




Modern Italian
Grammar **A PRACTICAL GUIDE**

SECOND EDITION



Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo



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Modern ITALIAN Grammar

A practical guide

Second Edition

**Anna Proudfoot
and Francesco Cardo**

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Contents

Introduction	xiii
How to use this book	xv
Glossary	xvii

Part A Structures

1	The noun group	3
1.1	What is a noun? 3	
1.2	The noun 3	
1.3	The article 10	
1.4	The adjective 14	
1.5	Agreement of noun, article and adjective 20	
2	Verbs	22
2.1	General features of verbs 22	
2.2	Verb tables 31	
2.3	Moods and tenses of verbs 39	
3	Pronouns	65
3.1	What is a pronoun? 65	
3.2	Personal pronouns 65	
3.3	Stressed personal pronouns 65	
3.4	Unstressed personal pronouns 67	
3.5	Relative pronouns 72	
3.6	Interrogative pronouns and adjectives 74	
3.7	Possessive pronouns and adjectives 75	
3.8	Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives 77	
3.9	Indefinite pronouns and adjectives 80	
4	Prepositions	84
4.1	What is a preposition? 84	
4.2	Combined prepositions and articles 85	
4.3	Use of prepositions with nouns 85	
4.4	Use of prepositions with verbs 89	
4.5	Other prepositions 91	

5	Conjunctions	93
5.1	What is a conjunction? 93	
5.2	Coordinating conjunctions 93	
5.3	Subordinating conjunctions 95	
6	Adverbs	98
6.1	What is an adverb? 98	
6.2	Types of adverbs 98	
6.3	Comparative and superlative adverbs 101	
7	Numbers	103
7.1	What is a number? 103	
7.2	Cardinal numbers 103	
7.3	Ordinal numbers 104	
7.4	Calculations 106	
7.5	Percentages 106	
7.6	Collective and approximate numbers 106	
7.7	Dates 107	
7.8	Time 108	
7.9	Weights and measures 108	
7.10	Currency 109	
7.11	Table of numbers 109	

Part B Functions

I Giving and seeking factual information

8	Identification: giving personal information	115
8.1	Introduction 115	
8.2	<i>Tu</i> or <i>Lei</i> ? 115	
8.3	Giving different kinds of personal information 116	
8.4	Emphasising the person referred to 120	
8.5	Eliciting personal information 120	
8.6	<i>Dialoghi</i> 121	
9	Specifying people or objects	123
9.1	Introduction 123	
9.2	Specifying a known or particular person or object 123	
9.3	Specifying category or type 124	
9.4	Specifying ownership 125	
10	Describing people or things	127
10.1	Introduction 127	
10.2	Physical characteristics 127	
10.3	Non-physical attributes 130	
10.4	Intensifying the meaning of the adjective 133	
10.5	Diminishing the strength of the adjective 134	
10.6	Describing a physical state using <i>stare</i> 135	
10.7	<i>Dialogo</i> 136	

11	Talking about existence, presence and availability	137
11.1	Introduction 137	
11.2	Talking about existence and/or presence 138	
11.3	Talking about occurrence 139	
11.4	Talking about presence, attendance and participation at an event 141	
11.5	Talking about availability 141	
11.6	Expressing 'some, any' 142	
11.7	Specifying the quantity available 144	
11.8	Expressing 'something, anything', 'someone, anyone' 145	
11.9	Specifying location, time or frequency 145	
11.10	Expressing non-existence or non-availability 146	
12	Talking about the present	149
12.1	Introduction 149	
12.2	Describing present situations, actions and events 149	
12.3	Expressing ongoing actions 151	
12.4	Words and phrases indicating present time 151	
12.5	<i>Dialogo</i> 152	
13	Speaking/writing about the past	154
13.1	Introduction 154	
13.2	The perfect aspect 155	
13.3	Using the <i>passato prossimo</i> 156	
13.4	Using the <i>passato remoto</i> 157	
13.5	Expressing the imperfect aspect 158	
13.6	Combinations of perfect and imperfect aspect 161	
13.7	Present tense expressing past 165	
13.8	Indicators of time 165	
14	Talking about the future	167
14.1	Introduction 167	
14.2	Using the future tense 167	
14.3	Using the present tense 167	
14.4	Expressing the immediate or very near future 168	
14.5	Expressing the English 'going to' 168	
14.6	The 'past in the future' 169	
14.7	The future seen from the past 169	
14.8	Some expressions of time in the future 170	
14.9	Expressing intention and future plans 172	
15	Asking questions	173
15.1	Introduction 173	
15.2	Asking a question using interrogative intonation 173	
15.3	Asking a question using interrogative words 173	
15.4	<i>Dialogo</i> 176	
16	Negative sentences	178
16.1	Introduction 178	
16.2	Reinforcing a negative statement 178	
16.3	Expressing negation and time <i>non . . . più, non . . . mai</i> 179	

16.4	Expressing negation using <i>né . . . né</i>	179
16.5	Expressing negation using <i>niente, nulla</i>	180
16.6	Expressing negation using the adjective <i>nessun/o/a</i>	180
16.7	Expressing negation using the pronoun <i>nessuno/a</i>	181
16.8	Reinforcing negation	181
17	Comparisons and degrees of intensity	183
17.1	Introduction	183
17.2	Using comparative adjectives and adverbs	183
17.3	Expressing 'than'	184
17.4	Expressing 'which'	186
17.5	Expressing different degrees of intensity	186
18	Referring to objects and people	188
18.1	Introduction	188
18.2	Using a pronoun to refer back	188
18.3	Using a pronoun: referring to the subject of an action	188
18.4	Using a pronoun: referring to someone other than the subject	188
18.5	Referring to someone or something using <i>questo, quello</i>	192
18.6	Using indefinites to refer to 'someone/something'	192
18.7	Referring to something or someone mentioned	193
18.8	Referring to what has been said or will be said	193
19	Focusing on the action	194
19.1	Introduction	194
19.2	Focusing on the action using the passive	194
19.3	Situations when the passive is not used	197
19.4	Focusing on the action using <i>si passivante</i> (passive form with <i>si</i>)	199
19.5	<i>Si impersonale</i> (impersonal <i>si</i>)	200
19.6	Focusing on the object of the action	200
II	Actions affecting ourselves and others	
20	Social interactions	203
20.1	Greeting, welcoming	203
20.2	Introducing oneself and others	204
20.3	Saying goodbye	205
20.4	Wishes	206
20.5	Expressing and receiving thanks, appreciation	206
20.6	Compliments	207
20.7	Making and accepting excuses, apologies	207
20.8	Expressing commiseration, sympathy	208
20.9	Using titles, salutations	208
21	Getting other people to do things	211
21.1	Introduction	211
21.2	Giving orders and commands	211
21.3	Making negative requests and commands	213

21.4	Written instructions and recipes	213
21.5	Asking someone to do something	216
21.6	Giving an order using 'command' verbs	217
21.7	<i>Far fare, lasciar fare</i> construction	217
21.8	Using persuasion	218
21.9	<i>Monologo</i>	219
22	Permission and possibility	221
22.1	Asking or granting permission	221
22.2	Denying permission	222
22.3	Speaking about the ability or opportunity to do something	222
22.4	Making a request	223
23	Expressing need, obligation or desire	225
23.1	Need or want	225
23.2	Expressing wants	225
23.3	Expressing needs	227
24	Suggesting, proposing, advising and recommending	229
24.1	Giving advice	229
24.2	Making or receiving a suggestion	230
24.3	More expressions of advising or suggesting	232
24.4	Advising someone not to do something, giving a warning	233
24.5	Asking for advice	233
24.6	Other ways of making suggestions	234
III	Expressing emotions, feelings, attitudes and opinions	
25	Expressing emotions: positive, negative, neutral	237
25.1	Introduction	237
25.2	Interjections (positive, negative, neutral)	237
25.3	Expressing positive emotions	238
25.4	Expressing negative emotions	241
25.5	Expressing neutral emotions	245
25.6	Expressing positive and/or negative emotions	247
26	Expressing emotions: hope, fear, doubt	248
26.1	Introduction	248
26.2	Expressing hope	248
26.3	Expressing fear, pessimism or regret	249
26.4	Expressing doubt	251
27	Expressing an opinion or belief, agreement or disagreement	253
27.1	Expressing or seeking an opinion or belief	253
27.2	Expressing agreement, disagreement	255
28	Indicating preference, likes and dislikes	258
28.1	Introduction	258
28.2	Expressing likes	258

	28.3	Expressing dislikes	260	
	28.4	Expressing a preference	262	
29		Expressing certainty and knowledge		263
	29.1	Introduction	263	
	29.2	<i>Sapere</i>	263	
	29.3	<i>Essere certo, sicuro, convinto</i>	264	
	29.4	<i>Non certo, poco certo, incerto</i>	265	
	29.5	<i>Pensare, credere, sembrare, parere</i>	266	
	29.6	<i>Ricordare, dimenticare</i>	266	
IV		Putting in context		
30		Combining messages		271
	30.1	Introduction	271	
	30.2	Combining messages of equal importance	271	
	30.3	Combining messages of unequal importance	274	
	30.4	Setting events in a time context	274	
	30.5	Relationship of main clause and dependent clauses	275	
	30.6	Relationship of tenses in complex texts	279	
31		Quoting or reporting events and hearsay		287
	31.1	Introduction	287	
	31.2	Quoting: direct speech	288	
	31.3	Reporting: indirect speech	289	
	31.4	Reporting information or quoting hearsay	291	
32		Expressing possibility and probability		294
	32.1	Introduction	294	
	32.2	Certainty, uncertainty	294	
	32.3	Knowing, not knowing	295	
	32.4	Possible or impossible, probable or improbable	295	
	32.5	Evident, obvious	296	
33		Expressing purpose		297
	33.1	Introduction	297	
	33.2	Purpose involving only the subject of the action	297	
	33.3	Purpose involving someone or something else	299	
	33.4	Purpose attached to a person/object	300	
34		Expressing causes and reasons		302
	34.1	Introduction	302	
	34.2	Specific people, factors or events responsible	302	
	34.3	General cause or reason	302	
	34.4	<i>Il motivo, la causa, la ragione</i>	305	
	34.5	<i>Causare, provocare, suscitare</i>	306	
	34.6	<i>Dovere, dovuto</i>	306	
	34.7	Asking why	306	
	34.8	Using the imperfect tense to give reasons	307	

35	Expressing result, effect and consequence	308
35.1	Introduction 308	
35.2	Coordinating conjunctions 308	
35.3	Conclusive (result) conjunctions 309	
35.4	<i>Così, tale, tanto, troppo</i> 310	
35.5	Words expressing result, effect 311	
36	Specifying time	313
36.1	Introduction 313	
36.2	Expressing same time context 313	
36.3	Expressing earlier time context 314	
36.4	Expressing later time context 315	
36.5	Defining the limits of a period: 'since'/'until' 317	
36.6	Specifying repetition and frequency 319	
36.7	Other expressions of time 320	
37	Place and manner	321
37.1	Introduction 321	
37.2	Place: adverbs 321	
37.3	Place: prepositions 322	
37.4	Manner 324	
38	Expressing a condition or hypothesis	327
38.1	Introduction 327	
38.2	Expressing a real possibility 327	
38.3	Expressing a condition unlikely to be met or impossible 328	
38.4	Expressing conditions with other conjunctions 329	
38.5	Expressing conditions with gerund, infinitive or participle 330	
38.6	Unfinished conditional sentence 331	
38.7	Other uses of <i>se</i> 332	
39	Expressing reservation, exception and concession	333
39.1	Introduction 333	
39.2	Expressing reservation or exception 333	
39.3	Modifying a statement by concession 334	

V

Expanding the horizons

40	Registers and style	341
40.1	Introduction 341	
40.2	Spoken and written discourse 341	
40.3	Differences in lexis 342	
40.4	Differences in syntax 343	
40.5	Informal written communication 346	
40.6	Formal and informal registers 347	
40.7	Word order 349	
41	Oral communication and telephone skills	352
41.1	Introduction 352	
41.2	The <i>Lei</i> form 352	

CONTENTS

41.3	Interjections	354	
41.4	Discourse markers	354	
41.5	Techniques of oral communication	356	
41.6	Spelling on the telephone	357	
41.7	Telephone phrases	358	
41.8	On the telephone	360	
42	Written communication		362
42.1	Introduction	362	
42.2	Letters and faxes	362	
42.3	Curriculum vitae	365	
42.4	Extended writing: differences between English and Italian	367	
42.5	Writing essays, making connections	367	
42.6	Reports	367	
42.7	Bureaucratic language	371	
42.8	Scientific and technical language	372	
42.9	Journalistic language	373	
Appendix I:	Spelling and pronunciation		376
Appendix II:	Irregular verbs		381
Appendix III:	Sequence of tenses		389
Appendix IV:	Verbs and prepositions		390
Index			396

Introduction

Modern Italian Grammar follows an entirely new approach to learning Italian. It embraces a new way of looking at grammar – seeing it not as the ultimate goal, but as the tool with which we construct a dialogue or a piece of writing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The last three texts in particular have departed from traditional Italian grammar terminology to some extent. In *Modern Italian Grammar* we too have made innovations both in terminology and in presentation. In many cases we have had to make choices, and there may be areas where our choices differ from those of our colleagues. One such area is terminology.

We have deliberately departed from the practice of translating **passato remoto** as 'past definite' or 'past historic', since this only reinforces in the learner's mind the idea that the **passato remoto** should be used to describe events far off in time, while the **passato prossimo** is used for more recent events – a concept which misleads. We have followed Salvi and Vanelli in defining the former as 'simple perfect' (**perfetto semplice**) and the latter as 'compound perfect' (**perfetto composto**) which better illustrates the difference in these verb forms, and at the same time brings the focus back to the important distinction between *perfect* and *imperfect*.

In conclusion, we are conscious of the fact that our grammar represents the *beginning* of a journey rather than an end. We have had to find our own way, and make our own judgements, in an area as yet uncharted. We may have erred on our way, but hope we have not foundered totally. We trust that our colleagues will be forgiving of any shortcomings. In this second edition of *Modern Italian Grammar* we have incorporated suggestions from readers and reviewers and updated the examples taken from the press, particularly in the later chapters, and the chapters on Writing, Oral communication, and Registers and style.

We'd like to thank our editors Sophie Oliver and Sarah Butler for their patience and support, and our students, colleagues and friends for their useful and positive feedback. Thanks also to our families in Oxford and Naples for putting up with the endless journeys back and forth.

Finally we wish our readers 'Buono studio'.

Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo

How to use this book

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

Part B shows how grammar structures are used to express communicative ‘functions’, such as giving personal information, asking someone to do something, describing something, etc. These structures are divided into four broad sections: I Giving and seeking factual information; II Actions affecting ourselves and others; III Expressing emotions, feelings, attitudes and opinions; IV Putting in context. A final section, Section V Expanding the horizons, looks at special types of language, for example the formal register, bureaucratic language, and the language of telephone and letter.

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

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

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

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

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

Lastly, Italian and English keywords are indexed to make it easier for the reader to look up a particular point. Grammar terminology as well as Italian examples are

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

listed in the index (for example, you will find both **lei** and ‘personal pronouns’). We hope you enjoy learning Italian using this book as a guide. Remember that some spoken skills such as pronunciation, intonation and stress cannot simply be learned from a book. But grammar structures are the foundation of any language, and this book will teach you how to use these structures to express what you want to say.

Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo, 2005

Glossary

Abstract noun

One which refers to a concept or quality rather than a person or object. Examples are: **la felicità** 'happiness'; **la miseria** 'poverty'.

Active construction

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

Adjective

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

Adverb

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

Agreement

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

Article

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

Auxiliary verb

Auxiliary verbs such as **avere**, **essere** are used in combination with the past participle to form compound tenses, both active (**Ho mangiato** 'I have eaten', **siamo andati** 'we have gone') and passive (**è stato licenziato** 'he was sacked'). See also **modal auxiliaries**.

Clause

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

Comparative

When one person, object or activity is compared with another a comparative form is used: **mia figlia nuota meglio della sua** 'my daughter swims better than hers'; **la pasta napoletana è migliore di quella siciliana** 'Neapolitan pasta is better than Sicilian pasta'.

Compound noun

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

Compound tenses

Compound tenses are tenses consisting of more than one element. In Italian, the compound tenses are formed by the auxiliary **avere** or **essere**, and the past participle: **ho mangiato troppo** 'I have eaten too much'; **siamo andati a casa** 'we went home'. See also **Simple tenses**.

Conditional

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

Conjugation

This refers to the way in which verb forms change according to the person, tense or mood: (io) **vado** 'I go'; (noi) **andremo** 'we will go'; le **ragazze sono andate** 'the girls went'; **voleva che io andassi a casa sua** 'he wanted me to go to his house'; etc. The word conjugation is also used to mean the regular patterns of verbs ending in **-are**, **-ere**, **-ire** to which verbs belong.

Conjunction

A linking or joining word, usually linking two words, phrases or clauses within a sentence: **Marco e Davide** 'Marco and Davide'; **con amore ma con disciplina** 'with

love but with discipline'; **sono andata a letto perché ero stanca** 'I went to bed because I was tired'; **i giudici dicono che bisogna cambiare la legge** 'the judges say that the law should be changed'. Conjunctions can either be coordinating, linking two phrases or clauses of equal weight, or subordinating, linking a main clause and subordinate clause.

Countable

A noun is countable if it can normally be used in both singular and plural, and take the indefinite article **un, una** (etc.): **un bicchiere** 'a glass'; **una pizza** 'a pizza'. Whereas an uncountable noun is one which is not normally found in the plural (e.g. **zucchero** 'sugar') or an abstract noun (such as **tristezza** 'sadness').

Declension

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

Definite article: see **Article**.

Demonstrative

A demonstrative adjective or a pronoun is one which demonstrates or indicates the person or object being talked about: **questo carrello** 'this trolley'; **quel professore** 'that teacher'; **quelle tagliatelle** 'those tagliatelle'.

Direct object

A direct object, whether noun or pronoun, is one which is directly affected by the action or event. A direct object can be living or inanimate. It is always used with a **transitive verb**: **i miei figli hanno mangiato tutti i cioccolatini** 'my sons ate all the chocolates'; **li ho visti in città ieri sera** 'I saw them in town yesterday evening'.

Feminine: see **Gender**.

Finite verb

A verb that has a subject and is complete in itself, as opposed to **infinitives** or **participles**, which have to depend on another verb: **ieri siamo andati in piscina** 'yesterday we went to the swimming pool'; **domani i ragazzi torneranno a scuola** 'tomorrow the kids will go back to school'.

Gender

All nouns in Italian have a gender: they are either masculine or feminine, even if they are inanimate objects. Even where living beings are concerned, grammatical gender is not always the same as natural gender: **una tigre** 'a tiger' (either sex unless specified); **un ippopotamo** 'a hippopotamus'. Gender is important since it determines the form of noun, the article and adjective.

Gerund

A gerund is a verb form ending in **-ando** or **-endo**: **parlando** 'speaking'; **sorridendo** 'smiling'; **finendo** 'finishing'. The gerund is most often used in Italian along with the verb **stare** to express a continuous action or event: **sto finendo** 'I'm just finishing'; **stavano ancora mangiando** 'they were still eating'. The nearest equivalent in English is the '-ing' form but it is not used in exactly the same way.

Idiomatic

An idiomatic expression is one that cannot normally be translated literally, for example **ubriaco fradicio** literally 'soaking drunk' but more idiomatically 'dead drunk'.

Imperative

The imperative mood is the verb mood used to express orders, commands or instructions: *state fermi* 'keep still'; *si accomodi* 'sit down'; *andiamo* 'let's go'. (See also **Subjunctive**.)

Impersonal (verbs, verb forms)

Impersonal verbs or verb forms do not refer to any one particular person. They can generally be translated by the English 'it' form and use the third person form: *occorre pulire prima la casa* 'It is necessary to clean the house first'; *non serve protestare* 'it's no good protesting'. These verbs can be personalised by the addition of a personal pronoun, usually the indirect object: *non mi occorre questo maglione* 'I don't need this thick sweater'.

Indefinite article: see **Article**.

Indefinites

An adjective or pronoun used to refer to a person or thing in a general way, rather than a **definite** person or thing. Examples are: *alcuni* 'some'; *certi* 'certain, some'; *qualche* 'some'.

Indicative (verbs)

The verb mood we use most in speaking and writing is the indicative mood. Within this mood is a full range of tenses: present *mangio* 'I eat'; past *ho mangiato* 'I have eaten'; future *mangerò* 'I will eat'; etc. The verb mood used to express uncertainty is the subjunctive, which also has a full range of tenses. See **Subjunctive**.

Indirect object

An indirect object, whether noun or pronoun, is one that is indirectly affected by the action or event. An indirect object can be found with a **transitive** verb, which already has one direct object: *ho mandato delle cartoline ai miei amici* 'I sent some postcards to my friends'. Or it can be used with an intransitive verb, which does not take a direct object, in which case it may be found together with a preposition such as **a**, **da**: *Marco telefonava a sua madre ogni sera* 'Marco used to phone his mother every evening'.

Infinitive

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

Interrogative

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

Intransitive (verbs)

See also **Transitive verbs**. Intransitive verbs are verbs that *cannot* be used with a direct object. Some intransitive verbs can be used with an indirect object: *ho telefonato*

a Maria Teresa 'I telephoned to Maria Teresa'. Some can only be used without any object: **siamo arrivati alla stazione con un'ora di ritardo** 'we arrived at the station an hour late'. Many of these verbs take the auxiliary **essere**, but some take **avere**: **abbiamo camminato molto** 'we walked a lot'. Sometimes a verb that can be used transitively in English ('to walk the dog') cannot be used transitively in Italian (**camminare**). Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively (see **Transitive verbs**).

Invariable

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

Irregular (noun or verb)

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

Masculine see **Gender**.

Modal verb

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

Mood

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

Negative

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

Noun

A noun indicates a person, place, thing or event. For example: **Italia** 'Italy'; **assistente** 'language assistant'; **la festa** 'the party'. Nouns are inextricably linked to the articles (**il, un**, etc.) and to any adjectives that accompany them. All nouns have a gender and this determines the form of the adjectives and articles that go with it.

Number

Number is the distinction between **singular** and **plural**. Verb forms alter according to the number of the subject: **il ragazzo nuota** 'the boy swims'; **i ragazzi nuotano** 'the boys swim'.

Object

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

Participle (present, past)

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

Partitive article see **Article**.

Passato composto

We use this term for the **compound past**, a past tense formed by auxiliary and participle: **ho mangiato** 'I ate'; **sono andato** 'I went'. Some books call it the **passato prossimo** 'perfect tense'.

Passato remoto see **Passato semplice**.

Passato semplice

We have used the term **passato semplice** 'simple past' to denote the past tense that is simple, not compound, e.g. **andai** 'I went' (as opposed to **sono andato** 'I went'). Most books call this tense **passato remoto**, English 'past definite', 'past historic' or 'past absolute'.

Passive (verb forms)

A passive construction is a sentence in which the subject of the sentence is the person or thing *affected* by the action or event taking place (as opposed to an **active** construction where the subject is the person *carrying out* the action): **tutti gli studenti sono stati promossi** 'all the students were moved up a class'; **il concerto è stato anticipato** 'the concert was put forward'.

Person

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

Personal pronouns see also **Pronouns**

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

Plural see **Number**.

Possessive

Possessive adjectives and/or pronouns denote ownership: **il mio orologio** 'my watch'; **la nostra macchina** 'our car'.

Preposition

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

Pronoun

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

Question

Direct questions sometimes use a question word (**dove vai stasera?** 'where are you going this evening?') and sometimes they do not (**hai tempo di parlarmi?** 'do you have time to speak to me?'). Indirect questions are introduced by words such as **chiedere** 'to ask': **mi ha chiesto se avevo tempo di parlargli** 'he asked me if I had time to speak to him'.

Reflexive verb

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

Regular

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

Relative

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

Reported speech

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

Sentence

A sentence must have a verb and a subject. It can either be a simple sentence (one subject, one verb), e.g. **gli ospiti dormivano** 'the guests were asleep', or a complex

sentence (main clause plus one or more subordinate clauses), e.g. **mentre dormivano, i ladri hanno portato via tutto** ‘while they were asleep, the thieves took everything’.

Simple tenses

Those that are formed of one word only. See also **Compound tenses**.

Singular see **Number**.

Stem see **Verb stem**.

Subject

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

Subjunctive

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

Subordinate (clauses) see **Conjunction**

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

Superlative

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

Tense

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

Transitive verbs

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

Verb

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

Verb stem

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

Voice

Verbs normally have two voices: **active** and **passive**.

Part A

Structures

1

The noun group

1.1 What is a noun?

The main function of nouns in any language is to denote an entity (person, object, etc.) or concept (situation, abstract idea, etc.). Nouns are generally used together with articles (*the, a*) and/or adjectives (describing physical or other characteristics), which provide information about the entity or concept. Together they form a group of words called the noun group; two examples are shown below:

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

Although the noun group may contain other elements (e.g. adverbs, prepositional phrases, etc.), in this chapter we will only deal with the three basic elements of noun/article/adjective, analysing them one by one. In Italian the three components of the noun group can be considered not only separately but also as a 'whole', in which the various components have to 'agree', so we will also look at how they are used together.

1.2 The noun

The noun is the focus of the noun group, and in fact the article and adjectives always agree with the noun in gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural). The two grammatical features of *gender* and *number* determine the form of noun, article and adjective.

1.2.1 Gender

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

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

Grammatically speaking, Italian does not always have a male and a female of each animal species, for example:

una giraffa	'giraffe' is always feminine
un ippopotamo	'hippopotamus' is always masculine

In order to provide the missing half, we have to say:

una giraffa maschio	a male giraffe
un ippopotamo femmina	a female hippopotamus

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

un cane	dog	una cagna	bitch
un gallo	cock	una gallina	hen

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

cameriere	cameriera	waiter/waitress
infermiere	infermiera	nurse
padrone	padrona	master/mistress
studente	studentessa	student
presidente	presidentessa	president
principe	principessa	prince/princess
conte	contessa	count/countess
barone	baronessa	baron/baroness

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

ambasciatore	ambasciatrice	ambassador
attore	attrice	actor/actress
autore	autrice	author
direttore	direttrice	director, manager
imperatore	imperatrice	emperor/empress
pittore	pittrice	painter
scultore	scultrice	sculptor
scrittore	scrittrice	writer
senatore	senatrice	senator

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

dottore	dottoressa	doctor
professore	professoressa	teacher

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

1.2.2 Number

Unlike gender, the grammatical concept of singular or plural ('number') causes no problem for speakers of English. Occasionally (as in English) a singular noun is used to refer to a collective entity that one might expect to be grammatically plural, e.g. **la gente** 'people'. On the other hand, some objects that are singular in English may be plural in Italian, e.g. **le lasagne** 'lasagne' or **i capelli** 'hair'.

1.2.3 Common noun patterns

The gender and number determine the ending of the noun. These patterns of endings are called *inflexions*. Italian nouns can be divided into several different groups, according to their patterns of inflexion. The three most common patterns (also followed by most adjectives, see below) are:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
1 Masculine	-o	-i
2 Feminine	-a	-e
3 Masculine or feminine	-e	-i

Note: Nouns in the third group (-e) have the same ending whatever the gender.

Examples

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
1 Masculine	tavolo	table	tavoli	tables
	albero	tree	alberi	trees
	sbaglio	mistake	sbagli	mistakes
	ragazzo	boy	ragazzi	boys
2 Feminine	donna	woman	donne	women
	parola	word	parole	words
	scuola	school	scuole	schools
	ragazza	girl	ragazze	girls
3 Masculine	padre	father	padri	fathers
	studente	student	studenti	students
	bicchiere	glass	bicchieri	glasses
3 Feminine	madre	mother	madri	mothers
	occasione	occasion	occasioni	occasions
	chiave	key	chiavi	keys

Note: In the plural, nouns ending in -co, -go; -ca, -ga; -cia, -gia present variations in their endings, as shown below.

Nouns ending in -co, -go

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

- in -chi and -ghi, with the hard c, g sound, if the stress falls on the penultimate syllable:

fuoco	fuochi	fire
ago	aghi	needle
buco	buchi	hole
albèrgo	albèrghi	hotel
sacco	sacchi	sack
sugo	sughi	sauce

and also in **catàlogo catàloghi** 'catalogue', **diàlogo diàloghi** 'dialogue' and a few more nouns.

- in **-ci** and **-gi**, with the soft **c, g** sound, if the stress – indicated here by an accent – falls on the third last syllable:

mèdico	mèdici	doctor
aspàrago	aspàragi	asparagus
mònaco	mònaci	monk
biòlogo	biòlogi	biologist

and also in **amìco amìci** 'friend', **nemìco nemìci** 'enemy', **greco greci** 'Greek', **porco porci** 'pig'.

Nouns ending in **-ca, -ga**

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

amica	amiche	friend
lega	leghe	league

Nouns ending in **-ca, -ga**, which refer to either men or women, normally form their plural in **-chi, -ghi** for male and **-che, -ghe** for female (and see 1.2.4 below):

collega	colleague	colleghi (m.)	colleghe (f.)
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But note:

belga	Belgian	belgi (m.)	belghe (f.)
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Nouns ending in **-cia, -gia**

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

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

farmàcia	farmàcie	pharmacy
bugià	bugie	lie
camìcia	camìcie	shirt
ciliègia	ciliègie	cherry
acàcia	acàcie	acacia
valìgia	valìgie	suitcase

- in **-ce, -ge** when the ending is preceded by a consonant:

arància	arànce	orange
spiàggia	spiàgge	beach
provìncia	provìnce	province
frangia	frange	fringe
faccia	facce	face
pioggia	piogge	rain

Notice that the pronunciation of **-cia** is similar to the 'ch' in English 'charm', that of **-gia** is like the 'j' in 'jacket', **-cie** like the 'che' in 'chest', **-gie** like the 'je' in 'jet'. There is no difference in pronunciation between the **-cie** of **camìcie** and the **-ce** of **arance**. The **i** is pronounced and given its full value as a syllable only when stressed as in **farmàcie** and **bugie**.

Note: In the plural, nouns ending in **-io** sometimes double the final **i**, sometimes not, according to whether the 'i' is stressed or unstressed:

studìo	study	studìi
zio	uncle	zii

1.2.4 Other noun patterns

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

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

<i>Singular -a (m./f.)</i>		<i>Plural -i (m.)</i>		<i>Plural -e (f.)</i>	
atleta	athlete	atleti		atlete	
autista	driver	autisti		autiste	
artista	artist	artisti		artiste	
giornalista	journalist	giornalisti		giornaliste	

The nouns in the above group refer to categories of people. The singular ending **-a** is used whether they are male or female, but the plural form is different according to the 'natural' gender. A large number of these nouns end in **-ista** (English '-ist') indicating an ideology (**socialista**, **marxista**), profession (**chitarrista**, **dentista**) or sport (**ciclista**, **tennista**).

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

<i>Singular -a (m.)</i>		<i>Plural -i (m.)</i>	
problema	problem	problemi	
programma	programme	programmi	
sistema	system	sistemi	
Papa	Pope	Papi	
poeta	poet	poeti	
monarca	monarch	monarchi	

This pattern is similar to that of masculine and feminine nouns ending in **-a** shown above, but in the plural has only masculine forms. See also masculine nouns ending in **-ca**, **-ga** above.

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

The two nouns shown below are both feminine in the singular, but differ in the plural: **mani** is feminine, while **echi** is masculine:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
mano (f.)	hand	mani (f.)	
eco (f.)	echo	echi (m.)	

See 1.2.5 for other examples of feminine nouns ending in **-o**.

Masculine nouns with singular in **-o**, feminine plural in **-a**

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

<i>Singular (m.)</i>		<i>Plural (f.)</i>	
uovo	egg	uova	
miglio	mile	miglia	
paio	pair	paia	

Masculine nouns with singular in -o, masculine plural in -i/feminine plural in -a

Some masculine nouns have a regular masculine plural in -i as well as an irregular feminine plural in -a:

<i>Singular (m.)</i>		<i>Plural in -i (m.)</i>		<i>Plural in -a (f.)</i>	
dito	finger	diti		dita	
braccio	arm	bracci		braccia	
ginocchio	knee	ginocchi		ginocchia	
labbro	lip	labbri		labbra	
osso	bone	ossi		ossa	
gesto	gesture	gesti		gesta	
lenzuolo	sheet	lenzuoli		lenzuola	
muro	wall	muri		mura	
urlo	shout	urli		urla	

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

For example, **le dita** are the fingers of your hand, when talked about 'collectively' (**ho le dita gelate** 'my fingers are frozen') while **i diti** are the fingers considered 'individually or separately' (**ho due diti rotti** 'I have two broken fingers').

Le mura are the collective walls of a city (**Lucca è una città circondata da mura romane** 'Lucca is a city surrounded by Roman walls'), while **i muri** refer to all other kinds of walls. **Le ossa** is the plural form normally used when talking about the skeletal system (**mi fanno male le ossa** 'my bones ache') while the masculine plural **gli ossi** is used when talking about separate bones, e.g. broken bones or dog bones (**ho dato due ossi al cane** 'I gave the dog two bones').

1.2.5

Invariable nouns

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

Nouns with stress falling on last syllable

These are mainly feminine in gender, coming from an older form, of Latin origin, ending in -tate (**civitate, qualitate**) now abbreviated and ending in -à:

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Feminine	città	town	città	
	università	university	università	
	libertà	freedom	libertà	
Masculine	caffè	coffee	caffè	

Feminine nouns ending in -i

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
crisi	crisis	crisi
ipotesi	hypothesis	ipotesi
analisi	analysis	analisi

Feminine nouns ending in -ie

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
serie	series	serie
specie	species	specie

But note:

moglie	wife	mogli
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Feminine nouns with abbreviated singular

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

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
auto	car	auto
moto	motorbike	moto
radio	radio	radio
foto	photo	foto
bici	bike	bici

Nouns of one syllable

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
Masculine	re	king	re
	sci	ski	sci
Feminine	gru	crane	gru

Words borrowed from another language

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
Masculine	bar	bar, café	bar
	sport	sport	sport
	film	film	film
	computer	computer	computer
Feminine	reclame	advert	reclame
	gaffe	gaffe	gaffe
	brioche	brioche	brioche

NOTE

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

1.2.6 Nouns with extremely irregular plurals

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

	<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Masculine	uomo	man	uomini	men
	dio	god	dei	gods
	bue	ox	buoi	oxen
Feminine	ala	wing	ali	wings
	arma	arm	armi	arms

1.3 The article

1.3.1 What is an article?

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

In giardino c'è un cane.

There is **a** dog in the garden. (unknown dog)

In giardino c'è il cane.

There is **the** dog in the garden. (our dog or a dog we know about)

In Italian the form of the article has to agree with the gender and number of the noun it is attached to, but also according to the initial letter of the word immediately following it, whether noun or adjective. This applies also a third type of article, the partitive article.

1.3.2 Indefinite article **un, uno, una, un'**

Masculine	un	+ vowel or consonant
	uno	+ s + consonant, gn, pn, ps, x, z , semivowel i (j, y)
Feminine	un'	+ vowel
	una	+ consonant

The form of the indefinite article for a masculine singular noun is **un**, becoming **uno** before a word starting with s + a consonant, **gn, pn, ps, x, z** and the semivowel **i** (j, y).

un telefono	a telephone
un espresso	an espresso
un nuovo studente	a new student
uno studente nuovo	a new student
uno spuntino	a snack
uno gnomo	a gnome
uno psichiatra	a psychiatrist
uno zoo	a zoo
uno yogurt	a yogurt
uno xenofobo	a xenophobe (someone who hates foreigners)
uno pneumatico	a tyre

With a feminine singular noun the indefinite article is **una**, but this changes to **un'** before a word starting with a vowel (**a, e, i, o, u**):

una bottiglia	a bottle
una spremuta	a fresh fruit juice
un' aranciata	an orangeade
un' ampia distesa di neve	a wide expanse of snow

1.3.3 Partitive article *dei, degli, delle*

Masculine:	dei + consonant
Masculine:	degli + vowel, s + consonant, gn, pn, ps, x, z , semivowel i (j, y)
Feminine:	delle + any letter

With plural nouns the function of the indefinite article is taken by the *partitive article*, translated by English 'some':

Masculine:	dei libri	some books
	degli studenti	some students
	degli amici	some (male) friends
Feminine:	delle amiche	some (female) friends
	delle camere	some rooms

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

A partitive article can also be used in the singular, indicating a quantity of *uncountable* things, people or abstract concepts:

Vorrei del pane.	I'd like some bread.
Ho visto della gente che correva.	I saw some people running.
C'è ancora della speranza.	There is still some hope.

Note: See also 11.6.1 for more details on using **del, della** as 'some'.

1.3.4 Definite article

The form of the definite article varies according to the number and gender of the noun it accompanies, but also on whether the noun begins with a vowel, a consonant or certain letters or groups of letters, as seen in the table below:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Masculine	il + consonant l' + vowel lo + gn, pn, ps s + consonant, x, z and semivowel i (j, y)	i + consonant gli + vowel or with gn, pn, ps, s + consonant, x, z , semivowel i (j, y) gli + vowel or with gn, pn, ps, s + consonant, x, z , semivowel i (j, y)
Feminine	la + consonant l' + vowel	le + any letter le + any letter

Masculine nouns

In the singular, masculine nouns normally take the article **il** but they take **lo** before a word starting with **s** + a consonant, **gn**, **pn**, **ps**, **x**, **z**, semivowel **i** (**j**, **y**) and **I'** before words starting with a vowel.

In the plural, masculine nouns take the article **i** but they take **gli** before a word beginning with **s** + a consonant, **gn**, **pn**, **ps**, **x**, **z** and semivowel **i** (**j**, **y**).

<i>il</i> famoso cantante	the famous singer
<i>lo</i> strano inglese	the strange Englishman
<i>lo</i> Ionio	the Ionian (sea)
<i>lo</i> yogurt	the yogurt
<i>l'inglese</i> pazzo	the mad Englishman
<i>i</i> ragazzi italiani	the Italian boys
<i>gli</i> studenti italiani	the Italian students
<i>gli</i> stranieri	the foreigners
<i>gli</i> zii americani	the American uncles
<i>gli</i> yacht	the yachts

Feminine nouns

In the singular, feminine nouns take the article **la**, but take **I'** before a word beginning with vowel. In the plural, they take the article **le**, which is *never* abbreviated.

<i>la</i> cioccolata calda	the hot chocolate
<i>la</i> spremuta	the fresh fruit juice
<i>l'aranciata</i>	the orangeade
<i>le</i> automobili bianche	the white cars
<i>le</i> studentesse	the students (female)

1.3.5 Use of definite or indefinite articles

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

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

Dammi *gli* stuzzicadenti.
Give me the toothpicks.

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

Dammi *degli* stuzzicadenti.
Give me some toothpicks.

Known or unknown, specified or unspecified

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

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

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

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

Flavia vuole portare *un amico* alla festa.

Flavia wants to take *a* friend to the party. (an unspecified friend)

Vorrei *una camera* per stasera, per favore.

I would like a room for tonight. (any old room, unspecified)

Individual or class/species

- (a) The *definite* article is used when we want to identify a whole class or species of things or creatures, distinct from other species or categories, for example an animal species or a category of films:

Il delfino è un mammifero.

The dolphin is a mammal. (= dolphins are mammals)

Mi piacciono i film americani.

I like American films.

Note how English only uses the definite article 'the' in the singular ('the dolphin').

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

Guarda! C'è un delfino!

Look! There is *a* dolphin!

Ho visto un bel film americano alla televisione.

I've seen *a* nice American film on television.

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

Some particular uses of the definite article

In Italian we *always* use the definite article with the proper names of geographical features such as mountains, rivers, etc.:

le Alpi, gli Alburni the Alps, the Alburni

il Tamigi, la Senna the Thames, the Seine

but *not* with the names of cities:

Firenze Londra

Florence London

except when qualified in some way:

la Firenze del Settecento
eighteenth-century Florence

We use the definite article with the names of countries or nations:

Amo l'Italia.

I love Italy.

Il Brasile è campione del mondo.

Brazil is world champion.

We don't normally use it with the preposition **in** if talking about feminine countries:

Vivo *in* Italia. I live in Italy.
Andiamo *in* Spagna. We go to Spain.

unless the country is qualified in some way:

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

But we do sometimes use it to refer to masculine or plural countries:

Vivo *negli* Stati Uniti. I live in the USA.

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

When speaking of somebody's profession we use the article with **fare**:

Faccio *l'ingegnere*. I am an engineer.

but omit it with **essere** (note how English usage differs):

Sono *ingegnere*. I am an engineer.

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

We can summarise these patterns in the following way:

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Class/group/species	Definite	Il cavallo è un animale docile The horse is a docile animal
Individual member	Indefinite	Ho comprato un cavallo I've bought a horse
Known	Definite	Il mio cavallo si chiama Max My horse's name is Max
Unknown	Indefinite	C'è un cavallo nel campo There is a horse in the field

1.4 The adjective

1.4.1 What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that qualifies the meaning of a noun by adding some specification or description to it.

There are many different categories of adjective including demonstrative (**questo**, **quello**), interrogative (**quale**), possessive (**mio**, **tuo**), indefinite (**alcuni**, **qualche**) and negative (**nessun**). But in this chapter we only cover the use of **aggettivi qualificativi**: *descriptive adjectives* that describe qualities (physical or otherwise) of person or thing, and *classifying adjectives*, such as nationality, that describe the category or classification that the person or thing belongs to (see also Chapter 10). The other types of adjectives will be shown in Chapter 3, together with the corresponding pronouns.

1.4.2 Common adjective patterns

Almost all descriptive adjectives follow the same basic patterns as the nouns (see 1.2.3 above), with their endings depending on gender and number. There are two 'classes' or groups of adjectives:

Class 1			Class 2		
Masculine	-o	-i	Masculine/feminine	-e	-i
Feminine	-a	-e			

In the first group, there are four different endings for feminine/masculine/singular/plural. In the second group, the ending is the same for both masculine and feminine:

	Class 1		Class 2	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Masculine	piccolo	piccoli	grande	grandi (m./f.)
Feminine	piccola	piccole	grande	grandi (m./f.)

The gender and number of the adjective must agree with the noun to which it refers (see 1.2.1 and 1.2.2):

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Masculine	libro piccolo	libri piccoli	libro grande	libri grandi
	balcone piccolo	balconi piccoli	balcone grande	balconi grandi
Feminine	penna piccola	penne piccole	penna grande	penne grandi
	stazione piccola	stazioni piccole	stazione grande	stazioni grandi

1.4.3 Exceptions to this pattern

Only a few descriptive adjectives have a different pattern from those shown above. Adjectives with singular **-a** (for both masculine and feminine) have masculine plural in **-i** and feminine plural in **-e**. Many of these have endings such as **-ista**, **-asta**, **-ita**, **-ida**, **-ota** (for nouns with similar endings, see 1.2.4 above):

Singular	Plural	
Masculine/feminine	Masculine	Feminine
socialista	socialisti	socialiste
entusiasta	entusiasti	entusiaste
ipocrita	ipocriti	ipocrite
suicida	suicidi	suicide
idiota	idioti	idioti
Il partito socialista	I paesi socialisti	Le idee socialiste
La bandiera socialista		

1.4.4 Invariable adjectives

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

- Some colours: **blu**, **rosa**, **viola**, **lilla**, **beige**.

un pantalone blu	navy trousers
una gonna blu	a navy skirt
i sandali blu	navy sandals
le scarpe blu	navy shoes

- Colours indicated by two words: **verde bottiglia**, **giallo canarino**, **bianco latte**.

camicia verde bottiglia	bottle green shirt
pantaloni giallo canarino	canary yellow trousers
lampadine bianco latte	milk white light bulbs

- Pari** 'even, equal', **dispari** 'odd' and **impari** 'uneven, unequal':

numero pari	even number
carte dispari	odd-numbered playing cards
pari condizioni	equal conditions
una lotta impari	an unequal struggle

- Arrosto** (roast):

pollo arrosto	roast chicken
patate arrosto	roast potatoes
carne arrosto	roast meat

1.4.5 Position of adjectives

Unlike English, and many other languages, the most common position for the adjective in the Italian noun group is after the noun. This is the usual non-emphatic position occupied by the adjective, when it expresses a basic, intrinsic characteristic of the noun:

Ho visto un film <i>interessante</i>	I saw an interesting film
Abbiamo visitato una città <i>storica</i>	We visited an historic city

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

una tavola <i>rotonda</i>	a round table
una maglia <i>bianca</i>	a white sweater
uno studente <i>francese</i>	a French student

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

una persona <i>enormemente simpatica</i>	a really nice person
un viaggio <i>pieno di problemi</i>	a journey full of problems

As do participles used as adjectives:

le mele <i>cotte</i>	cooked apples
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However in Italian, unlike in English, where adjectives almost always come before the noun ('an interesting film'), the order of the noun group is flexible, and the position of the adjectives can change the emphasis of the sentence.

Although Italian descriptive adjectives, particularly the most common (e.g. **nuovo**, **vecchio**, **giovane**, **piccolo**, **bello**, **brutto**) are placed *after* the noun when used to specify it or distinguish it from similar objects, they can be placed *before* when there is a need to describe the noun with some emphasis or imagination:

Dammi il cacciavite *piccolo*.

Give me the *small* screwdriver.
(not the big one)

Sul tavolo c'era un *piccolo* cacciavite.

There was a *small* screwdriver on the table.
(description of screwdriver)

Sandra è una ragazza *bella*.

Sandra is a *beautiful* girl. (not merely nice)

Sandra è una *bella* ragazza.

Sandra is a *really beautiful* girl.

Ho comprato una macchina *nuova*.

I bought a *new* car. (rather than a second-hand one)

Paola si è messa un *nuovo* vestito.

Paola put on a *new* dress. (another, a different one)

Some adjectives have a completely different meaning from their common one when their position is changed, expressing their *literal* meaning when used *after*, but a quite different, often *figurative*, meaning when used *before*:

un film *bello*

a *nice* film

un *bel* problema

a *pretty difficult* problem

Preferisco avere regole *certe*

I prefer to have *reliable* rules

Non capisco *certe* regole

I don't understand *certain* (some) rules

un ufficiale *alto*

a *tall* officer

un *alto* ufficiale

a *high-ranking* officer

un uomo *grande*

a *big* man (e.g. Pavarotti)

un *grande* uomo

a *great* man (e.g. Napoleon)

Ci sono molti studenti *poveri*

There are many *poor* students

***Poveri* studenti! L'esame sarà duro!**

Poor students! The exam will be hard!

Note that **bello**, when positioned before the noun (see example above, **un *bel* problema**) changes its endings in the same way as the definite article **il**, **la**, **lo**, etc. (see 1.3.4) and the adjective **quel**, **quella**, **quello**, etc. (see 3.8.1).

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

1.4.6 Comparative adjectives

One way of making a comparison between two different people, objects or other elements, is to use a *comparative adjective*.

La mia macchina è *veloce come* la tua.
My car is as fast as yours.

La mia macchina è *più veloce* della tua.
My car is faster than yours.

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

'as ... as'

This is formed by using the words **come** or **quanto** to introduce the second element of the comparison. As a reinforcement, we can also use the words **tanto**, **altrettanto** or **così** before the first element:

Il mio nuovo ufficio è comodo *quanto* quello di prima.
My new office is *as* comfortable *as* the one I had before.

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

Qui le melanzane non sono care *come* in Inghilterra.
Here aubergines are not *as* dear *as* in England.

'more than'/'less than'

The words **più** and **meno** are used to make a descriptive adjective into a comparative, while **di** or **che** introduce the second element of the comparison:

Sandro è *più* bravo *di* Angelo a bridge.
Sandro is better than Angelo at bridge.

È stato *meno* facile *di* quanto pensassi.
It was less easy than I expected.

È *più* facile criticare *che* risolvere i problemi.
It's easier to criticise than to solve problems.

Sara è *più* carina *che* intelligente.
Sara is prettier than she is intelligent.

The choice of **di** or **che** depends on what part of speech the second element of the comparison is, and on its position in the sentence:

più/meno . . . di + noun, pronoun, adverb, numeral

più/meno . . . che + adjective, verb, noun/pronoun preceded by preposition

Further examples of usage are shown in 17.2 and 17.3.

Special forms of comparative

Four very common adjectives have a special form of comparative:

buono	good	migliore (più buono)
cattivo/brutto	bad	peggiore (più cattivo)
grande	big	maggiore (più grande)
piccolo	small	minore (più piccolo)

The regular form of comparative (shown in brackets) is also possible. While there is little difference between **più buono/migliore** and **più cattivo/peggiore**, there is a difference of meaning between **maggiore** and **più grande**.

Maggiore can mean 'bigger, older/elder' in a physical sense, but can also mean 'greater' in an abstract sense. Similarly, **minore** can mean 'smaller' or 'younger', but can also mean 'less, the lesser' when referring to an abstract quality:

Ho due sorelle. La maggiore si chiama Diana.

I have two sisters. The elder is called Diana.

Noi abbiamo una maggiore responsabilità di voi.

We have a greater responsibility than you.

Il mio fratello minore frequenta la scuola elementare.

My little (younger) brother goes to elementary school.

Lui lavora con minore impegno da quando si è sposato.

He works with less commitment since he got married.

1.4.7 Relative superlatives

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

Silvia è la più brava studentessa della nostra classe.

Silvia is the best student in our class.

Pavarotti è il tenore italiano più famoso del mondo.

Pavarotti is the most famous Italian tenor in the world.

Il Po è il più lungo fiume italiano.

The Po is the longest Italian river.

Again, a few common adjectives have a special form of relative superlative, as well as the regular one:

buono	good	il migliore (il più buono)	the best
cattivo	bad	il peggiore (il più cattivo)	the worst
grande	big	il maggiore (il più grande)	the biggest, oldest
piccolo	small	il minore (il più piccolo)	the smallest, youngest

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

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

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

1.4.8 Absolute superlatives

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

un uomo bellissimo

a very handsome man

un'organizzazione efficientissima

a very efficient organisation

degli importantissimi clienti

some very important clients

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

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

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

dei clienti piuttosto importanti	some rather important clients
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Notice how when modified by the superlative suffix **-issimo**, the endings of the adjectives have the same pattern as adjectives in the first group, ending in **-o/-a/-i/-e** (see 1.4.2), even if they belong to the second group (**-e**, **-i**). So we have:

Adjective in the first group	bello/i/a/e	bellissimo/i/a/e
Adjective in the second group	importante/i	importantissimo/i/a/e

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

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

For the comparative and superlative of adverbs, see 6.3.

1.5 Agreement of noun, article and adjective

Nearly all Italian descriptive adjectives have the same pattern of endings as the nouns (the two patterns are shown above); only a few are invariable (see 1.2.3). Nouns, adjectives and articles used together in a noun group must agree in number and gender.

For example, if we use a feminine singular noun such as **borsa** 'bag', we have to use a feminine singular *article* **la** and *adjective* **rossa**:

La borsa rossa	The red bag
-----------------------	-------------

If we use a masculine plural noun such as **sandali** 'sandals', we have to use a masculine plural *article* **i** and *adjective* **rossi**:

I sandali rossi	The red sandals
------------------------	-----------------

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

Il vestito rosso	I sandali rossi
La borsa rossa	Le scarpe rosse

1.5.1 Noun and adjective of same pattern

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

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

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

1.5.2 Noun and adjective of different patterns

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

Sul tavolo c'è un piatto grande.	There is a large dish on the table.
Ho conosciuto due ragazze inglesi.	I met two English girls.
Il programma era noioso.	The programme was boring.
La radio era rotta.	The radio was broken.

1.5.3 More than one noun (same gender)

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

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

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

1.5.4 More than one noun (different genders)

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

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

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

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

2

Verbs

2.1 General features of verbs

2.1.1 Introduction

Actions, events and situations are expressed by the use of *verbs*. Italian has a complex system of different verb forms. In the first section of this chapter we shall introduce the general features of Italian verbs, both regular and irregular, with a brief explanation of basic grammatical terminology, which will help you to understand these features. In the second section, the different verb forms are illustrated in table form for the regular and the most common irregular verbs and also for the passive forms of the four regular verb types. Finally, in the third section, we look at the different verb moods and tenses individually with brief explanations on their use. Part B of the book illustrates usage more fully.

2.1.2 Grammatical subject

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

Noi partiamo per l’America.

We leave for America.

Franco e Teresa partono per l’America.

Franco and Teresa leave for America.

Sometimes we talk of *facts* rather than *actions*. Here the ‘subject’ of the verb is not ‘doing’ anything, but is the *theme* or main topic expressed by the verb:

Giulia è bionda.

Giulia is blonde.

Questo film dura due ore.

This film lasts two hours.

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

2.1.3 Persons of the verb

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

1	Singular first person (the speaker)	I
2	Singular second person (the person addressed)	you
3	Singular third person (the third party)	he, she, it
4	Plural first person (the speaker + other people)	we
5	Plural second person (the people addressed)	you
6	Plural third person (the third parties)	they

In each tense, Italian verbs have six different endings, depending on who or what is carrying out the action. The different endings immediately identify the 'person' – the subject of the action – unlike in English where only the third person singular has a distinctive ending ('I eat, you eat, he eats'). The first and second persons are usually evident in the context of communication (speaker/writer and receiver):

Quanti anni hai?

How old are you?

Ho trent'anni.

I am thirty.

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

Quanti anni ha Maria?

How old is Maria?

Ha venticinque anni.

She is twenty-five.

Consequently, it is not necessary to use subject pronouns (English 'I, you, he/she', etc.) in Italian, unless we need to give particular emphasis to the subject (see also 8.4).

2.1.4 Verb conjugations

The fact that Italian verbs have a pattern of six distinct verb endings in each of the tenses creates a large number of different forms of the same verb (almost a hundred!) also called *inflexions*. Fortunately, most verbs follow common patterns of change known as *conjugations*. Each verb has an *invariable* part (the 'stem'), which carries its meaning, and an *inflected* part (the 'ending') which identifies the *person*, the *tense*, the *mood*, and other features.

The regular conjugation patterns are shown in the verb tables below (2.2) for easy reference. Traditionally we distinguish three conjugations defined by the form that the verb takes in the *infinitive* (the infinitive is the form used in dictionary entries):

1st conjugation ending in **-are** as **parl-are** 'to speak'

2nd conjugation ending in **-ere** as **cred-ere** 'to believe'

3rd conjugation ending in **-ire** as **dorm-ire** 'to sleep'

The verbs of the 3rd conjugation (ending in **-ire**) follow two distinct patterns, the second of which, with endings in **-isco**, as in **fin-ire/fin-isco** 'to finish', is the most frequent. Both patterns, however, are considered as belonging to the same conjugation, because of the **-ire** ending of the infinitive.

2.1.5 Moods and tenses

Moods

The different forms and uses of Italian verbs are traditionally grouped in seven *moods*. These convey the different characteristics of the actions or facts that the speaker or writer wants to communicate: certainty or doubt, politeness or straightforwardness, command, etc.

The seven moods are:

indicative	infinitive
conditional	participle
subjunctive	gerund
imperative	

The different verb *forms* for each verb mood will be listed below in the tables of regular and irregular conjugations and then described in separate paragraphs. The ways in which moods are used to express distinct *communicative functions* and meanings are illustrated in Part B.

Tenses

The word *tense* denotes the different verb forms that indicate the relationship between the action or event referred to and the time of speaking or writing (or other reference point in time). There is a range of different tenses for each mood of verbs (except the imperative).

In Italian, different tenses are sometimes used to distinguish features of verbs other than time relationships. For example, perfect and imperfect tenses can express the *aspect* of the action (see Chapter 13), while different subjunctive and conditional tenses can express different degrees of doubt, possibility, politeness, etc. (see Sections III and IV).

Simple and compound tenses

Many tenses of Italian verbs are formed using the *past participle* of the main verb along with either **avere** or **essere** as the *auxiliary verb*. These are called compound tenses. One major area of difficulty for students of Italian is knowing which verbs use **avere** in compound tenses and which use **essere**. In order to be able to do this, it is useful to understand the difference between *transitive* and *intransitive* verbs (see 2.1.6 below).

All *passive* forms of verbs (see 2.1.7 below) are compound forms, commonly formed with the auxiliary **essere**.

2.1.6

Transitive/intransitive verbs: use of *avere* or *essere* in compound tenses

The actions that we express by using verbs can be 'completed' with an *object*. There may be a *direct object* as in:

Lucia scrive <i>una lettera</i>.	Lucia writes a letter.
Cerchiamo <i>una casa</i>.	We look for a house.

Here the action of the verb can be completed by answering the question **che cosa?** 'what?'. The direct object of the verb is the noun that can answer this question without the use of a preposition (in this case **una lettera** and **una casa**):

Che cosa scrive Lucia?	What is Lucia writing?
Lucia scrive <i>una lettera</i>.	Lucia is writing a letter.
Che cosa cerchiamo?	What are we looking for?
Cerchiamo <i>una casa</i>.	We're looking for a house.

If we can ask and answer the question **che cosa?**, the verb is *transitive*, and it will use the auxiliary **avere** in compound tenses:

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

But some Italian verbs cannot be completed by a direct object and the question **che cosa?** would not make sense; these are *intransitive verbs* and they normally use **essere** as the auxiliary:

Andiamo in ufficio alle 9.00.	We go to the office at 9.00.
Il treno per Napoli parte alle 6.00.	The train to Naples leaves at 6.00.
Siamo andate in ufficio alle 9.00.	We went to the office at 9.00.
Il treno per Napoli è partito alle 6.00.	The train to Naples left at 6.00.

Because it determines their different uses, especially in the compound tenses, knowing whether verbs are transitive or intransitive is very important. Check by either looking in a dictionary or seeing whether you can ask and answer the question **che cosa?** 'what?'. In dictionaries all verb entries carry the following indications:

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

Speakers of English find it difficult to distinguish transitive from intransitive verbs, because English compound tenses only use the auxiliary 'to have' in the active forms and the auxiliary 'to be' in passive forms ('I have criticised my colleagues', 'I am criticised by my colleagues').

Problems arise also from the fact that many English verbs used transitively and intransitively have an Italian counterpart that can only be used intransitively. Below we show some examples of English phrases that cannot be translated directly into Italian, since the verbs **camminare**, **volare**, **guidare** and **viaggiare** are not generally used transitively:

I'm going to walk the dog.
I'm Sharon. Fly me!
Can you drive me home?
Travel the world with Airmiles!

Verbs that can be used both transitively and intransitively

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

In the first two examples that follow, the subjects of these actions – beginning and finishing – are people and the verbs have direct objects ('the lesson', 'the holidays').

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

Finiamo le vacanze in agosto.
We finish our holidays in August.

In the next two examples (below), the same verbs (this time with 'the lesson' and 'the holidays' as subject) cannot have a direct object:

La lezione comincia alle 11.00.
The lesson begins at 11.00.

Le vacanze *finiscono* in agosto.

The holidays finish in August.

In simple tenses, the forms of the verbs are identical, whether transitive or intransitive. But the compound tenses, such as the past, vary according to whether they are used transitively or intransitively:

Il professore *ha cominciato* la lezione.

The teacher began the lesson.

La lezione è *cominciata* alle 11.00.

The lesson began at 11.00.

Abbiamo *finito* le vacanze in agosto.

We finished the holidays in August.

Le vacanze *sono finite* in agosto.

The holidays finished in August.

When used *transitively*, verbs such as **correre** 'to run', **saltare** 'to jump', **vivere** 'to live' take **avere**:

Hanno corso un grosso rischio.

They ran a great risk.

Oggi *ho saltato* il pranzo.

Today I skipped lunch.

Ho vissuto una vita d'inferno.

I have lived a life of hell.

When used *intransitively*, the choice of **avere/essere** is more a matter of personal choice and linguistic habit:

Ho vissuto/Sono vissuto a Londra per 10 anni.

I lived in London for 10 years.

Giuliana ha corso/è corsa a casa.

Giuliana ran home.

I bambini hanno saltato/sono saltati giù dal letto.

The children jumped down from the bed.

Verbs like these are marked in dictionaries as **v.tr. e intr.** ('verb transitive and intransitive').

Verbs using the auxiliary *avere* even when used intransitively

Generally Italian transitive verbs use the auxiliary **avere**, while intransitive verbs use the auxiliary **essere** in the compound tenses. However, there are quite a few verbs that use the auxiliary **avere** even when used intransitively. Here are the most common:

camminare	to walk	piangere	to cry
dormire	to sleep	riposare	to rest
giocare	to play	viaggiare	to travel
passaggiare	to walk		

Ho camminato per due ore.

I walked for two hours.

Come *hai dormito*?

How did you sleep?

***Avete giocato a carte*?**

Did you play cards?

2.1.7 Voice: active, passive, reflexive

Introduction

'Voice' describes the relationship of the verb action with its subject and object. The different voices or relationships are:

(a) *Active voice*

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

Gianni guarda Luisa.

Gianni watches Luisa.

Il meccanico ripara la macchina.

The mechanic repairs the car.

(b) *Passive voice*

But sometimes the person or object on the *receiving* end of the action is the grammatical subject, and in this case the verb is passive:

Luisa è guardata da Gianni.

Luisa is watched by Gianni.

La macchina è riparata dal meccanico.

The car is repaired by the mechanic.

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

(c) *Reflexive and pronominal voice*

A verb form is reflexive when its subject and object are the same:

Gianni si guarda allo specchio.

Gianni looks at himself in the mirror.

There are other verb forms that are not strictly speaking reflexive but are similar in form.

The following paragraphs look at the *passive* and *reflexive/pronominal* forms in detail.

The passive form

The passive of Italian verbs is formed by the use of the past participle and the auxiliary **essere**, using the same tense as the corresponding active form. The passive conjugation of verbs is shown in the verb tables in 2.2 below. The passive can also be formed using **venire** or **andare** as auxiliary instead of **essere** (see 19.2), or by using the pronoun **si** and the third person of the verb (see 19.4). Only *transitive* verbs can have a passive form (see 2.1.6).

Passive sentences (sentences based on a passive verb) are used when we want to focus on the action itself or the object of an action, rather than on the agent of an action. For more examples on the use of the passive, see 19.2.

The reflexive and pronominal form

Reflexive verb forms

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

Il Sig. Franchi *sta lavando* la macchina.

Mr Franchi is washing the car.

Il Sig. Franchi *si sta lavando*.

Mr Franchi is washing himself.

In the first example above, the direct object of the action of washing is the car. It is separate from the person who is doing it (the subject of the action). In the second example, the subject and the object of the action are the same person (**Il Sig. Franchi**). This is the reflexive form, in which the reflexive pronoun refers to the person carrying out the action, but at the same time is also the object of it.

The position of the reflexive pronoun is the same as that of all other unstressed personal pronouns (see 3.4): usually before the verb; but sometimes attached to the end of it, as with infinitives, gerunds and **voi**, **tu** imperatives:

Prego *si accomodi*.

Please, have a seat (make *yourself* comfortable).

In genere i giovani italiani *si vestono* alla moda.

In general young people in Italy dress fashionably.

Sono le 9.00. Dovete *prepararvi* ad uscire.

It's 9.00. You must prepare *yourselves* to go out.

***Preparati* ad uscire!**

Get *yourself* ready to go out!

In the compound tenses, reflexive verbs are conjugated with the verb **essere**, even though the verbs are *transitive* (cf. **lavare**, **alzare**) and normally take **avere** in the compound tenses. The past participle has to agree with the subject:

Stamattina i bambini *si sono alzati* alle 6.00.

This morning the children got (themselves) up at 6.00.

Mi sono *vestita* con calma.

I got dressed slowly.

Pronominal verb forms

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

The different uses of the *pronominal verb form* will become clear from the examples below.

(a) *Indirect reflexive*

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

Giulio *si* lava le mani.

Giulio washes *his* hands.

***Mi* metto la giacca.**

I put on *my* jacket.

Stamattina non *mi* sono fatto la barba.

This morning I didn't shave (*myself*).

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

Stamattina non *mi* sono fatta la barba.

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

Giulio lava le mani.

Metto la giacca.

Non ho fatto la barba.

(b) *Reciprocal reflexive (each other)*

A reciprocal action is when two people do something to one another:

Arrivederci. *Ci vediamo* domani.

Bye. See you tomorrow.

Mario e Nicoletta *si sposano* domani.

Mario and Nicoletta are getting married tomorrow.

Dove *vi siete conosciuti* tu e Maria?

Where did you and Maria meet (each other)?

***Ci siamo incontrati* in Spagna.**

We met (each other) in Spain.

Note how in the examples above the reflexive pronoun marks an event or action taking place *within* the subject; the two people are at the same time the subject and the object of a reciprocal action.

The same actions can be expressed by the active form, in which case one person is the subject and the other is the object:

Domani Mario *sposa* Nicoletta.

Tomorrow Mario will marry Nicoletta.

Dove (tu) *hai conosciuto* Maria?

Where did you meet Maria?

Ho incontrato il Dott. Rossi in Spagna.

I met Dr Rossi in Spain.

(c) *Emotion or involvement expressed with reflexive pronouns*

In Italian we can use the reflexive pronoun simply to stress the subjective side of an event, the importance of this event to the person (the self) who is involved in it and who is its (grammatical) subject:

Stasera ci vediamo un bel film.

Tonight we'll watch a nice film.

Ho fame! Voglio mangiarmi una pizza!

I'm hungry! I really want a pizza!

Mannaggia! Mi sono dimenticata le chiavi!

Damn! I forgot the keys!

In the examples above, the objects of the verbs are totally separate from, and not part of, the subjects. However the use of the reflexive pronoun shows the *intensity* felt by the people carrying out these actions.

The same sentences can be expressed without using the reflexive pronouns, but then the statements will sound much less emotional, more objective:

Stasera vediamo un bel film.

Voglio mangiare una pizza.

Ho dimenticato le chiavi.

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

accorgersi to realise, to be aware

arrabbiarsi to get angry

divertirsi to have fun

innamorarsi to fall in love

pentirsi to regret, repent

vergognarsi to be ashamed

Sbrigati! Non ti accorgi che è tardi?

Hurry up! Don't you realise that it's late?

Non arrabbiarti!

Don't be angry!

Vi siete divertiti a Roma?

Did you have a good time in Rome?

Giulia si è pentita di aver accettato quel lavoro.

Giulia regretted having accepted that job.

Non vergognarti di questo errore, non è colpa tua.

Don't be ashamed of this mistake. It's not your fault.

(d) *Si passivante*

In some cases the reflexive pronoun **si** is used to give a passive meaning to the active form of the verb (see also 19.4):

Si parla Italiano.

Italian is spoken.

Nella mia famiglia si parlano tre lingue.

In my family three languages are spoken.

Dal terrazzo si vedono i tetti della città.

From the terrace the roofs of the city can be seen
(one can see the roofs).

In the first example, the **si passivante** form appears identical to the **si impersonale** form ('one' speaks Italian) described in 2.1.8. However, when there is a plural subject, as in the second two examples, the verb is plural, so it becomes clear that the construction is passive ('three languages are spoken', 'the roofs can be seen').

2.1.8 Impersonal si

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

Si lavora meglio con il fresco.

One works better in cool weather.

Stasera si va a ballare.

Tonight everybody is going to dance.

A tavola non si invecchia.

One doesn't get old at the dinner table.

(Popular saying, meant to discourage people from hurrying when eating)

Notice that the impersonal form is always formed with **si** and the third person singular of the verb.

2.2 Verb tables

All the examples shown in the tables in 2.2.1 use the auxiliary **avere** in the compound tenses. Certain verbs use **essere** instead (see 2.2.4 **essere** for example). The simplified tables in 2.2.2 show how **essere** is used to form the passive verb forms.

2.2.1 Regular verbs: active conjugations

Here are the complete conjugations of four very common Italian verbs. We call these patterns *regular* because the *stems* of these verbs remain constantly the same (or *invariable*) throughout the whole system of moods and tenses. Understanding the way the *endings* (the *variable* part of the verb) change, will allow us to learn all the possible forms of most Italian verbs. Notice the two patterns of the 3rd conjugation, and remember that the pattern in **-isco** is the most frequent.

