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## Italian Alphabet and Pronunciation

a	as in mama
b	as in bed
c	as in cap before a consonant or the vowels A, O, U.
c	as in chip before the vowels I or E
d	as in dollar
e	(open) as in elbow
e	(closed) as in egg
f	as in feet
g	as in gorilla before consonants and the vowels A, O, U
g	as in giraffe before the vowels I or E
h	is silent
i	as the e is pronounced in the word ego
j	is only used in foreign words
k	is only used in foreign words
l	as in letter
m	as in melon
n	as in nickel
o	(open) as in oleander
o	(closed) as in olive
p	as in pot
q	as in queen
r	as in the t-o combination of "pot of water"
s	as in zebra
t	as in table
u	as in loop
v	as in vine
w	is only used in foreign words
x	is only used in foreign words
y	is only used in foreign words
z	as in TS combination in pits or the DS combination in pads

### Consonant Clusters:

CH before I or E is pronounced as a k sound as in click.

GH before I or E is pronounced as a hard g sound as in gallop.

GLI is pronounced like the -LLI- in million.

RR is "trilled" more than a single R. Listening to audio cassettes will give you the correct pronunciation.

SS is pronounced more like the S in English as in summer.

ZZ is pronounced like the TS combination in pits. The exception is the DS combination in pads.

S before CI or CE is pronounced as an SH sound as in sheet.

S before CA, CU, CHI or CHE is pronounced as an S sound as in soul.

GN almost always has the pronunciation of the "NY" combination as in vineyard.

GU is pronounced like a "GW" sound as in language.



## Articles

In Italian, the DEFINITE ARTICLE ("articolo determinativo") has a number of different forms, depending on whether the noun it accompanies is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. It also changes its form according to the initial letters of the word that follows it.

### MASCULINE SINGULAR:

before most consonants:	il	"il teatro"	<the theater>
before s + consonant, z, gn, ps:	lo	"lo specchio"	<the mirror>
before vowels:	l'	"l'orso"	<the bear>

### MASCULINE PLURAL:

before most consonants:	i	"i denti"	<the teeth>
before s + consonant, z, gn, ps:	gli	"gli stivali"	<the boots>
before vowels:	gli	"gli alberghi"	<the hotels>

### FEMININE SINGULAR:

before consonants:	la	"la casa"	<the house>
before vowels:	l'	"l'anima"	<the soul>

### FEMININE PLURAL:

invariably:	le	"le regole"	<the rules>
	le	"le amiche"	<the friends>

Definite articles are used with nouns that are abstract, general or collective: "la vita" <life>; "l'oro" <gold>; "la gente" <people>. When the possessor is already clear from the context, they are sometimes used where English would use a possessive adjective:

"le mani" <the hands>

"Maria mette le mani in tasca" <Maria puts her hands in her pockets>

"le scarpe" <the shoes>

"Mi sono messa le scarpe" <I put on my shoes>

Definite articles are also used with titles preceding a last name, except in direct address:

"Il signor Bianchi è di Firenze" <Mr. Bianchi is from Florence>

BUT "Buon giorno, Signor Bianchi" <Hello, Mr. Bianchi>.

Another important use of the definite article is with possessive adjectives:

"Ho perso il mio libro" <I lost my book>.

The INDEFINITE ARTICLES ("articoli indeterminativi") are:

### MASCULINE:

before most consonants:	un	"un teatro"	<a theater>
before s + consonant, z, gn, ps:	uno	"uno specchio"	<a mirror>
before vowels:	un	"un orso"	<a bear>

### FEMININE:

before consonants:	una	"una casa"	<a house>
before vowels:	un'	"un'anima"	<a soul>

## Contractions

The definite articles form CONTRACTIONS ("contrazioni") with the prepositions "a" <to, at, in>, "di" <of, from, by, about>, "da" <of, by, from, with>, "in" <in, to>, and "su" <on>.

	A	DI	DA	IN	SU
IL	al	del	dal	nel	sul
LO	allo	dello	dallo	nello	sullo
L'	all'	dell'	dall'	nell'	sull'
LA	alla	della	dalla	nella	sulla
I	ai	dei	dai	nei	sui
GLI	agli	degli	dagli	negli	sugli
LE	alle	delle	dalle	nelle	sulle

N.B. Italians sometimes contract "con il" <with the> to "col" and "con i" to "coi". Modern Italian normally uses separate words.

## Nouns: Gender and Agreement

NOUNS ("sostantivi") can have two GENDERS ("generi"), masculine and feminine, and two NUMBERS, singular ("singolare") and plural ("plurale"). Generally speaking, masculine nouns end in "-o" (plural "-i") and feminine nouns end in "-a" (plural "-e"): "il libro" <the book>, "i libri" <the books>; "la casa" <the house>, "le case" <the houses>.

There are exceptions, though. Some feminine nouns end in "-o"; they form the plural in "-i", "la mano" <the hand>, "le mani" <the hands>; some masculine nouns end in "-a"; they form their plural in "-i": "il problema" <the problem>, "i problemi" <the problems>.

Nouns that are abbreviated forms retain the gender of the long form. They do not change in the plural: "la foto" ("fotografia") <the photograph>, "le foto" <the photographs>; "il cinema" ("cinematografo") <the movie theater>, "i cinema" <the movie theaters>.

Some masculine nouns change their gender to feminine in the plural, with a singular-type "-a" ending rather than the usual plural form "-e":

"l'uovo" <the egg> BUT "le uova" <the eggs>;  
"il dito" <the finger> BUT "le dita" <the fingers>.

There are also a number of nouns which do not end in "-o" or "-a."

Nouns ending in "-e," whether masculine or feminine, invariably form the plural in "-i": "il fiore" <the flower>, "i fiori" <the flowers>; "la lezione" <the lesson>, "le lezioni" <the lessons>.

Nouns ending in "-i" or an accented vowel do not change in the plural: "la crisi" <the crisis>, "le crisi" <the crises>; "la virtù" <the virtue>, "le virtù" <the virtues>; "la città" <the city>, "le città" <the cities>.

The same is true of one-syllable nouns, and of foreign loan words ending in a consonant: "il re" <the king>, "i re" <the kings>; "il film" <the movie>, "i film" <the movies>.

Some nouns ending in "-a" or "-e" can be either masculine or feminine, depending on the gender of the person being named by the noun: "il pianista" <the male pianist>, "la pianista" <the female pianist>; "il cantante" <the male singer>, "la cantante" <the female singer>. Other nouns change their ending according to gender: "l'attore" <the actor>, "l'attrice" <the actress>; "il gallo" <the rooster>, "la gallina" <the hen>; "il cameriere" <the waiter>, "la cameriera" <the waitress>.

There are also nouns that have both genders, but with a different meaning for each:

"il fine" <the purpose>, "la fine" <the conclusion>; "il tema" <the topic>, "la tema" <fear>.

A noun and its modifiers have the same gender and number; this is called AGREEMENT. If a noun is feminine, its modifiers will be feminine: "un'antica chiesa" <an old church>. If a noun is plural, its modifiers will be plural: "i capelli grigi" <gray hairs>.

## Adjectives

ADJECTIVES ("aggettivi") agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify.

Regular adjectives with separate masculine and feminine forms end in -o (m.) and -a (f.) in the singular, -i (m.) and -e (f.) in the plural:

"Il battello è bianco" <The boat is white>;

"La colomba ha un'ala bianca" <The dove has a white wing>;

"I miei denti sono bianchi" <My teeth are white>;

"Le mie scarpe sono bianche" <My shoes are white>.

Regular adjectives with identical masculine and feminine forms have a singular ending "-e" and a plural ending "-i":

"un vestito verde" <a green dress>,

"una mela verde" <a green apple>;

"degli alberi verdi" <some green trees>,

"delle tartarughe verdi" <some green turtles>.

N.B. Adjectives describing colors by means of nouns do not change form to show gender or number:

"la rosa" <the rose>, "rosa" <pink>, "dei fiori rosa" <some pink flowers>; "la viola" <the violet>, "viola" <purple>, "un vestito viola" <a purple dress>.

Other adjectives describing colors that are invariable are:

"arancione" <orange>, "marrone" <brown>, "blu" <blue>,

The POSITION of adjectives follows certain rules. Generally speaking, adjectives which describe or differentiate FOLLOW the nouns they modify:

"una fontana magnifica" <a magnificent fountain>;

"la mano destra" <the right hand>.

Adjectives PRECEDE the nouns they modify when they express an essential or characteristic quality, and when they limit or quantify:

"un piccolo asino" <a small donkey>;

"le poche case" <the few houses>; "alcuni romanzi" <some novels>.

Some adjectives change meaning when they precede the noun, taking on a figurative sense:

"un uomo povero" <a poverty-stricken man>

BUT "un pover' uomo" <an unfortunate fellow>.

