



my Italian Circle

learn Italian, love Italy

FREE EDITION

Basic Italian Grammar

All the basics – clearly explained



by Anna Del Franco & Diana Lavarini

Foreword

Italian is considered one of the easiest languages to learn for English speakers. We share the same writing system; both languages include plenty of words with Latin roots; the basic sentence structure is the same; Italian is spoken the way that it is written.

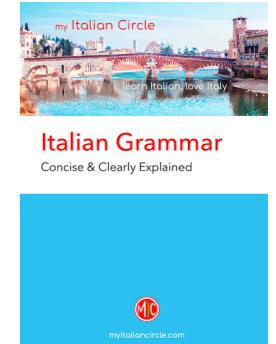
What's the catch then? While English has very little inflection, Italian is a heavily inflected language, which basically means that we change word endings to modify their meaning. Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and articles can be masculine, feminine, singular or plural, and verbs are conjugated according to mood, tense, person, and number. Italian grammar can be quite complicated!

This free handbook is an introduction to the main concepts and a quick reference guide. You will find the basic principles, simple explanations on how to use the main parts of speech, and regular verb conjugations in all the tenses needed for everyday communication, with examples from current, authentic language.

Buono studio!

Anna & Diana

The complete 147-page edition of this guide is available on [Amazon](#) worldwide as eBook and paperback. It's also our welcome gift for top-tier patrons on [Patreon](#).



My Italian Circle is a project by Anna Del Franco & Diana Lavarini. On our YouTube channel you can find several videos on the topics discussed in this handbook. Watch them to listen to detailed explanations and hundreds of examples:



[youtube.com/myitaliancircle](https://www.youtube.com/myitaliancircle)

Language and culture are closely intertwined, and this is especially true for Italy and Italian. Have a look at our Website for quick reference guides to Italian art, history, music, literature, and cinema, and for plenty of free resources to improve your Italian:

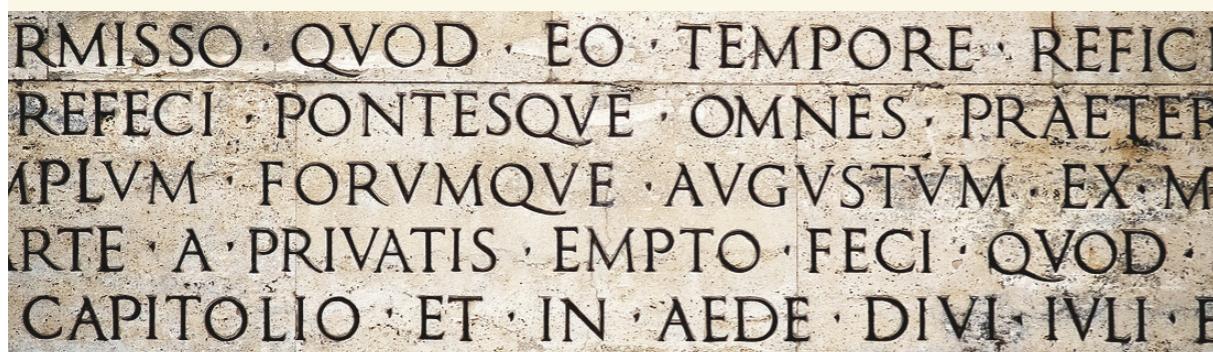


myitaliancircle.com

Inflection - Flessione

Inflection is the modification of a word according to various grammatical categories, for example number, gender, mood, and tense. In Italian the inflection of verbs is called **coniugazione** (conjugation), but nouns, adjectives, articles, and other parts of speech can be inflected, too.

Latin was highly inflected, with seven cases, five declensions, four conjugations, and three genders. Italian and other Romance languages are comparatively simpler, with only two genders (masculine and feminine) and no grammatical cases. Still, most Italian words can be inflected, usually by changing their ending, and only a minority of words are invariable.



Let's see some examples of inflection.

Nouns can be masculine or feminine, singular or plural based on their ending:

bambino (masculine singular)
bambina (feminine singular)
bambini (masculine plural)
bambine (feminine plural)

Articles and **adjectives** agree with the noun they refer to, so they also have masculine, feminine, singular and plural forms:

i bambini piccoli (masculine plural)
la bambina alta (feminine singular)

Pronouns replace nouns, so they also have gender and number, like the English she/her, they/them, etc. We introduce pronouns on page [14](#).

Verbs have various moods & tenses, persons and numbers. We introduce all seven moods and the most common tenses on page [16](#).

Basic Sentence Structure

Did you know that very different languages like English, Italian, Russian, Hebrew, Thai, and Chinese share the same basic sentence structure? They are all **SVO languages**, which means that sentences are usually made up by the sequence:

SUBJECT - VERB - OBJECT

In Italian, thanks to conjugation, the verb already contains a lot of information about the subject. Therefore the subject is often dropped, and our sentence structure can become even simpler:

VERB - OBJECT

subject: who or what is doing the action
verb: the action
object: who or what the action is being done to

Examples of basic sentences with SVO structure:

Lucia guarda la TV. - *Lucia watches TV.*

Guardare (to watch) is a transitive verb, and *TV* is a direct object.

Marco parla con Gianni. - *Marco talks with Gianni.*

Parlare (to talk) is intransitive in this sentence, and *con Gianni* is an indirect object.

Anna dà il libro a Luca. - *Anna gives Luca the book.*

Here *dare* (to give) has both a direct object (*il libro*) and an indirect object (*a Luca*).

Negative sentences have the same structure, we just add *NON* (not) before the verb:

Lucia **non** guarda la TV. - *Lucia doesn't watch TV.*

Interrogative sentences (questions) often retain the same structure, too:

Lucia guarda la TV? - *Does Lucia watch TV?*

Watch [this video](#) on the building blocks of Italian.

1.1 Nouns - Gender of nouns

AMICO E AMICA

Italian nouns can be **masculine** or **feminine**.

