivolgere.

scoprire to discover, uncover
See aprire.

scorgere to spot, to notice
See accorgere.

scrivere to write
Passato remoto: scrissi, scrivesti, scrisse, scrivemmo, scriveste, scrissero
Participio passato: scritto
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: iscrivere, iscriversi.

scuotere to shake
Passato remoto: scossi, scuotesti, scosse, scuotemmo, scuoteste, scossero
Participio passato: scosso

sedere to sit
Indicativo presente: siedo, siedi, siede, sediamo, sedete, sedono
Contrattativo presente: sieda, sieda, sieda, sediamo, sediate, sedano
APPENDIX III

sedurre to seduce
See condurre.

seppellire to bury
Passato remoto: seppellii, seppellisti, seppelli, seppellimmo, seppelliste, seppellirono
Participio passato: seppellito (sepolto)

smetterre to stop
See mettere.

soddisfare to satisfy (the written accents on vowels indicate where to place the stress)
Indicativo presente: soddisfo, soddisfi, soddisfa, soddisfiamo, soddisfate, soddisfano
Indicativo presente (alternative based on the verb fare): soddisfaccio, soddisfài, soddisfà, soddisfacciamo, soddisfate, soddisfânno
Passato remoto: soddisfeci, soddisfacesti, soddisfece, soddisfacemmo, soddisfaceste, soddisfecero
Futuro: soddisferò, soddisferai, soddisferà, soddisferemo, soddisferete, soddisferanno
Futuro (alternative based on the verb fare): soddisfarò, soddisfarai, soddisfarà, soddisfaremo, soddisfarete, soddisfaranno
Condizionale presente: soddisferei, soddisferesti, soddisferebbe, soddisferemmo, soddisfereste, soddisferebbero
Condizionale presente (alternative based on the verb fare): soddisferei, soddisferesti, soddisfarebbe, soddisfaremmo, soddisfareste, soddisfarebbero
Participio passato: soddisfatto
Congiuntivo presente: soddisfi, soddisfi, soddisfi, soddisfiammo, soddisfiate, soddisfino
Congiuntivo presente (alternative based on the verb fare): soddisfaccia, soddisfaccia, soddisfaccia, soddisfacciamo, soddisfacciate, soddisfacciano
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: disfare.

soffrire to suffer
See offrire.

sommergere to submerge
See emergere.

sorgere* to rise
Passato remoto: sorsi, sorgesti, sorse, sorgemmo, sorgeste, sorsero
Participio passato: sorto

sorprendere to surprise
See prendere.

sorriderede to smile
Passato remoto: sorrisi, sorridesti, sorrise, sorridemmo, sorrideste, sorrisero
Participio passato: sorriso
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: ridere.

sospenderede to suspend
Passato remoto: sospesi, sospendesti, sospese, sospendemmo, sospendeste, sospesero
Participio passato: sospeso

sostenerede to sustain
See tenere.

spargere to spread
Passato remoto: sparsi, spargesti, sparse, spargemmo, spargeste, sparsero
Participio passato: sparso

sparire* to disappear
See apparire.

spessere to put out to extinguish, to turn off
Indicativo presente: spengo, spegni, spegne, spegniamo, spegnete, spengono
Passato remoto: spensi, spegnesti, spense, spegnemmo, spegneste, spensero
APPENDIX III

Participio passato: spento
Congiuntivo presente: spenga, spenga, spenga, spegniamo, spegniate, spengano

spendere to spend
Passato remoto: spesi, spendesti, spese, spendemmo, spendeste, spesero
Participio passato: speso

spingere to push
Passato remoto: spinsi, spingesti, spinse, spingemmo, spingeste, spinsero
Participio passato: spinto

stare* to stay, to be
Indicativo presente: sto, stai, sta, stiamo, state, stanno
Passato remoto: stetti, stesti, stette, stemmo, steste, stettero
Participio passato: spento
Congiuntivo presente: stia, stia, stia, stiamo, stiate, stiano
Congiuntivo all imperfetto: stessi etc.
Imperativo: sta’, stia, state

stendere to stretch, to hang out
See tendere.

stringere to tighten
Passato remoto: strinsi, stringesti, strinse, stringemmo, stringeste, strinsero
Participio passato: stretto

succedere* to happen (used in 3rd person only – the verb forms differ when succedere has the meaning of “to succeed someone”)
Passato remoto: successse
Participio passato: successo

supporre to suppose
See porre.

svolgere to develop
See rivolgere.

svolgersi* to take place
See rivolgere.