## Adverbs

ADVERBS ("avverbi") of manner are usually formed by adding the suffix "-mente" to adjectives in their feminine singular form:

"esatta" <exact>, "esattamente" <exactly>.

"Buono" <good> and "cattivo" <bad> have special adverbial forms:

"bene" <well> and "male" <badly>.

Some singular masculine adjectives are used adverbially:

"Parlo piano" <I am speaking softly>;

"Abitano vicino" <They live nearby>;

"Sempre risponde giusto" <She always answers correctly>.

## Comparison

The COMPARATIVE form of adjectives and adverbs is expressed by preceding them with "più" <more> or "meno" <less>:

"alto" <tall>, "più alto" <taller>; "diligentemente" <diligently>, "meno diligentemente" <less diligently>.

The complete comparison is usually expressed with "di" <than> before nouns or pronouns and "che" <than> before modifiers:

"Giovanni è più vecchio di te" <John is older than you>;

"La lezione è più istruttiva che divertente" <The lesson is more informative than entertaining>.

The RELATIVE SUPERLATIVE of adjectives is expressed by preceding the comparative form with the definite article:

"il più giovane" <the youngest>;

"la meno veloce" <the least rapid>;

"i meno intelligenti" <the least intelligent>; "le più attive" <the most active>.

The definite article is not repeated if it already precedes the noun:

"la ragazza più intelligente" <the smartest girl>.

The ABSOLUTE SUPERLATIVE of an adjective (indicating degree rather than comparison) is regularly formed by adding the suffix "-issimo," which is then inflected like a regular adjective:

"un libro utilissimo" <a very useful book>;

"una donna bellissima" <a very beautiful woman>.

ADVERBS form the superlative by adding "-issimamente" to the stem of adverbs ending in "-mente" and "-issimo" to the stems of other adverbs:

"lentamente" <slowly>, "lentissimamente" <very slowly>; "spesso" <often>, "spessissimo" <very often>.

Some commonly used adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

"bene" <well>, "meglio" <better>, "ottimamente" <very well>; "male" <badly>, "peggio" <worse>,

"pessimamente" <very badly>.

Adjectives and adverbs are sometimes doubled to express an absolute superlative:

"pian piano" <very softly>.

## Possessives

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES ("aggettivi possessivi") and POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS ("pronomi possessivi") are usually compound forms which include a definite article that cannot be translated into English.

The forms of the possessive adjective are:

MASCULINE SINGULAR	MASCULINE PLURAL	FEMININE SINGULAR	FEMININE PLURAL	
il mio	i miei	la mia	le mie	<my>
il tuo	i tuoi	la tua	le tue	<your> (familiar)
il suo	i suoi	la sua	le sue	<his, her> <your> (polite)
il nostro	i nostri	la nostra	le nostre	<our>
il vostro	i vostri	la vostra	le vostre	<your> (plural)
il loro	i loro	la loro	le loro	<their, theirs> <your> (polite)

Possessive pronouns are identical in form to possessive adjectives; the difference is in meaning. Where the possessive adjective "il mio" means "my," for example, the possessive pronoun "il mio" means "mine": "le tue scarpe e le mie" <your shoes and mine>.

It is important to note that possessives agree in gender and number with the thing possessed, rather than with the possessor:

"i miei amici" <my friends>; "la loro automobile" <their car>.

If ambiguity results from the use of possessives, possession may be expressed by means of "di" with a disjunctive pronoun: "la sua valigia" <his or her or your suitcase>; "la valigia di lui" <his suitcase>.

If the possessor is also the subject of the sentence, "proprio" may be used.

"Giovanni porta la propria valigia" <John carries his own suitcase>

"Proprio" MUST be used after impersonal expressions:

"Bisogna portare le proprie valigie" <One must carry one's own pieces of luggage>.

When referring to articles of clothing and parts of the body, the definite article is regularly used instead of the possessive adjective; as long as the possessor is clear from context.

"le scarpe" <the shoes>

"Giovanni si è messo le scarpe" <Giovanni puts on his shoes>

"la testa" <the head>

"Marco si è grattato la testa" <Marco scratches his head>

## Demonstratives

The DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVES ("aggettivi dimostrativi") are:

	<this>	<that>	<that>
SINGULAR MASCULINE	questo	quello	codesto
SINGULAR FEMININE	questa	quella	codesta
	<these>	<those>	<those>
PLURAL MASCULINE	questi	quelli	codesti <those>
PLURAL FEMININE	queste	quelle	codeste <those>

"Questa" is sometimes shortened to "sta" and contracted with the noun it modifies:  
"questa sera" <this evening>, "stasera" <this evening>.

There is elision of "questo," "questa" and "quella" before a noun beginning with a vowel: "quest'aereo" <this airplane>; "quest'aula" <this classroom>; "quell'autostrada" <that highway>.

Demonstratives agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify, and always precede them: "questo libro" <this book>;  
"quella casa" <that house>.

The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS ("pronomi dimostrativi") are identical in form to the demonstrative adjectives, but mean "this one," "that one," etc. They are used alone, but refer back to something mentioned earlier (the antecedent) and agree with it in number and gender: "Questa casa è bianca e quella è nera" <This house is white and that one is black>.

## Pronouns

SUBJECT PRONOUNS ("pronomi") are often omitted, since the verb form indicates the subject: "Ho freddo" <I'm cold>.

When subject pronouns are used, it is for purposes of emphasis, clarification or courtesy:

"Io ho freddo" <I, for my part, am cold>

"Lui detesta il film" <He hates the movie>

"Vorrebbe Lei venire con me?" <Would you like to come with me?>.

The subject pronouns are:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1st person	io <I>	noi <we>
2nd person	tu <you>	voi <you all>
(polite)	Lei <you>	Loro <you all>
3rd person	lui <he>	loro <them>
	lei <she>	loro <them>
	esso <it> (m.)	essi <them> (masculine)
	essa <it> (f.)	esse <them> (feminine)

"Egli" is sometimes used for "lui" <he>; "ella" is sometimes used for "lei" <she>. Such usage is mainly literary. Also the use of "Loro" as the polite form of 2nd person plural is no longer commonly used. "Voi" is standard when addressing more than one person, formally or informally.

OBJECT PRONOUNS are either direct or indirect, and cannot stand alone without a verb. The direct object receives the action of the verb directly while the indirect object is indirectly affected by it. With the exception of "loro," they PRECEDE the conjugated verb:

"Ti ho visto ieri" <I saw you yesterday>

"Gli ho dato il mio numero di telefono" <I gave him my phone number>.

The forms of the direct and indirect object pronouns are:

SINGULAR	DIRECT	INDIRECT
1st	mi <me>	mi <to me>
2nd familiar	ti <you>	ti <to you>
2nd polite	La <you>	Le <to you>
3rd masculine	lo <him, it>	gli <to him>
3rd feminine	la <her, it>	le <to her>
PLURAL		
1st	ci <us>	ci <to us>
2nd familiar	vi <you>	vi <to you>
polite (m.)	Li <you>	Loro <to you>
polite (f.)	Le <you>	Loro <to you>
3rd masculine	li <them>	loro <to them>
feminine	le <them>	loro <to them>

With the exception of "loro," pronouns regularly precede the conjugated verb, but they are attached to infinitives (which drop the final "-e"), participles and familiar commands:

"Sono venuto per vederlo" <I have come to see it>

"Sto chiamandolo" <I am calling him>

"Ascoltami" <Listen to me!>.

In a compound (perfect) infinitive, the pronoun is attached to the auxiliary verb:

"averti chiamato" <having called you>.

Some one-syllable familiar commands double the first consonant of the object pronoun:  
"Dimmi" <Tell me!>.

"Lo" is used as a neuter pronoun referring back to a general idea or situation: "Vale la pena-- Sì, lo so!"  
<It's worth the trouble-- Yes, I know it!>.

When direct and indirect pronouns are used together, the indirect pronoun comes first. "Loro" is the exception to this rule; it always follows the verb:  
"Lo disse loro" <He said it to them>.

Before "lo," "la," "li," "le," and "ne," the indirect object pronouns change their form as follows:

mi --> me: "Giovanni me lo diede" <John gave it to me>  
ti --> te: "Te lo ho comprato" <I bought it for you>  
ci --> ce: "Ce lo dà" <He gives it to us>  
vi --> ve: "Ve l'ho detto ieri" <I said it to you yesterday>  
gli --> glie: "Glieli manderò" <I'll send them to him>  
le --> glie: "Glielo dicono" <They say it to her>.

Note that "glie" combines with the direct object pronoun.

The 3rd person reflexive pronoun singular and plural "si" changes to "se" before a direct object pronoun:  
"Si lava la faccia? Sì, se la lava." <Does he wash his face? Yes, he washes it>.