There is no neuter, no *it* — even ideas and inanimate objects are either masculine or feminine. Everything has a grammatical gender.

How can I figure out
the gender of a noun
in Italian?

When nouns refer to **people** or **animals**, their grammatical gender corresponds to natural gender. It is therefore quite difficult to avoid specifying someone's gender in Italian.

MASCHILE

IL CUOCO
IL BAMBINO
IL POLIZIOTTO
IL GATTO

FEMMINILE

LA CUOCA
LA BAMBINA
LA POLIZIOTTA
LA GATTA

There are some general rules that we can keep in mind to figure out the gender of a word when we don't have a dictionary at hand:

- Nouns ending in **-O** are *usually* **masculine** and form the plural with **-I**.
- Nouns ending in **-A** are *usually* **feminine** and form the plural with **-E**.
- Nouns ending in **-E** can be **masculine** or **feminine** and form the plural with **-I**.

NOMI MASCHILI

IL LETTO
IL FORNO
IL DIVANO
IL GIORNALE

NOMI FEMMINILI

LA FINESTRA
LA LAMPADA
LA TENDA
LA CHIAVE

I LETTI
I FORNI
I DIVANI
I GIORNALI

LE FINESTRE
LE LAMPADE
LE TENDE
LE CHIAVI

1.1 Nouns - Gender of nouns

ATTORE E ATTRICE

Some nouns are both masculine and feminine. The gender can be deduced from the context and/or the article (if any).

MASCHILE

IL COLLEGA
IL CANTANTE
IL PIANISTA
L'ARTISTA

FEMMINILE

LA COLLEGA
LA CANTANTE
LA PIANISTA
L'ARTISTA



Some masculine nouns ending in **-E** form the feminine with **-ESSA**.

Masculine nouns ending in **-TORE** form the feminine with **-TRICE**.

MASCHILE

LO STUDENTE
IL POETA
IL DOTTORE
IL CONTE
L'ATTORE
IL TRADUTTORE
LO SCRITTORE
IL PITTORE
IL DIRETTORE

FEMMINILE

LA STUDENTESSA
LA POETESSA
LA DOTTORESSA
LA CONTESSA
L'ATTRICE
LA TRADUTTRICE
LA SCRITTRICE
LA PITTRICE
LA DIRETTRICE

Today there is a heated debate on the feminine form of nouns that refer to jobs, titles, and positions in what were once male-dominated fields.

Avvocata is becoming increasingly common instead of *avvocatessa*; **ministra** and **sindaca** are often used for a female minister and a female mayor.

The choice is often based on personal preference.

1.2 Nouns - Plural of nouns

"CASE, LIBRI, AUTO, VIAGGI, FOGLI DI GIORNALE..."

Tiziano Ferro, *Non me lo so spiegare*

Masculine nouns ending in **-O** or **-A** and **all nouns** ending in **-E** form the plural with **-I**:

IL LIBRO	→	I LIBRI
IL POETA	→	I POETI
LA NOTTE	→	LE NOTTI

Feminine nouns ending in **-A** form the plural with **-E**:

LA CASA	→	LE CASE
---------	---	---------

I negozi di questa città sono fantastici!
The shops of this city are great!

Le città italiane sono spesso affascinanti.
Italian cities are often fascinating.

Nouns ending in **-IO** drop the **O** in the plural:

IL NEGOZIO I NEGOZI

But if the **I** in **-IO** is stressed, then an **-I** is added in the plural form:

LO ZIO GLI ZII

Remember! Foreign nouns, nouns stressed on the final vowel, and abbreviations **do not change** in the plural — they are invariable:

IL BAR	I BAR
LO SPORT	GLI SPORT
IL REFERENDUM	I REFERENDUM
LA CITTÀ	LE CITTÀ
LA VIRTÙ	LE VIRTÙ
LA FOTO	LE FOTO
LA BICI	LE BICI

2.1 Articles - Indefinite articles

The indefinite articles *a*, *an* have four forms in Italian.

UNO, UN

The **masculine** forms are **UN** and **UNO**.

UNO is used before singular nouns beginning with z, y, s + consonant, gn, or ps:

UNO SPETTACOLO

UNO YOGURT

UNO ZAINO

UN is used before singular nouns beginning with other consonants or with a vowel:

UN AMICO

UN ANIMALE

UN GELATO

UN TAVOLO

UN ORSO



UNA, UN'

The **feminine** forms are:

UNA, used before singular nouns beginning with a consonant:

UNA STANZA

UNA MELA

UN', used before singular nouns beginning with a vowel:

UN'AMICA

UN'AUTOMOBILE

A common mistake is using **UN'** before masculine nouns:

UN'AMICO  **WRONG**

UN AMICO  **CORRECT**

2.2 Articles - Definite articles

L'articolo determinativo

The definite article corresponds to the English *the*, and it's used to refer to something definite that the speaker knows. It agrees in gender and number with the noun.

- Before **signore, signora** and **titles**:

La signora Verdi, il dottor Bianchi

- With **languages**:

Studio l'italiano.

(but "*Studio italiano*" is also correct)

- With names of **countries** (except when introduced by the preposition IN):

La Francia è un bellissimo paese.

Vado spesso in Italia. (*no article here!*)

- With the **times & dates**:

Sono le undici. È il 15 giugno.

- When expressing **possession**:

La tua casa è molto grande.

- With **abstract nouns or general statements**:

La vita è bella.

I gatti sono adorabili.

I sogni sono desideri.

MASCULINE	SINGULAR	PLURAL
begins with a consonant*	IL	I
begins with a vowel	L'	GLI
* begins with S+consonant, GN, PN, PS, X, Y, Z	LO	GLI

FEMININE	SINGULAR	PLURAL
begins with a consonant	LA	LE
begins with a vowel	L'	LE

3.1 Adjectives

Gli aggettivi

Adjectives are words that provide additional information about other parts of the speech, usually nouns. There are different types of adjectives: descriptive, demonstrative, possessive, indefinite, interrogative.

