

# Past Tense

The **passato prossimo**, the Italian equivalent of the English past perfect and simple past, is formed using an auxiliary verb (either **avere** or **essere**) and the past participle of the main verb. The auxiliary verb is conjugated in the present tense to match the subject, while the past participle remains consistent for **avere** or changes to agree with the subject for **essere**.

## 1. Auxiliary Verb:

- **Avere (to have):** Most Italian verbs use avere as their auxiliary verb.
- **Essere (to be):** Some verbs, particularly those indicating movement, change of state, or reflexive actions, use essere.

## 2. Past Participle:

- **Regular Verbs:**
  - **-are verbs:** Drop the -are and add -ato (e.g., parlare - parlato).
  - **-ere verbs:** Drop the -ere and add -uto (e.g., vendere - venduto).
  - **-ire verbs:** Drop the -ire and add -ito (e.g., dormire - dormito).
- **Irregular Verbs:**  
These have unique past participle forms that need to be memorized (e.g., fare - fatto, dire - detto).

## 3. Agreement with Essere:

- When essere is the auxiliary verb, the past participle must agree in gender and number with the subject of the verb.
  - Masculine singular: -o
  - Feminine singular: -a
  - Masculine plural: -i
  - Feminine plural: -e
- For example: Sono andato (I went, masculine), Sono andata (I went, feminine), Siamo andati (We went, masculine plural).

## Example:

- **Ho mangiato la pizza.** (I ate the pizza - avere + past participle)
- **Sono andato al cinema.** (I went to the cinema - essere + past participle, masculine singular)
- **Sono andata al cinema.** (I went to the cinema - essere + past participle, feminine singular)

In essence, the passato prossimo is formed by correctly combining the present tense conjugation of either avere or essere with the appropriate past participle of the main verb.