After prepositions, the following DISJUNCTIVE PRONOUNS are used:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1st person	me <me, myself>	noi <us, ourselves>
2nd person	te <you, yourself>	voi <you all, yourselves>
polite:	Lei <you>	Loro <you>
3rd person	lui <him>	loro <them>
	lei <her>	loro <them>
	esso <it> (m.)	essi <them> (m.)
	essa <it> (f.)	esse <them> (f.)
	sè <yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself>	sè <yourselves, themselves>

These pronouns, also known as stressed pronouns ("pronomi tonici"), are used most frequently as objects of prepositions. "Parla a me?" <Are you speaking to me?> "Preferisco lavorare per lei" <I prefer to work for her>.

## Relative Pronouns

RELATIVE PRONOUNS ("pronomi relativi") introduce a subordinate clause and represent persons or things mentioned previously. They can function as either subject or object pronouns without any change in form.

The most common relative pronouns are:

- 1) "che" or "il/la quale" <who, which, that>, referring to a specific antecedent:  
"L'uomo che hai visto è italiano" <The man you saw is Italian>  
"Giulia, la quale è italiana, non parla inglese" <Julia, who is Italian, doesn't speak English>
- 2) "quel che," "quello che" or "ciò che" <what>, referring to an unspecified antecedent:  
"Quel che ha fatto non m'interessa" <What she did doesn't interest me>  
"Non so quello che ha fatto" <I don't know what she's done>  
"Fa ciò che vuole" <She does what she wants>
- 3) the impersonal pronoun "chi" <the one who/whom>:  
"Chi ride vince" <He who laughs wins>
- 4) After a preposition, the invariable pronoun "cui" is used in place of "che":  
"Ecco la signora di cui parlai" <Here is the woman of whom I spoke>.

## Negation

A verb is negated by preceding it with "non." When there is an object pronoun in front of the verb, "non" comes before the object pronoun:

"Non mi telefona" <He doesn't call me>.

A negative response, as in English, may consist of the single word "No":

"Lei parla italiano?-- No" <Do you speak Italian?-- No>.

Double negatives are standard in Italian:

"Non vedo nessuno" <I don't see nobody = anybody>.

Some other commonly used negations:

"niente" <nothing>

"nessuno" <no one>

"neanche" <not even>

"mai" <never>

## Conjugation: Tense, Person, Number

There are three verb CONJUGATIONS ("coniugazioni") in Italian, identified by the endings of the infinitives:

		EXAMPLE	
FIRST CONJUGATION:	-ARE	"parlare"	<to talk>
SECOND CONJUGATION:	-ERE	"vendere"	<to sell>
THIRD CONJUGATION:	-IRE	"dormire"	<to sleep>

See also

[1st Conjugation](#)

[2nd Conjugation](#)

[3rd Conjugation](#)

There are four SIMPLE TENSES in the indicative mood:

PRESENT:	"Parlo"	<I speak>
FUTURE:	"Parlerò"	<I will speak>
IMPERFECT:	"Parlavo"	<I used to speak>
SIMPLE PAST:	"Parlai"	<I spoke>

There are four COMPOUND TENSES in the indicative mood:

PRESENT PERFECT:	"Ho parlato"	<I have spoken, I spoke>
	"Sono arrivato"	<I have arrived, I arrived>
FUTURE PERFECT:	"Avrò parlato"	<I will have spoken>
	"Sarò arrivato"	<I will have arrived>
PLUPERFECT:	"Avevo parlato"	<I had spoken>
	"Ero arrivato"	<I had arrived>
PAST ANTERIOR:	"Ebbi parlato"	<I had spoken>
	"Fui arrivato"	<I had arrived>

The pluperfect is sometimes called the past perfect or first past perfect; the past anterior is sometimes called the preterite perfect or second past perfect.

There are four verbal MOODS ("modi"):

INDICATIVE (stating a fact):

"Parlo italiano" <I speak Italian>

SUBJUNCTIVE (expressing an attitude):

"Credo che lei parli italiano" <I think she speaks Italian>

CONDITIONAL (indicating a possibility):

"Gli studenti parlerebbero italiano se potessero"  
<The students would speak Italian if they could>

IMPERATIVE (giving a command):

"Parla italiano!" <Speak Italian!>

The conjugated forms of verbs agree with the person and number of the subject. There are two

NUMBERS (singular and plural) and three PERSONS. First person is the speaker; second person is the one spoken to; third person is the one spoken about.

SINGULAR

PLURAL

1ST PERSON: io parlo <I speak>

noi parliamo <we speak>

2ND PERSON: tu parli <you speak>

voi parlate <you speak>

3RD PERSON: lei parla <she speaks>

loro parlano <they speak>

The "Lei/Loro" (polite "you") form of address uses third person verb forms.

## Present Tense

The PRESENT tense ("presente") of regular verbs is formed by adding a set of personal endings to the verb stem.

	FIRST CONJUGATION		SECOND CONJUGATION	
	"parlare"	<to speak>	"vendere"	<to sell>
io	parl-o	<I speak>	vend-o	<I sell>
tu	parl-i	<you speak>	vend-i	<you sell>
lei	parl-a	<she speaks>	vend-e	<she sells>
noi	parl-iamo	<we speak>	vend-iamo	<we sell>
voi	parl-ate	<you speak>	vend-ete	<you sell>
loro	parl-ano	<they speak>	vend-ono	<they sell>
	THIRD CONJUGATION		THIRD CONJUGATION LONG	
	"dormire"	<to sleep>	"pulire"	<to clean>
io	dorm-o	<I sleep>	pul-isco	<I clean>
tu	dorm-i	<you sleep>	pul-isci	<you clean>
lei	dorm-e	<she sleeps>	pul-isce	<she cleans>
noi	dorm-iamo	<we sleep>	pul-iamo	<we clean>
voi	dorm-ite	<you sleep>	pul-ite	<you clean>
loro	dorm-ono	<they sleep>	pul-iscono	<they clean>

The present tense can have the sense of the English present progressive: "scrive" <she is writing>. The present tense is also used in conversation to refer to actions which will take place in the immediate future. It is occasionally used in literature to replace the past tense, lending an immediacy to the narrative (vivid present).

## Future Tense

The FUTURE tense ("futuro") is formed on the basis of a future stem, which is the same as the infinitive (dropping the final "-e"), except that the A of 1st conjugation -AR verbs changes to E. Identical personal endings are used for all three conjugations:

FIRST CONJUGATION			SECOND CONJUGATION		
	"parlare"	<to speak>		"vendere"	<to sell>
	future stem: parlar-			future stem: vender-	
io	parler-ò	<I will speak>	vender-ò	<I will sell>	
tu	parler-ai	<you will speak>	vender-ai	<you will sell>	
lei	parler-à	<she will speak>	vender-à	<she will sell>	
noi	parler-emo	<we will speak>	vender-emo	<we will sell>	
voi	parler-ete	<you will speak>	vender-ete	<you will sell>	
loro	parler-anno	<they will speak>	vender-anno	<they will sell>	

### THIRD CONJUGATION

"dormire"	<to sleep>
future stem: dormir-	
io dormir-ò	<I will sleep>
tu dormir-ai	<you will sleep>
lei dormir-à	<she will sleep>
noi dormir-emo	<we will sleep>
voi dormir-ete	<you will sleep>
loro dormir-anno	<they will sleep>

In addition to expressing future time, the future tense is used to express uncertainty or probability in the present:

"Saranno le cinque" <It must be around five o'clock>.

## Imperfect Tense

The IMPERFECT tense ("imperfetto") of regular verbs is formed by replacing the final "-re" of the infinitive form with personal endings. Those endings always begin with the letter "v" and are identical for all three conjugations:

### FIRST CONJUGATION

"parlare" <to speak>  
imperfect stem: parla

io	parla-vo	<I used to speak>
tu	parla-vi	<you used to speak>
lei	parla-va	<she used to speak>
noi	parla-vamo	<we used to speak>
voi	parla-vate	<you used to speak>
loro	parla-vano	<they used to speak>

### SECOND CONJUGATION

"vendere" <to sell>  
imperfect stem: vende

io	vende-vo	<I sold>
tu	vende-vi	<you sold>
lei	vende-va	<she sold>
noi	vende-vamo	<we sold>
voi	vende-vate	<you sold>
loro	vende-vano	<they sold>

### THIRD CONJUGATION

"dormire" <to sleep>  
imperfect stem: dormi-

io	dormi-vo	<I was sleeping>
tu	dormi-vi	<you were sleeping>
lei	dormi-va	<she was sleeping>
noi	dormi-vamo	<we were sleeping>
voi	dormi-vate	<you were sleeping>
loro	dormi-vano	<they were sleeping>

The imperfect tense describes a situation in the past, or an action which was ongoing or repeated. For this reason, it is sometimes called the past descriptive.