Adjectives generally follow the noun they modify, and they agree in gender and number with it:

Un teatro famoso

Una città moderna

Due gatti neri.

The vast majority of masculine adjectives ends in **-O**, whereas feminine adjectives usually end in **-A**.

Adjectives ending in **-E** have the same form for both masculine and feminine:

Una festa interessante

Un romanzo interessante

Plural of adjectives

Adjectives ending in **-O** form the plural with **-I**:

il teatro famoso → i teatri famosi

Adjectives ending in **-A** form the plural with **-E**:

la casa nuova → le case nuove

Adjectives ending in **-E** always form the plural with **-I**, regardless of gender:

le ragazze sorridenti → i ragazzi sorridenti

Their plural forms generally follow the spelling rules that apply to nouns:

una via larga → due vie larghe

Finally, there is a group of invariable adjectives, mainly colours, which never change:

un muro rosa

una bicicletta rosa

il pollo arrosto

i polli arrosto

3.2 Adjectives - Comparatives & superlatives

Comparatives

- The **comparative of majority** is formed as follows:

più + adjective + di

Il mio cane è più vecchio del tuo.

My dog is older than yours.

- The **comparative of minority** is formed as follows:

meno + adjective + di

La sua famiglia è meno ricca della tua.

His family is less rich than yours.

- The **comparative of equality** is formed as follows:

adjective + quanto/come

La sua famiglia è ricca quanto la tua.

La sua famiglia è ricca come la tua.

His/her family is as rich as yours.

TIP

La forma come è più usata.

Superlatives

- Relative** superlatives are easy to form:

definite article + più + adjective

Marco è il più intelligente del gruppo.

Marco is the most intelligent in the group.

- Absolute** superlative

The absolute superlative is used to state that someone (or something) has a quality to the highest degree, without any term of comparison.

It is formed by adding the suffix **-ISSIMO** to the adjective:

Venezia è una città bellissima.

Venice is a wonderful city.

3.3 Adjectives - Possessive adjectives

Gli aggettivi possessivi

MASCULINE SINGULAR	FEMININE SINGULAR
IL MIO	LA MIA
IL TUO	LA TUA
IL SUO	LA SUA
IL NOSTRO	LA NOSTRA
IL VOSTRO	LA VOSTRA
IL LORO	LE LORO

MASCULINE PLURAL	FEMININE PLURAL
I MIEI	LE MIE
I TUOI	LE TUE
I SUOI	LE SUE
I NOSTRI	LE NOSTRE
I VOSTRI	LE VOSTRE
I LORO	LE LORO

- The definite article is placed before the possessive adjective:
il mio cane - *my dog*
le tue sorelle - *your sisters*
- Possessive adjectives **agree with the noun they refer to**, NOT with the owner:
Il **libro** di Sofia → Il **suo** libro
La **casa** di Marco → La **sua** casa

- Suo/a** is the courtesy form:

Scusi, questa è la **Sua** borsa?

Ecco il **Suo** caffè.

The article is usually omitted before singular **kinship nouns**: *mio fratello, mia madre, tuo padre, sua zia, suo nonno, nostro zio, vostra nonna*. However, we can say *la mia mamma, il tuo papà, il suo babbo*.

We use the article if the kinship noun is modified or followed by an adjective: *il mio fratellino, il tuo nonno materno*, and with plural kinship nouns and the possessive adjective *loro*: *i tuoi zii, i nostri genitori, il loro nonno*.

4 Adverbs

Adverbs add to the meaning of verbs, adjectives or other adverbs. There are several types of adverbs:

- **Adverbs of manner:**

lentamente, allegramente, bene, male, forte, piano.

- **Adverbs of time:**

ora, adesso, ancora, ieri, oggi, domani, prima, poi, presto, subito, tardi, sempre, mai.

- **Adverbs of quantity:**

molto, poco, meno, troppo, più, tanto, assai, niente, nulla.

- **Adverbs of place:**

qui, qua, sopra, sotto, vicino, lontano, prima, dopo, davanti, dietro.

Together with conjunctions and prepositions, **adverbs are one of the few invariable parts of speech in Italian.**

We can however form superlatives: *tantissimo, moltissimo, lontanissimo, spessissimo, tardissimo...*

Additionally, some adverbs can be modified by suffixes: *benone, benino, pianino, pochino, malaccio...*

- Adverbs of manner are formed by adding the suffix **-MENTE** to the feminine form of the adjective:

libero → libera → liberamente

caldo → calda → caldamente

giusto → giusta → giustamente

duro → dura → duramente

- A few end in **-ONI**:

cavalcioni (*piggyback*), carponi (*on all fours*), a tentoni (*groping around*)

- Adjectives ending in **-LE/-LO, -RE/-RO** drop the final **-E** before **-MENTE**:

uguale → ugualmente

nobile → nobilmente

regolare → regolarmente

benevolo → benevolmente

leggero → leggermente

5.1 Pronouns - Subject pronouns

I pronomi soggetto

SINGULAR	PLURAL
IO	NOI
TU	VOI
LUI, LEI	LORO

Subject pronouns are used to replace the subject of a verb:

Lei suona il piano
(She plays the piano)
Lei is the pronoun.

The subject pronouns **egli** (he), **ella** (she), **esso/a** (animal/inanimate object), and **essi/e** (they) are commonly replaced by the pronouns listed above. This usage is already found in Alessandro Manzoni (early 19th century).

Important!

- In Italian, subject pronouns are usually dropped to avoid repetition. Thanks to conjugation, the ending of the verb already indicates the person that performs the action.
- When subject pronouns are expressed, they are usually added for **emphasis** or **contrast**:

Lui è italiano, lei invece è francese.

Io ho capito, tu no!