	<i>1st conjugation</i>	<i>2nd conjugation</i>	<i>3rd conjugation</i>	
<i>Infinitive (Infinito)</i>				
Present (Presente)	parl-are	cred-ere	dorm-ire	fin-ire
Past (Passato)	avere parlato	avere creduto	avere dormito	avere finito
<i>Indicative (Indicativo)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
1st sing.	parl-o	cred-o	dorm-o	fin-isco
2nd sing.	parl-i	cred-i	dorm-i	fin-isci
3rd sing.	parl-a	cred-e	dorm-e	fin-isce
1st pl.	parl-iamo	cred-iamo	dorm-iamo	fin-iamo
2nd pl.	parl-ate	cred-ete	dorm-ite	fin-ite
3rd pl.	parl-ano	cred-ono	dorm-ono	fin-iscono
Imperfect (Imperfetto)				
	parl-avo	cred-evo	dorm-ivo	fin-ivo
	parl-avi	cred-evi	dorm-ivi	fin-ivi
	parl-ava	cred-eva	dorm-iva	fin-iva
	parl-avamo	cred-evamo	dorm-ivamo	fin-ivamo
	parl-avate	cred-evate	dorm-ivate	fin-ivate
	parl-avano	cred-evano	dorm-ivano	fin-ivano
Compound perfect (Passato prossimo)				
	ho parlato	ho creduto	ho dormito	ho finito
	hai parlato	hai creduto	hai dormito	hai finito
	ha parlato	ha creduto	ha dormito	ha finito
	abbiamo parlato	abbiamo creduto	abbiamo dormito	abbiamo finito
	avete parlato	avete creduto	avete dormito	avete finito
	hanno parlato	hanno creduto	hanno dormito	hanno finito
Simple perfect (Passato remoto)				
	parl-ai	cred-etti (cred-ei)	dorm-ii	fin-ii
	parl-asti	cred-esti	dorm-isti	fin-isti
	parl-ò	cred-ette (cred-è)	dorm-ì	fin-ì
	parl-ammo	cred-emmo	dorm-immo	fin-immo
	parl-aste	cred-este	dorm-iste	fin-iste
	parl-arono	cred-ettero (cred-erono)	dorm-irono	fin-irono
Pluperfect (Trapassato prossimo)				
	avevo parlato	avevo creduto	avevo dormito	avevo finito
	avevi parlato	avevi creduto	avevi dormito	avevi finito
	aveva parlato	aveva creduto	aveva dormito	aveva finito
	avevamo parlato	avevamo creduto	avevamo dormito	avevamo finito
	avevate parlato	avevate creduto	avevate dormito	avevate finito
	avevano parlato	avevano creduto	avevano dormito	avevano finito
Past anterior (Trapassato remoto)				
	ebbi parlato	ebbi creduto	ebbi dormito	ebbi finito
	avesti parlato	avesti creduto	avesti dormito	avesti finito
	ebbe parlato	ebbe creduto	ebbe dormito	ebbe finito

	<i>1st conjugation</i>	<i>2nd conjugation</i>	<i>3rd conjugation</i>	
	parl-are	cred-ere	dorm-ire	fin-ire
	avemmo parlato	avemmo creduto	avemmo dormito	avemmo finito
	aveste parlato	aveste creduto	aveste dormito	aveste finito
	ebbero parlato	ebbero creduto	ebbero dormito	ebbero finito
Simple future (<i>Futuro semplice</i>)				
	parl-erò	cred-erò	dorm-irò	fin-irò
	parl-erai	cred-erai	dorm-irai	fin-irai
	parl-erà	cred-erà	dorm-irà	fin-irà
	parl-eremo	cred-eremo	dorm-iremo	fin-iremo
	parl-erete	cred-erete	dorm-irete	fin-irete
	parl-eranno	cred-eranno	dorm-iranno	fin-iranno
Future perfect (<i>Futuro anteriore</i>)				
	avrò parlato	avrò creduto	avrò dormito	avrò finito
	avrà parlato	avrà creduto	avrà dormito	avrà finito
	avrà parlato	avrà creduto	avrà dormito	avrà finito
	avremo parlato	avremo creduto	avremo dormito	avremo finito
	avrete parlato	avrete creduto	avrete dormito	avrete finito
	avranno parlato	avranno creduto	avranno dormito	avranno finito
<i>Subjunctive (Congiuntivo)</i>				
Present (<i>Presente</i>)				
	parl-i	cred-a	dorm-a	fin-isca
	parl-i	cred-a	dorm-a	fin-isca
	parl-i	cred-a	dorm-a	fin-isca
	parl-iamo	cred-iamo	dorm-iamo	fin-iamo
	parl-iate	cred-iate	dorm-iate	fin-iate
	parl-ino	cred-ano	dorm-ano	fin-iscano
Imperfect (<i>Imperfetto</i>)				
	parl-assi	cred-essi	dorm-issi	fin-issi
	parl-assi	cred-essi	dorm-issi	fin-issi
	parl-assi	cred-essi	dorm-issi	fin-issi
	parl-assimo	cred-essimo	dorm-issimo	fin-issimo
	parl-aste	cred-este	dorm-iste	fin-iste
	parl-assero	cred-essero	dorm-issero	fin-issero
Past (<i>Passato</i>)				
	abbia parlato	abbia creduto	abbia dormito	abbia finito
	abbia parlato	abbia creduto	abbia dormito	abbia finito
	abbia parlato	abbia creduto	abbia dormito	abbia finito
	abbiamo parlato	abbiamo creduto	abbiamo dormito	abbiamo finito
	abbiate parlato	abbiate creduto	abbiate dormito	abbiate finito
	abbiano parlato	abbiano creduto	abbiano dormito	abbiano finito
Pluperfect (<i>Trapassato</i>)				
	avessi parlato	avessi creduto	avessi dormito	avessi finito
	avessi parlato	avessi creduto	avessi dormito	avessi finito
	avessi parlato	avessi creduto	avessi dormito	avessi finito
	avessimo parlato	avessimo creduto	avessimo dormito	avessimo finito
	aveste parlato	aveste creduto	aveste dormito	aveste finito
	avessero parlato	avessero creduto	avessero dormito	avessero finito

	<i>1st conjugation</i>	<i>2nd conjugation</i>	<i>3rd conjugation</i>	
	parl-are	cred-ere	dorm-ire	fin-ire
<i>Conditional (Condizionale)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
	parl-erei	cred-erei	dorm-irei	fin-irei
	parl-eresti	cred-eresti	dorm-iresti	fin-iresti
	parl-erebbe	cred-erebbe	dorm-irebbe	fin-irebbe
	parl-eremmo	cred-eremmo	dorm-iremmo	fin-iremmo
	parl-ereste	cred-ereste	dorm-ireste	fin-ireste
	parl-erebbero	cred-erebbero	dorm-irebbero	fin-irebbero
Past (Passato)				
	avrei parlato	avrei creduto	avrei dormito	avrei finito
	avresti parlato	avresti creduto	avresti dormito	avresti finito
	avrebbe parlato	avrebbe creduto	avrebbe dormito	avrebbe finito
	avremmo parlato	avremmo creduto	avremmo dormito	avremmo finito
	avreste parlato	avreste creduto	avreste dormito	avreste finito
	avrebbero parlato	avrebbero creduto	avrebbero dormito	avrebbero finito
<i>Imperative (Imperativo)</i>				
	tu parl-a	cred-i	dorm-i	fin-isci
	lui parl-i	cred-a	dorm-a	fin-isca
	noi parl-iamo	cred-iamo	dorm-iamo	fin-iamo
	voi parl-ate	cred-ete	dorm-ite	fin-ite
	loro parl-ino	cred-ano	dorm-ano	fin-iscano
<i>Participle (Participio)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
	parl-ante	cred-ente	dorm-ente	fin-ente
Past (Passato)				
	parl-ato	cred-uto	dorm-ito	fin-ito
<i>Gerund (Gerundio)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
	parl-ando	cred-endo	dorm-endo	fin-endo
Past (Passato)				
	avendo parlato	avendo creduto	avendo dormito	avendo finito

2.2.2 Regular verbs: passive conjugation

Here is a simplified table (showing only the third person singular of each tense) of the passive forms of four regular verbs.

Notice how each passive tense is formed by the corresponding tense of the auxiliary **essere** (see below 2.2.4 for the full conjugation of **essere**) and the past participle. In this table the participle is masculine singular, but in actual use it agrees with gender and number of the subject (see below), as do all compound forms of verbs using **essere**.

Remember that only *transitive* verbs (see 2.1.6) can have a passive form (see also 19.2).

	<i>guardare</i>	<i>credere</i>	<i>sentire</i>
Infinitive			
Present	<i>essere guardato/a/i/e</i>	<i>essere creduto/a/i/e</i>	<i>essere sentito/a/i/e</i>
Past	<i>essere stato guardato</i>	<i>essere stato creduto</i>	<i>essere stato sentito</i>
Indicative			
Present	<i>è guardato</i>	<i>è creduto</i>	<i>è sentito</i>
Imperfect	<i>era guardato</i>	<i>era creduto</i>	<i>era sentito</i>
Compound perfect	<i>è stato guardato</i>	<i>è stato creduto</i>	<i>è stato sentito</i>
Simple perfect	<i>fu guardato</i>	<i>fu creduto</i>	<i>fu sentito</i>
Pluperfect	<i>era stato guardato</i>	<i>era stato creduto</i>	<i>era stato sentito</i>
Trapassato remoto	<i>fu stato guardato</i>	<i>fu stato creduto</i>	<i>fu stato sentito</i>
Simple future	<i>sarà guardato</i>	<i>sarà creduto</i>	<i>sarà sentito</i>
Future perfect	<i>sarà stato guardato</i>	<i>sarà stato creduto</i>	<i>sarà stato sentito</i>
Subjunctive			
Present	<i>sia guardato</i>	<i>sia creduto</i>	<i>sia sentito</i>
Imperfect	<i>fosse guardato</i>	<i>fosse creduto</i>	<i>fosse sentito</i>
Past	<i>sia stato guardato</i>	<i>sia stato creduto</i>	<i>sia stato sentito</i>
Pluperfect	<i>fosse stato guardato</i>	<i>fosse stato creduto</i>	<i>fosse stato sentito</i>
Conditional			
Present	<i>sarebbe guardato</i>	<i>sarebbe creduto</i>	<i>sarebbe sentito</i>
Past	<i>sarebbe stato guardato</i>	<i>sarebbe stato creduto</i>	<i>sarebbe stato sentito</i>
Imperative			
Present	<i>sia guardato</i>	<i>sia creduto</i>	<i>sia sentito</i>
Gerund			
Present	<i>essendo guardato</i>	<i>essendo creduto</i>	<i>essendo sentito</i>
Past	<i>essendo stato guardato</i>	<i>essendo stato creduto</i>	<i>essendo stato sentito</i>

2.2.3 Irregular verb conjugations: introduction

Irregular verbs are those that not only change the endings, but also change the stem in some of the tenses. Italian has a large number of irregular verbs, most of them in the 2nd conjugation, including many verbs frequently used in everyday language.

Sometimes the irregular changes of the stem are unique to one verb (as in the case of **avere** and **essere**). Sometimes several verbs may be grouped under a common pattern of irregularity, and this can help to memorise the many (but not always unpredictable) deviations from the 'norm'.

The complete conjugations of five irregular verbs are shown below (2.2.4) in table form. These verbs have been chosen not only because of their frequency of use, but also because in some cases their patterns are followed by several other irregular verbs.

A complete list of irregular verbs in alphabetical order is in Appendix II.

2.2.4 Irregular verbs *avere, essere, dovere, potere, volere*

These five verbs are among the most frequently used in Italian, and also among the most irregular. They share a common feature: they are often used in combination with another verb. The verbs **avere** 'to have' (see 11.5.1) and **essere** 'to be' (see 8.1) are used as *auxiliary* verbs, combining with the *past participles* of other verbs to form all compound tenses, while **dovere** 'must' (see 22.1.5, 23.3.4, 34.6), **potere** 'can' (see 22.1.1, 22.3.1, 22.4.1) and **volere** 'will' (see 21.2.1, 23.2.1) are very often used in combination with another verb in the *infinitive* form, to complement its meaning (see 4.4.5 and Appendix IV). When used in this way, they are called **verbi servili** 'modal verbs'.

Ieri ho dovuto chiudere io l'ufficio.

I had to lock the office, yesterday.

Quando potremo incontrare il Dott. Salvi?

When can we meet Dr Salvi?

Voglio tornare a casa presto stasera.

I want to go home early tonight.

The verb **essere** is highly irregular, with varied stems in almost all tenses. **Avere, dovere, potere, volere** also have varying stems in their present indicative tenses, but a common pattern of contraction in their future and present conditional tense with the vowel **-e-** dropping to give the the future forms **av-rò, dov-rò**, etc. (instead of ***av-erò, *dov-erò**, etc.) and the conditional forms **av-rei, dov-rei, pot-rei, vor-rei** (instead of ***av-erei, *dov-erei, *pot-erei, *vol-erei**).

The asterisk (*) marks an incorrect or non-existent form (see p. xv).

In the tables below, note how the compound tenses of **essere** take **essere** as their auxiliary, and the participle has to agree in number and gender.

Infinitive (Infinito)

Present (Presente)

av-ere	ess-ere	dov-ere	pot-ere	vol-ere
--------	---------	---------	---------	---------

Past (Passato)

avere avuto	essere stato	avere dovuto	avere potuto	avere voluto
-------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------

Indicative (Indicativo)

Present (Presente)

	son-o	dev-o (debbo)	poss-o	vogli-o
ho	son-o	dev-o (debbo)	poss-o	vogli-o
hai	se-i	dev-i	puo-i	vuo-i
ha	è	dev-e	può	vuol-e
abb-iamo	s-iamo	dobb-iamo	poss-iamo	vogl-iamo
av-ete	si-ete	dov-ete	pot-ete	vol-ete
hanno	s-ono	dev-ono (debbono)	poss-ono	vogli-ono

Imperfect (Imperfetto)

av-evo	ero	dov-evo	pot-evo	vol-evo
av-evi	eri	dov-evi	pot-evi	vol-evi
av-eva	era	dov-eva	pot-eva	vol-eva

av-ere	ess-ere	dov-ere	pot-ere	vol-ere
av-evamo	eravamo	dov-evamo	pot-evamo	vol-evamo
av-evate	eravate	dov-evate	pot-evate	vol-evate
av-evano	erano	dov-evano	pot-evano	vol-evano
Compound perfect (Passato prossimo)				
ho avuto	sono stato	ho dovuto	ho potuto	ho voluto
hai avuto	sei stato	hai dovuto	hai potuto	hai voluto
ha avuto	è stato	ha dovuto	ha potuto	ha voluto
abbiamo avuto	siamo stati	abbiamo dovuto	abbiamo potuto	abbiamo voluto
avete avuto	siete stati	avete dovuto	avete potuto	avete voluto
hanno avuto	sono stati	hanno dovuto	hanno potuto	hanno voluto
Simple perfect (Passato remoto)				
ebbi	fui	dov-ei (dovetti)	pot-ei	volli
av-esti	fo-sti	dov-esti	pot-esti	vol-esti
ebbe	fu	dov-é (dovette)	pot-é	vòll-e
av-emmo	fummo	dov-emmo	pot-emmo	vol-emmo
av-este	foste	dov-este	pot-este	vol-este
ebbero	furono	dov-erono (dovettero)	pot-erono (potettero)	vollero
Pluperfect (Trapassato prossimo)				
avevo avuto	ero stato	avevo dovuto	avevo potuto	avevo voluto
avevi avuto	eri stato	avevi dovuto	avevi potuto	avevi voluto
aveva avuto	era stato	aveva dovuto	aveva potuto	aveva voluto
avevamo avuto	eravamo stati	avevamo dovuto	avevamo potuto	avevamo voluto
avevate avuto	eravate stati	avevate dovuto	avevate potuto	avevate voluto
avevano avuto	erano stati	avevano dovuto	avevano potuto	avevano voluto
Past anterior (Trapassato remoto)				
ebbi avuto	fui stato	ebbi dovuto	ebbi potuto	ebbi voluto
avesti avuto	fosti stato	avesti dovuto	avesti potuto	avesti voluto
ebbe avuto	fu stato	ebbe dovuto	ebbe potuto	ebbe voluto
avemmo avuto	fummo stati	avemmo dovuto	avemmo potuto	avemmo voluto
aveste avuto	foste stati	aveste dovuto	aveste potuto	aveste voluto
ebbero avuto	furono stati	ebbero dovuto	ebbero potuto	ebbero voluto
Future (Futuro)				
av-rò	sa-rò	dov-rò	pot-rò	vor-rò
av-rai	sa-rai	dov-rai	pot-rai	vor-rai
av-rà	sa-rà	dov-rà	pot-rà	vor-rà
av-remo	sa-remo	dov-remo	pot-remo	vor-remo
av-rete	sa-rete	dov-rete	pot-rete	vor-rete
av-ranno	sa-ranno	dov-ranno	pot-ranno	vor-ranno
Future perfect (Futuro anteriore)				
avrò avuto	sarò stato	avrò dovuto	avrò potuto	avrò voluto
avrà avuto	sarà stato	avrà dovuto	avrà potuto	avrà voluto
avrà avuto	sarà stato	avrà dovuto	avrà potuto	avrà voluto
avremo avuto	saremo stati	avremo dovuto	avremo potuto	avremo voluto
avrete avuto	sarete stati	avrete dovuto	avrete potuto	avrete voluto
avranno avuto	saranno stati	avranno dovuto	avranno potuto	avranno voluto

av-ere	ess-ere	dov-ere	pot-ere	vol-ere
<i>Subjunctive (Congiuntivo)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
abbia	sia	debba	possa	voglia
abbia	sia	debba	possa	voglia
abbia	sia	debba	possa	voglia
abbiamo	siamo	dobbiamo	possiamo	vogliamo
abbiate	siate	dobbiate	possiate	vogliate
abbiano	siano	debbero	possano	vogliano
Imperfect (Imperfetto)				
av-essi	fo-ssi	dov-essi	pot-essi	vol-essi
av-essi	fo-ssi	dov-essi	pot-essi	vol-essi
av-esse	fo-sse	dov-esse	pot-esse	vol-esse
av-essimo	fo-ssimo	dov-essimo	pot-essimo	vol-essimo
av-este	fo-ste	dov-este	pot-este	vol-este
av-essero	fo-ssero	dov-essero	pot-essero	vol-essero
Past (Passato)				
abbia avuto	sia stato	abbia dovuto	abbia potuto	abbia voluto
abbia avuto	sia stato	abbia dovuto	abbia potuto	abbia voluto
abbia avuto	sia stato	abbia dovuto	abbia potuto	abbia voluto
abbiamo avuto	siamo stati	abbiamo dovuto	abbiamo potuto	abbiamo voluto
abbiate avuto	siate stati	abbiate dovuto	abbiate potuto	abbiate voluto
abbiano avuto	siano stati	abbiate dovuto	abbiate potuto	abbiate voluto
Pluperfect (Trapassato)				
avessi avuto	fossi stato	avessi dovuto	avessi potuto	avessi voluto
avessi avuto	fossi stato	avessi dovuto	avessi potuto	avessi voluto
avessi avuto	fossi stato	avessi dovuto	avessi potuto	avessi voluto
avessimo avuto	fossimo stati	avessimo dovuto	avessimo potuto	avessimo voluto
aveste avuto	foste stati	aveste dovuto	aveste potuto	aveste voluto
avessero avuto	fossero stati	avessero dovuto	avessero potuto	avessero voluto
<i>Conditional (Condizionale)</i>				
Present (Presente)				
av-rei	sa-rei	dov-rei	pot-rei	vor-rei
av-resti	sa-resti	dov-resti	pot-resti	vor-resti
av-rebbe	sa-rebbe	dov-rebbe	pot-rebbe	vor-rebbe
av-remmo	sa-remmo	dov-remmo	pot-remmo	vor-remmo
av-reste	sa-reste	dov-reste	pot-reste	vor-reste
av-rebbero	sa-rebbero	dov-rebbero	pot-rebbero	vor-rebbero
Past (Passato)				
avrei avuto	sarei stato	avrei dovuto	avrei potuto	avrei voluto
avresti avuto	saresti stato	avresti dovuto	avreste potuto	avresti voluto
avrebbe avuto	sarebbe stato	avrebbe dovuto	avrebbe potuto	avrebbe voluto
avremmo avuto	saremmo stati	avremmo dovuto	avremmo potuto	avremmo voluto
avreste avuto	sareste stati	avreste dovuto	avreste potuto	avreste voluto
avrebbero avuto	sarebbero stati	avrebbero dovuto	avrebbero potuto	avrebbero voluto

av-ere	ess-ere	dov-ere	pot-ere	vol-ere
<i>Imperative (Imperativo)</i>				
abbi	sii	n/a	n/a	vogli
abbia	sia	n/a	n/a	voglia
abbiamo	siamo	n/a	n/a	vogliamo
abbiate	siate	n/a	n/a	vogliate
abbiano	siano	n/a	n/a	vogliano

Participle (Participio)

Present (Presente)

avente	(ente)	–	(potente)	volente
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Past (Passato)

avuto	stato	dovuto	potuto	voluto
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Gerund (Gerundio)

Present (Presente)

avendo	essendo	doendo	potendo	volendo
--------	---------	--------	---------	---------

Past (Passato)

avendo avuto	essendo stato	avendo dovuto	avendo potuto	avendo voluto
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2.3 Moods and tenses of verbs

In this section, we look at each mood and tense of verbs individually, with a brief illustration of their use.

2.3.1 Infinitive mood (*infinito*)

The infinitive is the basic form of verbs, and the one used as dictionary entry (in other words, the name of the verb). It is the infinitive form (**-are**, **-ere**, **-ire** or **-rre**) that tells us which conjugation a verb belongs to.

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

*Present**Past*

andare	to go	essere andato/a/i/e	to be gone
vivere	to live	essere vissuto/a/i/e	to have lived
sentire	to hear	avere sentito	to have heard

Irregular infinitives

There are two groups of 2nd conjugation verbs with an irregular infinitive (i.e. not ending in the usual **-ere** form):

(a) *Verbs with infinitive in -urre*

Several verbs have an infinitive in **-urre**, which is a contracted form of the original infinitive ***-ucere** (***producere**, etc.). In fact several of the tenses are based on the original stem in ***-duc-** (see 2.3.3 below for the present indicative forms).

Here are a few examples:

produrre	to produce
introdurre	to introduce, insert
condurre	to conduct, lead
tradurre	to translate

(b) *Verbs with infinitive in -orre*

Several verbs have an infinitive in **-orre**. In their present indicative, these verbs follow the **-go** pattern shown below (2.3.3). Their infinitive is a contracted form of the original ***ponere**:

porre	to place, put
proporre	to propose
supporre	to suppose

Some uses of the infinitive

Verbs used in the infinitive generally *depend* on another verb:

Dobbiamo <i>partire</i> alle 7.00.	We must leave at 7.00.
Sai <i>usare</i> il computer?	Can you use the computer?
Penso di <i>avere capito</i>.	I think I have understood.
Non riesco a <i>sentire</i> la tua voce.	I can't hear your voice.

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

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

An exception to this is when the main verb of the clause is **fare** or **lasciare** (see also 21.7):

<i>Fammi passare.</i>	Let me pass.
<i>Lasciali parlare.</i>	Let them speak.
<i>Ho fatto entrare i signori.</i>	I allowed the gentlemen to come in.

Infinitive as imperative: The infinitive can be used by itself, without depending on another verb, when it is used to tell somebody *not to do* something, i.e. as a *negative imperative*, in the second person singular (see 21.3):

<i>Zitto, non parlare.</i>	Be quiet, don't speak.
<i>Non sporgersi dal finestrino.</i>	Don't lean out of the window.

Note how a phrase that was originally the imperative of a verb used reflexively **non ti scordare** 'do not forget' has now become the name of a flower:

<i>Nontiscordardimé</i>	Forget-me-not
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Infinitive as a noun: Infinitive verbs are often used instead of nouns, sometimes preceded by the definite article, in the masculine singular form:

Lavorare stanca.

Work is tiring.

Mangiare è necessario per vivere.

Eating is necessary for life.

Il sapere degli antichi si trasmette di generazione in generazione.

The wisdom of the ancients is handed down from generation to generation.

For further uses of the infinitive and past infinitive, see also 30.6.1, 30.6.2 and 36.4.2 (*dopo aver*).

2.3.2 Indicative mood: introduction

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

2.3.3 Present indicative (*indicativo presente*)

The forms of the present indicative of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables above (2.2).

In addition to **avere**, **essere**, **dovere**, **potere**, **volere** shown in the verb tables above, some common verbs with irregular present indicative are illustrated below.

Irregular present indicatives: 1st conjugation

Some verbs in the 1st conjugation present potential difficulties with spelling. These are the regular verbs ending in **-care**, **-gare**, such as **cercare**, **pagare**:

In those forms that include **i** (**cerchi**, **cerchiamo**), the **h** indicates the pronunciation with hard **g**:

<i>cercare</i> 'to look for'	<i>pagare</i> 'to pay'
cerco	pago
cerchi	paghi
cerca	paga
cerchiamo	paghiamo
cercate	pagate
cercano	pagano

In the verbs ending in **-ciare** and **-giare**, the **i** before letters **o**, **a** indicates the soft **c** or **g** and *is not pronounced as a separate vowel*. There is no doubling of the **i** in the second person singular and first person plural forms:

<i>cominciare</i> 'to begin'	<i>mangiare</i> 'to eat'
comincio	mangio
cominci	mangi
comincia	mangia
cominciamo	mangiamo
cominciate	mangiate
cominciano	mangiano

The only verbs of the *1st conjugation* with a truly irregular present indicative are:

<i>andare</i> 'to go'	<i>dare</i> 'to give'	<i>fare</i> 'to do'	<i>stare</i> 'to stay'
vado	do	faccio	sto
vai	dai	fai	stai
va	dà	fa	sta
andiamo	diamo	facciamo	stiamo
andate	date	fate	state
vanno	danno	fanno	stanno

Stare is used very often in combination with the gerund in the progressive tenses, for example **sto scrivendo** 'I am writing' (see also 12.3).

Irregular present indicatives: 2nd conjugation

Verbs ending in *-cere*, *-gere*, *-scere* have hard *c*, *g*, *sc* sounds before endings with the vowel *o* but a soft *c*, *g*, *sc* sound before the vowels *e*, *i*:

<i>vincere</i> 'to win'	<i>piangere</i> 'to cry'	<i>conoscere</i> 'to know'
vinco	piango	conosco
vinci	piangi	conosci
vince	piange	conosce
vinciamo	piangiamo	conosciamo
vincete	piangete	conoscete
vincono	piangono	conoscono

Many verbs in the *2nd conjugation* are irregular in the present indicative tense as well as in other tenses (see also verb tables above, 2.2). Although some verbs appear irregular, their forms are in fact regular but are based on an older form of the infinitive (see 2.3.1), for example:

<i>tradurre</i> 'to translate'	<i>bere</i> 'to drink'
traduc-o	bev-o
traduc-i	bev-i
traduc-e	bev-e
traduc-iamo	bev-iamo
traduc-ete	bev-ete
traduc-ono	bev-ono

Here are a few more irregular 2nd conjugation verbs.

The verb **sapere** is irregular both in the ending and in its stem changes:

<i>sapere</i> 'to know'
so
sai
sa
sappiamo
sapete
sanno

The verb **scegliere** has a pattern in which the stem alternates between **lg** and **gl**:

scegliere 'to choose'

scelgo
scegli
sceglie
scegliamo
scegliete
scelgono

Verbs following a similar pattern to **scegliere** are: **accogliere** 'to welcome', **accolgo/accogliamo**; **cogliere** 'to pick', **colgo/cogliamo**; **raccogliere** 'to collect', **raccolgo/raccogliamo**; **sciogliere** 'to melt', **sciolgo/sciogliamo**; and **togliere** 'to take away', **tolgo/togliamo**.

The following verbs have in common a pattern in which some persons are formed with **g** and some without (see Appendix II for a complete list). The verb **tenere** changes not only its endings but the stem **ten/tien**:

<i>rimanere</i> 'to remain'	<i>tenere</i> 'to keep'	<i>porre</i> 'to pose'
rimango	tengo	pongo
rimani	tieni	poni
rimane	tiene	pone
rimaniamo	teniamo	poniamo
rimanete	tenete	ponete
rimangono	tengono	pongono

Verbs following the pattern of **tenere** are: **mantenere** 'to maintain'; **ottenere** 'to obtain'; **ritenere** 'retain'; **sostenere** 'to sustain'; and other similar compounds.

Verbs following the pattern of **porre** are: **imporre** 'to impose'; **proporre** 'to propose'; **supporre** 'to suppose'; etc.

Irregular present indicatives: 3rd conjugation

The most important irregular verbs of the 3rd conjugation are the following:

<i>dire</i> 'to say'	<i>salire</i> 'to go up'	<i>uscire</i> 'to go out'	<i>venire</i> 'to come'
dico	salgo	esco	vengo
dici	sali	esci	vieni
dice	sale	esce	viene
diciamo	saliamo	usciamo	veniamo
dite	salite	uscite	venite
dicono	salgono	escono	vengono

The verb **uscire** has the stem change **esc-/usc-**. **Riuscire** 'to succeed' follows the same pattern (**riesco/riusciamo**). The verb **venire** has stem change **ven-/vien-**. Other verbs following its pattern are: **avvenire** 'to happen'; **divenire** 'to become'; **rinvenire** 'to find'; **svenire** 'to faint'; etc.

Uses of the present indicative

Verbs in the present indicative express actions, facts and situations that happen or are going on *at the moment when we speak or write*. This applies to:

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

Mara, il telefono suona. Rispondi, per favore.

Mara, the phone is ringing. Please answer it!

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

Nel mio ufficio il telefono suona continuamente di mattina.

In my office the phone rings continuously in the mornings.

La domenica le campane della chiesa suonano alle 8 meno 10.

On Sundays the church bells ring at 10 to 8.

Gli Italiani fumano più degli inglesi.

Italians smoke more than English people.

Le balene sono mammiferi.

Whales are mammals.

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

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

Domani arrivano gli ospiti spagnoli.

Tomorrow the Spanish guests are coming.

L'anno prossimo compriamo una macchina nuova.

Next year we'll buy a new car.

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

Nel 1870 Roma diventa capitale d'Italia.

Rome became the capital of Italy in 1870.

Al quinto rigore Baggio sbaglia e l'Italia perde il Campionato del Mondo.

At the fifth penalty Baggio missed the penalty kick and Italy lost the World Cup.

2.3.4 Future indicative (*indicativo futuro*)**Forms**

The forms of the future indicative of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables. Several verbs have an irregular future indicative. In most cases, the irregularity consists in the *contraction* of the stem (***anderò** to **andrò**, etc.) and in some cases the subsequent assimilation of the consonant groups **nr**, **lr**, etc. to **rr** as in the irregular infinitives (**bere**, **porre**, **trarre**) already seen above:

andare	andrò	avere	avrò
bere	berrò	cadere	cadrò
dovere	dovrò	potere	potrò
rimanere	rimarrò	sapere	saprò
vedere	vedrò	venire	verrò
volere	vorrò		

See Appendix II for further examples and translations.

A similar *contracted* pattern can be seen in the present tense of the conditional of the same verbs **andare** (**andrei**), **bere** (**berrei**), **potere** (**potrei**).

The future of **essere** is very irregular: **sarò**, **sarai**, **sarà**, etc.

Uses of the future

The future indicative tense is naturally mainly used to refer to facts that *will* happen in a time subsequent to the time when we speak. However Italians use this tense sparingly, often preferring to use the present tense instead (see 14.3).

The future tense is also used in Italian to express probability, as in English 'it will be . . .', with no relation to the future time (see 26.4.2):

Che ore sono? Saranno le tre meno dieci.

What time is it? It must be (about) ten to three.

Suona il telefono. Chi sarà? Sarà Davide.

The phone is ringing. Who could it possibly be? It will be Davide.

2.3.5 Future perfect (*futuro anteriore*)

Forms

The future perfect is a *compound* tense formed of the future tense of the auxiliary **avere** or **essere** together with the past participle of the verb. The forms of the future perfect are shown in the verb tables (2.2).

Uses of the future perfect

The future perfect is used to indicate facts or actions that will take place in the future (in relation to the moment when we are speaking or writing), but *before* facts or actions that will happen even later; it is a sort of 'past in the future':

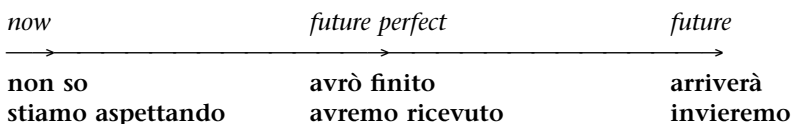
Non so se avrò finito il lavoro quando arriverà il cliente.

I don't know whether I will have finished the job by the time the customer comes.

Stiamo aspettando la fattura. Quando avremo ricevuto la fattura, Le invieremo i soldi.

We are waiting for the invoice. When we've received the invoice, we'll send you the money.

Each of the three verbs in these two sentences could be illustrated by a time sequence:



The examples show the position in time of the actions expressed by the future perfect (**avrò finito/avremo ricevuto**): they are in the *future* with reference to the moment of speaking, but are in the *past* in relation to a second reference point placed in the future (**arriverà, invieremo**). More examples of the use of the future perfect can be found in 14.6 and 26.4.2.

2.3.6 Imperfect indicative (*indicativo imperfetto*)

Forms

The forms of the imperfect of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables. The imperfect indicative is formed by adding the endings **-avo, -evo, -ivo** (for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd conjugations respectively) to the stem of the verb. It is the most regular of all the tenses of Italian verbs.

The imperfect of the 2nd conjugation verbs with contracted infinitive in **-urre** is regular, but follows the pattern of the stem in **duc-**, giving **produrre: produc-evo, produc-evi . . . ; tradurre: traduc-evo, traduc-evi . . . ;** etc.

Similarly, the verbs with contracted infinitive in **-orre** have a regular imperfect based on the stem in **pon-**: **disporre: dispon-evo; imporre: impon-evo;** etc.

The contracted infinitive **bere** has a regular imperfect **bev-evo**.

The only true irregular imperfect is that of **essere: ero, eri . . .** (see verb tables).

Uses of the imperfect

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

Here is a summary of the most common cases when the imperfect indicative is used:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Erano già le 5.00 quando hai telefonato

It was already 5.00 when you phoned

- (e) To refer to the 'future in the past', instead of using the compound conditional (see Chapter 14 and 30.5.2).

La settimana scorsa mi hanno detto che tu venivi (saresti venuto) ieri.

Last week I was told that you'd come yesterday.

In a few cases the imperfect indicative is *not* used to refer to past time, but as a substitute for a different verb mood (such as conditional or subjunctive):

- (f) To express a polite request or statement in place of the present conditional (see 23.2.2) or express embarrassment:

Volevo (vorrei) delle rose.

I'd like some roses.

Buongiorno, cercavo un libro di Umberto Eco.

Good morning, I'm looking for a book by Umberto Eco.

Mi scusi, non volevo disturbare.

Excuse me, I don't want to disturb you.

- (g) In hypothetical clauses ('if' clauses) where the 'if' condition is unlikely to happen, or can no longer happen, as a replacement for the compound conditional and subjunctive (see 38.3.2). This is more common in *spoken* than in written Italian.

Se andavi più piano non facevi l'incidente.

If you had gone more slowly, you wouldn't have had the accident.

For the use of the imperfect of modal verbs **dovere**, **potere**, **volere**, see 13.6.8.

2.3.7 Compound perfect (*passato prossimo*)

Forms

The compound perfect is formed by the present indicative of the auxiliary **avere** or **essere** and the past participle (see verb tables in 2.2).

Of the two forms of the perfect (compound and simple) the compound is by far the more frequently used, especially in spoken language. The uses of the compound perfect and other past tenses are illustrated in Part B.

Uses of the compound perfect

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

- (a) The past events are very near to the present time (see also 13.3):

Ho appena preso un caffè.

I've just had a coffee.

Avete capito quello che ho detto?

Did you understand what I said?

- (b) The facts or events, even if they are in the distant past, still have some relationship with the present time or with the person who is speaking (see also 13.4.1):

Siamo venuti in Inghilterra vent'anni fa.

We came to England 20 years ago (and we are still here).

La Basilica di S. Pietro è stata costruita nel Cinquecento.

St. Peter's Basilica was built in the 16th century

(and you can still see it now)

Because of these characteristics the compound perfect is very frequently used in conversational Italian, allowing the speaker to relate the facts of the past to the present.

2.3.8 Simple perfect (*passato remoto*)

Forms

The forms of the simple perfect (*passato remoto*) of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables (2.2).

Note in particular that the simple perfect of certain 2nd conjugation verbs has alternative forms for the first person singular and third person singular and plural:

credei/credetti	I believed
credé/credette	he/she believed
crederono/credettero	they believed

The simple perfect is often irregular. The most common irregularity is the short **-si** ending alternating with the longer form based on the stem of the infinitive, e.g. **chiesi/chiedesti, posi/ponesti**:

<i>chiedere</i> 'to ask'	<i>dire</i> 'to say'	<i>prendere</i> 'to take'	<i>vivere</i> 'to live'
chie-si	dis-si	pre-si	vis-si
chied-esti	dic-esti	prend-esti	viv-esti
chie-se	dis-se	pre-se	vis-se
chied-emmo	dic-emmo	prend-emmo	viv-emmo
chied-este	dic-este	prend-este	viv-este
chie-sero	dis-sero	pre-sero	vis-sero

Most verbs with this irregular pattern are 2nd conjugation verbs, and in some cases (for example **mettere, muovere, sapere, vedere**) the stem has a vowel change as well:

mettere:	misì/mettestì
muovere:	mossì/muovestì
sapere:	seppi/sapestì
vedere:	vidì/vedestì

A complete list of all these irregular verbs is in Appendix II.

There are a few verbs in the 1st and 3rd conjugations which show a similar pattern:

<i>fare</i>	<i>venire</i>	<i>dare</i>
fecì	venni	diedi
facesti	venisti	desti
fece	venne	diede
facemmo	venimmo	demmo
faceste	veniste	deste
fecero	vennero	diedero

Note the extremely irregular forms of:

avere	ebbi/avesti
essere	fui/ fosti
piacere	piacqui/piacesti

Uses of simple perfect

We use the simple perfect (*passato remoto*) whenever we want to express the distance of past events, not just in terms of time, but mainly in terms of their ‘separateness’ (remoteness) from the present situation (see 13.4.1):

Vissi male a Milano. Perciò sono tornato a Napoli.

I had a bad time living in Milan. That’s why I came back to Naples (and I am still here).

I dinosauri scomparvero 65 milioni d’anni fa.

Dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago.

In spoken Italian, the simple perfect tends to be used very seldom in the north of Italy, but quite often in Tuscany, and in central and southern Italy, in the contexts mentioned above. In written language, the simple perfect is very common, especially in narrative and historical language, because of the precise way in which it defines the past (13.4.2). Typically it is the tense of fairy tales, when events are placed in a far and abstract past, in a different dimension separate from the reality of the present:

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

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

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

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

– Non mi picchiar tanto forte!

(Collodi, *Pinocchio*, I Libri di Gulliver, 1983)

2.3.9 Pluperfect (*trapassato prossimo*)

Forms

The pluperfect can be thought of as the 'past of the past'. It is formed by the past participle and the imperfect of **avere** or **essere**. The forms of the pluperfect of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables.

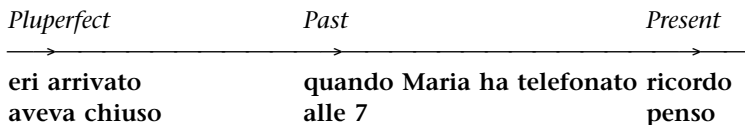
Uses of the pluperfect

It is used to refer to an event previous to an event placed in the past. See also 30.5.2, 30.6.2, 31.3.1, 34.3.1 (expressing reason), 36.4.2 (time clause).

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

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

If we place the two examples on a 'time line' it is easier to see where the pluperfect stands in the sequence of events:



2.3.10 Past anterior (*trapassato remoto*)

Forms

The **trapassato remoto** is formed by the simple perfect of the auxiliary **avere** or **essere** and the past participle. The forms of the **trapassato remoto** of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables.

Uses of the past anterior

The **trapassato remoto** is the form of pluperfect used when the main event or action is expressed by a verb in the simple perfect. Its use is rare and generally limited to the literary and more formal registers of the written language, and it is always introduced by a conjunction such as **dopo**, **appena** (see also 36.4.3):

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

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

2.3.11 Conditional mood (*condizionale*): introduction

The conditional mood is used to express a fact, action or event which can/will only take place *subject* to some *condition*. The forms of the conditional for the three regular conditions are shown in the verb tables above.

There are two tenses of the conditional mood: the present and the past.

2.3.12 Present conditional (*condizionale presente*)

Forms

For the regular verbs, the present conditional is formed by adding the specific endings **-rei, -resti**, etc. to the stem of the verb: the forms of the conditional of the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables above.

The verbs with an irregular present conditional show the same pattern already seen for the future indicative (see 2.3.4 above), with the contracted forms:

avere	<i>avrei</i>	dovere	<i>dovrei</i>
potere	<i>potrei</i>	volere	<i>vorrei</i>
andare	<i>andrei</i>	venire	<i>verrei</i>
bere	<i>berrei</i>	sapere	<i>saprei</i>
vedere	<i>vedrei</i>		

The only truly irregular conditional is that of **essere**: **sarei, saresti**, etc. (see 2.2.4 above).

Uses of the present conditional

- (a) The condition may be explicitly mentioned, usually by using a clause beginning with **se** 'if'. In Italian this is called **periodo ipotetico** (see 38.2 and 38.3). This type of sentence is made up of two parts: the condition and the consequence. The *condition* is introduced by **se** 'if such and such were to happen' and expressed by a verb in the indicative or, more often, the subjunctive mood. The *consequence*, if the condition were to be met, is expressed by a verb in the indicative or, more often, *conditional mood* 'this would be the result'.

Se fossi ricco, non lavorerei.

If I were rich, I wouldn't work.

Se Lei mi stimasse davvero, mi darebbe più responsabilità.

If you really valued me, you would give me more responsibility.

- (b) The conditional is often used to express politeness, when making a request. The politeness of these requests lies in their being subject to some implicit condition: 'I'd like a coffee (if it is available)', 'Could you open the window (if it isn't too much trouble)'. For further examples, see 22.1.1, 22.4.1, 22.4.3, 23.2.1 and 21.5.3.

Vorrei un caffè.

I would like a coffee.

Potrebbe aprire la finestra?

Could you open the window?

- (c) The condition is also used to 'soften' a statement, for example to express an opinion less forcefully (see also 23.3.4 and 24.2.4):

Secondo me *dovresti* riposarti.

I think you should rest.

Io *sarei* per la soluzione più facile.

I would be for the easier option.

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

La ragazza *sarebbe* la figlia di Beckham.

Apparently, the girl is the daughter of Beckham.

2.3.13 Past conditional (*condizionale passato*)**Forms**

The past conditional is formed by the present conditional of **avere** or **essere** and the past participle of the verb (see verb tables above, 2.2). The past conditional of the three regular conjugations is:

parlare	avrei parlato
credere	avrei creduto
partire	sarei partito

Uses of the past conditional

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

- (a) It is used to express a consequence in a conditional sentence (see also 38.3.2):

Ieri non sarei arrivato in ritardo se avessi preso il treno.
I wouldn't have been late yesterday if I had taken the train.

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

Avrei preferito un caffè.
I would have preferred a coffee.

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

Penso che la Sig.ra Prati avrebbe dovuto pagare in contanti.
I think Mrs Prati should have paid in cash.

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

Secondo La Repubblica, sarebbero arrivati duecento clandestini sull'isola.
According to *La Repubblica*, two hundred illegal immigrants arrived on the island.

- (e) This tense is also used to express an action which took place or was to take place after a point referred to in the past, the so-called 'future in the past' (see 30.5.1, 31.1.2, 31.3.1):

La mia segretaria mi ha detto che avrebbe prenotato l'albergo subito.
My secretary told me that she would reserve the hotel immediately.

Dieci anni fa non immaginavo che tu avresti fatto una carriera così brillante.
Ten years ago I didn't imagine that you would have such a brilliant career.

2.3.14 Subjunctive mood (*congiuntivo*): introduction

The subjunctive mood is mainly used to express something that is uncertain rather than definite, subjective rather than objective or a concept rather than a reality. Its most common use is in expressions of doubt, hope or supposition (see 2.3.15 a):

Non sono certo che mi abbiano capito.
I'm not certain they understood me.

Speriamo che lui venga in tempo.

Let's hope he'll arrive in time.

Penso che siano le tre e venti.

I think it must be twenty past three.

Verbs in the subjunctive mood always depend directly or indirectly on another verb, linked by **che** (as in the examples above) or by another conjunction, to form a complex sentence. Only in a few cases is the subjunctive used by itself, without depending on another verb, for example in the imperative forms (see 21.2.1, 21.2.4).

The 'uncertain' or 'subjective' nature of the verb phrase lies: (i) in the *main* verb on which the subjunctive depends, as in the examples above; (ii) in the *conjunction* that links the two verbs, as in the examples below (see also 2.3.15 b); or (iii) in the *pronoun* or *adjective*, as in the final example below:

Ti scrivo affinché tu sappia la verità.

I write to let you know the truth.

Nonostante le abbia scritto un mese fa, Paola non mi ha ancora risposto.

Although I wrote to her a month ago Paola hasn't yet replied (to me).

Qualsiasi canzone lei canti è sempre un piacere ascoltarla.

Whatever song she sings, it is always a pleasure to listen to her.

But often it is the subjunctive itself that provides a 'subjective' emphasis to what we say. The choice of indicative or subjunctive to convey the same facts, can shift the meaning of a sentence from the objective to the subjective, from the reality to the idea. Let's see two examples:

(a) **Ho bisogno dell'assistente che parla italiano.**

I need the assistant who speaks Italian. (just that particular one who is known to speak Italian).

Ho bisogno di un assistente che parli italiano.

I need an assistant who can speak Italian. (someone who might be able to speak Italian)

The first of the two statements above refers to a known person, actually in existence (as shown also by the use of the definite article *l'assistente*) and the statement sounds like a definite request that I expect to be met. In the second, the person I need may or may not be available, and therefore my need is presented as a 'subjective' desire, an ideal, that cannot necessarily be met (see also 9.3).

(b) **Sembra che l'Olivetti stia per lanciare un nuovo computer.**

It seems that Olivetti is about to launch a new computer.

Sembra che l'Olivetti stia per lanciare un nuovo computer.

It seems that Olivetti is about to launch a new computer.

In the first of the two sentences above, the news is presented as almost certain, while the second sentence, by using the subjunctive, implies a higher degree of doubt or uncertainty about the reliability of the news. These and other uses of the subjunctive in different contexts are illustrated fully in Chapters 30 to 39 (see also 40.6.1).

It is often said that the subjunctive mood is used ever less frequently in modern Italian. It is true that Italians tend to associate the frequent use of the subjunctive

with the more formal, sophisticated and in particular written registers of the language to express nuances of meaning. However using the indicative instead of the subjunctive not only conveys a more informal style, but also a different meaning, and may well change substantially the message that we want to convey.

2.3.15 Uses of the subjunctive

In some cases, it is almost compulsory to use the subjunctive, even in the most familiar context of communication. This is particularly true when there is an explicit reference to the subjective value of a statement:

(a) After *verbs* expressing hope, doubt, expectation, desire, fear, emotion such as:

sperare	to hope	desiderare	to wish
illudersi	to delude oneself	dubitare	to doubt
temere	to fear	sospettare	to suspect

Spero che abbiate capito.

I hope you understood.

Temo che sia troppo tardi.

I'm afraid it is too late.

Non illuderti che il Napoli possa vincere il campionato.

Don't delude yourself that 'Napoli' can win the championship.

Non avrei mai sospettato che tu fossi capace di mentire.

I would never have suspected you of being able to lie.

See also 25.3.2, 25.4 and 26.2-4.

(b) After certain *conjunctions* (the list below is not a complete list):

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

Prima che sia troppo tardi, dobbiamo pagare il telefono.

We must pay the phone bill, before it is too late.

Parlava come se avesse il raffreddore.

He was speaking as if he had a cold.

Dovete sbrigarvi, a meno che non vogliate fare tardi.

You must hurry up, unless you want to be late.

Malgrado fossero in tre non sono riusciti a sollevare l'armadio.

Although there were three of them, they couldn't lift the cupboard.

Sebbene siano stanchi, i ragazzi vogliono uscire stasera.

The kids want to go out tonight, although they're tired.

Se fossi in te non le parlerei.

If I were you I wouldn't speak to her.

See also uses of subjunctive in purpose clauses (33.3), concession (39.3), time *prima che* (36.3.2).

The most common conjunction used to introduce the subjunctive, however, is *se* 'if' in the so-called **periodo ipotetico**. Whether to use the subjunctive after *se*, however, is a matter of choice (see also 38.3–4).

- (c) When the verb is introduced by an indefinite pronoun or adjective (see 3.9) such as **chiunque**, **qualunque**, **qualsiasi** (see also 39.3.5):

Chiunque *bussi* alla porta, non aprire.

Whoever knocks at the door, don't open it.

Sono pronta a fare qualsiasi cosa tu mi *chieda*.

I'm ready to do whatever you ask me to do.

Even in the examples shown in this paragraph, many Italians might use the indicative instead of the subjunctive. However it is useful to get into the habit of using the subjunctive in the 'essential' cases and is especially important for those who need to communicate formally in Italian.

2.3.16 Tenses of the subjunctive

Except in a few cases, verbs in the subjunctive mood depend on another verb (i.e. the main verb of a complex sentence). This means that we also need to look at how each *tense* of the subjunctive expresses a different *time relationship* with the main verb.

There are four tenses of the subjunctive: *present*, *perfect*, *imperfect* and *pluperfect*. The regular conjugations of these tenses are shown in the verb tables above (2.2).

2.3.17 Present subjunctive (*congiuntivo presente*)

Forms

The regular conjugation of the present subjunctive has the same ending in the three singular persons: **-i/-i/-i** for the 1st conjugation and **a/-a/-a** for the 2nd and 3rd conjugations:

guardare	guard- <i>i</i>
credere	cred- <i>a</i>
dormire	dorm- <i>a</i>
finire	finisc- <i>a</i>

Note the following irregular verb forms:

avere (<i>abbia</i>)	essere (<i>sia</i>)
andare (<i>vada</i>)	dare (<i>dia</i>)
fare (<i>faccia</i>)	stare (<i>stia</i>)
dire (<i>dica</i>)	

See also Appendix II.

Uses of the present subjunctive

The present subjunctive is used when we want to mention something in the present or in the future (there is no future tense in the subjunctive). It is almost always linked to a main verb in the *present* tense:

Spero che tu *capisca*.

I hope you understand.

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

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

A more detailed study of the time relationship of the subjunctive and the verb it depends on is found in Chapter 30.

2.3.18 Perfect subjunctive (*congiuntivo passato*)

Forms

The perfect subjunctive is formed by the present subjunctive of the auxiliary **avere** or **essere** and the past participle. The forms of perfect subjunctive for the three regular conjugations are found in the verb tables above (2.2).

Uses of the perfect subjunctive

The perfect subjunctive is used to refer to a past fact linked to a main verb, usually in the present tense:

Mi sembra che ieri il telefono non abbia funzionato.
I think the phone must have been out of order yesterday.

Credo che l'agenzia di viaggio ci abbia prenotato l'aereo ieri.
I think the travel agency reserved our flight yesterday.

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

2.3.19 Imperfect subjunctive (*congiuntivo imperfetto*)

Forms

The ending of the imperfect subjunctive is the same for both first and second persons singular: **-assi, -essi, -issi** in the **-are, -ere, -ire** conjugations respectively (**io/tu guardassi, cred-essi, dorm-issi, fin-issi**). The forms of the imperfect subjunctive for the three regular conjugations are found in the verb tables above.

Irregular forms to be noted are:

essere	fossi	dare	dessi
fare	facessi	stare	stessi
bere	bevessi	dire	dicessi

See also Appendix II.

Uses of the imperfect subjunctive

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

Speravo che tu capissi.
I hoped you understood.

Ieri mi sembrava che il telefono non funzionasse.
Yesterday I thought the phone was out of order.

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

Vorrei che voi *parlaste* con il capo.

I'd like you to speak to the boss.

Sarebbe bene che domani *arrivasse* in orario.

It would be better if he arrived on time tomorrow.

It is also used to express a condition unlikely to be met (see 38.3.1):

Compreresti una Rolls Royce, se *avessi* i soldi?

Would you buy a Rolls Royce, if you had the money?

2.3.20 Pluperfect subjunctive (*congiuntivo trapassato*)

Forms

The pluperfect subjunctive is formed by the imperfect subjunctive of **avere** or **essere** and the past participle. The forms of the pluperfect subjunctive for the regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables above (2.2).

Uses of the pluperfect subjunctive

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

Speravo che *avessi capito*.

I hoped you had understood.

It is also used to express a condition that can no longer be met (see 38.3.2):

Se l'agenzia ci *avesse prenotato* l'aereo un mese fa, avremmo pagato di meno.

If the travel agency had already reserved our flight a month earlier, we would have paid less.

2.3.21 Other uses of the subjunctive

In a few cases the subjunctive is used by itself without depending on another verb.

- (a) To give an order or invite somebody to do something, when using the polite **Lei/Loro** form. In this function the present subjunctive serves as the third person form of the imperative, both singular and plural (see 21.2.1 and 21.2.4):

Prego, *dica*!

Can I help you? (lit. 'Please, tell me')

Prego, si *accomodi*.

Please, have a seat.

Esca immediatamente!

Get out immediately!

Prego signori, *vengano di qua*.

Please come over this way, gentlemen.

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

Dio *salvi* la Regina.

God save the Queen.

Viva l'Italia!

Long live Italy!

Dio ti *benedica*.

God bless you.

Ti *venga* un accidente.

Drop dead.

The verb can be introduced by the words **magari** 'if only' or **se** 'if':

Magari potessi andare in vacanza . . .

If only I could go on holiday . . .

Se avessi vent'anni!

If I were 20 years old!

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

(Spero che) ti venga un accidente.

(I hope that) something horrible happens to you.

(Mi auguro che) Dio ti benedica.

(I wish that) God would bless you.

Se avessi vent'anni (farei tante cose).

If I were young (I would do lots of things).

2.3.22 Imperative mood (*imperativo*)

Forms

The forms of the imperative for the three regular conjugations are shown in the verb tables above (2.2). The imperative only has one tense, the present (see Tenses, p. xxiv). The imperative is the mood we use when we want to give orders or to ask somebody to do something, so it has no first person singular form.

Ama il prossimo tuo come te stesso.

Love your neighbour like yourself.

Credetemi, sono sincero.

Believe me, I am sincere.

Prendimi l'ombrello, per favore.

Please, get my umbrella for me.

Aiuto, datemi una mano.

Help, give me a hand.

The polite 'you' form, the third person **Lei/Loro**, uses the present subjunctive as a polite 'imperative' form to give an order or to invite or advise someone to do something (see subjunctive above 2.3.21):

Signora, guardi che belle scarpe.

Look what beautiful shoes, madam.

Dott. Bianchi, finisca quella lettera e poi venga da me.

Dr Bianchi, could you please finish that letter and then come to see me.

Mi dia il telefono, per favore.

Give me the telephone, please.

Note how in the first set of examples above, the **tu** or **voi** form is combined with any pronoun used, whether direct or indirect object (see also 3.4).

For more illustrations of the use of the imperative, see 21.1–4.

2.3.23 Some irregular imperatives

A few verbs have an irregular imperative, in the **tu** form:

avere	<i>abbi</i>
essere	<i>sii</i>
sapere	<i>sappi</i>

With the five verbs **andare**, **dare**, **dire**, **fare** and **stare**, the shortened imperative forms are normally marked nowadays with an apostrophe, to distinguish them from the prepositions **da**, **di** or the third person singular of the present indicative **da**, **fa**, **sta**. These shortened imperative forms are very often replaced by the second person indicative forms **fai**, **vai**, etc.:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Imperative</i>	<i>Indicative</i>
andare	va'	vai
dare	da'	dai
dire	di'	dici
fare	fa'	fai
stare	sta'	stai

***Abbi* pazienza!**

Be patient!

***Sii* prudente!**

Be prudent (drive carefully)!

***Dammi* la penna, per favore!**

Please give me the pen.

***Fammi* un piacere.**

Do me a favour.

***Vallo* a trovare.**

Go to see him.

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

2.3.24 Negative imperative

To ask somebody *not* to do something we use **non** + infinitive, if using the second person singular (**tu**). For all other forms of the imperative, simply add **non**.

Teresa, *non giocare* in casa con la palla.

Teresa, don't play indoors with the ball.

Bambini, *non andate* lontano.

Children, don't go far away.

Franco, *non preoccuparti*.

Don't worry, Franco.

Non si *preoccupi*, avvocato.

Don't worry, (lawyer).

2.3.25 Gerund (*gerundio*)

Forms

The present gerund is formed by adding the endings **-ando** for the 1st conjugation and **-endo** for the 2nd and 3rd conjugations to the verb stem:

am-ando

ved-endo

part-endo

fin-endo

The past gerund is formed by the gerund of the auxiliary **avere** or **essere** and the past participle:

amare	avendo amato
vedere	avendo visto
partire	essendo partito/a/i/e
finire	avendo finito

Uses of the gerund

The gerund is always used in connection with another verb on which it is closely dependent. The subject of the gerund must be the same as that of the main verb (unless explicitly stated).

The present gerund indicates an action happening at the same time as that of the main verb, be it past, present or future:

Il Prof. Neri parla *leggendo* gli appunti.

Prof. Neri speaks reading from notes.

Il Prof. Neri ha parlato *leggendo* gli appunti.

Prof. Neri spoke reading from notes.

Il Prof. Neri parlerà *leggendo* gli appunti.

Prof. Neri will speak reading from notes.

The past gerund indicates an action that took place before that of the main verb:

***Avendo distribuito* gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri parla in italiano.**
Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri speaks in Italian.

***Avendo distribuito* gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri ha parlato in italiano.**

Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri spoke in Italian.

***Avendo distribuito* gli appunti in inglese, il Prof. Neri parlerà in italiano.**
Having distributed notes in English, Prof. Neri will speak in Italian.

2.3.26 Other uses of the gerund

English '-ing' form

Note that the English verb form '-ing' cannot be translated by the Italian gerund when used as an adjective or a participle modifying a noun. In Italian we use a *relative* clause with **che**:

C'è un uomo *che bussa* alla porta.

There is a man knocking at the door.

Ho visto uno studente *che leggeva* "Panorama".

I saw a student reading Panorama.

Using the gerund with unstressed personal pronouns

When the gerund has an unstressed pronoun as direct or indirect object, the pronoun is attached to the end of the verb (see 3.4):

Guardandoli bene ho capito che quei francobolli erano falsi.

Looking at them carefully I realised that those stamps were false.

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

Progressive (*stare + gerund*)

One of the most common uses of the gerund is with **stare** (See also 12.3) to describe an action *in progress*:

Sto preparando il caffè.
I'm making coffee.

Non ho risposto al telefono perché stavo facendo la doccia.
I didn't answer the phone because I was having a shower.

In the *past*, the progressive form is *always* formed with the *imperfect* of **stare**. The progressive form, expressing an action in its duration rather than when completed, is the most typical example of the *imperfect* aspect of verbs (see 13.5).

2.3.27 Present participle (*participio presente*)

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

Adjective:	affascinante	fascinating
	bollente	boiling hot
	ignorante	ignorant
	imbarazzante	embarrassing
	importante	important
	potente	powerful
	rilevante	relevant
	soddisfacente	satisfactory
	splendente	splendid
	urgente	urgent
Noun:	amante	lover
	agente	agent
	cantante	singer
	comandante	commander, commandant
	dependente	dependant
	dirigente	manager, director
	insegnante	teacher
	stampante	printer
	studente	student

... and many more.

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.28 Past participle (*participio passato*)

Unlike the present participle, the past participle is one of the most frequently used forms of Italian verbs. It is found in all *compound tenses* of verbs, together with the auxiliary **avere** or **essere**. The regular past participle is formed by the endings **-ato** for the 1st, **-uto** for the 2nd and **-ito** for the 3rd conjugation.

guardato creduto dormito finito

Its endings have to agree with the subject (in the case of verbs taking the auxiliary **essere**) or sometimes the object of the verb (see below), following the pattern of adjectives in **-o/-a/-i/-e** (see 1.4.2).

Irregular past participles

There are many verbs with an irregular past participle (Appendix II lists all the verbs with irregular past participles). But some basic groups can be identified:

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

accendere	<i>acceso</i>	chiudere	<i>chiuso</i>	correre	<i>corso</i>
decidere	<i>deciso</i>	mettere	<i>messo</i>	perdere	<i>perso</i>
prendere	<i>preso</i>	scendere	<i>sceso</i>	apparire	<i>apparso</i>

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

aprire	<i>aperto</i>	rispondere	<i>risposto</i>
chiedere	<i>chiesto</i>	rompere	<i>rotto</i>
dire	<i>detto</i>	scegliere	<i>scelto</i>
leggere	<i>letto</i>	scrivere	<i>scritto</i>
morire	<i>morto</i>	vedere	<i>visto</i>
nascere	<i>nato</i>	tradurre	<i>tradotto</i>
offrire	<i>offerto</i>	venire	<i>venuto</i>
porre	<i>posto</i> (and <i>composto</i> , <i>esposto</i> , etc.)	vivere	<i>vissuto</i>
produrre	<i>prodotto</i>		

Note: **essere/stato**

Uses of the past participle

The past participle is used in two ways:

(a) *In compound tenses, formed with auxiliary **avere** or **essere**:*

When the auxiliary is **avere**, the participle ends in **-o** (masculine singular), and does not change to agree with the subject of the verb:

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

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

Sandro e Lucia hanno lavorato bene.

Sandro and Lucia did a good job.

But if the verb is preceded by a *direct object pronoun* the participle changes to agree with the gender and number of this pronoun (see also 3.4.7):

Avete visto quelle pratiche? Sì, le abbiamo viste.

Did you see those files? Yes, we've seen them.

Hai visto Elisa? Sì, l'ho vista.

Did you see Elisa? Yes, I saw her.

When the auxiliary is **essere** the past participle always agrees with the gender and number of the *subject*:

È arrivato il mio stipendio?

Has my salary arrived?

È arrivata la posta?

Has the mail arrived?

Ci siamo accorti troppo tardi del nostro errore.

We realised our mistake too late.

Le fatture non sono state ancora ricevute dal cliente.

The invoices haven't yet been received by the customer.

(b) *As a verb form on its own:*

Used on its own, the past participle can have the same function as an adjective (i.e. qualifying a noun) in which case its ending agrees with the gender and number of the noun it qualifies:

Oggi non c'era posta indirizzata a Lei, Sig. Sini.

There was no mail addressed to you today, Mr Sini.

Oggi non c'erano lettere indirizzate a Lei, Sig. Sini.

There were no letters addressed to you today, Mr Sini.

Dove sono i pacchi arrivati oggi?

Where are the parcels that arrived today?

It can also have the function of a verb in its own right, expressing an action *completed* before the action expressed in the main clause; the subject can be the same as that of the main verb or a different one:

Appena arrivati, abbiamo preso un caffè.

As soon as we arrived, we had a coffee.

Appena arrivato Franco, prendiamo un caffè.

As soon as Franco has arrived, we'll have a coffee.

Sconfitto l'esercito borbonico a Calatafimi, Garibaldi avanzò verso Palermo.

After defeating the Bourbon army at Calatafimi, Garibaldi advanced towards Palermo.

Past participle and unstressed personal pronouns:

The past participle can also take an unstressed pronoun (direct or indirect) as its object, in which case the pronoun is attached to the end of the participle (see also 3.4):

Vista *la* arrivare, ho chiamato Sara dal balcone.

As I saw her arriving, I called Sara from the balcony.

Consegnat*gli* i documenti, sono tornato in ufficio.

After delivering the documents to him, I came back to the office.

3

Pronouns

3.1 What is a pronoun?

A pronoun (pro + noun) is literally a word that takes the place of, or fulfils the function of a noun in certain specific circumstances.

There are several types of *pronouns* in Italian (as there are in English): *personal*, *relative*, *interrogative*, *possessive*, *demonstrative* and *indefinite*. Each type of pronoun is covered separately in this section.

3.2 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are the main thread of any spoken or written discourse. Their function is to refer to somebody or something known to both speaker and listener, either because they are actually present or because they have already been mentioned in the conversation or in the text. In Italian, personal pronouns have the same gender and number as the noun to which they refer.

3.3 Stressed personal pronouns

Stressed pronouns are *only* used when we want to identify clearly the person to whom we refer, usually to distinguish them from somebody else (see 8.3 and 8.4). They almost always refer to people, rather than to things or animals.

Stressed pronouns are normally quite separate from other words, and in particular from the verb. For this reason they are sometimes called *disjunctive* (*unjoined*) pronouns. This gives them a more emphatic position in the sentence. They are distinguished from the more common unstressed pronouns by three main characteristics: (a) their *form*; (b) their *position*; and (c) the *stress* that falls on them.

3.3.1 Subject pronouns

Subject pronouns are used to emphasise the person or thing responsible for the action (see 8.3 and 8.4). The forms of the subject pronouns are as follows:

io	I	noi	we
tu	you	voi	you (pl.)
lui	he	loro	they

lei	she	Loro	you (formal, pl.)
Lei	you (formal)		

Other much less used subject pronouns are:

egli, esso	he	essi	they (m.)
ella, essa	she	esse	they (f.)

These pronouns are limited to formal spoken and written language. In modern Italian they are used infrequently.

In Italian, use of subject pronouns with verbs is not essential, unlike in English (see 2.1.3), since the endings of Italian verbs always show who the subject (or person) is, without the need for a pronoun. So the use of pronouns is limited to situations where we need to give special emphasis to the subject (see also 8.4, 18.3):

Chi te l'ha detto? Me l'ha detto lui.
Who told you that? *He* told me.

Io sono scozzese, lei è gallese.
I am Scottish, *she* is Welsh.

3.3.2 Object pronouns

Object pronouns are used to refer to the person or thing that is the target of an action, and *stressed* object pronouns place particular emphasis on it. For this reason they are generally much less used than the corresponding *unstressed* forms (see 3.4).

The forms of the stressed object pronouns are as follows:

me	me	noi	us
te	you	voi	you (pl.)
lui	him	loro	them
lei	her	Loro	you (formal, pl.)
Lei	you (formal)		

These pronouns can be used as the direct object of a verb, for example:

Vorrei vedere te al posto mio!
I'd like to see *you* in my place!

or, preceded by a preposition, as the indirect object or other complement of a verb:

Dai a me quei soldi.
Give that money *to me*.

Devi parlare più forte con lui, perché è duro d'orecchi.
You should speak louder *to him*, because he's hard of hearing.

For the uses of stressed object pronouns, see 18.4.1 and 24.2.1.

Indirect object pronouns (indicating the person or thing *at which* the action of the verb is directed) also have an *unstressed* form, used without the preposition **a** (see 3.4.2).

When a preposition is present, only stressed pronouns can be used.

3.3.3 Reflexive pronouns (stressed)

Reflexive pronouns refer to the object or other complement of a verb, when it is the same person as the subject. This is expressed in English by the use of ‘-self’ (‘himself, ourselves’, etc.).

Here are the stressed (emphatic) forms (for the unstressed forms, see 3.4.3):

me (stesso/a)	myself	noi (stessi/e)	ourselves
te (stesso/a)	yourself	voi (stessi/e)	yourselves
sé (stesso/a)	him/herself	sé (stessi/e)	themselves

The use of **stesso**, to increase the emphasis given to the pronoun, is optional. It is not necessary to omit the accent on **sé** when it is followed by **stesso**, although many writers do.

Dovrebbe criticare sé stesso invece di dare la colpa agli altri.

He ought to be more critical of himself instead of putting the blame on others.

Ama il prossimo tuo come te stesso.

Love thy neighbour as thyself.

3.4 Unstressed personal pronouns

The most common way to refer to somebody or something, without mentioning them explicitly, is to use *unstressed* pronouns (see 18.4.2–3). Because they are always used in conjunction with a verb, they are also called *conjunctive* pronouns. The unstressed pronouns can be *direct object*, *indirect object* or *reflexive*, depending on their relationship with the verb.

The unstressed pronouns are always used *without a preposition*. (With a preposition, e.g. **a**, **da**, **di**, **con**, **per**, the stressed forms should always be used.)

Their normal position is *before* the verb. When the verb is in the infinitive, imperative, gerund or participle, however, the pronouns are attached to the *end* of the verb:

Pronto! Mi senti?

Hello! Can you hear me?

Sì, ti sento bene!

Yes, I can hear you well!

Dammi lo zucchero.

Give me the sugar.

Il caffè mi piace dolce.

I like my coffee sweet.

Non dirglielo. Glielo dirò io.

Don't tell her/him (it). I'll tell her/him (it).

Although the pronouns are separate words when used in writing, when we speak they combine with the verb, which usually comes immediately after, to sound like a single utterance (**misènti**, **tisènto**). When they follow the verb, they are actually attached to it, in writing as well as in speech (**dammi**, **dirglielo**). This shows how closely pronoun and verb are linked.

3.4.1 Direct object pronouns

Direct object pronouns are those used with *transitive* verbs (see 2.1.6). They indicate the thing, person or entity that the action of the verb directly affects, in other words, its 'object', and are much more frequently used than the stressed pronouns seen above (see also 18.4.1 and 18.4.2).

mi	me	ci	us
ti	you	vi	you (pl.)
lo	him, it	li	them
la	her, it	le	them
La	you (formal)		

3.4.2 Indirect object pronouns

We use the *indirect object* pronouns to indicate that the action of a verb is aimed *at* or *to* something or somebody (see also 18.4.1–3, 24.1–2, 25.3.2).

The forms are as follows:

mi	to me	ci	to us
ti	to you	vi	to you (plural)
gli	to him	gli (loro*)	to them
le	to her		
Le	to you (formal)		

NOTE

* In written Italian, and occasionally in formal spoken Italian, the pronoun **loro** (coming after the verb) can be used instead of **gli**.

3.4.3 Reflexive pronouns

The unstressed reflexive pronouns are the following:

mi	myself	ci	ourselves
ti	yourself	vi	yourselves
si	himself/herself	si	themselves

Notice how in the *first* and *second* person, the unstressed pronouns (**mi**, **ti**, **ci**, **vi**) are identical in form, whether direct, indirect or reflexive. In the *third* person, however, there is a difference between direct object, indirect object and reflexive pronouns, respectively **lo/ gli/si**; **la/le/si**; **li/gli/si**; **le/gli/si**.

The reflexive pronouns have the same function as the direct object pronouns seen above, but are used when the *object* and the *subject* of the verb are the *same person* (see also 2.1.7).

Io mi lavo (Io lavo me stesso) tutte le mattine alle 7.00.

I wash (myself) every morning at 7.00.

Guardati allo specchio!

Look at yourself at the mirror!

I miei figli si stanno preparando per gli esami.

My children are getting (themselves) ready for the exams.

For **si** as impersonal pronoun, see 2.1.8.

3.4.4 **Ne****Ne used as partitive**

In the examples below, the pronoun **ne** is called *partitive* because it refers to a part or quantity of something or somebody:

Desidera del pane? Sì, ne vorrei un chilo.

Would you like some bread? Yes, I would like one kilo (of it).

È squisito questo gelato. Vuoi assaggiarne un po'?

This ice cream is delicious. Would you like to taste a little bit (of it)?

Oggi sono arrivate molte telefonate. Solo io ne ho ricevute dieci.

Today we have had a lot of telephone calls. I alone have had ten (of them).

Oggi sono arrivati molti clienti. Solo io ne ho ricevuti cinque.

Today a lot of customers have come. I myself have seen five (of them).

Ne is therefore used almost always with an indication of *quantity*. It may be a number, a specification of weight or length, or a pronoun, for example **molto, poco, troppo, abbastanza, un po'** (for more examples see 11.6.5, 11.7).

Ne is invariable (does not change form) and it can refer to any noun (masculine, feminine, singular or plural). Notice however that, although invariable in form, **ne** 'reflects' the noun to which it refers. In fact, in the compound tenses, the past participle generally agrees with the noun that **ne** represents, as in the last two examples above (see 3.4.7).

Notice also how **ne** occupies the same position in the sentence as the other unstressed pronouns: *before* the verb but *after* an infinitive, certain imperative forms, the gerund and the participle (see 3.4 above).

Other uses of ne

There are a few cases where **ne** is used without a 'partitive' meaning.

- (a) Meaning **di questo . . . di quello**, but without any reference to quantity:

Non ho comprato quella macchina e me ne pento.

I didn't buy that car and I regret it.

Franco lavora troppo, ma non se ne lamenta.

Franco works too much, but he doesn't complain about it.

- (b) Meaning **da questo . . . da quello** 'from':

I miei affari vanno bene. Ne ricavo un buon profitto.

My business is going well. I'm making a good profit (out of it).

Questo ufficio è male organizzato e ne deriva molta confusione.

This office is badly organised and a great deal of confusion arises from this (fact).

- (c) With **andare** or other verbs in idiomatic expressions as:

Vattene! Andatevene!

Go away! Get out of here!

Non ce la faccio più. Me ne vado!

I can't stand it any more. I'm going away!

Chi se *ne* frega!
Who cares!?! (rather coarse)

Non me *ne* importa niente!
I don't care at all! (colloquial but not vulgar)

Non *ne* posso più!
I can't bear it any more!

Non *ne* vale la pena!
It is not worth the effort!

Oggi ho la febbre. È meglio che me *ne* stia a casa.
Today I am ill. I'd better stay at home.

For examples of **ne** used as adverb of place, see 6.2.5.

3.4.5 Particle *ci*

Like **ne**, **ci** can be used as a pronoun, as an adverb of place, or idiomatically in several expressions. Like the conjunctive pronouns, it is normally positioned *before* the verb, but *after* an infinitive, certain imperatives, the gerund or the participle.

- (a) As an adverb of place, either static or implying movement, with verbs such as **essere**, **abitare**, **andare**, **mettere**, **venire**:

C'è . . . Ci sono . . .
There is . . . There are . . .

C'era una volta (una principessa) . . .
Once upon a time there was (a princess) . . .

Ci vado quest'estate.
I'm going there this summer.

Napoli mi piace molto. Ci abito da dieci anni.
I like Naples a lot. I've lived here ten years now.

When found with an unstressed direct object pronoun or **ne**, **ci** used as an adverb of place occupies a different position according to what the pronoun is: **mi ci**, **ti ci**, **ce lo**, **ce la**, **vi ci**, **ce li**, **ce le**, **ce ne**. The combination **ci ci** is best avoided.

Chi mi porta all'aeroporto?
Who's taking me to the airport?

Ti ci porto io.
I'll take you there.

For further examples of **ci** used as an adverb of place, see 6.2.5.

- (b) As a pronoun, used with a verb taking **a**, to replace either **a** + noun or **a** + verb phrase:

Tu fumi ancora? Perché non ci rinunci veramente? (ci = a fumare)
Are you still smoking? Why don't you really give *it* up?

L'Italia mi manca molto. Ci penso spesso. (ci = all'Italia)
I miss Italy a lot. I often think *about it*.