## Simple Past Tense

The SIMPLE PAST tense ("passato remoto") of regular verbs is formed by adding personal endings directly to the verb stems. Each conjugation has a separate set of endings:

### FIRST CONJUGATION

	"parlare"	<to speak>
io	parl-ai	<I spoke>
tu	parl-asti	<you spoke>
lei	parl-ò	<she spoke>
noi	parl-ammo	<we spoke>
voi	parl-aste	<you spoke>
loro	parl-arono	<they spoke>

### SECOND CONJUGATION

	"vendere"	<to sell>
	vend-ei	<I sold>
	vend-esti	<you sold>
	vend-è	<she sold>
	vend-emmo	<we sold>
	vend-este	<you sold>
	vend-erono	<they sold>

Second conjugation -ERE verbs have the following alternate endings (unless the verb stem ends in "-t", as with "pot-ere"): io vend-etti; lei vend-ette; loro vend-ettero.

### THIRD CONJUGATION

	"dormire"	<to sleep>
io	dorm-ii	<I slept>
tu	dorm-isti	<you slept>
lei	dorm-ì	<she slept>
noi	dorm-immo	<we slept>
voi	dorm-iste	<you slept>
loro	dorm-irono	<they slept>

The simple past tense narrates an action with a beginning and an end. For this reason, it is sometimes called the past historic. It is also called the preterite, or the past absolute. The simple past is used most commonly in literature. In spoken Italian, it is used mostly in southern regions of Italy.

## Compound (Perfect) Tenses

The COMPOUND or PERFECT TENSES are formed with the auxiliary verb "avere" or "essere" and the past participle of the main verb.

"Avere" is used with transitive verbs (those that can take a direct object), and with many intransitive verbs which express an action: "Non l'ho visto" <I haven't seen him>; "Ho parlato" <I have spoken>.

The past participle does not agree with the subject, although it agrees with a preceding direct object: "Non l'ho vista" <I haven't seen her>.

"Essere" is used with reflexive verbs, reciprocal verbs, and verbs which express a change or continuance in a certain state:

"Mi sono lavato" <I washed myself>;

"Ci siamo parlati" <We have spoken to one another>;

"Eravate partite" <You women had left>.

Notice that the past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject of the verb.

There are four compound tenses in the INDICATIVE mood:

PRESENT PERFECT:	"Ho parlato"	<I have spoken, I spoke>
	"Sono arrivato"	<I have arrived, I arrived>
FUTURE PERFECT:	"Avrò parlato"	<I will have spoken>
	"Sarò arrivato"	<I will have arrived>
PLUPERFECT:	"Avevo parlato"	<I had spoken>
	"Ero arrivato"	<I had arrived>
PAST ANTERIOR:	"Ebbi parlato"	<I had spoken>
	"Fui arrivato"	<I had arrived>

The present perfect uses a present tense auxiliary; the future perfect uses a future tense auxiliary; the pluperfect uses an imperfect auxiliary; the past anterior uses a simple past auxiliary.

The pluperfect is sometimes called the past perfect or first past perfect; the past anterior is sometimes called the preterite perfect or second past perfect.

There are two compound tenses in the SUBJUNCTIVE mood:

PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE:	"Abbia parlato"	<I have spoken>
	"Sia arrivato"	<I have arrived>
PLUPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE:	"AveSSI parlato"	<I had spoken>
	"Fossi arrivato"	<I had arrived>

There is one compound tense in the CONDITIONAL mood:

PAST CONDITIONAL:	"Avrei parlato"	<I would have spoken>
	"Sarei arrivato"	<I would have arrived>

## Present Perfect Tense

The PRESENT PERFECT tense ("passato prossimo") is formed with a present tense auxiliary verb and a past participle of the main verb. It often should be translated by the English simple past rather than the English perfect tense which it resembles:

"L'ho fatto per te" <I did it for you>.

The present perfect tense describes an action which occurred at a definite time in the past.

io	ho	parlato	<I have spoken, I spoke>
tu	hai	parlato	<you have spoken, you spoke>
lei, lui	ha	parlato	<she, he has spoken, she, he spoke>
noi	abbiamo	parlato	<we have spoken, we spoke>
voi	avete	parlato	<you have spoken, you spoke>
loro	hanno	parlato	<they have spoken, they spoke>
io	sono	arrivato	<I have arrived, I arrived>
tu	sei	arrivato	<you have arrived, you arrived>
lei	è	arrivata	<she has arrived, she arrived>
lui	è	arrivato	<he has arrived; he arrived>
noi	siamo	arrivati	<we have arrived, we arrived>
voi	siete	arrivati	<you have arrived, you arrived>
loro	sono	arrivate	<they (f.) have arrived, they arrived>

## Future Perfect Tense

The FUTURE PERFECT tense ("futuro anteriore") is formed with a future tense auxiliary verb and a past participle of the main verb. It describes an action which will occur in the future prior to another future event or situation: "Quando avrai finito, ceneremo" <When you have finished, we will eat supper>.

The future perfect may also indicate conjecture or possibility with regard to a past event: "Sarà andato a teatro" <He probably went to the theater>.

io	avrò	parlato	<I will have spoken>
tu	avrà	parlato	<you will have spoken>
lei, lui	avrà	parlato	<she, he will have spoken>
noi	avremo	parlato	<we will have spoken>
voi	avrete	parlato	<you will have spoken>
loro	avranno	parlato	<they will have spoken>

io	sarò	arrivato	<I will have arrived>
tu	sarai	arrivato	<you will have arrived>
lei	sarà	arrivata	<she will have arrived>
lui	sarà	arrivato	<he will have arrived>
noi	saremo	arrivati	<we will have arrived>
voi	sarete	arrivati	<you will have arrived>
loro	saranno	arrivate	<they (f.) will have arrived>

## Pluperfect (Past Perfect) Tense

The PLUPERFECT or past perfect tense ("trapassato prossimo") is formed with an auxiliary in the imperfect tense and a past participle of the main verb. It is sometimes called the first past perfect, to distinguish it from the past anterior (the second past perfect). It describes an action which occurred in the past prior to another past event or situation.

io	avevo	parlato	<I had spoken>
tu	avevi	parlato	<you had spoken>
lei, lui	aveva	parlato	<she, he had spoken>
noi	avevamo	parlato	<we had spoken>
voi	avevate	parlato	<you had spoken>
loro	avevano	parlato	<they had spoken>
io	ero	arrivato	<I had arrived>
tu	eri	arrivato	<you had arrived>
lei	era	arrivata	<she had arrived>
lui	era	arrivato	<he had arrived>
noi	eravamo	arrivati	<we had arrived>
voi	eravate	arrivati	<you had arrived>
loro	erano	arrivate	<they (f.) had arrived>

## Past Anterior (Preterite Perfect) Tense

The PAST ANTERIOR or preterite perfect tense ("trapassato remoto") is formed with an auxiliary in the simple past tense along with a past participle of the main verb. It is sometimes called the second past perfect, to distinguish it from the pluperfect tense (the first past perfect).

The past anterior is a literary tense, not used in conversation. Like the pluperfect, it describes an action which took place in the past prior to another past action (in the simple past tense), and must be introduced by "quando" <when>, "dopo che" <after> or "appena" <as soon as>:  
"Quando avesti finito, cenammo" <When you had finished, we ate supper>.

io	ebbi	parlato	<I had spoken>
tu	avesti	parlato	<you had spoken>
lei, lui	ebbe	parlato	<she, he had spoken>
noi	avemmo	parlato	<we had spoken>
voi	aveste	parlato	<you had spoken>
loro	ebbero	parlato	<they had spoken>

io	fui	arrivato	<I had arrived>
tu	fosti	arrivato	<you had arrived>
lei	fu	arrivata	<she had arrived>
lui	fu	arrivato	<he had arrived>
noi	fummo	arrivati	<we had arrived>
voi	foste	arrivati	<you had arrived>
loro	furono	arrivate	<they (f.) had arrived>

## Conditional Mood

The CONDITIONAL mood ("condizionale") is used to express a doubt, a wish or a possibility: "Che cosa avremmo dovuto fare?" <What should we have done?>; "Vorrei un panino al prosciutto" <I would like a ham sandwich>; "Gli studenti parlerebbero italiano, se potessero" <The students would speak Italian if they could>.

The past conditional is used with a past tense verb of saying:  
"Disse che sarebbe venuta" <She said she would come>.