tacere to be silent
Indicativo presente: taccio, taci, tace, tacciamo, tacete, tacciano
Passato remoto: tacqui, tacesti, tacque, tacemmo, taceste, tacquero
Participio passato: tacito
Congiuntivo presente: taccia

tenere to hold
Indicativo presente: tengo, tieni, tiene, teniamo, tenete, tengono
Passato remoto: tenni, teneste, tenne, tenemmo, teneste, tennero
Futuro: terrò, terrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: terrrei, terresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: tenga, tenga, tenga, teniamo, teniate, tengano
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: attendere, distendere, estendere, stendere.

tingere to dye, to colour
Passato remoto: tinsi, tingesti, tinse, tingemmo, tingeste, tinsero
Participio passato: tinto

togliere to take away
See accogliere.
APPENDIX III

tradurre to translate
See condurre.

trascorrere to spend
See correre.

trasmettere to transmit, to broadcast
See mettere.

uccidere to kill
Passato remoto: uccisi, uccidesti, uccise, uccidemmo, uccideste, uccisero
Participio passato: ucciso

uscire* to go out
Indicativo presente: esco, esci, esce, usciamo, uscite, escono
Congiuntivo presente: esca, esca, esca, usciamo, usciate, escano
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: riuscire.

valere* to be worth (frequently used in third person)
Indicativo presente: valgo, vali, vale, valiamo, valete, valgono
Passato remoto: valsi, valesti, valse, valemmo, valeste, valsero
Participio passato: valso
Futuro: varrò, varrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: varrei, varresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: valga, valga, valga, valiamo, valiate, valgano

vedere to see
Passato remoto: vidi, vedesti, vide, vedemmo, vedeste, videro
Participio passato: visto
Futuro: vedrò, vedrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: vedrei, vedresti, etc.

venire* to come
Indicativo presente: vengo, vieni, viene, veniamo, venite, vengono
Passato remoto: venni, venisti, venne, venimmo, veniste, vennero
Participio passato: venuto
Futuro: verrò, verrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: verrei, verresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: venga, venga, venga, veniamo, veniate, vengano
Other verbs that follow this pattern include: avvenire, divenire, rinvenire, svenire.

vincere to win
Passato remoto: vinsi, Vincesti, vinse, vincemmo, vinceste, vinsero
Participio passato: vinto

vivere* to live
Passato remoto: vissi, vivesti, visse, vivemmo, viveste, vissero
Participio passato: vissuto
Futuro: vivrò, vivrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: vivrei, vivresti, etc.

volere to want, to wish
Indicativo presente: voglio, vuoi, vuole, vogliamo, volete, vogliono
Passato remoto: volli, volesti, volle, volemmo, voleste, vollero
Participio passato: voluto
Futuro: vorrò, vorrai, etc.
Condizionale presente: vorrei, vorresti, etc.
Congiuntivo presente: voglia, voglia, voglia, vogliamo, vogliate, vogliano

volgere to turn
See rivolgere.
Appendix IV

Verbs and prepositions

Complex sentences often make use of verbs linked to infinitives. Most verbs are linked to the verb infinitive by a preposition such as a or di. A few verbs do not need any preposition but are followed directly by the verb infinitive. Here is a list of the most common verbs (in alphabetical order) grouped into categories according to the preposition normally used, along with some examples. If you want to use a verb not contained in this list and are not sure which preposition is needed, you can check in any good Italian dictionary.

Note that the verb + infinitive construction can only be used where the subject of the main verb and the subject of the verb infinitive are the same. Where the subject of the main verb and the subject of the dependent verb are not the same, the verb cannot be followed by an infinitive but must be followed by che and a dependent clause. In Section 4, we give examples of verbs that involve an action carried out by another person.

1 Verbs followed directly by infinitive

This group of verbs includes the auxiliary verbs dovere, potere, volere as well as several others.

- amare to love to
- desiderare to desire to
- dovere to have to
- osare to dare to
- potere to be able to
- preferire to prefer to
- sapere to know how to
- volere to want to

Examples

*Devo andare in banca.*
I have to go to the bank.

*Sai nuotare bene?*
Do you know how to swim well?

*Non oso chiamarlo.*
I don’t dare call him.

*Non voleva venire con noi.*
She didn’t want to come with us.

Also in this group are impersonal verbs and/or verbs used mainly impersonally with the sense of “one”:

- basta to be enough to
- bisogna to be necessary to
- conviene to be advisable to
- dispiace to regret
- occorre to be necessary to
- piace to please
APPENDIX IV

Examples

*Basta mangiare cose sane per dimagrire.*
You only have to eat healthy things to lose weight.

*Bisogna portare il vino a casa di Gianluca stasera.*
We (‘one’) must take wine to Gianluca’s house tonight.

*Ti piace andare al cinema?*
Do you like going to the cinema?

