Esperanto grammar

Cover of the book *Detala Gramatiko de Esperanto* ("Detail grammar of Esperanto") by Bertilo Wennergren, a member of the [Academy of Esperanto](#).

Esperanto's [grammar](#) (rules of language) is meant to be simple. The rules in Esperanto never change and can always be applied in the same way.

Articles

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Esperanto has only definite [article](#) *la* (the same thing as "the" in English) and no indefinite article (the same thing as "a" or "an" in English). They use definite article when they talk about things, about which they have already told something.

Nouns, adjectives, adverbs

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	Nominative	Accusative
Singular	-o	-on
Plural	-oj	-ojn

[Nouns](#) end with *-o*. For example, *patr**o*** means *father*. To make a noun [plural](#) add -j. For example: *patro**j*** means *father**s***.

	Nominative	Accusative
Singular	-a	-an
Plural	-aj	-ajn

[Adjectives](#) end with *-a*, [adverbs](#) end with *-e*, for example *grand**a*** means *big*, *bon**a*** means *good*, *bon**e*** means *well*.

The *-n* ending is the mark of the direct [object](#) (the [Accusative case](#)) in nouns and adjectives. For example:

- *Mi vidas vin.* - I see you.
- *Li amas ŝin.* - He loves her.
- *Ili havas belan domon.* - They have a nice house.

In adjectives and adverbs is [comparison](#) made by words *pli* (*more*) and *plej* (*most*). For example:

- *pli granda* - bigger
- *plej granda* - biggest
- *pli rapide* - faster

- *plej rapide* - fastest

Pronouns

		Singular	Plural
First person		**mi** (I)	**ni** (we)
Second person		**ci** (thou singular)	**vi** (you singular or plural)
Third person	**Masculine**	**li** (he)	
	Feminine	**ŝi** (she)	**ili** (they)
	Neuter	**ĝi** (it)	
Uncertain			**oni** ("one")
Reflexive			**si** (self)

- Personal pronouns are: *mi* - I, *ci* - thou singular, *li* - he, *ŝi* - she, *ĝi* - it, *ni* - we, *vi* - you singular or plural, *ili* - they, *oni* - one/they, *si* (self). The pronoun *oni* is used for uncertain subject (like *man* in German). The pronoun *ci* means *thou* but people do not use it much. Instead they use *vi,* almost exclusively, as the singular form of you, or the plural form - you all.
- Possessive pronouns are made by adding of ending *-a* to a personal pronoun: *mia* - my, *cia* - your singular, *lia* - his, *ŝia* - her, *ĝia* - its, *nia* - our, *via* - your plural, *ilia* - their. People use possessive pronouns like adjectives.
- Accusative case (the *-n* ending) is used in pronouns as well: *min* - me, *cin* - thee, *lin* - him, *ŝin* - her, *ĝin* - it, *nin* - us, *vin* - you or you all, *ilin* - them. As noted with ci, cin is very seldom used in modern spoken Esperanto.

So, to say how old somebody is in Esperanto, just say:

- *Lia aĝo estas dudek = He is twenty (20) years old*. (word for word: *His age is twenty (20).*)

Verbs

Esperanto has got regular endings for these grammatical tenses:
-is – past tense
-as – present tense
-os – future tense

	Indicative mood	Active participle	Passive participle	Infinitive	Jussive mood	Conditional mood
Past tense	-is	-int-	-it-	-i	-u	-us
	-as	-ant-	-at-			

Present tense			
Future tense	-os	-ont-	-ot-

[Verbs](#) end with *-as* when they are in [present tense](#). English uses *I am*, *you are*, *he is*. But in Esperanto, there is just one word for *am*, *are*, *is - estas*. Similarly, *kuras* can mean *run* or *runs*. [Infinitives](#) end with *-i*. For example, *esti* means *to be*, *povi* means *to can*. It is easy to make [past tense](#) - always add *-is* ending. To make [future tense](#), add *-os*. For example:

- *kuri - to run*
- *mi kuras - I run*
- *vi kuras - you run*
- *li kuris - he ran*
- *ĝi kuros - it will run*

Many words can be made opposite by adding *mal* at the beginning.

- *bona = good*. *malbona = bad*
- *bone = well*, *malbone = poorly*
- *granda = big*, *malgranda = small*
- *peza = heavy*, *malpeza = light*

Examples of sentences which show the rules:

- *Mi povas kuri rapide. = I can run fast.*
- *Vi ne povas kuri rapide. = You cannot run fast.*
- *Mi estas knabo. = I am a boy.*
- *Mi estas malbona Esperantisto. = I am a bad Esperantist.*

Yes/No questions

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To make a yes-or-no question, add *Ĉu* at the beginning. For example:

- *Ĉu vi parolas Esperanton? = Do you speak Esperanto?*
- *Jes, mi parolas Esperanton tre bone. = Yes, I speak Esperanto very well.*
- *Ne, mi estas komencanto. = No, I am a beginner.*

Unlike in English, they can answer to a yes/no question only *jes* (yes) or *ne* (no).

Numbers

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The numbers are:

0   *nul*

1	*unu*
2	*du*
3	*tri*
4	*kvar*
5	*kvin*
6	*ses*
7	*sep*
8	*ok*
9	*naŭ*
10	*dek*
100	*cent*
1000	*mil*

Numbers like twenty-one (21) are made by their compounding by [order of magnitude](). For example: *dek tri* means thirteen (13), *dudek tri* means twenty-three (23), *sescent okdek tri* means six hundred eighty-three (683), *mil naŭcent okdek tri* means (one) thousand nine hundred and eighty-three (1983).