- (c) Used idiomatically with certain verbs:

Non ci vedo. I can't see.
Ce l'hai? Have you got it?

See also 11.5.1.

- (d) With a reflexive verb, to replace impersonal
- si**
- (see 2.1.8):

If the impersonal **si** were used with the third person of a reflexive verb **si alza**, this would produce ***In Italia si si alza presto**. To avoid repetition and confusion, the first **si** changes to **ci**: **In Italia ci si alza presto** ('In Italy one gets up early').

3.4.6 Combined pronouns (indirect + direct)

Unstressed pronouns are often used in combination with each other and with **ci** and **ne**. When indirect and direct object pronouns (third person only) are combined, the indirect object pronoun (and the reflexive **si**) comes first. In the case of **mi**, **ti**, **ci**, **vi**, **si**, the **-i** ending changes to **-e**. **Gli** combines with a direct object pronoun to form a single word. The table below shows the combinations of direct pronouns (third person only), indirect pronouns, and **ne**. See also 3.4.5 (**ci** combinations).

	<i>lo</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>ne</i>
<i>mi</i>	me lo	me la	me li	me le	me ne
<i>ti</i>	te lo	te la	te li	te le	te ne
<i>gli, le</i>	glielo	gliela	glieli	glielle	gliene
<i>si</i>	se lo	se la	se li	se le	se ne
<i>ci</i>	ce lo	ce la	ce li	ce le	ce ne
<i>vi</i>	ve lo	ve la	ve li	ve le	ve ne
<i>gli, loro</i>	glielo	gliela	glieli	glielle	gliene

These combined pronouns, like all the other unstressed pronouns, are normally placed *before* the verb, but *after* the infinitive, imperative, participle or the gerund (see 3.4 above). In spoken Italian, they form a single utterance with the verb: **te l'ho detto** (*teloddetto*) 'I told you'.

Che bella rosa! Me la dai?

What a beautiful rose! Will you give it to me?

No non voglio dartela!

No, I don't want to give it to you!

Gliel'ho detto io.

I told her it.

Per favore, diglielo tu.

Please tell her it.

3.4.7 Agreement with past participle

When using compound verb tenses, such as the **passato prossimo**, the *past participle* must agree with the gender and number of the direct object pronouns, and with **ne**:

Hai visto la mia macchina nuova? Sì, l(a)'ho vista.

Did you see my new car? Yes, I saw it.

Hai visto l'ultimo film di Moretti? No, non l(o)'ho visto.

Did you see the last Moretti film? No, I didn't see *it*.

Hai visto i bambini? Sì, li ho visti.

Did you see the children? Yes, I saw *them*.

Hai visto le Olimpiadi? No, non le ho viste.

Did you see the Olympics? No, I didn't see *them*.

Hai comprato le bibite? Sì, ne ho comprate due.

Have you bought the drinks? Yes, I bought *two*.

Hai comprato le pesche? Sì, ne ho comprate un chilo.

Have you bought peaches? Yes, I bought *a kilo of them*.

3.5 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns have a double function: (a) like the personal pronouns, they refer to a previously mentioned person or thing; (b) they also act as a link between two sentences or clauses. The sentence introduced by a relative pronoun is called the relative clause (see 9.3).

Puoi restituirmi la penna *che* ti ho prestato?

Can you give me back the pen that I lent you?

3.5.1 *Che*

Che is by far the most common of all relative pronouns in the Italian language, and indeed is one of the most frequently used words. It is used to refer to people, animals or things, and it is *invariable* (does not change form). In the relative clause it can be either the subject or the direct object of the verb.

Subject:

L'albero *che* cresce davanti alla mia finestra è una quercia.

The tree that grows in front of my window is an oak.

Ricordi lo scrittore *che* ha vinto il Premio Strega?

Do you remember the writer who won the Strega Prize?

Object:

L'albero *che* ho tagliato stamattina era una quercia.

The tree that I cut down this morning was an oak.

Ricordi lo scrittore *che* l'Università ha invitato a fare una conferenza?

Do you remember the writer whom the University invited to give a talk?

When used as a relative pronoun **che** can never be preceded by a preposition.

3.5.2 *Cui*

Cui is the relative pronoun used with the function of indirect object or other complement of the verb. It is usually preceded by a preposition (**a, con, da, di, in, per, su**). Like **che**, **cui** is invariable and can refer to any noun (masculine, feminine, singular or plural) without change of form.

Questo è l'ufficio *in cui* dobbiamo trasferirci l'anno prossimo.

This is the office which we have to move into next year.

Sto lavorando sulla pratica *di cui* ti ho parlato ieri.

I am working on the file which I spoke to you about yesterday.

Oggi quella signora *a cui* abbiamo mandato la fattura è venuta a pagare.

Today the lady to whom we sent the invoice came to pay.

When **cui** is used as an *indirect object*, as in the last example above, indicating the person or thing *at whom/which* the action of the verb is directed, the preposition **a** can be omitted:

Vorrei gli indirizzi di tutte le ditte *cui* abbiamo inviato il nostro catalogo.

I would like to have the addresses of all the companies to whom we sent our catalogue.

Il problema *cui* ti riferisci è stato già affrontato.

The problem to which you are referring has already been dealt with.

Cui is also used as a *possessive adjective* (English 'whose'). It is then placed between the definite article and the noun, without a preposition:

Bisogna trovare la persona *le cui* chiavi sono rimaste sul mio tavolo.

We have to find the person *whose* keys have been left on my table.

Verrà assunto il candidato *il cui* curriculum risulterà più adatto.

The candidate *whose* CV turns out to be the most suitable will be employed.

3.5.3 **Il quale, la quale, i quali, le quali**

These are used instead of **che** and **cui**, when we need to specify more clearly which noun the relative pronoun is referring to. Unlike **che** and **cui**, these pronouns vary in gender and number, as does the definite article used with them, so it is clearer which noun they are referring to.

Il quale, however, is used only rarely as a replacement for **che**, and then only in a formal context, for example in legal or bureaucratic language (see the first example below). It is more commonly found with a preposition (note the combined forms) replacing **cui**, but again only when there is a need for precision in the reference. Compare the examples below with those above:

Tutta la corrispondenza deve essere firmata dal direttore, *il quale* ne assume la responsabilità legale.

All correspondence must be signed by the manager, who assumes legal responsibility for it.

Sto lavorando sulla pratica *della quale* ti ho parlato ieri.

I am working on the file which I spoke to you about yesterday.

Vorrei gli indirizzi di tutte le ditte *alle quali* abbiamo inviato il catalogo.

I would like to have the addresses of the companies to which we sent the catalogue.

Verrà assunto il candidato, *il cui* curriculum risulterà più adatto.

The candidate whose CV turns out to be most suitable will be employed.

3.5.4

Chi

Chi is more commonly found as an interrogative in questions or indirect questions:

Mi ha chiesto *chi* ha telefonato.

She asked me who phoned.

As a relative pronoun, **chi** is used only to refer to people, never to things. It has the function of a 'double' pronoun: **quello che**, **uno che** 'those who, the people who':

Le Pagine Gialle sono utili soprattutto a *chi* lavora nel commercio.

The Yellow Pages are useful especially to those who are in business.

I nostri prodotti sono disegnati *per chi* apprezza la funzionalità.

Our products are designed for people who appreciate the functional approach.

Notice that **chi** is always used with a singular verb (even when it refers to more than one person). Note also that unlike the other relative pronouns, it does not refer explicitly to a noun but is complete in itself.

Here are five sayings of popular wisdom, in which **chi** is used (we leave their interpretation and translation to you):

***Chi* cerca trova.**

***Chi* va piano va sano e va lontano.**

***Chi* di spada ferisce di spada perisce.**

***Chi* tace acconsente.**

***Chi* troppo vuole nulla stringe.**

3.6

Interrogative pronouns and adjectives

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask questions, mainly about three different aspects: (a) quantity, (b) quality and (c) identity (see also Chapter 15).

Quantity: **Quanto, quanta, quanti, quante?**

How much, how many?

Quality: **Quale, quali? Che?**

Which, which one(s)? What?

Identity: **People: Chi? Quale?**

Who? Whom? Which?

Things: Che, che cosa, cosa? Quale?

What? Which?

Quanto, **quale** and **che** are used both as pronouns (by themselves) and as adjectives (accompanying a noun). **Chi**, **che cosa** and **cosa** are used only as pronouns. Here are a few examples distinguishing the two different functions (for more examples see Chapter 15):

Pronoun

Quant'è?

How much is it?

Quante ne vedi?

How many do you see?

Qual è?

Which one is it?

Adjective

Quanti libri hai comprato?

How many books did you buy?

Quante cassette vedi?

How many cassettes do you see?

Quale libro hai comprato?

Which book did you buy?

Quali preferisci?
Which ones do you prefer?

–

Chi hai invitato?
Whom did you invite?

Che vuoi?
What do you want?

Che cosa beve?
What would you like to drink?

Quali canzoni preferisci?
Which songs do you prefer?

Quali amici hai invitato?
Which friends did you invite?

–

Che dolce vuoi?
Which cake do you want?

Che vino beve?
Which wine would you like?

3.7

Possessive pronouns and adjectives

Possessives indicate the person to whom something or somebody belongs (see also 9.4). Like personal pronouns they have six grammatical ‘persons’ (‘my, your, his’, etc.). In Italian, each of the six persons has *four* different endings, which should agree with the noun they specify (except *loro* which is invariable): for example, *il mio ragazzo*, *la mia macchina*, *i miei amici*, *le mie scarpe* (see also formal *Lei*, 3.3.1).

Possessive *pronouns* and *adjectives* are identical in form (whereas English has the variation ‘my/mine, your/yours’, etc.). The pronouns are used on their own to refer to something that has already been mentioned or that is actually present. The adjectives are always attached to a noun.

Adjective: **Questa è la mia scrivania.** This is my desk.
Pronoun: **E questa è la tua.** This is yours.

The following table shows all the forms of the possessive:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
<i>(m.)</i>	<i>(f.)</i>	<i>(m.)</i>	<i>(f.)</i>
mio	mia	miei	mie
tuo	tua	tuoi	tue
suo	sua	suoi	sue
nostro	nostra	nostri	nostre
vostro	vostra	vostri	vostre
loro	loro	loro	loro

3.7.1

Use of article with possessives

In English possessives are *never* accompanied by articles, however in Italian the opposite applies: possessives are *always* preceded by an article, except in a few cases. Both article and possessive must agree in gender and number with the noun to which they are attached:

Il suo computer His/her computer
La sua macchina His/her car
I suoi soldi His/her money
Le sue colleghe His/her colleagues (female)

When referring to family, the definite article is not used if the relatives are *singular*:

Mia madre	Mio padre	Mia sorella	Mio fratello	Mia cugina
my mother	my father	my sister	my brother	my cousin (female)

It is used, however, when referring to more than one relative:

i miei genitori	le mie cugine
my parents	my cousins (female)

With **loro** 'their', the article is *always* used:

la loro madre	il loro zio
their mother	their uncle

The article is always used when the noun is qualified by a suffix (e.g. as a term of affection) or an adjective:

la sua sorellina	il mio amato zio
his/her little sister	my beloved uncle

Finally, it is normally used – although this is not a firm rule – with **nonno**, **nonna** and with the affectionate terms **babbo**, **papa**, **mamma**:

(il) mio nonno	(la) mia nonna Giuseppina
my grandfather	my grandmother Giuseppina
(la) mia mamma	(il) mio babbo/(il) mio papà
my mummy	my daddy

Finally, when used as a possessive *pronoun* (i.e. not attached to a noun) the article is often omitted:

Di chi sono questi occhiali? Sono miei!
Whose spectacles are these? They are mine!

3.7.2 Position and omission of the possessive

The possessive adjective is usually placed before the noun. When it follows the noun, it carries a strongly emphatic or emotional meaning:

Mamma mia! Dio mio! **Signora mia! Figlio mio!**

Qui siamo in casa nostra!
Here we are in our own place!

Questo dev'essere opera tua!
This must be your work! (ironical)

In English the possessive is commonly used to indicate personal belongings, or relationships, and parts of the body. In Italian, when the relationship or ownership is obvious, as in the examples shown, the possessive is not used. This is particularly true when referring to parts of the body or items of clothing, where a reflexive pronoun is often used instead:

Porterò la macchina.
I'll bring *my* car.

Aveva una giacca sulle spalle.
She had a jacket over *her* shoulders.

Lavati *le mani*!
Wash *your* hands!

Mettiti *il cappotto*!
Put on *your* coat!

3.7.3 Possessives as nouns

In a few cases possessives are used on their own, as nouns rather than as pronouns:

I miei/i tuoi
My/your (parents)

La Sua/La Vostra del 20.6.04
Your (letter) of 20.6.04 . . . (in business correspondence)

Alla tua!/Alla nostra!
To your/our (health)! (when making a toast)

3.7.4 *Proprio*

Proprio is used as a possessive in three particular contexts:

- (a) It can reinforce a normal possessive (like English 'own'):

L'ho visto con *i miei propri* occhi!
I saw it with my own eyes!

- (b) In the third person it can replace **suoi**, **loro**, to avoid ambiguity (but only when it refers to the subject of the sentence):

Anna disse a Clara che aveva bisogno dei *propri* soldi.
Anna told Clara that she needed her (Anna's) money.

Quando scrive appunti per Marco, Luciana preferisce usare il *proprio* computer.
When she writes notes for Marco, Luciana prefers to use her own computer.

- (c) It is always used when the subject is an *indefinite* pronoun such as **tutti**, **ognuno**, **nessuno** (see 3.9.1) or impersonal **si** 'one' (see 19.5):

Tutti fanno i *propri* interessi.
Everybody looks after their own interests.

Nessuno ammette facilmente i *propri* errori.
Nobody easily admits to their mistakes.

In tempo di guerra si faceva il *proprio* dovere senza esitazione.
In times of war, one did one's duty, without hesitation.

3.8 Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives

Demonstratives are used to *indicate* something or somebody actually present when we speak, for example:

Dammi *questo* libro.
Give me this book.

Metti *quella* bottiglia in frigorifero.

Put that bottle in the fridge.

They can also refer to something or somebody not physically present, but previously mentioned in the discourse. In this function they are useful in connecting two different statements:

Ho comprato una macchina familiare, perché *questa* mi sembrava più adatta per la nostra famiglia.

I bought an estate car, because I thought this was more suitable for our family's needs.

3.8.1

Questo, quello

These demonstratives can be used as adjectives (qualifying a noun as in the first two examples above), or on their own as pronouns (as in the last example).

Questo and **quello** correspond exactly to the English 'this' and 'that', indicating respectively something or somebody near to or far away from the speaker/writer (in terms of space, time or position in the discourse). See also 18.5.

Note: There is a third demonstrative in Italian: **codesto**, used to refer to something far away from the speaker, but near to the person addressed:

Dammi *codesto* libro.

Give me that book (the one you have).

This use of **codesto** is relatively uncommon today, except in Tuscany, being restricted to bureaucratic language, when we want to refer to an office, company or firm (as in English 'your company'):

Informiamo *codesta* rispettabile ditta che i nostri prezzi subiranno una variazione dal 30/6 p.v.

We would like to inform your company that our prices will change as from 30/6 next.

Questo has four different endings, which should agree with the gender and number of the noun to which it refers:

<i>questo</i> vestito	this dress
<i>questa</i> cravatta	this tie
<i>questi</i> pantaloni	these trousers
<i>queste</i> scarpe	these shoes

Volevo un paio di scarpe e ho comprato *queste*.

I wanted a pair of shoes and I bought these.

Cambiati i pantaloni. *Questi* sono più comodi.

Change your trousers. These are more comfortable.

Quello behaves differently according to whether it is a pronoun or an adjective:

- (a) As a *pronoun* it has four possible endings, **-o/-a/-i/-e**, according to the noun to which it refers:

Questo vestito è mio. **Quello** è tuo.

This dress is mine. That one is yours.

Questa cravatta è mia. Quella è tua.

This tie is mine. That one is yours.

Questi pantaloni sono miei. Quelli sono tuoi.

These trousers are mine. Those are yours.

Queste scarpe sono mie. Quelle sono tue.

These shoes are mine. Those are yours.

- (b) As an *adjective* it changes its ending, with the same pattern as the definite article (see 1.3.4), and depending on the word that follows:

<i>Il vestito</i> dress	<i>Quel vestito</i>	<i>La scarpa</i> shoe	<i>Quella scarpa</i>
<i>L'ombrello</i> umbrella	<i>Quell'ombrello</i>	<i>L'amica</i> friend	<i>Quell'amica</i>
<i>Lo scialle</i> shawl	<i>Quello scialle</i>		
<i>I vestiti</i>	<i>Quei vestiti</i>	<i>Le scarpe</i>	<i>Quelle scarpe</i>
<i>Gli ombrelli</i>	<i>Quegli ombrelli</i>	<i>Le amiche</i>	<i>Quelle amiche</i>
<i>Gli scialli</i>	<i>Quegli scialli</i>		

NOTE

The pattern of the demonstrative **quello**, and of the definite article, is followed by another very common adjective: **bello** (see 1.4.5).

3.8.2

Other demonstrative pronouns: *ciò; costui, costei, costoro; colui, colei, coloro*

These demonstratives are used *only* as pronouns. They are used instead of **questo/quello** but mainly in written language.

- (a) **Ciò** refers only to events or ideas, in particular to something that has just been mentioned, usually in the form of a whole phrase, clause or sentence such as:

Il treno è arrivato con un'ora di ritardo, e ciò ci ha fatto perdere l'appuntamento.

The train arrived one hour late, and this caused us to miss the appointment.

Non posso spiegarvi perché abbiamo deciso di partire. Di ciò abbiamo già parlato nella riunione di ieri.

I can't explain why we decided to leave. We already talked about it at yesterday's meeting.

Ciò che, ciò . . . cui are used when referring to something explained subsequently in a *relative* clause:

Non ho capito ciò che hai detto.

I didn't understand *what* you said.

Vorrei spiegarvi ciò di cui ha parlato ieri il direttore.

I'd like to explain to you *what* the manager talked about yesterday.

- (b) A more formal way to refer to people, is to use **costui, costei, costoro** instead of **questo/questi** and **colui, colei, coloro** instead of **quello/quelli**:

Chi è costui?

Who is this gentleman?

Abbiamo inviato una lettera a tutti *coloro che* parteciperanno al congresso.

We sent a letter to all those who will take part in the congress.

3.9 Indefinite pronouns and adjectives

Indefinite pronouns and *indefinite adjectives* designate somebody or something without a definite specification. In Italian they take various forms.

Indefinites can be divided into three different groups, according to their different grammatical function: (a) as pronouns only; (b) as adjectives only; and (c) as pronouns and adjectives. This list shows only the indefinites most commonly used.

3.9.1 Pronouns: **uno, qualcuno, ognuno, chiunque, qualcosa, niente, nulla**

The following are used *only* as pronouns, on their own and not attached to a noun. They are all used only in the *singular*.

- **Uno/a** 'one, somebody', refers to a single person or thing:

C'è *uno* che ti cerca.

There is a man looking for you.

Non ho mai conosciuto *una* come te.

I've never met anybody like you.

Che belle prugne. Me ne dai *una*?

What nice plums! Would you give me one?

- **Ognuno/a** 'each one' (see also **ciascuno** and **ogni** below):

Ho comprato un regalo ad *ognuno*.

I bought a present for each one.

Ci sono 15 linee telefoniche, *ognuna* con un numero diverso.

There are 15 telephone lines, each with a different number.

- **Qualcuno/a** 'somebody, someone, something' refers to an undefined but small number of people or things:

C'è *qualcuno* alla porta.

There is somebody at the door.

Ho fatto molte fotografie. Vuoi vederne *qualcuna*?

I took a lot of photographs. Do you want to see some?

- **Chiunque** 'anyone, whoever' is invariable and refers only to people. When introducing a relative sentence it is often followed by a verb in the subjunctive (see 2.3.15).

Chiunque può rivolgersi al direttore.

Anyone can go to the manager.

Chiunque sia, non voglio rispondergli.

Whoever it may be, I don't want to answer.

Non aprire mai la porta a chiunque chieda di entrare.

Never open the door to anyone who asks to come in.

- **Qualcosa** 'something' is invariable and refers only to things. Note that its gender is usually considered masculine (although **cosa** is feminine) and note the use of **di** (**qualcosa di buono**) when an adjective is used:

C'è sempre qualcosa da fare.

There is always something to be done.

Vorrei qualcosa di buono da mangiare.

I'd like something good to eat.

Qualcosa è stato fatto, nonostante le difficoltà.

Something has been done, in spite of all the difficulties.

- **Niente, nulla** 'nothing' are also invariable. When placed after a verb, they require a second negative (**non**) before the verb (see also 16.5).

Non c'è niente da fare.

There is nothing to do.

Non fa niente!

It's all right! Don't worry!

Non è successo niente.

Nothing happened. Everything is all right.

Nulla è più bello di una giornata di sole.

Nothing is more beautiful than a sunny day.

3.9.2 Adjectives: **ogni, qualche, qualunque, qualsiasi**

The following are used *only* as adjectives, modifying a noun. They are all *invariable* and used only in the *singular*.

- **Ogni** 'every, each'

Faccio la doccia ogni giorno.

I have a shower every day.

Ogni volta che entro in ufficio c'è sempre una telefonata per me.

Each time I come into my office, there is always a telephone call for me.

Dobbiamo controllare i registri ogni tre settimane.

We must check the registers once every three weeks.

- **Qualche** 'some' is unique in always taking a singular noun, with a plural meaning:

Qualche volta anche tu sbagli.

Sometimes even you make mistakes.

Dammi qualche francobollo.

Give me a few stamps.

I soldi arriveranno fra *qualche* giorno.

The money will arrive in a few days.

- **Qualunque, qualsiasi** 'any'. The corresponding pronoun is **chiunque** which refers to people (see 3.9.1):

Può venire a trovarmi in *qualunque* momento.

You may come to see me at any time.

Chiamami pure a *qualunque* ora.

Call me at any time.

Bisogna essere preparati a *qualsiasi* eventualità.

One should be ready for any eventuality.

Dobbiamo essere capaci di risolvere *qualsiasi* problema si presenti.

We should be able to solve any problem that might arise.

Note the different meaning of **qualunque** when used after the noun:

Oggi non è un giorno *qualunque*. È il mio compleanno.

Today is not just any old day. It's my birthday.

3.9.3

Pronouns and adjectives: *alcuno, ciascuno, nessuno, tale, altro*

The following are used both as *pronouns* and as *adjectives*:

- **Alcuno/a/i/e** 'some, a few' is sometimes used as an adjective, with *plural* nouns, instead of the more common **qualche**, which is always singular (see above 3.9.2). In the singular it is only used in *negative* sentences (see 16.8), as a stronger alternative to the more common **nessuno** (see below).

Sul mio tavolo ci sono *alcune* pratiche importanti.

There are a few important files on my desk.

Non ho *alcuna* paura.

I have no fear.

Non c'è *alcun* dubbio.

There is no doubt.

- **Ciascuno/a** 'each (one)' is only used in the *singular*. It can be used instead of the more common **ogni** (adjective, see 3.9.2, 12.2.2 and 36.6.1–2) and **ognuno** (pronoun, see 3.9.1):

Nel mio giardino *ciascuna* pianta ha un'etichetta.

In my garden each plant has got a label.

Ho tre figli e devo sempre comprare un regalo a *ciascuno*.

I have three children and I must always buy a present for each (one).

- **Nessuno/a** 'no, nobody' is only *singular*. Like **niente**, **nulla** (see above 3.9.1), when it comes after the verb it has to take a second negative **non** before the verb (see also 16.6, 16.7).

***Nessuno* conosce il futuro.**

Nobody knows the future.

Non c'è nessuno.

There is nobody.

Nessuna macchina passa a quest'ora.

No cars come by at this time.

Non c'è nessun dubbio.

There is no doubt.

- **Tale/i** 'such, a certain' can be singular or plural. When used as a pronoun it refers to an unidentified person (English 'chap, bloke, fellow'), and is usually preceded by **un** or **quel**:

Di là c'è un tale che ti cerca.

There is a bloke asking for you, next door.

Dica a quel tale di aspettarmi.

Tell that chap to wait for me.

Ho avuto una tale paura, che sono rimasto paralizzato.

I was so scared that I froze.

- **Altro/a/i/e** 'other, another' can be singular or plural. Used as a pronoun, **altro** can refer to people or things, or can be used in idiomatic expressions, as in the last two examples.

Desidera un altro caffè?

Would you like another coffee?

Sì, grazie, ne vorrei un altro.

Yes, please, I'd like another one.

Non mi interessa quello che dicono gli altri.

I am not interested in what others say.

Desidera qualcos'altro?

Would you like anything else?

Ci sono degli altri?

Is there anybody else?

Senz'altro!

Certainly!

Altro ché!

No wonder!

4

Prepositions

4.1 What is a preposition?

In Italian there are eight prepositions which are used more than any others:

a, con, da, di, in, per, su, tra (or *fra*)

The basic function of a *preposition* is to introduce some additional information to a verb or a noun, in the form of a *complement* (something which *completes* the verb):

Abbiamo parlato *di* Anna.

We talked about Anna.

Qual è il numero *di* Teresa?

What is Teresa's phone number?

The complement can be either a noun:

Vado *a* Roma.

I go to Rome.

Or a verb:

Vado *a* lavorare.

I go to work.

When prepositions introduce a verb, as in the last example above, their function is very similar to that of *conjunctions* (see Chapter 5) except for the differences shown below:

Prepositions (for example **di**) always introduce verbs in the *infinitive* (**parlare**):

Spero *di* parlare con Carlo domani.

I hope I'll talk to Carlo tomorrow.

Conjunctions (such as **che**) introduce verbs in the indicative, conditional or subjunctive mood (here, **parli**):

Spero *che* tu parli con Carlo domani.

I hope you'll talk to Carlo tomorrow.

4.2

Combined prepositions and articles

Six of the eight important prepositions listed above combine with the *definite article* (see 1.3.4) to give the forms shown below:

	<i>il</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>le</i>
<i>a</i>	al	allo	all'	ai	agli	alla	alle
<i>da</i>	dal	dallo	dall'	dai	dagli	dalla	dalle
<i>di</i>	del	dello	dell'	dei	degli	della	delle
<i>in</i>	nel	nello	nell'	nei	negli	nella	nelle
<i>su</i>	sul	sullo	sull'	sui	sugli	sulla	sulle
<i>con</i>	col	collo	coll'	coi	cogli	colla	colle

Note particularly how **in** + the definite article changes into **nel**, **nella**, etc.

In the case of **con** the combination with the article is optional, and rarely used in writing. For the other five prepositions, the use of the compound form is essential.

4.3

Use of prepositions with nouns

We now give a few detailed examples showing the basic uses of the most common prepositions. Some examples have been chosen to stress the difference between Italian and English usage. Note especially those cases in which *no* preposition is needed in English, and particularly where we use **a** or **di** in Italian. A good dictionary can provide even more examples. For use of prepositions with dependent verb, see 4.4.

4.3.1

A

The basic relationship expressed by the preposition **a** is that of direction towards some person, place or time (the *indirect object* of the action expressed by a verb). However, this preposition has many and varied uses, beyond its basic meaning of 'to, at':

Indirect object:	dire qualcosa a qualcuno ho scritto a mia sorella	to say something to somebody I wrote to my sister
To place:	andiamo a Parigi vado a casa	we're going to Paris I'm going home
In/at place:	vivo a Parma lavoro all'Università	I live in Parma I work at the University
Time:	alle tre a mezzanotte	at three o'clock at midnight
Means:	andiamo a piedi lavorato a mano	let's walk handmade
Manner:	spaghetti alle vongole ragù alla bolognese	spaghetti with clams Bolognese meat sauce
Quality:	televisione a colori pentola a pressione	colour television pressure cooker

Note that movement *to* a place can also be expressed by other prepositions, such as **in** and **da**:

vado a scuola	I'm going to school
vado in ufficio	I'm going to the office
vado da Roberta	I'm going to Roberta's

Note too that we always need to use **a** to express the *indirect object* even when the preposition can be omitted in English (except with *unstressed* pronouns, see last example below):

ho dato il libro a Paolo	I gave Paolo the book
ho dato il libro a lui	I gave <i>him</i> the book
gli ho dato il libro	I gave him the book

When followed by a word beginning with a vowel, **a** can change to **ad** to help pronunciation:

ho dato il libro ad Anna	I gave the book to Anna
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For further examples of **a**, see 18.4.1 (followed by stressed pronouns), 37.3 (expressing place) and 37.4 (expressing manner).

For use of **a** with dependent verbs, see 4.4 below.

4.3.2 Con

Basically **con** corresponds to the English 'with':

Together:	stasera ceno con Gigi	I'll have dinner with Gigi tonight
	con chi stai parlando?	who are you talking to? (lit. 'with whom')
Means:	lavoro molto col telefono	I work on the telephone a lot
	si accende con il telecomando	it's switched on by remote control

For more examples of **con**, see 37.4.2 (manner).

4.3.3 Da

The basic meaning of **da** is direction *from* some point in space or in time, and in fact it is often used with **venire**. However **da** is used to represent many other relationships; it can even indicate movement *to* somewhere when used with **andare** (but only when the objective is an individual, indicated by name or by trade, as in the second set of examples):

From a place:	veniamo da Genova	we come from Genoa
	veniamo dall'Inghilterra	we come from England
To a place:	andiamo da Giorgio	we go to Giorgio's (home)
	andiamo dal dentista	we go to the dentist's (surgery)

At a place:	stasera dormi <i>da</i> me Lucia è <i>dal</i> direttore	tonight you're staying at my place Lucia is in the manager's office
Through a place:	il treno passa <i>da</i> Pisa è uscito <i>dalla</i> finestra	the train passes through Pisa he went out through the window
Agent:	fu colpito <i>da</i> una palla amato <i>da</i> tutti	he was hit by a ball loved by everyone
Since [†] :	lavoro <i>da</i> tre anni viaggiamo <i>dalle</i> sette	I've been working for three years we've been travelling since seven o'clock
Function:	spazzolino <i>da</i> denti crema <i>da</i> barba	toothbrush shaving cream
Cause:	morte <i>da</i> infarto stress <i>da</i> lavoro	death from heart attack work-related stress
Manner:	vita <i>da</i> cani giochi <i>da</i> bambini	dog's life child's play
Value:	una moneta <i>da</i> 2 euro	a two euro coin

NOTE

[†] For this 'time' use of **da**, see 13.7 and 36.5.1.

For further examples of **da**, see 34.5 (expressing cause), 36.5.1 (time), 37.3 (expressing place), 37.4.6 (expressing manner).

4.3.4 **Di**

Di is the most frequently used of all Italian prepositions. Although it is often translated by the English 'of', it has many different functions, some of which are shown below:

Specification:	la difficoltà <i>del</i> lavoro frutta <i>di</i> stagione	the difficulty of the job fresh fruit
Belonging:	la macchina <i>di</i> Giulia la casa <i>di</i> mio padre <i>Di</i> chi è la giacca?	Giulia's car my father's house Whose jacket is this?
Origin:	Franco è <i>di</i> Napoli Anna è <i>di</i> Ayr	Franco is from Naples Anna is from Ayr
Comparison:	sono più alto <i>di</i> te	I'm taller than you
Material:	tavolo <i>di</i> legno cavo <i>d'</i>acciaio	wooden table steel cable
Author:	la "Commedia" <i>di</i> Dante "Amarcord" <i>di</i> F. Fellini	the 'Comedy' by Dante 'Amarcord' by F. Fellini

Topic:	parliamo <i>di</i> affari una lezione <i>di</i> storia	let's talk about business a lecture on history
Time:	<i>di</i> giorno, <i>di</i> notte <i>d'inverno, d'estate</i>	by day, by night in winter, in summer
Place/movement:	<i>di</i> qui, <i>di</i> là <i>di</i> sopra, <i>di</i> sotto	over here, over there upstairs, downstairs

Note how, before a word beginning with a vowel, **di** is elided to **d'**, as shown above.

For further examples of **di**, see 10.2.4 (referring to materials), 17.3 (used in comparisons), 18.4.1 (followed by stressed pronouns), 37.3.3 (expressing place).

For **di** + article (**del, dello . . .**) as a partitive article see 1.3.3 and 11.6.1. For **di** with dependent verbs, see 4.4 below.

4.3.5 **In**

The basic meaning of **in** is similar to that of English 'in', but it indicates both position in time and space, as well as movement *into* somewhere:

'In' (place):	i bicchieri sono <i>in</i> cucina abito <i>in</i> Francia	the glasses are in the kitchen I live in France
'To' (place):	vado <i>in</i> Francia domani vengo <i>in</i> ufficio	I'm going to France I'll come to the office tomorrow
'In' (time):	mi sono laureato <i>nel</i> '76 mi preparo <i>in</i> 5 minuti	I graduated in 1976 I'll get ready in five minutes
Means:	devo andare <i>in</i> macchina pagheremo <i>in</i> dollari	I must go by car we'll pay in dollars
Matter:	rifiniture <i>in</i> pelle camicia <i>in</i> seta grezza	trimmings in leather raw silk shirt
Mood/style:	<i>in</i> buona fede voglio vivere <i>in</i> pace	in good faith I want to live in peace

For further examples of **in**, see 37.3.2, 37.3.4 (place).

4.3.6 **Per**

In addition to its basic meaning of English 'for', **per** is also used in several other contexts. Here are a few examples:

Through/along:	siamo passati <i>per</i> Londra andiamo <i>per</i> l'autostrada parliamo <i>per</i> telefono	we passed through London let's go by the motorway we talk on the phone
Destination:	parto <i>per</i> il Giappone c'è posta <i>per</i> me?	I'm leaving for Japan is there any mail for me?
Limitation:	<i>per</i> me è sbagliato <i>per</i> ora aspettiamo	in my opinion it is wrong we'll wait, for the moment

Distribution:	catalogo <i>per</i> autore	catalogue by author
	divisi <i>per</i> età	divided by age group
	5 <i>per</i> 5 fa 25	5 times 5 equals 25

See also 34.3.2, 34.4 (cause).

For the use of **per** with dependent verbs see 4.4 below.

4.3.7 **Su**

Su indicates a position, for example 'on, upon, above', or a topic:

On:	i piatti sono <i>sul</i> tavolo	the dishes are on the table
	andiamo a sciare <i>sulle</i> Dolomiti	we go skiing in the Dolomites
Topic:	notizie <i>sul</i> mercato	market report
	un articolo <i>su</i> Pirandello	an article on Pirandello
Approximation:	un uomo <i>sui</i> trent'anni	a man of around thirty
	costa <i>sui</i> due milioni	it costs about two million

When indicating a position ('upon some place'), the preposition **sopra** is also commonly used (see 4.5):

i piatti sono <i>sopra</i> il tavolo	the dishes are on the table
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4.3.8 **Tra, fra**

These two prepositions have exactly the same meaning. Their basic meaning is English 'between' or 'among':

Between/among:	<i>fra</i> me e te	between you and me
	<i>tra</i> la gente	among the people
Distance:	<i>tra</i> un anno	in a year's time
	<i>fra</i> tre chilometri	in three kilometres

See also 14.8 (time), 37.3.4 (place).

4.4 Use of prepositions with verbs

Prepositions often introduce a dependent clause in the infinitive such as:

Cerca <i>di</i> capire.	Try to understand.
Vieni <i>a</i> vedere.	Come to see.
Lavoro <i>per</i> guadagnare.	I work in order to earn money.

In this function the role of the preposition is similar to that of a conjunction, although with some important differences (see below).

A, da, di and **per** are the prepositions most commonly used in this function. It is impossible to give precise rules on the uses of these prepositions, which mainly depend on the verb they accompany. Use a dictionary to find out about the different constructions possible with each verb or refer to the list in Appendix IV. Meanwhile here are a few guidelines and examples.

4.4.1

A is mainly used to indicate the *aim*, *end* or *intention* of the main verb. It is also often used with a verb expressing 'beginning' or 'starting out':

Vado a sciare.

I'm going to ski.

Pensa a studiare.

You'd better think about studying.

Cominciate a lavorare.

Start working.

For further examples of **a**, see 21.8.1–2, Appendix IV (following certain verbs), 25.3.3, 25.4.5 (after **fare bene**, **fare male**), 33.2 (expressing purpose).

4.4.2

Da indicates that 'something must be done' – a *passive* sense – rather than indicating that 'someone has to do something':

Ho molto da fare.

I've got a lot to do (lit. 'a lot to be done').

Ci sono due lettere da scrivere.

There are two letters to write (i.e. to be written).

Cosa prende da bere?

What would you like to drink?

For further examples of **da**, see 33.4.2 (expressing purpose), 35.4 (expressing result).

4.4.3

Di is used when the dependent verb expresses the *object* (*the end*) or the *subject* of the action of the main verb. It is also often used with a verb of completion or ending:

Penso di partire presto.

I'm thinking of leaving early.

Ho finito di scrivere.

I've finished writing.

Mi pare di impazzire.

I feel as if I am going mad.

(lit. 'It seems to me to be going mad')

Sforzati di mangiare.

Make an effort to eat.

For further examples of **di** followed by dependent verb, see 22.1.3, 22.2, 22.3.4, 23.2.2–4, 23.3.2–3, 24.1, 24.2, 25.3.2, 26.2.1, 26.3.2, 26.3.4, 26.4.3, 27.1.1, 29.3, 29.4, 29.6 (following certain verbs); 25.3.2, 25.4.3–4 (after adjectives and participles expressing emotion); 33.2(b)/(c) (expressing purpose).

4.4.4

Per is used to state explicitly the *aim* of an action (English 'in order to'):

Sono venuto per parlarti.

I came in order to speak to you.

Ho bisogno di tempo per finire il lavoro.

I need time in order to complete the job.

For further examples of **per**, see 33.4 (expressing purpose), 34.3.2 (expressing cause).

Note how in Italian the verb introduced by a preposition must always have the same subject as the main verb. If the subject is different, a *conjunction* (**che**, etc.) must be used, and the dependent verb has to be a *finite* verb in the indicative or subjunctive:

Credo *di* avere ragione.

I think I am right.

Credo *che* tu abbia ragione.

I think you are right.

4.4.5

Some very frequently used verbs introduce dependent verbs in the infinitive without the use of a preposition. The most important are: **dovere**, **potere**, **volere** (see 2.2.4), **amare**, **fare**, **osare**, **preferire**, **sapere**:

Vorrei dormire.

I'd like to sleep.

Non so nuotare.

I don't know how to swim.

Preferisco vivere da solo.

I prefer to live alone.

4.5

Other prepositions

In addition to the eight most common prepositions shown above, there are many other prepositions. Here are the most common, expressing:

(a) Position in space

davanti a	in front of	dentro	inside
dietro	behind	fuori	outside
lontano da	far from	lungo	along
oltre	beyond	presso	near, at
sotto	under	sopra	on, above
verso	towards	vicino	near

See also 37.3.2, 37.3.4.

(b) Position in time

prima di	before	dopo	after
durante	during		

See also 14.8, 36.3, 36.4.

(c) Other features

come	as	contro	against
insieme a	together with	mediante	by means of
secondo	according to	senza	without

These prepositions have several distinguishing features:

- (i) Unlike the common prepositions **a**, **da**, etc., they all have more than one syllable.
- (ii) They are often found together with another preposition, for example **prima di**, **davanti a**, **insieme a**.

(iii) Some can be used either as a preposition followed by a noun, *or* on their own as *adverbs* (see Chapter 6) to modify a verb, for example:

Arriverò *dopo* le cinque.

I shall arrive after five o'clock.

Arriverò *dopo*.

I shall arrive afterwards.

Si siede *davanti al* banco.

Please, have a seat at the counter.

Si siede *davanti*.

Please, have a seat in front.

Partirò *prima di* cena.

I'll leave before dinner.

Partirò *prima di* cenare.

I'll leave before having dinner.

Partirò *prima*.

I will leave earlier.

5

Conjunctions

5.1 What is a conjunction?

The role of conjunctions ('joining words') is to link two sentences or parts of a sentence, which could be clauses, phrases or simply groups of words. The conjunctions, together with other elements such as prepositions, pronouns and discourse markers, help to connect the thread of logic that runs through any discourse or text. The links formed by conjunctions can be of two different types: coordinating or subordinating.

5.2 Coordinating conjunctions

Two clauses or groups of words are called *coordinated* when they have the *same syntactical status*, for example:

- when they are both subjects of the same verb:

Luciano e Gianni sono italiani.

Luciano and Gianni are Italian.

- or they are clauses of equal weight or value:

Il cane dorme e il gatto mangia.

The dog is sleeping and the cat is eating.

The different types of coordinating conjunctions fulfil different functions, depending on the relationship between the two clauses or parts of the sentence (see also 30.2).

5.2.1 Simple coordinating conjunctions

E 'and' is the most common of the coordinating conjunctions. When followed by a word beginning with a vowel it may change into **ed** to help pronunciation (**tu ed io**). Other simple coordinating conjunctions are:

anche, pure	also	neanche, neppure	neither, nor
o, oppure	or		

Flavia parla italiano ed anche spagnolo.

Flavia speaks Italian and also Spanish.

Marina si iscriverà all'università di Siena oppure al Politecnico di Torino.

Marina will enrol at Siena University or else at the Politecnico in Turin.

5.2.2 Double conjunctions

Sometimes two or more conjunctions are used to create a relationship between several corresponding elements of a clause or sentence:

e . . . e	both . . . and	o . . . o	either . . . or
sia . . . sia	both . . . and	né . . . né	neither . . . nor
non solo . . . ma anche		not only . . . but also	

Né io né mio marito abbiamo il tempo di pulire la casa.

Neither I nor my husband have time to clean the house.

Vediamo le stesse persone sia in città sia al mare.

We see the same people both in town and at the seaside.

(The pair *sia . . . sia* is often substituted by the pair *sia . . . che*.)

Napoli è una città interessante non solo dal punto di vista archeologico, ma anche dal punto di vista culturale.

Naples is an interesting city, not only from an archaeological point of view, but also from a cultural one.

5.2.3 Explanatory conjunctions

These connect one clause, phrase or sentence with a second one which *explains* the meaning of the first more fully:

cioè, infatti indeed, really

Arriveremo domani, cioè sabato.

We will arrive tomorrow, in other words Saturday.

Non è andata bene l'ispezione. Infatti è andata malissimo.

The inspection didn't go well. In fact it went very badly.

Cioè can also be used to *correct* a previous statement:

Vado io a prendere il pane, cioè no, vai tu, perché sai dove andare.

I'll go and get the bread, no, *you* go, because you know where to go.

See also 30.2.5 (*cioè* as discourse marker in written language); 41.5.4 (*cioè* as discourse marker in spoken language).

5.2.4 Contrasting conjunctions

These connect a clause or sentence, whose content is in *contrast* with the preceding one (see also 30.2.4):

ma, però	but
tuttavia	yet
anzi, piuttosto	on the contrary, rather

Diana non è stupida, anzi è molto intelligente.

Diana is not stupid, on the contrary she's very intelligent.

Se c'è traffico, non fate l'autostrada, piuttosto prendete le strade di campagna.

If there's traffic, don't go on the motorway, rather take the country roads.

5.2.5 Conjunctions of sequence or consequence

These introduce a clause or sentence whose content is a direct follow-on or a *consequence* of the preceding one (see also 35.2):

dunque, quindi, perciò, allora therefore, so, then

Laura ha capelli biondi, *quindi* si capisce subito che è straniera.

Laura has blonde hair, so people realise immediately that she's a foreigner.

Il bambino è nato prematuro, *perciò* è a rischio.

The baby was born premature so he's at risk.

Il treno è arrivato in ritardo e *allora* Marco ha preso il tassì per arrivare prima.

The train arrived late, so Marco took a taxi to get there quicker.

Each of the conjunctions shown above produces a sequence of sentences or clauses that are connected, but still independent of each other, and which could just as well stand alone. These are called *coordinated* sentences.

5.3 Subordinating conjunctions

We say that a sentence is *subordinate* to another one when it has the function of completing it. There is a relationship of dependence, in which there is a *main* clause or sentence and one or more *dependent* clauses or sentences. Certain specific conjunctions are used to indicate this relationship. Their role is similar to that of prepositions (see 4.1, 4.4). Dependent clauses cannot stand alone, but exist only in relation to the main clause.

Relationships of subordination are frequently found in Italian, certainly more so than in English, so it is important to understand the role of the various conjunctions in Italian.

The dependent verb introduced by a *preposition* must be in the infinitive and its subject must be the *same* as that of the main verb (see 4.4):

Spero *di* vincere.

I hope to win.

The verb introduced by a *subordinating conjunction*, on the other hand, can be in the indicative, conditional or subjunctive mood, and its subject may be a *different* one from that of the main verb:

Indicative: **So *che* loro hanno vinto.**

I know they have won.

Conditional: **Capisco *che* voi vorreste vincere.**

I understand that you would like to win.

Subjunctive: **Spero *che* la nostra squadra vinca.**

I hope our team wins.

The mood and tense of the dependent verbs, introduced by the conjunction **che**, depends on the nature of the main verb (**so**, **capisco**, **spero**) and on the time relationship between the two verbs.

Some of the most common subordinating conjunctions are shown below, with a few examples:

5.3.1 **Che**

Che is the most frequently used of all subordinating conjunctions. This function of **che** has to be distinguished from its function as a *relative pronoun* (see 3.5).

The different kinds of sentences introduced by **che** can be identified by their relationship with the main verb on which they depend. The various types of complex sentences are illustrated in Chapters 30 to 39. Here are just a few examples:

<i>Object:</i>	Ho detto <i>che</i> sono stanco. I said that I am tired.
<i>Subject:</i>	È meglio <i>che</i> tu vada a letto. It's better that you go to bed.
<i>Consequence:</i>	Sono così stanco <i>che</i> andrei a letto subito. I'm so tired that I'd go to bed immediately.
<i>Comparison:</i>	È più facile dirlo <i>che</i> farlo. It's easier to say it than to do it.

5.3.2 **Perché**

<i>Reason:</i>	Mio figlio piange <i>perché</i> ha fame. My son is crying because he is hungry.
<i>Purpose:</i>	Ti parlo <i>perché</i> tu possa capirmi. I am speaking to you so that you can understand.
<i>Indirect question:</i>	Dimmi <i>perché</i> vuoi andare via. Tell me why you want to go away.

See also 33.3 (purpose), 34.3.1 (reason), 31.1.2 and 31.3 (indirect speech).

5.3.3 **Se**

<i>Condition:</i>	<i>Se</i> piove non esco. If it rains I won't go out. <i>Se</i> avessi i soldi farei un viaggio negli USA. If I had the money I'd go on a trip to the USA.
<i>Indirect question:</i>	Dimmi <i>se</i> capisci. Tell me whether you understand or not.

See also 38.2, 38.3 (*se* in 'if' clauses), 29.2, 31.3.2, 38.7.2 (indirect questions), 26.4.6 (*chissà se*).

5.3.4 **Quando, mentre, appena**

<i>Time:</i>	Scrivimi <i>appena</i> arrivi. Write to me as soon as you arrive. <i>Quando</i> l'ho visto l'ho salutato. When I saw him I said hello.
--------------	---

Sono arrivato *mentre* telefonavi.

I arrived while you were on the phone.

Indirect question: Gli chiedo *quando* mi pagherà.

I'll ask him when he'll pay me.

See also 36.2, 36.4 (time relationships), 31.1.2 and 31.3 (indirect speech).

5.3.5 **Affinché, benché, prima che, purché, sebbene, senza che**

Some conjunctions require the use of the *subjunctive* mood (see 2.3.14–15). This is because of the meaning of the conjunction and the nature of the relationship between the main verb and the dependent verb:

<i>Concessive:</i>	anche se	even if	benché	although
	neanche se	not even if	nonostante	despite
	sebbene	even though		

Sono venuto in ufficio, *nonostante* avessi la febbre.

I came to the office, although I had a fever.

Non vorrei una motocicletta *neanche se* me la regalassero.

I wouldn't like to have a motorbike, even if I was given one for free.

See also 39.3.2.

Purpose: **perché, affinché** so that, in order to

Il direttore ha comprato un nuovo computer alla segretaria *perché* lavorasse meglio.

The manager bought the secretary a new computer so that she could work better.

See also 33.3.1.

<i>Restrictive:</i>	a meno che	unless
	in/nel caso (che)	just in case
	salvo che	unless, except for
	senza che	without, unless
	tranne che	except that

Possiamo andare, *a meno che* tu non abbia ancora da fare.

We can go now, unless you still have something to do.

Ti lascio le chiavi della macchina *in caso* tu ne avessi bisogno.

I'll leave you my car keys, just in case you might need them.

See also 39.2.1.

6

Adverbs

6.1 What is an adverb?

The main function of adverbs is to modify the meaning of a verb. This function can be compared to that of adjectives qualifying a noun. Adverbs are invariable in form.

Adjective: **Viviamo una vita *tranquilla*.**
We live a quiet life.

Adverb: **Viviamo *tranquillamente*.**
We live quietly.

Certain adverbs such as **molto**, **poco** (see 6.2.2) can also be used to modify words other than verbs, in particular adjectives or other adverbs:

La mia vita è *molto* tranquilla.
My life is very quiet.

Viviamo *molto* tranquillamente.
We live very quietly.

6.2 Types of adverbs

6.2.1 Adverbs formed with *-mente*

The most typical form of Italian adverbs is that derived from an adjective, with the addition of the suffix **-mente**. This is similar to the English pattern of adverbs formed with the suffix ‘-ly’ (‘quiet/quietly, slow/slowly’).

- (a) For adjectives in the first group (-o/-a/-i/-e type, see 1.4.2) the suffix **-mente** is added to the feminine singular form (ending in -a):

tranquillo	<i>tranquillamente</i>	lento	<i>lentamente</i>
attento	<i>attentamente</i>	serio	<i>seriamente</i>

- (b) For adjectives in the second group (-e/-i type, see 1.4.2) the suffix **-mente** is simply added to the singular form; with adjectives ending in **-le** and **-re**, however, the **e** is dropped first:

semplice	<i>semplicemente</i>	veloce	<i>velocemente</i>
facile	<i>facilmente</i>	particolare	<i>particolarmente</i>

6.2.2 Adjectives used as adverbs

Some of the most commonly used adjectives in Italian are also used as adverbs: **molto**, **poco**, **quanto**, **tanto**, **troppo**, **tutto**. When used as adjectives they agree in gender and number with the noun that they qualify, following the pattern **-o/-a/-i/-e**. When used as adverbs, however, they are invariable and identical to the masculine singular form:

- Used as an adjective:

Ho molti amici.

I have many (boy)friends.

Ho molte amiche.

I have many (girl)friends.

- Used as an adverb (see also 10.4.1, 17.5.2):

Lavoro molto.

I work a lot.

Lavoriamo molto.

We work a lot.

Carla è molto stanca.

Carla is very tired.

Gianni è molto stanco.

Gianni is very tired.

Many other adjectives are used as adverbs without any change in form (keeping the masculine singular form):

Non ti capisco quando parli *veloce*. (instead of *velocemente*)

I don't understand you when you speak fast.

Capisco bene quando parli *chiaro*. (instead of *chiaramente*)

I understand well when you speak clearly.

This is particularly frequent in advertising:

Mangia *sano*, mangia Yoppo.

Eat healthily, eat Yoppo.

6.2.3 Prepositional phrases used as adverbs

Another alternative to the simple adverb is an adverbial phrase consisting of *noun* and *preposition*, for example:

Ha guidato *con molta attenzione*.

He drove with great care.

Gli studenti devono imparare a lavorare *in modo autonomo*.

The students have to learn to work independently.

For more information on the use of adverbial phrases, see 37.4.2.

6.2.4 Simple adverbs

Some adverbs are not derived from, or connected to, any adjective. They are words used exclusively as adverbs. Here is a list of the most common of these, divided into categories by meaning:

<i>Time:</i>	ora, adesso	now	allora	then	
	ancora	still	già	already	
	tardi	late	presto	soon, early	
	oggi	today	ieri	yesterday	
	domani	tomorrow	l'altro ieri	day before yesterday	
	dopo, poi	after	prima	before	
	subito	immediately	spesso	often	
	sempre	always	mai	never	
	<i>Place:</i>	qui, qua	here	lì, là	there
		quaggiù	down here	quassù	up here
laggiù		down there	lassù	up there	
sopra		above	sotto	beneath	
altrove		elsewhere	oltre	further	
dentro		inside	fuori	outside	
dietro		behind	davanti	in front	
dappertutto		everywhere			
<i>Question:</i>	come?	how?	dove?	where?	
	perché?	why?	quando?	when?	
<i>Quality:</i>	bene	well			
	male	badly			
	volentieri	willingly			
<i>Doubt:</i>	forse	perhaps			
	quasi	almost			
<i>Assertion:</i>	appunto	just, indeed, precisely, exactly			

Some adverbs of time and place can be used as prepositions (see also 4.5, 37.2). In this case they are normally combined with a simple preposition (**a**, **da**, **di**):

<i>Time:</i>	dopo di, prima di
<i>Place:</i>	davanti a, dentro a, dietro a/di, fuori a/da, oltre a, sopra a, sotto a

Siamo arrivati *dopo di* voi.

We arrived after you.

Mi piace sedermi *davanti al* caminetto.

I like to sit in front of the fireplace.

Mettetevi la giacca *prima di* uscire.

Put your jacket on before you go out.

A few of the most common adverbs can have a suffix added to them, which can convey a more limited intensity of meaning or a particular tone, such as affection. This usage is mainly limited to spoken Italian:

Ha solo due anni, ma parla *benino*.

She's only two years old, but she speaks quite well.

Come ti senti adesso? *Maluccio*.
How do you feel now? Not too bad.

6.2.5 Unstressed adverbs of place: *ci, vi, ne*

One very common adverb of place is the unstressed particle *ci* (see also 3.4.5) or less commonly the form *vi* used with the meaning of 'here/there' in expressions such as:

<i>C'è, ci sono</i>	There is, there are
<i>Ci vado, ci vengo</i>	I go there, I come here

Ne as an adverb of place has the meaning of 'from here/from there' (see also 3.4.4):

<i>Me ne vado</i>	I'm going away
<i>Andatevene</i>	Go away

Ci and *ne* are similar to the corresponding unstressed personal pronouns (see 3.4) in form and behaviour; for example, they can be combined with conjunctive pronouns, as in the examples above (see 3.4.4–6). However, in the examples above their meaning and function are clearly those of an adverb.

6.3 Comparative and superlative adverbs

We can make comparisons with adverbs, as we do with adjectives, using comparative and superlative forms (see 1.4.6–8 comparative adjectives):

<i>Adverb</i>	<i>Comparative</i>	<i>Superlative (absolute)</i>
<i>molto</i>	<i>più</i>	<i>moltissimo</i>
<i>poco</i>	<i>meno</i>	<i>pochissimo</i>
<i>sicuramente</i>	<i>più/meno sicuramente</i>	<i>sicurissimamente</i>
<i>velocemente</i>	<i>più/meno velocemente</i>	<i>velocissimamente</i>
<i>presto</i>	<i>più/meno presto</i>	<i>prestissimo (molto presto)</i>
<i>tardi</i>	<i>più/meno tardi</i>	<i>tardissimo (molto tardi)</i>

Two adverbs with 'special' comparative/superlative forms are:

<i>bene</i>	<i>meglio</i>	<i>benissimo (molto bene)</i>
<i>male</i>	<i>peggio</i>	<i>malissimo (molto male)</i>

Some examples of comparative and superlative adverbs in use (see also 17.2, 17.5.6):

Si scrive *più velocemente* col computer che a mano.
One can write faster with a computer than by hand.

Ieri sera siamo andati a letto *tardissimo*.
Yesterday evening we went to bed very late.

È *meglio* lavorare in gruppo che lavorare da soli.
To work in a team is better than to work alone.

Oggi mi sento *benissimo*.
Today I feel very well.

Teresa suona il piano *peggio* di Giovanni.
Teresa plays the piano worse than Giovanni.

Per favore guida *un po' più* piano.
Please drive a bit slower. (a bit more slowly)

The superlatives shown above are *absolute* superlatives, i.e. they do *not* express a comparison, but it is also possible to form a *relative* superlative, by using **il più . . . possibile** or, with the particular forms shown above, **il meglio/peggio possibile**:

Partiamo *il più presto possibile*.

Let us leave as early as possible.

Controlli il contratto *il più attentamente possibile*.

Check the contract as carefully as possible.

The superlative adverbs **il meglio** 'best', **il peggio** 'worst' can also have the function of nouns, as in the expressions below:

Do *il meglio di me stesso quando posso lavorare in modo autonomo*.

I give the best of myself when I can work independently.

***Il peggio deve ancora venire*.**

The worst is still to come.

7

Numbers

7.1 What is a number?

Grammatically, numbers can be considered as belonging to several categories, depending on their different functions.

A number can be used as:

(a) a noun:

Il *cinque* è un numero dispari.

Five is an odd number.

Ci vediamo alle *nove*.

See you at nine o'clock.

(b) an *adjective* (with a noun):

Mi servono *tre* fogli di carta.

I need three sheets of paper.

(c) a *pronoun* (on its own):

Quanti fogli di carta ti servono? Me ne servono *tre*.

How many sheets do you need? I need three.

7.2 Cardinal numbers

Cardinals are the basic numbers. A list of cardinal numbers is shown at the end of this chapter. Note in particular the elision of the vowel in **ventuno**, **trentotto** and the acute accent in **trentatré**.

All cardinal numbers are invariable except **uno/una**, which is used also as the indefinite article, and whose forms vary according to the word that follows (see 1.3.2 for all possible variations). With numbers ending in **-uno**, the final vowel is often dropped:

trentun giorni

thirty-one days

Ha compiuto ventun anni.

She's turned twenty-one.

Numbers with more than one element are joined together, for example:

4.944	4,944
quattromilanovecentoquarantaquattro	

When the first element is **cento** or **mille**, these can remain separate, but joined by **e**:

1.002	1,002
mille e due	

Milione 'million' and plural form **milioni** can also remain separate from the figures that follow and are *not* joined by **e**:

1.250.000	1,250,000
un milione duecentocinquantamila	
2.350.000	2,350,000
due milioni trecentocinquantamila	

Note how **mille** 'one thousand' becomes **-mila** in the plural, creating compound forms: **duemila** 'two thousand', **tremila** three thousand, **centomila** 'one hundred thousand'.

Decimal point

In Italian, contrary to English usage, a **virgola** 'comma' is used to denote the decimal point, while a **punto** 'full stop' is used to separate figures above a thousand:

<i>Italian</i>	<i>English</i>
2,5	2.5
due virgola cinque	two point five
1.500	1,500
millecinquecento	

When describing how people or objects are arranged or distributed, we use the prepositions **a** (**a due a due**) or **per**, as shown below:

Ragazzi, mettetevi in fila due per due.
Kids, get in line (line up) two by two.

Signori, entrate uno per volta, per favore.
Ladies and gentlemen, come in one at a time, please.

7.3

Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers (except the first ten, whose special forms can be seen in 7.11) are formed by adding the suffix **-esimo**. The final vowel of the cardinal number drops before the suffix: **undic-esimo**, **dodic-esimo**, **quarant-esimo**, **cent-esimo**.

These numbers are basically used as adjectives and can be masculine or feminine, singular or plural, changing their ending (with the pattern **-o/-a/-i/-e**) in agreement with the noun to which they are attached:

Sto scrivendo il sesto capitolo.
I am writing the sixth chapter.

la dodicesima notte
the twelfth night

They come *after* the noun when used with the names of rulers, always written as a Roman number:

Enrico VIII (*Enrico ottavo*)

Henry the eighth

In some cases, however, they are used on their own, for example when referring to something which is understood from the context:

- The gears of a car:

la prima, la quarta (marcia)

first, fourth gear

- For schools, referring to classes, grades or years:

Mio figlio frequenta la prima (classe) media, e mia figlia la terza.

My son is in the first year of middle school, and my daughter is in the third.

- Referring to units of time:

(minuti) primi, secondi

minutes, seconds

Ci vogliono due ore, quattro primi e trenta secondi.

It takes two hours, four minutes and thirty seconds.

decimi, centesimi (di secondo)

tenths, hundreds of a second

- Ordinal numbers are also used in *fractions* as in:

1/10 un decimo

a tenth

2/3 due terzi

two-thirds

5/12 cinque dodicesimi

five-twelfths

See also 17.5.5 (numbers and placing).

Note also:

la metà, il mezzo half (noun)

mezzo, mezza half (used as adjective)

La metà degli studenti è stata bocciata

Half the students failed

Una mezza porzione di spaghetti al burro

A half portion of spaghetti with butter

Un mezzo litro di vino rosso

Half a litre of red wine

7.4

Calculations

Here are some examples of basic arithmetical calculations in Italian:

+	più	plus	$5 + 6 = 11$ cinque più sei uguale undici
-	meno	less	$9 - 3 = 6$ nove meno tre uguale sei
:	diviso	divided by	$8 : 2 = 4$ otto diviso due uguale quattro
×	per	multiplied by	$3 \times 8 = 24$ tre per otto uguale ventiquattro
=	uguale	equals	

In informal speech, **fa** 'makes' is also used:

$2 + 2 = 4$ **due più due fa quattro**

7.5

Percentages

Percentages are always preceded by an article:

Il 15% del nostro fatturato consiste in prodotti alimentari.
15% of our turnover is in foodstuffs.

L'euro si è svalutato del 20% (venti per cento).
The Euro has been devalued by 20%.

Il mio reddito si è ridotto del 50%.
My income has been reduced by 50%.

The article *l'* is used with an initial vowel sound:

***l'*ottanta per cento (80%)** eighty per cent

See also 42.6 for use of percentages in written reports.

7.6

Collective and approximate numbers

Note the use of suffixes in the following:

una decina	una dozzina	un'oretta
about ten	a dozen	a short hour (just for an hour)

The suffix **-ina** is used with numbers to express approximation:

C'era una ventina di spettatori.
There were about twenty spectators.

Passo una quindicina di giorni in montagna.
I'm spending a fortnight in the mountains.

As is the suffix **-aio** in **centinaio**, **migliaio**:

un centinaio di persone	un migliaio
about a hundred people	about a thousand

These have an irregular feminine plural form:

varie migliaia di clienti
several thousands of customers

An approximation of someone's age is expressed by:

Era una donna *sui* quaranta.
She was a woman of around 40.

Aveva una *quarantina* di anni.
She was around 40.

Other collective numbers are:

un paio a pair (irregular feminine plural **le paia**)
una coppia a couple

7.7

Dates

The dates of the month are referred to with cardinal numbers, except the first:

il primo gennaio **il due aprile**
the first of January the second of April

Partiamo il *dieci* marzo
We'll leave on the tenth of March

Note how the article *I'* is used before an initial vowel sound:

***l'uno* settembre** ***l'otto* giugno** ***l'undici* agosto**
the first of September the eighth of June the eleventh August

Years are usually written in figures but spoken in full:

Sono nato *nel* 1951 (*millenovecentocinquantuno*).
I was born in 1951.

Mia figlia è nata il 29 luglio 1987 (*millenovecentottantasette*).
My daughter was born on the 29th of July 1987.

Viviamo in Gran Bretagna *dall'*89 (*ottantanove*).
We have lived in Britain since '89.

All dates expressed in numbers are *always* preceded by the *definite article*, as in the examples above.

Note the two different ways in which to describe centuries:

il ventesimo secolo/il Novecento **il quinto secolo**
the twentieth century (the 1900s) the fifth century (the 400s)

il quindicesimo secolo/il Quattrocento
the fifteenth century (the 1400s)

And note the following phrases:

i primi anni trenta
in the early thirties

agli inizi degli anni '80
at the beginning of the '80s

7.8

Time

Time is expressed using the definite article, normally in the feminine plural form referring to **le ore**:

Sono *le otto di sera*.

It's eight o'clock in the evening.

Sono *le otto di mattina*.

It's eight o'clock in the morning.

But in the case of midday, midnight or one o'clock, the singular is used:

È *mezzogiorno*.

It's midday.

È *mezzanotte*.

It's midnight.

È *l'una*.

It's one o'clock.

Time 'at which' is expressed using **a** or more frequently the combined preposition and article forms:

Sono andata a letto *a mezzanotte*.

I went to bed at midnight.

Ci vediamo *all'una*.

We'll see each other at one o'clock.

Passo a prenderti *alle sette*.

I'll come by and get you at seven o'clock.

7.9

Weights and measures

Units of weight include:

un etto 100 grams

un chilo a kilo

un quintale 100 kilos

una tonnellata a metric ton

Units of distance/length include:

un centimetro a centimetre

un metro a metre

un decimetro ten cms

un chilometro a kilometre

The cost per unit or speed per hour are expressed as follows:

I CD costano €10 (dieci euro) *l'uno*.

The CDs cost €10 (ten euros) each.

Le pere costano €4 (quattro euro) *al chilo*.

Pears cost €4 (four euros) per kilo.

Il limite di velocità su autostrada è di 130 chilometri *all'ora*.

The speed limit on motorways is 130 kms per hour.

7.10 Currency

Like other countries of the European Union, Italy uses the euro as the unit of currency. Previously the unit of currency was the Italian **lira** and you may occasionally still hear prices quoted in **lire**.

Here the writer complains about the high cost of holidaying in Italy:

Due panini e due lattine di coca: 9.70 euro; un ombrellone e due sdraio 15 euro indipendentemente se li prendi per tutto il giorno o mezza giornata; parcheggiare in zona blu (senza alternative) 6 euro al giorno . . . sono stufo di farmi prendere in giro, non tornerò più tanto spesso in Italia.

(Adapted from letter to 'Forum', *Corriere della Sera* (online), 9 August 2004)

Two sandwiches and two cans of coke: 9.70 euros; a beach umbrella and two deckchairs 15 euros, regardless of whether you take them for the whole day or half a day; parking in the blue zone (no choice) six euros a day . . . I am fed up being taken for a ride, I won't come back to Italy so often.

7.11 Table of numbers

<i>No</i>	<i>Cardinal</i>	<i>Ordinal</i>
1	uno/una	primo/a/i/e
2	due	secondo/a/i/e
3	tre	terzo/a/i/e
4	quattro	quarto/a/i/e
5	cinque	quinto/a/i/e
6	sei	sesto
7	sette	settimo
8	otto	ottavo
9	nove	nono
10	dieci	decimo
11	undici	undicesimo
12	dodici	dodicesimo
13	treddici	treddicesimo
14	quattordici	quattordicesimo
15	quindici	quindicesimo
16	sedici	sedicesimo
17	diciassette	diciassettesimo
18	diciotto	diciottesimo
19	diciannove	diciannovesimo
20	venti	ventesimo
21	ventuno	ventunesimo
22	ventidue	ventiduesimo
23	ventitré	ventitreesimo
30	trenta	trentesimo
31	trentuno	trentunesimo

32	trentadue	trentaduesimo
33	trentatré	trentatreesimo
40	quaranta	quarantesimo
41	quarantuno	quarantunesimo
42	quarantadue	quarantaduesimo
50	cinquanta	cinquantesimo
60	sessanta	sessantesimo
70	settanta	settantesimo
80	ottanta	ottantesimo
90	novanta	novantesimo
100	cento	centesimo
200	duecento	duecentesimo
300	trecento	trecentesimo
1.000	mille	millesimo
2.000	duemila	duemillesimo
10.000	diecimila	diecimillesimo
100.000	centomila	centomillesimo
1.000.000	un milione	milionesimo
1.000.000.000	un miliardo	miliardesimo

Part B

Functions

Section I

Giving and seeking factual information

8

Identification: giving personal information

8.1 Introduction

In Italian, as in other languages, one of the simplest ways of giving or eliciting information about yourself or others, is by using the verb **essere** 'to be' (see 2.2.4) as shown in this simple dialogue:

- A **Buongiorno, io *sono* Monica. *Sono* la nuova assistente di marketing. E voi?**
- B **Io *sono* Carlo, *sono* il direttore tecnico. E questo è il mio collega, Gerardo. *Siamo* colleghi da più di dieci anni!**
- C **Piacere, Monica.**
- A **Piacere, Gerardo. Di dove *sei*?**
- C ***Sono* napoletano. E tu?**
- A **Io *sono* di Milano.**
- A Good morning. I'm Monica. I'm the new marketing assistant. What about you?
- B I'm Carlo. I'm the technical director. And this is my colleague Gerardo. We've been colleagues for more than ten years!
- C Pleased to meet you, Monica.
- A Pleased to meet you, Gerardo. Where are you from?
- C I'm from Naples. And you?
- A I'm from Milan.

8.2 Tu or Lei?

There are two ways of addressing someone in Italian: **Lei** (formal) or **tu** (informal). **Lei** should be used when addressing someone you don't know well, or don't know at all, although young people meeting each other often use **tu** straightaway, as in the conversation above. You may at some point be invited to use the **tu** form with the words: **Diamoci del tu**.

When using **Lei** to address someone, the third person verb form is used (**Lei parla inglese?**), rather than the second person verb form (**Tu parli inglese?**) normally used when addressing someone directly. In our examples, we have shown both 'you' forms.

8.3

Giving different kinds of personal information

The verb *essere* 'to be' is used in most of the functions illustrated below, to supply the kind of personal information we exchange, for example, when meeting someone for the first time. (For 'Introductions', see also 20.2.)

In Italian the verb endings tell us which person is referred to (see Chapter 2). This means it is not necessary to use the *subject pronouns* **io**, **tu**, **lui**, etc. to indicate the person, so they are shown in our examples in brackets:

8.3.1

Giving one's name

(Io) <i>sono</i> Anna.	I am Anna.
(Lui) <i>è</i> Franco.	He is Franco.
(Loro) <i>sono</i> Monica e Gerardo.	They're Monica and Gerardo.

The verb *essere* can be replaced by the verb **chiamarsi** (2.1.7) 'to be called':

(Io) <i>mi chiamo</i> Anna.	My name is Anna.
(Lui) <i>si chiama</i> Franco.	His name is Franco.
Come <i>si chiama</i> ?	What's his name?
<i>Si chiama</i> Marco.	His name's Marco.

8.3.2

Indicating relationship to speaker**Friends or colleagues**

<i>È una collega.</i>	<i>È un amico.</i>
She is a (my) colleague.	He is a friend.

Note the use of the articles in **un mio**, **i miei**:

È un mio amico.
He's a friend of mine/my friend.

Sono i miei colleghi.
They are colleagues of mine/my colleagues.

Family relations

When we talk about family relations, we naturally often use the possessives **mio**, **tu**, etc. (see 3.7.1). With relations, the definite article **il**, **la**, etc. is omitted, unless talking about relatives in the plural:

È mio fratello.
He is my brother.

È suo marito.
It's her husband.

Sono i suoi figli.
They're her children.

Here is a list of close relations, with English translations:

il padre	father	la madre	mother
il fratello	brother	la sorella	sister
il cugino	cousin (m.)	la cugina	cousin (f.)

il marito	husband	la moglie	wife
il figlio	son	la figlia	daughter
lo zio	uncle	la zia	aunt
il suocero	father-in-law	la suocera	mother-in-law
il genero	son-in-law	la nuora	daughter-in-law
il cognato	brother-in-law	la cognata	sister-in-law
il nonno	grandfather	la nonna	grandmother
il nipote	grandson, nephew	la nipote	granddaughter, niece

Note that the words **la famiglia** and **i parenti** *do* need the definite article:

la mia famiglia	my family
il mio/la mia parente	my relative (m./f.)

Avoid confusing the following:

i miei parenti	my relatives
i miei genitori	my parents

8.3.3 Indicating profession

In Italian, when talking about one's profession using **essere**, the indefinite article **un, una** 'a, an' (see 1.3.2) is not needed:

(Io) sono insegnante.	I am a teacher.
(Lui) è ingegnere.	He is an engineer.
(Loro) sono medici.	They're doctors.