The conditional is based on the future stem, and adds identical personal endings to all three conjugations:

### FIRST CONJUGATION

"parlare" <to speak>  
future stem: parler-

io	parler-ei	<I would speak>
tu	parler-esti	<you would speak>
lei, lui	parler-ebbe	<she, he would speak>
noi	parler-emo	<we would speak>
voi	parler-este	<you would speak>
loro	parler-ebbero	<they would speak>

### SECOND CONJUGATION

"vendere" <to sell>  
future stem: vender-

io	vender-ei	<I would sell>
tu	vender-esti	<you would sell>
lei, lui	vender-ebbe	<she, he would sell>
noi	vender-emo	<we would sell>
voi	vender-este	<you would sell>
loro	vender-ebbero	<they would sell>

### THIRD CONJUGATION

"dormire" <to sleep>  
future stem: dormir-

io	dormir-ei	<I would sleep>
tu	dormir-esti	<you would sleep>
lei, lui	dormir-ebbe	<she, he would sleep>
noi	dormir-emo	<we would sleep>
voi	dormir-este	<you would sleep>
loro	dormir-ebbero	<they would sleep>

The PAST CONDITIONAL ("condizionale passato") is a perfect tense using the conditional of the auxiliary verb and a past participle of the main verb.

io	avrei	parlato	<I would have spoken>
tu	avresti	parlato	<you would have spoken>

lei, lui	avrebbe	parlato	<she, he would have spoken>
noi	avremmo	parlato	<we would have spoken>
voi	avreste	parlato	<you would have spoken>
loro	avrebbero	parlato	<they would have spoken>

io	sarei	arrivato	<I would have arrived>
tu	saresti	arrivato	<you would have arrived>
lei	sarebbe	arrivata	<she would have arrived>
lui	sarebbe	arrivato	<he would have arrived>
noi	saremmo	arrivati	<we would have arrived>
voi	sareste	arrivati	<you would have arrived>
loro	sarebbero	arrivate	<they (f.) would have arrived>

## Subjunctive Mood

The SUBJUNCTIVE ("congiuntivo") indicates a subjective attitude toward the action or situation described by the verb. It is used to express an opinion or an uncertainty:

"Penso che dorma" <I think he's sleeping>

"Che abbia venduto la macchina?" <I wonder if he sold his car>.

It is also used after verbs of emotion, and of willing or hindering an event:

"Ho paura che sia troppo tardi" <I am afraid it may be too late>

"Desidero che venga con me" <I want her to come with me>.

The subjunctive is always used after impersonal constructions ("It is...") and for the polite imperative ("Lei"):

"Bisogna che venda la sua macchina" <It is necessary for him to sell his car>

"Parli piano" <Speak slowly>.

The subjunctive has four tenses: present, perfect, imperfect and pluperfect.

The PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE ("congiuntivo presente") is formed as follows:

### FIRST CONJUGATION

"parlare" <to speak>

io	parl-i <I speak>
tu	parl-i <you speak>
lei, lui	parl-i <she, he speaks>
noi	parl-iamo <we speak>
voi	parl-iate <you speak>
loro	parl-ino <they speak>

### SECOND CONJUGATION

"vendere" <to sell>

	vend-a <I sell>
	vend-a <you sell>
	vend-a <she, he sells>
	vend-iamo <we sell>
	vend-iate <you sell>
	vend-ano <they sell>

### THIRD CONJUGATION

"dormire" <to sleep>

io	dorm-a <I sleep>
tu	dorm-a <you sleep>
lei, lui	dorm-a <she, he sleeps>
noi	dorm-iamo <we sleep>
voi	dorm-iate <you sleep>
loro	dorm-ano <they sleep>

### THIRD CONJUGATION LONG

"pulire" <to clean>

	pul-isca <I clean>
	pul-isca <you clean>
	pul-isca <she, he cleans>
	pul-iamo <we clean>
	pul-iate <you clean>
	pul-iscano <they clean>

The IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE ("congiuntivo imperfetto") is formed by adding personal endings to the imperfect stem. The endings are identical for all three conjugations:

### FIRST CONJUGATION

"parlare" <to speak>  
imperfect stem: parla-

io	parla-ssi <I used to speak>
tu	parla-ssi <you used to speak>
lei, lui	parla-sse <she, he used to speak>
noi	parla-ssimo <we used to speak>
voi	parla-ste <you used to speak>

### SECOND CONJUGATION

"vendere" <to sell>  
imperfect stem: vende-

	vende-ssi <I sold>
	vende-ssi <you sold>
	vende-sse <she, he sold>
	vende-ssimo <we sold>
	vende-ste <you sold>

loro                    parla-ssero <they used to speak>                    vende-ssero <they sold>

### THIRD CONJUGATION

"dormire" <to sleep>  
imperfect stem: dormi-

io	dormi-ssi	<I was sleeping>
tu	dormi-ssi	<you were sleeping>
lei, lui	dormi-sse	<she, he was sleeping>
noi	dormi-ssimo	<we were sleeping>
voi	dormi-ste	<you were sleeping>
loro	dormi-ssero	<they were sleeping>

The PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE or PAST SUBJUNCTIVE ("congiuntivo passato") consists of the present subjunctive of the auxiliary verb (note the irregular forms) and a past participle of the main verb.

io	abbia	parlato	<I have spoken, I spoke>
tu	abbia	parlato	<you have spoken, you spoke>
lei, lui	abbia	parlato	<she has spoken, she spoke>
noi	abbiamo	parlato	<we have spoken, we spoke>
voi	abbiate	parlato	<you have spoken, you spoke>
loro	abbiano	parlato	<they have spoken, they spoke>

io	sia	arrivato	<I have arrived, I arrived>
tu	sia	arrivato	<you have arrived, you arrived>
lei	sia	arrivata	<she has arrived, she arrived>
lui	sia	arrivato	<he has arrived, he arrived>
noi	siamo	arrivati	<we have arrived, we arrived>
voi	siate	arrivati	<you have arrived, you arrived>
loro	siano	arrivate	<they (f.) have arrived, they arrived>

The PLUPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE ("congiuntivo trapassato") consists of the imperfect subjunctive of the auxiliary verb and the past participle of the main verb.

io	avessi	parlato	<I had spoken>
tu	avessi	parlato	<you had spoken>
lei, lui	avesse	parlato	<she had spoken>
noi	avessimo	parlato	<we had spoken>
voi	aveste	parlato	<you had spoken>
loro	avessero	parlato	<they had spoken>

io	fossi	arrivato	<I had arrived>
tu	fossi	arrivato	<you had arrived>
lei	fosse	arrivata	<she had arrived>
lui	fosse	arrivato	<he had arrived>
noi	fossimo	arrivati	<we had arrived>
voi	foste	arrivati	<you had arrived>
loro	fossero	arrivate	<they (f.) had arrived>

## Commands (Imperative)

Strictly speaking, the imperative mood is only used for second person ("you") familiar commands. For the other persons, the subjunctive mood is used.

Familiar ("tu" and "voi") positive commands are expressed by using the present indicative form, except that the imperative singular of first conjugation -ARE verbs ends in "-a" instead of "-i":

	FIRST CONJUGATION (-ARE)	SECOND CONJUGATION (-ERE)
tu	parla <speak!>	vendi <sell!>
voi	parlate	vendete
	THIRD CONJUGATION (-ERE)	THIRD CONJUGATION LONG
tu	dormi <sleep!>	pulisci <clean!>
voi	dormite	pulite

The NEGATIVE of familiar singular commands is expressed with the infinitive form

"non parlare" <don't talk!>;

"non vendere la tua macchina" <don't sell your car>;

"non dormire" <don't sleep>.

This is also the form used in written instructions (public signs, recipes, etc.), where it has a polite, impersonal sense:

"non fumare" <no smoking>.

The polite forms of the second person ("Lei/Loro") and the first person plural ("noi") use the present subjunctive for commands:

	FIRST CONJUGATION	
Lei	parli	<you should speak>
Loro	parlino	<you all should speak>
noi	parliamo	<let's speak>
	SECOND CONJUGATION	
Lei	venda	<you should sell>
Loro	vendano	<you all should sell>
noi	vendiamo	<let's sell>
	THIRD CONJUGATION	
Lei	dorma	<you should sleep>
Loro	dormano	<you all should sleep>
noi	dormiamo	<let's sleep>

## Reflexive Verbs and Pronouns

A REFLEXIVE VERB ("verbo riflessivo") expresses an action in which the subject is also the object:

"Mi lavo" <I wash myself>.

Reflexive verbs are conjugated with reflexive pronouns which normally precede the finite verb form but are attached to infinitives, adverbial participles (usually called gerunds) and affirmative commands:

"Mi lavo" <I wash myself>; "lavarsi" <to wash oneself>; "lavandoci" <washing ourselves>; "Lavati" <Wash yourself!>.

Reflexive verbs can also express RECIPROCAL actions:

"Si parlano" <They speak to each other>.

REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS have the same form as direct object pronouns except in the third person, where the invariable form is "si."