Noi andiamo, voi restate lì!

- **Lei** with a capital L is the courtesy form, which corresponds to the third person singular:

Scusi, Lei è il nuovo professore?

Venga anche Lei, signor Rossi!

Lei non sa chi sono io!

5.2 Pronouns - Object pronouns

Direct object pronouns

Direct object pronouns replace the object, and answer the questions *What?* or *Whom?* They can be stressed or unstressed.

Unstressed pronouns are placed **before** the verb:

Mi porti a casa? *Will you take me home?*

SINGULAR	PLURAL
MI	CI
TI	VI
LO, LA	LI, LE

Stressed pronouns are placed **after** the verb:

Ha indicato **me**. *He pointed to me.*

SINGULAR	PLURAL
ME	NOI
TE	VOI
LUI, LEI	LORO

Indirect object pronouns

In Italian some verbs need indirect object pronouns. They answer the questions *To whom?* or *For whom?* They can be unstressed or stressed.

Unstressed pronouns go **before** the verb:

Mi hanno telefonato. *They called me.*

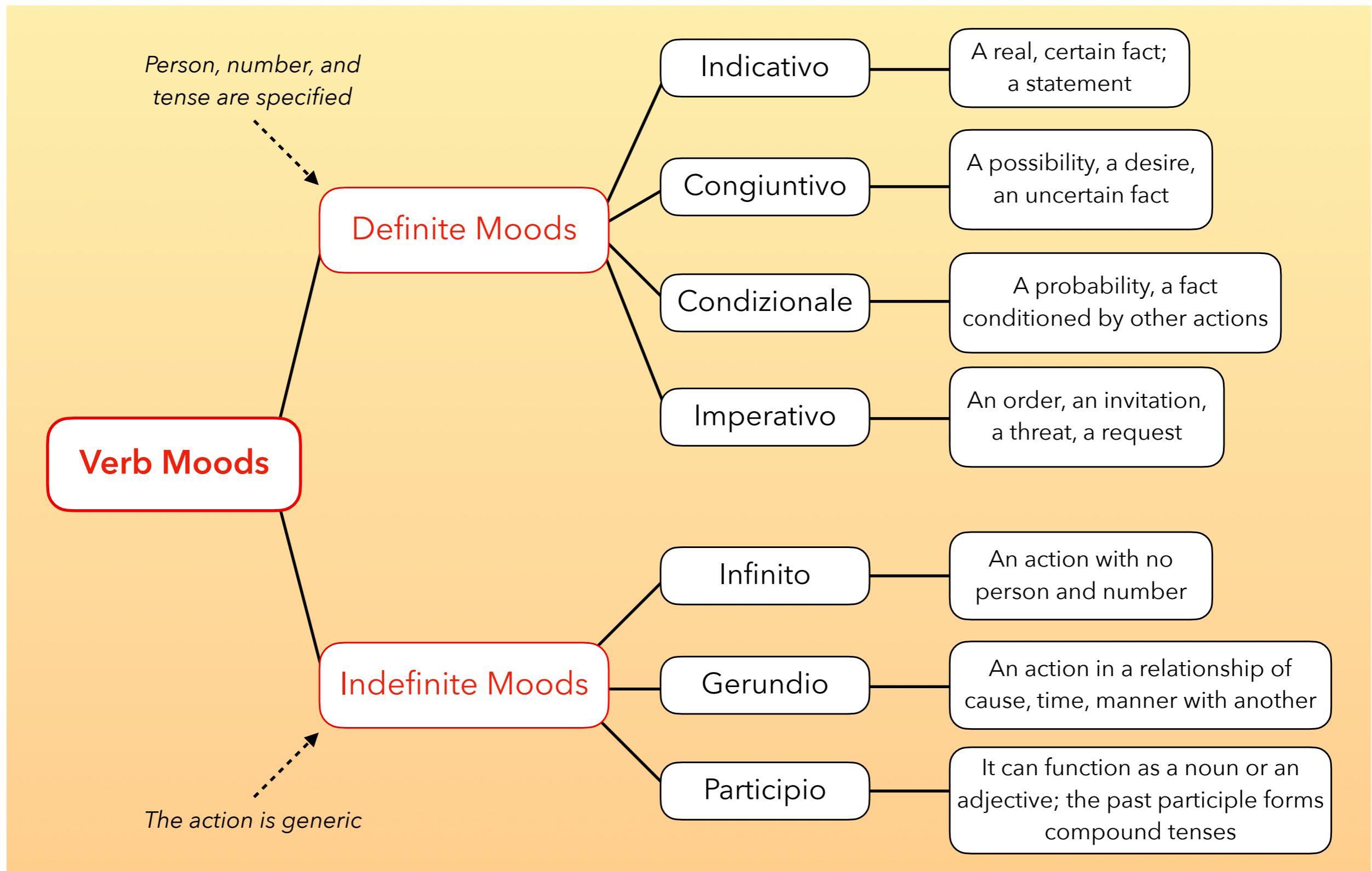
SINGULAR	PLURAL
MI	CI
TI	VI
GLI, LE	GLI

Stressed pronouns are placed **after** the verb and need a **preposition**:

Hanno telefonato **a me**. *They called me.*

SINGULAR	PLURAL
A ME	A NOI
A TE	A VOI
A LUI, A LEI	A LORO

6.1 Verbs - Moods



6.1.1 Verbs - Moods - Indicativo

Verb Moods - Modi verbali

Verb moods are classifications that specify how the action takes place. They are divided into two groups:

1. **Definite moods**, which indicate person, number, and tense:

indicativo (indicative)

congiuntivo (subjunctive)

condizionale (conditional)

imperativo (imperative)

2. **Indefinite moods**, which indicate only tense:

infinito (infinitive)

gerundio (gerund)

participio (participle)

Tenses can be simple, i.e. formed by a single word, or compound, i.e. formed by the auxiliary verb *essere* (to be) or *avere* (to have) + past participle.