When, on the other hand, we use the verb **fare** (see 1.3.4), the definite article is used:

Faccio l'insegnante.	I'm a teacher.
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We have indicated in the following list some of the trades and professions you are most likely to come into contact with in Italy:

Professionals:

il medico	doctor
il/la dentista	dentist
il ragioniere	accountant
il/la pediatra	paediatrician
l'ingegnere	engineer
l'architetto	architect
l'insegnante	teacher (m./f.)
il professore/la professoressa	lecturer, secondary school teacher
il maestro/la maestra	teacher (elementary school)

Builders and workmen:

il muratore	builder
l'operaio	workman
l'idraulico	plumber
l'elettricista	electrician

Shops, trade:

il pescatore	fisherman
il fruttivendolo	greengrocer
il droghiere	grocer

il salumiere	grocer (delicatessen)
il fotografo	photographer
il bagnino/la bagnina	beach attendant

General:

l'impiegato/a	office employee
lo/la statale	state employee
il/la giornalista	journalist
il commesso/ la commessa	shop assistant

For more on the masculine/feminine forms of professions, see 1.2.1 and 20.9.

8.3.4 Indicating role or position

Where a specific individual post is referred to, the definite article **il**, **la** (see 1.3.5) is normally used, but see last example:

Sono il direttore commerciale dell'agenzia di viaggio.
I'm the commercial director of the travel agency.

È la nuova insegnante d'italiano.
She's the new Italian teacher.

Sono capo della sezione di Risorse Umane.
I'm head of Human Resources.

8.3.5 Indicating nationality

Generally, nationality is indicated by using **essere** with the appropriate adjective (see 1.4) of nationality:

(Io) sono scozzese.	I am Scottish.
Mia madre è italiana.	My mother is Italian.
(Loro) sono francesi.	They're French.

Here is a selection of adjectives denoting the more common nationalities:

africano	African	irlandese	Irish
albanese	Albanian	italiano	Italian
americano	American	kosovaro	Kosovan
australiano	Australian	libanese	Lebanese
austriaco	Austrian	libico	Libyan
belga	Belgian	lussemburghese	Luxembourgish
britannico	British	neozelandese	New Zealander
canadese	Canadian	norvegese	Norwegian
cinese	Chinese	olandese	Dutch
croato	Croatian	portoghese	Portuguese
danese	Danish	russo	Russian
finlandese	Finnish	sloveno	Slovenian
francese	French	spagnolo	Spanish
gallese	Welsh	sudafricano	South African
giapponese	Japanese	svedese	Swedish
greco	Greek	svizzero	Swiss
indiano	Indian	tedesco	German
inglese	English	turco	Turkish
iracheno	Iraqi	ucraino	Ukrainian

However, note that:

- (a) In Italian, no capital letter is used for adjectives of nationality:

un collega italiano an Italian colleague

- (b) The singular form of the adjective *belga* 'Belgian' is the same for masculine and feminine, but the plural form has two distinct endings:

degli amici belgi Belgian friends (m.)
delle amiche belghe Belgian friends (f.)

- (c) **Inglese** is often used by Italians to denote 'British'.

8.3.6 Indicating marital status

Essere is used with an adjective (see 1.4) to indicate marital status (see also 10.3.2):

(Io) sono sposato.

I am married.

(Lui) è divorziato.

He's divorced.

(Noi) siamo sposati da venti anni.

We've been married for twenty years.

'Single' is best expressed in spoken Italian as **non sposato**. In the media, the English 'single' is often used. In more formal contexts (for example CVs, passports, etc.), the words **celibe** 'bachelor', **nubile** 'spinster' are often used.

Giorgio non è sposato.

Giorgio is single/not married.

8.3.7 Indicating religion

Here are some religions you might want to describe in spoken Italian or on a form (see also 10.3.4):

cattolico	Catholic	protestante	Protestant
musulmano	Muslim	ebreo	Jewish

Religione: cattolica

Religion: Catholic

Il mio fidanzato è ebreo. Io sono musulmana.

My fiancé is Jewish. I am Muslim.

Details of other adjectives, for example those that describe physical appearance (age, shape, size, etc.), are found in 10.2.

8.3.8 Indicating place of origin

Note that while English uses 'from', Italian uses **di** (see 4.3.4) when referring to the city or town of origin:

(Io) sono di Napoli.

I'm from Naples.

(Lui) è di Firenze.

He's from Florence.

I miei colleghi sono di Londra.

My colleagues are from London.

However, when using the verb **venire**, to express the place where you come from, not necessarily where you were born, use **da** (see 4.3.3) instead:

Vengo da Londra.
I come from London.

Vengono dalla Sicilia.
They come from Sicily.

8.4 Emphasising the person referred to

8.4.1 Stressed subject pronouns

In Italian, the verb endings change or inflect; this means it is not necessary to use the *subject pronouns* **io**, **tu**, **lui**, etc. (see 3.3) to indicate *who* we are referring to. But the pronouns are sometimes used to *contrast* or *emphasise* the person(s) spoken about:

Io sono inglese.
I am English.

Lui è italiano.
He is Italian.

They are also used (particularly when using the polite **Lei** form of address, see 8.2 above) to make a question sound less abrupt:

Lei è inglese?
Are you English?

Lei è di Londra?
Are you from London?

8.4.2 With *questo*

We can also add the demonstrative pronoun **questo** 'this' (see 3.8) in our introductions, although when introducing someone, it is far preferable to use the subject pronouns:

Questi sono i miei studenti.
Queste sono le mie amiche.

These are my students.
These are my friends.

Lui è Franco.
Lei è una mia collega.

He (This) is Franco.
She is a colleague of mine.

8.5 Eliciting personal information

Essere is also used to elicit information, sometimes with a question word (see 3.6 and 15.3):

Chi è lui?
Di dove sei/è?

Who is he?
Who are you?

Di dov'è Franco?
Di dove sono gli studenti?

Where is Franco from?
Where are the students from?

Normally the form of the sentence and the word order are exactly the same, whether statement or question (but see 40.7). To turn a statement into a question, we need only alter the intonation of the sentence, usually by raising the voice towards the end of the sentence (see 15.2):

Lei è sposata?
Tu sei insegnante?
È un collega?

Are you married?
Are you a teacher?
Is he a colleague?

In the following examples, note the use of **quale** (**qual**) where English would use the question word 'what'. **Quale** can be abbreviated to **qual** but must never use an apostrophe:

Qual è il Suo cognome?

What is your surname?

Qual è il Suo indirizzo?

What is your address?

8.6

Dialoghi**Un incontro con amici**

A Ciao, Mariella!

B Ciao, Gianna. Che sorpresa!

A Questo è mio cugino, Aurelio. È siciliano.
Aurelio, questa è la mia amica, Mariella.

B Ciao, Aurelio. Benvenuto a Pisa. Di dove sei?

C Sono di Catania, ma mia madre è di Pisa.

B Ah, anche il mio fidanzato è di Catania. Si chiama Carmelo.
È ragioniere. I suoi sono di Messina, ma sono a Catania da molto tempo.

Meeting friends

A Hi Mariella!

B Hi, Gianna. What a surprise!

A This is my cousin, Aurelio. He's Sicilian.
Aurelio, this is my friend Mariella.

B Hi, Aurelio. Welcome to Pisa. Where are you from?

C I'm from Catania, but my mother is from Pisa.

B Ah, my boyfriend's from Catania too. He's called Carmelo. He's an accountant. His parents are from Messina, but they've been in Catania for some time.

In the following dialogue several legal/bureaucratic terms are used: **residenza** 'residence' or 'home address', **domicilio** 'the place where you are presently living', **stato civile** 'married status'. Note too how the polite form **Suo** ('yours') is generally written with a capital letter.

All'ufficio di Polizia

A Prego si accomodi. Dobbiamo compilare questo modulo con le Sue generalità. Le farò alcune domande. Il Suo cognome?

B Smith.

A Mi scusi. Come si scrive?

B Esse-emme-i-ti-acca (Savona, Mantova, Imola, Taranto, Hotel).

A E il nome?

B Richard.

A La nazionalità?

B Australiana.

A Residenza?

B 56 Ramsay Street, Sydney, Australia.

A Qual è il Suo domicilio in Italia?

B Hotel Miramare, Napoli.

- A Numero di telefono?
B 081-271638.
A E il Suo stato civile?
B Coniugato.
A Qual è il numero del Suo passaporto?
B 0044998245.
A Che professione fa?
B Commerciante.
A Va bene, grazie. Per ora basta. Le telefoneremo non appena avremo notizie della Sua pratica di permesso di soggiorno.

At the police station

- A Please sit down. We have to fill in this form with your particulars. I have to ask you some questions. Your surname?
B Smith.
A Sorry, how is that written?
B *S* for sugar, *M* for mother, *I* for India, *T* for Tommy, *H* for Harry.
A And your name?
B Richard.
A Nationality?
B Australian.
A Home address?
B 56 Ramsay Street, Sydney, Australia.
A What is your address in Italy?
B Hotel Miramare, Naples.
A And the telephone number?
B 081-271638.
A And your marital status?
B Married.
A What's the number of your passport?
B 0044998245.
A What is your profession?
B Businessman /salesman.
A That's fine, thanks. That's enough for now. We'll call you as soon as we have some news of your application for a residence permit.

9

Specifying people or objects

9.1 Introduction

This dialogue shows how even at the simplest level, we can *indicate* our specific needs:

At the bar

- A Buongiorno.
- B Buongiorno, un caffè per favore.
- A Va bene. E . . . per la Signora?
- C Una birra piccola e un whisky.
- A Certamente. Una birra italiana, va bene?
- C Sì, va bene. Ma . . . un whisky scozzese.
- A Naturalmente, Signora.

At the café

- A Good morning.
- B Good morning. A coffee, please.
- A All right. And . . . for Madam?
- C A small beer and a whisky.
- A Certainly. An Italian beer, is that all right?
- C Yes, OK. But . . . a Scotch whisky.
- A Of course, Madam.

In the dialogue above, we identify what we want by using a simple noun **una birra** or noun and adjective combination **una birra piccola** (see 1.1). We can also use a verb such as **aver bisogno di** (23.3.2), or **volere** (see 23.2.1).

9.2 Specifying a known or particular person or object

9.2.1 Using the definite article *il, la*

When we have *one particular person or thing* in mind, we can express this by using the definite article **il, la**, etc. (see 1.3.4). As the examples show, we are generally referring to a known person or thing, for example, 'the speciality we've had before', 'the English girl someone told us about':

Vorrei assaggiare *la* specialità della casa.
I'd like to try *the* speciality of the house.

Mi presenti *la* ragazza inglese?
Will you introduce me to *the* English girl?

Alternatively, we may be referring to someone or something that is the only one, or the only one possible, in this set of circumstances ('the manager', 'the bill'):

Il direttore, per favore.
The manager, please.

Il conto, per piacere.
The bill, please.

9.2.2 Using *questo*, *quello*

We use **questo** 'this' or **quello** 'that' (see 3.8) to refer to *this* or *that* person or object: the one near us (**questo**), the one near the person addressed (**quello**), the one we can see in front of us (**questo**, **quello**) or perhaps even the one that has just been talked about:

Vorrei assaggiare *quel* caffè speciale.
I'd like to try *that* special coffee.

Conosci *quelle* ragazze inglesi?
Do you know *those* English girls?

Questo scontrino non è per la valigia che è andata smarrita.
This baggage tag is not for the case that's gone missing.

The verb **essere** (see 2.2.4) can be used with **questo**, **quello**:

Questi sono i miei appunti. Sono abbastanza completi, se vuoi copiarli.
These are my notes. They're quite complete, if you want to copy them.

Quello è il computer portatile che abbiamo comprato negli Stati Uniti.
That is the laptop that we bought in the USA.

The question words **cosa** or **che cosa** 'what?' can be used to elicit specific information:

Cosa sono (questi)? Sono funghi secchi.
What are they/these? They're dried mushrooms.

Che cosa sono quelle foglie secche? Sono foglie di basilico.
What are those dry leaves? They're basil leaves.

9.3 Specifying category or type

Sometimes we want to indicate a specific *type* or category of person or thing.

Using an adjective

We can do this by using an *adjective* (see 1.4) or combination of adjectives:

Cerco *un interprete italiano*.
I'm looking for an Italian interpreter.

Gli studenti hanno bisogno di *un libro semplice e chiaro*.

The students need a clear simple book.

Using a *che* clause

Another way of being more specific is to use a relative clause beginning with **che** (see 3.5.1) to give more details.

The **che** clause can refer to a definite or actual object or category that we know about, in which case the *indicative* verb form is used:

In genere gli inglesi preferiscono bere le birre *che conoscono*.

On the whole the English prefer to drink the beers that they know.

Questa è la bicicletta *che ho comprato* l'anno scorso.

This is the bike I bought last year.

Il regista ha assunto l'attrice *che aveva girato* dei film con Pasolini.

The director employed the actress who had been in some of Pasolini's films.

If the **che** clause refers to something that may or may not exist or be available, the *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14) is sometimes used, particularly in more formal language. The examples here use the indicative, with the subjunctive shown in brackets:

Vorrei una birra *che non è (sia)* troppo forte.

I would like a beer that is not too strong.

Cerco un interprete *che sa (sappia)* parlare inglese.

I'm looking for an interpreter who can speak English.

9.4 Specifying ownership

One of the most important aspects of identification is *belonging*. We can indicate the person to whom things belong. Note how Italian uses **di** and the person involved; there is no equivalent of the English possessive form 'Franco's car', 'Anna's motor-bike':

Metti il maglione verde *di Alessandro*.

Put Alessandro's green sweater on.

Prendiamo la macchina *di mio cugino*.

Let's take my cousin's car.

Le ciabatte sono *dei bambini*.

The flip-flops are the children's.

We can also use possessives such as **mio**, **tuo**, **suo** (see 3.7). Note that in Italian, the definite article **il**, **la** (etc.) is normally used (see 3.7.1):

Questo è *il mio* lavoro.

This is my work.

Questa è *la tua* cassetta?

Is this your cassette?

To *ask* who something belongs to, we use:

Di chi è . . . ? Whose is it?
(lit. 'Of who is it?')

When **mio**, **tuo**, **suo**, etc. are used as a pronoun ('mine, yours', etc.), the definite article **il**, **la**, etc. is optional:

Di chi è questa maglia? È mia.

Whose is this sweater? It's mine.

Di chi è questo biglietto? È il suo.

Whose is this ticket? It's his.

Quel libro è mio.

That book is mine.

Le carte da gioco erano sue.

The playing cards were hers.

10

Describing people or things

10.1 Introduction

The most common way of describing the characteristics of someone or something is to use an adjective or adjectives (see 1.4). In this chapter are some of the most frequently used categories of adjectives, some relating to people, some to things and some to both. We give just a few examples in each category. For the forms of adjectives, including those that are invariable, see 1.4.4.

10.2 Physical characteristics

Physical characteristics may be temporary or permanent, as seen in the examples below.

10.2.1 Size

Common adjectives describing *size* include:

grande	large	piccolo	small
alto	tall	basso	low, small in stature
grasso	fat	magro	thin
lungo	long	corto	short

La sua futura suocera era *alta e grassa*.
His future mother-in-law was tall and fat.

È *bionda*, sui quaranta anni.
She's blonde, around forty.

I ragazzi sono *alti*, con capelli *lunghi e castani*.
The boys are tall, with long brown hair.

10.2.2 Shape

Common adjectives describing *shape* include:

ovale	oval	piatto	flat
quadrato	square	rettangolare	rectangular
rotondo	round		

10.2.3 Colour

Common adjectives describing colour include:

bianco	white	nero	black
grigio	grey	marrone	brown
blu	navy	azzurro	sky blue
verde	green	rosso	red
giallo	yellow	rosa	pink

The intensity of colour can be modified by **chiaro** 'light' or **scuro** 'dark':

verde chiaro	light green	rosso scuro	dark red
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Note that many adjectives of colour are *invariable*: they do not change form (see 1.4.4). Examples are **blu**, **rosa**, **beige**.

Sulle Isole Eolie ci sono delle case piccole e bianche.
On the Aeolian islands there are small white houses.

È più facile curare un giardino quadrato.
It's easier to look after a square garden.

10.2.4 Composition and materials

Rather than use an adjective (English 'metallic, wooden'), Italian often uses a prepositional phrase to describe what an object is made of (see 4.3.4 and 4.3.5): for example, the preposition **di** 'of' or **in** 'in' with a noun such as **legno**, **cotone**, etc.

Textiles

di cotone	cotton	di seta	silk
di poliestere	polyester	di viscosa	viscose
di lana	wool	di pelle	leather
di cuoio	leather	di materiale sintetico	synthetic material

Metals

di alluminio	aluminium	di metallo	metal
di ferro	iron	di acciaio	steel
d'oro	gold	di argento	silver
di bronzo	bronze	di ottone	brass

Other materials

di gomma	rubber	di plastica	plastic
di legno	wood	di ceramica	china

La cucina è tutta in legno.
The kitchen is all in wood.

Per la stagione estiva la moda sarà tutta di cotone.
For the summer season, the fashion will be all cotton.

In montagna bisogna mettere una maglia di lana.
In the mountains you must put on a woollen sweater.

You can also use **fatto di** 'made of' or another participle of similar meaning, such as:

foderato di	lined with
ricoperto di	covered with
ripieno di	filled with
rivestito di	covered with

L'ascensore aveva le porte fatte di metallo.

The lift had metal doors.

The *authenticity* of the material is expressed by:

vero	real	finto	fake
puro	pure	genuino	genuine
autentico	authentic	cento per cento	hundred per cent

Questa giacca è vera pelle.

This jacket is real leather.

Characteristics of the material include:

debole	weak	duro	hard
elastico	elastic, stretchy	forte	strong
liscio	smooth	morbido	soft
resistente	tough, long-lasting	ruvido	rough
soffice	soft		

Questo tegame è resistente in lavastoviglie.

This frying pan can be washed in the dishwasher.

10.2.5 Condition, state or appearance

Other adjectives that describe a physical condition, state or appearance, whether permanent or temporary, and that can apply to a person, an object or both, include:

acceso	lit, switched-on	asciutto	dry
bagnato	wet	bello	pretty, nice, handsome
bollente	boiling	brutto	ugly, horrible
caldo	hot	calmo	calm
carino	pretty	denso	thick
elegante	elegant	fresco	fresh, cool
freddo	cold	ghiacciato	iced
gelato	ice-cold	gonfio	swollen
macchiato	stained (also used for coffee)	malato	ill
pulito	clean	sciupato	worn-out
secco	dry	sottile	thin
spento	out, switched-off	spesso	thick
sporco	dirty	squallido	squalid
stanco	tired	tranquillo	quiet

I bambini erano bagnati.

The children were soaking wet.

La professoressa era stanca.

The teacher was tired.

La città è sporca e squallida.
The town is dirty and squalid.

Prendo un caffè *macchiato*.
I'll have a coffee with a little milk.

Non mettete gli asciugamani *bagnati* sul letto.
Don't put the wet towels on the bed.

Dopo la lunga passeggiata, avevo i piedi *gonfi*.
After the long walk, I had swollen feet.

10.2.6 Taste and smell

Adjectives describing taste or smell include:

amaro	bitter	buono	good
cattivo	bad	dolce	sweet
insipido	tasteless	salato	salty
saorito	tasty		

10.2.7 Weather

Adjectives describing weather conditions include:

afofo	stuffy, humid	mosso	rough (e.g. mare mosso)
nuvoloso	cloudy	piovoso	rainy
sereno	calm, clear (e.g. cielo sereno)	umido	damp, wet
		ventoso	windy

10.3 Non-physical attributes

10.3.1 Nationality

Adjectives of nationality are illustrated in 8.3.5.

Teresa parla bene il cinese, perché ha la mamma *cinese*.
Teresa speaks Chinese well, because she has a Chinese mother.

La Buick è una macchina *americana*.
The Buick is an American car.

Le scarpe che ho comprato al mercato sono *italiane*.
The shoes I bought at the market are Italian.

10.3.2 Marital status

Adjectives describing marital status (see also 8.3.6) include:

divorziato	divorced	separato	separated
single	single	sposato	married

Mio cugino Antonio è *single*.
My cousin Antonio is single.

Gemma è *separata*.
Gemma is separated.

Walter e Gloria sono *sposati*.

Walter and Gloria are married.

10.3.3 Age

Here are some common adjectives denoting age:

For a person:

anziano	old	giovane	young
grande	big, old	piccolo	small, young

For an object only:

antico	old, antique
---------------	--------------

For either:

vecchio	old
----------------	-----

È proprio bello avere un marito *giovane*.

It's really great to have a young husband.

Le case *vecchie* sono difficili da pulire.

Old houses are hard to clean.

10.3.4 Religion

Here are a few adjectives describing specific religions (see also 8.3.7):

anglicano	Anglican	buddista	Buddhist
ortodosso	Orthodox		

I nostri amici greci sono *ortodossi*.

Our Greek friends are Orthodox.

La chiesa *anglicana* è vicino all'*ambasciata britannica*.

The Anglican church is near the British Embassy.

10.3.5 Character, temperament or qualities

Adjectives describing character, temperament (of a person) or other qualities (of a person or thing) include:

aggressivo	aggressive	allegro	happy, cheerful
antipatico	unpleasant	bello	nice
brutto	horrible		(e.g. gesture)
	(e.g. situation)	crudel	cruel
disponibile	available, helpful	dolce	gentle
estroverso	extrovert	fastidioso	annoying
furbo	crafty	gentile	kind
gradevole	pleasant	intelligente	intelligent
introverso	introvert	piacevole	pleasant
pignolo	fussy	prepotente	domineering

sgradevole	unpleasant	sfacciato	cheeky, bold
simpatico	nice	spiacevole	regrettable, disagreeable
stupido	stupid	timido	shy
tranquillo	calm	vivace	lively

Simonetta è *antipatica*.

Simonetta is unpleasant.

È una ragazza *simpatica*, bella e *intelligente*.

She's a nice, pretty and intelligent girl.

10.3.6 Talents and skills

Adjectives referring specifically to talents or skills include:

abile	skilled, talented
dotato	gifted
portato	naturally talented (in . . .)
negato	with no talent for

Insisteva che la bambina facesse lezioni di pianoforte, però Sara era proprio *negata*.

She insisted on the child doing piano lessons, but Sara was hopeless.

Per parlare bene una lingua, forse bisogna essere proprio *portati*.

To speak a language well, maybe you need to have a leaning for it.

Abile and **dotato** can be used without any specific talent being mentioned. **Dotato** implies 'naturally gifted' while **abile** suggests acquired skills:

Il direttore era una persona molto *abile*.

The director was a very skilled person.

Il figlio della mia amica era un bambino molto *dotato*.

My friend's son was a very gifted child.

And when you are getting everything wrong, or dropping things:

Oggi sono proprio *imbranata*.

Today I'm all fingers and thumbs.

10.3.7 Emotional condition or state

Adjectives describing an emotional or psychological state include:

agitato	agitated, jumpy	annoiato	bored
arrabbiato	angry	calmo	calm
contento	happy, pleased	felice	happy
imbarazzato	embarrassed	irritato	irritated
nervoso	edgy	rilassato	relaxed
scandalizzato	shocked	scioccato	shocked
seccato	annoyed, fed up	sorpreso	surprised
stressato	stressed	triste	sad

Mio marito sarà *arrabbiato*.

My husband will be angry.

Il capo era proprio *seccato*.

The boss was really fed up.

10.4 Intensifying the meaning of the adjective

There are various ways in which the meaning of the adjective can be intensified or strengthened (see also 17.5).

10.4.1 Using an adverb

The adverbs most commonly used for this purpose in Italian are:

molto	much
tanto	much, so much
troppo	too much

These are used before the adjective in the same way as 'very, greatly, extremely' in English. You can also use:

abbastanza	enough, a bit, quite	alquanto	rather
assai	very	ben(e)	well, quite, much, pretty
estremamente	extremely	parecchio	greatly, much
piuttosto	rather		
veramente	really		

Alcuni leghisti erano *molto* preoccupati dal patto con Berlusconi.
Some members of the Lega were very worried by the agreement with Berlusconi.

È una situazione *estremamente* instabile.
It's an extremely unstable situation.

Il cane era *ben* contento di vederci.
The dog was really happy to see us.

10.4.2 Using the suffix *-issimo*

The suffix *-issimo* (see 1.4.8 and 17.5.2) can only be used for the shorter more common adjectives:

I ragazzi sono *contentissimi* di andare in vacanza senza la mamma.
The kids are really happy to be going on holiday without their mother.

Ha un marito *simpaticissimo*.
She has a really nice husband.

10.4.3 Using a prefix

There are several prefixes that can be added to the beginning of an adjective, and although these are not very common, they are found more and more in the press and in the spoken language. Always check with a dictionary before using one of these. The form you want may not exist, or else it may mean something different. The 'hyper' forms in particular (*arci-*, *ultra-*) are used for effect, e.g. in journalistic writing:

arci-	È <i>arcicontento</i>	he's over the moon
extra-	l'olio <i>extravergine</i>	extra-virgin (olive) oil
iper-	una madre <i>iperprotettiva</i>	an overprotective mother
sovra-	un camion <i>sovraccarico</i>	an overloaded lorry

stra-	un whisky <i>stravecchio</i>	an aged/vintage whisky
su- (sur-)	il pesce <i>surgelato</i>	frozen fish
super-	<i>superbianco!</i>	whiter-than-white
ultra-	<i>l'ultrasinistra</i>	the far left

10.4.4 Using a second adjective

There are several fixed phrases in which a second adjective is used to intensify the meaning of the first adjective, for example:

bianco pallido	white as a sheet	freddo gelato	icy cold
caldo bollente	boiling hot	ricco sfondato	filthy rich
stanco morto	dead tired	ubriaco fradicio	dead drunk

Sono *stanca morta*.

I'm dead tired.

Gli studenti erano *ubriachi fradici*.

The students were extremely drunk.

10.4.5 Doubling the adjective

Sometimes we 'double' or repeat the adjective to intensify its meaning:

brutto brutto	really ugly
caldo caldo	very hot
stretti stretti	very tightly packed

Attenta! Il caffè è *caldo caldo*.

Be careful! The coffee is really hot.

10.4.6 Using a phrase indicating the extent or effect

We can use a phrase to indicate the extent of the quality:

bello <i>da impazzire</i>	beautiful (enough) to drive you mad
brutto <i>da morire</i>	ugly (enough) to kill you

10.5 Diminishing the strength of the adjective

10.5.1 Using an adverb

In the same way that certain adverbs can be used to intensify or strengthen the meaning of the adjective, a few adverbs can be used to produce the opposite effect.

The adverb most commonly used for this purpose is **poco**:

Gli studenti sono *poco* motivati.

The students are not very motivated.

Other adverbs that can be used include:

appena	barely, hardly
leggermente	slightly
scarsamente	barely

10.5.2 Using a suffix

Suffixes that can be used to diminish the strength of the adjective include **-etto**, **-ino**:

bellino	pretty (rather than beautiful)
magrolino	skinny (rather than thin)
piccolino	little, small
poveretto	poor little . . .

They can only be used for the shorter, more common adjectives, and, as for the suffixes used to intensify, caution is advised.

10.5.3 Using a prefix

Prefixes that can be used to imply the opposite include:

a-	analcolico	non-alcoholic
	anormale	abnormal
dis-	disabile	disabled
	disadatto	unsuited
in-	incapace	incapable
	inutile	useless
s-	scomodo	uncomfortable
	scontento	unhappy
	sgradevole	unpleasant

For ways of expressing different degrees of intensity and comparison, see Chapter 17.

10.6 Describing a physical state using *stare*

To describe how someone is (state of health) – not what he/she looks like – we use **stare**:

Come *sta*, signora? *Sto bene, grazie.*

How are you, signora? I'm well, thanks.

Mio padre *stava* molto male.

My father was very ill.

The difference in meaning between the two verbs is clear when they are used in a question starting with **Come?** 'How?'.
 Use **essere** to ask about physical appearance:

Com'è la tua amica?

What is your friend like?

È bionda, con capelli lunghi.

She's blonde, with long hair.

Use **stare** to ask about state of health:

Come *sta* la tua amica?

How's your friend?

***Sta* molto meglio adesso.**

She's a lot better now.

Come stai?/Come sta? is one of the most common ways of greeting someone (see 20.1).

10.7 Dialogo**Incontro con gli amici**

- A Ciao Sergio, come stai?
B Bene grazie e tu?
A E Lucia come sta?
B Non sta bene, è stanca e nervosa. Il suo lavoro è faticoso, ma per fortuna Lucia è una ragazza forte e sana e non sono preoccupato per lei.
A Senti, oggi è una bella giornata. Usciamo insieme?
B È una buona idea, Lucia sarà contenta.
A Allora va bene. La mia macchina è comoda e grande. Guido io. Tu e Lucia potete stare rilassati e riposare.

Meeting with friends

- A Hi Sergio, how are you?
B I'm fine and you?
A How is Lucia doing?
B She's not well, she's tired and edgy. Her job is hard, but luckily Lucia is a strong and healthy girl and I'm not worried about her.
A Listen, it's a beautiful day today. Shall we go out together?
B It's a good idea. Lucia will be pleased.
A That's fine then. My car is big and comfortable. I'll drive. You and Lucia can relax and have a rest.

11

Talking about existence, presence and availability

11.1 Introduction

In Italian, there are various ways of saying whether something or someone exists, is present and/or is available. One of the simplest ways is to use *ci* 'there' and *essere* 'to be', while another way, often used in shops or restaurants, is to use the verb *avere* 'to have'; both are shown in this simple dialogue:

All'ufficio turistico

- T Buongiorno, *avete* una piantina della città?
I Sì, *c'è* questa, che costa €4; è compreso anche l'elenco dei monumenti. Oppure questa qua, che è gratuita.
T Prendo questa, grazie. Dunque, noi vorremmo vedere *l'Aida* all'Arena. *Ci sono* dei biglietti per stasera?
I Per stasera, no, purtroppo . . . *non ce ne sono*. Ma se per voi va bene, *ce ne sono* due nella platea per domani sera.
T Sì, per noi va bene. Quanto costano?
I €30 ciascuno.
T Va bene, li prendo. Senta, *c'è* una trattoria vicino al teatro?
I Sì, *ce n'è* una molto buona proprio a due passi dal teatro. Si chiama "Da Alfredo". Se vuole, posso chiamare e prenotare un tavolo.
T No, grazie, non fa niente.
I Prego, signore. Arrivederci.

NOTE T = Turista 'tourist', I = Impiegato 'employee'

At the tourist information office

- T Hello, do you have a map of the town?
E Yes, there's this one, which is 4 euros; the list of monuments is included too. Or else this one, which is free.
T I'll take this one, thanks. Now, we'd like to see *Aida* at the Arena. Are there any tickets for this evening?
E Not for this evening, no, unfortunately. But if it's all right for you, there are two tickets in the stalls for tomorrow evening.
T Yes, that's fine for us. How much are they?

- E 30 euros each.
 T OK, I'll take them. Listen, is there a restaurant near the theatre?
 E Yes, there's a very good one very near the theatre. It's called 'Da Alfredo'. If you want, I can call and book a table.
 T No, thank you, it's not important.
 E All right, sir. Goodbye.

11.2 Talking about existence and/or presence

Depending on the circumstances, you can use one or other of the following verbs or verb phrases:

esistere	to exist
essere + ci	to be there
essere presenti	to be present
trovarsi	to be there (position)

11.2.1 Essere + ci

The present tense forms are **c'è**: 'there is', **ci sono** 'there are' (see 2.2.4 for all forms of **essere** and 6.2.5 for **ci**).

In the singular form, the combination of **ci** and **è** is shortened to **c'è**:

C'è	There is
C'è?	Is there?

The plural form is:

Ci sono	There are
Ci sono?	Are there?

You can ask about a specific person or thing, or one known to you, using **il/la** (see 1.3.5):

C'è il medico oggi?	Sì, c'è.
Is the doctor here today?	Yes, he's here.
Ci sono i nostri amici?	Sì, ci sono. Sono arrivati mezz'ora fa.
Are our friends here?	Yes, they're here. They arrived half an hour ago.

You can ask about an unknown or unspecified person or thing using **un/una** (see 1.3.2) in the singular and **dei/delle** (optional) in the plural:

Scusi, c'è un gabinetto? Sì, c'è un gabinetto lì in fondo.
 Excuse me, is there a toilet? Yes, there's a toilet over there.

Ci sono ospiti? Sì, ci sono degli ospiti appena arrivati.
 Are there any guests? Yes, there are some guests just arrived.

Of course, **ci** can be used with other tenses of **essere**, for example:

Future

Ci sarà qualcuno in ufficio?
 Will there be anyone in the office?

Imperfect

Il pomeriggio, non c'era mai nessuno in ufficio.

In the afternoon, there was never anyone in the office.

11.2.2 **Esistere**

Per quanto riguarda l'alloggio, esistono varie sistemazioni.

As for accommodation, there are various arrangements.

Ma sono esistiti i dinosauri o no?

But did the dinosaurs exist or not?

11.2.3 **Essere presente/i**

This phrase is often used for resources found naturally, as well as for other contexts:

I giacimenti di metano sono presenti in grandi quantità nella valle padana.

Deposits of methane are present in large quantity in the Po Valley.

Mio marito non era presente quel giorno.

My husband was not present that day.

11.2.4 **Trovarsi**

We use **trovarsi** mainly when referring to geographical position:

La mia casa si trovava vicino al mare.

My house was near the sea.

Oggi ci troviamo in un piccolo paese della Basilicata.

Today we are in a small village in Basilicata.

11.3 **Talking about occurrence**

Here are some expressions which indicate the occurrence of events. They are explained more fully below.

accadere	to happen	aver luogo	to take place
capitare	to happen	fare	to hold (an event)
può darsi	to come about	ricorrere	to recur, take place
succedere	to happen	svolgersi	to take place
tenersi	to take place, to be held	verificarsi	to take place

11.3.1 **Accadere, capitare, succedere**

These verbs, particularly **succedere**, are by far the most common of all the verbs meaning 'to happen':

Molti incidenti stradali accadono nel momento del rientro dalle vacanze.

Many road accidents take place when people come back from their holidays.

È mai capitato un incidente del genere?

Has anything like that ever taken place?

Ti è mai capitato di vedere un fantasma?

Has it ever happened to you to see a ghost?

Può succedere che si dimentica di spegnere il gas.

It can happen that one forgets to turn off the gas.

11.3.2 *Può darsi*

Sometimes the phrase **può darsi** ('it may be, it may happen') is used. It is followed by a **che** clause, usually with verb in the *subjunctive*:

Può darsi che la segretaria l'abbia già mandata.

It may be that the secretary has already sent it.

11.3.3 *Aver luogo, svolgersi, tenersi*

When talking about an event taking place, you can use the verbs **aver luogo**, **svolgersi**, **tenersi** 'to take place':

I funerali avranno luogo giovedì alle 17.00.

The funeral will take place on Thursday at 5.00 p.m.

Il Palio di Siena si svolge due volte all'anno nella Piazza del Campo.

The Palio of Siena takes place twice a year in the Piazza del Campo.

La Fiera di Milano si tiene nel quartiere di San Siro.

The Milan Trade Fair takes place in the San Siro district.

11.3.4 *Fare*

Fare is often used specifically with films, television programmes, etc., in the third person plural form:

Che fanno stasera alla televisione?

What's on television tonight?

Cosa fanno al cinema Ariston?

What's on at the Ariston cinema?

You can also use the verb **fare** with **si** to make it passive (lit. 'to be made'):

Le gare si facevano ogni anno nello stesso periodo.

The competitions were held every year at the same time.

11.3.5 *Verificarsi/ricorrere*

The verb **ricorrere** is used when an event recurs regularly:

La festa dell'Assunzione ricorre il 15 agosto.

The holy day of the Assumption is on the 15th August every year.

When talking about one single occurrence or a regular event, you can use **verificarsi**:

Il miracolo di San Gennaro si è verificato anche quest'anno davanti a migliaia di fedeli.

The miracle of San Gennaro happened again this year in front of thousands of the faithful.

11.4 Talking about presence, attendance and participation at an event

In addition to *essere* (ci), or *trovarsi* (see above), the following verbs can be used:

<i>assistere</i>	to be at, to take part in
<i>partecipare</i>	to be at, to take part in
<i>frequentare</i>	to go to, to attend (e.g. school)

11.4.1 *Assistere*

It's important to note that this verb is *not* the same as the English 'assist'.

Al concerto di Pavarotti, *hanno assistito* 30.000 spettatori.
30,000 spectators were at Pavarotti's concert.

11.4.2 *Partecipare*

This verb implies a more active role:

Il Capo di Stato *ha partecipato* al Vertice del G7 a Napoli.
The Head of State took part in the G7 Summit in Naples.

11.4.3 *Frequentare*

Attendance at a place, e.g. school or bar, can be expressed by *frequentare*:

I miei figli *frequentano* una scuola privata.
My children go to a private school.

Il direttore *frequentava* il bar di fronte.
The manager always went to the café opposite.

11.5 Talking about availability

When talking about availability, all of the verbs and verb phrases listed below can be used to refer either to a person or a thing:

<i>avere</i>	to have (e.g. in shop or restaurant)
<i>rimanere</i>	to be left (over)
<i>essere disponibile</i>	to be available
<i>essere libero/occupato</i>	to be free/engaged

11.5.1 *Avere*

In shops, offices, restaurants, hotels or similar situations, *c'è* and *ci sono* can be replaced by the verb *avere* 'to have' to express or enquire about availability:

Avete una mappa della città?
Do you have a map of the town?

Abbiamo questa qui, che costa €4.
We have this one, which costs 4 euros.

When **avere** is used with a direct pronoun such as **lo** or **li**, **ci** is often added (see 3.4.5). **ci** changes into **ce** when used before pronouns:

<i>Avete La Repubblica?</i> Do you have the <i>Repubblica</i> ?	No, non ce l'abbiamo oggi. No, we haven't got it today.
<i>Ha il passaporto, signora?</i> Do you have your passport, madam?	Sì, ce l'ho . Yes, I do have it.

11.5.2 **Rimanere**

The concept of 'quantity remaining, left' is expressed by **rimanere** (see Appendix II, Irregular verbs):

È rimasto un po' di dolce?
Is there any cake left?

Del vecchio paese di prima, non è rimasto più niente.
There's nothing left now, of the old village that was.

Sono rimaste ancora due o tre persone nella sala.
There are still two or three people left in the hall.

11.5.3 **Essere disponibile/i**

The adjective **disponibile** 'available' is often used in shops or business situations. It has to agree with the noun referred to:

Le buste sono disponibili in vari formati.
The envelopes are available in various formats.

Il direttore sarà disponibile dopo la riunione.
The manager will be available after the meeting.

11.5.4 **Essere libero, occupato, impegnato**

The adjectives **libero**, **occupato** can be used both for a person or an object. Note how they have to agree with the person or object referred to:

È libero il bagno? No, è occupato.
Is the bathroom free? No, it's occupied.

La linea è occupata. Può attendere in linea?
The line is busy. Can you hold?

Il professore è impegnato in questo momento. Può richiamarLa quando sarà libero?
The professor is busy right now. Can he call you back when he's free?

11.6 **Expressing 'some, any'**

There are various ways of saying how much is available and expressing 'some' in Italian, depending on whether we are referring to *countable* nouns or *uncountable* nouns.

A 'countable' noun refers to people or things that can be counted; you can put a number in front of them. An 'uncountable' noun *cannot* usually have a number before it and therefore is *normally* singular; for example **zucchero** 'sugar', **vino** 'wine' (although of course it is possible to talk about **i vini italiani** 'Italian wines').

11.6.1 **Del, dei, etc.**

Del, dei, etc. can be used with both countable nouns and uncountable nouns.

With 'countable' nouns, we use plural forms **dei, delle, degli** (the form varies according to the noun which follows, see 1.3.3 and 4.2):

Ci sono *delle* sedie?

Are there any chairs?

Ci sono *degli* studenti italiani all'Università.

There are some Italian students at the University.

With 'uncountable' nouns, we use the singular forms **del, dello, della, dell'**:

C'è *del* vino?

Is there any wine?

Per colazione, c'è *della* marmellata d'arancia.

For breakfast, there is marmalade.

11.6.2 **Un poco di, un po' di**

This phrase is used with uncountable nouns such as 'bread, butter, coffee, wine' in the singular:

È rimasto ancora *un po' di* vino.

There's still a little wine left.

C'è *un poco di* caffè anche per me?

Is there some coffee for me too?

Or with countable nouns such as 'coins, books' in the plural:

Dammi *un po' di* monete!

Give me some coins!

Porto *un po' di* libri in vacanza.

I'm taking a few books on holiday.

11.6.3 **Qualche**

Qualche (see 3.9.2) can only be used with *countable* nouns, *not* with uncountable nouns like 'sugar'. **Qualche** means 'a few, some' but, despite its plural meaning, it is always used with the *singular form* of nouns. Its form is the same for both masculine and feminine nouns:

C'è *qualche* programma interessante stasera?

Are there any interesting programmes on TV tonight?

C'è *qualche* donna manager che guadagna più degli uomini.

There are some women managers who earn more than men.

11.6.4 *Alcuni, alcune*

Alcuni/alcune meaning 'some, a few' (see 3.9.3) can be used with countable nouns, instead of *qualche*, in the plural only:

Ci sono *alcuni* programmi televisivi educativi, ma i bambini preferiscono guardare i cartoni animati.

There are a few educational television programmes, but children prefer to watch cartoons.

Ci sono *alcune* donne manager in Italia che guadagnano più degli uomini.

There are a few women managers in Italy who earn more than men.

11.6.5 *With ne*

Both *alcuni/alcune* and *un po' di* can be used on their own, meaning 'a few things, a few people' and 'a little', with or without the particle *ne* (see 11.7 below and 3.4.4):

Ci sono dei ragazzi italiani al corso estivo? *Ce ne sono alcuni.*

Are there any Italian kids on the summer course? There are a few (of them).

Avete delle guide in italiano? Sì, *ne* abbiamo *alcune.*

Do you have any guidebooks in Italian? Yes, we have a few.

C'è del parmigiano? Sì, *ce n'è un po'.*

Is there any parmesan? Yes, there's a bit.

11.7 *Specifying the quantity available*

With a number or other indication of quantity, *avere*, *essere* or *rimanere* can be used (see 11.2, 11.5.1 and 11.5.2):

Sono rimasti solo due panini. Li buttiamo?

There are only two rolls left. Shall we throw them away?

Quanti giorni di vacanza avete? Ho trenta giorni all'anno.

How many days' holiday do you have? I have 30 days a year.

Da Roma a Napoli ci sono 190 chilometri.

From Rome to Naples is 190 kilometres.

To refer to the number or the indication of quantity, we use the pronoun *ne* (see 3.4.4) to avoid repeating the noun previously mentioned. Before *ne* or another pronoun, *ci* becomes *ce*, as in *ce n'è* or *ce ne sono*:

Sono rimasti dei panini? Sì, ne sono rimasti due.

Are there any rolls left? Yes, there are two (of them) left.

C'erano molti spettatori al cinema? Sì, ce n'erano almeno 300.

Were there many spectators at the cinema? Yes, there were at least 300.

C'è una banca? Sì, ce ne sono due in centro.

Is there a bank? Yes, there are two (of them) in the centre.

C'è del caffè? Sì, ce n'è tanto.

Is there any coffee? Yes, there's lots (of it).

Ne can also be used where there is *no* indication of number or quantity, but it is less common in such cases:

C'è del latte? Sì, ce n'è.

Is there any milk? Yes, there is some.

Ci sono fichi? Sì, ce ne sono.

Are there figs? Yes, there are some.

11.8 Expressing 'something, anything', 'someone, anyone'

While **qualche** (see 3.9.2 and 11.6.3) is always used with a noun, **qualcosa** 'something, anything' and **qualcuno** 'someone, anyone' (see 3.9.1) are used on their own:

C'è qualcosa da leggere?

Is there anything to read?

C'è qualcuno?

Is anyone there?

We can add a 'qualifying' **che** clause ('someone, something *that*', 'anyone, anything *that*'). This can be followed by the *indicative* (particularly in spoken Italian or informal writing) or the *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14 and 9.3). The English translation is the same in both cases:

Cerco qualcuno che sa/sappia tradurre le lettere commerciali.

I'm looking for someone who can translate commercial letters.

11.9 Specifying location, time or frequency

You can specify *where* something/someone is, or *when* or *how often* something happens.

11.9.1 Specifying location

You can indicate where the action is taking place, or where something is, by using adverbs or adverbial phrases referring to place, such as **vicino**, **lontano**, or position, such as **dietro**, **davanti** (see 6.2.4):

La mia casa si trova qui vicino.

My house is near here.

La sede è a due km. dal centro.

The Head Office is 2 kms from the centre.

Nella riunione, il direttore era seduto davanti a me.

In the meeting, the director was sitting in front of me.

Or phrases with prepositions (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.5) such as:

C'è un ufficio cambio? Sì, ce n'è uno in centro.

Is there a bureau de change? Yes, there's one in the centre.

C'è un Consolato Britannico? Sì, ce n'è uno a Roma.

Is there a British Consulate? Yes, there's one in Rome.

11.9.2 Specifying time or date

You can indicate *when* the action takes place by adding an expression of date or time (see Chapter 36):

C'è un treno alle cinque.

There's a train at five o'clock.

C'è il Telegiornale stasera? Sì, c'è alle 8.00.

Is there a news bulletin this evening? Yes, there's one at 8.00.

Quando si svolge il Palio? Si svolge a luglio e ad agosto.

When does the Palio take place? It takes place in July and in August.

11.9.3 Specifying frequency

You can indicate *how often* the event or action takes place with phrases of frequency (see Chapter 36):

una volta alla settimana once a week

due volte al mese twice a month

una volta all'anno once a year

il martedì/ogni martedì on Tuesdays, every Tuesday

C'è un servizio medico al campeggio?

Is there a medical service in the campsite?

Sì, c'è due volte alla settimana, il martedì e il venerdì.

Yes, there's one twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays.

11.10 Expressing non-existence or non-availability**11.10.1 Non**

The easiest way of saying that something does not exist or is not available, is to add **non** to the verbs or phrases shown above:

Non ci sono serpenti velenosi in questa zona.

There are no poisonous snakes in this area.

C'è il medico? No, mi dispiace. Non c'è.

Is the doctor here? No, I'm sorry. He isn't here.

Non c'è rimasto più niente.

There's nothing left any more.

Mi dispiace, il direttore non è disponibile oggi.

I'm sorry, the manager is not available today.

No, non è libero questo posto.

No, this place isn't free.

For details on negatives, including **nessuno**, **niente**, see 16.3, 16.5–7.

11.10.2 Mancare

The verb **mancare** means 'to be missing, to be short':

Vorremmo migliorare i nostri servizi, ma mancano i fondi.

We would like to improve our services, but funds are short.

L'ufficio rimarrà chiuso venerdì. Manca il personale.
The office will be shut on Friday. There is a shortage of staff.

Manca solo Giorgio.
Only Giorgio is missing.

Manchi solo tu.
Only you are missing.

Mancano i dati.
There are no facts or figures.

11.10.3 **Essere assente**

Chi è assente stamattina?
Who's absent this morning?

Someone who has sent his/her excuses and apologies in advance is called:

un assente giustificato
an explained absentee (lit.)

The noun *l'assente* can also mean 'the dear departed' (see 11.10.6 below).

Note that the verb **partire** is used colloquially *not* to express the idea of someone having left, but to express the idea that someone is 'not all there' mentally, i.e. is crazy:

È partito! He's off his head!

11.10.4 **Non . . . più, essere esaurito, essere finito**

When talking about supplies that are finished, or have run out:

Purtroppo sono esaurite le nostre scorte di candele.
Unfortunately, our supplies of candles have run out.

È finita la carta nella stampante.
The paper in the printer is finished.

Non c'è più posto per stasera. È tutto esaurito.
There's no more room for tonight. It's all sold out.

11.10.5 **Estinguersi, scomparire, sparire, spegnersi, sradicare**

The verbs above mean 'to disappear' literally or metaphorically. **Sparire** is probably the most colloquial.

Sono scomparse le chiavi di casa.
The house keys have disappeared.

Il morbillo è praticamente scomparso dagli USA.
Measles has practically disappeared from the USA.

The passive form of the verb **sradicare** can also be used to talk about a disease or other evil which has been eradicated:

Il morbillo è stato quasi completamente sradicato negli USA.
Measles has been almost completely eradicated in the USA.

When talking about a species that has died out, use the verbs **estinguersi** or **sparire**. Note that **estinto** also means 'the departed' (see 11.10.6).

Fra 500 anni, alcune specie di animali potrebbero estinguersi.

In 500 years time, some species of animals could die out.

I dinosauri sono spariti dalla terra milioni di anni fa.

The dinosaurs disappeared from the earth millions of years ago.

Both **estinguersi** and **spegnersi** can be used with their literal meaning 'to be extinguished', so are often used to refer to fires, volcanoes and, metaphorically, of the fires of love:

L'amore si spegne e la passione si raffredda.

Love dies out and passion grows cold.

11.10.6 Euphemisms for death

A reluctance to mention the words 'death' or 'dying' has led Western languages to produce a wide range of euphemisms to express the concept of death and dying. Italian is no exception. Any of the following verbs can be used: **estinguersi**, **mancare**, **scomparire**, **spegnersi**.

The participle **scomparso** is the form most often used in death announcements:

È scomparso il nostro caro Alfredo.

Our dear friend Alfredo has passed away.

The noun **la scomparsa** is also often used:

Nel terzo anniversario della scomparsa di Carlo, la mamma lo ricorda con grande amore.

On the third anniversary of the death of Carlo, his mother remembers him with love.

The verb **spegnersi** 'to be extinguished' can be used as a euphemism for **morire**:

Il conte si spense a mezzanotte, con i familiari attorno al letto.

The count died at midnight, with his family around the bed.

So can **mancare**:

È improvvisamente mancato all'affetto dei suoi cari Marco Strada.

Marco Strada has suddenly been lost to the affection of his dear ones.

Note the use of these participles:

l'assente the absent one (lit.)

il caro estinto the dear departed

12

Talking about the present

12.1 Introduction

Situations, actions and events are expressed by the use of verbs (see Chapter 2). Here we look at how to describe situations, actions and events taking place at the *present* time (i.e. in the same period of time when we are speaking or writing). The verb tense most commonly used for this is the *present indicative* (see 2.3.3), as shown in our examples. The examples here are mainly in the affirmative; interrogative and negative statements are covered more fully in Chapters 15 and 16 respectively.

12.2 Describing present situations, actions and events

The present tense is used to describe a situation, action or event that is in effect or taking place at the present time, although not necessarily at the exact moment when we speak or write. Here are some examples:

12.2.1 Facts, situations or descriptions

L'Avv. Bianchi *lavora* alla FIAT.
Mr Bianchi the lawyer works at FIAT.

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

Molti Italiani *amano* il calcio.
Many Italians love football.

***Mi piace* molto passeggiare.**
I like walking a lot.

Mia madre *è* malata. *Ha* una malattia cardiaca.
My mother is ill. She has a heart disease.

Le autostrade *sono* invase da turisti stranieri che *vengono* in vacanza in Italia.
The motorways are invaded by foreign tourists who come on holiday to Italy.

Il turismo in Calabria è poco sviluppato.
Tourism in Calabria is not very developed.

Il tempo è brutto.
The weather is bad.

I gemelli non sono identici.
The twins are not identical.

12.2.2 Actions or events

Single actions and events

Perché non telefoni all'Ufficio Vendite?
Why don't you phone the Sales Department?

Oggi cucina Walter.
Today Walter is cooking.

In Italian, we use the same present tense of the verb to describe actions or events which are happening at the time we speak or write ('The Boat Show is taking place this week', 'Isabella is teaching this morning'), and those that may not be happening *right now*, but are a habit or regular occurrence ('The Boat Show takes place every year', 'Isabella teaches every Tuesday').

Isabella insegna stamattina./Isabella insegna ogni martedì.
Isabella is teaching this morning./Isabella teaches every Tuesday.

L'infermiera non viene oggi./L'infermiera non viene il giovedì.
The nurse isn't coming today./The nurse doesn't come on Thursdays.

Il Salone Nautico si svolge questa settimana a Genova.
The Boat Show is taking place this week in Genova.

Il Salone Nautico si svolge ogni anno ad aprile.
The Boat Show takes place every year in April.

Regular actions

Often, in fact, the only feature that distinguishes *habitual* actions from *single* actions is the use of adverbs or phrases used to convey the notion of habit or regular occurrence such as:

di solito	usually
generalmente	generally
normalmente	normally
ogni	every
tutti i, tutte le	every

Ogni mese, andiamo a trovare i parenti in campagna.
Every month, we go to see our relatives in the country.

Ogni giovedì mattina, c'è il mercato a Postiglione.
Every Thursday morning there's the market at Postiglione.

Tutte le settimane facciamo la spesa al Centro Commerciale "Globus".
Every week we do the shopping at the 'Globus' shopping centre.

Normalmente mio marito torna a casa prima di me.
Normally my husband comes home before me.

subito immediatamente right now/immediately

Vieni *subito* qua!
Come here right now!

Attenda un attimo, per favore. Le passo *immediatamente* il direttore.
Hold on a second, please. I'll put you through to the manager immediately.

oggi today

***Oggi* mi sento felice!**
I feel happy today!

***Oggi* è sabato.**
Today is Saturday.

ancora still

È *ancora* presto per partire.
It's still early to be leaving.

Ho *ancora* fame!
I am still hungry!

questo

***Quest'anno* le vendite vanno bene.**
This year the sales are going well.

***Questa settimana* lavoro fino a tardi.**
This week I'm working till late.

***Questo pomeriggio* fa freddo.**
It's cold this afternoon.

Note the shortened forms **stamattina** 'this morning', **stanotte** 'this/last night', **stasera** 'this evening':

***Stasera* Monica è nervosa.**
Tonight Monica is edgy.

***Stanotte* non sono riuscita a dormire.**
I couldn't sleep last night.

12.5 Dialogo

In this dialogue the different forms of the present are highlighted.

Incontro di lavoro

Mario Adinolfi è impiegato alla Camera di Commercio di Bari, ma in questi giorni *sta lavorando* a Roma per organizzare la partecipazione di alcune industrie romane alla Fiera del Levante di Bari. La Ditta Cosmetici 2000 Spa *vuole* presentare alla Fiera un nuovo prodotto per la cura dei capelli e il Sig. Luca Violli, direttore delle vendite, *incontra* il Sig. Adinolfi per chiedere informazioni sui servizi della Fiera. Ecco un brano della loro conversazione:

- Violli *Quanto costa l'affitto di un ufficio per il periodo della Fiera?*
Adinolfi *Quest'anno abbiamo uffici attrezzati con servizi di segreteria, che costano €1.500 per 5 giorni.*
- Violli *Quando posso visitare gli uffici?*
Adinolfi *Gli uffici si possono visitare dopo il 10 settembre. Ora stiamo ancora completando i lavori, ma Lei può fare una prenotazione adesso. Deve solo riempire questo modulo.*
- Violli *Va bene. Chi deve firmare il modulo?*
Adinolfi *Può firmare Lei, o un altro responsabile della Ditta, come preferisce.*

Business meeting

Mario Adinolfi is an employee at the Chamber of Commerce in Bari, but at present he is working in Rome making arrangements for several Roman companies in the 'Fiera del Levante' Trade Fair in Bari. The company 'Cosmetics 2000' Ltd wants to present its new hair care product and Mr Luca Violli, director of sales, meets Mr Adinolfi to ask for information on the services offered by the Fair. Here is a snatch of their conversation.

- Violli *How much does it cost to rent an office for the duration of the Fair?*
Adinolfi *This year we have ready-equipped offices with secretarial services, which cost 1,500 euros for 5 days.*
- Violli *When can I visit the offices?*
Adinolfi *After the 10th September. We are just finishing the work, but you can book now. You only need to fill in this form.*
- Violli *All right. Who needs to sign the form?*
Adinolfi *You can sign it, or else some other representative of the company, as you prefer.*

13

Speaking/writing about the past

13.1 Introduction

When speaking or writing about the past in Italian we generally use two different verb forms: a *perfect* form and an *imperfect* form. These two forms are two different *aspects* of Italian verbs in the past – two different *points of view* – and it is essential to distinguish between them.

The *perfect* aspect is used when we talk about the past from the point of view of the present. The *imperfect* aspect looks at the past from the point of view of the past; it is used to talk and write about past events as if viewing it from ‘inside’.

To describe what we or someone else did, we can use any of the following:

The perfect form

Ieri ho lavorato fino alle 5.00 e poi sono andata al bar.
Yesterday I worked until 5.00 and then I went to the bar.

The imperfect form

Gli impiegati lavoravano tutta la mattina e poi andavano al bar.
The employees worked all morning and then they went to the bar.

A combination of both

Quando lavoravo lì, sono andata molte volte nell'ufficio del direttore.
When I worked there, I went several times to the director's office.

In the next few pages, we look first at the *perfect* aspect in its two different forms (compound and simple) then at the *imperfect* aspect, and finally at the two aspects used together.

All the examples here are of verbs in the *indicative* mood; for examples of perfect and imperfect in the *subjunctive* mood, see Chapter 2 for the verb forms and Chapters 25 to 27, 29 to 33, 35 to 36 and 38 to 39 in particular for examples of how they are used.

13.2 The perfect aspect

When talking about events in the past that are regarded as complete, Italian uses the *perfect* tense. There are two forms of *perfect* tense: the *simple perfect* or **passato remoto** (see 2.3.8) and the *compound perfect* or **passato prossimo** (see 2.3.7).

The **passato prossimo** is a *compound* tense (see 2.1.5) formed of an auxiliary and participle, while the **passato remoto** is not a compound form, so can be defined as the *simple perfect*. The **passato remoto** is also known in English as the *past historic*, which has led to misunderstandings over its use.

The *perfect* tense most frequently used is the *compound* form, the **passato prossimo**:

Sono arrivato la settimana scorsa.

I arrived last week.

Ieri ho comprato una camicia rossa.

Yesterday I bought a red shirt.

Ti è piaciuto il film?

Did you like the film?

Avete conosciuto il direttore?

Have you met the director?

The *simple perfect* form (**passato remoto**) can also be used. Here are the same examples as above, this time using the **passato remoto**:

Arrivai la settimana scorsa.

I arrived last week.

Ieri comprai una camicia rossa.

Yesterday I bought a red shirt.

Ti piacque il film?

Did you like the film?

Conosceste il direttore?

Have you met the director?

It is clear that the difference between the two sets of examples is *not* one of *time*, as suggested by traditional Italian grammar terminology, which makes a distinction between **passato remoto** or 'far-off' past, and **passato prossimo** or 'near' past. This is the reason why these two tenses are best defined in English as *simple* and *compound* perfect (in Italian **passato semplice**, **passato composto**), in order not to stress any difference in 'time setting'.

The sentences in the second set above, although perfectly correct, are unlikely to be used in everyday conversation, at least in northern and much of central Italy (see 13.4.3). The different functions and uses of the two past tenses are best explained by example.

The **passato remoto** (see 2.3.8) is much less frequently used than the **passato prossimo**. Its main function is to represent events in the past that have *no connection with the present*, i.e. with the time when the sentence is spoken or written. So, when talking about the date someone was born, we can use the **passato remoto** if that person is no longer alive:

Dante *nacque* nel 1265. Visse per molti anni a Firenze.
Dante was born in 1265. He lived for many years in Florence.

Pier Paolo Pasolini *nacque* nel 1922. *Fu uno dei più famosi scrittori del Neorealismo.*
Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in 1922. He was one of the most famous Neorealist writers.

However, if we want to stress the relationship of those personalities with the present, in other words their influence on today's readers, we use the **passato prossimo** (see 2.3.7):

Dante *è nato* nel 1265, e oggi si festeggia l'anniversario della nascita.
Dante was born in 1265, and today we celebrate the anniversary of his birth.

Pier Paolo Pasolini *è nato* nel 1922, e i suoi film più famosi sono ancora molto popolari.
Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in 1922, and his best-known films are still very popular today.

The **passato prossimo** is always used if the person is still alive at the present time:

Mio figlio *è nato* nel 1983.
My son was born in 1983.

13.3 Using the *passato prossimo*

This form is very similar to the English present perfect ('I have eaten', etc.); however they do not always correspond exactly in their use, as shown below:

Gli ho parlato apertamente.
I have spoken openly to him.

Siamo partiti alle 5.00.
We left at 5.00.

Here is an example of a passage in which you will recognise many verbs used in the compound form of the perfect. Some of the participles shown do not follow a regular pattern; for more information, see 2.3.28 and Appendix II:

Sono uscito alle 9.00 per andare a far spese e *ho incontrato* un vecchio amico che non vedevo da molto tempo. *Abbiamo deciso* di fare le spese insieme e *siamo andati* prima alla Rinascente e poi da UPIM. Alle 11.00 *abbiamo bevuto* un aperitivo al bar e quindi *abbiamo comprato* verdura e carne per preparare il pranzo. *Siamo arrivati* a casa a mezzogiorno e *abbiamo cucinato* e *mangiato* con appetito. Alle 2.00 il mio amico *è tornato* a casa sua, perchè aveva un appuntamento.

I went out at 9.00 to go shopping and I met an old friend whom I hadn't seen for a long time. We decided to go shopping together and we went first to 'Rinascente' and then to UPIM. At 11.00, we drank an aperitif at the café and then we bought vegetables and meat to make lunch. We arrived home at midday and we cooked and ate hungrily. At 2.00 my friend went back home, because he had an appointment.

13.4 Using the *passato remoto*

Although the *passato remoto* is much less frequently used than the *passato prossimo* there are certain contexts in which it is used to describe events or actions.

13.4.1 In a historical context

The *passato remoto* is used frequently in historical narration, as can be seen from this example taken from a history textbook for primary schools (*Strumenti*, a cura di Alfio Zoi, Editrice La Scuola, 1991, pp.188–9):

Quando nel 1152, Federico I detto Barbarossa *divenne* re di Germania, *decise* di sottomettere i Comuni ribelli. *Compì* cinque discese in Italia: nella prima (1154) *soffocò* la ribellione di Roma e *si fece* incoronare imperatore; nella seconda *conquistò* Milano e *riaffermò* solennemente i diritti dell'Imperatore sui Comuni (1158); nella terza *assedì* e *distrusse* Milano (1163); nella quarta *occupò* Roma (1168) e nella quinta *fu sconfitto* a Legnano dalla Lega Lombarda (Alleanza tra i Comuni, decisa a Pontida nel 1167, e appoggiata dal Papa Alessandro III). Per questo *dovette* riconoscere la libertà dei Comuni con il trattato di pace di Costanza (1183).

When, in 1152, Frederick I, known as Redbeard, became King of Germany, he decided to suppress the rebellious City States. He carried out five raids in Italy; in the first (1154) he suppressed the rebellion in Rome, and had himself crowned emperor; in the second he conquered Milan and with due ceremony reaffirmed the rights of the emperor (1158); in the third he besieged and destroyed Milan (1163); in the fourth he occupied Rome (1168) and in the fifth he was defeated at Legnano by the Lombard League (an alliance between the City States, set up in Pontida in 1167, and supported by Pope Alexander III). For this reason he was forced to recognise the freedom of the City States, with the peace treaty of Constance (1183).

Note however that when historical events are seen in their relevance to the present time, again the *passato prossimo* is more likely to be used, even if the events happened a long time ago. Here is another example, again from the same textbook *Strumenti* (p. 248):

La storia moderna di Roma è *iniziata* nel 1870 quando la città è *diventata* capitale del giovane Regno d'Italia. Allora Roma contava appena 200.000 abitanti ed anche il suo aspetto urbanistico non era molto diverso da quello dei secoli precedenti . . .

Anche nel nostro secolo, e in particolare negli ultimi decenni, Roma *ha continuato* a espandersi per l'afflusso di lavoratori provenienti da tutto il Lazio e dalle regioni centro-meridionali.

The modern history of Rome began in 1870 when the city became the capital of the young Kingdom of Italy. At that time Rome counted scarcely 200,000 inhabitants, and as a town it did not appear very different from previous centuries . . .

In our own century, and particularly in the last few decades, Rome has continued to grow, because of the influx of workers coming from all over Lazio, and the central and southern regions.

Here the events described, some of which happened more than a hundred years ago, are relevant to today's situation (Rome is still the capital of Italy and its population is still expanding because of the influx of immigrants).

13.4.2 In a narrative

The **passato remoto** is in general the 'perfect' form most often used in the narrative register and is therefore more frequently found in *written* than in *spoken* language.

Here is another example of the use of the **passato remoto**, this time not in a historical context but in a narrative literary passage (from the novel *Requiem* by Antonio Tabucchi, Feltrinelli, 1992, p. 7.57):

E allora vieni avanti, disse la voce di Tadeus, ormai la casa la conosci. Chiusi la porta alle mie spalle e avanzai per il corridoio. Il corridoio era buio, e inciampai in un mucchio di cose che caddero per terra. Mi fermai a raccogliere quel che avevo sparso sul pavimento: libri, un giocattolo di legno, un gallo di Barcelos, la statuetta di un santo . . .

So, come on through, said Tadeus' voice, you know the house by now. I shut the door behind me, and started off along the corridor. The corridor was dark and I stumbled into a pile of things which fell on the ground. I stopped to pick up what I had spread over the floor: books, a wooden toy, a Barcelos cock, the statuette of a saint . . .

13.4.3 In spoken Italian

The **passato remoto** used as a historical or narrative tense is most frequently found in written texts. The use of this tense in spoken conversational Italian is rare and restricted to the southern regions of Italy. So the examples of spoken Italian using the **passato remoto**, seen in 13.2 above, are very unlikely to be heard in northern Italy or most of central Italy, but are quite acceptable, for example, in the southern regions including Sicily.

13.5 Expressing the imperfect aspect

The *imperfect* aspect of actions or events in the past is conveyed by the **imperfetto** in Italian (see 2.3.6). This paragraph looks at the use of the imperfect aspect by itself, while 13.6 considers its use together with the perfect.

The general function of the *imperfect* aspect is to represent past events and actions as if seen from *within* the past itself. The following two sentences illustrate how the same fact, happening at the same time, can be seen from two different points of view, in other words from two *aspects*:

Ieri faceva molto caldo a Napoli.
Yesterday it was very hot in Naples.

Ieri ha fatto molto caldo a Napoli.
Yesterday it was very hot in Naples.

The first example (the *imperfect* aspect) talks about the hot weather as the condition experienced by people *during* that particular span of time; it could be said, for

instance, by someone who was actually in Naples yesterday and wants to talk about his/her own experience of the weather.

The second example (the *perfect* aspect) sees yesterday's weather from *outside*; it could be said, for example, by someone who was not in Naples (e.g. a weather forecaster) and who wants to tell someone else about the weather with a certain detachment.

The main uses of the **imperfetto** or imperfect aspect are listed below.

13.5.1 Parallel events or actions

Two past actions or events can be viewed in a symmetrical relationship, taking place within the *same time span*:

Mentre lavorava, Anna pensava alle vacanze in Sardegna.

While she was working, Anna was thinking about the holidays in Sardinia.

Il direttore parlava e gli invitati ascoltavano annoiati.

The director was talking and the guests were listening, bored.

These are parallel actions that take place at the *same* time and are part of the *same* situation, described as if seen from within the situation itself, rather than a set of events viewed in relation to the present time (the time when we are speaking or writing).

— Action 1 —————→

— Action 2 —————→

13.5.2 Habitual or repeated actions

In the following examples, the actions are not separate actions taking place at the same time; because of their repetition, they are seen not as individual actions but as the general state or situation of the person carrying out the actions, at the period of time when the actions took place. In English, this situation can be expressed with the form 'used to ...'.

A Roma andavo tutti i giorni a mangiare in trattoria.

In Rome I went to eat in a trattoria every day.

Da ragazzo facevo molto sport.

When I was a boy, I used to play lots of sport.

13.5.3 Describing past events or situations

All'Università c'era una gran confusione. Gli studenti, che volevano iscriversi, cercavano di capire che cosa fare mentre gli impiegati della Segreteria non riuscivano a farsi sentire nel gran chiasso. Faceva molto caldo e molti si riparavano all'ombra degli alberi nel cortile.

At the University, there was a great deal of confusion. The students, who wanted to enrol, were trying to find out what to do, while the staff in the Administrative Office couldn't make themselves heard in the racket. It was very hot, and many people took refuge in the shade of the trees in the courtyard.

Here we have a 'picture' of a situation where the verbs are the elements *inside* the picture, rather than the *whole* of an event or an action.

Compare the situation above with a narrative description, which uses the *perfect* aspect if the facts take place one after the other, i.e. when they are not seen as details inside a picture, but as a sequence of single separate actions, as shown in the example below:

| ————— | ————— | ————— | ————— | ————— |

***Ieri sono andato all'Università e ho trovato una gran confusione.
Ho chiesto informazioni in Segreteria e mi hanno detto di aspettare.
Faceva molto caldo e mi sono riparato sotto gli alberi nel cortile.***

Yesterday I went to the University and I found a great deal of confusion. I asked for information in the Administrative Office and they told me to wait. It was very hot, and I took refuge under the trees in the courtyard.

Each of these actions had to be carried out before the following one could take place:

| ho chiesto | hanno detto | mi sono riparato |

13.5.4 Narrative using imperfect

Here is a passage from the novel *La Delfina Bizantina* by Aldo Busi (Mondadori, 1992, p. 53), which uses verbs in the *imperfect* almost entirely, because it is describing a scene, the background to the action. Note how the description below ends with two verbs in the simple perfect: **finì, girò**:

Era entrata nella stanza adiacente dove adesso i giornali toccavano il soffitto o comunque la sovrastavano pencolanti e minacciosi. Era una vera e propria foresta di carta con scricchiolanti sottoboschi in fondo ai quali vide farsi largo la luce del giorno e lei, la vecchia striminzita imbacuccata in un mucchio di stracci maschili e di coperte. Era in piedi davanti alla finestra rotta e le presentava la schiena. Stava incollando con impasto di acqua e farina bianca un foglio di giornale sul riquadro senza vetro. E contemporaneamente lo stava bisbigliando dalla a alla zeta. Doveva certo essere così assorta da non averla sentita, non si decideva a girarsi. Brunili finì con calma il duplice lavoro e poi si girò . . .

She had gone into the adjacent room, where the newspapers now touched the ceiling, or at least towered over her, swaying and threatening. It was a absolute forest of paper, with creaking undergrowth at the other side of which she saw the light of day penetrating and then saw her, the shabby old woman all muffled up in a heap of tattered men's clothes and blankets. She was standing in front of the broken window with her back turned to her. She was glueing – with flour and water paste – a sheet of newspaper on the windowless frame. And at the same time she was whispering it to herself from cover to cover. She must have been so absorbed that she hadn't heard her, she didn't give any sign of turning around. Brunili calmly finished her twofold task, and then turned around . . .

13.5.5 Progressive imperfect (*stare + gerundio*)

One very common form of the *imperfect aspect* is the *progressive* form. This is formed using the imperfect of the verb **stare** together with the gerund of the main verb. This form is fairly familiar to English speakers, being similar in form and use to the English 'to be -ing'.

Che cosa stavate facendo ieri sera?

What were you doing yesterday evening?

Stavo lavorando quando mi ha telefonato Andrea.

I was working when Andrea called me.

The progressive form expresses an action in progress, i.e. not completed, at a certain moment in time. It cannot be used to convey, for example, the aspects of repetition or description of past events (as in the paragraphs above), where the simple imperfect is used instead. The *progressive* aspect in Italian, as in English, can be used not only in the past, but also in the present (see 12.3).