*Ci conviene prendere il bus delle 8.00.*
We should get the 8.00 bus.

Impersonal expressions formed by verb (normally *essere*) and adjective are also followed directly by the infinitive:

- è difficile it’s difficult
- è facile it’s easy
- è importante it’s important
- è impossibile it’s impossible
- è possibile it’s possible
- è probabile it’s probable

Examples

*Non è facile trovare un posto di lavoro.*
It’s not easy to get a job.

*Era importante arrivare presto la mattina.*
It was important to arrive early in the morning.

2 Verbs followed by *a*

This group of verbs includes verbs of beginning, continuing or succeeding such as *cominciare*; verbs of onward action of some kind, such as *continuare*; and verbs of movement such as *andare*, *venire*.

- abituarsi to get used to
- andare to go to (see also section 3 below for another use of *andare*)
- aver difficoltà to have difficulty in
- cominciare to begin to
- continuare to continue to
- correre to run to
- decidersi to make one’s mind up to
- divertirsi to enjoy oneself
- esitare to hesitate
- fare bene to do well to
- fare male to be a bad idea to
- fare meglio to do better to
- fare presto to be quick to
- fermarsi to stop to
- imparare to learn
- impegnarsi to commit oneself
- iniziare to begin to
- mettersi to begin to
- passare to pass to
- prepararsi to get ready to
- provare to try to
APPENDIX IV

rimanere  to stay
rinunciare to give up
riprendere to begin again
riuscire to succeed in
sbrigarsi to hurry
stare to stay
tornare to return to
venire to come

Examples

Vado a comprare il giornale.
I’m going to buy the newspaper.

Ho cominciato a fumare a 12 anni.
I began smoking at age 12.

Ci siamo abituati a vederlo sempre in giro.
We got used to seeing him always around.

Sono rimasta a casa a studiare.
I stayed home to study.

3 Verbs followed by di

This group includes verbs that communicate information such as dire; verbs and related verb phrases expressing emotion, such as essere contento, vergognarsi; verbs expressing opinion, belief or hope such as credere, pensare, parere, sembrare, sperare; verbs of remembering, forgetting and realising such as ricordare, dimenticare, accorgersi; and verbs of deciding and choosing such as decidere, scegliere.

accettare to accept, agree to
accorgersi to realise, to notice
affermare to assert
ammettere to admit
andare (mi va) to feel like
annunciare to announce
aspettare to wait to
aspettarsi to expect to
augurarsi to wish
cercare to try to
cessare to stop
comunicare to communicate
confermare to confirm
credere to believe
decidere to decide to
dichiarare to declare
dimenticare to forget to
dire to say, tell
dubitare to doubt
essere + adjective to be
fare a meno di to do without
far finta to pretend to
fingere to pretend to
finire to finish
immaginare to imagine
informare  to inform
lamentarsi  to complain
mancare  to fail to
meravigliarsi  to be amazed at
negare  to deny
offrire  to offer to
(mi) pare  to seem to
pensare  to think of, to intend to
pentirsi  to regret
preoccuparsi  to worry about
promettere  to promise to
raccontare  to recount
rendersi conto  to realise
ricordare  to remember
ricordarsi  to remember
rifiutarsi  to refuse
ritenere  to maintain
sapere  to know (*but see also section 1 above*)
scegliere  to choose
sembiare  to seem
sentirsela  to feel like
smettere  to finish, to end
sognare  to dream of
sperare  to hope to
spiegare  to explain
stancarsi  to tire of
stupirsi  to be amazed at
temere  to fear
tentare  to try to
vergognarsi  to be ashamed of

Examples

Ho deciso di partire domani sera.
I've decided to leave tomorrow evening.

Mi ha detto di aver visto un fantasma.
He told me he had seen a ghost.

Spero di vederlo domani mattina.
I hope to see him tomorrow morning.

Sono proprio contenta di rivederlo.
I am really happy to see him again.

Pensavo di organizzare una festa.
I thought I would organise a party.

Verb phrases followed by di include:

c’è bisogno  it is necessary to
aver bisogno  to need
aver paura  to be afraid to
aver voglia  to want to
essere in grado  to be able to
Verbs involving other people

Most verbs that invite, force, encourage or advise others to do something will either use no preposition or use the preposition a with the person involved (i.e. as indirect object); they generally use a – occasionally di – to link the verb to the infinitive that follows (in the list below, qcn is used as abbreviation for qualcuno):