Modo indicativo

The indicative mood is used to state a fact that is believed to be true by the speaker.

The indicative mood indicates the three moments when a fact can take place or a statement is made:

Anteriority — in the past:

imperfetto (imperfect)

passato remoto (past absolute or past simple)

passato prossimo (present perfect)

trapassato prossimo (past perfect)

trapassato remoto (preterite perfect tense)

Contemporaneity — right now:

presente (present)

Posteriority — in the future:

futuro semplice (future)

futuro anteriore (future perfect)

> See page [27](#) for more on verb tenses.

6.1.2 Verbs - Moods - Congiuntivo

The subjunctive mood is used to express uncertainty, doubt, desire.

Modo congiuntivo

The subjunctive usually connects two clauses, a main clause and a subordinate one: in Italian *congiungere* means to connect, to join.

It is mainly used in **subordinate clauses** that depend on verbs or expressions which:

- Indicate feelings (*avere paura, dispiacere, essere felice, essere contento*, etc.):

Sono contenta che tu **capisca**.

- Express opinions (*credere, sperare, pensare, ritenere*, etc.):

Spero che il treno **sia** in orario.

- Express doubt (*dubitare, immaginare*, etc.):

Non so dove **sia**.

- Express will (*volere, desiderare, ordinare*, etc.):

Voglio che tu **venga** qui!

Subjunctive mood, first conjugation

1

	PRESENT	PAST
CHE IO	AMI	ABBIA AMATO
CHE TU	AMI	ABBIA AMATO
CHE LUI/LEI	AMI	ABBIA AMATO
CHE NOI	AMIAMO	ABBIAMO AMATO
CHE VOI	AMIATE	ABBIATE AMATO
CHE LORO	AMINO	ABBIANO AMATO

	IMPERFECT	PAST
CHE IO	AMASSI	AVESSI AMATO
CHE TU	AMASSI	AVESSI AMATO
CHE LUI/LEI	AMASSE	AVESSE AMATO
CHE NOI	AMASSIMO	AVESSIMO AMATO
CHE VOI	AMASTE	AVESTE AMATO
CHE LORO	AMASSERO	AVESSERO AMATO

6.1.2 Verbs - Moods - Congiuntivo

Subjunctive mood, second conjugation

2

	PRESENT	PASSATO
CHE IO	CREDA	ABBIA CREDITO
CHE TU	CREDA	ABBIA CREDITO
CHE LUI/LEI	CREDA	ABBIA CREDITO
CHE NOI	CREDIAMO	ABBIAMO CREDITO
CHE VOI	CREDIATE	ABBIATE CREDITO
CHE LORO	CREDANO	ABBIANO CREDITO

Subjunctive mood, third conjugation

3

	PRESENT	PASSATO
CHE IO	SENTA	ABBIA SENTITO
CHE TU	SENTA	ABBIA SENTITO
CHE LUI/LEI	SENTA	ABBIA SENTITO
CHE NOI	SENTIAMO	ABBIAMO SENTITO
CHE VOI	SENTIATE	ABBIATE SENTITO
CHE LORO	SENTANO	ABBIANO SENTITO

	IMPERFETTO	TRAPASSATO
CHE IO	CREDESSI	AVESSI CREDITO
CHE TU	CREDESSI	AVESSI CREDITO
CHE LUI/LEI	CREDESSE	AVESSE CREDITO
CHE NOI	CREDESSIMO	AVESSIMO CREDITO
CHE VOI	CREDESTE	AVESTE CREDITO
CHE LORO	CREDESSERO	AVESSERO CREDITO

	IMPERFETTO	TRAPASSATO
CHE IO	SENTISSI	AVESSI SENTITO
CHE TU	SENTISSI	AVESSI SENTITO
CHE LUI/LEI	SENTISSE	AVESSE SENTITO
CHE NOI	SENTISSIMO	AVESSIMO SENTITO
CHE VOI	SENTISTE	AVESTE SENTITO
CHE LORO	SENTISSERO	AVESSERO SENTITO

6.1.3 Verbs - Moods - Condizionale

The conditional mood is used to talk about things that would happen or would be true under certain conditions.

Modo condizionale

The conditional mood has two tenses:

- The **present conditional (condizionale presente o semplice)** is used to describe an event that could happen in the present on condition that another event occurs:

Se avessi tempo, **leggerei** di più.
If I had time, I would read more.

- The **past conditional (condizionale passato o composto)** is used to describe an event that would have happened in the past if another event had happened:

Se me lo avessi detto, ti **avrei** aiutato.
If you had told me, I would have helped you.

Use the conditional:

- To express a wish:

Vorrei mangiare un gelato.
I would like to eat an ice cream.

- To make a polite request:

Mi presteresti la tua macchina?
May I borrow your car?

- To give advice:

Dovresti dormire di più.
You should get more sleep.

- To make assumptions:

Il negozio **dovrebbe** essere aperto.
The shop should be open.

- To express uncertainty:

"Come andrà a finire?" "Non **saprei!**"
"How will it end?" "I don't know!"

- To express a future action in a past context:

Pensavo che **sarei tornata** prima.
I thought I would be back sooner.

6.1.3 Verbs - Moods - Condizionale

The conditional is also used in **conditional sentences** where the condition is introduced by the subjunctive:

Se fosse oro vero, lo **comprerei** subito.

If it were real gold, I would buy it immediately.

Se avessi studiato, **avresti** passato l'esame.

If you had studied, you would have passed the exam.