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person:	mi <myself>	ci <ourselves>
2nd familiar	ti <yourself>	vi <yourselves>
2nd polite:	si <yourself>	si <yourselves>
Third person:	si <him/her/itself>	si <themselves>

## Passive and Impersonal Constructions

In the PASSIVE VOICE, a verb is turned around so that its object becomes the grammatical subject. When the agent (doer) of the action is specified, the passive voice is expressed by the following construction:

SUBJECT + "essere" + past participle + "da" + AGENT

Example:

"Questa lettera è stata scritta da Paolo" <This letter was written by Paolo>

Since the past participle acts as a predicate adjective (following the verb "is") in this construction, it agrees in gender and number with the subject.

If the passive subject is a thing and the doer is not mentioned, then a construction called the "SI PASSIVANTE" may be used. This passive reflexive construction is formed with the pronoun "si": "Qui si vendono molti libri" <Many books are sold here>.

"Si" is also used as an impersonal pronoun (like the English "one" or "they"> to form IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS with an indefinite subject: "Qui si mangia bene" <One eats well here>.

In compound tenses, impersonal "si" constructions must be conjugated with "essere" as the auxiliary, even when the verb would otherwise be conjugated with "avere":

"Qui si è lavorato molto" <They worked very hard here>.

See also [Passive Conjugation](#)

## Participles

The ADVERBIAL PRESENT PARTICIPLE or gerund ("gerundio") is formed by adding a suffix to the verb stem:

-ARE verbs add "-ando":	parl-ando	<speaking>
-ERE verbs add "-endo":	vend-endo	<selling>
-IRE verbs add "-endo":	dorm-endo	<sleeping>

Adverbial participles answer questions about the action expressed by the main verb: "Sbagliando si impara" <One learns by making mistakes> (answering the question, "How does one learn?"). They are used like English present participles to form progressive tenses with the verb "stare": "Sto parlando" <I am talking> (Present progressive, answering the question, "What am I engaged in doing?"); "Stava dormendo" <He was sleeping> (Past progressive, answering the question, "What was he engaged in doing?").

Because they function as adverbs, defining an action, these participles are invariable in form, and do not agree in gender or number with the subject of the verb.

The ADVERBIAL PERFECT PARTICIPLE is formed with the adverbial present participle of the auxiliary verb and the past participle of the main verb: "avendo parlato" <having spoken>; "essendo arrivato" <having arrived>.

NB: The Italian name "gerundio" has led to the use of the English word "gerund" to denote adverbial participles. This is misleading, since the English gerund is a verbal noun ("Walking is good exercise"). It is best for English--speaking students to avoid using the term "gerund" when studying the Romance languages like Spanish and Italian.

The ADJECTIVAL PRESENT PARTICIPLE or simple participle ("participio presente") is formed by adding the following suffixes to the verb stem:

-ARE verbs add "-ante":	parlante	<speaking>
-ERE verbs add "-ente":	vendente	<selling>
-IRE verbs add "-ente":	dormente	<sleeping>

The ending follows the form of unisex adjectives ending in "-e," changing to "-i" in the plural: "l'uomo dormente" <the sleeping man>; "le lezioni seguenti" <the following lessons>.

The PAST PARTICIPLE ("participio passato") is formed by adding the following suffixes to the verb stem:

-ARE verbs add "-ato":	parlato	<spoken>
-ERE verbs add "-uto":	venduto	<sold>
-IRE verbs add "-ito":	dormito	<slept>

The ending is inflected like a regular adjective:

MASCULINE SINGULAR:	parlato	venduto	dormito
FEMININE SINGULAR:	parlata	venduta	dormita
MASCULINE PLURAL:	parlati	venduti	dormiti
FEMININE PLURAL:	parlate	vendute	dormite

When used with the auxiliary verb "essere" to form compound tenses, the past participle agrees in person and number with the subject of the verb: "Giulia è arrivata" <Giulia has arrived>.

When used with the auxiliary verb "avere" to form compound tenses, the past participle has an invariable

ending, except that it can agree with a preceding direct object: "Ho comprato una macchina fotografica" <I bought a camera>; "Ecco la cartolina postale che ho comprata" <Here's the postcard I bought>.

The past participle can also be used in what is called the ABSOLUTE CONSTRUCTION, where it modifies a noun to form a phrase with no strict grammatical connection to the rest of the sentence: "Finita la lezione, sono partiti" <When the lesson was over, they left>. The noun being modified may form part of the absolute construction, as in the preceding example, or it may be the subject of the main clause: "Arrivata a Firenze, Giulia gli telefonò" <Having arrived in Florence, Giulia called him up>.

Note that the past participle agrees in both gender and number with the noun it modifies in the absolute construction.

## Infinitives

The INFINITIVE ("infinito") is the basic form of a verb given in a dictionary. There is a different infinitive ending for each of the three conjugations:

1ST CONJUGATION:        -ARE  
                          parlare <to speak>  
                          lavarsi <to wash oneself>

reflexive:

2ND CONJUGATION:       -ERE  
                          vendere <to sell>  
                          sedersi <to sit down>

reflexive:

3RD CONJUGATION:       -IRE  
                          dormire <to sleep>  
                          sentirsi <to feel>

reflexive:

Infinitives have two tenses: present and past. The present infinitive is the simple form given above. The past infinitive is a compound form consisting of the present infinitive of the auxiliary verb and the past participle of the main verb:

1ST CONJUGATION:        avere parlato            <to have spoken>  
                          essere arrivato        <to have arrived>  
                          essersi lavato         <to have washed oneself>

reflexive:

2ND CONJUGATION:       avere venduto           <to have sold>  
                          essere caduto         <to have fallen>  
                          essersi seduto         <to have sat down>

reflexive:

3RD CONJUGATION:       avere dormito           <to have slept>  
                          essere uscito         <to have gone out>  
                          essersi sentito        <to have felt>

reflexive:

Infinitives can function as VERBAL NOUNS, with or without an accompanying definite article (invariably masculine singular):

"Il ballare è molto divertente" <Dancing is very entertaining>.

The infinitive is nearly always used after the MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS "potere" <to be able to>, "dovere" <to have to> and "volere" <to want to>: "Non può parlare" <He can't speak>; "Ho dovuto portare il loro bagaglio" <I had to carry their luggage>; "Voglio mangiare" <I want to eat>.

The infinitive is used for familiar NEGATIVE COMMANDS: "Non andare" <Don't walk!>. It can also be used to give impersonal commands (the type found on public signs, etc.): "Non fumare" <No smoking>.

The infinitive is also used after verbs which are followed by the linking prepositions "a" and "di," and with

the causative of "fare" (to make something be done): "Cominciarono a cantare" <They began to sing>;  
"Speravano di essere a tempo" <They hoped to be on time>; "Fa' correggere gli errori" <See to it that the  
errors are corrected!>.

## Auxiliary Verbs

"Avere" <to have> and "essere" <to be> are used as AUXILIARY VERBS ("verbi ausiliari") to form the compound tenses. Generally speaking, "avere" is used with TRANSITIVE verbs (verbs which take an object) while "essere" is used with REFLEXIVE and INTRANSITIVE verbs (verbs of motion, position, physical or mental condition, etc.): "Abbiamo venduto la casa" <We have sold the house>; "Si è frenata" <She restrained herself>; "Voi siete arrivati a tempo" <You arrived on time>.

"Stare" <to stay, to be> is used as an auxiliary verb with adverbial participles (so-called gerunds) to form PROGRESSIVE TENSES. The present progressive uses the present tense of "stare": "Sto parlando" <I am speaking>. The past progressive uses the imperfect tense of "stare": "Stava leggendo" <He was reading>. "Andare" is used in a similar fashion as an auxiliary verb: "Andava cantando" <He went around singing>.

## **"Lei" and "Tu"**

"Tu" (plural "voi") is the familiar form of address; to use it is to "dare del tu." This form of address is used with family members, close friends, children and pet animals: "Tu vai a teatro?" <Are you going to the theater?>.

The polite form "Lei" (plural "Loro") is more commonly used in conversation. "Lei" and "Loro" have to be capitalized within a sentence. To use it is to "dare del Lei": "Vorrebbe Lei venire con me?" <Would you like to come with me?>. In current usage, "voi" is replacing "Loro" in most regions of Italy. It is not considered impolite to use "voi" in polite situations.

The polite form of address uses third person verb forms, even though the voice is actually second person (direct address). This gives a sense of formality and respectful distance to the conversation: "Dove abita lei?" <Where does she live?>; "Dove abita Lei?" <Where do you live?>.

## **"Ne", "Ci" and "Vi"**

When used as a PRONOMINAL PARTICLE, "ne" stands for something mentioned earlier, and means "of it," "about them," etc.: "Non ne ho bisogno" <I have no need of it>.

When used as an ADVERBIAL PARTICLE, "ne" means "from there," "from here": "Ne siamo appena tornati" <We've just come back from there>.