13.6 Combinations of perfect and imperfect aspect**13.6.1 Scene setting: introduction**

In the paragraphs above, we saw how the *imperfect* expresses the elements of a past situation, in contrast with the *perfect* tenses, which see actions or events in their entirety and 'separateness'. To understand more clearly how the two aspects interact to depict the past we can use the metaphor of a play seen at the theatre: where the scenery or stage set is the background of the play and is represented by the *imperfect*. The actors, their actions, and the events of the play are in the foreground and represented by the *perfect*.

13.6.2 Scene setting in novels

A traditional technique of novelists is to set a scene, using the *imperfect*, and to let the characters act within it, using the *perfect*. In each of the following two passages, taken from Leonardo Sciascia's *Il Giorno della Civetta* (Einaudi, 1981, pp.9 and 57), it is easy to identify the two aspects, perfect and imperfect:

- (a) *L'autobus stava per partire, rombava sordo con improvvisi raschi e singulti. La piazza era silenziosa nel grigio dell'alba . . . Il bigliettaio chiuse lo sportello, l'autobus si mosse con un rumore di sfasciame . . . Si sentirono due colpi squarciati . . . Il bigliettaio bestemmiò: la faccia gli era diventata colore di zolfo, tremava . . .*

The bus was about to leave, it was giving out a dull roar, with sudden rasping or hiccuping noises. The square was silent, in the grey dawn . . . the conductor shut the door, the bus moved off with a disintegrating noise . . . then two shots were heard to rip the air . . . the conductor swore: his face turned the colour of sulphur, he shook . . .

- (b) *Il corpo di Parrinieddu era ancora sul selciato, coperto da un telo azzurrastrastro. I carabinieri di guardia sollevarono il telo: il corpo era contratto come nel sonno prenatale, nella oscura matrice della morte.*

Parrinieddu's body was still on the asphalt, covered by a bluish sheet. The police on duty lifted the cloth: the body was drawn up as if in a prenatal slumber, in the dark womb of death.

13.6.3 Scene (an ongoing action or event) and a new action or event

A less obvious example of scene setting is the way in which Italian, even in everyday speech or writing, distinguishes between actions in the past, using the imperfect to describe certain actions that are seen as a background to others. Here are a few examples, where the pattern is that of an *action/event* happening at a certain moment, set against the *background scene* of something that was going on at the same moment in time (but also before and possibly after):

Paola è arrivata [event] *mentre preparavo la cena* [scene].
Paola arrived [event] while I was preparing dinner [scene].

Gli impiegati lavoravano [scene] *quando è suonato l'allarme* [event].
The staff were working [scene] when the alarm went [event].

Passeggiavamo [scene] *tranquillamente, ma all'improvviso è scoppiato* [action] *un temporale*.
We were walking along quietly [scene], when suddenly a storm broke [action].

13.6.4 Scene (a situation) and new action or event

Erano le 5.25 quando è esplosa la bomba.
It was 5.25 when the bomb went off.

Sono arrivato alla stazione proprio quando il treno partiva.
I arrived at the station just when the train left.

In both these examples, the **imperfetto** represents a fact that, although happening in an instant (*il treno partiva*), is seen as the situation, context or background against which something happened.

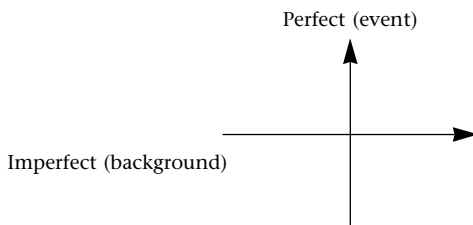
13.6.5 Cause (imperfect) and effect (perfect)

Non sono venuto a trovarti perché avevo troppo lavoro da fare.
I didn't come to see you, because I had too much work to do.

Avevamo fame e abbiamo deciso di fare due spaghetti.
We were hungry and (so) we decided to cook a bit of spaghetti.

In these sentences the role of the **imperfetto** is clearly that of the background to, or cause of, an event.

All the examples given in 13.6.1–5 can be illustrated with the following pattern:



13.6.6 Examples of different patterns

Here are examples of how the same two verbs can be used in three different patterns as described above:

Parallel actions

Mentre io riposavo Sandro telefonava a sua sorella.

While I was resting, Sandro was on the phone to his sister.

Sequence of actions

Ho riposato e poi ho telefonato a Sandro.

I rested and then I telephoned Sandro.

Situation and action/event

Mentre riposavo mi ha telefonato Sandro.

While I was resting, Sandro telephoned me.

13.6.7 Further examples of imperfect/perfect aspects

Here are some further examples illustrating the different functions of imperfect and perfect; see if you can link them to the explanations above:

Ho ordinato gli articoli che mi interessavano.

I ordered the items that I was interested in.

Ieri sera pensavo a quello che mi hai detto e ho capito che avevi ragione.

Yesterday evening I was thinking about what you said to me, and I realised that you were right.

Mi dispiace, non volevo offenderti quando ti ho rimproverato.

I'm sorry, I didn't want to offend you when I told you off.

Ho visitato Firenze con quell'amico che lavorava al Museo.

I visited Florence with that friend who worked in the Museum.

Abbiamo imparato l'italiano con un professore che non diceva nemmeno una parola d'inglese.

We learnt Italian with a teacher who didn't speak a word of English.

Quando abitavo a Napoli ho visitato tre volte il Museo Nazionale.

When I lived in Naples, I visited the National Museum three times.

Per quanto tempo hai vissuto in Cina?

How long did you live in China for?

Ho vissuto a Shanghai per tre anni.

I lived in Shanghai for three years.

Quando vivevo in Cina mangiavo il riso tre volte al giorno.

When I lived in China, I ate rice three times a day.

Ieri ho mangiato riso tre volte.

Yesterday I ate rice three times.

13.6.8 Imperfect/perfect aspect: auxiliary verbs *dovere, potere, volere*

With certain verbs, the choice of tense can be even more important, since it may alter the meaning. Use of the imperfect suggests that the intention or obligation was not fulfilled (the action was not completed). The past conditional may also be used in place of the imperfect (see 2.3.13).

Volevo andare in banca, ma era chiusa.

I wanted to go to the bank, but it was shut.
(So I couldn't go after all.)

Ho voluto andare in banca.

I wanted to go to the bank.
(The implication is that I did go there.)

Dovevano venire ieri, ma c'era sciopero dei treni.

They should have come yesterday, but there was a train strike.
(They should have come but they didn't.)

Hanno dovuto introdurre un nuovo prodotto per competere con i francesi.

They had to introduce a new product to compete with the French.
(They had to introduce one – and they did.)

Potevi almeno telefonare!

You could have called!

Meno male che hai potuto telefonare.

Just as well you were able to phone.

In the first of each pair of examples above, the **imperfetto** can be replaced by the *past conditional*:

Avrei voluto andare in banca, ma era chiusa.

Avrebbero dovuto venire ieri ma . . .

Avresti potuto almeno telefonare.

Non hanno potuto salvare il ragazzo.

They were not able to save the boy.
(One action is implied.)

Non potevano mai uscire perché il padre non glielo permetteva.

They could never go out because their father would not allow them.
(A long-term state or condition is implied.)

13.6.9 Imperfect/perfect aspect: *conoscere, sapere*

The choice of tense can also alter the meaning in the case of **conoscere** and **sapere**:

La nostra azienda non conosceva il mercato inglese.

Our firm was not familiar with the English market.

Ho conosciuto il direttore di marketing alla Fiera di Genova.

I met the director of marketing at the Genova Trade Fair.

(**Conoscere** in the *passato prossimo* generally means 'to meet'.)

Sapevamo che lui era disposto a trattare.

We knew that he was prepared to negotiate.

L'abbiamo saputo troppo tardi.

We found it out too late.

(*Sapere* in the *passato prossimo* generally means 'to learn, to find out'.)

13.7 Present tense expressing past

There are two situations in which past events are not expressed by imperfect or perfect tenses but by the *present indicative* tense:

13.7.1 When the event in question is still going on

When the event, action or situation in question is still going on, the present tense is used with *da*, the equivalent of the English *since*:

Studio l'italiano da 5 anni.

I have been studying Italian for 5 years.

(Implication: And I'm still trying!)

(lit. 'I study Italian since 5 years')

Compare this with the following example:

Ho studiato l'italiano per 5 anni.

I studied Italian for 5 years.

(Implication: But now I've given up!)

13.7.2 For dramatic effect, for example reporting events in newspapers

Fuori dal bar *si accende* un furibondo litigio. Un signore, in giro con il cane, *vede* i due sudamericani che *si rincorrono*.

Outside the bar a furious quarrel started up. A man, out walking his dog, saw the two South Americans chasing each other.

Or in historical descriptions

Nel settembre 1939 la Germania *invade* la Polonia e Francia e Gran Bretagna *dichiarano* la guerra. L'Italia *rimane* fuori del conflitto fino al 1940.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and France and Great Britain declared war. Italy stayed out of the conflict until 1940.

13.8 Indicators of time

13.8.1 Time indicators

To say how long ago the action took place, use *fa* ('ago') and the appropriate length of time:

due giorni fa

two days ago

un mese fa

a month ago

poco tempo fa

a short time ago

To express 'last' meaning 'the one just past', use the adjectives **scorso** or **passato** (note that while **scorso** can come before or after the noun, **passato** can only come after):

la scorsa settimana	last week
il mese scorso	last month
l'anno passato	last year
l'estate passata	last summer

Here are some common time phrases, which can be used to refer to the past:

ieri	yesterday
l'altro ieri	day before yesterday
ieri mattina	yesterday morning
ieri sera	yesterday evening
stamattina	this morning

Here are the days of the week:

lunedì	Monday
martedì	Tuesday
mercoledì	Wednesday
giovedì	Thursday
venerdì	Friday
sabato	Saturday
domenica	Sunday

13.8.2 Negative indicators of time

When the double negative phrases **non ... ancora**; **non ... mai**; **non più** (see 16.3) are used with the **passato prossimo**, **non** goes before the whole verb, while the second negative element will normally go *after* the auxiliary, but *before* the participle:

La consegna non è ancora arrivata.
The delivery hasn't arrived yet.

Non è più venuto.
He didn't come any more.

Non c'è mai stata la pace in quel paese.
There has never been peace in that country.

Alternatively, the second negative element can be placed *after* the *whole* verb:

La consegna non è arrivata ancora.
The delivery hasn't arrived yet.

Non è venuto più.
He didn't come any more.

Non c'è stata mai la pace in quel paese.
There has never been peace in that country.

14

Talking about the future

14.1 Introduction

English speakers often assume that when talking about future events, actions or situations Italian always uses the future tense of verbs (see 2.3.4). This is not always the case. As we can see in the following examples, we can use either the *future* tense or the *present* tense, to refer to the same event or facts. We can also use a different verb or verb phrase when talking about the *very near future*.

14.2 Using the future tense

In the examples below, the *future tense* of the verbs is used to indicate firm intentions or plans, or a future event that is certain:

La settimana prossima partirò per gli Stati Uniti.
Next week I'll leave for the USA.

Arriveremo non appena possibile.
We'll arrive as soon as possible.

Spero che tu non cambierai idea.
I hope you won't change your mind.

Fra pochi giorni saremo in Francia.
In a few days we'll be in France.

14.3 Using the present tense

The *future tense* is not very much used in colloquial Italian. The *present tense* can be used in its place in almost every situation, just as it can in English:

Domani parto per Genova.
Tomorrow I'm leaving for Genoa.

A che ora arriva l'aereo?
What time is the flight arriving?

La settimana prossima cambiamo ufficio.
Next week we are changing office.

Fra poco *siamo* in Francia.
Soon *we'll be* in France.

14.3.1 With a time indicator

Even events in the *distant* future can be expressed using the present. However, when using the present, some explicit indication placing the events firmly in the future (such as **la settimana prossima**, **l'anno prossimo**, **fra un mese**, etc.) helps to avoid misunderstandings, as in the following examples:

L'anno prossimo *passiamo* le vacanze a New York.
Next year we are spending the holidays in New York.

Fra un mese *siamo* in Italia.
In a month we'll be in Italy.

The future tense is generally preferable when speaking or writing in a more formal context.

14.4 Expressing the immediate or very near future

There are two particular ways of talking about actions that are imminent or 'about to happen':

14.4.1 *stare per*

The verb **stare** (see 2.3.3) is used with **per** and the *verb infinitive*:

Stiamo per partire.
We are about to leave.

La conferenza sta per cominciare.
The talk will begin soon.

La sua fattura è quasi pronta. Sto per finire di scriverla.
Your invoice is almost ready. I'm just finishing writing it.

14.4.2 *essere sul punto di*

The expression **essere sul punto di** approximately corresponds to the English 'to be on the verge of':

Il professore è sul punto di avere un esaurimento nervoso.
The teacher *is on the verge of* a nervous breakdown.

Attenzione! Il treno è sul punto di partire!
Attention! The train *is just about* to depart!

14.5 Expressing the English 'going to'

The English 'going to' can sometimes be a way of expressing the future, or an intention. Occasionally it means 'physically going to'. You have to know which meaning it conveys before you can translate it into Italian:

Future or intention

When I'm on holiday, I'm going to learn Italian.

Quando sarò in vacanza, imparerò l'italiano.

or **Ho intenzione di imparare l'italiano.**

Physically 'going'

Tomorrow I'm going shopping.

Domani vado a fare le spese.

For other examples of future planning and intention, see 14.9 below.

14.6 The 'past in the future'

Sometimes when we talk about a point in the future (3), we need to describe events/actions that have not yet happened at the moment of speaking (1) but that will have happened at some unspecified time (2), before the point we are talking about (3).

1	2	3
NOW	UNSPECIFIED TIME	FUTURE
(moment of speaking)	(action or event)	(point referred to)

→

Oggi i giornali dicono che il Governo avrà deciso il bilancio prima di agosto.

Today the papers say the Government will have decided on the budget before August.

Franco dice che avremo già finito il lavoro quando arriverà lo stipendio.

Franco says that we will have finished the work before the salary arrives.

This reference to the *past in the future* – often called the *future perfect* in English – is expressed in Italian by a tense called **futuro anteriore** 'compound future' (see 2.3.5). Here are some examples:

Domani l'ufficio chiuderà alle 12. A quell'ora avremo già finito la nostra relazione.

Tomorrow the office will close at 12. By then we'll already have finished our report.

È tardi. Quando arriveremo allo stadio, la partita sarà già iniziata.

It's late. When we reach the stadium, the match will already have started.

Soltanto dopo che avrai migliorato il tuo italiano potrai superare l'esame.

Only after improving your Italian, will you be able to pass the exam.

For other examples of how the past and future are linked, see 30.5.2 and 31.3.1.

14.7 The future seen from the past

We do not just talk of future events with reference to the actual moment when we are speaking or writing ('the present'). We may be talking *now* about a point in the *past*, when the particular events referred to were still in the *future*.

How to express this situation in Italian depends on the *sequence of events* (see Appendix III) and on the probability of their happening. We can use a variety of verb tenses/moods:

14.7.1 Present or simple future tense

When the future moment has not yet come, and it is still possible that Carlo will pass by:

Carlo ha detto che *passerà* più tardi.
Carlo said he will pass by later.

Carlo ha detto che *passa* più tardi.
Carlo said he will pass by later.

14.7.2 The *condizionale al passato* 'past conditional'

The past conditional (see 2.3.13) indicates the future *from a past point of view* (see also 30.5.2). It is generally used after the moment has passed, regardless of whether Carlo actually came or not:

Carlo ha detto che *sarebbe passato* (ed è venuto).
Carlo said he would pass by later (and he did).

Carlo ha detto che *sarebbe passato* (e non è venuto).
Carlo said he would pass by later (and he didn't).

14.7.3 The *imperfetto* 'imperfect'

More colloquially, it is possible to use the *imperfect* (see 2.3.6) to replace the compound conditional:

Carlo ha detto che *passava* più tardi.
Carlo said he would pass by later.

For more examples of putting events in a time context, and the sequence of tenses, see 30.5 and Appendix III.

14.8 Some expressions of time in the future

Here are a few words frequently used to indicate future time.

Prossimo 'next'

Domenica *prossima* andiamo al mare.
Next Sunday we'll go to the sea.

Dovremo lavorare molto nei *prossimi* mesi.
We'll be very busy in the next months.

Le telefonerò il mese *prossimo*.
I'll phone you next month.

Fra (tra) 'within a certain time'

The prepositions **fra/tra** are identical in meaning (for this and other uses, see 4.3.8).

Ci vediamo *fra* una settimana.

We'll see each other in a week.

Sandro deve partire *tra* poco.

Sandro has to leave in a moment.

Mi scusi, sono occupata. La richiamo *fra* cinque minuti.

Excuse me, I'm busy at the moment. I'll call you back in five minutes.

Presto 'soon, early, quickly'

***Presto* cambieremo casa.**

We'll soon move house.

Le manderò *presto* una risposta.

I'll send an answer to you soon.

Note that **presto** can also be used to mean 'at an early hour', as in **È presto!** 'It's early!', or 'at a fast pace', as in **Fa' presto!** 'Hurry up!'.

Poi 'then'

Prima parleremo della riunione *poi* passeremo all'argomento principale.

First we'll speak about the meeting, then we'll go on to the main subject.

Dopo 'after, later'

Andiamo a fare una passeggiata e *dopo* andiamo a casa tua.

Let's go for a walk and after we'll go to your place.

Domani 'tomorrow'

***Domani* porto Filippo dal pediatra.**

Tomorrow I'm taking Filippo to the paediatrician.

Dopodomani 'day after tomorrow'

***Dopodomani* l'ufficio rimarrà chiuso.**

The day after tomorrow the office will be closed.

Stasera 'this evening, tonight'

***Stasera* alle 19.30 si trasmetterà la prossima puntata di "Ispettore Derek".**

This evening at 7.30 p.m., will be shown the next episode of 'Inspector Derek'.

Alla fine 'at the end'

Il vertice durerà cinque giorni; *alla fine* verrà offerto un pranzo dall'ambasciatore inglese.

The summit will last five days; at the end there will be a dinner given by the British ambassador.

Prima o poi 'sooner or later'

***Prima o poi* riusciranno a risolvere il problema.**

Sooner or later they'll manage to solve the problem.

Verrò a trovarti, *prima o poi!*
I'll come to see you, sooner or later!

D'ora in poi 'from now on'

D'ora in poi non mi sentirò più sola. Ci sei tu.
From now on I won't feel lonely. You're here.

14.9 Expressing intention and future plans

As seen above, the English 'going to' can be expressed by Italian **aver intenzione di**:

Ho intenzione di noleggiare una macchina.
I intend hiring a car.

Other expressions of intention and planning for the future include:

aspettarsi	to expect
aver in progetto di	to have planned to
decidere di	to decide to
decidersi a	to make one's mind up to
desiderare	to wish, desire
fare progetti per	to make plans for
non vedere l'ora di	to not be able to wait for
promettere di	to promise to
sperare di	to hope to

Mi sono decisa a passare le feste natalizie in famiglia.
I've made up my mind to spend the Christmas celebrations with my family.

Gli studenti stanno facendo progetti per venire a studiare in Inghilterra.
The students are planning to come and study in England.

Il professore si aspetta di ricevere i nostri compiti domani.
The lecturer expects to receive our homework tomorrow.

I bambini non vedono l'ora di andare in vacanza.
The children can't wait to go on holiday.

See also Chapter 26 and Chapter 33 for further expressions of intention and future plans.

15

Asking questions

15.1 Introduction

There is no specific verb form in Italian to distinguish a statement from a question, such as the English question form 'Does he . . .?' 'Is he . . .?' In Italian the form of the verb and the word order of the sentence generally remain the same:

Devo chiudere la porta.

I must shut the door.

Devo chiudere la porta?

Should I shut the door?

15.2 Asking a question using interrogative intonation

Very often the only difference between a statement and a question in spoken Italian is the intonation of the voice, which therefore becomes particularly important in getting our message through (see 8.5). The pitch of the voice is raised on the word that is the *focus* of the question. In the sentence above we can raise our voice on any one of its components, depending on what the main focus of our question is:

Devo chiudere *la porta*? (o *la finestra*?)

Should I shut *the door*? (or the window?)

Devo *chiudere* la porta? (o devo *aprirla*?)

Should I *shut* the door? (or shall I open it?)

Devo chiudere la porta? (o non devo?)

Should I shut the door? (or shall I not?)

15.3 Asking a question using interrogative words

When we ask questions about somebody or something, we usually use *interrogative* words (see 3.6).

We now look at some of the words used to ask questions about: (1) *identification*; (2) *quantity*; or (3) other details about something or somebody.

15.3.1 Questions about identification (of people or things)**Chi? Che cosa? Quale? Che?**

- (a) **Pronto, chi parla?**
Hello, *who's* speaking?
- (b) **Chi ha scritto questa lettera?**
Who wrote this letter?
- (c) **Buongiorno, che cosa desidera?**
Good morning, how can I help you?
(*What* would you like?)
- (d) **Che cosa facciamo stasera?**
What shall we do tonight?
- (e) **Chi devi vedere stasera?**
Who will you see tonight?
- (f) **Per chi è questo pacco?**
Who is this parcel *for*?
- (g) **Di chi è questa giacca?**
Whose jacket is this?
- (h) **Di che cosa parliamo con l'avvocato?**
What shall we talk *about* with the solicitor?
- (i) **Quale computer devo usare?**
Which computer should I use?
- (j) **Qual è la mia penna?**
Which one is my pen?
- (k) **Che ora è?**
What time is it?

In spoken Italian, **quale**, when used as in example (i), can be replaced by **che**:

Che computer devo usare?
Which computer should I use?

Quale is abbreviated before the verb form *è*, but never with an apostrophe:

Qual è il tuo indirizzo?
What is your address?

Chi is invariable (see 3.5.4 and 3.6): unlike English *who*, *whom*, *whose*, it does not change form regardless of whether it is the *subject* of the verb, as in examples (a), (b), the *direct object*, as in example (e), or preceded by a preposition, as in examples (f), (g).

In Italian, prepositions (**di**, **per**) always come *before* **chi** or **che cosa**.

We can also use just **che** or **cosa** instead of **che cosa**, especially in a more familiar or informal context:

Che vuoi?
What do you want?

Che fai?

What do you do?

Cos'è questo?

What is this?

Cosa stai mangiando?

What are you eating?

Di cosa ti occupi?

What do you do?

15.3.2 Questions about quantity

Quanto? Quanti?

When used as an adjective meaning 'how much, how many', **quanto** (see 3.6) changes its ending to agree with the noun, as in examples (d), (e), (f), (g) below:

- (a) **Quanto costa? Quant'è?**
How much is it?
- (b) **Scusi, quanto ci vuole per Palermo?**
Excuse me, how long does it take to Palermo?
- (c) **Quanto l'hai pagato?**
How much did you pay for it?
- (d) **Quante stanze ci sono in questa casa?**
How many rooms there are in this house?
- (e) **Quanto zucchero vuole nel caffè?**
How much sugar do you want in your coffee?
- (f) **Di quanta carta ha bisogno?**
How much paper do you need?
- (g) **Fra quanti giorni sarai a Roma?**
In how many days' time will you be in Rome?

15.3.3 Other types of questions

Here are some other words commonly used to introduce questions. These usually come immediately before the verb.

Perché? 'Why?'

Perché non vai in ufficio?

Why don't you go to the office?

Perché Teresa piange?

Why is Teresa crying?

Note that **perché** also means *because*, and can be used to answer a question as well as to ask it:

... **perché ho mal di testa.**

... *because I have a headache.*

... **perché ha fame.**

... *because she is hungry.*

Come mai? 'How come?'

Come mai? 'How come?' is very often used, instead of **perché**, in a familiar context:

Come mai torni a casa così presto?

How come you're going home so early?

Come mai non c'è più pane?

How come there is no bread left?

Quando? 'When?'

Quando comincia la scuola?

When does school begin?

Quando è arrivato questo fax?

When did this fax come?

Dove? 'Where?'

Dove va Paolo in vacanza?

Where does Paolo go on holiday?

Scusi, ***dov'è*** il bagno?

Excuse me, *where* is the toilet?

Dove compreranno una casa?

Where will they buy a house?

Come? 'How?'

Buongiorno, ***come*** sta?

Good morning, *how* do you do?

Come si dice "today" in Italiano?

How do you say 'today' in Italian?

Come avete fatto a . . . ?

How did you manage to . . . ?

15.4 Dialogo

Un esame di storia

Professore Si accomodi. Cominciamo con una domanda generale.
Che cosa è il Risorgimento italiano?

Candidato È il movimento di indipendenza e unità nazionale dell'Italia.

Professore E *quando* è avvenuto questo movimento?

Candidato Nel XIX secolo.

Professore Mi dica . . . *chi* era Giuseppe Mazzini?

Candidato Mazzini è stato un grande leader democratico e repubblicano. Insieme a Giuseppe Garibaldi lottò per realizzare la partecipazione popolare al movimento nazionale.

Professore *Quali* sono stati gli altri grandi protagonisti del Risorgimento?

- Candidato I più importanti sono stati Camillo Cavour, il Re Vittorio Emanuele II, il Papa Pio IX . . . e tanti altri . . .
- Professore Senta . . . saprebbe dirmi *come* e in *quale* anno Roma divenne capitale d'Italia?
- Candidato Nel 1870. Roma fu presa con la forza.
- Professore *Perché* fu necessaria la forza?
- Candidato Perché il Papa non voleva perdere la sua autorità politica e la sovranità su Roma.
- Professore Per concludere . . . *come mai* Garibaldi ebbe il soprannome di "eroe dei due mondi"?
- Candidato Perché aveva combattuto sia in Italia che in America Latina per la causa della libertà e indipendenza dei popoli.
- Professore Bene, complimenti! Si accomodi pure, l'esame è finito.

A history exam

- Professor Sit down. Let's begin with a general question. *What* is the Italian *Risorgimento*?
- Candidate It was the movement for independence and national unity in Italy.
- Professor And *when* did this movement take place?
- Candidate In the 19th century.
- Professor Tell me . . . *who* was Giuseppe Mazzini?
- Candidate Mazzini was a great democratic and republican leader. Together with Giuseppe Garibaldi he fought to achieve popular participation in the national movement.
- Professor *Who* were the other great characters in the *Risorgimento*?
- Candidate The most important were Camillo Cavour, King Vittorio Emanuele II, Pope Pius IX . . . and many others . . .
- Professor Listen . . . could you tell me *how* and in *what* year Rome became capital of Italy?
- Candidate In 1870. Rome was taken by force.
- Professor *Why* was force necessary?
- Candidate Because the Pope didn't want to lose his political authority and sovereignty over Rome.
- Professor To conclude . . . *how come* Garibaldi was known as the 'hero of the two worlds'?
- Candidate Because he had fought both in Italy and in Latin America for the cause of freedom and independence for the people.
- Professor Good, well done! You may go, the exam is finished.

16

Negative sentences

16.1 Introduction

The most common way to form a negative statement or question is to use **non** *immediately before* the verb. There is usually no specific *word order* that distinguishes a negative sentence from an affirmative one.

Sono stanca.

I'm tired.

Non sono stanca.

I am not tired.

Potete venire alla festa?

Can you come to the party?

Non potete venire alla festa?

Can't you come to the party?

C'erano molti studenti in aula?

Were there many students in the classroom?

No. Non ce n'erano molti.

No. There weren't many.

When answering a question negatively, **no** is used. We can also repeat the verb and/or include a pronoun object such as **li**, **la**:

Hai dieci euro?

Have you got ten euros?

No! (No, non li ho.)

No, I haven't.

Sa guidare la macchina?

Can you drive a car?

No! (No, non la so guidare.)

No, I can't.

16.2 Reinforcing a negative statement

There are several other words expressing negation that can be used to reinforce the negative concept introduced by **non** (see 3.9.1 and 3.9.3). Since these are generally used together with **non**, except when the word order is reversed, in Italian we usually have a *double negative* (two negative words in the same sentence).

16.2.1 Affatto, per niente, mica

A negative statement can be *reinforced* by using **affatto, per niente, mica** (the last is rather colloquial):

Non ho affatto paura!

I am *not* afraid *at all!*

Il film non era per niente interessante!

The film was *not at all* interesting!

Non sono mica scema!

I am *not* stupid!

Notice how all the reinforcing adverbs are used *after* the verb.

16.2.2 Neanche, nemmeno, neppure

These adverbs are used to reinforce or, rather, expand a negative statement, with the meaning of 'not even, not either':

Non ho neanche una lira!

I haven't got even a penny!

Non mi piace la TV. Non guardo nemmeno il Telegiornale.

I don't like TV. I don't even watch the news.

16.3 Expressing negation and time non . . . più, non . . . mai

Non . . . mai 'never', **non . . . più** 'no longer' are used to specify negation, with reference to *time* (see also 13.8.2):

Non leggiamo mai i giornali.

We never read the newspapers.

Non sono mai stato in America.

I've never been to America.

Non lavorava più alla Fiat.

He didn't work at FIAT any longer.

Non c'è più benzina.

There isn't any more petrol.

16.4 Expressing negation using né . . . né

When we have to make a negative statement about two (or more) related words or sentences they are introduced by **né . . . né** used after **non** (see 5.2.2) corresponding to the English 'neither . . . nor'.

Sto bene. Non ho né fame né sete.

I'm fine. I'm neither hungry nor thirsty.

Di domenica non voleva né lavorare né studiare.

On Sundays he didn't want either to work or to study.

Il direttore ha troppi impegni. *Non* può vederLa in ufficio, né può venire a casa Sua.

The manager is too busy. He can't see you at the office or come to your house.

Questo bicchiere *non è né mio né tuo*, è di Andrea.

This glass is neither mine nor yours. It's Andrea's.

Like other negative phrases, *né . . . né* can also stand on their own at the beginning of a sentence or clause. The verb used with *né . . . né* as subject can be either singular or plural:

Né Marco né Luisa sapeva come far funzionare la fotocopiatrice.

Neither Marco nor Luisa knew how to make the photocopier work.

Né io né lui sapevamo dove andare.

Neither I nor he knew where to go.

16.5 Expressing negation using *niente*, *nulla*

Niente (and the less common *nulla*) mean 'nothing' and are normally used together with *non* (see also 3.9.1):

Non ho niente da dire.

I have nothing to say.

Non vedo niente.

I can't see anything.

Non c'è nulla di buono da mangiare.

There isn't anything good to eat.

When *niente*, *nulla* come first in the sentence, the *non* is not needed. This is rather dramatic in style and is mainly used in writing, although in Sicily and the south this word order can be heard in spoken Italian too:

Niente succede.

Nothing happens.

Nulla lo preoccupa.

Nothing worries him.

16.6 Expressing negation using the adjective *nessun/o/a*

We can reinforce the idea that a person or object is not available by adding the negative adjective *nessun/o/a* ('no, not any'). *Nessun/o/a* (see 3.9.3) follows the pattern of *un, uno, una* (see 1.3.2).

Non c'è nessuna guida.

There is no guidebook.

Non c'è nessun'automobile disponibile.

There are no cars available.

(lit. 'There is no car available')

Non c'è nessun posto.

There is no place free.

Non c'era nessuno scrittore italiano presente.

There were no Italian writers present.

Nessun/o/a can also come first in the sentence, in which case **non** is omitted:

Nessun compito gli era difficile.

No task was difficult for him.

Nessuna guida ti spiega queste cose.

No guidebook explains these things to you.

16.7

Expressing negation using the pronoun *nessuno/a*

Nessuno is a negative *pronoun*, which stands on its own; it has a masculine form **nessuno** (occasionally abbreviated to **nessun**) and feminine form **nessuna**. **Nessuno** is usually found with **non**, but if it comes first in the sentence, **non** is not needed (see 3.9.3 and 16.6). **Nessuno** is more commonly found in this position than **niente** is:

Nessun dorma!

Let nobody sleep!

Nessuno viene dopo le 16.00.

No one comes after 4.00 p.m.

A questo numero non risponde nessuno.

Nobody answers on this number.

In casa non c'è nessuno.

There isn't anybody at home.

When **nessuno**, **niente** are followed by a clause that more closely defines or specifies the negative ('no guidebook . . . *that explains clearly*') Italian uses **che**, normally followed by the subjunctive (see 2.3.14, 9.3 and 11.8):

Non c'è nessuna guida che spieghi la storia della città in modo chiaro.

There is no guide *that explains* the history of the town clearly.

Non c'è nessuno che sappia fare la pizza come mia cugina.

There is no one *that can make pizza* like my cousin.

Non c'è niente che possa soddisfarlo.

There's nothing *that can satisfy* him.

16.8

Reinforcing negation

There are other ways in which you can emphasise the negative concept:

Non c'è alcun motivo per offendersi.

There's absolutely no reason to take offence.

Non ha la minima intenzione di finire quel progetto.

He hasn't the slightest intention of completing that project.

Non ho la più pallida idea di quello che sta facendo.
I haven't got the faintest idea what he's doing.

Questo libro non è proprio adatto.
This book isn't really suitable.

For the uses of **alcun**, see also 3.9.3.

17

Comparisons and degrees of intensity

17.1 Introduction

Comparisons between objects or people, or situations, are defined in terms of 'more', 'less' or 'the same as'.

In Part A the comparative forms of adjectives (see 1.4.6) and adverbs (see 6.3) are illustrated. Here we look at the ways in which these forms are used, and at other ways of expressing degrees of intensity.

17.2 Using comparative adjectives and adverbs

17.2.1 'More'

La situazione economica è *più grave* in Italia che in Inghilterra.

The economic situation is more serious in Italy than in England.

Gli inglesi guidano *più prudentemente* degli italiani.

The English drive more carefully than the Italians.

17.2.2 'Less'

Enrico era *meno intelligente* di Enrica.

Enrico was less intelligent than Enrica.

Bisogna andare *meno velocemente* del solito.

You should go more slowly than usual.

17.2.3 'Same as'

Non troverà mai una moglie *tanto comprensiva quanto* Angelica.

He will never find a wife as understanding as Angelica.

Non guidi *così attentamente come* me.

You don't drive as carefully as me.

The first words of each pair can be omitted:

Non troverà mai una moglie *comprensiva quanto* Angelica.

He will never find a wife as understanding as Angelica.

Non guidi attentamente *come* me.
You don't drive as carefully as me.

17.3 Expressing 'than'

English 'than' is translated by **di** or **che** (see examples above) according to which two elements are being compared and their position in the sentence:

17.3.1 Comparing two nouns

When comparing two nouns or proper names, we normally use **di** (although see 17.3.3 below):

In classe, i maschi sono meno estroversi *delle* ragazze.
In class, the males are less extrovert than the girls.

Luciano scrive più lentamente *di* Alessandra al computer.
Luciano writes more slowly than Alessandra on the computer.

17.3.2 Comparing two pronouns

As with nouns, when comparing two pronouns, we normally use **di**:

Personal pronouns (see 3.2)

Io sono meno stressata *di* te.
I am less stressed than you.

Lui guida più velocemente *di* te.
He drives more quickly than you.

Demonstrative pronouns (see 3.8)

Questa stanza è più spaziosa *di* quella.
This room is more spacious than that one.

Quello è più saporito *di* questo.
That one is more tasty than this one.

Possessive pronouns (see 3.7)

Lo stipendio di mio marito è più basso *del* mio.
My husband's salary is lower than mine.

La nostra automobile è meno comoda *della* vostra.
Our car is less comfortable than yours.

17.3.3 Comparing two adjectives

When comparing two adjectives that refer to the *same person* or *same thing*, use **che**:

I genitori del bambino rapito erano più preoccupati *che* arrabbiati.
The parents of the snatched child were worried more than angry.

Questi mobili sono più vecchi *che* antichi.
This furniture is not so much antique as old.

The same applies when comparing two nouns referring to the *same person or thing*:

Il mulo è più asino *che* cavallo.

The mule is more donkey than horse.

17.3.4 Comparing two verbs

When comparing two verbs, use **che**:

Andare a ballare è più divertente *che* andare al cinema.

Going dancing is more fun than going to the cinema.

Spendere è più facile *che* guadagnare.

Spending is easier than earning.

17.3.5 Comparing phrases of time or place

When comparing *adverbs* of time/place, use **di**:

Ora mi stanco più *di* prima.

Now I get more tired than before.

But use **che** if the adverbs are next to each other, separated only by 'than':

Sono più stanca *adesso che* prima.

I am more tired now than before.

Fa meno freddo oggi *che* ieri.

It is colder today than yesterday.

When at least one of the terms of comparison is a *prepositional phrase* of time/place, use **che**:

Si sta meglio *adesso che* negli anni Cinquanta.

People are better off now than in the fifties.

I turisti si divertirebbero più *a Napoli che a Roma*.

The tourists would enjoy themselves more in Naples than in Rome.

17.3.6 Comparing two elements separated by 'than'

All the above rules can be simplified by remembering that when 'than' comes directly between the two elements, it is always translated by **che**:

Fa meno freddo oggi *che* ieri.

It is less cold today than yesterday.

Mia madre era più preoccupata *che* arrabbiata.

My mother was worried rather than angry.

17.3.7 Comparing with one's expectations

To compare an actual state of affairs with what we thought, expected or imagined beforehand, we use the construction **di quanto** or **di quel che** along with either the imperfect indicative (e.g. **pensavo**) or the imperfect subjunctive (e.g. **pensassi**) according to whether we are using a formal or informal register:

Il corso d'italiano era più facile *di quel che* pensavo.

The Italian course was easier than I thought.

or

Il corso d'italiano era più facile *di quanto pensassi*.

or

Il corso d'italiano era più facile *di quanto non pensassi*.

17.4 Expressing 'which'

Use the interrogative **quale** (see 3.6) to express English 'which':

Quale città è più interessante, Roma o Firenze?

Which city is more interesting, Rome or Florence?

Quali fichi sono più dolci, quelli bianchi, o quelli neri?

Which figs are sweetest, the white ones or the black ones?

17.5 Expressing different degrees of intensity

17.5.1 Adjectives: relative superlative

When the person/object has more of a particular quality than all the others, we use the *relative* superlative, the most *in relation to* others (see 1.4.7):

I ragazzi italiani sono i più viziati d'Europa.

Italian kids are the most spoiled in Europe.

È stato il più bel viaggio della mia vita.

It was the best trip of my life.

Per me, venerdì è il giorno meno complicato della settimana.

For me, Friday is the least complicated day of the week.

17.5.2 Adjectives: absolute superlative

When no comparison is being made, we use the *absolute* superlative (see 1.4.8 and 10.4):

I vestiti di Armani sono costosissimi.

Armani clothes are really expensive.

Il viaggio è stato bellissimo.

The trip was really wonderful.

Often Italians prefer not to use this *-issimo* form, but to use a simple qualifying adverb such as *così*, *molto*, *tanto*, or an adverb such as *estremamente*, *veramente*:

Sono tanto stanca.

I'm so tired.

Le sono estremamente grato.

I'm extremely grateful to you.

17.5.3 Adjectives: diminishing the intensity

The opposite effect can be conveyed by using the adverb **poco** (see 10.5.1):

Ha fatto una mossa *poco intelligente*.
He made a not very intelligent move.

17.5.4 Adjectives: moderate intensity

The adverbs **piuttosto** and **abbastanza** express only a moderate degree of intensity (see 10.4.1):

Il processo elettorale è *piuttosto lento*.
The electoral process is rather slow.

Siamo *abbastanza soddisfatti* del suo lavoro.
We are quite satisfied with his work.

17.5.5 Numbers and placing

Note how the superlative form is used with ordinal numbers (**primo**, **secondo**):

Milano è *la seconda città più grande* d'Italia.
Milan is the second biggest city in Italy.

17.5.6 Adverbs

With adverbs, the superlatives are less commonly used. The English 'as . . . as possible' is expressed as shown:

Per favore, parla *il più lentamente possibile*.
Please, speak as slowly as possible.

Ho fatto *il meglio possibile*. Speriamo bene.
I've done as well as I could. Let's hope things go well.

When no comparison is being made, we can express the absolute superlative by using the qualifying adverbs **molto**, **tanto**, **così**, **veramente**, **estremamente** as for the adjectives (see 10.4.1 and 17.5.2 above):

Ha guidato *molto attentamente*.
He drove very carefully.

As for the adjectives, the opposite effect can be conveyed by using **poco**:

Ha seguito *poco attentamente* in classe.
He followed not very attentively in class.

In the case of adverbial phrases using **con** or **in maniera**, the comparative and superlative are formed in a different way:

Ha suonato la chitarra *con tanta passione*.
He played the guitar with great passion/very passionately.

Ha parlato *nella maniera più calma possibile*.
She spoke in the most calm way possible.

Ha studiato *con poco impegno*.
He studied with little commitment.

18

Referring to objects and people

18.1 Introduction

When talking or writing, we often need to refer to something or somebody without naming them, usually to avoid repeating a name or object already mentioned earlier; in English we do this by using 'this/that, he/she/it'. In Italian, too, we use pronouns (see Chapter 3) to refer to something or someone mentioned already.

18.2 Using a pronoun to refer back

There are many different kinds of pronoun (indefinites, demonstratives, relatives, interrogatives, possessives) and all of them can be used to refer to a noun already mentioned. Here we look in detail at *personal pronouns*, the pronouns that describe people and also objects. For details on all the pronoun forms (stressed, unstressed, combined), see 3.3 and 3.4.

18.3 Using a pronoun: referring to the subject of an action

In Italian, when talking about the person or entity carrying out an action ('the subject'), we do not usually need the subject pronoun, as we do in English; the verb ending tells us who or what is carrying out the action (see 2.1.3 and 3.3.1). But sometimes we want to emphasise *who* is carrying out an action, to distinguish him/her from someone else or to emphasise the contrast:

***Io* vado a scuola, *lui* va a lavorare.**

I'm going to school, *he's* going to work.

***Noi* andiamo al cinema. *Voi* dove andate?**

We're going to the cinema. Where are *you* going?

18.4 Using a pronoun: referring to someone other than the subject

When we want to refer to somebody who is not the subject but the *object* of the action, avoiding the use of a noun, we use an *object pronoun* (English *me, you, her, him, us, them*).

In Italian we can choose either an *unstressed* object pronoun (**mi, ti, lo, la, gli, ci, vi, li, le**) or the more emphatic *stressed* object pronoun (**me, te, lui, lei, Lei, noi, voi, loro**).

18.4.1 Using stressed pronouns

When we want to emphasise the identity of the person we are referring to, we use the *stressed* or *emphatic* pronouns (see 3.3.2). We also use them if we want to contrast or compare, or to distinguish him/her from somebody else. The three sets of examples below show the different emphasis given, depending on whether we use an unstressed pronoun (examples A) or a stressed pronoun (examples B):

- A **Dov'è Paola? La chiamo e non risponde.**
Where is Paola? I call her and she doesn't answer.
- B **Dov'è Paola? Chiamo lei e risponde Anna.**
Where is Paola? I call *her* and Anna answers instead.
- A **Guardami!**
Look at me!
- B **Guarda me, non lui.**
Look at *me*, not *him*.
- A **La mia amica mi ha invitato a cena. Le porto dei fiori.**
My friend has invited me for dinner. I'll bring some flowers for her.
- B **La mia amica mi ha invitato a cena. Porto dei fiori a lei e del vino a suo marito.**
My friend has invited me for dinner. I'll bring some flowers *for her* and some wine for her husband.

After a *preposition* (**con, di, da, a, per . . .**, etc.) the stressed forms are the only type of pronoun that can be used:

Ho parlato di voi con la Dott.ssa Prati.

I talked about you with Dr Prati.

Ho telefonato a te prima che a Sandra.

I rang you before I called Sandra.

Questa lettera è per lui.

This letter is for him.

Ti ho visto con lei.

I saw you with her.

Stressed pronouns are used mainly to refer to people. Using **lui, lei, loro** for 'it, them' to refer to animals – or even more so to inanimate objects – endows them with a 'human' personality. **Questo, quello** can be used instead.

Here, in this news item, the motorcyclist whose life has been saved is grateful to his crash helmet for protecting him and thinks of it almost as a friend, hence the use of **lui**:

Io devo la mia vita a questo casco. È grazie a lui che sono vivo.

I owe my life to this helmet. It's thanks to it that I'm alive.

18.4.2 Using unstressed pronouns

The most common way of all to refer to somebody or something – when no particular emphasis is required – is to use unstressed pronouns (3.4.1–2).

The pronouns can be *direct object* pronouns (used when the action directly involves or affects the person or thing):

Conosci Paola? Sì, *la* conosco.

Do you know Paola? Yes, I know her.

Pronto, *mi* senti? No, non *ti* sento bene!

Hello, can you hear me? No, I can't hear you very well!

Mi piace il caffè italiano, *lo* bevo tutti i giorni.

I like Italian coffee, I drink it every day.

Hai la chiave? Sì, *ce l'*ho.

Have you got the key? Yes, I've got it.

Alternatively, they can be *indirect object pronouns* (used when the action is aimed *at* or directed *to* them). Common verbs that often use indirect pronouns include:

dare	to give	dire	to say, tell
inviare	to send	mandare	to send
offrire	to offer	passare	to pass
presentare	to present	prestare	to lend
raccontare	to tell	scrivere	to write
spedire	to send	telefonare	to telephone

Paola è rimasta senza soldi. Domani *le* mando un assegno.

Paola's got no money left. Tomorrow I'll send a cheque to her.

A che ora *gli* telefoni?

At what time will you call (to) him?

Ciao. *Scrivimi* presto!

Bye. Write (to) me soon.

Dimmi!

Tell me!

Dammi lo zucchero!

Give (to) me the sugar!

Both types of pronoun can be found in the same sentence:

***Mi* piacciono le poesie di Montale. *Le* ho lette tutte.**

I like Montale's poems. I've read them all.

The pronouns can be combined (see 3.4.6):

Se vedi Anna, *dille* di telefonarmi. Va bene, *glielo* dirò, non preoccuparti.

If you see Anna, tell her to ring me. All right, I'll tell her, don't worry.

Remember that occasionally the correct pronoun might not be the one you think. An English 'it' might well be plural **li, le** in Italian if it refers to a plural noun; an English 'them' might on the other hand be singular **lo, la** in Italian:

Odio questi mobili. *Li* brucerei.

I hate this furniture. I'd burn it.

Tutta questa gente. Io *la* mando via.

All these people. I'll send them all away.

One of the main sources of difficulty for English speakers is remembering that the unstressed pronouns *usually come before the verb*.

18.4.3 Direct or indirect?

Another problem for English speakers is knowing when to use the indirect pronoun in Italian. This is because in English the direct object and indirect object are often not easily distinguishable. Sometimes English uses the word 'to' before the pronoun, showing clearly that it is an *indirect* object, for example 'I'll give the parcel to him' or 'He lent the novel to me'. But it is equally possible to say in English: 'I'll give him the parcel' or 'he lent me the novel', as if the pronoun were a *direct* object.

Look at these examples, where Italian distinguishes between *direct* and *indirect* object pronouns, depending on the choice of verbs, but where English uses identical pronouns ('him, them') in each case:

Direct: **Chiamalo subito.**

Call him now.

Indirect: **Telefonagli subito.**

Ring him now.

Direct: **Li accompagno all'aeroporto.**

I'll take them to the airport.

Indirect: **Gli do un passaggio.**

I'll give them a lift.

18.4.4 Special cases: *piacere, servire*

Remember that with **piacere** (see 28.2), the person who likes something is expressed by the indirect pronoun **mi** (lit. 'music pleases *to me*', 'the shoes please *to me*'). So if we want to avoid repeating the name of the person or thing liked ('music, shoes'), we simply miss it out:

Ti piace la musica moderna?

Do you like modern music?

Sì, mi piace.

Yes, I like it. (lit. 'It pleases me')

Ti piacciono queste scarpe?

Do you like these shoes?

Sì, mi piacciono.

Yes, I like them. (lit. 'They please me')

Similarly when we use **servire** 'to be of use to' (see 23.3.5) or similar verbs, the object needed (**le forbici**) is the subject of the verb ('the scissors are of use to me'), while the person needing them is expressed by the indirect pronoun, either stressed or unstressed. When we want to refer to the objects without mentioning them again, we simply miss them out: in the first example, **le forbici** or, in the second example, **la calcolatrice**:

Ti servono le forbici? (unstressed form)

Do you need the scissors?

Le forbici servono a te? (stressed form)

Do *you* need the scissors?

Sì, mi servono (le forbici).

Yes, I need them (the scissors).

Signora, Le serve la calcolatrice? (unstressed)

Do you need the calculator, signora?

La calcolatrice serve a Lei, signora? (stressed)

Do *you* need the calculator, signora?

Sì, mi serve (la calcolatrice).

Yes, I need it (the calculator).

18.5 Referring to someone or something using *questo, quello*

The demonstrative pronouns **questo, quello** can also be used to avoid naming or repeating the object or person (see 3.8). Often the use of **quello, quella** without naming the person involved indicates dislike or contempt:

Non c'è nessuno più egoista di *quella*.

There is no one more self-centred than that woman.

È *questo* il tuo nuovo amico?

Is this your new friend?

Non ho mai mangiato una torta come *questa*.

I've never eaten a cake as good as this one.

Hai visto *quello*?

Did you see that man?

***Questo* è il mio tavolo.**

This is my desk.

Ti servono dei fogli? Prendi *quelli*.

Do you need some sheets of paper? Take those.

The English 'the former . . . the latter' can be conveyed by using **quello** and **questo** respectively, but only in written texts. Sometimes 'the latter' is conveyed by **quest'ultimo**.

18.6 Using indefinites to refer to 'someone/something'

Often *indefinite pronouns* such as **alcuni, certi, altri, ognuno** (see 3.9 and 11.6.4) can be used to refer to something or someone previously mentioned:

Abbiamo parlato con i prigionieri di guerra. *Alcuni* di loro erano stati presi all'inizio del conflitto.

We spoke to the prisoners of war. Some of them had been taken at the beginning of the conflict.

Avevamo invitato una ventina di bambini alla festa. *Ognuno* di loro ha ricevuto un regalino prima di andare a casa.

We invited around twenty children to the party. Each of them received a small present before going home.

La sala d'attesa era piena di viaggiatori pallidi e stanchi. *Alcuni* sfogliavano giornali, *altri* sonnecchiavano.

The waiting room was full of pale, tired travellers. Some were flicking through newspapers, others were dozing.

18.7 Referring to something or someone mentioned

The words **simile**, **tale** can be used to refer to something or someone already mentioned:

Nell'incidente sono morti cinque giovani tutti di Cornate. Al paese non era mai accaduta *una tale tragedia*.

In the accident, five young people died, all from Cornate. A similar tragedy had never happened in the village.

Una cosa simile si vedeva a Opicina (vicino Trieste) dove un cane di nome Lucky era un cliente abituale del Bar Centrale.

Something similar used to be seen in Opicina (near Trieste) where a dog called Lucky was a regular customer of the Bar Centrale.

18.8 Referring to what has been said or will be said

Particularly in business or formal letters, use is made of expressions such as **come sopra**, **sopraindicato**, **sopraccitato**, **sopraddetto**, referring back, or **il seguente**, **come segue**, **quanto segue**, to refer forward:

Per eventuali chiarimenti, si prega di telefonare al numero sopraindicato.

For any clarification needed, please telephone the above number.

Prima di accendere il vostro frigorifero, vi suggeriamo di leggere il seguente.

Before turning on your fridge, we suggest you read the following.

For more details on formal style and letter-writing, see Chapters 40 and 42 respectively.

19

Focusing on the action

19.1 Introduction

Sometimes we want to focus on the *action*, or on the *person or thing affected* by the action, rather than on the person carrying the action out. In Italian there are various ways in which we can do this.

19.2 Focusing on the action using the passive

Normally, the grammatical subject of a verb is the person carrying out an action; the verb form is therefore an active verb form:

I camerieri *hanno servito* la cena.

The waiters served dinner.

One way of focusing on the action or on the person/thing affected, is to use a passive verb form (see 2.1.7) and to make the person or thing affected by the action the grammatical subject of the verb instead, so that it becomes more important than the 'doer':

La cena è *servita* alle ore 20.00.

Dinner is served at 8.00 p.m.

19.2.1 With *essere*

The passive is normally formed with **essere** and the past participle (see 2.2.2). It has a full range of tenses in the same way as the active verb does. There may or may *not* be an agent (person carrying out the action) mentioned, but even when there is, the agent is at the end of the sentence, in a *secondary* position compared to the action or person affected:

Agent not mentioned

Le destre *sono state fermate*.

The Right has been stopped.

La merce *era stata scaricata* a Genova.

The goods had been unloaded at Genoa.

Agent mentioned

Stamattina il Vesuvio è *ricoperto da un bianco manto di neve*.

This morning Vesuvius is covered by a white mantle of snow.

Ogni mattina, quando mi alzo, i bagni sono sempre occupati dai miei figli.

Every morning, when I get up, the bathrooms are always occupied by my children.

Domani la Principessa sarà ricevuta dal Papa.

Tomorrow the Princess will be received by the Pope.

Nel 1943 Napoli è stata bombardata dagli Alleati.

In 1943 Naples was bombarded by the Allies.

I ladri furono scoperti dalla guardia mentre entravano da una finestra.

The thieves were discovered by the guard as they came in through a window.

I risultati delle elezioni erano attesi da una grande folla per le strade della città.

The results of the elections were awaited by a great crowd in the streets of the city.

Se avessi più pazienza, forse saresti ascoltato di più dai tuoi figli.

If you had more patience, perhaps you would be listened to more by your children.

Secondo i giornali, i quadri sarebbero stati rubati da una banda di ladri professionisti.

According to the newspapers, the pictures were stolen by a band of professional thieves.

Note: For this use of the conditional to express report or rumour, see Chapter 31.

19.2.2 With *venire*

In the examples above, the *passive* construction is formed with the verb *essere* and the past participle. You can also use *venire* instead of *essere* (2.1.7). This is used only in a more formal register and only in the simple tenses: present, imperfect, **passato remoto**, future, conditional. *Venire* tends to express the idea that a regular action is involved:

La cena viene servita da camerieri vestiti di giacca bianca.

Dinner is served by waiters dressed in white jackets.

Gli ordini ci venivano trasmessi dai nostri rivenditori italiani.

The orders were sent on to us by our Italian dealers.

Gli studenti verranno ammessi solo se muniti di tessera.

Students will be admitted only if in possession of a membership card.

The other reason for using *venire* is to avoid ambiguity. The passive, used with certain verbs, e.g. **chiudere**, **aprire** can sound static ('the door is already closed') rather than expressing an action ('the door is being closed'); this is particularly true when there is no agent mentioned, as shown by the examples below:

La porta è chiusa da Marco.

The door is shut by Marco. (action)

La porta è chiusa.

The door is shut/is being shut. (action or state: ambiguous)

This ambiguity can be avoided by using the verb **venire**:

La porta viene chiusa.

The door is being shut/gets shut. (action)

19.2.3 With *andare*

The passive can also be formed with **andare** (see 2.1.7), in which case it has a prescriptive sense, indicating this is how things *should* be done:

Eventuali riparazioni vanno effettuate solo dai nostri tecnici qualificati.

Any repairs should be carried out only by our qualified technicians.

Il vino bianco va servito fresco, mentre il vino rosso va servito a temperatura ambiente.

White wine should be served chilled, while red wine should be served at room temperature.

19.2.4 In scientific papers, news reports, etc.

Although Italians tend to avoid the use of passive sentences in everyday speech, there are certain special contexts where it is preferred, for example *scientific papers*, *news reports* and *bureaucratic language* where it is used to express detachment and impartiality (see 42.7–9).

Sometimes the passive is used without mention of any agent, because the agent is not known, has already been mentioned, is unimportant, or is too obvious to be stated, especially in scientific writing.

Scientific papers

In the case of scientific papers, the intention is to stress the objectivity of experimental procedures; a passive sentence puts emphasis on the results of an action, rather than on the person who has carried it out (see also 42.8). When scientific observations are described, the 'agent' (i.e. the person or research group that carried them out) is often omitted, to stress the objective nature of the findings:

Il nuovo vaccino contro l'Aids è stato sperimentato presso l'Università di Pisa.

The new Aids vaccine has been tested at Pisa University.

L'eclissi è prevista alle 15.23 del 10 agosto.

The eclipse is expected at 15.23 on the 10th of August.

Il tasso medio di inflazione è calcolato sulla base di rilevazioni che vengono effettuate nelle principali città.

The average inflation rate is calculated on the basis of surveys which are conducted in the main cities.

There can be exceptions where the discovery has made the scientist or inventor famous:

La penicillina fu scoperta da Fleming nel 1928.

Penicillin was discovered by Fleming in 1928.

News reports

Passive statements are widely used in the reporting of news by the press (see also 42.9). Again this is due to the need to present events as facts and to suggest they are true, impartial and accurately verified:

La legge finanziaria è stata approvata dal Parlamento.

The budget bill has been approved by Parliament.

I due ostaggi saranno liberati domani.

The two hostages will be released tomorrow.

Media headlines often omit the **avere/essere** element of the passive and use the subject and the past participle only:

Liberati i due ostaggi.

The two hostages freed. (Italian daily newspaper)

Aggredita da africano tredicenne lo picchia.

Attacked by an African, a thirteen-year-old girl beats him up. (*Televideo*)

Bureaucratic language

Legal and bureaucratic language uses passive statements to emphasise the impersonality of rules and duties (see also 42.7):

Il biglietto deve essere timbrato all'inizio del viaggio.

Tickets must be stamped at the beginning of the journey.

Ogni cambiamento di indirizzo dovrà essere comunicato per iscritto.

Any change of address should be reported in writing.

19.3 Situations when the passive is not used**19.3.1 Verbs with an indirect object only**

Unlike English verbs, in Italian only a transitive verb (a verb taking a direct object) can be turned into a passive construction, as shown below:

In English the active sentence

Anna *told* Franco to call the plumber.

can be rephrased using the passive

Franco *was told* by Anna to call the plumber.

In Italian we can use the active form:

Anna ha detto a Franco di chiamare l'idraulico.

but we cannot turn this sentence round into a passive construction.

We can only turn a sentence into the passive when there is a *direct* object which can become the subject of the action. An *indirect* object (English 'to Franco, to her') cannot be turned into the grammatical subject. Verbs that take an indirect object include **telefonare**, **dire**, **raccontare** where the action does not affect the person directly, but indirectly ('to telephone to me', 'to say to him', 'to tell to them').

Here are some more examples where an English passive sentence *cannot* be translated directly into a passive form in Italian, because the person affected is not the direct object. No agent is mentioned, so Italian uses the 'anonymous' *third person plural* verb form, for example **hanno telefonato** 'they phoned' (see 19.3.3 below):

Mi hanno telefonato a casa.

I was telephoned at home.

Gli hanno detto di sbrigarsi.

He was told to hurry up.

19.3.2 Verbs with a direct and indirect object

In the case of verbs such as **dare, dire, inviare, mandare, passare, presentare, prestare, raccontare, regalare, spedire**, there is often a direct object *and* an indirect object.

The direct object, often a thing, *can* become the subject of a passive verb:

Mi è stato rubato l'orologio.

I've had my watch stolen.

(lit. 'My watch has been stolen from me')

Alternatively, you can use the third person active verb form (see 19.3.3 below):

Mi hanno rubato l'orologio.

I've had my watch stolen.

(lit. 'They have stolen my watch from me')

But you cannot make 'I' the subject in Italian, as in English 'I've had my watch stolen'.

Gli hanno offerto un buon posto.

Gli è stato offerto un buon posto.

He was offered a good job.

Durante la riunione ci hanno passato un messaggio del direttore.

Durante la riunione, ci è stato passato un messaggio del direttore.

During the meeting, we were passed a message from the manager.

Note in the last example how mention of an agent would require the preposition **da**:

Durante la riunione, ci è stato passato un messaggio dal direttore.

During the meeting, we were passed a message by the manager.

(lit. 'During the meeting a message was passed to us by the manager')

19.3.3 Use of third person plural instead of passive

In Italian we use the passive construction only very sparingly. In everyday language an Italian speaker would almost always prefer to use the corresponding active sentence, if at all possible. Often the third person verb forms are preferred, even where the passive would technically be possible.

So instead of using the passive construction,

Sono stata invitata a una festa.

I've been invited to a party.

Sono state mandate dieci casse di spumante.

Ten crates of *spumante* were sent.

Italians would prefer to use the active construction,

Mi hanno invitata a una festa.

They (some unspecified people) have invited me to a party.

Hanno mandato dieci casse di spumante.

They sent ten crates of *spumante*.

19.4 Focusing on the action using *si passivante* (passive form with *si*)

Another way of emphasising the action, rather than the subject of it, is to use the **si passivante** (see 2.1.7), where the pronoun **si** is added to the active form to give the verb (in this case **possono vedere**) a passive meaning. This is only possible with the third person, singular or plural.

The **si passivante** can be used only when there is no mention of the *agent* or author of the action. This construction is very common in Italian, because of the reluctance to use the plain passive forms, especially in the more colloquial register.

Like the passive, **si passivante** can only be used with verbs taking a direct object. So instead of the passive construction,

Da Manfredonia, le isole Tremiti possono essere viste.

From Manfredonia, the Tremiti islands can be seen.

we can use the **si passivante**:

Da Manfredonia si possono vedere le isole Tremiti.

From Manfredonia, the Tremiti islands can be seen.

When the object or person affected is plural, we use a plural verb:

Qui si parla italiano.

Italian is spoken here.

In Alto Adige si parlano sia l'italiano che il tedesco.

In Alto Adige both Italian and German are spoken.

In quel concessionario Lancia si vendono 25 automobili al giorno.

At that Lancia dealer, 25 cars are sold every day.

Le vendite si registrano su questo libro.

Sales are recorded in this book.

In questo club si deve mettere la cravatta.

In this club a necktie must be worn.

Al centro di Milano, si vende un appartamento di quattro vani per lo stesso prezzo di una villa.

In the centre of Milan, a four-room apartment is being sold for the same price as a villa.

In the 'small ads' a reverse combination of verb + *si* is often used. In the plural form, the final vowel is dropped (*affittano* > *affittan*):

Vendesi appartamento di quattro vani.

Four-room apartment for sale.

Affittasi monolocale.

One-room apartment for rent.

Affittansi camere.

Rooms for rent.

19.5 *Si impersonale* (impersonal *si*)

The ***si impersonale*** structure (see 2.1.8), equivalent of the English 'one', is often confused with ***si passivante***. The ***si passivante*** is always used with a *transitive* verb, and has both singular and plural forms, while the ***si impersonale*** is used with an *intransitive* verb and is only singular. Often the ***si impersonale*** is not really impersonal but is used as a substitute for 'we':

Domenica si va al mare.

On Sundays we go to the seaside.

In genere, si parte presto quando si va all'aeroporto.

In general, one leaves early when one is going to the airport.

Both past participle and adjectives, when used with ***si impersonale***, are plural. The compound tenses take *essere*:

La sera dopo una giornata di lavoro, si è stanchi.

In the evening, after a day at work, one is tired.

Si è partiti la mattina presto, e si è arrivati la sera tardi.

One (we) left in the morning early, and one (we) arrived in the evening late.

19.6 Focusing on the object of the action

Italian has more freedom to change word order (see also 40.7). The normal order of *subject*, *verb*, *object* can be reversed; we can emphasise the *object* of an action (rather than the *subject* or author of it) by keeping the active form of the sentence, but placing the object in a more prominent position before the verb. The pronoun (in this case, *lo*) is used as well (see 3.4.1) to mark the unusual and emphatic position of the object:

Emphasising the subject

Subject – verb – object

Il direttore ha già firmato il contratto.

The manager has already signed the contract.

Emphasising the object

Object – pronoun – verb – subject

Il contratto lo ha già firmato il direttore.

The contract has already been signed by the manager.

Section II

**Actions affecting
ourselves and others**

20

Social interactions

20.1 Greeting, welcoming

Saying 'hello' and 'goodbye'

Buon giorno	used to greet people during daytime
Buona sera	used to greet people in the evening (after dark or after siesta time in the south)
Buona notte	used only when taking leave of one's companions to go to bed or go home at the end of the evening
Ciao	a more informal, and extremely popular, way to say 'hello' as well as 'goodbye'
Salve	another informal greeting, used only when meeting somebody, but less common and limited to certain regions and certain social contexts

When enquiring about someone's state of health, use the verb **stare**.

Come stai? or **Come va?** are used when addressing somebody with the familiar **tu**:

Ciao Paolo, *come stai?*
Hello Paolo, how are you?

Come sta? is used with the formal **Lei** (see 3.3.1 and 41.2), both for men and women:

Buon giorno Dottorressa Serra, come sta?
Good morning Dr Serra, how are you?

A normal reply might be one of the following (providing some brief information about one's physical or psychological state):

(Molto) bene, grazie e tu/Lei?
Very well, thank you. And you?

Bene grazie, non c'è male.
Thanks, not bad.

Insomma . . . non c'è male.
Not bad. (but said doubtfully)

Non molto bene purtroppo.
Not very well, unfortunately.

Benvenuto means 'welcome' but is used mainly on relatively formal occasions. When welcoming someone into a room, Italians often say:

Si accomodi, signora.

Please come in, signora.

(lit. 'Make yourself comfortable')

Accomodati!/Accomodatevi!

Come in! (familiar form of address, using **tu/voi**)

Avanti!

Come in! (lit. 'Forward!')

When inviting guests to sit down, you can use **accomodarsi**, as above, or else **sedersi**:

Prego, si sieda signora

Please take a seat, signora.

Siediti, Angela . . .

Sit down, Angela . . .

Sedetevi, voi due . . .

Sit down, you two . . .

When passing on greetings from someone else, use the verb **salutare**:

Mio marito La saluta.

My husband sends (you) best wishes.

Giorgio ti saluta.

Giorgio sends (you) best wishes.

And when someone wants to pass on their greetings to your family, (s)he says:

Mi saluti Sua madre.

Say 'hello' to your mother for me.

Salutami la tua mamma.

Say 'hello' to your mum for me.

20.2 Introducing oneself and others

When meeting someone we don't know, we need a few words to introduce each other, or to introduce someone else (see also 8.1). Here are the phrases most commonly used, with approximate translations:

Permette . . . ?

Allow me . . . (rather formal, used as a first approach, and followed by one's name)

Mi chiamo Peter Green.

My name is Peter Green.

(lit. 'I am called . . .')

Piacere, Sally Parker.

(My name is) Sally Parker. It's a pleasure (to meet you).

Molto lieta/o.

Glad to meet you . . .

Here are two examples of typical introductions, the first rather formal (e.g. business situation), the second more informal (e.g. two young students).

Dialogue 1

- A *Permette? Vorrei presentarmi, mi chiamo William Hughes.*
 B *Molto lieto, io sono Andrea Fulgenzi, sono l'agente della ditta Duemila.*
 A *Molto lieto, ho sentito parlare spesso di Lei. Io lavoro per il Ministero degli Esteri canadese.*
 B *Questo è il mio biglietto da visita.*
 A *Grazie, ecco il mio.*
 A Would you mind? I'd like to introduce myself. My name's William Hughes.
 B Very pleased to meet you. My name's Andrea Fulgenzi. I'm the agent for the Duemila company.
 A Very pleased (too), I've often heard speak of you. I work for the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
 B This is my card.
 A Thanks, here's mine.

Dialogue 2

- A *Ciao, come ti chiami?*
 B *Mi chiamo Sandra, e tu?*
 A *Io mi chiamo Luigi. Piacere!*
 B *Piacere!*
 A Hi, what's your name?
 B My name's Sandra, and you?
 A My name's Luigi. Pleased (to meet you).
 B Pleased (to meet you).

When introducing a third person, we may say:

Le presento l'avvocato Negri.

Can I introduce Mr Negri (to you)? (lit. 'Lawyer Negri')

Posso presentarLe l'avvocato Negri?

Can I introduce Mr Negri (to you)? (lit. 'Lawyer Negri')

Ti presento il mio amico Luigi.

This is my friend Luigi.

Notice that in Italy professional titles or qualifications such as **dottore**, **professore**, **ingegnere**, **direttore** are commonly used when addressing or introducing somebody, where we would not use them in English. The same applies to **signora** 'madam' or **signore** 'sir' (see 20.9 below).

20.3 Saying goodbye

'Goodbye' in Italian is either **arrivederci** or (to friends) **ciao**. More formal is **arrivederLa**, although **arrivederci** is appropriate in almost all circumstances. Other very common familiar forms of leave-taking are:

a domani	see you tomorrow
a presto	see you soon
buona notte	goodnight (used only when taking leave at the end of an evening)
ci vediamo	see you
di nuovo	see you again (less familiar)

20.4 Wishes

Here is a series of expressions used as good wishes in various circumstances. These may be exchanged both when meeting and when leaving people:

auguri	best wishes (used in virtually all situations including birthdays and Christmas, but not before exams – see in bocca al lupo below)
buon viaggio	bon voyage
buone vacanze	have a nice holiday
buon Natale	Merry Christmas
buon Anno	Happy New Year
Felice Anno Nuovo	Happy New Year (on Christmas cards, etc.)
buona Pasqua	Happy Easter
in bocca al lupo	good luck (idiomatic, lit. ‘in the mouth of the wolf’), used before exams or other difficult tests or competitions. In such circumstances Auguri! is considered inappropriate, and even ominous. The traditional reply is Crepi! ‘May the wolf die!’.
buona fortuna	good luck (generic)
buon divertimento	enjoy yourself
salute	bless you (after a sneeze)
cin cin or salute	cheers (raising glasses for a toast)
alla tua, alla vostra	to your health (as a toast)
buon appetito	enjoy your meal (very common before beginning a meal, in both formal and informal situations; as a reply we might say: grazie altrettanto although more often buon appetito is repeated instead)

20.5 Expressing and receiving thanks, appreciation

Saying thank you

grazie	thanks
molte grazie	many thanks
grazie mille	many thanks
ti ringrazio, Paola	(I) thank you, Paola
La ringrazio, Professore	(I) thank you, (teacher)

Receiving thanks

prego	you are welcome
di niente	don't mention it
non c'è di che	don't mention it
per carità, non è nulla	don't even mention it, it's nothing

Expressing a more intense appreciation

grazie, molto gentile thank you, very kind of you
molto gentile da parte Sua how kind of you

La ringrazio molto per la Sua ospitalità.

Thank you very much indeed for your hospitality.

Le sono molto grata/o per l'assistenza che ho ricevuto.

I am much grateful to you for the assistance I received.

Ho apprezzato molto il Suo regalo.

I much appreciated your present.

Ho gradito molto i Suoi fiori.

I very much appreciated your flowers.

Ancora mille grazie. Lei è stata/o veramente gentile.

Thank you again. You have been extremely kind.

20.6 Compliments

Here is a list of expressions that can be used to convey our compliments to somebody in various circumstances.

bravo/a!	well done! (friendly and informal)
complimenti!	congratulations!
complimenti per la laurea!	congratulations on your degree!
congratulazioni	congratulations! (more formal)
felicitazioni	congratulations! (especially on marriage and new babies)

Che bello!

How beautiful!

Che bel vestito!

What a nice dress!

Che begli occhi che hai!

What beautiful eyes you have!

Come sei elegante!

How elegant you are!

Le sta molto bene questa giacca.

This jacket looks really good on you.

Come parli bene l'italiano!

How good your Italian is!

20.7 Making and accepting excuses, apologies

The following examples show the most usual ways to say 'excuse me' or 'sorry' in Italian.

Using Lei

Mi scusi Excuse me

Scusi Excuse me

Chiedo scusa I apologise

La prego di scusarmi.

I beg your pardon.

La prego di accettare le mie scuse.

I hope you will accept my apologies. (more formal)

Sono *spiacente* che non ci sia abbastanza caffè per tutti.

I regret there is not enough coffee for everybody. (very formal)

Using *tu*

Scusami Excuse me

Mi dispiace/mi spiace I'm sorry

Spiacente I'm sorry (formal)

To accept someone's apologies we may say:

Per carità You don't need to apologise (lit. 'for pity's sake')

Non si preoccupi Don't worry

Non fa niente It doesn't matter

Prego It's all right

20.8 Expressing commiseration, sympathy

To express sympathy for someone's death, whether speaking or in writing, we can use **condoglianze** 'condolences':

Desidero esprimere *le mie condoglianze* per la perdita di Suo marito.