Prefixes and suffixes

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Esperanto has over 20 special words which can change the meaning of another word. People put them before or after the root of a word.

These words combined can make very long words, such as *malmultekosta* (cheap), *vendredviandmanĝmalpermeso* (prohibition of eating a meat on Friday).

Prefixes

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[Prefixes]() are added before the root of the word.

- *bo-* – means "in-law". *Patro* means *father*, and *bopatro* means *father-in-law*.
- *dis-* – means "all or many directions". *Iri* means *to go*, and *disiri* means *to go in different directions*.[1]
- *ek-* – means "start" of something. *Kuri* means *to run*, and *ekkuri* means *to start running*.[2]
- *eks-* – makes the word "former". *Amiko* means *friend*, and *eksamiko* means *former friend*.[3]
- *fi-* – makes the word worse. *Knabo* means *boy*, and *fiknabo* means *bad boy*; *odoro* means *smell*, and *fiodoro* means *bad smell*.
- *ge-* – changes meaning of a word to "both gender". *Frato* means *brother*, and *gefratoj* means *brother(s) and sister(s)*.[4]

- *mal-* – makes the word opposite. *Bona* means *good*, and *malbona* means *bad*.[5]
- *mis-* – means "wrong". *Kompreni* means *to understand*, and *miskompreni* means *to understand wrong*.[6]
- *pra-* – means "prehistoric", "very old" or "primitive". *Homo* means *human*, and *prahomo* means *prehistoric human*.[7]
- *re-* – means *again*. *Vidi* means *to see*, and *revidi* means *to see again*.

Suffixes

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Suffixes are added after the root of the word, but before the ending.

- *-aĉ-* – makes the word uglier. *Domo* means *house*, *domaĉo* means *ugly house*.
- *-ad-* – means *continuous doing of something*. *Fari* means *to do*, and *Faradi* means *to do continuously*.[8]
- *-aĵ-* – means *a thing*. *Bela* means *beautiful*, and *belaĵo* means *a beautiful thing*; *trinki* means *to drink*, and *trinkaĵo* means *a drink* ("something for drinking").[9]
- *-an-* – means *member of something*. *Klubo* means *club*, and *klubano* means *a member of a club*.[10]
- *-ar-* – means *many things of the same kind*. *Arbo* means *tree*, and *arbaro* means *forest*.[11]
- *-ĉj-* – makes male diminutives. *Patro* means *father*, and *paĉjo* means *daddy*.[12]
- *-ebl-*– means *ability* or *possibility*. *Manĝi* means *to eat*, and *manĝebla* means *eatable*.[13]
- *-ec-* – means *quality*. *Granda* means *big*, and *grandeco* means *size*.[14]
- *-eg-* – makes the word bigger. *Domo* means *house*, and *domego* means *big house*.
- *-ej-* – means *a place*. *Lerni* means *to learn*, and *lernejo* means *school* ("place for learning").[15]
- *-em-* – means *tendency*. *Mensogi* means *to lie*, and *mensogema* means *with tendency to lie*.[16]
- *-end-* – means *something which must be done*. *Pagi* means *to pay*, and *pagenda*, means *something which must be paid*.[17]
- *-er-* – means *a bit of bigger group*. *Neĝo'* means *snow*, and *neĝero* means *snowflake*.[18]
- *-estr-* – means *a chief of*. *Urbo* means *town*, and *urbestro* means *mayor* ("chief of a town").[19]
- *-et-* – makes the word smaller. *Domo* means *house*, and *dometo* means *small house*.
- *-id-* – means *the child of*. *Ŝato* means *cat*, and *katido* means *kitten*.
- *-il-* – means *instrument*. *Ŝlosi* mens *to lock*, and *ŝlosilo* means *key* (an instrument for locking).

- *-ind-* – means *worthiness*. *Ami* means *to love*, and *aminda* means *something which is worth to be loved*.[20]
- *-in-* – changes the gender of a word into female. *Patro* means *father*, and *patrino* means *mother*.[21]
- *-ing-* – means *a holder*. *Kandelo* means *candle*, and *kandelingo* means *candlestick* ("a holder of a candle").[22]
- *-ism-* – means *an ideology or movement*. *Nacio* means *nation*, *naciismo* means *nationalism*.[23]
- *-ist-* – means *somebody who does something (perhaps as a job)*. *Baki* means *to bake* and *bakisto* means *baker*; *scienco* means *science*, and *sciencisto* means *scientist*. *Esperantisto* means *Esperanto speaker*.[24]
- *-nj-* – makes female [diminutives](#). *Patrino* means *mother*, and *panjo* means *mummy*.[25]
- *-obl-* – means *times*. *Tri* means *three*, and *trioble* means *three times*. It also makes multiples. *Kvin* means *five*, and *kvinoblo* means *multiple of five*.
- *-on-* – makes [fractions](#). *Kvar* means *four* (4), and *kvarono* means *quarter* (*one fourth of something*).
- *-uj-* – generally means *a vessel*. *Salo* means *[salt](#)*, and *salujo* means *salt shaker* ("a vessel for salt").[26]
- *-ul-* – means *person of some quality*. *Juna* means *young*, and *junulo* means *young person*.[27]
- *-um-* is suffix for cases when is not able to do a word from other existing suffixes, preffixes or roots.

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