Conditional mood, first conjugation

1

	PRESENTE	PASSATO
IO	AMEREI	AVREI AMATO
TU	AMERESTI	AVRESTI AMATO
LUI/LEI	AMEREBBE	AVREBBE AMATO
NOI	AMEREMMO	AVREMBO AMATO
VOI	AMERESTE	AVRESTE AMATO
LORO	AMEREBBERO	AVREBBERO AMATO

Conditional mood, second conjugation

2

	PRESENTE	PASSATO
IO	CREDEREI	AVREI CREDUTO
TU	CREDERESTI	AVRESTI CREDUTO
LUI/LEI	CREDEREBBE	AVREBBE CREDUTO
NOI	CREDEREMMO	AVREMBO CREDUTO
VOI	CREDERESTE	AVRESTE CREDUTO
LORO	CREDEREBBERO	AVREBBERO CREDUTO

Conditional mood, third conjugation

3

	PRESENTE	PASSATO
IO	SENTIREI	AVREI SENTITO
TU	SENTIRESTI	AVRESTI SENTITO
LUI/LEI	SENTIREBBE	AVREBBE SENTITO
NOI	SENTIREMMO	AVREMBO SENTITO
VOI	SENTIRESTE	AVRESTE SENTITO
LORO	SENTIREBBERO	AVREBBERO SENTITO

6.1.4 Verbs - Moods - Imperativo

The imperative is used to give orders and offer advice or suggestions.

Modo imperativo

The imperative is used in the second person singular and plural (tu, voi) and in the courtesy form (Lei).

A few practical examples:

Se ti piace il riso, **prova** il risotto ai funghi!
If you like rice, try mushroom risotto!

Forza ragazzi, **parlate** in italiano!
Come on guys, speak Italian!

Paolo, non **tornare** più!
Paolo, don't come back!

Prendi quel libro dallo scaffale, per favore!
Get that book from the shelf, please!

Signora, **vada** pure avanti.
Go on, ma'am.

How to form it:

Imperative of the three regular conjugations:

person	PARLARE	CORRERE	PARTIRE
tu	Parla!	Corri!	Parti!
Lei*	Parli!	Corra!	Parta!
voi	Parlate!	Correte!	Partite!

Common verbs with irregular or shortened forms:

person	ANDARE	AVERE	DARE
tu	Va' / vai!	Abbi!	Da' / dai!
Lei*	Vada!	Abbia!	Dia!
voi	Andate!	Abbiate!	Date!

* For the courtesy form, the imperative is formed using the present subjunctive, third person singular.

6.1.5 Verbs - Moods - Infinito

The infinite expresses an action with no person and number.

Modo infinito

The infinitive has only the present and past tenses. The past infinitive is formed with the infinitive of the auxiliary and the past participle of the verb:

present: mangiare, ridere, dormire, essere, avere

past: avere mangiato, avere riso, avere dormito, essere stato, avere avuto

On signs, in advertisements, recipes and instructions for use, the infinitive is commonly used instead of the imperative:

Vietato fumare. *No smoking.*

Aggiungere farina e zucchero. *Add flour and sugar.*

Stringere le viti. *Tighten the screws.*



**VIETATO
ENTRARE**

The infinitive is used in both main and dependent clauses. Generally, the **present infinitive** indicates that the action of the dependent clause happens **at the same time or after** the action of the main clause:

Credo (now) di **essere onesto** (now)

The **past infinitive** indicates something that happened **before** the action of the main clause:

Credo (now) di **essere stato** onesto (*in the past*)

Frequently used structures:

In Italian **prepositions** are usually followed by the infinitive, including when they are followed by the -ing form in English:

Ho smesso **di** correre. *I stopped running.*

Stavo **per** ridere. *I was about to laugh.*

Mi ha insegnato **a** cantare. *He taught me to sing.*

Comincia **a** piovere. *It's starting to rain.*

6.1.6 Verbs - Moods - Gerundio

parlare → **parlando**
credere → **credendo**
seguire → **seguedo**

Modo gerundio

The gerund is formed with the suffixes **-ando** (first conjugation) and **-endo** (second and third).

It has two tenses, present (**parlando**) for contemporaneity, and past (**avendo parlato**), which expresses something that happened before the action of the main verb.

- The gerund can indicate the reason for something:

Non **avendo avuto** tempo, ho mangiato un panino. *Since I didn't have time, I ate a sandwich.*

- It can indicate when something happens:

Parlano sempre al telefono **guidando**. *They always talk on the phone while driving.*

- It can replace the 'if clause' in conditional sentences when the subject is the same:
Studiando molto passeresti l'esame.
By studying a lot you would pass the exam.
- It is used with the presente indicativo of *stare* to form the present continuous:
Sto facendo un esempio. *I am giving an example.*
Stiamo arrivando. *We are coming.*
- It is used with the imperfetto indicativo of *stare* to form the past continuous:
Stavamo scherzando. *We were kidding.*

Pronouns are usually attached to the end of the present gerund:

Chiamandolo **lo** sveglieresti.

By calling him you would wake him up.

or to the auxiliary of the past gerund:

Avendole **lette**, bruciò le lettere.

Having read them, he burnt the letters.

6.1.7 Verbs - Moods - Participio

Modo participio

parlare → **parlante** → parlato

credere → **credente** → creduto

seguire → **seguinte** → seguito

The participle has two tenses: present and past.

The present participle

The **present participle** is used mainly as an adjective or a noun.

Un dipinto **affascinante**. *A fascinating painting.*

Un artista **interessante**. *An interesting artist.*

Una mostra **deludente**. *A disappointing exhibition.*

Here, the present participles *affascinante*, *interessante*, *deludente* are all used as adjectives.

A few examples of present participles functioning as nouns:

Quella **cantante** ha una voce angelica.

That singer has an angelic voice.

L'**insegnante** ha molta esperienza.

The teacher has a lot of experience.

Gli **studenti** di disegno hanno ottenuto buoni risultati. *The drawing students have achieved good results.*

Cantante, insegnante, studenti are all present participles used as nouns.

The present participle is formed by the root of the verb and the ending **-ante** or **-ente**. Some verbs belonging to the third conjugation use the suffix **-iente**.