- aiutare qcn a
- chiedere a qcn di
- comandare a qcn di
- consigliare a qcn di
- convincere qcn a
- costringere qcn a
- dire a qcn di
- domandare a qcn di
- forzarqe qcn a
- impedire a qcn di
- incoraggiare qcn a
- insegnare a qcn a
- invitare qcn a
- mandare qcn a
- obbligare qcn a
- ordinare a qcn di
- permettere a qcn di
- persuadere qcn a
- pregare qcn di
- proibire a qcn di
- proporre a qcn di
- raccomandare a qcn di
- suggerire a qcn di
- vietare a qcn di

e to help someone to

to ask someone to

to command someone to

to advise someone to

to persuade someone to

to force someone to

to tell someone to

to ask someone to

to force someone to

to prevent someone from

to encourage someone to

to teach someone to

to invite someone to

to send someone to

to oblige someone to

to order someone to

to allow someone to

to persuade someone to

to beg someone to

to forbid someone to

to propose, suggest to someone to

to recommend someone to

to suggest to someone to

to forbid someone to

Example

Ho aiutato mio fratello a fare i compiti.
I helped my brother to do his homework.

Fare, lasciare and verbs of seeing, hearing, feeling

The following verbs are followed directly by the infinitive, and then by the person involved:

- fare  to make
- lasciare  to let

Example

Faccio venire Marco.
I’ll have Marco come.

Constructions with fare, lasciare are covered in detail in 21.7.

The same applies to verbs such as sentire ‘to hear, to feel’, vedere ‘to see’:

Ho visto arrivare Gianna.
I saw Gianna arriving.
Appendix V
Sequence of tenses

This is a simplified schematic outline of the ‘sequence of tenses’ between a main and a dependent clause. Here we indicate only the most common combinations of main verbs and dependent verbs.

The first table below shows combinations where the dependent verb is mainly in the indicative mood, while the second table shows combinations where the dependent verb is mainly in the subjunctive mood.

In each of the two tables, the combinations are determined by the tense of the verb in the main clause: present tense, past tense, future tense.

Finally for each of these main verb tenses, three time contexts are considered: same time context, earlier time context, later time context.

The sequence of tenses is explained in greater depth, along with examples, in 30.5.

**Dependent verbs in the indicative**

After a main verb such as dire, the dependent clause is normally in the indicative mood. If, however, there is any doubt or uncertainty, or a condition is implied, the conditional mood can be used in its place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in present tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco dice</td>
<td>Present indicative che tu sei brava.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marco dice che tu verresti con noi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco dice</td>
<td>Perfect indicative che tu sei venuto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marco dice che tu venivi spesso.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco dice</td>
<td>Present indicative che tu vieni stasera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marco dice che tu verrai stasera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marco dice che tu verresti stasera.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in past tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco ha detto / diceva</td>
<td>che tu insegni italiano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco ha detto / diceva</td>
<td>che tu insegnavi italiano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Marco ha detto / diceva</td>
<td>che eri venuto.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in future tense</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Gli dirò</td>
<td>che tu vieni tutti i giorni in ufficio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Gli dirò</td>
<td>che noi abbiamo già mangiato.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Gli dirò</td>
<td>che stavi male.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dependent verbs in the subjunctive

After a main verb such as credere, pensare, sembra, the dependent clause is normally in the subjunctive mood, to express doubt or uncertainty. If there is less doubt or uncertainty, the conditional mood can be used instead. When the action referred to is in the future, either the present subjunctive is used or the future indicative, since the subjunctive has no future tense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in present tense (present indicative, present conditional)</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensa</td>
<td>che tu sia brava.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorrei</td>
<td>che tu fossi qui con me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensa</td>
<td>che tu sia venuto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensa</td>
<td>che tu studiassi poco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensa</td>
<td>che tu verrai stasera.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensa</td>
<td>che Marco accetti il posto.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in past tense (imperfect, perfect, past definite, pluperfect)</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same</strong> (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensava / ha pensato / pensò / aveva pensato</td>
<td>Imperfect subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che tu avessi una casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>molto grande.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Earlier</strong> (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensava / ha pensato</td>
<td>Pluperfect subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che tu fossi venuto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Later</strong> (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Pensava / ha pensato</td>
<td>Past conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che sarebbe venuto anche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tuo marito.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect indicative (replacing past conditional in informal speech only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che veniva anche tuo marito.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time context</th>
<th>Main verb in future tense (future indicative)</th>
<th>Verb in dependent clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same</strong> (an event or act happening at the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Penserà</td>
<td>Present subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che tu venga tutti i giorni in ufficio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Earlier</strong> (an event or act happening in the past in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Penserà</td>
<td>Perfect subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che tu sia venuta solo per vederlo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Later</strong> (an event or act happening in the future in relation to the time of speaking or writing)</td>
<td>Penserà</td>
<td>Future indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che partiremo domani in treno.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Present subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>che tu venga domani.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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