I wish to express my sympathy for the loss of your husband.

Some common expressions of commiseration or regret are the following:

(Che) peccato!

What a pity! It's a shame!

Peccato che lei sia arrivata in ritardo.

It's a pity that she arrived late.

È un *peccato* che non abbiate visto quel film.

It's a pity you haven't seen that film.

Poveretto/a!

Poor him/her!

Povero Mario!

Poor Mario!

Che pena!

What a shame!

Poveretti, mi fanno pena!

Poor things. I feel sorry for them!

Mi dispiace che abbiate avuto questo brutto incidente.

I'm sorry you had this bad accident.

20.9 Using titles, salutations

As mentioned above (20.2), in Italy professional titles and qualifications are commonly used when addressing somebody, either speaking or in writing. Failing to do so, or using the wrong title, may result in embarrassment or upset.

Here we present the titles most commonly used. (See 42.2 for details of abbreviations and other conventional forms used in correspondence.)

Most frequently used are:

Signore	Mister
Signora	Madam
Signorina	Miss (if unmarried)

These are general forms of address used when the person has no special title, and also when we don't know whether the person addressed has other titles or not. Italians would tactfully try to find out whether any other title is appropriate, before addressing somebody with **Signor(e)**. A title may be used on its own or followed by the person's surname, in which case the final -e is dropped from the masculine form; for example **Signore** is abbreviated to **Signor** (**Signor Rossi**):

The final -e is also dropped before a surname with many of the following (as indicated by the brackets):

Dottor(e)	Doctor (used both for medical doctor and for anybody with a university degree, also when there is not a more specific professional title)
Dottoressa	Doctor (female equivalent of above)
Professor(e)	Professor (used for university and secondary school male teacher)
Professoressa	Professor (female equivalent of above)
Avvocato	Lawyer, Solicitor
Avvocatessa	this title exists but see note below
Ingegn(er)e	Engineer (only if holding a university degree)
Ragionier(e)	Accountant
Architetto	Architect
Maestro	Master (used for all male artists and conductors; in southern Italy it is also used for highly skilled manual labourers and artisans)
Onorevole	Member of Parliament
Ministro	Minister
Padre	Father (for priest)
Madre/Sorella	Mother/Sister (for nun)
Monsignor(e)	Monsignor (for high-ranking Catholic priest)

Generally used on its own, not with surnames is:

Direttore	Director, Manager (or other high-ranking official)
------------------	--

In some professions (such as military or diplomatic), the specific title indicating the rank should be used:

Generale	General
Capitano	Captain
Ambasciatore	Ambassador

In some cases there are both masculine and feminine forms. For a list of the most common titles or professions with distinct feminine equivalents see 1.2.1. Where there is no feminine form, women should be addressed with the same title as their male counterparts: **Ingegn Maggioni**, **Avvocato Parma**.

While some of the titles shown here and in 1.2.1 and 8.3.3 are widely used to denote women professionals (for example **professoressa**, **dottoressa**), in other cases the feminine forms follow the rather old-fashioned tradition of indicating the *wife*

of the professional person: **ambasciatrice** 'the ambassador's wife', **presidentessa** 'the president's wife'. In these cases, it is common practice not to use the feminine form but to use the masculine form to indicate women working in this profession as well:

La presidente della Camera Irene Pivetti

The speaker of the House Irene Pivetti

Generally speaking, when there is a choice of forms, the use of the masculine form is perceived as putting less emphasis on the gender aspect and more on the profession of the person, and is therefore seen as less sexist.

The masculine form is used for all those professions for which there is no commonly used feminine form, such as those listed above:

Il ministro degli esteri Susanna Agnelli

The Minister for Foreign Affairs Susanna Agnelli

The use of feminine titles newly created because of the recent increase of women entering traditionally male-only jobs, such as **poliziotta** 'policewoman' and **avvocatessa, soldatessa, vigilessa** (female) 'lawyer, soldier, traffic warden' respectively is perceived as ironical and patronising (see 8.3.3).

Note: The basic formalities used in *correspondence* are illustrated in 42.2.

21

Getting other people to do things

21.1 Introduction

Possibly the most important transactional function in any language, is to get people to do things. Indeed one of the first words a child learns in any language – apart from **mamma** ‘mummy’ – is **Dammi!** ‘Give me!’. There are various ways of getting others to do things, ranging from a polite request or question to an order or command using the *imperative* verb form (see 2.3.22–24). The question form using **tu** may be used when asking your friend to pass the salt (**Mi passi il sale?** ‘Will you pass me the salt?’) while the imperative form with **Lei** may be used for something as simple as calling the waiter in the restaurant or bar (**Senta! Mi porti il conto!** ‘Listen! Bring me the bill!’).

21.2 Giving orders and commands

The imperative can be used in the familiar **tu** form or in the more formal **Lei** form. Examples are shown below along with alternative forms using the indicative in a question form.

21.2.1 *Lei*

To give an order to someone we don’t know well, we use the **Lei** form of the *imperative*. Here is the imperative form of some frequently used verbs:

Senta!

Excuse me! (lit. ‘Listen!’)

Scusi!

Excuse me!

Si accomodi!

Come in/make yourself comfortable!

Mi dia il passaporto, signora.

Give me your passport, madam.

If we prefer to make a request rather than issue a command, we would use the present indicative, or sometimes the verb **volere** ‘to wish to’:

Mi dà il passaporto, signora?

Would you give me your passport, madam?

Vuole accomodarsi, signora?

Would you like to sit down, madam?

We can also make a polite request by use of the phrase **Le dispiace?** and the infinitive verb form (see 22.4.3):

Le dispiace aprire la finestra?

Would you mind opening the window?

21.2.2 Tu

To give a command or instruction to someone you are on familiar terms with, use the **tu** form of the imperative:

Mangia!

Eat up!

Vieni a casa mia alle 6.00.

Come to my house at 6.00.

Siediti qui accanto a me.

Sit here next to me.

Dagli un colpo di telefono!

Give him a call!

Fa' quello che vuoi!

Do what you want!

As seen above, the imperative form is sometimes replaced by the less abrupt indicative form (the 'normal' form) of the verb. This gives the effect of the speaker making a request rather than giving an order:

Mangi un altro po' di dolce?

Would you eat another little bit of cake?

Mi passi il pane, per favore?

Would you pass me the bread?

Mi dai un passaggio?

Would you give me a lift?

This is particularly common where the one-syllable imperatives of the verbs **andare**, **dare**, **dire**, **fare**, **stare** (**va'**, **da'**, **di'**, **fa'**, **sta'**) are concerned (see 2.3.23). These are often replaced with the indicative:

Dai retta a me.

Listen to me.

Fai come vuoi.

Do as you please.

As with **Lei**, a polite request can be made using **ti dispiace** (see 22.4.3):

Ti dispiace prestarmi la giacca da sci?

Would you mind lending me your ski jacket?

21.2.3 Voi

To give a command or instruction to more than one person, use the **voi** form of the imperative (the **voi** form is the form of imperative most frequently used in recipes):

Venite a cena da me sabato prossimo!

Come to dinner at my house next Saturday!

Tagliate i pomodori a pezzi piccoli.

Cut the tomatoes in small pieces.

21.2.4 Loro

There is a polite form of 'you' in the plural, which corresponds to the singular **Lei**: **Loro** is however far less common than **Lei**, being largely used by waiters or hotel staff to address customers. **Loro** like **Lei** above, takes a third person verb form:

Si accomodino, signore.

Make yourselves comfortable, ladies.

Vengano di qui, signori.

Come this way, ladies and gentlemen.

21.2.5 Noi

When we are personally involved in the action, we use a proposal or exhortation rather than a command:

Controlliamo questi conti adesso.

Let's have a look at these accounts now.

Usciamo.

Let's go out.

21.3 Making negative requests and commands

All the imperative forms shown above (21.2) can be expressed in a negative form, to tell someone *not* to do something (see 2.3.24):

Lei **Non si preoccupi!**
Don't worry!

tu **Non fumare tanto, Walter.**
Don't smoke so much, Walter.

voi **Non andate lontano, ragazzi.**
Don't go far away, kids.

loro **Non si stanchino, signorine.**
Don't get tired, ladies.

noi **Non usciamo stasera, restiamo a casa.**
Let's not go out tonight, let's stay in.

When it comes to the present *indicative* forms, adding **non** doesn't make any real difference to the meaning of the request, except to try to sound more persuasive:

Non mi porti a cena?
Aren't you taking me to dinner?

Non andiamo al cinema?
Aren't we going to the cinema?

21.4 Written instructions and recipes**Instructions**

We often have to cope with written instructions, whether for recipes or tourist guides, instructions for household or other appliances, getting money out of an ATM or

cashpoint, or taking medicine. Being addressed to the non-specialist reader, these kinds of instructions are usually very simple in structure, with a series of short sentences (sometimes numbered), and simplified terminology often accompanied by illustrations.

Written instructions often use the infinitive form of the verb (see 2.3.1), rather than one of the imperative forms shown above, to convey a sense of impersonality both for the source (often an unnamed authority or expert) and for the target reader (the general public). Here is one example that uses the infinitive:

Al Bancomat

- 1 **Inserire la tessera**
- 2 **Digitare il codice personale**
- 3 **Digitare PRELIEVO**
- 4 **Scegliere la cifra desiderata**
- 5 **Premere CONFERMA**
- 6 **Ritirare il denaro**
- 7 **Ritirare la tessera**

At the cashpoint (ATM)

- 1 Insert your card
- 2 Key in your PIN
- 3 Press WITHDRAWAL
- 4 Select the amount required
- 5 Press CONFIRM
- 6 Take your money
- 7 Retrieve your card

Here is a second example, using the infinitive:

Annaffiare le piante

Quando è possibile usare acqua piovana.
In primavera e in autunno annaffiare al mattino.
In inverno annaffiare nel tardo mattino.
Non usare acqua eccessivamente fredda.
Dare sempre l'acqua gradualmente.
Assicurarsi che l'acqua non sia inquinata da sostanze nocive.

Watering plants

Whenever possible, use rainwater.
 In spring and autumn, water in the mornings.
 In winter, water late morning.
 Do not use excessively cold water.
 Always give water gradually.
 Ensure that the water is not contaminated by harmful substances.

In this third example, the instructions for using a manual pasta-making machine also use the infinitive:

Usando la macchina per la prima volta, pulirla perfettamente con un panno asciutto. Non usare acqua. Fissare la macchina al tavolo. Fare un

impasto di una certa consistenza. Introdurre dei pezzi d'impasto tra i rulli e girare lentamente la manovella.

When using the machine for the first time, clean it thoroughly with a dry cloth. Do not use water. Fix the machine to the table. Make a pasta dough of suitable consistency. Introduce pieces of pasta dough between the rollers and turn the handle slowly.

Recipes

For recipes too, instructions are often given using the infinitive, as in example A below. But the same recipe can be given using verbs in the voi ('you' plural) *imperative* form (see 2.3.22) in order to express a more informal and direct relationship with the reader, as in example B below.

Example A

LA RICETTA DI FRANCO

Pasta e fagioli

(per 4 persone)

Rosolare in 3 cucchiai di olio extra-vergine d'oliva mezza cipolla tritata finemente ed *aggiungere* 300 grammi di fagioli cannellini.

Bagnare con un litro di brodo, *aggiungere* due patate a pezzetti e *lasciare* cuocere per 15 minuti.

Quindi *cuocere* 200 gr. di pasta mista nella zuppa e *aggiustare* di sale e pepe.

In un pentolino a parte *friggere* una noce di burro con un rametto di rosmarino e uno spicchio d'aglio.

Prima della fine della cottura della pasta, *unire* alla zuppa il burro, dopo averlo filtrato, e 2 pomodori pelati, tagliati a pezzetti.

Buon appetito!

Example B

LA RICETTA DI FRANCO

Pasta e fagioli

(per 4 persone)

Rosolate in 3 cucchiai di olio extra-vergine d'oliva mezza cipolla tritata finemente ed *aggiungete* 300 grammi di fagioli cannellini.

Bagnate con un litro di brodo, *aggiungete* due patate a pezzetti e *lasciate* cuocere per 15 minuti.

Quindi *cuocete* 200 gr. di pasta mista nella zuppa e *aggiustate* di sale e pepe.

In un pentolino a parte *friggete* una noce di burro con un rametto di rosmarino e uno spicchio d'aglio.

Prima della fine della cottura della pasta, *unite* alla zuppa il burro, dopo averlo filtrato, e 2 pomodori pelati, tagliati a pezzetti.

Buon appetito!

FRANCO'S RECIPE

Pasta and bean soup

(for 4 people)

Sauté in 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil half an onion finely chopped and add 300 g of cannellini beans.

Moisten with a litre of stock, add two potatoes cut in pieces and leave to cook for 15 minutes.

Then cook 200 g of mixed pasta in the soup and adjust seasoning if necessary.

In a small separate pan, fry a knob of butter with a sprig of rosemary and a clove of garlic in it.

Before the pasta has finished cooking, add the butter, after straining it, to the soup, along with two peeled tomatoes cut in pieces.

Bon appetit!

Informal instructions

When giving instructions in an informal context (e.g. to friends) the **tu** form of address is used (see 8.2). In this example below, an informal travel guide uses the **tu** form of imperative (see 2.3.22).

VISITA ALLA SOLFATARA DI POZZUOLI

Parcheggia la macchina nel piazzale davanti all'ingresso. Dopo aver comprato il biglietto *attraversa* il campeggio e entra nell'area del cratere. *Attraversalo*'† tutto lungo il diametro centrale e poi *fa*'† un giro lungo il margine esterno. Potrai osservare accuratamente lo spettacolo infernale delle fumarole.

VISIT TO THE SOLFATARA IN POZZUOLI

Park the car in the area in front of the entrance. After buying the ticket, cross the car park and go in to the crater area. Walk all the way across the central part and then walk around the outside edge of it. You will be able to see the fiery spectacle of the 'fumarole' [smoke emissions].

NOTE

† Take note of the forms of the imperative of **fare** (see 2.3.23). Note too how the unstressed pronoun **lo** is attached to the **tu** imperative form **attraversa + lo** (see 3.4).

21.5 Asking someone to do something

An alternative to the imperative forms shown above is a strongly worded request (one that you expect to be met) using a verb such as **chiedere**, **volere**.

21.5.1 Chiedere with di

Chiedere can be linked to the action (*what* is being asked) by **di** followed by the verb in the infinitive (see also 4.4). The person *who* is being asked is expressed by a noun introduced by **a** or by an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2):

Bisogna chiedere agli studenti italiani di stare un po' più zitti.
We have to ask the Italian students to keep a little quieter.

Le chiedo di rispettare l'orario di lavoro.
I ask you to respect the working hours.

21.5.2 Chiedere with *che*

Chiedere can also be followed by **che** and the subjunctive (see 2.3.15):

Chiedo soltanto che Lei rispetti l'orario di lavoro.
I only ask that you respect the working hours.

21.5.3 Volere with *che*

Volere, like chiedere, can also be followed by **che** and the subjunctive. The present indicative **voglio** is used to make a strong request, while the present conditional **vorrei** sounds more polite. Note that the different tenses of the subjunctive depend on which tense of **volere** is used (see also 30.5.1):

Voglio che tu faccia uno sforzo per recuperare il tempo perso.
I want you to make an effort to recover the time lost.

Vorrei che tu facessi uno sforzo per recuperare il tempo perso.
I would like you to make an effort to recover the time lost.

21.6 Giving an order using 'command' verbs

More explicit command forms such as **comandare**, **ordinare**, as well as **dire**, can also be used, as an alternative to the imperative forms or the verbs shown above. Some/most take an indirect object, either a noun governed by **a** or an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2), and are followed by **di** and the verb infinitive (see 21.5.1 above):

I carabinieri hanno comandato ai mafiosi di uscire dalla casa.
The police commanded the Mafia men to come out from the house.

La padrona di casa ci ha ordinato di pulire le scale.
The landlady ordered us to clean the stairs.

Gli ho detto di sbrigarsi.
I told him to hurry up.

21.7 Far fare, lasciar fare construction

When asking someone to *do* something, we frequently use the verb **fare** 'to make' with another verb expressing the action you are making the person carry out. The person carrying out the action can be the direct *or* indirect object, expressed by a noun or pronoun (see 3.4.1–2):

When there is *no other object* in the sentence, the noun or pronoun is the direct object:

Faccio venire Isabella.
I'll call Isabella.

Abbiamo bisogno di Isabella. *La faccio venire.*

We need Isabella. I'll have her come.

Ha fatto entrare il poliziotto.

He let the policeman in.

In the example below, the second verb (**riparare**) also has an object (**il computer**), so the person (whether noun or pronoun) who is being made to do something (**il fidanzato di Giovanna**) becomes the *indirect* object:

Ho fatto riparare il computer al fidanzato di Giovanna.

I got Giovanna's boyfriend to repair the computer.

Gli ho fatto riparare il computer.

I got him to repair the computer.

Similarly, to allow someone to do something is expressed by **lasciar(e)** and another verb, with the person as direct object:

Sono tornati gli operai. Li lascio entrare?

The workmen are back. Shall I let them in?

Non lo lascia parlare.

She doesn't let him speak.

As with **fare** above, when there is a second direct object (**quel lavoro**) the person being asked to carry out the action (**mio marito**) becomes the *indirect* object. Both for **fare** and **lasciare**, the indirect pronoun can be either stressed **a lui** (see 3.3) or unstressed **gli** (see 3.4):

Ho lasciato fare quel lavoro a lui.

Gli ho lasciato fare quel lavoro.

I let him do that job.

Il capo ha fatto scrivere la relazione a me.

Il capo mi ha fatto scrivere la relazione.

The boss got me to write the report.

21.8 Using persuasion

Other ways of getting something done include invitation, encouragement, begging and gentle persuasion.

21.8.1 Using *invitare* 'to invite', *incoraggiare* 'to encourage'

These verbs use a direct object (person or pronoun) and a verb in the infinitive, linked by **a** (see 4.4):

Il preside invitò i ragazzi a riflettere sulle loro azioni.

The headmaster invited the boys to reflect on their actions.

Il mio supervisore mi ha incoraggiato a finire la mia tesi.

My supervisor encouraged me to finish my thesis.

21.8.2 Using *persuadere*, *convincere* ‘to persuade’

These verbs also use a direct object (person or pronoun) and a verb in the infinitive, linked by **a**:

Mio marito cerca di persuadermi *ad* andare in vacanza invece di finire il libro.

My husband is trying to persuade me to go on holiday instead of finishing the book.

Convincerò Donatella *a* cambiare idea.

I'll persuade Donatella to change her mind.

21.8.3 Using *pregare* ‘to beg’

Pregare uses a direct object (person or pronoun) and a verb in the infinitive, linked to it by **di**:

Il direttore *mi* pregò *di* sedermi.

The manager begged me to sit down.

Mia madre *ha* pregato *mia* sorella *di* rimanere ferma.

My mother begged my sister to stay still.

Signora, *La* prego *di* ricordarsi della patente.

Signora, please remember your driving licence.

21.9 Monologo

And finally, since imperative verb forms (see Chapter 2 and 21.2.2, 21.2.3 above) are quite commonly used in the relationship between adults and children, we reproduce two typical, if somewhat exaggerated, ‘conversations’ between a mother and a group of children, adapted from *Il libronuovo* (B. Reggiani and A. Salvatore, IGDA, Novara). The first takes place on the beach in summer, and the second (also reproduced in Chapter 40 as an example of informal communication) takes place in the winter, when the children are getting ready for school. The imperative forms are in **bold italic**, to help the reader identify them:

Mia moglie, d'estate, è così

Valentina, *spogliati*. Franco *non* buttarti in acqua vestito. Roberta *lascia* stare il secchiello e *togliti* le scarpe. Roberta *sta'* ferma, Franco *dov'è*? Franco *vieni* a spogliarti, Valentina *metti* il costumino a Lorenzo, Franco *dov'è*? Roberta, *vieni* qui, il bagno si fa più tardi! Franco, *dov'è* Franco? Valentina *acchiappa* Roberta che si butta in acqua! Franco, perché hai fatto il bagno? Lorenzino di mamma sua, non si mangia la sabbietta, brutta la sabbietta! Franco, non vedo più Franco! Franco! *Torna* indietro, sennò niente gelato! Valentina *corri* a prendere Franco. Roberta *non* ti *muovere*! Franco, *dov'è* Franco?

Valentina, get undressed. Franco, don't jump in the water with your clothes on. Roberta, leave the bucket alone and get your shoes off. Roberta keep still, where's Franco? Franco come and get undressed, Valentina put Lorenzo's costume on, where's Franco? Roberta, come here, you can go swimming later! Franco, where's Franco? Valentina grab hold of Roberta, she's jumping

in the water! Franco, why did you go swimming now? Lorenzino, mummy's treasure, you mustn't eat the sand, nasty sand! Franco, I can't see Franco any more! Franco! Come back, otherwise no ice cream! Valentina run and get Franco. Roberta don't move! Franco, where's Franco?

D'inverno, invece, è così

Valentina, svegliati, Roberta svegliati . . . Franco salta giù dal letto. Ragazzi sono le sette e cinque! Franco, presto, vai a fare la doccia. Valentina vestiti. Sono le sette e dieci! Ragazzi, il caffelatte è pronto! Franco hai fatto la doccia? Asciuga per terra. Roberta, perché piangi? Valentina, avanti, falle mettere la gonna gialla. Sono le sette e un quarto! Insomma, venite o no a prendere il caffelatte? Si sta freddando tutto! Roberta se piangi ancora vengo di là e ti ammazzo! Francooooooooo! Dov'è Franco? Roberta non piangere, vatti a pettinare invece. Sono le sette e mezzo. Perderete l'autobus. Ma dimmi tu che razza di figli!

Valentina, wake up, Roberta wake up . . . Franco get out of bed. Kids, its five past seven! Franco, quick, go and have a shower. Valentina get dressed. It's ten past seven! Kids, your *caffelatte* is ready! Franco, have you had a shower? Dry the floor. Roberta, why are you crying? Valentina, come on, let her put your yellow skirt on. It's quarter past seven! Come on, are you coming to have this *caffelatte* or not? It's all getting cold! Roberta if you keep on crying, I'll come over there and kill you! Francooooooooo! Where's Franco? Roberta don't cry, go and comb your hair, instead of crying. It's half past seven. You'll miss the bus. Honestly, tell me, what sort of kids have I got!

22

Permission and possibility

In English, the verb 'can' conveys many different meanings, for example: possibility, permission, ability or opportunity. A similar function is expressed in Italian by the verb **potere**, seen in several different situations below, but there are also many other ways of expressing possibility, which are illustrated below as well.

22.1 Asking or granting permission

22.1.1 Using *potere*

Posso andare in bagno?
Can I go to the bathroom?

Potete andare a giocare fuori, bambini.
You can go and play outside, kids.

Puoi lasciare qui la giacca, se vuoi.
You can leave your jacket here, if you want.

The examples illustrated above use the *present indicative* of **potere** 'to be able to' (see 2.2.4), but to formulate a request more politely, the *conditional* is often used:

Potrei andare in bagno?
Could I go to the bathroom?

22.1.2 Using *è possibile*

Potere can often be replaced by the impersonal expression **è possibile** followed immediately (without prepositions such as **di** or **a**) by a verb in the infinitive (see 32.4):

È possibile lasciare qui la giacca?
Is it possible to leave one's jacket here?

È possibile andare in bagno?
Is it possible to use the bathroom?

22.1.3 Using *permettere*

Another way of asking or granting (*someone*) permission (*to do something*) is to use the verb **permettere a (qualcuno) di (fare qualcosa)**. The person being allowed to do something, or not, is the indirect object of the verb **permettere** while the second verb, always in the infinitive, is linked by the preposition **di**.

La legge non *ci permette di* importare i prodotti direttamente dalla Cina.
The law does not allow us to import the products directly from China.

22.1.4 Granting permission, using *pure*

Pure, best translated by the English expression 'by all means', can be added to an imperative to imply not only permission, but encouragement to do something:

Posso dire qualcosa? Dica *pure!*

Can I say something? Go ahead, (speak) by all means.

Faccia *pure!*

Go ahead, do it! (Be my guest)

Prego! also invites someone to do what they have just requested:

Posso andare in bagno? *Prego, si accomodi.*

May I use the bathroom? Please, go ahead.

22.1.5 Asking permission *not* to do something

If you *don't* want to do something, use the verb **dovere** and the intensifier **proprio**:

***Devo proprio* andare a letto?**

Do I really have to go to bed?

22.2 Denying permission

22.2.1 Using *vietare* or *proibire*

Denying someone permission to do something uses a similar grammatical construction to allowing someone to do something (see 22.1.3): a verb, such as **vietare** or **proibire**, combined with a person (expressed by noun or indirect pronoun) and a verb in the infinitive, linked by **di**:

***Gli ho proibito di firmare* le lettere per conto mio.**

I have forbidden him to sign letters on my behalf.

***I bambini mi hanno proibito di mangiare* il loro cioccolato.**

The children have forbidden me to eat their chocolate.

***La polizia ha vietato ai non residenti di parcheggiare* in questa strada.**

The police have banned non-residents from parking in this street.

22.3 Speaking about the ability or opportunity to do something

22.3.1 Using *potere*

Potere expresses the ability or the opportunity to do something:

***Puoi* arrivare per le sette?**

Can you arrive by 7 o'clock?

***Potete* vedere ancora oggi la grotta dove viveva il santo.**

You can still see the cave where the saint lived.

Sometimes the verb **potere** is omitted, for example when the English 'can' means 'to be able to', especially when used with verbs of 'seeing, hearing, feeling':

Ci vedi?

Can you see? (lit. 'there')

Si sente la musica dal giardino?

Can one hear the music from the garden?

22.3.2 Using *è possibile*

Potere can be replaced by the impersonal expression **è possibile** (see 32.4):

È possibile prendere l'autobus per andare all'aeroporto?

Is it possible to get the bus to go to the airport?

A Malta, è possibile vedere le catacombe di San Paolo.

In Malta, it is possible to see the catacombs of Saint Paul.

22.3.3 Using *sapere*

The English 'can, to be able to' can very often be translated in Italian by the verb **sapere** (see 2.3.2), which does not express permission or possibility, but rather *knowledge* or *ability* to do something, referring to a learnt skill:

Sai nuotare?

Can you swim? (Do you know how to swim?)

Il direttore non sa parlare inglese, e quindi si deve rivolgere all'interprete.

The manager can't speak English, and so he has to use the interpreter.

The choice of **sapere** rather than **potere** changes the meaning of a phrase entirely:

Sai fare questo esercizio?

Do you know how to do this exercise?

Puoi fare questo esercizio?

Can you do this exercise? (i.e. do you have time or energy to do it?)

22.3.4 Using *essere in grado di*

The expression **essere in grado di** implies the meaning 'to be up to' or 'to be fit to':

Non è in grado di gestire l'ufficio da solo.

He's not up to managing the office on his own.

Non eravamo in grado di prendere una tale decisione.

We weren't able to take such a decision.

22.4 Making a request

22.4.1 Using *potere*

Either the present or the conditional of **potere** can be used:

Può indicarmi la fermata del tram?

Can you show me the tram stop?

Potrebbe aiutarmi a portare giù i bagagli, per favore?
 Could you help me to take the luggage down, please?

22.4.2 Using *si può, è possibile*

A more formal or general request, not necessarily referring to one specific person, is sometimes expressed using the impersonal form **si può** 'one can'/'can one?' or again **è possibile**:

Si può prenotare?
 Can one book?

Si può partire adesso?
 Can one (we) go now?

È possibile prenotare?
 Is it possible to book?

È possibile telefonare in Inghilterra?
 Is it possible to phone England?

22.4.3 Using *Le/ti/vi dispiace*

A more formal or polite request can be expressed by the verb **(Le) dispiace/dispiacerebbe se** or **(Le) dispiace** + infinitive (see 21.2.1–2), both used with the appropriate indirect pronoun:

Le dispiace se fumo?
 Do you mind if I smoke?

Le dispiacerebbe aprire la finestra?
 Would you mind opening the window?

Ti dispiace se vado via un po' prima?
 Do you mind if I leave a little earlier?

Ti dispiace darmi una mano?
 Would you mind giving me a hand?

Vi dispiace aspettare cinque minuti?
 Would you mind waiting five minutes?

23

Expressing need, obligation or desire

23.1 Need or want

Sometimes in Italian, as in other languages, there is little to distinguish a *desire*, expressed by the verb **volere**, from a *need*, expressed by the phrase **aver bisogno di** (or similar expression):

Ho bisogno di un caffè./Voglio un caffè.
I need a coffee./I want a coffee.

23.2 Expressing wants

23.2.1 Using *volere*

The verb **volere** (see 2.2.4) can be used both with a noun (something or someone you want) and with a verb (something you want to do):

Gli operai vogliono un aumento di stipendio.
The workmen want a wage increase.

Volete parlare del contratto?
Do you want to talk about the contract?

Vuoi andare a cena?
Do you want to go to dinner?

Vuoi una mano?
Do you want a hand?

Using the *present indicative* form of **volere** can sometimes sound rather demanding, or even discourteous, especially in the first person 'I':

Voglio un francobollo.
I want a stamp.

Il direttore vuole parlarLe.
The manager wants to speak to you.

A request or wish can be expressed less urgently and more politely by using the *conditional* (see 2.3.12) rather than the present indicative of **volere**:

Vorrei due biglietti per stasera, per favore.
I would like two tickets for tonight, please.

La signora Giannini vorrebbe parlarLe.
Signora Giannini would like to speak to you.

Vorrei un appuntamento per domani.
I would like an appointment for tomorrow.

23.2.2 Using *aver voglia di*

Another way of expressing 'want' is the phrase **aver voglia di**, used either with a *verb* or a *noun*:

Gli studenti avevano voglia di andare a casa.
The students wanted to go home.

Non ha voglia di scherzare.
He's not in the mood for joking.

Ho voglia di un gelato.
I fancy an ice cream.

It can also be expressed using the *imperfect* (see 2.3.6):

Volevo prenotare un posto per domani sera.
I wanted to book a seat for tomorrow evening.

23.2.3 Using *mi va*

A very idiomatic way of saying what you want to do or feel like doing is to use the verb **andare** (see 2.3.3) and an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2), either with a *noun* or with a *verb infinitive*, linked by **di**:

Ti va un gelato?
Do you fancy an ice cream?

Non mi vanno queste domande.
I don't like these questions.

Ti va di mangiare la pizza?
Do you feel like (having) a pizza?

Non gli andava di seguire le mie istruzioni.
He didn't want to follow my instructions.

23.2.4 Using *me la sento*

Another idiomatic way to say what you feel like doing is **sentirsela** (the verb **sentire** with a reflexive pronoun and the pronoun **la**, here invariable); again it can be linked to a verb infinitive by **di**:

Faccio i compiti domani. Non me la sento stasera.
I'll do my homework tomorrow. I don't feel like it tonight.

When the compound perfect is used, the past participle agrees with the **la** (see 2.3.28):

I ragazzi non se la sono sentiti di assumere la responsabilità.
The boys didn't feel up to taking on the responsibility.

23.2.5 Making a request in a shop

One of the most common ways of requesting something in a shop or restaurant is to use the conditional form **Vorrei** as seen above, or else the question form **Mi dà . . . ?** 'Please give me . . .?':

Mi dà un pacchetto di Marlboro, per favore?
Would you give me a packet of Marlboro, please?

23.3 Expressing needs

23.3.1 Using *bisogna*

The verb **bisogna** 'it is necessary' can be used with a verb infinitive, or with **che** and subjunctive. This verb is generally used only in the third person singular and only in certain moods/tenses: present (**bisogna**), imperfect (**bisognava**), future (**bisognerà**) and conditional (**bisognerebbe**):

Bisogna farlo subito.
One must do it straightaway. (It must be done straightaway.)

Bisognava vedere qual era la soluzione migliore.
One had to see what the best solution was.

Bisognerebbe che loro capissero la situazione.
They would have to understand the situation.

23.3.2 Using *aver bisogno di*

The phrase **aver bisogno di** 'to have need of' can be used with either a noun or a verb infinitive:

Ho bisogno di tempo per studiare.
I need time to study.

Avete bisogno di me?
Do you need me?

Aveva bisogno di riposare.
He needed to rest.

23.3.3 Using *c'è bisogno*

The phrase **c'è bisogno di** 'there is need of' can be used with a noun (object or person), a verb infinitive linked by **di**, or **che** + subjunctive:

Ci sarà bisogno di un interprete. Il direttore parla solo italiano.
We will need an interpreter. The manager only speaks Italian.

Non c'era bisogno di spiegare. Avevamo già capito.
There wasn't any need to explain. We had already understood.

Non c'è bisogno che Lei mi accompagni. Penso di trovare l'ufficio senza problemi.
There's no need for you to accompany me. I think I can find the office without any problem.

23.3.4 Using *dovere*

The verb **dovere** 'to have to' (see 2.2.4) expresses a personal obligation as well as a need:

Devo prendere il treno delle 5.00 per arrivare in tempo per la riunione.
I have to get the 5.00 train to arrive in time for the meeting.

Gli studenti *devono* impegnarsi di più.
The students must make more of an effort.

Used in the conditional, it expresses what one *ought* to do, rather than what one *must* do:

Dovremmo organizzare la prossima riunione prima di Natale.
We ought to organise the next meeting before Christmas.

23.3.5 Using *servire, occorrere*

To express *need*, the verbs **servire** (see 18.4.4) and **occorrere** are used. Both these verbs are most commonly found in their third person forms (**serve, servono; occorre, occorrono**) in a similar way to **piacere**. The person needing something is expressed by an indirect pronoun ('to me, to you'), while the object needed is the grammatical subject:

Mi serve un cacciavite.
I need a screwdriver.

Quanti fogli ti servono?
How many sheets do you need?

Occorrono sei uova.
Six eggs are needed.

Both verbs are also used *impersonally* (meaning 'it is necessary') followed by a verb infinitive, or by **che** + subjunctive (see 2.3.14). **Occorrere** tends to be used in more formal contexts, while **servire** is more widely used:

Occorre controllare prima di consegnare la traduzione.
You/one should check before handing in the translation.

Occorre che lei mi dia un documento.
She has to give me a document.

Non mi serve imparare l'italiano.
It's not much use to me learning Italian.

When used impersonally, as here, both **servire** and **occorrere** can be replaced by the phrase **è necessario**.

24

Suggesting, proposing, advising and recommending

24.1 Giving advice

There are lots of ways of giving advice, some formal, some informal. Advice can range from encouragement or a recommendation to a firm order or warning. Here we look at some ways of expressing these functions in Italian.

24.1.1 Using *consigliare*

In the act of advising or recommending, there are usually two people involved: the person giving advice and the person receiving it. **Consigliare** is most commonly used with an indirect object (see 18.4.3), denoting the person receiving the advice, governed by **a** when necessary, and linked by **di** to the verb that follows:

Gli addetti consolari consigliavano *agli* italiani *di* lasciare il paese al più presto possibile.

The consular officials were advising Italians to leave the country as soon as possible.

Sometimes the person (people) receiving advice is represented by a *pronoun*, normally an unstressed *indirect* object pronoun such as **mi**, **ti**, **gli** (see 3.4.2):

Gli addetti consolari *gli* consigliavano *di* lasciare il paese al più presto.

The consular officials were advising them to leave the country as soon as possible.

Mia madre *mi* ha consigliato *di* sposare un inglese.

My mother advised me to marry an Englishman.

Occasionally there might be a reason to emphasise the person who is receiving the advice, or contrast him/her with another person; in this case the emphatic stressed forms of indirect object pronouns **a me**, **a te**, **a lui**, etc. (see 3.3.2) are used:

Mia madre ha consigliato *a me* *di* sposare un inglese, *ma a mio fratello di* sposare un'italiana!

My mother advised me to marry an Englishman, but (advised) my brother to marry an Italian girl!

The verb **consigliare** is not only used with a verb but also with a *noun direct object* (the thing being advised or recommended), with the meaning 'to recommend' or 'to advise':

Mi può consigliare un buon ristorante?
Can you recommend (to me) a good restaurant?

I nostri avvocati hanno consigliato la massima cautela.
Our lawyers advised the utmost caution.

24.1.2 Using *raccomandare*

Raccomandare is almost synonymous with **consigliare** and can be used in a similar way, i.e. with a person or personal pronoun as indirect object and followed by a verb infinitive linked by **di**:

Mi ha raccomandato di andare a parlare con il contabile.
He advised me to go and speak to the accountant.

Like **consigliare**, it can also be used with a person as indirect object (**gli**) and a noun as direct object (**prudenza**) as below:

Gli hanno raccomandato prudenza.
They advised him to be prudent.

24.1.3 Using *raccomandarsi*

Raccomandarsi is difficult to translate. Used by the parents of toddlers and teenagers throughout Italy, it means something like 'If you don't do what you're told . . .', or else 'I'm warning you' or 'Listen to me'. It is used either:

(a) With the imperative (but not dependent on it):

Mi raccomando, non fate tardi!
Listen to me, don't be late!

(b) Directly followed by **di** + verb infinitive:

Si è raccomandato di fare attenzione.
He warned (them) to be careful.

Note: This verb should not be confused with the phrase **dare/fare una raccomandazione** or with the verb **raccomandare**, both of which have come to mean 'recommending someone for a job'.

24.2 Making or receiving a suggestion

24.2.1 Using *suggerire*

The verb **suggerire** can be used in a similar way to **consigliare**. Again in most cases the person giving advice is the grammatical *subject* of the verb **suggerire**, the person receiving it is the *indirect object* (preceded if necessary by **a**), while any verb following is in the infinitive, linked by **di**:

Le compagnie aeree suggeriscono ai passeggeri di non portare troppi bagagli a mano.
The airlines suggest to passengers that they should not bring too much hand luggage.

Again, the person or persons receiving advice is/are represented by *indirect object pronouns*, either:

- (a) By the *unstressed* forms **mi**, **ti**, **gli**, etc. (see 3.4.2):

Il suo capo le ha suggerito di fare una breve pausa.

Her boss suggested she take a short break.

L'impiegata ci ha suggerito di prenotare subito il traghetto per la Sardegna, perché non c'erano tanti posti disponibili.

The sales assistant suggested we should book the ferry for Sardinia straightaway because there weren't many places left.

- (b) By the *stressed (emphatic)* forms **a me**, **a te**, **a lui**, etc. (see 3.3.2):

Il capo ha suggerito a lei di fare una breve pausa, ma ha detto agli altri di continuare a lavorare.

The boss told her to have a short break but he told the others to carry on working.

24.2.2 Consigliare, suggerire + subjunctive

Both *consigliare* and *suggerire* can be used with **che** + subjunctive (see 2.3.15):

La consulente ha consigliato che il direttore si informasse sul mercato prima di lanciare il nuovo prodotto.

The consultant advised the director to find out about the market before launching the new product.

Il capo ha suggerito che lei facesse una breve pausa.

The boss suggested she have a short break.

24.2.3 Using proporre

The verb *proporre* 'to propose, to suggest' can be used with two slightly different meanings:

- (a) When someone suggests that he/she and others do something together (using a similar structure to *consigliare*, *suggerire* in 24.2.2):

Antonio mi ha proposto di fare una passeggiata lungo il fiume.

Antonio suggested (to me) taking a walk along the river.

Vorrei proporre agli azionisti di accettare l'offerta.

I would like to suggest to the shareholders that they accept the offer.

- (b) When someone or something else is involved (using **che** + subjunctive):

Propongo che l'ufficio rimanga chiuso per due giorni prima dell'ispezione.

I propose that the office stays closed for two days before the inspection.

24.2.4 Using dire

The verb *dire* 'to say' can be used to give advice. It is most commonly used in the present conditional (e.g. the first person singular *direi*) and can be followed either by **di** and the infinitive or by **che** and the subjunctive.

Ti direi di portare l'impermeabile.

I would say (to you) to take a raincoat.

Direi che sia meglio rinviare a domani.

I would say that it is better to postpone until tomorrow.

Direi che Giovanni debba impegnarsi di più.

I would say that Giovanni needs to show more commitment.

24.3 More expressions of advising or suggesting

24.3.1 Giving or asking for advice using *dare indicazioni*, *dare suggerimenti*

The expression **dare un'indicazione** means to give advice or information, usually on one particular thing; **un'indicazione** is one piece of advice, whereas **delle indicazioni** and **qualche indicazione** (both meaning literally 'some information') mean advice in general:

Vorrei trovare un albergo vicino al centro. Mi può dare qualche indicazione?

I would like to find a hotel near the centre. Can you give me some suggestions?

Il mio collega mi ha dato delle indicazioni per il congresso.

My colleague gave me some suggestions for the conference.

Almost synonymous are **dare suggerimenti/un suggerimento** and **dare consigli/un consiglio**:

Mi daresti un consiglio per arredare questa stanza?

Would you give me advice for furnishing this room?

24.3.2 Giving advice using *fare una proposta*

The phrase **fare una proposta**, depending on the context, can mean either a business proposition or similar. Occasionally, it can also mean a proposal of a different kind:

L'azienda aveva delle difficoltà economiche, e il direttore ha fatto una proposta di riorganizzazione finanziaria all'assemblea generale.

The company had some economic difficulties and the director made a proposal for financial reorganisation at the general meeting.

Preferirei non stare nello stesso albergo di lui. L'altra volta mi ha fatto una proposta.

I would prefer not to stay in the same hotel as him. The last time he propositioned me.

24.3.3 Giving advice stressing a personal point of view

In spoken Italian, advice is often preceded by the expression **Se (io) fossi in te** ('If I were you'):

Se io fossi in te, farei la domanda per aver quel posto a Milano.

If I were you, I would apply for that post in Milan.

The same thing can be expressed more plainly and less emphatically:

Per me, è pericoloso.

(If you want to know what I think) it's dangerous.

Secondo te, non dovrei chiedere un aumento di stipendio?

In your opinion, shouldn't I ask for a rise?

(See also 27.1 Expressing an opinion.)

24.4 Advising someone not to do something, giving a warning

When advising someone *not* to do something, use **avvertire**. With this verb, the person being warned or advised is the *direct* object:

Il portiere mi ha avvertito che l'acqua non è potabile.

The porter warned me that the water is not drinkable.

La maestra dovrebbe avvertire i ragazzi che domani non c'è scuola.

The teacher should warn the children that tomorrow there is no school.

Warning people to be careful, use **stare attento**:

Gli operai dicono al pubblico di stare attenti a non cadere.

The workmen are telling the public to be careful not to fall.

Note: In the example above, the adjective is plural (**attenti**) because **il pubblico** is a collective noun (see 1.2.2).

Or use **Attenzione!**:

Attenzione a non bruciare la cravatta con la candela.

Watch you don't burn your tie on the candle.

Or **fare attenzione**:

Faccia attenzione al semaforo.

Look out for the traffic light.

Or **stare attento**:

State attenti a non cadere.

Be careful you don't fall.

24.5 Asking for advice

All the verbs seen above can be used to *ask for* advice:

Cosa mi consiglia di fare?

What do you advise me to do?

And:

Cosa faccio?

What shall I do? (lit. 'What do I do?')

Cosa devo fare?

What shall I do? (lit. 'What must I do?')

Secondo te, *cosa dovrei fare?*

In your opinion, what should I do?

24.6 Other ways of making suggestions

Another way to propose something for yourself and others is to use **perché non?**:

Perché non facciamo una gita in montagna?

Why don't we take a trip into the mountains?

Or an imperative verb form:

Vieni a prendere un caffè a casa mia!

Come and have a coffee at my house!

24.7 Using *conviene*

The impersonal verb **conviene** 'it is advisable, better/best to' is used with an indirect object pronoun:

Ti conviene prendere l'autostrada. Non ti conviene prendere le strade secondarie.

You would be best to take the motorway. It isn't advisable for you to take the secondary roads.

Section III

**Expressing emotions,
feelings, attitudes and
opinions**

25

Expressing emotions: positive, negative, neutral

25.1 Introduction

The ways in which emotion can be expressed vary from straightforward *vocal interjections* (brief utterances) **Ah, oh, ahimé** to *exclamations* **Che bello!** 'That's lovely!' or **Quanto mi piace!** 'I like him so much!' through to more *complex statements*, for example **Mi dispiace che tu abbia avuto questi problemi** 'I'm sorry that you've had these problems'.

Here are some of the ways in which we use language to express emotion in Italian:

25.2 Interjections (positive, negative, neutral)

Emotions can often be conveyed with very simple utterances, which have no specific meaning in themselves, but can be inserted at any point in the conversation and can express a variety of emotions according to the context. These include:

Simple vowel sounds, in general expressing surprise, amazement, shock or horror

Ah! Oh! Eh! Uh!

Sounds indicating doubt, uncertainty

Boh!

Di chi è questa macchina? Boh!

Whose car is this? Who knows?

Expressing perplexity and sometimes exasperation

Mah!

Mah! Chissa come andra a finire!

Well, I don't know! Who knows how it will end up!

Expressing embarrassment

Ehm!

Expressing doubt but sounding almost challenging

Beh! Cosa volete?

So? What do you want?

Painful feelings (physical or psychological)

Ahi!

Ahimè!

Ohimè!

Ahi! Mi sono scottato!

Ouch! I've burnt myself!

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello,

Alas, Italy enslaved, wherein dwells grief, (Dante *Purgatorio* VI, 76)

Ahimè è finito il vino!

Oh no, the wine is finished! (lit. 'Alas!')

Boredom, impatience, irritation

Uffa! Non ce la faccio più!

(. . .) I can't stand it any longer! (No real translation in English)

25.3 Expressing positive emotions

25.3.1 Exclamations

Common adjectives (see 1.4), sometimes accompanying nouns, can be used to form exclamations, expressing for example *pleasure, admiration, enthusiasm, approval, gratitude*. Obviously there is a whole range of adjectives which can be used, though only a few are shown here:

Bello!	Beautiful!	Buon'idea!	Good idea!
Bravo! Bravissimo!	Well done!	Eccellente!	Excellent!
Eccezionale!	Exceptional!	Fantastico!	Fantastic!
Magnifico!	Magnificent!	Ottimo!	Very good!
Ottima idea!	Wonderful idea!	Perfetto!	Perfect!
Stupendo!	Wonderful!		

Adjectives can be used with the verb **essere** to convey positive feelings about someone or something:

È magnifico!

It's magnificent!

È un regalo stupendo!

It's a splendid present!

Both adjectives and nouns can be used in combination with **che**:

Che bel bambino!

What a beautiful child!

Che bellezza!

How wonderful! (approximate translation)

Che bello!

How nice! How lovely!

Che bravo!

How clever!

Che buono!

How good!

Che gioia!

How wonderful! (approximate translation)

Che piacere!

How nice!

Che serata perfetta!

What a perfect evening!

Adjectives can also be used in combination with **quanto** or **come** (see 6.2.2–4):

Quant'è bravo quello studente!

How clever that student is!

Come sei furbo!

How crafty you are!

Another positive sounding exclamation, which is untranslatable but expresses admiration as well as amazement, is:

Caspita!

25.3.2 Satisfaction, admiration, happiness, pleasure

Essere, rimanere

The verbs **essere** and **rimanere** can both be used with a past participle or adjective to express feelings or reactions:

Il direttore era molto soddisfatto del mio lavoro.

The manager was very satisfied with my work.

Siamo rimasti veramente delusi della nostra esperienza.

We were really disappointed by our experience.

Sei rimasta contenta dei voti che hai preso?

Were you happy with the marks you got?

I ragazzi erano contenti dei regali che gli ho portato dagli USA.

The kids were pleased with the presents I brought them from the USA.

Contento, felice, soddisfatto

The adjectives **contento/felice/soddisfatto** can either be followed by **di** and the verb infinitive (see 2.3.1), or by **che** and, normally, the subjunctive (see 2.3.14), when used in a more formal context:

Era contento di venire con voi.

He was happy to come with you.

Sono contento che vieni anche tu stasera.

I'm happy you're coming too tonight.

Sono felice che Lei possa venire alla conferenza.

I'm glad you can come to the talk.

Gli studenti erano soddisfatti di aver superato gli esami.

The students were satisfied at having got through the exams.

Fare piacere

The phrase **fare piacere**, literally 'to make pleasure for someone' can be used with a noun, a verb infinitive or **che** and the subjunctive, in each case acting as the subject of the verb. The person affected by the event or action (here shown in italics) is indicated by a noun, a name (with **a**), or an *indirect* object pronoun (see 3.4.2):

Questa notizia farà molto piacere a Marco. (subject: *Questa notizia*)

This news will make Marco very happy.

Gli ha fatto piacere sentire le tue notizie. (subject: *sentire le tue notizie*)

He was happy to hear your news.

Ci fa piacere che i ragazzi stiano tutti bene.

(subject: *che i ragazzi stiano bene*)

We're happy that the kids are all well.

See also 28.2.

25.3.3 Approval, appreciation, gratitude

Simple phrases

D'accordo!

Agreed!

(Va) Bene!

All right!

Benissimo!

Very good!

Giusto!

Right!

Certo!

Sure!

Esatto!

Precisely!

Chiaro!

Of course!

Sono trenta euro. Va bene così? Sì, va bene.

That's thirty euro. Is that all right? Yes, fine.

For more examples, see 27.2.1.

Fare bene

The phrase **fare bene** addressed to someone expresses satisfaction or approval with their action:

Hai fatto bene a dirmelo.

You did well to tell me.

Daniela ha fatto bene a scegliere l'Università di Viterbo.

Daniela did well to choose the University of Viterbo.

25.3.4 Relief

Meno male!

Just as well

Grazie al cielo!

Thank Heavens!

Per fortuna!

Luckily!

Meno male che tu ti sei informato.

Just as well that you took the trouble to find out.

Per fortuna è arrivato subito il medico.

Luckily the doctor arrived straightaway.

25.3.5 Pity

Pity for others is conveyed by **fare pena** or **far pietà**:

Questi bambini mi fanno pena.

I feel sorry for these children.

Faceva pena vedere i mendicanti per la strada.

It was pitiful to see the beggars on the street.

I profughi fanno pietà a tutti.

Everyone feels sorry for refugees.

The exclamation **Poveretto!** also expresses pity, as does the adjective **povero** used with a noun or pronoun:

La professoressa ha lavorato anche durante l'intervallo. Poveretta!

The teacher worked during the break as well. Poor thing!

Povero Mario, gli va tutto storto.

Poor Mario, everything goes wrong for him.

Povero me! Devo preparare due conferenze in una settimana.

Poor me! I have to prepare two talks in a week.

25.3.6 Support

Evviva!

Hooray!

Viva . . .!

Long live . . .!

25.3.7 Trust

Phrases conveying trust include: **avere fiducia (in), fidarsi (di):**

Mi posso fidare di lui?

Can I trust him?

Non hai fiducia in me.

You don't have any confidence in me.

25.3.8 Interest or enthusiasm

Ti interessa il tuo lavoro?

Does your work interest you?

Gli studenti non sono interessati alla politica.

The students are not interested in politics.

Alfredo non si è mai interessato del corso.

Alfredo never cared about the course.

Sono interessanti i lavori di quest'artista, ma non mi piacciono.

The works of this artist are interesting, but I don't like them.

I turisti sono sempre entusiasti di Venezia.

Tourists are always enthusiastic about Venice.

Dopo un mese mi sono veramente entusiasmata del mio lavoro.

After a month I got really enthusiastic about my work.

Bisogna essere motivati per fare il dottorato di ricerca.

You have to be motivated to do a Ph.D.

Gianni e Luisa sono appassionati di mobili antichi.

Gianni and Luisa are passionate about antique furniture.

25.4 Expressing negative emotions

25.4.1 Regret, sorrow, unhappiness

Purtroppo expresses regret at a fact:

Purtroppo il treno è in ritardo.

Unfortunately the train is late.

The verb **dispiacere** (see 28.3) can be used with an indirect object noun or pronoun, indicating the person who is expressing regret. It is normally followed by **che** and the subjunctive in formal language:

Ci dispiace che tu non abbia avuto il posto.

We're sorry that you didn't get the job.

Mi dispiace che tu la pensi così.

I'm sorry you feel like that.

You can also use the expression (**È un**) **peccato che**, again followed by the indicative in informal conversation but the subjunctive in formal language:

Peccato che voi dovete studiare.

Pity (shame) you have to study!

È un peccato che i suoi genitori abitino così lontano.

It's a pity (shame) that her parents live so far away.

25.4.2 Desperation

Sono disperata, è partito il mio fidanzato per un viaggio di sei mesi.

I'm in despair, my fiancé has left for a six month long journey.

Non so più come fare. Non ce la faccio più.

I don't know what to do. I can't go on.

25.4.3 Disappointment

Simple expressions of disappointment include:

Che delusione!

How disappointing!

Che disastro!

What a disaster!

Per amor del cielo!

Heaven forbid!

Deludere is the verb used when we want to articulate this feeling more clearly:

Sono veramente delusa del tuo comportamento.

I'm really disappointed with your behaviour.

Mi hai proprio deluso.

You've really disappointed me.

The verb **dispiacere**, seen above, can also be used to express disappointment:

Sono proprio dispiaciuto che i nostri amici non siano (sono) venuti.

I'm really upset that our friends didn't come.

Che dispiacere mi ha fatto vederlo così mal ridotto!

What a disappointment to see him in such a bad shape!

25.4.4 Dissatisfaction

Expressions of dissatisfaction include:

Così non va bene.

That won't do.

Il tuo supervisore non è molto soddisfatto del tuo lavoro.

Your supervisor isn't very satisfied with your work.

A volte i clienti *rimangono insoddisfatti* della qualità del prodotto.
Sometimes customers are dissatisfied with the quality of the product.

25.4.5 Disapproval, disagreement

Expressions of disapproval include **non . . . approvare, essere contrario, fare male a:**

Sono contrario all'idea di andare al mare solo per la giornata.

I'm against the idea of going to the seaside just for the day.

Hai fatto male a scegliere Giurisprudenza.

You made a mistake choosing law.

Further expressions of disagreement are shown in 27.2.2.

25.4.6 Irritation, annoyance, displeasure

Irritation, annoyance or displeasure can be expressed in many different ways:

Non *mi piace* il tuo comportamento.

I don't like your behaviour.

Basta!

That's enough!

Non *mi va*!

I don't like it!

Il mio amico era proprio *seccato* con me.

My boyfriend was really fed up with me.

Se mia madre venisse a sapere, sarebbe *furiosa*.

If my mother were to find out, she would be furious.

I professori sono *furibondi* con gli studenti che non hanno partecipato al seminario.

The lecturers are furious with the students who didn't take part in the seminar.

Quando ha saputo della macchina, è *andato su tutte le furie*.

When he found out about the car, he went wild.

25.4.7 Boredom

Boredom is expressed by words such as **noioso, noia:**

È un libro veramente *noioso*.

It's a really boring book.

È *noioso* imparare i verbi irregolari.

It's boring learning irregular verbs.

Che *noia*!

What a bore!

Other more colloquial expressions include:

Che *barba*!

What a bore!

Che *palle*! (rather vulgar)

What a bore!

25.4.8 Anger

Anger can be conveyed with stronger language such as these interjections. These sorts of words do not always have an exact translation:

Mannaggia!

Accidenti!

Porca miseria!

There is an infinite variety of curses and swear words used by Italians of different age groups and different regions and dialects. We leave it to the reader to investigate further. Less harsh but more explicit ways of expressing anger include:

Che rabbia!

That's really infuriating!

Che nervi!

It gets on my nerves!

Mi fa una rabbia pensare che ha vinto lui invece di me.

It makes me angry to think that he won instead of me.

Le fanno venire i nervi tutti questi spostamenti.

All these moves get on her nerves.

25.4.9 Antipathy, hostility

Again a variety of idiomatic expressions can be used to represent the speaker's antipathy towards somebody.

Mild dislike can be expressed thus:

Non mi piacevano gli amici di mia madre.

I didn't like my mother's friends.

Non ci va il nuovo preside.

We don't like the new headmaster.

Alfredo le è sempre stato antipatico.

She's always disliked Alfredo.

Non lo trovi un po' antipatico?

Don't you find him rather unlikeable?

Se viene Caterina, io non vengo. Non la sopporto.

If Caterina is coming, I'm not coming. I can't stand her.

See also 28.3.

Speakers can express hostility by cursing someone:

Al diavolo!

To hell!

Va al diavolo!

Go to hell!

Che gli venga un accidente!

Damn him!

Other more picturesque or violent ways to express hostility are left to individual preferences and creative fantasy.

Sei proprio antipatico. Vattene.

You're really horrible. Go away.

Leonardo è una persona molto aggressiva.

Leonardo is a really aggressive person.

A volte gli inglesi possono sembrare addirittura ostili.

Sometimes the English can actually seem hostile.

When a certain degree of courtesy and formality is needed, the following might come in useful:

Per favore, mi lasci in pace. Si accomodi fuori!

Please, leave me alone. Leave the room now.

25.4.10 Disgust

Disgust is usually conveyed by the following expressions, rather informal and vulgar, but very common:

Che schifo! Mi fa schifo!

Disgusting! I'm disgusted! It makes me sick.

Mi fa schifo dover lavorare con gente del genere!

It makes me sick having to work with this sort of people!

Questi episodi di razzismo fanno schifo.

These episodes of racism are sickening.

25.5 Expressing neutral emotions

25.5.1 Indifference

Ways of expressing indifference to a person, object or proposal include the following:

A me non interessa se vieni o no. Fai come vuoi.

I don't care if you come or not. Do what you want.

Se per te è uguale, partiamo il 15 dicembre.

If it's all the same for you, we'll leave on the 15th December.

Scegli quello che vuoi, tanto per me è lo stesso.

Choose what you want, it's all the same for me anyway.

Fa lo stesso se viaggiamo in treno o in macchina.

It's the same whether we travel by train or by car.

Che lui venga o no per me fa lo stesso.

Whether he comes or not, it's the same for me.

Non importa se finisci l'esercizio o no.

It doesn't matter if you finish the exercise or not.

Non mi importa niente della tua vita personale.

I don't care about your personal life.

I voti che danno i professori non importano a nessuno.

The marks the teachers give don't matter to anyone.

Scusa, che t'importa di quello che dice lui?

Excuse me, what do you care about what he says?

Mangiamo dove vuoi tu, per me è indifferente.

Let's eat where you want, for me it's the same.

Quello che pensano loro *non mi interessa.*

I don't care what they think.

To express straightforward indifference without mentioning the object of our indifference, we can say:

Non me ne importa niente.

I don't care a bit about it.

Non ha importanza.

It doesn't matter.

Non fa nessuna differenza.

It doesn't make any difference.

The *lack* of positive qualities such as interest and enthusiasm (see 25.3.8) can also convey indifference:

Gli *manca proprio l'entusiasmo.*

He's really lacking enthusiasm.

Non *ha interesse (nel suo lavoro).*

He has no interest (in his work).

Gli studenti *sono poco motivati.*

The students are not very motivated.

Or, more forcefully:

Non gliene frega niente. (informal)

He couldn't give a damn.

Chi se ne frega? (informal, slightly vulgar)

Who cares?

In the expression **non mi importa niente**, **niente** can be replaced by **un corno/un fico (secco)**, both very colloquial expressions:

Non me ne importa un fico (secco).

I don't care a (dried) fig. (lit.)

25.5.2 Resignation

When you are resigned to a situation, or feel you can do little about it:

Pazienza!

Never mind! (lit. 'Patience!')

Non importa!

It doesn't matter.

Mi dispiace, sono finite le lasagne.

Sorry, the lasagne is finished.

Fa lo stesso. Prendo i tortellini.

It doesn't matter. I'll have the tortellini.

Non c'è niente da fare.

There's nothing to be done.

Cosa vuoi! Hanno sedici anni.

What do you expect? They're sixteen years old.

25.5.3 **Puzzlement, perplexity**

Cosa faccio?
What shall I do?

Non so (più) cosa fare.
I don't know what to do (now).

25.6 **Expressing positive and/or negative emotions**

Expressions which are not neutral, but instead can express *either* positive or negative emotions according to the context are shown below.

25.6.1 **Surprise, shock, amazement**

Che sorpresa!
What a surprise!

Che brutta sorpresa!
What a horrible surprise!

Davvero?
Really?

Mamma mia!
(untranslatable)

Perbacco!
(untranslatable)

Che bella sorpresa!
What a nice surprise!

Nooo!
No!

Veramente?
Really?

Non ci credo!
I don't believe it!

Two expressions of amazement, both untranslatable, used particularly in the north of Italy are:

Perdinci!
Perdiana!

25.6.2 **Patience, impatience, expectation**

Pazienza!
Have patience!

(See also 25.5.2 Resignation.)

Non vedo l'ora di finire questo libro!
I can't wait to finish this book!

I bambini non vedono l'ora di andare in vacanza.
The children can't wait to go on holiday.

26

Expressing emotions: hope, fear, doubt

26.1 Introduction

Hope, fear and doubt are emotions frequently expressed. Like the other subjective utterances, they are often represented by a verb construction requiring the subjunctive (see 2.3.14).

26.2 Expressing hope

26.2.1 *Sperare*

The verb **sperare** is used to express 'hope', followed either by **di** and a verb infinitive (see 2.3.1) or by **che** and the subjunctive.

The construction **di** + verb infinitive can only be used where the subject or implied subject is the same in both parts of the sentence (*I hope that I will see you tomorrow*):

Spero di vederti domani.

I hope to see you tomorrow.

Otherwise, when the two verbs have a different subject (*I hope that your mother feels better now*), the construction **spero che** must be used, followed by the subjunctive:

Spero che tua madre si senta meglio adesso.

I hope your mother feels better now.

Speriamo is often used as a kind of imperative form (meaning 'let's hope' rather than 'we hope'), and conveys a certain *anxiety*, or pessimistic expectation:

Speriamo di farcela!

Let's hope we can manage it! (but it's going to be hard)

Arriverai in tempo? Speriamo di sì!

Will you arrive in time? Hopefully yes! (or I'll be in trouble)

Sta finendo la benzina? Speriamo di no!

Are we running out of petrol? Let's hope not!

26.2.2 Augurarsi

In formal conversation and greetings we can use **mi auguro** instead of **spero** to convey a combination of hoping and wishing:

ArrivederLa. Mi auguro che faccia un buon viaggio.

Goodbye. I hope you'll have a nice journey.

Mi auguro che il vostro progetto abbia successo.

I hope/wish your project will be successful.

26.2.3 Magari

This is a very common exclamation used to express hope combined with a strong desire. With this meaning it can be used with a verb in the imperfect subjunctive (see 2.3.19), or alone as an *interjection*.

Ti piacerebbe avere una casa sul mare? Magari!

Would you like to have a home at the seaside? If only it could be true!

Magari vincessi il Superenalotto!

If only I could win the National Lottery!

26.3 Expressing fear, pessimism or regret

Both **avere paura** and **temere** express fear. The first is more commonly used as the equivalent of the English 'to be afraid'. Both can mean real fear but can also convey pessimism or regret rather than actual fear. When used in combination with another verb they use the constructions with **di** + infinitive or **che** + subjunctive, in the same way as the verbs in 25.3.2.

26.3.1 Real fear

Ho paura dei temporali.

I am scared of thunderstorms.

Mio figlio ha paura dei fantasmi.

My son is afraid of ghosts.

Mia nonna teme anche le più piccole malattie.

My grandmother is afraid of even the slightest illness.

26.3.2 Pessimism

Ho paura di non riuscire a finire in tempo.

I am afraid I won't finish on time.

Gli studenti temono che il professore sia arrabbiato con loro.

The students are afraid that the teacher is angry with them.

26.3.3 Anxiety

Speriamo che non succeda niente di brutto.

Let's hope nothing awful happens.

See also 26.2.1 above for further examples of how **sperare** can express anxiety.

26.3.4 Regret

In the following examples **temere** and **avere paura** are used, as the English 'to be afraid', as a polite expression of regret rather than real fear:

Temo di disturbare.

I am afraid I am disturbing (you).

Si è rotta la macchina? Ho paura di sì!

Has the car broken down? I am afraid so!

Ho paura che sia troppo tardi per disdire l'appuntamento.

I am afraid it is too late to cancel the appointment.

26.3.5 Terror, panic

Stronger feelings of terror are represented by nouns such as:

terrore	terror
panico	panic
spavento	fear
fifa	fear (rather ironical)

Il mio collega ha il terrore della possibilità di prendere malattie.

My colleague is terrified by the possibility of catching illnesses.

Tutti gli studenti hanno una fifa eccessiva degli esami.

All students have an exaggerated fear of exams.

A grandi altezze mi prende il panico.

I'm scared of heights.

Che spavento!

What a fright!

Che fifa!

How frightening! (said scathingly)

Or verbal expressions such as:

essere terrorizzato	to be terrorised/terrified
prendere uno spavento	to get a fright
essere in preda al panico	to be in the grip of panic

Mia moglie è terrorizzata dai topi.

My wife is terrified of mice.

Quando l'aereo è atterrato nella tempesta ho preso uno spavento che non dimenticherò mai più!

When the plane landed in the storm, I was so scared that I'll never forget it!

Durante i bombardamenti la popolazione era in preda al panico.

During the bombardments, the population was in a panic.

Non lasciarti prendere dal panico.

Don't panic.

26.4 Expressing doubt

26.4.1 With the subjunctive

As we have seen in several parts of this book, the use of verbs in the *subjunctive* mood, as an alternative to the *indicative* mood (2.3.2), is the most common way to express doubt or uncertainty in Italian. The subjunctive is frequently found linked with verbs indicating doubt, opinion, guessing, possibility such as **credere**, **pensare**, **dubitare**, **ritenere**, **sembrare**, **immaginare**:

Ritengo che Luigi *potrà* laurearsi il prossimo luglio.

I believe that Luigi will be able to graduate next July. (certain)

Ritengo che Luigi *possa* laurearsi il prossimo luglio.

I believe that Luigi might be able to graduate next July. (probable)

Immagino che *sei* stanco.

I imagine that you are tired. (certain)

Immagino che *tu sia* stanco.

I imagine that you must be tired. (probable)

Information on the forms of the subjunctive can be found in 2.3.14, while other examples of how it is used will be found throughout Sections III and IV.

26.4.2 With the future

The *future indicative* (see 2.3.4) is often used to add an element of doubt to a fact or action expressed by a verb. It is also quite common when the verb stands on its own and does not depend on a main verb, as in the examples in 26.4.1 above (and see Section IV throughout).

Non ho l'orologio. *Saranno* quasi le 8.00.

I don't have a watch. It must be almost 8.00.

Che bella macchina. *Costerà* un occhio della testa.

What a beautiful car. It must cost a fortune.

Marco non c'è. *Sarà* uscito.

Marco's not there. He must have gone out.

26.4.3 With specific verbs such as *dubitare*

The verb **dubitare** expresses doubt in an explicit way. It is used with **che** and the subjunctive, or with **di** and infinitive (see above 26.2.1):

***Dubita che* il problema si risolva così facilmente.**

He doubts whether the problem will be solved so easily.

***Dubito di* poter risolvere facilmente il problema.**

I doubt whether I'll be able to solve the problem easily.

26.4.4 *Forse, possibilmente, probabilmente, eventualmente*

These adverbs (see 6.2.1, 6.2.4) can be used to imply an element of doubt in anything we say. **Forse** is the most colloquial and also generic in meaning. **Possibilmente** is similar in meaning but less used. **Probabilmente** implies something more likely to

happen. **Eventualmente** expresses an option or alternative. It must not be confused with the English 'eventually' (with its reference to an 'eventual' or final time). It means in Italian that something may or may not happen, and is closer to the meaning of the English 'possibly'.

Non so se avrò tempo. *Eventualmente* passerò a salutarti verso le 5.00.

I don't know whether I'll have time. Possibly (if I have the time) I'll pop in to say hello around 5.00.

In frigorifero non c'è quasi nulla. *Eventualmente* possiamo uscire a mangiare una pizza.

There is almost nothing in the fridge. We might (if thought desirable or necessary) go out for a pizza.

26.4.5 ***Può darsi***

This is an expression also indicating doubt or possibility. It is followed by **che** and, usually, the subjunctive, or used alone as the answer to a question.

Non rispondono al telefono. *Può darsi che siano usciti.*

They're not answering the phone. They might have gone out.

Può darsi che stasera venga/verrà Marinella a cena.

It's possible that Marinella will come for dinner tonight.

Ci sarà la Divina Commedia in biblioteca? *Può darsi!*

Do you think there is a copy of Dante's Comedy in the Library? It's possible!

26.4.6 ***Chissà se . . .***

This expression means 'who knows whether . . .?' and is followed by a verb in the indicative. It carries a strong sense of doubt.

Chissà se c'è ancora qualcuno in ufficio?!

Is it possible that someone is still in the office?

Chissà se sono già partiti?!

Could they have left already?

Chissà is also used as a highly doubtful answer to a question:

Pensi che ci pagheranno in tempo? *Chissà?!*

Do you think they will pay us in time? God knows!!

27

Expressing an opinion or belief, agreement or disagreement

27.1 Expressing or seeking an opinion or belief

There are many ways of expressing your own opinion, either hesitantly or forcefully. You can also seek someone else's opinion using a similar range of expressions.

27.1.1 *Pensare, credere*

The verb **pensare** can be used in three different ways to express an opinion:

***Pensare di* and noun**

Cosa pensate di questo cantante?
What do you think of this singer?

***Pensare di* + verb infinitive** (see 2.3.1)

Pensate di essere infallibili?
Do you think you are infallible?

***Pensare che* + the subjunctive** (see 2.3.14)

I clienti pensavano che il direttore fosse molto in gamba.
The customers thought that the manager was very bright.

Where **pensare** means 'to think, to believe' (not 'to think of' as in the first example), it can be replaced by **credere**:

Lo credevano un genio.
They thought he was a genius.

I clienti credevano che il direttore fosse onesto.
The customers thought that the manager was honest.

27.1.2 *Credere* expressing a belief

Credere can also be used to convey religious, political, ideological or other strong belief. In this context it is generally used with **in**:

Credo in Dio Padre onnipotente, creatore del cielo e della terra.
I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
(adapted from the Creed)

I buddisti credono nella reincarnazione dell'anima.
Buddhists believe in the reincarnation of the soul.

I musulmani credono nella rivelazione del Corano.
Muslims believe in the revelations of the Koran.

Se non credi in te stesso non raggiungerai mai il tuo scopo.
If you don't believe in yourself, you will never reach your goal.

Molti italiani credono in un sistema educativo pubblico e gratuito.
Many Italians believe in an education system that is public and free.

27.1.3 ***Sembrare, parere***

The verbs **sembrare**, **parere** are used impersonally ('it seems') with an indirect object or object pronoun (see 3.4.1–2) to express an opinion. They are slightly more tentative (less definite) than **pensare**, **credere**:

Ci sembra che sia una iniziativa valida.
It seems to us that this is a worthwhile initiative.

Ti pare giusto escludere Teresa?
Do you think it's fair to exclude Teresa?

As well as this impersonal use, they can also be used with a person or thing to say how he/she/it seems to you:

Il suo ragionamento non mi è sembrato molto valido.
His reasoning didn't seem very sound to me.

Come ti sembra questo progetto?
What do you think of this project?

Come vi è parso il direttore d'orchestra?
How did the conductor seem to you?

I bambini non mi sembravano molto contenti.
The children didn't seem very happy to me.

27.1.4 ***Il/un parere***

Parere can also be used as a noun meaning 'opinion'. Near synonyms of **parere** are **il giudizio**, **la valutazione**, **l'opinione**:

Vorrei conoscere il Suo parere sulla qualità dei nostri prodotti.
I would like to know your opinion of the quality of our products.

Qual è la tua valutazione della situazione?
What is your evaluation of the situation?