"Ci" and "vi" are object pronouns, but they are also used as pronominal particles representing a previously mentioned noun or verb with the understood preposition "a." When used that way, "ci" and "vi" mean "to it/them," "in it/them," "about it/them," etc.: "Ci penso" <I'm thinking about it>.

When used as adverbial particles, they mean "there" or "to there": "Ci vado" <I'm going there>.

"Ci" and "vi" change to "ce" and "ve" in front of "lo," "la," "li," "le" and "ne."

## Sentences

Sentences are made up of one or more CLAUSES. A clause consists of a SUBJECT (a noun or pronoun) and a PREDICATE (what is said about the noun or pronoun). The predicate always contains a verb. In the simple sentence "**Il re ama la regina**" <The king loves the queen> **re** <king> is the subject and **ama** <loves> is the predicate.

When an adjective or noun is used along with the verb **essere** <to be> in order to tell us what is being asserted about someone or something, the adjective or noun is said to be in the predicative position. In the sentence "**Il re è un amante**" <The king is a lover>, **amante** <lover> is a predicate noun. Predicate adjectives and nouns have the same case as the noun or pronoun they inform us about.

The DIRECT OBJECT of a verb is a noun or pronoun which receives its action. In the sentence "**Il re ama la regina**" <The king loves the queen>, **regina** <queen> is the direct object of the verb.

Some verbs take an INDIRECT OBJECT. In the sentence "**Il re dà un regalo alla regina**" <The king gives a gift to the queen>, **regalo** <gift> is the direct object and **alla regina** <to the queen> is the indirect object.

# Grammar Pages

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## Number

There are two numbers in Italian: **singular** and **plural**.  
Most nouns in Italian have singular and plural forms:

"**la famiglia**", "**le famiglie**" <the family, the families>.

See: [Nouns: Gender and Agreement](#)

Pronouns also have singular and plural forms:

"il mio", "la mia" <mine> (singular, masculine, feminine)

"i miei", "le mie" <mine> (plural, masculine, feminine)

See: [Pronouns](#)

Adjectives and articles agree with nouns in number and in gender.

"il vecchio cane" <the old dog>

"la ragazza alta" <the tall girl>

See:

[Adjectives](#)

[Articles](#)

Verbs and different verbal forms (present and past participles) agree with the subject of the sentence in number:

"(Noi) portiamo le scarpe marroni" <We are wearing brown shoes>.

**Portiamo** is 1st person plural, present tense of the verb **portare**. It agrees in number with the personal pronoun **noi**.

See:

[Conjugation: Tense, Person, Number](#)

[Passive and Impersonal Constructions](#)

[Participles](#)

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## Person

Grammatical person indicates the relationship of speaker or writer to the rest of the sentence. First person refers to the speaker or to the speaker group (**io, me, a me, il mio, noi, il nostro**). Second person refers to whomever is being spoken to (**tu, te, a te, il tuo, voi, il vostro**). Third person refers to the entity being spoken about (**lui, lei, lo, la, li, gli, le, il suo, i, le, gli, i loro, le loro ai loro, alle loro, il loro, si**).

See:

[Pronouns](#)

Verbs are inflected (receive different endings) to agree with the person of the subject:

parlare (to talk)

1st person	io parlo	noi parliamo
2nd person	tu parli	voi parlate
3rd person	lui/lei parla	loro parlano

See:

[Conjugation: Tense, Person, Number](#)

[1st Conjugation](#)

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[Passive Conjugation](#)

# Gender

There are two genders in Italian: **masculine** and **feminine**.

All nouns in Italian are either masculine or feminine.

Although there are no rules by which the gender of all nouns can be determined, the gender of many nouns can be determined by their meaning or their ending. The gender of other nouns must be learned individually. The best way to memorize the gender of words is to memorize the article when learning a new word.

“la ragazza”	<the girl>
“l’uomo”	<the man>
“la mano”	<the hand>
“il giornale”	<the newspaper>

See:

[Nouns: Gender and Agreement](#)

Knowing the gender of every noun is important not only for the noun itself, but for the spelling and pronunciation of the words it influences in a sentence: adjectives, articles, participles, and pronouns. They agree in gender and in number with the noun.

See:

[Adjectives](#)

[Articles](#)

[Participles](#)

[Pronouns](#)

[Passive Conjugation](#)

## Elision

Elision in Italian occurs when the final vowel of a word is dropped before another word beginning with a vowel (this term includes words beginning with mute **h**). The fact that the vowel has been elided is indicated by an apostrophe.

Elision occurs in the following circumstances:

1. The pronouns **mi**, **ti**, **vi**, **lo**, and **la** elided before a vowel or mute **h**:

“Lui **m'**aveva visto” <He had seen me>

“**L'**ho venduta” <I sold it>

2. The definite article **la** elided before a noun or verb beginning with a vowel or mute **h**:

“**L'altra** donna” <the other woman>

3. The adverbial pronouns **cosa**, **quando**, **quanto**, **come**, **quale**, **dove** all drop their final vowels to elide with **è** and **era**.

“**Quant'è?**” <How much is it?>

“**Dov'era?**” <Where was he?>

4. The adverbial conjunctions **anche** and **neanche** drop their final "e" before the pronoun **io**:

“**Anch'io** voglio guardare la tv” <I also want to watch t.v.>

5. Italian preposition/definite article contractions can be elided if the following word begins with a vowel or silent "h". This applies to the masculine singular and plural forms and to the feminine singular form only:

Masc. sing: **all'**, **dall'**, **sull'**, **dell'**, **nell'**

Masc. plural: **agl'**, **dagl'**, **sugl'**, **degl'**, **negl'**

Fem. sing: **all'**, **dall'**, **sull'**, **dell'**, **nell'**

# 1st Conjugation

## Present Infinitive

parlare (to talk)

## Present Participle

parlando

## Past Infinitive (Perfect Infinitive)

avere parlato

## Past Participle)

parlato, -ata, -ati, -ate

## Present

io parlo  
tu parli  
lui, lei parla  
noi parliamo  
voi parlate  
loro parlano

## Present Perfect

ho parlato  
hai parlato  
ha parlato  
abbiamo parlato  
avete parlato  
hanno parlato

## Imperfect

io parlavo  
tu parlavi  
lui, lei parlava  
noi parlavamo  
voi parlavate  
loro parlavano

## Pluperfect (Past Perfect)

avevo parlato  
avevi parlato  
aveva parlato  
avevamo parlato  
avevate parlato  
avevano parlato

## Future

io parlerò  
tu parlerai  
lui, lei parlerà  
noi parleremo  
voi parlerete  
loro parleranno

## Future Perfect (Future Anterior)

avrò parlato  
avrà parlato  
avrà parlato  
avremo parlato  
avrete parlato  
avranno parlato

## Simple Past

io parlai  
tu parlasti  
lui, lei parlò  
noi parlammo  
voi parlaste  
loro parlarono

## Preterite Perfect (Past Anterior)

ebbi parlato  
avesti parlato  
ebbe parlato  
avemmo parlato  
aveste parlato  
ebbero parlato

## Present Subjunctive

io parli  
tu parli  
lui, lei parli  
noi parliamo  
voi parliate  
loro parlino

## Past Subjunctive

abbia parlato  
abbia parlato  
abbia parlato  
abbiamo parlato  
abbiate parlato  
abbiano parlato

## Imperfect Subjunctive

io parlassi  
tu parlassi  
lui, lei parlasse  
noi parlassimo

## Past Perfect Subjunctive

avessi parlato  
avessi parlato  
avesse parlato  
avessimo parlato

voi	<b>parlaste</b>	aveste	<b>parlato</b>
loro	<b>parlassero</b>	avessero	<b>parlato</b>

	<b>Present Conditional</b>	<b>Past Conditional</b>	
io	<b>parlerei</b>	avrei	<b>parlato</b>
tu	<b>parleresti</b>	avresti	<b>parlato</b>
lui, lei	<b>parlerebbe</b>	avrebbe	<b>parlato</b>
noi	<b>parleremmo</b>	avremmo	<b>parlato</b>
voi	<b>parlereste</b>	avreste	<b>parlato</b>
loro	<b>parlerebbero</b>	avrebbero	<b>parlato</b>

	<b>Present Imperative</b>
tu	<b>parla</b>
Lei	<b>parli</b>
noi	<b>parliamo</b>
voi	<b>parlate</b>
Loro	<b>parlino</b>

## 2nd Conjugation

### Present Infinitive

vendere (to sell)

### Present Participle

vendendo

### Past Infinitive (Perfect Infinitive)

avere venduto

### Past Participle

venduto, -uta, -uti, -ute

### Present

io	vendo
tu	vendi
lui, lei	vende
noi	vendiamo
voi	vendete
loro	vendono

### Present Perfect

ho	venduto
hai	venduto
ha	venduto
abbiamo	venduto
avete	venduto
hanno	venduto

### Imperfect

io	vendevo
tu	vendevi
lui, lei	vendeva
noi	vendevamo
voi	vendevate
loro	vendevano