CANTARE → CANT → **CANTANTE**

SORRIDERE → SORRID → **SORRIDENTE**

DORMIRE → DORM → **DORMIENTE**

6.1.7 Verbs - Moods - Participio

The **past participle** can be used as adjective or noun; in its verbal function it is used to form compound tenses, to form the passive voice and in dependent clauses.

È **vestito** di bianco dalla testa ai piedi.

He is dressed in white from head to toe.

Il pacco **arrivato** ieri è mio.

The parcel that arrived yesterday is mine.

In the examples above, the past participle is used as an adjective.

Preparati i colori, l'artista fissò la tela bianca.

Having prepared the colours, the artist stared at the white canvas.

The past participle is used here in a dependent clause, showing a sequence of actions.

Preoccupato dai rumori che venivano dalla strada, il pittore andò verso la finestra.

Worried by the noises coming from the street, the painter went towards the window.

The past participle *preoccupato* in this sentence provides the reason for an action.

The past participle

The past participle is formed by the root of the verb and the ending **-ato**, **-uto** or **-ito**.

CANTARE → CANT → CANTATO

SEDERE → SED → SEDUTO

DORMIRE → DORMI → DORMITO

Watch out: a good number of past participles are irregular.

> See page [30](#) for a list.

The **present participle** is always contemporaneous with the action expressed by the main verb:

Voglio un piano **rispondente** agli obiettivi comuni.

I want a plan that meets common objectives.

The **past participle** denotes an action completed before the action expressed by the main verb:

Laura, **svegliata** dal rumore, accese la luce.

Laura, awakened by the noise, switched on the light.

6.2.1 Verbs - Tenses - Presente

Presente

The presente indicativo is used in everyday Italian to describe actions or states that happen regularly or are happening at the moment of speaking.

 It is also commonly used to talk about future actions; see page [32](#).

Italian verbs are grouped into three conjugations according to their infinitive ending:

The **first** conjugation ends in **-are**
PARLARE, AMARE, CANTARE

The **second** conjugation ends in **-ere**
CORRERE, CREDERE, PRENDERE

The **third** conjugation ends in **-ire**
DORMIRE, PARTIRE, FINIRE

To conjugate a verb, drop the infinitive ending and add the appropriate ending according to mood, tense, person, and number.

First conjugation - CANTARE (to sing)

IO	CANTO
TU	CANTI
LUI/LEI	CANTA
NOI	CANTIAMO
VOI	CANTATE
LORO	CANTANO

Second conjugation - PRENDERE (to take)

IO	PRENDO
TU	PRENDI
LUI/LEI	PRENDE
NOI	PRENDIAMO
VOI	PRENDETE
LORO	PRENDONO

6.2.1 Verbs - Tenses - Presente

The **third conjugation** is divided into two groups; each group has a different set of endings, so you need to know the group to which the verb belongs.

The vast majority of verbs of the third conjugation, about 500, belong to **Group 2**. These verbs insert the interfix **-ISC** before all endings, except in the persons NOI and VOI. See the conjugation of *finire* on the right.

Third conjugation, Group 2 - FINIRE (to finish)

IO	FINISCO
TU	FINISCI
LUI/LEI	FINISCE
NOI	FINIAMO
VOI	FINITE
LORO	FINISCONO

Third conjugation, Group 1 - PARTIRE (to leave)

IO	PARTO
TU	PARTI
LUI/LEI	PARTE
NOI	PARTIAMO
VOI	PARTITE
LORO	PARTONO

Notice how the endings repeat themselves in the three conjugations. The ending is always **-O** for the first person singular, **-I** for the second person singular, and **-IAMO** for the first person plural.

Check the verb that you need to conjugate in the dictionary to see if it belongs to the first, second, or third conjugation. Any irregular form will be listed in the dictionary.

6.2.2 Verbs - Tenses - Imperfetto

Imperfetto

The **imperfetto** (imperfect tense) is, along with the passato prossimo, one of the most commonly used verb tenses in Italian, so it is important to understand how it works. Actually, English speakers often tend to overuse it. It is used:

- To say that something continued over a period of time in the past. It can correspond to the English past continuous:

Nel 1593 Caravaggio viveva a Roma.

In 1593 Caravaggio was living in Rome.

- To talk about repeated actions or states in the past, similar to the English form to be used to:

Da ragazzo, andavo a ballare tutte le sere.

As a teenager, I would go dance every night.

- To express an intention, a wish:

Una volta volevo fare l'astronauta.

I used to want to be an astronaut.

1st conjugation

PARLARE

IO	SENTIVO
TU	SENTIVI
LUI/LEI	SENTIVA
NOI	SENTIVAMO
VOI	SENTIVATE
LORO	SENTIVANO

2nd conjugation

CREDERE

IO	PARLAVO
TU	PARLAVI
LUI/LEI	PARLAVA
NOI	PARLAVAMO
VOI	PARLAVATE
LORO	PARLAVANO

3rd conjugation

SENTIRE

IO	CREDUTO
TU	CREDUTI
LUI/LEI	CREDUTA
NOI	CREDUTAMO
VOI	CREDUTATE
LORO	CREDUTANO

6.2.3 Verbs - Tenses - Passato prossimo

Passato prossimo

The **passato prossimo** (perfect tense) is the past tense most commonly used in everyday spoken Italian. It is formed using the present tense of **avere or essere** (auxiliary verbs) **plus the past participle of the main verb**: **io ho lavorato** molto.

- The passato prossimo is used to describe what you have done at some time in the past, what you have done so far, and, unlike in English, it is also used to say what happened at a specific time in the past. It describes a **completed** action in the past, whereas the imperfetto describes an action in progress in the past, or a habit in the past.
- It translates both the English present perfect *and* the past simple. Especially in northern Italy, it is often used to replace the passato remoto and to describe when exactly something happened:

Ho visitato i Musei Vaticani due anni fa.
I visited the Vatican Museums two years ago.