Essere del parere

Mio marito è del parere che dovremmo andare a sciare nelle Dolomiti quest'anno.
My husband is of the opinion that we ought to go skiing in the Dolomites this year.

Noi *siamo del parere opposto*.
We are of the opposite opinion.

A mio parere, secondo me, per me

The phrase **a mio parere**, and the similar phrases **secondo me** and **per me**, act as an adjunct to the main message of the sentence, serving to convey the fact that it is a personal opinion. The *conditional* is sometimes used to convey the same message, especially in the press (see also 42.9) where it is important to stress that the opinion is subjective and not proved.

A mio parere, Berlusconi è molto abile nel manipolare l'opinione pubblica.

In my opinion Berlusconi is very skilled at manipulating public opinion.

Al parere del mio professore di storia, il Risorgimento è il periodo più interessante della storia italiana.

In my history teacher's opinion, the Risorgimento is the most interesting period in Italian history.

Secondo mio padre i genovesi sarebbero tirchi.

According to my father the Genoese are mean.

Per me, non ci sono alternative.

In my opinion there are no alternatives.

Secondo can be used not only with a personal opinion, but also with a saying, a tradition or a legend:

Secondo la leggenda, nel castello girerebbe il fantasma di un soldato austriaco morto in modo violento.

According to legend, the castle is haunted by the ghost of an Austrian soldier who died violently.

Secondo un detto popolare, "chi dorme non piglia pesci".

According to a popular saying, he who sleeps doesn't catch fish.

27.1.5 Making a point: dico

To emphasise the point you are making more strongly, use **dico che**:

Dico che è ora di finirla con queste menzogne.

I say it's time to finish with these lies.

See also 41.5 Techniques of oral communication.

27.2 Expressing agreement, disagreement

An important linguistic function in any language is to be able to express or indicate agreement or disagreement with a person or statement. Not surprisingly, there are many ways of doing this in Italian, some more polite than others.

27.2.1 Expressing agreement

Simple expressions of agreement include:

OK	OK
(essere) d'accordo	(to be) agreed/in agreement
essere favorevole	to be in favour (of)
va bene	all right
è vero/è giusto	that's true/that's correct

Note how these expressions are used:

È vero quello che dici tu.

What you say is true.

Era vero che c'erano pochi dipendenti disposti a lavorare anche il sabato.

It was true that there were few employees willing to work on Saturdays too.

Sono d'accordo che bisogna cambiare la struttura del reparto.

I agree that we need to change the structure of the department.

Essere d'accordo can be followed by **di** or **in** with a noun or verb in the infinitive, or by **con**, **di**, **in**, **su** with a noun:

Eravamo d'accordo di votare sì.

We were in agreement in voting yes.

I clienti sono d'accordo sul prezzo.

The customers are in agreement on the price.

I dipendenti saranno d'accordo con la decisione del sindacato.

The employees will agree with the decision of the trade union.

When expressing agreement *with a person*, **con** is used:

Sono d'accordo con lui.

I agree with him.

Other ways of expressing agreement, particularly in the spoken language, include:

Hai proprio ragione.

You're absolutely right.

Sì, anch'io la vedo così.

Yes, I see it like that too.

Naturalmente.

Naturally. (Of course.)

27.2.2 Expressing disagreement

Expressions of disagreement include:

sbagliare	to be wrong
per niente	not at all
non è vero	it's not true
non essere d'accordo	to not agree
non condividere (una scelta)	to not agree with (a choice)

Here are some examples of how these expressions are used:

Non condivido la tua scelta di partner.

I don't agree with your choice of partner.

Su questo aspetto del Trattato di Maastricht gli Eurodeputati inglesi non sono mai stati d'accordo con gli Eurodeputati francesi.

On this aspect of the Treaty of Maastricht the English Euro MPs have never been in agreement with the French Euro MPs.

Non eravamo d'accordo di fare lo sciopero.

We were not in agreement to strike.

Sbagli. Vincerà la Juventus, non il Milan.

You are wrong. Juventus will win, not Milan. (Italian football teams)

The phrase **non è vero** can be used to correct a statement or deny an accusation. In formal written language, the construction **non è vero** takes the verb in the subjunctive:

Non è vero che l'abbiano licenziato. È stato lui a dare le dimissioni.

It's not true that they've fired him. It was he who resigned.

Often, in less formal language, the indicative is used instead:

Non è vero che Marco è stato fuori per una settimana.

It's not true that Marco has been away for a week.

Another way of expressing disbelief:

Non ci credo per niente.

I don't believe a word.

27.2.3 Agreeing in part: *non dico che*

Non dico che vada bene il suo comportamento, ma lo capisco.

I'm not saying that his behaviour is all right, but I can understand it.

This negative **dico** construction also takes the verb in the subjunctive.

28

Indicating preference, likes and dislikes

28.1 Introduction

One of the communicative functions that we need to master in Italian is how to express our likes, preferences and, on occasion, our dislikes. Some of the ways of expressing likes or dislikes are more appropriate for people, others for objects.

28.2 Expressing likes

28.2.1 Things and people, using *piacere*

Probably the commonest way of expressing likes or dislikes is to use the verb **piacere** and an indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2). **Piacere** means literally 'to please' so the phrase 'I like music' becomes in Italian 'music is pleasing to me'. The English structure is reversed, so that the object or person giving pleasure is the *subject* of the sentence and the person receiving pleasure is the *indirect object*:

Mi piace la musica.
Music pleases to me./I like music.

To emphasise the 'me' element, you can also use an emphatic indirect object pronoun (see 3.3.2):

La musica piace a me.

Piacere is equally suitable for people, objects and activities, but note that if the person or thing liked is plural, the verb must be plural too:

Ci piacciono gli spaghetti.
We like spaghetti.

Piacere can be used in a full range of tenses and uses **essere** in all compound tenses:

Quella ragazza mi è piaciuta un sacco.
I really liked that girl.

The indirect object (the person receiving pleasure) can be a noun or a name governed by **a**:

Il caldo piace solo alla gente che è in vacanza.
Only people who are on holiday like the heat.

Ai ragazzi italiani piacciono le magliette americane.
Italian kids like American T-shirts.

A Marco piaceva andare in bicicletta.
Marco used to like going by bike.

An indirect object pronoun (see 3.4.2), here indicated in bold, can be used in place of the person:

Come può piacerti una persona così superficiale?
How can you like such a superficial person?

Vi sono piaciuti i cannelloni fatti con spinaci?
Did you like the cannelloni made with spinach?

The following example uses the emphatic form of indirect pronoun:

A noi piaceva fare delle lunghe passeggiate, a loro piaceva stare fermi.
We liked going for long walks; *they* liked staying still.

Molto, tanto, poco, abbastanza

The extent of like or dislike can be indicated with the words **molto** 'a lot', **tanto** 'a lot, so much', **poco** 'not very much, a little', **abbastanza** 'fairly, enough, sort of', etc.:

Mi piace molto questo paese.
I like this village a lot.

Gli piaceva tanto andare in barca.
He used to love going in the boat.

Ti piacciono queste scarpe? Abbastanza.
Do you like these shoes? Sort of.

28.2.2 Liking a person

Because likes and loves are the subject of much discussion in everyday life, phrases on the topic abound:

volere bene a	to love, to like
trovare simpatico	to find someone pleasant, likeable
amare	to love
prendere la cotta per	to get a crush on

While the first two expressions, and to some extent the third, can be used for a non-romantic friendship or any friendly relationship, **prendere la cotta** has a romantic/sexual connotation:

Vogliamo bene a tutti i nostri figli.
We love all our children.

Ho conosciuto il nuovo insegnante; l'ho trovato molto simpatico.
I've met the new teacher; I found him very nice.

Pino mi ha telefonato di nuovo stasera; ha proprio preso una cotta.
Pino rang me again tonight; he's really got it bad.

Ti amo più di ieri, meno di domani.
I love you more than yesterday, less than tomorrow.
(Often found on medallions and lockets)

28.2.3 Liking an object or activity

Apart from **piacere**, we can use one of the following expressions to say what we like or what we like doing:

amare	to love
andare bene	to be all right, OK, acceptable
gradire	to please (mainly used when offering food and drink and no longer very common)

Like **piacere**, **andare bene** can be used with an indirect object pronoun, referring to the person, and a noun or verb infinitive, linked by **di** to say what one likes:

Ti va bene questo posto?
Is this place all right for you?

Non mi va di mangiare fuori stasera.
I don't feel like eating out tonight.

Gradisce un aperitivo?
Would you like an aperitif?

I miei genitori amano la musica; infatti ei sono conosciuti ad un concerto di musica classica.
My parents love music. In fact they met at a concert of classical music.

For forms of entertainment, we often use verbs such as:

godersi	to enjoy
divertirsi	to enjoy oneself

Vi siete divertiti a Londra?
Did you enjoy yourselves in London?

Ti diverti a giocare a carte?
Do you like playing cards?

I ragazzi ei sono goduti le vacanze al mare.
The boys enjoyed their holiday at the seaside.

28.3 Expressing dislikes

Most of the expressions conveying dislike can be used equally for a person, object, event or activity.

28.3.1 Non ... piacere

If you really don't like something or someone, you can of course say so, just by using **piacere** and adding **non**:

Non mi è piaciuto il tuo comportamento.
I didn't like your behaviour.

Gli spinaci non piacevano ai ragazzi.
The boys didn't like spinach.

Al direttore non piace scrivere delle relazioni.
The manager doesn't like writing reports.

Non mi piacciono le persone maleducate.

I don't like bad-mannered people.

Note that **dispiacere** is not the exact opposite of **piacere**; it does not mean 'to dislike'. It expresses apologies or a request, as in **ti dispiace passarmi il sale?** (see 20.7) 'Would you mind passing me the salt?'. **Mi dispiace** means literally 'It is displeasing to me', in other words 'I am sorry'.

The construction is similar to that of **piacere**; the indirect pronoun **mi, ti, gli**, etc. indicates the *person* who is apologising:

Scusi, mi dispiace disturbarLa.

Excuse me, I'm sorry to disturb you.

28.3.2 Conveying mild dislike

Sometimes it is better to be tactful and tell someone that you 'don't like something very much' by using **poco**:

Le piace questo libro? A me piace poco.

Do you like this book? I don't like it very much.

The word **abbastanza** in Italian expresses a distinct lack of enthusiasm:

Le piacciono le vongole? Abbastanza.

Do you like clams? A bit. (lit. 'enough')

28.3.3 Other expressions of dislike

trovare antipatico

to find unpleasant (normally refers to person)

(non) andare

to be not all right

The expression **non andare** 'to be not all right or acceptable' is more commonly used with an object or activity and can be followed by **di** and an infinitive:

Non mi va di uscire stasera.

I don't feel like going out this evening.

But it can also be used with a person:

Non gli va bene Marco al posto di Giorgio.

He's not happy about Marco, in place of Giorgio.

28.3.4 Conveying strong dislike

Here are some stronger ways of conveying dislike, of a person or object:

non sopportare

to not be able to stand

non tollerare

to not be able to stand

non potere vedere

to not be able to bear

odiare

to hate

detestare

to hate

fare schifo a qualcuno

to make somebody sick

fare effetto a qualcuno

to make somebody sick (mainly used with an object)

Non sopporto il mio collega, lo trovo proprio antipatico.

I can't bear my colleague, I find him really unpleasant.

Il direttore *non può vedere* Berlusconi.

The manager can't stand Berlusconi.

Mio padre *detesta* i fannulloni.

My father detests layabouts.

Non mi piacciono le vongole. Mi *fanno effetto*.

I don't like clams. They make me want to throw up.

Vedere le mosche sulla carne *mi ha fatto schifo*.

Seeing the flies on the meat made me feel sick.

***Odio* gli spinaci.**

I hate spinach.

28.4 Expressing a preference

Unsurprisingly, to express a preference, you can use **piacere**, with **di più** 'more' or **di meno** 'less':

Noi andiamo al mare quest'estate, ma *ci piacerebbe di più* andare in montagna.

We're going to the sea this summer, but we would prefer to go to the mountains.

Secondo un sondaggio recente sui personaggi famosi, sono i politici che *piacciono di meno* alla gente.

According to a recent survey on famous people, it's the politicians who are less popular.

You can also use a 'dedicated' verb, **preferire** 'to prefer':

Oggi si *preferisce* mangiare meno carne, più verdura e frutta fresca.

Today people prefer eating less meat, more vegetables and fresh fruit.

I professori *preferiscono* gli studenti che si impegnano di più.

Lecturers prefer students who are more committed.

29

Expressing certainty and knowledge

29.1 Introduction

In this section of the book we describe various states of mind and emotions. How to express various degrees of certainty, including knowing, remembering and forgetting, is described in this chapter, while in Chapter 32, we describe more objective, less personalised ways of expressing certainty or uncertainty.

29.2 *Sapere*

'Knowing' can be conveyed by the verb **sapere** 'to know' (see 2.3.3). **Sapere** can be used with a noun, verb infinitive or verb introduced by **che** or **se**:

With a noun or noun equivalent (i.e. a fact)

Lei sa quanto è il cambio con la sterlina?
Do you know how much the exchange with sterling is?

Bisogna sapere queste date a memoria.
These dates must be known by heart.

Cosa ne sai tu di queste cose?
What do you know about these things?

Non so niente di questo.
I don't know anything about this.

With a verb infinitive

Per chi sa scrivere a macchina, è facile usare il computer.
For those who know how to type, it's easy to use the computer.

With a dependent clause introduced by **se**

Sai se arrivano oggi i nostri amici?
Do you know if our friends are arriving today?

With a dependent clause introduced by **che**

Sapevamo che lui veniva, ma non l'ora precisa del suo arrivo.
We knew he was coming, but not the precise time of his arrival.

Normally, with **se** or **che**, **sapere** is followed by a verb in the indicative:

Il direttore sa che c'è ancora molto da fare.

The manager knows there's still a lot to do.

Sappiamo se lui vuole il posto?

Do we know if he wants the job?

When **sapere** is negative, it is often followed by the subjunctive to stress *uncertainty* (see also 32.3). However this is not essential in informal conversation or writing, where the indicative is often used:

Non sapevo che tu cantassi così bene.

I didn't know you could sing so well.

Non so se si possa rimborsare il biglietto.

I don't know if the ticket can be refunded.

Non so se questa sia una mossa intelligente.

I don't know if this is an intelligent move.

Il mio collega non sa che sta per essere licenziato.

My colleague doesn't know he's about to be sacked.

At the end of a sentence expressing uncertainty, we can add the phrase **o no**, for example:

Non so se questa sia una mossa intelligente, o no.

I don't know if this is an intelligent move, or not.

29.3 Essere certo, sicuro, convinto

Certainty or uncertainty can be expressed using the verb **essere** and one of the following adjectives:

certo	certain
sicuro	sure
convinto	convinced

The last adjective, **convinto**, is the past participle of the verb **convincere**.

The message that follows can either be introduced by **di** + infinitive or by **che**. The construction **di** + infinitive can be used *only* if the subject of the two parts of the sentence is the same ('you . . . you'):

Siete sicuri di trovare la strada?

Are you sure you'll find the road?

Otherwise use **che** + the subjunctive or the indicative:

Siete sicuri che questa sia/è la strada giusta?

Are you sure this is the right road?

We use the *indicative* (see 2.3.1) when we are certain of something. If the sentence is negative or interrogative, the *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14) is used to express doubt or uncertainty, although it is often replaced by the indicative in conversation or informal writing.

Essere certo

Sono certo che hanno già ricevuto la merce.

I am certain they have already received the goods.

Non sono certo che abbiano ricevuto il nostro fax.

I'm not certain if they have received our fax.

Essere sicuro

Sono sicura che questa è la casa di Cristina.

I'm certain that this is Cristina's house.

Non sono sicura che questa sia la casa di Cristina.

I'm not certain that this is Cristina's house.

Sei sicura che questa è la casa di Cristina?

Are you sure that this is Cristina's house?

Lei è sicura che questa sia la casa di Cristina?

Are you sure that this is Cristina's house?

In the second example above, **se** could be used instead of **che**:

Non sono sicura se questa sia la casa di Cristina.

I'm not certain if this is Cristina's house.

When a fact that we are certain of at the time is later disproved, then the subjunctive is essential:

Eravamo convinti che la merce fosse in magazzino ma ci sbagliavamo.

L'avevano rubata.

We were convinced that the goods were in the warehouse, but we were wrong. They had been stolen.

To see how **certo** and **sicuro** are used to express *possibility* and *probability* in a more impersonal way, see 32.4.

29.4 Non certo, poco certo, incerto

Lack of certainty can be expressed *either* by adding **non** (**non certo, non sicuro**) or **poco** (**poco certo, poco sicuro**):

I ragazzi sono poco sicuri di trovare la strada.

The boys are not at all certain of finding the way.

Il cliente non era certo di ricevere l'ordine.

The customer was not certain of receiving the order.

The adjective **incerto**, on the other hand, applies not only to personal feelings, but to a situation:

Sono un po' incerta sul da farsi.

I'm a bit uncertain as to what to do.

È una situazione un po' incerta.

It's an uncertain situation.

29.5 **Pensare, credere, sembrare, parere**

Verbs of *thinking* (**pensare, credere, sembrare, parere**) can also express certainty and uncertainty (see 27.1.1 and 27.1.3):

(mi) sembra/pare che	it seems (to me)
pensare/credere che	to think that

Mia madre *pensa che* io sia troppo vecchia per sposarmi.
My mother thinks that I am too old to get married.

A me *sembrava che* mia madre fosse troppo vecchia per fare figli.
I thought that my mother was too old to have children.

29.6 **Ricordare, dimenticare**

'Remembering' and 'forgetting' are expressed in Italian by the verbs **ricordare** and **dimenticare** respectively. **Ricordare** can express both 'to remember' and 'to remind'.

29.6.1 **Ricordare**

When **ricordare** conveys 'to remember', it can be used with or without the reflexive pronoun (see 3.4.3) depending on how involved the person is (see also 2.1.7(c)). It can be followed by the person or thing remembered or by a verb (**di** + infinitive, or **che** + indicative):

I professori *ricordano* solo gli studenti più bravi.
The teachers only remember the cleverest students.

Daniela ha aspettato mezz'ora davanti all'università perché non *ci siamo ricordati di lei*.

Daniela waited half an hour in front of the University because we didn't remember her.

Non *ti ricordi* dove hai messo quella cartella?
Don't you remember where you put that file?

Ricordati di comprare il giornale.
Remember to buy the newspaper.

Il vigile *si ricordava di aver visto* la macchina parcheggiata vicino all'incrocio.

The traffic warden remembered seeing the car parked near the crossroads.

Mia moglie *si è ricordata che* io avevo lasciato i biglietti sul comodino.
My wife remembered that I had left the tickets on the bedside cabinet.

When **ricordare** conveys the concept of 'reminding', the person reminded is expressed by an indirect object noun or pronoun. If followed by a verb (to remind someone to do something), the verb infinitive is preceded by **di**:

Questa casa *ci ricorda* le vecchie case di montagna.
This house reminds us of the old houses in the mountains.

Il direttore *ha ricordato* agli impiegati la riunione generale alle 6.00.
The manager reminded the employees of the general meeting at 6.00.

Stasera cambia l'ora. Ricordami di aggiustare l'orologio.
Tonight the clocks change. Remind me to adjust my watch.

Un **ricordo** conveys the idea of nostalgia rather than a practical reminder:

Questo orsacchiotto è un ricordo della mia infanzia.
This teddy bear is a reminder/souvenir of my childhood.

Finally **ricordare** can also be used with the sense of 'to commemorate':

Oggi ricordiamo il nostro caro compagno Enrico.
Today we remember our dear companion Enrico.

29.6.2 **Dimenticare**

Like **ricordare**, **dimenticare** can be used with or without a reflexive pronoun, with a noun (to forget something or someone) or with a verb (**di** + infinitive or **che** + indicative):

Scusi, ho dimenticato il Suo nome.
I'm sorry, I've forgotten your name.

Marco, non dimenticare di prendere le chiavi.
Marco, don't forget to take your keys.

Oh Carla, ti sei dimenticata di comprare la carta igienica.
Oh Carla, you forgot to buy toilet paper.

Mio marito si era dimenticato che oggi è il nostro anniversario.
My husband had forgotten that today is our anniversary.

It can also mean 'to leave something behind':

Mia moglie ha dimenticato la borsa in ufficio.
My wife forgot her briefcase in the office.

Lastly, verbs of 'remembering' and 'forgetting' (**ricordarsi**, **dimenticare**) can also convey uncertainty, by use of the subjunctive or conditional:

Non mi ricordo se Carlo abbia già compiuto 40 anni.
I don't remember if Carlo has already reached 40 or not.

La direttrice aveva dimenticato che la segretaria sarebbe stata in vacanza.
The manager had forgotten that the secretary would be on holiday.

Section IV

Putting in context

30

Combining messages

30.1 Introduction

Many of the early sections in *Modern Italian Grammar* show how we can get our message across: communicating information, completing a transaction, expressing a feeling or emotion.

In this section of the book, 'Putting in context' (Chapters 30 to 39), we deal with the various ways of conveying a more complex message, of combining more than one message, and of putting our message *in a context*. The examples chosen are taken from various sources including the press and contemporary literature.

Some chapters look at *specific contexts*, such as expressing certainty (Chapter 32), purpose (Chapter 33), reason (Chapter 34), result (Chapter 35), place and manner (Chapter 37), condition and hypothesis (Chapter 38), reservation and concession (Chapter 39). Chapter 31 illustrates time relationships in the context of *relating* or *reporting* an event or action while Chapter 36 illustrates sentences where there is a *specific time reference*, such as **mentre**, **quando**, **prima** or **dopo**.

In this introductory chapter, 'Combining messages', we look at some *general points* that need to be borne in mind when combining messages: for example, the structure of the sentence and the tenses and moods of the verbs used.

When the message is more complex, the sentence structure also tends to become more complex. The possible sentence structures can be summarised in *two* broad categories: sentences where there are two or more clauses of equal weight (*coordinated clauses*), and sentences where there is a *main* clause and one or more *dependent* (*subordinate*) clauses.

30.2 Combining messages of equal importance

30.2.1 Separate sentences

Two messages of equal weight or importance are conveyed by using two clauses or groups of words of equal importance. These can be completely *separate sentences*:

Non è essenziale l'ammorbidente. I prodotti oggi sono più delicati.
It's not essential to use softener. Products today are more delicate.

30.2.2 Basic coordinated clauses

Alternatively they can be separate clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions or other elements (see 5.2), such as **e** 'and', **ma** 'but', in which case they are known as *coordinated clauses*:

I prodotti oggi sono più delicati e non induriscono i tessuti.

Today's products are more delicate and they don't make fabrics harsh.

Lavo tutto in lavatrice ma lavo le maglie di lana a mano.

I wash everything in the washing machine but I wash woollen sweaters by hand.

30.2.3 Common coordinating elements

Other common coordinating elements, with varying meanings, include:

anche	also as well
inoltre	besides
né	nor
neppure	not even
nonché	not to mention
o, oppure	or, or else
pure	also, as well

Non ho i soldi per andare in vacanza e inoltre non ho neanche il tempo per andarci.

I haven't got the money to go on holiday and besides I don't even have the time to go.

Non l'ho comprato né lo voglio.

I haven't bought it nor do I want it.

Possiamo andare a vedere i templi oppure se preferisci andiamo al mare.

We can go to see the temples or if you prefer we'll go to the seaside.

Elements such as **anche** or **pure** are normally attached to a specific element in the sentence, e.g. noun or pronoun:

La lavatrice è rotta, la lavastoviglie è rotta, anche la macchina è rotta.

The washing machine's broken, the dishwasher's broken, even the car is broken.

I miei cugini vanno in Sicilia; anch'io voglio andarci.

My cousins are going to Sicily; I want to go too.

30.2.4 Contrasts

Coordinating conjunctions and elements that express *contrast* (adversative conjunctions) include:

bensì	but
invece	on the other hand
mentre	whereas
però	however
piuttosto	rather (can be followed by che or di)
tuttavia	however

Pensavo che avrei avuto difficoltà a seguire i corsi in inglese. *Invece* non ho avuto problemi.

I thought I would have found it difficult to follow courses in English. Instead I didn't have any problems.

A Milano ho trovato subito un posto *mentre* il mio ragazzo ha avuto un po' di difficoltà.

In Milan I found a job straightaway while my boyfriend had a bit of difficulty.

Bettina si impegnava al massimo negli studi. *Però* i professori le davano sempre voti alquanto bassi.

Bettina studied as hard as she could. However her lecturers always gave her rather low marks.

***Piuttosto* che aumentare il numero di canali televisivi, penso che sia il caso di aumentare la qualità dei programmi televisivi già esistenti.**

Rather than increasing the number of television channels, I think it would be a good idea to improve the quality of the existing television programmes.

Non spetta a me preparare i corsi. *Piuttosto* aspetto che il mio collega mi passi il materiale.

It's not up to me to prepare the courses. Rather I'm waiting for my colleague to give me the material.

Preferirei non riscrivere questo capitolo, *tuttavia* lo farò se proprio insisti.

I would prefer not to rewrite this chapter, however I will do it if you insist.

30.2.5 Confirmation and affirmation

Difficult to translate in English, **anzi** can mean 'on the contrary' but can also express confirmation of what has just been said:

Luisa era veramente brava. *Anzi*, era la studentessa più brava della classe.
Luisa was really clever. In fact she was the cleverest student in the class.

Il turismo non è ancora molto sviluppato, *anzi* le infrastrutture sono praticamente inesistenti.

Tourism isn't very developed yet, in fact the infrastructures are almost non-existent.

The following are conjunctions and discourse markers that affirm what has just been said or written (declarative conjunctions):

cioè	in other words, that is
vale a dire	in other words
infatti	indeed

Le scoperte scientifiche possono essere anche pericolose *cioè* possono avere conseguenze negative – basta pensare alla bomba atomica.

Scientific discoveries can even be dangerous, in other words they can have negative consequences – one need only think of the atomic bomb.

Gli studenti laureati devono imparare ad essere autonomi, *infatti* l'autonomia è la qualità più importante per un ricercatore.

Graduate students must learn to be independent, in fact independence is the most important quality for a researcher.

30.2.6 Conclusion, results

For details of *conclusive conjunctions* such as **allora** 'and so', **dunque** 'therefore', **per cui** 'and so' and **quindi** 'therefore', which express conclusion, result or consequence, see Chapter 35.

30.3 Combining messages of unequal importance

When there are two messages that are *not* of equal importance, one message usually expresses a main event or action, while the other expresses an action or event linked to it. The main action or event is normally expressed by a *main clause* (one that can stand on its own without another clause) while the linked action or event is expressed by a clause that cannot stand on its own but is *dependent* or *subordinate* to the main clause. There are many types of *dependent* clause. In the example below we have a main clause (**non erano presenti**) and a dependent relative clause (beginning **cui hanno assistito**):

Alla cerimonia di Hiroshima, cui hanno assistito 100 mila persone, non erano presenti rappresentanti del governo americano. (Televideo)

At the ceremony of Hiroshima, which 100,000 people attended, there were no representatives of the American government.

The combination of main and dependent clauses expresses many different types of relationships, many of which are illustrated elsewhere in Section IV (see also 30.5).

30.4 Setting events in a time context

30.4.1 Simple time relationship

When facts or events are related only to the moment of speaking or writing, the time relationship is simple. Section I gives examples of simple time relationships: the *present* (Chapter 12); the *past* (Chapter 13); the *future* (Chapter 14). Usually the verb tense alone (present, past, future) is enough to indicate the time when the action took place, although the sentence sometimes includes a more specific *marker of time* (phrase, adverb or noun group):

(Oggi) è il compleanno di Marta.
(Today) it is Marta's birthday.

Siamo andati a Londra (la settimana scorsa).
We went to London (last week).

(L'anno prossimo) ci trasferiremo negli Stati Uniti.
(Next year) we will be moving to the USA.

30.4.2 Complex time relationship

In a complex sentence, where messages are combined, the verbs used are closely inter-linked in a relationship of time that determines the *tense* and *mood* of verb used.

(a) *Main clause and dependent clause*

When the sentence is composed of main clause and dependent clause, the choice of verb tense and mood in the dependent clause is determined by the verb in

the *main* clause. Italian has a 'set of rules' (the *sequence of tenses*) which demonstrates this, shown in Appendix III and illustrated below in 30.5. These rules are only guidelines, and how rigidly they are applied depends on the *type* of dependent clause; they are particularly important when the clause acts as *object* of a verb (for example **Spero che tu possa venire; lui dice che partiranno più tardi**) or as *subject* (as in **Mi sembra assurdo che tu debba fare il lavoro della segretaria**).

(b) *Series of main clauses*

When the sentence is composed of a series of main clauses, these rules do not apply so rigidly, and the choice of verb tense and mood is much wider.

In both types of sentences (main/main and main/dependent), the choice of verbs used depends on the relationship between the events referred to: this may be *same time context* (both events taking place in the same time context), *earlier time context* (one event taking place earlier than the other) or *later time context* (one event taking place later than the other). Events can be described as taking place earlier or later not just in relation to the point of speaking or writing, but in relation to another point in time (in the past or the future) mentioned in the text. We will see how these guidelines work in practice with some general examples. See also 30.1 for details of where specific time contexts are illustrated.

30.5 Relationship of main clause and dependent clauses

Here we illustrate the way in which the 'sequence of tenses' (see Appendix III) works in different time contexts and how the choice of verb in the main clause influences the choice of verb in the dependent clause. We take as our starting point the different tenses used in the main clause.

30.5.1 Present tense in the main clause

Indicating same time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: present
- conditional: present
- subjunctive: present or imperfect
- infinitive or gerund: present

The *indicative* expresses certainty or objectivity:

I passeggeri sanno che devono arrivare due ore prima della partenza.
Passengers know they have to arrive two hours before departure time.

The *conditional* (see 2.3.12) is used to indicate an unconfirmed report (see also Chapter 32), expressed in English by a simple present indicative:

Gli esperti dicono che la situazione economica sarebbe più complicata di quanto sembra.

The experts say that the economic situation *is* more complicated than it seems.

The *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14–15) indicates a relationship of uncertainty or ‘subjectivity’:

Pare che mio cugino *sia* pronto a partire.

It seems my cousin is ready to leave.

The *imperfect subjunctive* (see 2.3.19) is used after a present conditional main verb:

Vorrei che tu *fossi* meno prepotente.

I wish you were less domineering.

Indicating earlier time context

The dependent verb can be:

- indicative: simple or compound perfect; imperfect
- conditional: past
- subjunctive: past or imperfect
- infinitive, gerund, participle: past

The *indicative* expresses a fact or certainty:

Sappiamo che il gruppo di nordafricani è *partito* martedì sera a bordo di un gommone.

We know that the group of North Africans left on Tuesday evening on board an inflatable dinghy.

The *conditional* is used to indicate a report that has not been confirmed and is expressed in English by a simple past indicative:

I giornali inglesi dicono che l'anno scorso il Primo Ministro *avrebbe voluto* dare le dimissioni.

The English newspapers say that last year the Prime Minister wanted to resign.

The *subjunctive* is used after **sembrare**, **parere**, etc. to express uncertainty:

Sembra che la regina *abbia voluto* incontrare i responsabili del progetto.

It seems the Queen wanted to meet those responsible for the project.

Indicating later time context

The dependent verb can be:

- indicative: simple future (or present)
- subjunctive or conditional: present

The *simple future* expresses an action that will happen *later*:

Non importa quanto *costerà*, ce la *faremo*.

It doesn't matter how much it will cost, we'll manage.

The *present indicative* can be used instead of the future tense, especially when talking of the very near and immediate future:

Sto preparando la camera per mio figlio che *arriva* domani.

I'm getting ready the room for my son who is arriving tomorrow.

The *present tense* of the *conditional and subjunctive* is used, since they have no future tense:

Molti italiani sperano che il Presidente *si dimetta* anche prima delle elezioni.

Many Italians hope that the President will resign even before the elections.

30.5.2 Past tense in the main clause

Indicating same time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: imperfect
- subjunctive: imperfect

Indicating earlier time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: pluperfect
- subjunctive: pluperfect
- infinitive, gerund, participle: past

The *indicative* is used to recount a fact or objective statement:

Il direttore ha rivelato che almeno 30 milioni di euro *erano spariti* dal conto.

The manager revealed that at least 30 million euros had disappeared from the account.

The *subjunctive* is used after certain verbs that require it:

Il cameriere attendeva che *avessimo finito* di mangiare prima di portare il conto.

The waiter waited until we had finished eating before bringing the bill.

Indicating later time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: future
- conditional: past (or imperfect indicative)

If the events still have to take place, the simple *future indicative* is used, even when the verb depends on a main clause in a past tense:

Mia mamma mi ha promesso che *verrà a trovarmi* domani mattina.

My mother has promised me that she will come to see me tomorrow morning.

Otherwise the *past conditional* is used:

Il Presidente ha dichiarato che *avrebbe posto* il veto a una decisione del Congresso in favore dell'abolizione dell'embargo.

The President declared that he would impose a veto if Congress were to decide to lift the embargo.

Sometimes, in colloquial Italian, the past conditional is replaced by the *imperfect indicative*:

Mia mamma mi aveva promesso che *veniva* (*sarebbe venuta*) a trovarmi ieri sera.

My mother had promised me that she would come to see me yesterday evening.

30.5.3 With a future tense in the main clause

Indicating same time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: future
- conditional, subjunctive: present
- infinitive or gerund: present

Future indicative

Pagheremo quando *riceveremo* la merce.

We'll pay when we (will) receive the goods.

Present conditional

Le dirò che *sarebbe* meglio lavorare in gruppo.

I'll tell her that it would be better to work in a team.

Present subjunctive

La manager vorrà che le cameriere *puliscano* le camere prima di mezzogiorno.

The manager will want the maids to clean the bedrooms before midday.

Indicating earlier time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: future perfect
- gerund, infinitive, participle: past

Future perfect

Partiremo per le vacanze solo dopo che *avremo finito* di scrivere il libro.

We'll go on holiday only after we finish writing the book.

Past infinitive

Partiremo per le vacanze solo dopo *aver finito* di scrivere il libro.

We'll go on holiday only after finishing writing the book.

Past gerund

***Avendo finito* di scrivere il libro, la settimana prossima potremo partire per le vacanze.**

Having finished writing the book, next week we'll be able to go on holiday.

Indicating later time context

The verb in the dependent clause can be:

- indicative: future
- conditional, subjunctive: present

Future indicative

Gli comunicheremo che *dovrà* pagare entro una settimana.

We'll inform him that he will have to pay within one week.

Present subjunctive

Dovremo completare il lavoro prima che il personale *parta* per le vacanze.

We'll have to complete the work before the staff leave for the holidays.

30.6 Relationship of tenses in complex texts

Sometimes the link between main and dependent clauses is not obvious. Here we look at some extracts from the press that illustrate the different way in which time relationships are expressed in current journalistic Italian. Some of the sentences contain only main clauses, while sometimes a main verb is implied but not stated. The same basic 'rules' of the sequence of tenses, however, still apply in these more complex situations. This time we have arranged the examples by time context, and *not* by the tense used in the main clause.

30.6.1 Same time context**Present**

In this example, all the verbs are in the *present indicative*, whether main verbs or verbs in dependent clauses:

Restauro con sponsor a Positano

Un grande cartellone di un'auto copre uno dei campanili più belli.

Il parroco: "È una soluzione transitoria." Ma i turisti protestano.

Positano, 8 agosto 2004

Anche la chiesa di un paese caratteristico come Positano cede ai vantaggi della pubblicità. Sui quattro lati del campanile del '700 della chiesa dell'Assunta in fase di restauro, a Positano, spicca un enorme telone con l'immagine di un'automobile tedesca.

L'immagine si vede anche arrivando via mare.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 9 August 2004)

Restoration with sponsor in Positano

A big poster of a car is covering one of the most beautiful bell towers.

Parish priest says: 'It's a temporary solution.' But tourists are protesting.

Positano, 8 August 2004

Even the church of a characteristic village like Positano is giving in to the advantages of advertising. On four sides of the eighteenth-century

bell tower of the Church of the Assumption, currently being restored, a huge banner with the image of a German car stands out. The image can be seen even when you approach from the sea.

This next example from the press shows how present tenses are used in the main clauses (**sono prigionieri, non riescono, comincia**), the dependent time clause (**mentre un medico assiste**) and the dependent relative clause (**che stanno male**) to express simultaneous events. The present conditional **avrebbe** is used to express one person's opinion of what is needed, while the present conditional **permetterebbero** expresses what the result would be *if* the ship had lateral thrust propellers.

I prigionieri del traghetto

LAMPEDUSA

97 persone, uomini donne e bambini, **sono prigionieri** dentro la motonave Francesco Sansovino. **Non riescono** a sbarcare sull'isola per il mare grosso. Il cibo **comincia** a scarseggiare, **mentre un medico assiste** i passeggeri **che stanno male**. La Sansovino **avrebbe** bisogno di eliche laterali, **che permetterebbero** una maggiore manovrabilità.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 16 December 2003)

Prisoners of the ferry

LAMPEDUSA

97 people, men, women and children, are prisoners on board the ship *Francesco Sansovino*. They are unable to disembark on the island because of heavy seas. Food is beginning to be in short supply, while a doctor is attending passengers who are ill. The *Sansovino* needs lateral thrust propellers, which would give it greater manoeuvrability.

This last example shows how the conditional is used in Italian to express an unconfirmed report. The present conditional of the Italian is expressed in English by a plain present indicative, and the past conditional by a simple past tense, both qualified by the adverb 'apparently':

Un parroco **avrebbe ammesso** di essere innamorato di una donna e per questo di non poter più dire la messa. La passione **sarebbe** addirittura la moglie del vicesindaco del paese.

(Adapted from *Tiscali Notizie*, 9 August 2004)

A parish priest has apparently admitted to being in love with a woman and being unable for this reason to say mass. The object of his passion apparently is none other than the wife of the deputy mayor of the village.

Past

Here the actions or events in the main clause are expressed by a past tense, and the tenses and moods used in the dependent clauses to express simultaneity are the *imperfect indicative* or the *imperfect subjunctive*.

As seen elsewhere (Chapter 13) the verbs in the compound perfect (**sono morti, li abbiamo abbandonati**) express the events, while the imperfect indicative in the first part of the sentence (**eravamo**) describes the background to them:

Su quel barcone eravamo cento ma 15 li abbiamo gettati in mare

SIRACUSA

Su quel barcone *eravamo* un centinaio: una quindicina *sono morti* durante la traversata. I loro cadaveri li *abbiamo abbandonati* in mare.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 8 August 2004)

On that boat there were a hundred of us, but we threw 15 of them in the sea

SIRACUSA

On that boat there were a hundred of us: fifteen died during the crossing. We left their bodies in the sea.

In this next example, the first two clauses, linked by **ma**, again express the background, using imperfect verb tenses (**tenevano**, **c'erano**, **c'era**), while the next two clauses express the main events, using the compound perfect, in the passive in the first case (**sono stati accusati**, **si sono presi cura**):

*Francia, violenze su 5 bambini
I genitori rischiano 20 anni*

PARIGI

Tenevano i loro cinque figli in casa fra spazzatura ed escrementi, in una cameretta dove non *c'erano* letti. Ma in salotto *c'era* un immenso televisore di nuova generazione. I genitori di questi cinque bambini *sono stati accusati* di maltrattamenti ai danni dei propri figli e arrestati dalla polizia a Seine-Saint-Denis, nella regione parigina. Ora i servizi sociali *si sono presi cura* dei piccoli.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 9 August 2004)

*France, abuse of 5 children.
Parents risk 20 years in jail.*

PARIS

They kept their five children at home among rubbish and excrement, in a bedroom where there were no beds. But in the sitting room there was a huge new model television. The parents of these five children have been accused of ill treatment of their children and arrested by the police in Seine-Saint-Denis, in the Paris area. Now the social services have taken care of the little ones.

Future

When the time referred to is the future, a variety of verb moods can be used to express related actions taking place in the same time context. If the indicative mood is used, it will be in the *future* tense. If the conditional or subjunctive moods are used, they will be in the *present* tense, since they have no future tense.

In this passage on digital television, the present conditional in the main clause (**dovrebbe**) expresses what *should* happen but is not certain to happen. The future tense in the second main clause (**saranno**) suggests the prediction is likely to come true, though the phrase **secondo le stime** makes it clear that the figures given are only an estimate:

Tv digitale terrestre tra successo e illusione

Il digitale terrestre *dovrebbe* diventare, in poco più di due anni, il nuovo standard della tv italiana. Secondo le stime di Rai e Mediaset, entro la fine del 2004 i decoder nelle case degli italiani *saranno* più di un milione. Ma la confusione intorno alla nuova tecnologia è ancora alta.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 20 April 2004)

Digital terrestrial TV: success or illusion

Digital terrestrial TV should become, in little more than two years, the new standard for Italian TV. According to estimates by RAI and Mediaset, by the end of 2004, there will be over a million decoders in Italian households. But the confusion over the new technology is still great.

Using the infinitive or gerund

Both the present infinitive and gerund (*lavorando*, *limitandomi*, *guadagnando*) can be used to express simultaneous actions and situations in a dependent clause, *whatever the tense and mood of the main verb*. Here there is a succession of present infinitives dependent on a preceding verb or other (*a prendere*, *per uscire*, *continuo a non riuscire a mettere da parte*, *per andare in vacanza*, *comprarmi vestiti*, *andare a cena*). The past infinitive (*aver fatto*) used here refers to a past action or non-action:

Vivere con 988 euro al mese

Vivo da sola, in Italia, da circa 3 anni. Da gennaio, *lavorando* con contratto Co.Co.Co, *senza aver fatto* un singolo giorno di ferie, *riesco a prendere* circa 988 euro al mese. Lavoro 8–9 ore per 5 o 6 giorni a settimana, *non ho tempo e soldi per uscire*, sono sempre stanca e continuo *a non riuscire a mettere da parte* un centesimo *per andare in vacanza*, *comprarmi* vestiti, *andare a cena fuori*. Se tornassi a vivere con mamma e papà, *limitandomi* a fare qualche lavoretto saltuario, i risultati sarebbero esattamente gli stessi, *guadagnando* addirittura qualcosa in tempo libero e salute.

(Adapted from letter to 'Italians' by Beppe Severgnini, *Corriere della Sera* online, retrieved 9 August 2004)

Living on 988 euros a month

I have been living on my own, in Italy, for about 3 years. Since January, working on a temporary contract, without having taken a single day of holiday, I've managed to bring home about 988 euros a month. I work 8–9 hours for 5–6 days a week, I haven't got the time or money to go out, am always tired, and am still unable to set aside a penny to go on holiday, buy myself clothes, eat out. If I went back to mum and dad, limiting myself to the odd temporary job, the result would be exactly the same, gaining something, even, in terms of free time and health.

30.6.2 Earlier time context

Earlier than the time of speaking/writing

In this extract from the press, the event clearly takes place *earlier* than the time of writing. In the first sentence, the event is related using the *compound perfect* (**è morta**) as well as a gerund (**precipitando**), which gives the reason for the child's death. In the second sentence, a *past conditional* is used (**sarebbe avvenuta**) to express the idea of an unconfirmed report or hearsay; English simply uses the past tense ('occurred') but qualifies it by use of the word 'apparently'. Finally a proven fact is expressed by a *compound perfect* (passive) **sono stati determinati**:

Cade in un pozzo, muore bimba di quattro anni

Una bambina tedesca di quattro anni, Ria Reimisch, è morta questa mattina precipitando in un pozzo artesiano nelle campagne tra Fossacesia e Rocca San Giovanni. Stando ad un primo accertamento medico, la morte sarebbe avvenuta per annegamento, anche se gravi traumi sono stati determinati dalla caduta.

(Adapted from *Corriere della Sera* online, 9 August 2004)

Child four years old dies falling in a well

A German child age four, Ria Reimisch, died this morning, after falling in an artesian well, in the countryside between Fossacesia and Rocca San Giovanni. According to an early medical evaluation, death apparently occurred through drowning, even though serious injuries were caused by the actual fall.

Earlier than the past time referred to

When the time setting referred to is in the past, and the actions or events described had already taken place *before* those described or implied in the main clause, the time relationship can be described as the *past of the past*, expressed in Italian by the *pluperfect* (**trapassato**), either *indicative* or *subjunctive*. In the following example, the main clauses use the pluperfect indicative (**aveva acquistato, era riuscita**) to express something that had already happened and an imperfect indicative (**stava scontando**) to describe the background:

Detenuta aveva acquistato una neonata per farsi trasferire di reparto

Aveva acquistato una neonata al prezzo di 30.000 euro, così una nomade della ex Jugoslavia di 21 anni, reclusa presso il carcere milanese di "San Vittore" che stava scontando una pena per traffico internazionale di stupefacenti, era riuscita a farsi trasferire al reparto nido del carcere.

(Adapted from *Yahoo Notizie*, <http://it.news.yahoo.com>, 30 July 2004)

Detainee had bought a newborn baby to get herself transferred

She had bought a newborn baby for 30,000 euro, by this means a nomad from the former Yugoslavia, age 21, currently in San Vittore prison, Milan, who was serving a sentence for international drug trafficking, had managed to get herself transferred to the crèche section of the prison.

The next example shows main verbs in the compound perfect (**ha imposto, ha accolto**), with a dependent relative clause using the pluperfect (**che . . . aveva chiesto**) and a second main clause using the pluperfect (**aveva opposto, si era detto**), both describing what had taken place earlier. There is also a gerund in the past (**essendosi accorta**), referring to a previous event, and a gerund in the present (**dichiarando**), referring to what the consultant had said at the time:

Giudice ordina aborto del feto gemello malato

CAGLIARI

Per la prima volta in Italia un tribunale *ha imposto* a un medico di praticare un'operazione di embrioriduzione: la soppressione di un feto su una donna in attesa di due gemelli. Il giudice del Tribunale di Cagliari *ha accolto* la richiesta di una donna di 25 anni che, incinta di due gemelli, *essendosi accorta* all'11esima settimana di avere un feto affetto da Betatalassemia *aveva chiesto* di interrompere la gravidanza del feto malato. In un primo momento il primario *aveva opposto* un rifiuto, *dichiarando* che «l'embrioriduzione non è probabilmente consentita dalla nuova legge sulla procreazione medicalmente assistita»; ma *si era detto* pronto a eseguire l'intervento in caso di ordine del giudice.

(Adapted from *Corriere della Sera* online, 9 June 2004)

Judge orders abortion of unhealthy twin foetus

For the first time in Italy a tribunal has forced a doctor to carry out an embryo reduction: the termination of one foetus in a woman expecting twins. The judge of the court in Cagliari granted the request made by a woman of 25 pregnant with twins who, having learnt in the eleventh week of her pregnancy that she had one foetus affected by beta-thalassaemia, had asked to be allowed to terminate the pregnancy of the unhealthy foetus. At first the surgeon had opposed the request, stating that 'embryo reduction was probably not allowed by the new law on medically assisted procreation'; but he had said he was prepared to carry out the operation if the judge ordered it.

Earlier than a future point in time

Sometimes an action will take place *after* another action has taken place at a certain point in a time that is *still to come*. The action, which still has to take place (but will take place earlier than the 'main' event/action), is expressed by the *future perfect* tense (**futuro anteriore**):

Solo dopo che le parti avranno stabilito un prezzo, potranno firmare il contratto.

Only after the parties (will) have fixed a price, can they sign the contract.

Using past infinitive, past participle and gerund

In the dependent clause, the *past infinitive*, *past participle* and *past gerund* of the verbs are often used, whatever the time context (present, past or future).

When using the infinitive or the gerund, the subject of the dependent clause must be *the same as* that of the main clause:

Washington

Lo scienziato inglese Francis Crick, uno dei pionieri delle ricerche sul Dna, è morto mercoledì in un ospedale di San Diego, in California, all'età di 88 anni. Biofisico di formazione, nel 1962 venne insignito del premio Nobel per la medicina *per avere identificato* la struttura a doppia elica del Dna.

(Adapted from www.ansa.it, 29 July 2004)

The scientist Francis Crick, one of the pioneers of research on DNA, died on Wednesday in a hospital in San Diego, California, at the age of 88. A biophysicist by training, in 1962 he was honoured with the Nobel prize for medicine, for having identified the double helix structure of DNA.

30.6.3 Later time context

Later than the time of writing/speaking

Events or actions that will take place later than the time of writing or speaking are generally expressed in the future. Often the present tense is used to express the near future:

Domani arriva a Roma il famoso coro di Praga, per partecipare alla Festa della pace che si celebra domenica prossima.

Tomorrow the famous choir from Prague arrives in Rome, to take part in the Festival of Peace which is being celebrated next Sunday.

The expression **stare per** (see Chapter 14) is used to refer to events just about to happen:

Harry Potter e il teatro degli effetti speciali

Sta per uscire in Gran Bretagna "La camera dei segreti".

(Adapted from *Corriere della Sera* online, 24 October 2002)

Harry Potter and the theatre of special effects

'The Chamber of Secrets' is about to come out in Great Britain.

In this next lengthy example, there is a series of verbs in the future, some in main clauses (**il 65% . . . lo farà, i voli saranno, saranno 600, partiranno 450 mila persone**) and some in dependent clauses (**che partiranno, di chi si metterà, che transiteranno, che partiranno**):

Il Grande Esodo

Valigia alla mano, tutti sono pronti alla fuga da Milano. Secondo i dati dell'Osservatorio di Milano sono 11 milioni gli italiani *che partiranno* per le vacanze in questo fine settimana. *Il 65% di chi si metterà* in viaggio *lo farà* in automobile. Per quanto riguarda gli altri mezzi, sono 2.000 gli aerei *che* in questi primi tre giorni del mese di agosto *transiteranno* all'aeroporto di Malpensa. «*I voli saranno* più numerosi dello scorso anno» comunica la Sea. *Saranno* invece 600 i treni *che partiranno* ogni giorno dalla stazione Centrale di Milano. In tutto, nei primi due fine settimana di agosto *partiranno* per mare e monti *450 mila persone*.

(Adapted from *Corriere della Sera* online, 1 August 2004)

The Great Exodus

Suitcase in hand, everyone is ready to get out of Milan. According to figures from the Observatory of Milan, 11 million Italians will leave for their holidays this weekend. 65% of those who will travel will go by car. As for other means of transport, 2,000 planes will be on the move at Malpensa airport over these first three days of August. 'There will be more flights than last year' says SEA. 600 trains will leave every day from the Central Station in Milan. Overall over the first two weekends of August, 450 thousand people will leave for the sea or the mountains.

In the next example, the first sentence has no explicit main verb at all, but has a relative clause introducing a future (**segnaleranno**). The second sentence has two past tenses (**hanno promesso**, **hanno annunciato**):

Lampedusa, vacanze gratis a turisti che segnalano clandestini

Vacanze gratis per tutti i turisti di Lampedusa che segnalano immigrati clandestini nelle spiagge o nel paese dell'isola. Lo hanno promesso alcuni albergatori e operatori turistici di Lampedusa, **che attraverso il tour operator di Lampedusa "Sogni nel blu" hanno annunciato** di essere pronti a rimborsare il soggiorno "fino all'ultimo centesimo" agli avvistatori di clandestini.

(Adapted from *Corriere della Sera* online, 9 August 2004)

Lampedusa, free holidays for tourists who notify the authorities of illegal immigrants

Free holidays for all tourists in Lampedusa who notify (the authorities of) illegal immigrants on the beaches or in the village on the island. This is the promise made by some hoteliers and tour operators in Lampedusa, who, through the Lampedusa tour operator 'Sogni nel blu', announced they are ready to give back 'every penny spent' on their stay to those visitors who notify them of illegal immigrants.

Later than a past point in time

In the following example, the time referred to is the past (**voleva**, **passavano**, **si avvicinava**) but the action or event expressed in the second and third sentences (**sarebbe morto**) is clearly one that will take place *later* than this point in time:

La guerra colpisce non solo i soldati. Il figlio di una nostra amica a 14 anni voleva combattere. La madre non voleva. Gli anni passavano e lui si avvicinava ai fatidici 18 anni. Quel ragazzo sarebbe morto a 16 anni, ucciso da una granata. Sarebbe morto senza andare in guerra.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica*, 27 July 1995)

War doesn't just hit soldiers. The son of a friend of ours, age 14, wanted to go to fight. His mother didn't want him to. The years went by and he was getting close to the fateful age of 18. That boy would die at 16, killed by a grenade. He would die without even going to war.

31

Quoting or reporting events and hearsay

31.1 Introduction

There are two main ways of reporting what somebody has said (and what we ourselves may have said).

31.1.1 Direct speech

Il direttore mi ha detto: “Può andare a casa.”

The manager said to me ‘You can go home.’

Gli ho chiesto: “Quando mi restituisci i soldi?”

I asked him: ‘When are you giving me back the money?’

“Anche se un po’ confusamente lo spirito del ’68,” afferma il regista Bertolucci “metteva insieme politica, cinema, arte, musica, rock ‘n’ roll e sesso . . .”

(Adapted from *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*, 29 August 2003)

‘Albeit in a rather confused way, the spirit of ‘68,’ states the film director Bertolucci, ‘put together politics, cinema, art, music, rock ‘n’ roll, and sex . . .’

31.1.2 Indirect speech

Il direttore mi ha detto *che potevo andare a casa.*

The manager told me that I could go home.

Gli ho chiesto *quando mi avrebbe restituito i soldi.*

I asked him when he would give me back the money.

Il regista Bertolucci afferma *che, anche se un po’ confusamente, lo spirito del ’68 metteva insieme politica, cinema, arte, musica, rock ‘n’ roll e sesso.*

The film director Bertolucci states that, albeit in a somewhat confused way, the spirit of ‘68 put together politics, cinema, art, music, rock ‘n’ roll and sex.

31.2 Quoting: direct speech

The form of *direct speech* is used for all kinds of quotations, but essentially whenever we want to report something that has been said or written, with exactly the same words used by the quoted person or text. It is very common in newspaper titles; here are a few examples from *La Repubblica*:

Berlusconi: “Riformeremo il sistema dei controlli.”

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 2 January 2004)

Berlusconi: ‘We will reform the system of checks.’

Parmalat, Tanzi resta in carcere “Non dice tutto quello che sa.”

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 2 January 2004)

Parmalat, Tanzi stays in prison ‘He is not telling everything he knows.’

Arbitri: “Vogliamo più soldi.”

Football referees: ‘We want more money.’

Written Italian normally uses two **virgolette** (“ . . .”) to open and close a quotation. Sometimes, however, writers use pairs of **frecce** (« . . .») as shown below. When the quotation is interrupted by a phrase such as ‘he said’ or ‘they asked’, the convention is to use a pair of dashes or hyphens:

«Bene – ha detto Marco – andiamo a letto.»

Written texts, too, are often quoted directly. This is very common, not only in essays and scientific literature, but also in everyday language, business correspondence and newspapers:

Ho ricevuto una cartolina di Venezia con un bel cuoricino rosso e la scritta: “Manchi solo tu.”

I got a postcard of Venice with a lovely little red heart on it and the words ‘All it needs is you.’

Nel suo libro “Gli Inglesi” (Rizzoli, 1990) Beppe Severgnini afferma che: “Gli anni Ottanta sono stati per la Gran Bretagna gli anni di Margaret Thatcher, come gli anni Sessanta furono gli anni dei Beatles.”

In his book *The English* (Rizzoli, 1990) Beppe Severgnini states that ‘The eighties were for Great Britain the years of Margaret Thatcher, just as the sixties were the years of the Beatles.’

Il sindaco di Ivrea ha emanato un’ordinanza che vieta a tutti di gettare delle arance al di fuori della piazza e delle zone riservate alla Battaglia delle Arance. “Durante il periodo di Carnevale – si legge nell’ordinanza – per motivi di sicurezza si ritiene opportuno che la Battaglia delle Arance debba essere limitata esclusivamente nelle zone tradizionalmente riservate al getto . . .”

The Mayor of Ivrea has issued a ruling which bans anyone from throwing oranges outside the square and the areas reserved for the Battle of the Oranges. ‘During the period of Carnival – one reads in the ruling – for

reasons of safety it is thought opportune that the Battle of the Oranges should be limited exclusively to the areas traditionally reserved for throwing . . .’

Notice how, when quoting a regulation or law (as in the last example above), an impersonal verb form (see 2.1.7 and 19.5) such as **si legge** can be used to stress the objective nature of its content rather than its ‘author’. This and other impersonal expressions are often used when a quotation is included in formal or legal reports and correspondence, as below:

Nella Vostra lettera del 15 maggio u.s. si dichiarava quanto segue: “La consegna della merce avverrà entro e non oltre il 10 giugno p.v.”

In your letter of 15 May last, the following was stated: ‘The delivery of the goods will take place by and no later than 10 June.’

Nella circolare del 6/7/04 si fa riferimento a “tutte le competenze spettanti all’interessato” e si assicura che “saranno liquidate entro trenta giorni dalla data dell’assunzione in servizio”.

In the circular of 6/7/04, reference is made to ‘all the fees to which the person concerned is entitled’ and assurance is given that ‘these will be paid within 30 days of the date of starting employment’.

See also the use of the impersonal verb form **si dice** in 31.4.

31.3 Reporting: indirect speech

When using *indirect speech* to quote somebody, note how the reported discourse is often introduced by the conjunction **che** (see 5.3.1).

Le previsioni del tempo dicono che oggi farà caldo.

The weather forecast says that today it will be hot.

Sui manuali di enologia abbiamo trovato la notizia storica che la Vernaccia di San Gimignano è stato il primo vino a Denominazione d’Origine Controllata in Italia.

In the winemaking manuals we found the historic information that Vernaccia of San Gimignano was the first DOC wine in Italy.

When referring to something that one has been told, it is not always possible in Italian to use a passive construction such as the English ‘I have been told’ (see 19.3.1). The following expressions may be used instead:

Mi hanno detto che dovevo rivolgermi a questo ufficio per il rinnovo del passaporto.

I was told that I had to apply to this office for the extension of my passport.

Mi hanno comunicato in ritardo che la data della partenza era stata cambiata.

I was informed too late that the departure date had been changed.

An indirect quotation of the kind shown in the examples above is usually composed of a main clause containing the verb of ‘saying, stating’, etc. (for example **dicono, hanno detto, mi hanno comunicato**) and a dependent clause, introduced by **che**.

When using a verb such as **informare** which takes a direct object, the passive construction can be used (see 19.2):

Sono stata informata che la mia patente è scaduta.

I have been told (informed) that my driver's licence has expired.

31.3.1 Choosing the verb tense

When deciding which tense to use for the dependent verb, it is important to take into account the tense/time of the main verb, and to apply the guidelines of the sequence of tenses, illustrated in Appendix III and Chapter 30.

Let's see how to transform a direct quotation into an indirect quotation, applying the sequence of tenses:

Main clause		Dependent clause	
Present	Present	Past	Future
Mario dice	"Finisco all'una"	"Ho finito all'una"	"Finirò all'una"
Mario dice che	Finisce all'una	Ha finito all'una	Finirà all'una
Past			
Mario ha detto	"Finisco all'una"	"Ho finito all'una"	"Finirò all'una"
Mario ha detto che	Finiva all'una	Aveva finito all'una	Avrebbe finito/ finiva all'una

31.3.2 Changing other elements

When transforming speech into the indirect form, other elements must change, as well as the tense of the verbs. Note the change of *subject* (**io** > **lui**) in the dependent clause in the examples above:

Mario dice: "(Io) finisco all'una."

Mario says 'I finish at 1 o'clock.'

Mario dice che (lui) finisce all'una.

Mario says that he finishes at 1 o'clock.

Any time or place indications, and any demonstratives (see 3.8) such as **questo**, **quello** also need to be adapted to the form of indirect speech, as in the following examples:

Il ministro ha dichiarato: "L'accordo sarà firmato domani."

The Minister stated 'The agreement will be signed tomorrow.'

Il ministro ha dichiarato che l'accordo sarebbe stato firmato il giorno dopo.

The Minister declared that the agreement would be signed the next day.

Mia madre mi ha chiesto: "Hai letto questo libro di Eco?"

My mother asked me: 'Have you read this book by Eco?'

Mia madre mi ha chiesto se avevo letto quel libro di Eco.

My mother asked me if I had read that book by Eco.

Here is a summary of the time references used in direct and indirect speech:

*Direct speech**Indirect speech*

Mario ha detto: "Parto oggi"

Mario ha detto che partiva *quel giorno*

"Sono partito ieri"

era partito *il giorno prima*

"Partirò domani"

sarebbe partito *il giorno dopo*

"Questo mese/quest'anno ho fatto buoni affari"

quel mese/quell'anno aveva fatto buoni affari

"Il mese/l'anno scorso ho fatto buoni affari"

il mese/l'anno precedente aveva fatto buoni affari

"Il mese/l'anno prossimo farò buoni affari"

il mese/l'anno successivo avrebbe fatto buoni affari

31.4

Reporting information or quoting hearsay

Reporting information or quoting hearsay may be done with a greater or lesser degree of certainty and/or objectivity. For this purpose different moods of verbs can be used: *indicative* (see 2.3.2) to show objectivity, *conditional* (see 2.3.11) and *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14) to show uncertainty or subjectivity.

The following example shows how the fact of an event is reported in the *indicative*, while something less certain, such as the possible causes of it, is in the *conditional*. In English, a plain indicative tense is used, sometimes accompanied by a word such as 'apparently' to indicate lack of proof or certainty:

È annegato davanti a Capo Ferrato Giuseppe Puddu, guardia giurata di 30 anni, di Maracalagonis, durante una battuta di pesca subacquea. La causa della morte sarebbe un malore che avrebbe colto il giovane durante l'immersione

(Adapted from *La Repubblica*, 6 August 1995)

A security guard aged 30, from Maracalagonis, Giuseppe Puddu, drowned off Capo Ferrato, while underwater fishing. The cause of death was, apparently, a sudden bad turn which the young man suffered while diving.

Factual information, e.g. statistics or figures, may well receive different interpretations. In the following example, the figures on employment in Italy, given by ISTAT (the National Institute for Statistics), are reported in *La Repubblica* on 25 September 2003:

Il Governo è entusiasta: ". . . il dato è straordinariamente positivo."

The Government is enthusiastic: '. . . the figure is extraordinarily positive.'

Per Confindustria: ". . . il dato ISTAT indicherebbe addirittura una diminuzione degli occupati."

In the view of Confindustria: '. . . the ISTAT figure may even indicate a decrease in the number of people in employment.'

Per il sindacato CGIL: ". . . la crescita dell'occupazione si è fermata."

In the view of the Trade Union CGIL: '. . . the growth in employment has halted.'

Here the use of the *conditional* (**indicherebbe**) by Confindustria (the Employers Association), shows the attempt to give the figures an interpretation that is clearly the opposite of the Government's and might be considered controversial. At the other end of the spectrum, the Trade Union's negative interpretation of the figures is stated strongly and given as objective and factually certain, by the use of the *indicative* (**la crescita si è fermata**).

Hearsay, or highly doubtful information, is usually introduced by such verbs as **pare che**, **sembra che**, **si dice che** followed by the subjunctive. These verbs, being impersonal, convey information without referring to its source. Let's see how gossip about a famous star is reported in *La Repubblica*:

Pare che* Barbra Streisand (61) *abbia rinunciato ad esibirsi dal vivo.

It seems that Barbra Streisand (61) has given up performing live in public.

Sembra che* la star americana *sia annoiata dalle proprie canzoni.

The American star is reported to be bored by her own songs.

Si dice che* gli uomini *facciano più incidenti stradali delle donne.

They say (it is said) that men have more road accidents than women.

When we want to refer to the source of some information, without endorsing its content, we use the word **secondo** followed by the indication of the source. In this case the choice of either indicative or conditional indicates the different degrees of certainty of the information:

Secondo la stampa americana* la cantante Barbra Streisand *avrebbe rinunciato ad esibirsi in pubblico.

According to the American press, the singer Barbra Streisand has given up live appearances.

When used to express one's own opinion too (**secondo me**, **secondo noi**), use of the *conditional* softens the forcefulness of our opinion and sounds more polite (see also Chapter 27):

... e secondo te tutte queste notizie sarebbero vere?

... and in your opinion, are all these news stories true?

***Secondo me* i giornalisti *dovrebbero* controllare meglio le informazioni.**

In my opinion, the journalists should check the information more carefully.

***Secondo me* faresti bene a prenderti una vacanza.**

In my opinion, you would do well to have a holiday.

The use of the *indicative*, on the other hand, conveys strong conviction or belief, presented as fact, as in the following examples:

***Secondo me* tutte queste notizie *sono* false.**

In my opinion, all these news stories are false.

***Secondo fonti attendibili* della Banca d'Italia l'inflazione è *diminuita* dello 0,5 per cento nel primo trimestre del 2004.**

According to reliable sources in the Banca d'Italia, inflation has fallen by 0.5% in the first three months of 2004.

***Secondo quanto accertato* dalla polizia stradale, prima dello scontro la Citroen *viaggiava* ad oltre 160 chilometri all'ora e il guidatore *ha battuto* la testa morendo sul colpo.**

According to the findings of the traffic police, before the crash, the Citroen was travelling at over 160 km per hour, and the driver struck his head, dying instantly.

Secondo un sondaggio 8 italiani su 10 tradiscono il coniuge.

According to an opinion poll, eight Italians out of ten betray their partner.

Another very simple way to convey an opinion is to use **per**, with the *indicative* or the *conditional*:

Per me, hai torto.

In my opinion, you are wrong.

Per me, Andreotti ha commesso un errore.

In my opinion, Andreotti made a mistake.

Per la stampa italiana, la situazione economica del paese sarebbe in via di miglioramento.

According to the Italian press, the economic situation is improving.

Per gran parte del pubblico americano, OJ Simpson non avrebbe commesso nessun delitto.

According to a large sector of the American public, OJ Simpson did not commit any crime.

32

Expressing possibility and probability

32.1 Introduction

This section looks at ways of putting our message in context in a complex sentence. One important context is that of *possibility* and *probability*: saying how certain or how likely it is, that something has happened/is happening/will happen.

On the whole, we can separate statements of possibility or probability into two broad categories: those which represent a *personal opinion* or *subjective point of view* ('I think, we believe'), and those which represent a *general state of affairs* or *objective point of view*, whether fact or fiction ('it seems, it is likely').

The first category – *personal opinion or subjective point of view* – is covered in Chapter 27 and in 29.2–5 and includes verbs such as **credere, essere certo/sicuro, pensare, ricordare, sembrare, sapere**.

In this chapter we look at the second category, the *impersonal or objective point of view*.

32.2 Certainty, uncertainty

The adjectives **certo, sicuro** can be used impersonally, to express the English 'it is certain' (compare with their more personal use illustrated in 29.3):

È certo che la vita è più cara in Italia.

It's certain that life is dearer in Italy.

Non è sicuro che il posto lo prenda lui.

It's not certain that *he* will get the job.

È **certo**, è **sicuro** can be replaced by the adverbs or adverbial phrases **certamente, sicuramente, di sicuro**:

Certamente la vita è più cara in Italia.

Certainly life is dearer in Italy.

Sicuramente/Di sicuro il posto non lo prende lui.

Certainly he won't get the job.

Note the difference in degree of certainty between the two negative statements: **Non è sicuro che il posto lo prenda lui**, where the subjunctive expresses doubt, and **Sicuramente il posto non lo prende lui**, in which no doubt is expressed and the indicative is used.

32.3 Knowing, not knowing

Sapere can also be used with an impersonal subject **si** 'one', as in the expression **si sa** (see also 2.1.8 and 19.5). Again uncertainty is expressed by the use of the subjunctive:

Si sa che gli inglesi sono molto riservati.

It is generally known that the English are reserved.

Non si sa se gli ostaggi siano ancora vivi.

It is not known if the hostages are still alive.

32.4 Possible or impossible, probable or improbable

Certain adjectives can be used with the verb **essere** to form so-called impersonal phrases in which no specific person or object is mentioned:

È impossibile imparare l'italiano.

It is impossible to learn Italian.

The most common impersonal phrases are the following:

è possibile	it's possible
è impossibile	it's impossible
è probabile	it's probable/likely
è improbabile	it's improbable/unlikely
è facile	It's easy/likely
è difficile	it's difficult/unlikely

These phrases can be followed either by the verb infinitive, or by **che** and a clause.

These adjectives can also be used to refer to a person or an object: **è una persona difficile** 'she is an impossible person'; **è un compito impossibile** 'it is an impossible task'.

In a *general statement*, where *no* individual subject is mentioned, these phrases are used with the verb infinitive:

È possibile vedere il mare?

Is it possible to see the sea?

È possibile mangiare fuori?

Is it possible to eat outside?

È facile imparare l'italiano.

It's easy to learn Italian.

È impossibile completare questi ordini prima della fine del mese.

It's impossible to complete these orders before the end of the month.

When a *specific subject* needs to be mentioned (for example 'I', 'you', 'the hotel') we use **che**, introducing a verb in the subjunctive to express uncertainty:

È possibile che tu abbia dormito fino a mezzogiorno?

Is it really possible that you slept to midday?

È probabile che l'albergo sia pieno.

It is likely that the hotel will be full.

È poco probabile che lui l'abbia rubato.

It's not very likely that he stole it.

È impossibile che i conti siano sbagliati.

It's impossible that the accounts are wrong.

The phrases **È facile che/È difficile che** can also convey the meaning of 'It's likely'/'It's unlikely':

È facile che il contabile sbagli.

It's easy (likely) for the accountant to make mistakes.

È difficile che loro arrivino prima di pranzo.

It's unlikely that they will arrive before lunch.

The expressions **si dice, dicono** 'one says'/'it is said, they say' are used to report what someone said, whether likely to be true or just hearsay (see 31.4):

Si dice che Joan Collins abbia fatto il lifting varie volte.

It is said that Joan Collins has had several facelifts.

32.5 Evident, obvious

Phrases that express certainty more than probability include:

è chiaro	it's clear
è evidente	it's evident, obvious
è ovvio	it's obvious

These expressions, by their very nature, always express certainty, so are always followed by the indicative:

È chiaro che l'autore scrive di una sua esperienza personale.

It is clear that the author is writing about a personal experience.

Era evidente che l'impiegato non era in grado di svolgere quella funzione.

It was obvious that the employee was not able to carry out that function.

33

Expressing purpose

33.1 Introduction

Purpose involves an element of premeditation. A *purpose* clause tells us what the subject's *intention* or *purpose* is, or was, in advance of the action. A *reason* clause tells us – after the event – why someone did something or why something happened. Both 'reason' clauses and 'purpose' clauses are introduced by conjunctions (see 5.3) or other connecting words. Generally, clauses of reason have a verb in the *indicative* (see 2.3.2), while clauses of purpose have a verb in the *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14). The difference between them is best illustrated by the conjunction **perché** (see 15.3.3), which is used to express *reason* and *purpose*:

Reason **Ho parlato lentamente perché l'interprete doveva tradurre.**
I spoke slowly *because* the interpreter had to translate.

Purpose **Parlerò lentamente perché l'interprete possa tradurre.**
I will speak slowly *so that* the interpreter can translate.

An event may not have had a human *cause* or *reason*, but may have been caused by 'events outside our control', for example an 'act of God' or a natural disaster. A *sense of purpose*, on the other hand, is almost always confined to humans:

A causa del temporale, la partita è finita presto.
Because of the storm, the match ended early.

Mi sono alzata presto per prendere il treno delle 5.00.
I got up early to catch the 5.00 train.

In *grammatical* terms, the most important factor in expressing *purpose* is to determine whether another person or object is involved in, or affected by, the action, apart from the original subject (subject of the main verb).