### Pluperfect (Past Perfect)

avevo	venduto
avevi	venduto
aveva	venduto
avevamo	venduto
avevate	venduto
avevano	venduto

### Future

io	venderò
tu	venderai
lui, lei	venderà
noi	venderemo
voi	venderete
loro	venderanno

### Future Perfect (Future Anterior)

avrò	venduto
avrà	venduto
avrà	venduto
avremo	venduto
avrete	venduto
avranno	venduto

### Simple Past (Historic)

io	vendei
tu	vendesti
lui, lei	vendè
noi	vendemmo
voi	vendeste
loro	venderono

### Past Anterior

ebbi	venduto
avesti	venduto
ebbe	venduto
avemmo	venduto
aveste	venduto
ebbero	venduto

### Present Subjunctive

io	venda
tu	venda
lui, lei	venda
noi	vendiamo
voi	vendiate
loro	vendano

### Past Subjunctive

abbia	venduto
abbia	venduto
abbia	venduto
abbiamo	venduto
abbiate	venduto
abbiano	venduto

### Imperfect Subjunctive

io	vendessi
tu	vendessi
lui, lei	vendesse

### Past Perfect Subjunctive

avessi	venduto
avessi	venduto
avesse	venduto

noi	<b>vendessimo</b>	avessimo	<b>venduto</b>
voi	<b>vendeste</b>	aveste	<b>venduto</b>
loro	<b>vendessero</b>	avessero	<b>venduto</b>

	<b>Present Conditional</b>	<b>Past Conditional</b>	
io	<b>venderei</b>	avrei	<b>venduto</b>
tu	<b>venderesti</b>	avresti	<b>venduto</b>
lui, lei	<b>venderebbe</b>	avrebbe	<b>venduto</b>
noi	<b>venderemmo</b>	avremmo	<b>venduto</b>
voi	<b>vendereste</b>	avreste	<b>venduto</b>
loro	<b>venderebbero</b>	avrebbero	<b>venduto</b>

	<b>Present Imperative</b>
tu	<b>vendi</b>
Lei	<b>venda</b>
noi	<b>vendiamo</b>
voi	<b>vendete</b>
Loro	<b>vendano</b>

# 3rd Conjugation

## Present Infinitive

dormire (to sleep)

## Present Participle

dormendo

## Past Infinitive (Perfect Infinitive)

avere dormito

## Past Participle

dormito, -ita, -iti, -ite

## Present

io dormo  
tu dormi  
lui, lei dorme  
noi dormiamo  
voi dormite  
loro dormono

## Present Perfect

ho dormito  
hai dormito  
ha dormito  
abbiamo dormito  
avete dormito  
hanno dormito

## Imperfect

io dormivo  
tu dormivi  
lui, lei dormiva  
noi dormivamo  
voi dormivate  
loro dormivano

## Pluperfect (Past Perfect)

avevo dormito  
avevi dormito  
aveva dormito  
avevamo dormito  
avevate dormito  
avevano dormito

## Future

io dormirò  
tu dormirai  
lui, lei dormirà  
noi dormiremo  
voi dormirete  
loro dormiranno

## Future Perfect (Future Anterior)

avrò dormito  
avrà dormito  
avrà dormito  
avremo dormito  
avrete dormito  
avranno dormito

## Simple Past (Historic)

io dormii  
tu dormisti  
lui, lei dormì  
noi dormimmo  
voi dormiste  
loro dormirono

## Past Anterior

ebbi dormito  
avesti dormito  
ebbe dormito  
avemmo dormito  
aveste dormito  
ebbero dormito

## Present Subjunctive

io dorma  
tu dorma  
lui, lei dorma  
noi dormiamo  
voi dormiate  
loro dormano

## Past Subjunctive

abbia dormito  
abbia dormito  
abbia dormito  
abbiamo dormito  
abbiate dormito  
abbiano dormito

## Imperfect Subjunctive

io dormissi  
tu dormissi  
lui, lei dormisse

## Past Perfect Subjunctive

avessi dormito  
avessi dormito  
avesse dormito

noi	<b>dormissimo</b>	avessimo	<b>dormito</b>
voi	<b>dormiste</b>	aveste	<b>dormito</b>
loro	<b>dormissero</b>	avessero	<b>dormito</b>

	<b>Present Conditional</b>		<b>Past Conditional</b>
io	<b>dormirei</b>	avrei	<b>dormito</b>
tu	<b>dormiresti</b>	avresti	<b>dormito</b>
lui, lei	<b>dormirebbe</b>	avrebbe	<b>dormito</b>
noi	<b>dormiremmo</b>	avremmo	<b>dormito</b>
voi	<b>dormireste</b>	avreste	<b>dormito</b>
loro	<b>dormirebbero</b>	avrebbero	<b>dormito</b>

	<b>Present Imperative</b>
tu	<b>dormi</b>
Lei	<b>dorma</b>
noi	<b>dormiamo</b>
voi	<b>dormite</b>
Loro	<b>dormano</b>

## Passive Conjugation

lodare (to praise)

**Present Infinitive**  
essere lodato (to be praised)  
**Present Participle**  
essendo lodato/-a/-il-e

**Past Infinitive (Perfect Infinitive)**  
essere stato/-a/-il-e lodato/-a/-il-e  
**Past Participle**  
essendo stato/-a/-il-e lodato/-a/-il-e

	<b>Present</b>		<b>Present Perfect</b>		
io	sono	lodato/a	sono	stato/a	lodato/a
tu	sei	lodato/a	sei	stato/a	lodato/a
lui, lei	è	lodato/a	è	stato/a	lodato/a
noi	siamo	lodati/e	siamo	stati/e	lodati/e
voi	siete	lodati/e	siete	stati/e	lodati/e
loro	sono	lodati/e	sono	stati/e	lodati/e

	<b>Imperfect</b>		<b>Pluperfect (Past Perfect)</b>		
io	ero	lodato/a	ero	stato/a	lodato/a
tu	eri	lodato/a	eri	stato/a	lodato/a
lui, lei	era	lodato/a	era	stato/a	lodato/a
noi	eravamo	lodati/e	eravamo	stati/e	lodati/e
voi	eravate	lodati/e	eravate	stati/e	lodati/e
loro	erano	lodati/e	erano	stati/e	lodati/e

	<b>Future</b>		<b>Future Perfect (Future Anterior)</b>		
io	sarò	lodato/a	sarò	stato/a	lodato/a
tu	sarai	lodato/a	sarai	stato/a	lodato/a
lui, lei	sarà	lodato/a	sarà	stato/a	lodato/a
noi	saremo	lodati/e	saremo	stati/e	lodati/e
voi	sarete	lodati/e	sarete	stati/e	lodati/e

loro	saranno	lodat <i>i/e</i>	saranno	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
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**Simple Past (Historic)**

io	fui	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fui	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
tu	fosti	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fosti	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
lui, lei	fu	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fu	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
noi	fummo	lodat <i>i/e</i>	fummo	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
voi	foste	lodat <i>i/e</i>	foste	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
loro	furono	lodat <i>i/e</i>	furono	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>

**Past Anterior**

**Present Subjunctive**

io	fossi	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fossi	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
tu	fossi	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fossi	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
lui, lei	fosse	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fosse	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
noi	fossimo	lodat <i>i/e</i>	fossimo	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
voi	foste	lodat <i>i/e</i>	foste	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
loro	fossero	lodat <i>i/e</i>	fossero	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>

**Past Subjunctive**

**Imperfect Subjunctive**

io	fossi	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fossi	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
tu	fossi	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fossi	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
lui, lei	fosse	lodat <i>o/a</i>	fosse	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
noi	fossimo	lodat <i>i/e</i>	fossimo	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
voi	foste	lodat <i>i/e</i>	foste	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
loro	fossero	lodat <i>i/e</i>	fossero	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>

**Past Perfect Subjunctive**

**Present Conditional**

io	sarei	lodat <i>o/a</i>	sarei	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
tu	saresti	lodat <i>o/a</i>	saresti	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
lui, lei	sarebbe	lodat <i>o/a</i>	sarebbe	stat <i>o/a</i>	lodat <i>o/a</i>
noi	saremmo	lodat <i>i/e</i>	saremmo	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
voi	sareste	lodat <i>i/e</i>	sareste	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>
loro	sarebbero	lodat <i>i/e</i>	sarebbero	stat <i>i/e</i>	lodat <i>i/e</i>

**Past Conditional**

**Present Imperative**

tu	sii lodat <i>o/a</i>
noi	siamo lodat <i>i/e</i>
voi	siate lodat <i>i/e</i>

**Past Imperative**

essendo stat*o/-a/-i/-e* lodat*o/-a/-i/-e*