Common irregular past participles

accendere	acceso	<i>switched on</i>
aprire	aperto	<i>opened</i>
bere	bevuto	<i>drunk</i>
chiedere	chiesto	<i>asked</i>
correre	corso	<i>run</i>
dire	detto	<i>said/told</i>
dividere	diviso	<i>divided</i>
essere	stato	<i>been</i>
fare	fatto	<i>done</i>
leggere	letto	<i>read</i>
morire	morto	<i>dead</i>
nascere	nato	<i>born</i>
perdere	perso	<i>lost</i>
piangere	pianto	<i>cried</i>
prendere	preso	<i>taken</i>
rompere	rotto	<i>broken</i>
scegliere	scelto	<i>chosen</i>
scrivere	scritto	<i>written</i>
vedere	visto	<i>seen</i>

6.2.3 Verbs - Tenses - Passato prossimo

Avere o essere?

Several of the most common verbs form the passato prossimo with the auxiliary **ESSERE**:

- Stative verbs or verbs indicating a change:
essere (to be), *nascere* (to be born), *stare* (to stay), *morire* (to die):

Sono nato il 3 dicembre.

I was born on 3 December.

È stata molto male.

She has been very sick.

- Reflexive verbs:

Mi **solo** fatto male.

I hurt myself.

Si **solo** lasciati.

They split up.

Ti **sei** addormentato?

Have you fallen asleep?

- Many verbs of movement, such as *andare* (to go), *arrivare* (to arrive), *entrare* (to enter), *cadere* (to fall), *tornare* (to return), *uscire* (to go out), *venire* (to come), *partire* (to leave). The list is by no means exhaustive.

- Verbs that describe the weather can take both *essere* and *avere*:

Ha nevicato tutta notte OR

È nevicato tutta notte.

It snowed all night.

With the verbs *cominciare*, *iniziare* and *finire*, use:

- **avere** if the subject is a person or animal:
Il gatto **ha** finito il latte. *The cat finished the milk.*
- **essere** if the subject is inanimate:
Il latte **è** finito. *The milk is finished.*

! ATTENZIONE

Camminare, *passeggiare*,
and *viaggiare* use avere:

Ho camminato molto.

I walked a lot.

6.2.4 Verbs - Tenses - Futuro semplice

Futuro semplice

The **futuro semplice** indicates an action that will take place in the **future**.

Tra due mesi **andrò** a Parigi.

In two months I'm going to Paris.

The futuro semplice is also used:

- To express a **doubt**:

Chi **sarà** quella ragazza? Forse la sorella di Paolo? *Who can that girl be? Maybe Paolo's sister?*

- To express an **approximation**:

Questa valigia **peserà** circa 8 chili.

This suitcase weighs about 8 kilos.

- In the **first conditional** (periodo ipotetico di primo tipo):

Se non studi, non **passerai** l'esame!

If you don't study, you won't pass the exam!

How to form the futuro semplice:

	1st conjugation	2nd conjugation
IO	PARLERÒ	CREDERÒ
TU	PARLERAI	CREDERAI
LUI/LEI	PARLERÀ	CREDERÀ
NOI	PARLEREMO	CREDEREMO
VOI	PARLERETE	CREDERETE
LORO	PARLERANNO	CREDERANNO

The first and second conjugation have the same endings.

	3rd conjugation
IO	SENTIRÒ
TU	SENTIRAI
LUI/LEI	SENTIRÀ
NOI	SENTIREMO
VOI	SENTIRETE
LORO	SENTIRANNO

In **informal spoken Italian**, the present indicative often replaces the future:

Il mese prossimo
vado al mare.

*I'll go to the sea
next month.*

Table of Contents

Foreword	2	6. Verbs	
Introduction - Basic Concepts	3	6.1 Verbs - Moods	16
1. Nouns		6.1.1 Verbs - Moods - Indicativo	17
1.1 Nouns - Gender of nouns	5	6.1.2 Verbs - Moods - Congiuntivo	18
1.2 Nouns - Plural of nouns	7	6.1.3 Verbs - Moods - Condizionale	20
2. Articles		6.1.4 Verbs - Moods - Imperativo	22
2.1 Articles - Indefinite articles	8	6.1.5 Verbs - Moods - Infinito	23
2.2 Articles - Definite articles	9	6.1.6 Verbs - Moods - Gerundio	24
3. Adjectives		6.1.7 Verbs - Moods - Particípio	25
3.1 Adjectives - Plural of adjectives	10	6.2 Verbs - Tenses	
3.2 Adjectives - Comparatives & superlatives	11	6.2.1 Verbs - Tenses - Presente indicativo	27
3.3 Adjectives - Possessive adjectives	12	6.2.2 Verbs - Tenses - Imperfetto indicativo	29
4 Adverbs - Formation	13	6.2.3 Verbs - Tenses - Passato prossimo	30
5. Pronouns		6.2.5 Verbs - Tenses - Futuro semplice	32
5.1 Pronouns - Subject pronouns	14	Table of contents	33
5.2 Pronouns - Object pronouns	15	Conclusion	34

Conclusion

Italian grammar can be monumental, but don't worry if you can't memorise every little rule! As adult learners we tend to remember things more easily if we know the why's and how's, and clear-cut rules make us feel more confident, but at the end of the day we will only make them our own by actively using them. If you'd like some guidance, I offer **1-to-1 online lessons** for all levels, tailored according to specific needs and interests. Send me an [email](#) to book a free trial lesson.



References

[Treccani](#) - The most reliable and complete online dictionary and encyclopaedia. (italiano)

[Accademia della Crusca](#) - The oldest linguistic academy in the world. Questions and answers. (italiano)



Follow us on [Twitter](#) for expansions on our videos and cultural news or to chat with us in English or Italian.



If you like what we are doing, visit our [Patreon page](#) to learn how you can support this project and receive additional content.