33.2 Purpose involving only the subject of the action

In Italian, when the aim or purpose expressed involves *only the subject of the action*, it is expressed by either:

- (a) Prepositions **per**, **a** + infinitive (see 2.3.1)

The preposition most frequently used to express purpose is **per** (see 4.3.6, 4.4) 'in order to':

Lucia ha lavorato per pagarsi le vacanze.
Lucia worked to pay for her holidays.

Lo facciamo *per risparmiare tempo*.

We are doing it to save time.

Chiudi la porta *per non far entrare il gatto*.

Shut the door so as not to let the cat in.

With verbs expressing *movement*, such as **andare**, **venire**, **correre**, there is a choice of using **a** or **per** (see 4.3.1, 4.4). Whereas **a** tends to focus on *where* you are going, **per** has more of a sense of purpose and indicates *for what reason* you are going there:

I turisti vanno a Roma *per vedere il Papa*.

Tourists go to Rome to see the Pope.

Mentre eravamo a Roma, siamo andati *a vedere il Papa*.

While we were in Rome, we went to see the Pope.

Devo andare a Londra *per rinnovare il passaporto al consolato*.

I have to go to London to renew my passport at the Consulate.

I ragazzi sono andati a casa di Edoardo *a guardare un DVD*.

The boys went to Edoardo's house to watch a DVD.

Teresa veniva da me *per fare lezioni d'italiano*.

Teresa used to come to me to do Italian lessons.

(b) Prepositional phrases **al fine di**, **allo scopo di** + infinitive

Phrases used to express purpose include:

allo scopo di with the aim of

(con lo scopo di)

al fine di with the aim of

Lucia ha lavorato *allo scopo di pagarsi gli studi universitari*.

Lucia worked to pay for her university studies.

Abbiamo lanciato il nuovo prodotto *al fine di conquistare il mercato italiano*.

We have launched the new product with the aim of conquering the Italian market.

Other phrases expressing future intention can be found in 14.9.

(c) **pur di**

A sense of near desperation is implied by use of the phrase **pur di** 'just to':

È disposto a tutto *pur di non fare il servizio militare*.

He's willing to do anything just to get out of military service.

La signora Ferri avrebbe fatto di tutto *pur di essere invitata al ricevimento all'ambasciata*.

Signora Ferri would have done anything to be invited to the reception at the Embassy.

33.3 Purpose involving someone or something else

Where the aim or purpose expressed involves *another person* or object, other than the one carrying out the original action (the subject of the main verb), Italian uses a *conjunction* (see 5.3) to introduce a subordinate clause in which the person involved or affected is the subject of a verb in the *subjunctive*.

33.3.1 Conjunctions

Examples of conjunctions and phrases used to introduce a purpose clause are, in order of frequency, **perché** 'in order that', **affinché** 'in order that', **in modo che** 'in such a way that', **in maniera che** 'in such a way that'.

The *subjunctive* is used after these conjunctions because it is not certain that the aim can be achieved. The tense can be either *present* (when the main verb is present, or future) or *imperfect* (when the main verb is in a past tense or present conditional):

Il Governo si impegnerà affinché la guerra civile non diventi un massacro.

The Government will take steps so that the civil war does not become a massacre.

Volevamo organizzare il congresso per settembre in modo che venissero tutti i rappresentanti.

We wanted to organise the congress for September so that all the representatives came.

The normal order in sentences of this kind is to have the main clause followed by the subordinate clause (the purpose clause). But it is possible to reverse the order:

Perché i clienti disabili possano venire ospitati in albergo, chiediamo agli albergatori di mettere a disposizione alcune camere al pianterreno.

So that disabled clients can be put up in hotels, we ask hotel owners to put at their disposal a few rooms on the ground floor.

33.3.2 Alternatives to a purpose clause

In everyday speech and writing, in order to avoid a 'heavy' construction such as those above, Italians prefer alternative ways of expressing purpose.

Che expressing purpose

Where another person (or an object) is involved, we can use the relative pronoun **che** (see 3.5) to express what our intention is for that person or object, i.e. what we want him/it to do. The implication of 'purpose' is marked by the use of the subjunctive:

Facciamo venire un meccanico che ripari la lavatrice.

We'll call a mechanic who (so that he) can repair the washing machine.

Volevamo prenotare una vacanza al sole che ci permettesse di rilassarci e di visitare dei posti d'interesse.

We wanted to book a holiday in the sun which would allow us to (so that we could) relax and to visit some places of interest.

In spoken Italian, when the objective is more likely to be met, an *indicative* verb is sometimes used:

Chiamiamo il cameriere *che* ci porta una bella bibita fresca.

Let's call the waiter, who'll bring us a nice cool drink.

The use of the subjunctive implying purpose also implies that the speaker is looking for a *type* of person or object, not one specific one known to him or her. Note the difference between these two sentences:

Il direttore cerca un'assistente *che* possa tradurre le lettere commerciali e mandare dei fax in inglese.

The manager is looking for an assistant who can translate commercial letters and send faxes in English.

Il direttore cerca l'assistente nuova *che* può tradurre le lettere commerciali e mandare dei fax in inglese.

The manager is looking for the new assistant who can translate commercial letters and send faxes in English.

Fare + infinitive

Another way to mention or bring into the conversation the person affected by the plans, is to use **fare**, with a direct or indirect object pronoun identifying the person affected either directly or indirectly (see 21.5). Study the examples below:

Telefoniamo alla reception, *per farci* portare la colazione in camera.

Let's ring Reception to have breakfast brought to us in the room.

Valentina ha chiamato il fidanzato *per farlo* venire alle 7.00.

Valentina called her boyfriend to have him come at 7.00.

Valentina ha chiamato il fidanzato *per fargli* portare la macchina.

Valentina called her boyfriend to have him bring the car.

To summarise, the same concept can be expressed in three different ways, depending on the register used. With the most formal option first, they are:

Chiamo mia figlia *perché* prepari la cena.

I'll call my daughter so that she can make supper.

Chiamo mia figlia *per farle* preparare la cena.

I'll call my daughter to get her to make supper.

Chiamo mia figlia *che* prepara la cena.

I'll call my daughter who will make supper.

33.4 Purpose attached to a person/object

33.4.1 Per

Per can also describe the purpose of an object or person, for example:

Questo è un nuovo prodotto *per* liberare il bagno dagli scarafaggi.

This is a new product to free the bathroom of cockroaches.

Gli studenti hanno formato un'organizzazione *per* proteggere i diritti delle minoranze etniche.

The students formed an organisation to protect the rights of ethnic minorities.

Adesso che ho deciso di tornare al lavoro, devo trovare una persona *per* tenermi la bimba.

Now that I've decided to go back to work, I have to find someone to look after my child for me.

33.4.2 *Da*

Da can be used to express the purpose or use of an object in the passive sense for example 'a magazine *to be read*', 'something *to be eaten*':

Vorrei comprare una rivista *da* leggere sul treno.

I'd like to buy a magazine to read on the train.

Dopo averci fatto aspettare 12 ore all'aeroporto, finalmente ci hanno offerto qualcosa *da* mangiare.

After making us wait 12 hours at the airport, they finally gave us something to eat.

34

Expressing causes and reasons

34.1 Introduction

Frequently we need to explain the reason behind an event or action, or to justify our actions or those of someone else. There are various ways in which we can do this in Italian. Sometimes one person or thing is responsible, sometimes there is a factor or set of circumstances.

34.2 Specific people, factors or events responsible

Sometimes the cause of an event can be attributed to just one person, thing or event (expressed by a noun or pronoun), in which case one of the following *prepositional phrases* can be used:

grazie a	thanks to
a causa di	because of
per via di	because of

È grazie al chirurgo che mio figlio è ancora vivo oggi.
It's thanks to the surgeon that my son is still alive today.

È grazie agli impiegati che l'azienda ha avuto tanto successo.
It's thanks to the employees that the firm has been so successful.

A causa degli scioperi, l'aereo è arrivato a Catania con due ore di ritardo.
Because of the strikes, the plane was two hours late arriving in Catania.

Per via del traffico, siamo arrivati a casa stanchi e nervosi.
Because of the traffic, we arrived home tired and edgy.

34.3 General cause or reason

Sometimes the cause of an event or action is a situation or combination of factors. There are several ways of expressing such a cause.

34.3.1 Using a causal clause

A conjunction or similar phrase can be used to introduce a *causal clause* (*clause of reason*). The most common conjunctions are:

considerato che	considering that
dal momento che	since

dato che	given that
giacché	since
in quanto	inasmuch as
per il fatto che	for the fact that
per il motivo che	for the reason that
perché	because
poiché	since
siccome	since
visto che	seeing as

By far the most common of these is **perché**, followed by **poiché**, **giacché**, with **siccome** frequently used in the spoken language. These all use the *indicative* (see however the note on **non perché** below). Compare this use of **perché** with **perché** expressing 'purpose' (see Chapter 33). The position of the 'since'/'because' clauses differs according to the conjunction used.

A causal clause introduced by **perché** always comes after the main clause:

Sono stata bocciata perché non avevo studiato per niente.
I failed because I didn't study at all.

Clauses introduced by other conjunctions/phrases are more flexible, and can come either before or after the main clause:

Poiché non avevano il capitale per formare una società, hanno deciso di cercare collaboratori.

Since they didn't have enough capital to form a company, they decided to look for collaborators.

Ci metteremo subito al lavoro, giacché abbiamo cominciato con un po' di ritardo.

We will start work straightaway, since we began a little late.

Siccome sei stato tu a voler comprare i calamari, adesso li puoi preparare.

Since it was you who wanted to buy the squid, now you can prepare it.

Dato che la situazione peggiorava, l'ONU ha deciso di ritirare le sue truppe.

Since the situation was getting worse, the UN decided to withdraw its troops.

Sometimes **perché** is replaced by the shortened form **ché**, considered rather old-fashioned, but still seen in written texts:

Non far rumore, ché ho mal di testa.

Don't make a noise because I've got a headache.

Also found in informal spoken language, is **che** used with a causal meaning:

Vieni con me, che vado a vedere cosa succede.

Come with me (since) I'm going to see what's happening.

The phrases **visto che**, **considerato che**, **in quanto** tend to be used particularly in bureaucratic or legal language:

Visto che non si è concluso niente, sarebbe meglio rimandare la riunione a domani.

Since nothing has been decided, it would be better to put off our meeting until tomorrow.

Visto e considerato che non stati rispettati i termini del contratto, possiamo procedere all'annullamento dello stesso.

In view of the fact that the terms of the contract have not been fulfilled, we can proceed to the annulment of the same.

È in parte responsabile il direttore di marketing in quanto non aveva pensato a come realizzare il progetto.

The director of marketing is partially responsible in that he hadn't thought about how to put the plan into effect.

Note that **in quanto** can also be used *without* a verb, for example:

Dopo il disastro, l'Ingegnere è stato criticato in quanto responsabile della manutenzione della diga.

After the disaster, the chief engineer was criticised as the person responsible for the upkeep of the dam.

Non perché and **non ché** are used to say that something is *not* the real reason behind an event or action; these are usually followed by the subjunctive, although the indicative is frequently used in everyday speech. If the *real* reason is given as well, this is in the indicative:

Il capo vuole mandarla via, non perché gli sia antipatica, ma perché proprio non sa fare il suo lavoro.

The boss wants to get rid of her, not because he doesn't like her, but because she really doesn't know how to do her job.

Non perché ti voglia offendere, ma forse la danza classica non è il tuo forte.

Not that I want to offend you, but perhaps classical dance isn't your strong point.

34.3.2 Using *per* + infinitive

When the *same person* is the subject of both cause and effect, **per** and an infinitive (usually past) can be used:

Un nostro collega fu licenziato per aver portato a casa un computer.

A colleague of ours was sacked for having taken a computer home.

Per can be expanded into **per il fatto di**:

Mio fratello è rimasto stupito per il fatto di aver vinto il premio.

My brother was amazed at having won the prize.

Il direttore è arrabbiato per il fatto di dover riprogrammare tutto.

The manager is angry at having to reschedule everything.

Il ragazzo viene giudicato male per il fatto di essere timido.

The boy is judged harshly because of being shy.

34.3.3 Using the gerund

The gerund, present or past (see 2.3.25) can also have a *causal* meaning. The subject of the gerund should also be the subject of the 'result' clause ('we . . . we') or should be mentioned explicitly, as in the last example:

Sapendo che saremmo tornati a Natale, abbiamo lasciato gli sci a casa dei nostri amici.

Knowing that we would be coming back at Christmas, we left our skis at our friends' house.

Avendo già chiesto il prezzo della camera all'ufficio turistico, abbiamo capito subito che la padrona di casa ci faceva pagare troppo.

Having already asked the price of the room at the tourist office, we realised immediately that the landlady was charging us too much.

Essendo chiuso il negozietto, abbiamo comprato il latte al bar.

Since the corner shop was shut, we bought milk from the café.

34.3.4 Using the past participle

Similarly, even the past participle (see 2.3.28) can express a reason or cause. Again the subject of the participle must be that of the main verb, or, if not, must be specifically expressed:

Laureato con 110 e lode, Marco pensò di trovare subito un posto, ma non era così facile.

Having graduated with top marks, Marco thought he would find a job straightaway, but it wasn't so easy.

Partiti i genitori, i ragazzi hanno organizzato una festa in casa.

With their parents gone, the kids organised a party at their house.

34.4 Il motivo, la causa, la ragione

Italian, as English, has several nouns denoting *cause* or *reason*, such as **la ragione**, **la causa** and **il motivo**, already seen above. They are followed by the relative **per cui** (3.5) or **per il/la quale** 'the reason . . . for which' rather than the more generic **perché** 'the reason . . . why':

Il motivo per cui abbiamo scelto questa casa è la posizione tranquilla.

The reason we have chosen this house is its quiet position.

La ragione per la quale non sono venuti è che avevano dei compiti da finire.

The reason why they didn't come is that they had homework to finish.

Che ragioni aveva per agire in questo modo?

What reasons did she have to act in this way?

Il disaccordo tra i soci è stato **la causa** del fallimento dell'azienda.

The disagreement between the shareholders was the cause of the company's bankruptcy.

Per quale motivo bisogna fare il check-in due ore prima del volo?

Why does one have to check in two hours before the flight?

The reasons can be specified by adding an *adjective*, for example:

per ragioni familiari for family reasons

per motivi finanziari for financial reasons

per motivi personali for personal reasons

34.5 **Causare, provocare, suscitare**

Verbs meaning 'to cause' include **causare**, **portare a**, **produrre**, **provocare**, **stimolare**, **suscitare**:

Una sigaretta buttata per terra ha provocato l'incendio.

A cigarette thrown on the ground caused the fire.

All these verbs except **portare a** can be used in a passive construction:

La sua malattia era causata dallo stress.

Her illness was caused by stress.

Le proteste erano suscitate dall'inerzia delle autorità.

The protests were caused by the inertia of the authorities.

34.6 **Dovere, dovuto**

The verb **dovere** (see 2.2.4) can have the meaning 'to be due to' and can be used to express cause:

Si deve al tuo lavoro se abbiamo ottenuto buoni risultati.

If we have had good results, it's due to your work.

The past participle **dovuto** must refer to one specific noun, with which it agrees, as shown below:

Il problema del traffico a Napoli è dovuto alla struttura della città.

The traffic problem in Naples is due to the structure of the city.

Abbiamo incontrato delle code sull'autostrada dovute a una manifestazione dei camionisti.

We met queues on the autostrada (motorway) due to a demonstration of lorry drivers.

Where the reason is not a single factor but a whole set of circumstances, the phrase **il fatto che** 'the fact that' can be used to introduce the reason:

Marisa non si decideva a buttarsi in acqua. La sua indecisione era dovuta al fatto che non sapeva nuotare.

Marisa couldn't make up her mind whether to jump into the water.

Her indecision was due to the fact that she couldn't swim.

34.7 **Asking why**

The question 'why' (see 15.3.3) can also be asked by using **come mai** or **perché**:

Come mai non sei venuto stasera?

How come you didn't come tonight?

Perché non mi rivolge la parola?

Why isn't she speaking to me?

You can also ask the reason:

Qual è il motivo della sua gelosia?

What is the reason for her jealousy?

Qual è la spiegazione di questo comportamento?

What is the explanation for this behaviour?

Come si può spiegare questo fenomeno?

How can one explain this phenomenon?

34.8 Using the imperfect tense to give reasons

Often the *imperfect* tense (see 2.3.6 and 13.6.5) is used to supply the background to an action or event, usually expressed in the compound perfect. Even without a specific conjunction of *cause*, the 'reason' aspect is clear from the context:

Siamo andati a casa. (*perché*) Eravamo stanchi.

We went home. (because) We were tired.

35

Expressing result, effect and consequence

35.1 Introduction

In narrative, and in everyday conversation, events can be seen as a sequence of purpose–action–result. In Chapters 33 and 34 we looked at *purpose* and *reason* respectively. Here we look at how to express results, consequences and effects in Italian.

35.2 Coordinating conjunctions

Conclusions and results can be expressed by two equal clauses of *consequence* or *result* introduced by simple *coordinating conjunctions* such as **e**, **ma** (see 30.2) and/or by other adverbs or phrases that link an action or event to its end result, for example:

allora	therefore
così	thus
dunque	therefore
in questo modo	in this way
perciò	therefore
per cui	and so
pertanto	therefore
quindi	therefore

Marco non fa mai niente in casa, e allora perché devo sempre lavare i piatti io?

Marco never does anything in the house, so why do I always have to wash the dishes?

L'agricoltura ormai è in declino allora bisogna sfruttare le nostre risorse naturali per il turismo.

Agriculture is in decline now so one must exploit our natural resources for tourism.

Mi hanno rubato la borsetta con tutte le carte di credito e i soldi (action or event) e così mi sono trovata senza soldi (end result).

They stole my handbag with all my credit cards and cash and so I found myself without any money.

Penso, *dunque* esisto.
I think, therefore I am.

Nell'ambiente di lavoro siamo tutti sotto pressione e *dunque* si creano delle tensioni.
In the work environment we are all under pressure and so tensions are created.

Ti sei comportato malissimo alla festa (action/event). *In questo modo non avrai più amici* (end result).
You behaved really badly at the party. If you carry on like this, you won't have any more friends.

La ditta versava in condizioni economiche disastrose e *perciò* ha licenziato più di 200 impiegati.
The company was in a disastrous economic condition and therefore they sacked more than 200 employees.

Eravamo tutti stanchi *per cui* abbiamo preferito non uscire.
We were all tired so we preferred not to go out.

Il settore automobilistico è in crisi. *Pertanto* si potranno verificare dei ribassi nelle assunzioni in questo settore.
The automobile sector is in a crisis. Therefore there may be some reductions in employment in this sector.

Non ho potuto fare una vacanza quest'anno e *quindi* mi sento veramente stanca.
I wasn't able to have a holiday this year, so I feel really tired.

Used almost exclusively in spoken Italian is the phrase *ecco che* 'and there you are' as in this example below:

La gente corre, le strade sono bagnate. Ed *ecco che* succedono degli incidenti stradali.
People drive too fast, the roads are wet. And there you are with road accidents happening.

35.3 Conclusive (result) conjunctions

Consequence or result can also be expressed by a sequence of main clause (the original action) and dependent verb construction (the consequence) linked by conjunctions such as *cosicché*, *di modo che*, *in modo che*, *perché*, *sicché* and informally *che*. The verb expressing the result or consequence is normally in the indicative or conditional:

La strada era bagnata *cosicché* quando mio marito ha frenato, la macchina ha sbandato.
The road was wet, so that when my husband braked, the car skidded.

Andava troppo veloce *di modo che* arrivata alla curva la macchina è andata fuori strada.
She was going too fast, so that when it got to the bend the car went off the road.

However the verb may be in the subjunctive, if the result is seen as unlikely or improbable, or, as in this example, where it implies deliberate purpose:

Ha versato da bere in modo che non vedessimo quello che faceva.
He poured the drinks in such a way that we didn't see what he was doing.

See also 35.4 below for an example using **perché**.

35.4 **Così, tale, tanto, troppo**

Result is frequently linked to a main clause containing an adjective or adverb expressing *excess or extent*.

Adjectives include **tale** 'of such a kind (that, as to)', **tanto** 'so much, so great (that)', **troppo** 'too much (for)'. *Adverbs* include **così** 'so, so much so (that)', **talmente** 'so, so much so (that)', **tanto** 'so, so much (that)', **troppo** 'too, too much (for)'.

The consequence can be expressed by an infinitive introduced by **da** or **per**. In this case the subject of the infinitive must be the same as that of the main clause:

Il direttore è troppo impegnato per riceverLa oggi.
The manager is too busy to see you today.

La sua intelligenza è tale da far paura.
His intelligence is so great as to be frightening.

È cambiato tanto da non essere più riconoscibile.
He's changed so much as to have become unrecognisable.

Ha bevuto troppa birra per poter guidare la macchina.
He has drunk too much beer to be able to drive the car.

Otherwise consequence can be expressed by **che** and a dependent clause. The verb expressing the result or consequence is normally in the indicative or conditional:

Eravamo così stanchi che non riuscivamo a tenere gli occhi aperti.
We were so tired that we couldn't keep our eyes open.

Mi sento tanto male che non riesco a stare in piedi.
I feel so ill I can't stand up.

Provo una tale antipatia per Carlo che vorrei ucciderlo.
I dislike Carlo so much that I could kill him.

La soluzione mi sembra talmente facile che potrei anche cominciare domani.
The solution seems to me so easy that I could even start tomorrow.

However the verb may be in the subjunctive if the result is seen as unlikely or improbable, as in this example, introduced by **perché** where the sentence implies deliberate purpose:

Gli studenti sono troppo giovani perché possano capire i nostri problemi.
The students are too young to be able to understand our problems.

Extent can also be expressed by using **basta** 'it is enough to, one need only' and **solo** 'only' in the main clause:

Devi solo leggere i giornali per capire i problemi del mondo.

You only have to read the newspapers to understand the problems of the world.

Basta un minimo di intelligenza per imparare una lingua straniera.

One only needs a minimum of intelligence to learn a foreign language.

In the example below, **perché** is followed by the subjunctive, to express the *result* or *effect* of an action:

Ci sono la radio, la televisione, *basta* aprirle per un secondo *perché* il male ci raggiunga, ci entri dentro.

(Susanna Tamaro, *Va dove ti porta il cuore*)

There is the radio, the television. You only have to switch them on for the evil to reach us, to enter into us.

35.5 Words expressing result, effect

35.5.1 Nouns expressing result, effect, consequence

These include:

il risultato	result
l'effetto/gli effetti	effect(s)
l'impatto	impact
la conseguenza	consequence
la conclusione	conclusion

L'iniziativa ha avuto risultati inattesi.

The initiative had unexpected results.

La mancanza di azione da parte dell'ONU ha avuto conseguenze disastrose per la popolazione.

The lack of action on the part of the UN had disastrous consequences for the population.

Questa medicina può avere effetti collaterali. Leggere attentamente le istruzioni.

This medicine can have side effects. Read the instructions carefully.

L'effetto dello sciopero è stato minimo.

The effect of the strike was minimal.

Verbs meaning 'to cause, to bring about' are illustrated in Chapter 34.

35.5.2 Expressing the extent of the effects or consequences

The *extent* of the effect or consequence is expressed by adjectives such as **rilevante**, **importante**, **notevole** or phrases such as **di lunga portata**, **di rilievo**, if stressing its importance; if stressing its insignificance, use adjectives such as **irrilevante**, **minimo**, **insignificante** or phrases such as **di nessun rilievo**, **di nessuna importanza**:

Il terremoto aveva provocato poche morti, ma aveva avuto conseguenze economiche *di lunga portata*.

The earthquake had caused few deaths, but had had far-reaching economic consequences.

In Italia, la recessione ha avuto un impatto *notevole*.

In Italy, the recession had a considerable impact.

Secondo il governo francese, gli effetti degli esperimenti nucleari a Mururoa sarebbero *di nessuna importanza*.

According to the French government, the effects of the nuclear experiments at Mururoa are of no importance.

35.5.3 Surveys and opinion polls

The results of surveys, opinion polls, etc. are often expressed by the verbs **risultare**, **emergere**:

Risulta da un sondaggio della DOXA che il 70% dei milanesi è favorevole al divieto di fumare nei ristoranti della città.

A survey by DOXA shows that 70% of the Milanese favour a ban on smoking in restaurants in the city.

Emerge un quadro generale della situazione che non è molto positivo.

A general picture emerges of the situation which is not very positive.

See also 42.6 for more information on writing reports.

36

Specifying time

36.1 Introduction

When we need to indicate explicitly the time context in which different actions or events take place, or in which different facts are set, we use *time clauses* and/or *adjuncts of time* (phrases that specify a time context).

Adjuncts of time may be *adverbs* (see 6.2.4) such as **oggi** or **domani**, *adverbial phrases* such as **fra dieci giorni**, **un anno fa**, **più tardi**, or *conjunctions* (see 5.3.4) such as **quando**, **mentre**, **appena**. Examples are shown below.

Time clauses are dependent (subordinate) clauses (see 30.3) and their function is to expand the content of a main clause with a specification of time. They are usually introduced by a conjunction such as **quando**, **mentre**, **dopo**. When using dependent clauses, the tenses of main and dependent verbs must follow the rules of the *sequence of tenses* (see Appendix III for the basic 'rules' and 30.4 for a further illustration of how these rules are applied).

We have divided our examples into three time contexts: *same time context*, *actions happening earlier* and *actions happening later*. In all three time contexts, the relationship of one event to another may be that of two or more linked main clauses (see 30.2) or of main/dependent clause (see 30.3).

36.2 Expressing same time context

Actions happening at the same time as those of the main clause are generally marked by words such as those below, followed by a verb in the *indicative*:

quando	when
mentre	while
al tempo in cui	at the time when
nel momento in cui	at the moment when, just as, when

36.2.1 *Quando* 'when'

This is by far the most frequently used specification of time:

***Quando* ero ragazzo giocavo a pallacanestro.**
When I was a teenager I used to play basketball.

Ho visitato Siena *quando* sono stato in Italia.
I visited Siena when I was in Italy.

Quando ci hai telefonato stavamo cenando.
When you phoned us we were having dinner.

36.2.2 *Mentre* 'while'

Cerco di lavorare un po' *mentre* i bambini giocano in giardino.
I'm trying to do a little work while the children are playing in the garden.

Mentre tu eri al telefono sono arrivati due clienti.
While you were on the telephone two clients arrived.

La folla gridava senza sosta *mentre* i giocatori si preparavano a iniziare la partita.
The crowd was shouting continuously while the players got ready to start the match.

36.2.3 *Al tempo in cui* 'at the time when'

Al tempo in cui noi abitavamo a Trieste, loro abitavano a Venezia.
At the time when we were living in Trieste, they were living in Venice.

36.2.4 *Nel momento che/in cui* 'at the same time as, just as, just when, when'

Il direttore mi ha chiamato proprio *nel momento in cui* stavo per uscire.
The manager called me just when I was about to go out.

In the next example Italian uses the future tense after **nel momento in cui**, while English uses the present after 'when' (the same applies to other time clauses in the future tense):

Pagheremo in contanti *nel momento in cui* riceveremo la merce.
We'll pay in cash when we receive the goods.

Come 'as, when, just as'

Although less common, **come** can also be used with the sense 'as soon as' or 'just as':

Come sono arrivata a casa, ho fatto una doccia.
As soon as I arrived home, I took a shower.

36.3 Expressing earlier time context

An earlier time context is often indicated by the word **prima**.

36.3.1 *Prima* 'earlier'

When the time relationship of one event happening earlier than another is represented by two clauses, or groups of words, of equal weight, it is often expressed by **prima** 'first', followed by **poi** 'then, after, later':

Prima ho fatto la spesa e poi sono tornata a casa.
First I did some shopping and then I went back home.

Prima andremo a Monaco e poi visiteremo Salisburgo.

First we'll go to Munich and then we'll visit Salzburg.

Prima mangerei un gelato, e poi andrei volentieri a letto.

First I'd like to eat an ice cream then I'd happily go to bed.

Bisogna andare **prima** al supermercato e poi dal fruttivendolo.

One has to go first to the supermarket and then to the greengrocer's.

È meglio che parliate **prima** con l'agenzia di viaggio e che poi compriate i biglietti alla stazione.

It's better if you speak first to the travel agency and then buy the tickets at the station.

36.3.2 **Prima di, prima che 'before'**

When the time relationship is represented by a combination of *main* clause and *dependent* clause, with one fact, action or event occurring *earlier* than the other, the action that takes place later is introduced by **prima di** (and the present infinitive) or **prima che** (and the subjunctive).

Prima di 'before'

Prima di is followed by the *present infinitive*. This construction can only be used when the subject of main and dependent clause are the same person ('I came to the office', 'I visited my cousin').

Devo fare la spesa **prima di tornare** a casa.

I have to do some shopping before going back home.

Prima di venire in ufficio sono andata a trovare mia cugina.

Before coming to the office I went to visit my cousin.

Prima di essere nominata preside, la dottoressa Belloni aveva insegnato al liceo "Parini".

Before being appointed headmistress, Dr Belloni had taught at the 'Parini' high school.

Prima che 'before'

Prima che introduces a dependent time clause containing a *subjunctive*. This construction is generally used when the two parts of the sentence have a different subject:

Prima che Lei arrivasse in ufficio ha telefonato il dott. Rosi.

Before you arrived in the office Dr Rosi phoned.

Devo informare Lucio di quello che è successo **prima che sia troppo tardi**.

I must inform Lucio of what happened before it is too late.

36.4 Expressing later time context

A later time context can be marked by words such as **dopo**, **più tardi** or **poi**.

36.4.1 **Dopo 'afterwards', poi 'then', più tardi 'later'**

When the time relationship of one event happening later than another is represented by two clauses, or groups of words, of equal weight, it can be indicated by words such as **dopo** 'afterwards', **poi** 'then' or **più tardi** 'later':

Prima ho fatto lezione e *più tardi* sono andata in biblioteca.
First I taught and later I went to the library.

Prima andremo al mare e *poi* andremo in montagna.
First we'll go to the seaside and then we'll go to the mountains.

Per cambiare valuta estera, bisogna andare prima allo sportello no. 6 e *dopo* alla cassa.
To change foreign currency, one has to go first to window no. 6 and afterwards to the cash desk.

È meglio che Lei parli prima con la segretaria e che *dopo* chieda di parlare con il direttore.
It's better if you speak first to the secretary and then afterwards ask to speak to the manager.

36.4.2 **Dopo aver 'after', dopo che 'after'**

When the time relationship is represented by a combination of *main* clause and *dependent* clause, with one fact, action or event occurring *later* than the other, the action that takes place earlier is introduced by **dopo** (and a *past infinitive*) or **dopo che** (and a verb in the *indicative*).

Dopo 'after'

Dopo is followed by a *past infinitive*:

Dopo aver cenato faremo una passeggiata.
After having dinner we'll have a walk.

Andammo tutti insieme al cinema *dopo essere stati* da Franco un'ora.
We went all together to the cinema after staying an hour at Franco's.

Dopo che 'after'

Dopo che is followed by a verb in the *indicative* in a range of tenses:

Partirò solo *dopo che avrò finito* il mio lavoro.
I'll leave only after I've finished my work.

Vieni a trovarmi *dopo che hai finito* il tuo lavoro.
Come to see me after you've finished your work.

Andrea è venuto a trovarmi *dopo che aveva finito* il lavoro.
Andrea came to see me after he had finished his work.

36.4.3 **Appena, non appena 'as soon as'**

These are used to indicate that the action of the main clause happens *immediately after* something else. Note the optional use of **non**:

Telefonami (*non*) *appena hai finito*.
Ring me as soon as you have finished.

***Appena sei partito* ci siamo accorti che avevi dimenticato le chiavi.**
As soon as you left, we realised that you had forgotten the keys.

Note the use of the **futuro anteriore** (see 2.3.5) in the following example:

Ti telefonerò non appena sarò arrivato a Tokyo.
I'll ring you as soon as I have arrived in Tokyo.

Note in the following example the use of the **trapassato remoto**, generally only used in written texts, and only when there is a **passato remoto** in the main clause:

Non appena ebbe visto l'orologio, corse via senza dire una parola.
As soon as he caught sight of the clock, he ran off without saying a word.

36.5 Defining the limits of a period: 'since'/'until'

We can also define the period of time in which several facts happened, by specifying the moment when the period began ('time from when') and the moment when it ended ('time until when'), as in the examples below.

36.5.1 Time from when (since)

(fin) da	since
da quando	since when
dal momento in cui	since the moment when

Fin dal momento in cui ti ho conosciuta ho sempre pensato che tu fossi la persona ideale per me.

Since the moment I first met you I've always thought you to be the ideal person for me.

Da quando sono arrivata ho già letto la corrispondenza, risposto a due lettere, ricevuto due clienti, e ho perfino avuto il tempo di prendere il caffè con Sara.

Since I arrived I've already read the mail, answered two letters, received two clients, and I've even had the time to have coffee with Sara.

Dal 2000 abbiamo già cambiato tre macchine.

Since 2000 we have already changed car three times.

Lavoro alla Fiat da cinque anni.

I've been working at Fiat for five years.

Note the use of the present tense, with **da**, in the last example, where English uses the perfect continuous ('I have been working'). The present is used to stress that the action is still going on, or the situation still applies (see 2.3.3).

Similarly, **da** can be used with the imperfect tense to show that the action *was* still going on at that time:

Vivevo in Italia già da due anni, quando ho conosciuto Carlo.
I had been living in Italy for two years when I met Carlo.

36.5.2 Time until when

We can also define how long a period of time lasts, by specifying the moment *up to when* the actions or events referred to continue/will continue/have continued, by using one of the following:

fino a	until
finché (non)	until, as long as
fino a quando	up to the moment when

Fino a can be followed by a day (**fino a martedì, fino a ieri**) or by a specific date or year:

Ho lavorato in questo ufficio *fino al* 2003 e ho realizzato molti progetti collaborando con numerose ditte e clienti.

I worked in this office up until 2003 and I carried out many projects collaborating with several companies and clients.

Finché is normally followed by **non** when it expresses the meaning of ‘until something happens’:

Rimarremo in ufficio *finché non* avremo finito il nostro lavoro.

We’ll stay in the office until we finish the job.

It can be followed by a verb in the *subjunctive* rather than the more normal indicative form, but this tends to convey doubt as to whether the event or action will ever be complete:

Dovremo fare economie, *finché* la nostra situazione finanziaria *non sia* più sicura.

We will need to cut back, until our financial situation becomes more certain.

Finché can also convey the meaning of ‘during the length of time that’ or ‘during the whole period that’:

***Finché* l’avvocato Prati ha lavorato con noi non abbiamo mai avuto problemi e gli affari sono andati a gonfie vele.**

In all the time Mr Prati the lawyer worked with us, we had no problems and business was booming.

When the starting and finishing point of the time context are specified (as in the last example), the verbs are in the perfect rather than the imperfect, even when the facts took place over a long span of time. In fact, as shown in 13.2, the perfect aspect stresses the completion of an action rather than its duration.

36.5.3 Duration of time

The phrase **tutta la giornata** expresses an action or event that went on *all* day. In fact the use of the feminine form ending in **-ata** tends to convey the meaning of a long period of time or something special: **una serata** ‘an evening out, an evening together’, **una mattinata** ‘a whole morning’:

Abbiamo passato una bellissima *serata*.

We spent a beautiful evening.

Ci aspetta una *mattinata* di lavoro.

We’ve got a morning of work ahead of us.

36.6 Specifying repetition and frequency

There are various ways to indicate the repetition of a fact or action in certain circumstances.

36.6.1 *Ogni volta che, tutte le volte che* 'every time that'

Add a dependent time clause introduced by one of the following:

<i>ogni volta che</i>	every time
<i>tutte le volte che</i>	every time
<i>ogni qual volta (che)</i>	every time

Non rimproverarmi *ogni volta che* accendo una sigaretta.
Don't tell me off every time I light a cigarette.

***Tutte le volte che* andavamo a Londra, trovavamo sempre traffico.**
Every time we went to London, we always used to find traffic.

***Ogni qual volta* ho avuto bisogno di aiuto, ho sempre trovato la massima collaborazione dei miei colleghi.**

Every time I needed some help, I always had the greatest support from my colleagues.

Venga pure a trovarmi *ogni volta che* avrà bisogno di una mano.
Come and see me any time you need a hand.

36.6.2 *Ogni* 'every'

Ogni followed by a time specification can indicate the frequency of repetition as in:

<i>ogni giorno</i>	every day
<i>ogni mese</i>	every month
<i>ogni cinque minuti</i>	every five minutes
<i>ogni tanto</i>	every so often

***Ogni giorno* riceviamo almeno venti telefonate.**
We receive at least twenty telephone calls every day.

Il telefono suona *ogni cinque minuti*.
The telephone rings every five minutes.

Dose prescritta: due pillole *ogni quattro ore*.
Prescribed dose: two tablets every four hours.

***Ogni tanto* Franco perde la pazienza.**
Every so often Franco loses patience.

***Ogni lunedì* giochiamo a carte.**
Every Monday we play cards.

For more details on the use of *ogni* as indefinite adjective see 3.9.2.

36.6.3 Tutti i, tutti gli, tutte le 'every'

<i>tutti i</i> giorni	every day
<i>tutti gli</i> anni	every year
<i>tutte le</i> settimane	every week

Vado a scuola *tutti i* giorni.
I go to school every day.

Abbiamo pagato regolarmente le tasse *tutti gli* anni.
We paid taxes regularly every year.

Prendo lezioni d'italiano *tutte le* settimane.
I take Italian lessons every week.

Tutte le domeniche, andiamo a messa.
Every Sunday we go to Mass.

36.6.4 Other expressions of frequency

un giorno sì e un giorno no every other day

Da ragazzo andavo al cinema *un giorno sì e un giorno no*.
When I was a teenager I used to go to the cinema every other day.

raramente seldom

Al cinema andiamo molto *raramente*.
We go very seldom to the cinema.

spesso often, frequently

Mia madre mi telefona *spesso*.
My mother telephones me frequently.

sempre always

Mio fratello legge *sempre* i fumetti.
My brother always reads comic strips.

36.7 Other expressions of time

Other expressions of time with particular reference to the *present*, *past* or *future* can be found in the relevant chapters.

Some expressions of time that are not specifically related to any one time context are:

<i>man mano</i> (che)	gradually as
<i>subito</i>	immediately
<i>nel frattempo</i>	meanwhile

Man mano che i lavoro procedevano, il costo aumentava vertiginosamente.
As the works went on, the cost went soaring up.

Ha capito *subito* cosa volevo.
He understood immediately what I wanted.

Pulisco io la cucina – *nel frattempo* tu prepara la cena!
I'll clean the kitchen – meanwhile you prepare dinner!

37

Place and manner

37.1 Introduction

Chapter 36 showed how to put events in a time context, by saying *when* and *how frequently* something happened. Another way of setting an action or event in context is to say *where* it happened or *how* it happened, in other words to indicate place and manner. There are various ways of doing this, including using adverbs (see 6.2), prepositions (see Chapter 4) and adverbial or prepositional phrases (see 6.2.3).

37.2 Place: adverbs

Adverbs of place indicate the place where an event or action happened. These include: **davanti** 'in front of', **dentro** 'inside', **dietro** 'behind', **fuori** 'outside', **lontano** 'far, far away', **sopra** 'above', **sotto** 'underneath, under', **vicino** 'nearby, near'. All of the adverbs listed above are also used as prepositions (see 37.3).

Ho freddo. Vado dentro.
I'm cold. I'm going inside.

Vai tu davanti. Io mi siedo dietro.
You go in front. I'll sit behind.

Mangiamo fuori stasera?
Shall we eat out tonight?

Non sento mai quelli che abitano sopra.
I never hear those who live upstairs.

Non ho bisogno della macchina. Abito qui vicino.
I don't need a car. I live near here.

Adverbs and adverbial phrases indicating position include: **su** 'up', **giù** 'down', **in fondo** 'in the background, at the bottom', **in centro** 'in the centre', **in alto** 'high up', **in basso** 'low down' and, of course, **a sinistra** 'on the left', **a destra** 'on the right'.

Guarda in alto, poi in basso.
Look up, then down.

Questo panorama è bellissimo: a sinistra il Vesuvio, a destra Posillipo, e in centro il mare. In fondo si vede Capri.
This view is very beautiful: on the left, Vesuvius, on the right Posillipo, in the middle the sea. In the background you can see Capri.

Quando torni su?

When are you going back up?

Vengo giù dopo il 15 agosto.

I'm coming down after the 15th of August.

Some of these adverbs can be used as prepositions, with some adaptation:

In fondo alla strada, giri a destra.

At the bottom of the street, turn right.

37.3 Place: prepositions

Prepositions of place can indicate the place *where* an action or event happens, the place *to where* an action or a person is directed, and the place *from where* something originates.

37.3.1 Forms of prepositions

There are many prepositions that relate to place. Full information on each specific preposition and on the forms when combined with the definite article (**al**, **nel**, **dal**, **sul**, etc.) can be found in 4.3 and 4.2 respectively.

37.3.2 To a place

Prepositions which express movement *to* a place or other kinds of destination include: **a** 'at, to', **in** 'in, into', **per** 'for', **su** 'on, onto', **verso** 'towards' and also **da** 'at, to':

Vorrei andare a Venezia per Carnevale.

I would like to go to Venice for the Carnival.

Fra due giorni vado in Italia.

In two days I am going to Italy.

A maggio si sono trasferiti negli Stati Uniti.

In May they moved to the USA.

Domani devo partire presto per Roma.

Tomorrow I have to leave early for Rome.

È arrivato un fax per Lei.

There is a fax for you.

Il passeggero ha cercato di saltare sull'autobus che però era già in partenza.

The passenger tried to jump onto the bus, which however was already leaving.

L'aereo stava scendendo verso l'aeroporto quando è caduta a terra una porta.

The plane was descending towards the airport when a door fell to the ground.

Da can indicate movement *to* somewhere, usually the place (shop, studio, surgery, house) of an individual indicated by name or by trade:

Devo accompagnare i bambini dal dentista.

I have to take the children to the dentist.

Stasera andiamo *da* Gianni.
Tonight we're going to Gianni's place.

37.3.3 From a place

Prepositions which express movement from a place include **da** and less frequently **di**:

Il treno *da* Trieste arriverà al binario 10.
The train from Trieste will arrive on platform 10.

Per arrivare alle 7.00 all'aeroporto, bisognerà uscire *di* casa alle 6.00.
To get to the airport by 7.00, we will have to leave the house at 6.00.

Vai via *di* qua, brutto cane.
Go away from here, horrible dog.

Esci *di* là, stupido.
Get out of there, idiot.

37.3.4 In or at a place

Prepositions that indicate *in* or *at* a place include: **a**, **da**, **in**:

Ho fatto i miei studi *a* Padova.
I carried out my studies at Padua.

Abbiamo mangiato benissimo *da* Gianni.
We ate really well at Gianni's.

Una grande percentuale dei lavoratori lavora *in* centro ma abita *in* periferia o anche *in* campagna.
A large percentage of workers work in the centre but live in the suburbs or even in the country.

Note how the combined form of prepositions is used for many phrases such as:

al mare	at the seaside
al cinema	at the cinema

But note:

a casa	at home
a scuola	at school
a teatro	at the theatre

37.3.5 Position: prepositions

Prepositions that indicate position are: **fra** 'between, among', **su** 'on', **tra** 'between':

La mia macchina è parcheggiata *tra* due camion. Non si vede *da* qui.
My car is parked between two lorries. You can't see it from here.

Quando vengono i nipoti, metto i vasi di porcellana *sullo* scaffale più alto.
When my grandchildren come, I put the china vases on the highest shelf.

37.3.6 Position: prepositions and/or adverbs

Some prepositions indicating position have an adverbial function as well, already seen in 37.2. These include **davanti** 'in front of', **dentro** 'inside', **dietro** 'behind', **fuori** 'outside', **sopra** 'above', **sotto** 'underneath, under', **vicino** 'nearby, near'.

Used as a preposition, these adverbs sometimes require simple prepositions such as **a**, **di** after them. **Davanti (a)**, **dietro (a, di)**, **fuori (di)** always require a preposition; **dentro**, **sopra**, **sotto**, **vicino** only require it before a stressed pronoun:

La macchina era parcheggiata *davanti alla* casa.

The car was parked in front of the house.

Ci sono dei negozi anche *dentro* la galleria, ma sono costosi.

There are some shops inside the shopping mall as well, but they're expensive.

***Dentro di me*, mi sentivo molto triste.**

Inside myself, I felt very sad.

Il portafoglio è caduto *dietro all'*armadio.

The wallet has fallen behind the cupboard.

Il signore *dietro di me* russava.

The man behind me was snoring.

La chiesa era affollatissima, c'erano dei fedeli che ascoltavano la messa *fuori della* chiesa.

The church was packed out, there were some worshippers who were listening to the mass outside the church.

Mia madre nascondeva i regali per Natale *sopra l'*armadio nella sua camera.

My mother hid the Christmas presents on top of the cupboard in her bedroom.

I gattini dormono *sotto* il letto.

The kittens sleep under the bed.

Loro abitano *vicino a* casa mia.

They live near my house.

37.4 Manner**37.4.1 Adverbs and beyond**

The easiest way of stating *how* an action is carried out is to use an adverb. Full details of the *formation and use* of *adverbs* are found in Chapter 6. Here we look at various ways to specify or state how an action is carried out, using alternatives to adverbs.

37.4.2 Adverbial phrases

An adverbial phrase is composed of preposition and noun and has the meaning of an adverb. We list the most common ones.

An adverbial phrase formed with **maniera** and **modo** indicates the way or manner in which something is done:

Nell'ultimo anno, le vendite dei computer portatili sono aumentate *in una maniera incredibile*.

Over the last year, sales of laptops increased in an unbelievable manner.

Mi ha risposto *in maniera molto brusca*.

He replied to me in a very abrupt way.

Non parlarmi *in questo modo*.

Don't speak to me in this way.

The forms using **alla** and feminine adjective, for example in cooking, can also be used to indicate manner:

Saltimbocca *alla romana*.

Saltimbocca Roman style.

Salutare *all'inglese*.

To go away English fashion, i.e. without saying goodbye.

The following expression apparently derives from the name of a ruler Carlo Magno:

Facciamo le cose sempre *alla carlona*.

We always do things in a sloppy way.

Other adverbial phrases can be formed with: **a**, **con**, **in**, **senza**:

With con

Mariolina suonava il violino *con* molto entusiasmo ma *con* poca accuratezza.

Mariolina played the violin with great enthusiasm but with little accuracy.

With a

I bambini dormivano e noi parlavamo *a* bassa voce.

The children were asleep and we were speaking in a low voice.

I treni Interregionali corrono *a* grande velocità.

The Inter-regional trains run at high speed.

With in

Guardavano il programma *in* silenzio e senza commentare.

They watched the programme in silence and without commenting.

Ho preso un basso voto perché ho fatto il compito *in* fretta.

I got a low mark because I did the work in a hurry.

With senza

Ha fatto l'esame di guida cinque volte *senza* successo.

She's taken the driving test five times without success.

37.4.3 Adverbial adjective

The so-called *adverbial adjective*, an adjective used with the force of an adverb, is becoming more and more common, for example, in advertising language. The masculine singular form is the form always used: for example **parlare chiaro** instead of **chiaramente**. Here are some more examples:

Mangiare sano. Mangiare Yomo.

Eat healthy. Eat Yomo.

Abbiamo lavorato sodo per una settimana.

We worked solidly for a week.

Chi va piano va sano e va lontano.

He who goes slowly goes healthily and goes far.

37.4.4 Benino, benone

Some common adverbs such as **bene** can also have suffixes such as **-ino**, **-one** added (see 6.2.4) to give the forms **benino** 'quite well', **benone** 'very well'.

Come va Alessandro a scuola? Benino.

How is Alessandro doing at school? Quite well.

Nel villaggio turistico, abbiamo mangiato benone.

In the tourist village, we ate very well.

37.4.5 Unusual adverbial forms

Unusual adverbial forms include those ending in **-oni** which apply mainly to physical actions. Examples include:

bocconi	face down
carponi	crawling, on all fours
gattoni	catlike
penzoloni	dangling
tentoni	feeling one's way

37.4.6 Using come or da

Camminava con la testa alta, come una giraffa.

She walked with her head high, like a giraffe.

Si è comportato da pazzo.

He behaved like a lunatic.

38

Expressing a condition or hypothesis

38.1 Introduction

In English you express a condition by using the word 'if': 'If you are good, I will buy you an ice cream' (a distinct possibility); 'If we win the Lottery, we will buy a house in Tuscany' (possible but unlikely); 'If you had drunk less wine, you wouldn't have crashed the car' (too late, no longer a possibility). In each case, the second half of the sentence expresses what *will/would* happen if the condition is met, or what *would have* happened if it had been met.

Similarly, in Italian, *se* 'if' can introduce a hypothesis or condition (the **periodo ipotetico**). Conditional sentences are traditionally divided into three types: real/probable, possible and impossible. This is a slightly artificial division. In reality there are only *two* main types of conditional sentence: those which are a *possibility*, and those which are *unlikely or impossible*.

38.2 Expressing a real possibility

Here the condition is either likely to be met or may even be a reality already. The verb in the *se* clause is in the *indicative* (see 2.3.2), using the *present*, *future* or *past* tense, or a combination of tenses, to express certainty or reality. The *imperative* (see 2.3.22) may also be used. Most of the time, the *se* clause comes first in the sentence, but it can also come *after* the 'result' clause.

The choice of verbs used depends on the *degree of probability*, in other words, on how likely it is that the condition will be met. If we are expressing a near certainty, rather than a condition (in the last example we may already know that our friends are going to Italy in October), we use a verb in the *indicative* for the *se* clause, and another *indicative* for the 'result' clause, in the appropriate tense.

Present + present

Se c'è qualche problema, mi puoi chiamare sul cellulare.

If there's a problem, you can call me on the mobile phone.

Se piove, entra l'acqua.

If it rains, water gets in.

Present + imperative

Se decidi di andare via, lasciami la chiave.

If you decide to go away, leave me the key.

Chiudi la porta, se esci.

Shut the door if you go out.

Present + future

Se c'è un problema, mi potrai chiamare con il cellulare.

If there's a problem, you'll be able to call me on the mobile phone.

Se tu sei intelligente, non avrai difficoltà a imparare l'italiano.

If you're clever, you won't have any trouble learning Italian.

Past + future

Se l'aereo non ha fatto un ritardo, lui sarà già all'aeroporto.

If the plane hasn't arrived late, he will be at the airport already.

Future + future

Se voi sarete in Italia ad ottobre, potrete partecipare alla vendemmia.

If you are in Italy in October, you can take part in the grape picking.

38.3 Expressing a condition unlikely to be met or impossible

Where there is little chance of the conditions coming true (for example in the case of the Lottery), we are more likely to use the *present conditional* (see 2.3.12) to express what *would* happen if the condition were met, and the *imperfect subjunctive* (see 2.3.19) in the 'condition' or *se* clause, to express the hypothetical nature of the situation or the impossibility of the condition coming true:

Se noi vincessimo la lotteria, compreremmo una seconda casa, magari al mare.

If we were to win the Lottery, we would buy a second home, maybe at the seaside.

Note the use of **magari** 'perhaps' in the example above.

The first and fifth example shown in 38.2 above can be expressed in a way that suggests you are *not* expecting any problems:

Se ci fosse qualche problema, mi potresti chiamare sul cellulare.

If there were any problem, you could call me on the mobile phone.

38.3.1 In present time context

Se io fossi in te, non accetterei quell'incarico.

If I were you, I wouldn't accept that job.

38.3.2 In past time context

This combination uses the *past conditional* (see 2.3.13) to express what *could* or *would have* happened if the condition had been met, while the conditional or *se* clause uses the *pluperfect subjunctive* (see 2.3.20). Clearly, in the examples below, the condition can no longer be met.

Se il direttore fosse stato più gentile, non avrebbe licenziato il nostro collega in questo modo.

If the manager had been kinder, he wouldn't have sacked our colleague in this way.

Se tu me l'avessi detto, avrei potuto aiutarti.

If you had told me, I could have helped you.

It is also possible to have a combination of a *pluperfect subjunctive* to express a condition which can no longer be met and a *present conditional*:

Se io avessi sposato un inglese, sarei più felice oggi.

If I had married an Englishman, I would be happier today.

In *spoken* language (though rarely in written), the pluperfect subjunctive in the *se* clause is quite often replaced by the *imperfect indicative* (see 2.3.6). Compare the example below with the same sentence expressed more formally above:

Se tu me lo dicevi, avrei potuto aiutarti.

If you had told me, I could have helped you.

The past conditional in the result clause can also be replaced by the imperfect indicative:

Se tu me lo dicevi, ti potevo aiutare.

If you had told me, I could have helped you.

The choice of pluperfect subjunctive + past conditional, imperfect + past conditional, imperfect + imperfect depends very much on the register (spoken or written, formal or conversational). The same statement can be expressed in three different ways, all with the same meaning:

Se tu ti fossi comportata meglio, ti avrebbero invitata alla festa.

Se tu ti comportavi meglio, ti avrebbero invitato alla festa.

Se tu ti comportavi meglio, ti invitavano alla festa.

If you had behaved better, they would have invited you to the party.

There is a general tendency for language to become less formal, more colloquial, and the imperfect indicative is an easier verb form to use, even for Italians. In formal writing, it is usually preferable to use the first pattern shown above.

38.4 Expressing conditions with other conjunctions

Apart from *se*, there are several other conjunctions or phrases that can introduce a condition, such as:

nel caso (che)	if
qualora	if (ever)
posto che	given that
ammesso che	given that

a patto che	on condition that
a condizione che	on condition that
purché	provided that
nell'eventualità che	in the event that
nell'ipotesi che	in the event that

Generally speaking, these phrases are used with the *subjunctive* in the *possible* type of conditional sentences:

Nel caso che vi perdiate, chiedete informazioni ad un vigile.
If you get lost, ask a traffic warden for information.

Of similar meaning, but followed by a noun rather than a verb, is the prepositional phrase **in caso di** 'in case of':

In caso di incendio, rompete il vetro.
In case of fire, break the glass.

The conjunction **qualora** is used in a hypothetical clause; its nearest translation in English is 'if ever':

Qualora dovesse presentarsi l'occasione, Francesco e Chiara si trasferirebbero a Trieste.
If ever the occasion were to arise, Francesco and Chiara would move to Trieste.

Both **a patto che** and **a condizione che** express the more specific meaning 'on condition that' and are always used with the subjunctive:

Gli stiro le camicie a patto che lui lavi i piatti.
I iron his shirts on condition that (if) he washes the dishes.

La Madison firmerà il contratto solo a condizione che la commissione venga aumentata del 10%.
Madison will sign the contract only on condition that the commission goes up by 10%.

The phrase **anche se** 'even if' acts like **se**. It can either express a *possible* condition (using the indicative) or an *improbable* condition (using the subjunctive):

Anche se lui mi dice che va bene, aspetterò di avere la conferma del direttore prima di procedere.
Even if he tells me that it is OK, I will wait to get confirmation from the manager before going ahead.

Anche se tu mi pagassi cinquemila euro al mese, non accetterei di vendere i tuoi prodotti.
Even if you were to pay me five thousand euros a month, I wouldn't agree to sell your products.

38.5 Expressing conditions with gerund, infinitive or participle

More unusually, instead of using a **se** clause, or any of the phrases shown above, one can express a condition by using one of the following verb forms. In each case, the subject of the main verb also has to be the subject of the other verb form or else be explicitly mentioned.

38.5.1 Gerund

Andando in treno, si risparmierebbe un'ora.

If we (one) went by train, we (one) would save an hour.

Even when referring to a past context, only the present gerund can be used:

Guidando con più prudenza, non avresti preso la multa.

If you had driven more carefully, you wouldn't have got a fine.

38.5.2 Past participle**With se**

Se compilato con attenzione, il questionario può essere uno strumento utile per capire il carattere di una persona.

If compiled with care, the questionnaire can be a useful tool to understand someone's character.

Without se

Fatto in modo incompleto, il sondaggio non sarebbe molto valido.

(If it were) done in an incomplete fashion, the survey wouldn't be very valid.

38.5.3 Infinitive

A guardarla bene, sembra più vecchia di lui.

If you look at her closely, she seems older than him.

A reagire in modo eccessivo, rischi di allontanare tuo figlio.

If you overreact, you risk alienating your son.

38.6 Unfinished conditional sentence

Sometimes in English we express a half-finished thought, for example a desire or regret, with the words 'if/if only' ('If only I had listened to my teacher . . .'). A similar construction is possible in Italian, either with imperfect subjunctive or with pluperfect subjunctive. Only the *se* clause is expressed, while the 'consequence' or 'result' is left unspoken:

Se si potesse tornare indietro nel tempo . . . (si potrebbero evitare tanti disastri).

If only one could turn the clock back . . . (so many disasters could be avoided).

Se l'avessi saputo . . . (avrei fatto le cose in modo diverso).

If only I had known . . . (I would have done things differently).

Se mia madre avesse saputo . . . (mi avrebbe ammazzata).

If my mother had found out . . . (she would have killed me).

Sometimes *se* is replaced by **magari**:

Magari me lo avesse detto . . .

If he had only told me . . .

Compare this use of **magari** with its use in 38.3 above.

Sometimes the half-finished thought is a tentative idea, a suggestion:

Se prendessimo il treno invece di andare in macchina . . . ?

What if we took the train instead of going by car . . . ?

Se gli dicessimo la verità . . . ?

What if we told him the truth . . . ?

38.7 Other uses of *se*

38.7.1 Contrast

In the examples below, we are referring to an action or event that clearly did take place (a *fact* rather than a hypothesis). In this case the *se* is not really expressing a condition, but has the *contrasting* meaning of ‘while, whereas’:

Se lui parlava molto, sua moglie parlava due volte tanto.

If (‘while’) he spoke a lot, his wife spoke twice as much.

Se nell’Ottocento la gente usava ancora la carrozza, già agli inizi del Novecento si cominciava ad andare in treno.

If (‘while, whereas’) in the nineteenth century people were still using carriages, already at the beginning of the twentieth century, they were starting to go by train.

38.7.2 Indirect questions

In an indirect question, *se* does not express a condition but means ‘whether’:

Voleva sapere se noi avevamo visto sua moglie.

He wanted to know if we had seen his wife.

39

Expressing reservation, exception and concession

39.1 Introduction

Whereas conditional sentences (see Chapter 38) talk about what will or will not take place *if* something happens, sentences expressing *reservation* talk about an action or event that will/will not take place *unless* something happens. Of a similar type are those sentences which express *exception* ('except'). Another type of sentence that balances one set of events against another is that which expresses *concession* ('although'). Here we look at each type in detail.

39.2 Expressing reservation or exception

39.2.1 Conjunctions or phrases expressing exception

Sometimes we speak about an event or circumstance that is true *except for* a particular detail, or which will take place *unless* a particular detail, circumstance or event prevents it. In other words, we are expressing a *reservation* ('unless') or *exception* ('except'). Words that express reservation or exception in Italian are listed below. They are followed by **che** and a dependent clause, by the verb infinitive or, in some cases, by a noun.

se non che	except that
a meno che (non)	unless
eccetto che	except that
tranne che	except, unless
fuorché	except
salvo (che)	save for, unless

39.2.2 Followed by *che* and a dependent clause

These phrases or conjunctions introduce a dependent clause; the verb is usually in the *subjunctive* (see 2.3.14), but can be in the *indicative* (see 2.3.2) if it expresses a reality rather than a possibility:

Il Ministro non darà le dimissioni, *tranne che* il Presidente del Consiglio non lo costringa a farlo.

The Minister won't resign unless the Prime Minister forces him to do so.

Dobbiamo spedire le lettere, *salvo che* non le abbia già spedite la segretaria.

We have to send the letters, unless the secretary has already sent them.

Avrei piacere di accompagnarti, *se non che* ho un appuntamento.

I would happily go with you, except that I have an appointment.

È tutto pronto per la cena, *eccetto che* non sono ancora arrivati gli ospiti.

Everything is ready for dinner, except that the guests haven't arrived yet.

Note the use in Italian of **non** after a **meno che**, where English does not require a negative:

Domani mangiamo all'aperto *a meno che* non piova.

Tomorrow we will eat in the open air as long as it doesn't rain.

39.2.3 Followed by a verb infinitive

The phrases *eccetto che*, *fuorché*, *salvo che*, *tranne* can also be followed by an *infinitive*:

Lei fa tutto *fuorché* aiutarmi.

She does everything except help me.

Chiedetemi qualsiasi cosa, *tranne* cantare!

Ask me anything, but don't ask me to sing!

39.2.4 Followed by a noun or pronoun

Lastly, *eccetto*, *fuorché*, *salvo*, *tranne* can also be followed by a noun (object or person) or pronoun:

Non ho mangiato niente *tranne* quello che mi hai preparato tu.

I haven't eaten anything except what *you* made me.

39.3 Modifying a statement by concession

39.3.1 Introduction

Using a clause or phrase of *concession* means that we are *conceding* the existence of a possible factor that can alter the circumstances, but saying that the event or action expressed in the main clause will take place despite it:

Per quanto tu possa lamentarti, non cambierai niente.

However much you complain, you won't change anything.

There are several ways in which a statement can be modified by an expression of concession in Italian (equivalent of English 'although, despite, even if'): some are *explicit* and some are *implicit* (in other words the idea of concession is understood or implied from the context, even without a specific conjunction being used).

39.3.2 Conjunction or phrase of concession

Sometimes the expressions of concession are introduced by a conjunction or phrase such as:

benché	although	sebbene	although
nonostante	despite	quantunque	however (much)
malgrado	in spite of	per quanto	however
anche se	even if	con tutto che	with all that

Generally, these conjunctions are followed by the subjunctive:

Benché fosse tardi, voleva presentarmi tutti i suoi amici e parenti.

Although it was late, he wanted to introduce me to all his friends and relatives.

Malgrado la segretaria abbia lavorato fino alle 8.00 di sera, non è riuscita a completare la relazione.

Despite the secretary having worked until 8.00 in the evening, she wasn't able to finish the report.

Quantunque fosse preparato Marco, l'esame di guida si è rivelato più difficile di quanto aspettasse.

However well-prepared Marco was, the driving test turned out to be more difficult than he expected.

Sebbene non avessimo dormito tutta la notte, abbiamo deciso di andare a fare una passeggiata lungo il mare.

Although we had not slept all night, we decided to go for a walk along the seafront.

Very occasionally **nonostante** is followed by **che**:

Nonostante (che) sia ancora piccolo, ha già cominciato a studiare il violino.

Despite being still little, he has already begun to study the violin.

Anche se can be followed by either *indicative* or *subjunctive* (imperfect or pluperfect only) depending on how likely or unlikely the situation is:

Likely

Anche se tu sei la mia migliore amica, ci sono certe cose che non ti potrò mai raccontare.

Even though you are my best friend, there are certain things that I can never tell you.

Unlikely

Anche se fosse l'ultimo uomo su questa terra, non accetterei di uscire con lui.

Even if he were the last man on earth, I wouldn't agree to go out with him.

Con tutto che is also usually followed by the indicative:

Con tutto che aveva da fare 200 chilometri in macchina, ha voluto accompagnarmi prima all'aeroporto.

Despite the fact that she had 200 km to drive, she wanted to take me to the airport first.

39.3.3 Prepositions

Malgrado, **nonostante** can also be used as prepositions followed by a noun:

Malgrado la nostra esperienza, torneremo in Calabria l'anno prossimo.

Despite our experience, we will go back to Calabria next year.

Nonostante tutto, è la compagnia aerea inglese più importante.

Despite everything, it's the most important English airline.

39.3.4 Per . . . che + subjunctive

The combination of an adjective with **per . . . che** takes the subjunctive:

Per intelligente che sia, non è stato promosso.

Bright though he is, he didn't pass his exams.

“Casa mia, casa mia, per piccina che tu sia, tu mi sembri una badia.”

'Home, sweet home, however small you are, to me you seem like a fortress.'
(Italian saying)

A similar construction is possible with a verb, although less common:

Per studiare che lei faccia, sarà bocciata agli esami.

However she studies, she will fail the exams.

39.3.5 Chiunque, qualunque, qualsiasi 'anyone who, whichever, whatever'

Often *indefinite* adjectives and pronouns (see 3.9) such as **chiunque**, **qualunque**, **qualsiasi** introduce a concessive clause and are followed by the subjunctive:

Chiunque lo veda, dice che sembra ringiovanito.

Anyone who sees him, says he seems much younger.

Qualunque risultato si ottenga, val la pena di provare.

Whatever result is achieved, it is worth trying.

Qualsiasi cosa io dico, mi dai sempre torto.

Whatever I say, you always say I'm wrong.

39.3.6 Past participle or adjective

A past participle or an adjective alone can have a concessive meaning, as shown below:

Nata in Inghilterra, Giuseppina si sentiva tuttavia italiana al cento per cento.

(Although) born in England, Giuseppina however felt 100% Italian.

Benché, **anche se**, **sebbene** can be added to reinforce the meaning:

Anche se malato, volle partecipare alla gara.

Even though ill, he wanted to take part in the competition.

Benché invecchiato un po', era ancora molto in forma.

Although aged a little, he was still very fit.

39.3.7 Gerund pur essendo, pur avendo

Where the subject of the concessive clause is the same as that of the main verb, a gerund – normally present – can be used, preceded by **pur** ‘although’:

Pur avendo pochi clienti, la commessa ci ha messo mezz’ora a servirmi.
Although she had few customers, the shop assistant took half an hour to serve me.

Pur volendo aiutarmi, mio padre non era in grado di finanziare i miei studi.
Although wanting to help me, my father was unable to finance my studies.

39.3.8 Per essere, per avere

The construction **per essere** or **per avere** is used only where the subject is the same in both cases:

Per essere così giovane, è proprio in gamba.
Considering he’s so young, he’s really on the ball.

Per aver studiato l’italiano cinque anni, non lo parla tanto bene.
Considering he has studied Italian for five years, he doesn’t speak it so well.

39.3.9 A costo di

This means ‘at the cost of’:

All’età di 75 anni, insisté per fare un’ultima scalata del Monte Bianco a costo di rimetterci la pelle.
At the age of 75, he insisted on making a last ascent of Mont Blanc even at the cost of losing his life.

39.3.10 Nemmeno, neanche, neppure a, manco a

These negative expressions can be followed by **se** and a verb (subjunctive) or by **a** and then the infinitive. The main clause has to be a negative statement.

Manco a fare la coda per 24 ore, non si trovano i biglietti per quel concerto.
Not even if one queues for 24 hours, can one get tickets for that concert.

Io non lo farei, neanche se tu mi pagassi.
I wouldn’t do it, not even if you paid me.

Nemmeno a volerlo, non riuscirei a mangiare le lumache.
I couldn’t eat snails even if I tried.

39.3.11 Tuttavia, nondimeno

Often the idea that the event will go ahead anyway is reinforced by the addition of **tuttavia** ‘however’ or **nondimeno** ‘nonetheless’ in the main clause:

Sebbene stanchi, volevamo tuttavia andare a vedere il centro.
Although tired, we wanted however to go and see the centre.

Section V

Expanding the horizons

40

Registers and style

40.1 Introduction

Italy's long and complex history has left its distinctive mark on the Italian language. Used almost exclusively as a written and literary language (until Italy became one nation in the late 1800s) and spoken only by an educated elite, until recent years it had preserved unchanged many features of its origins in the aristocratic society of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

These origins and the fact that the literary language existed side-by-side with a diversity of dialects, together with the influence of foreign domination (particularly Spanish and French) have contributed to the complexity of Italian syntax, the richness of vocabulary and the variety of stylistic forms.

Today Italian is a modern and dynamic language, spoken by sixty million people, but still retains certain features of its literary and aristocratic tradition. In this section of the book, we will highlight just a few. While this chapter looks at registers and style in general, Chapter 41 looks specifically at spoken communication and Chapter 42 at written communication.

The Italian language has inherited a fondness for elegance and eloquence, a sometimes excessive search for precise terminology (even to the detriment of clarity) and an unabashed love of formality. These characteristics of the language of an educated elite are still strong today in certain sectors of Italian life, although there is a growing trend towards the modernisation and simplification of the language.

40.2 Spoken and written discourse

Just as any other language, Italian has different patterns of expression depending on whether it is being used as a spoken or written means of communication. The differences in the choice of words (lexis), as well as in the structures used (syntax), distinguish the spoken from the written style. There are, of course, people who speak **come un libro stampato** 'like a printed book', whose speech is formal or elegant, just as there are people who adopt the patterns of the spoken language in their writing.

In Italy, the gap dividing written from spoken language has traditionally been wider than in English-speaking countries. Until just over a hundred years ago, Italian was almost exclusively used as a written language, while the spoken language was mainly

dialect, even among the more educated social classes. We shall try to provide a few examples of how spoken Italian and written Italian can be very different. In recent years, the spread of new technologies based on writing, such as email, mobile phone messages (SMS) and faxes, has narrowed the gap between the spoken and written register and we give some examples of this in 40.5.

40.3 Differences in lexis

40.3.1 Exclamations

Many words are used frequently in everyday conversation, but rarely found in a written text. These include exclamations such as:

Mannaggia!	Damn!
Che casino!	What a mess!
Caspita!	Good gracious!

It is difficult but not impossible to find a corresponding expression you can use in written Italian, as shown below:

Peccato.	That's a pity.
Che confusione!	What a muddle!
Sorprendente.	Surprising.

The written language is almost always associated with a greater formality and should avoid the kind of words used in everyday conversation, as well as the widespread and typically Italian use of regional or local languages.

Here are just a few examples of words commonly used in familiar contexts and spoken communication, with suggestions for alternatives suitable for written Italian. This list can be expanded by learners themselves, with the help of dictionaries, friendly advice and experience.

<i>Spoken</i>	<i>Written</i>	
abbuffarsi	riempirsi	to stuff oneself
balla	bugia	a lie
faticare	lavorare	to work
fifa	paura	fear
fregare	ingannare	to swindle
stronzo	imbecille	idiot
tele	televisione	TV
OK	va bene	all right

40.3.2 Vocabulary and synonyms

Italian is blessed with an extraordinary wealth of words drawn from its ancient literary tradition, enriched by the diversity of its regional and local varieties and by contributions from other languages, both in recent years as well as in the past. The written language cannot call on the intonation, gestures, pauses or repetitions that make oral communication easier and more effective. So a rich vocabulary is one way in which we can make our written messages effective.

Synonyms are an important tool in exploiting the rich and quickly evolving vocabulary of Italian. A good dictionary of synonyms is useful for the more complex communication needs.

One of the most common problems faced by students of Italian is how to choose from the variety of adjectives with identical or similar meanings. Here are just a few of the most commonly used adjectives with a choice of alternatives that have slightly different nuances of meaning:

bello (magnifico, meraviglioso)	beautiful(magnificent, marvellous)
grande (enorme, gigantesco)	big (enormous, huge)
piccolo (minuscolo)	small (tiny)

40.4 Differences in syntax

40.4.1 Coordination

The pattern of spoken discourse is generally that of coordination (see 30.2), i.e. phrases tend to be short, simple, similar in form and separated only by pauses. In spoken discourse, phrases of different weight, connecting links or time relationships can be represented by pauses, changes in intonation or in the pitch of voice, gestures or repetitions. Eye contact is often a more effective channel of communication than words or grammar.

Here is an example of this typical pattern of spoken language, in the familiar situation of communication between mother and children at the beginning of a busy day of school and work:

Valentina, svegliati, Roberta svegliati . . . Franco salta giù dal letto. Ragazzi sono le sette e cinque! Franco, presto, vai a fare la doccia. Valentina vestiti. Sono le sette e dieci! Ragazzi, il caffelatte è pronto! Franco hai fatto la doccia? Asciuga per terra. Roberta, perché piangi? Valentina, avanti, falle mettere la gonna gialla. Sono le sette e un quarto! Insomma, venite o no a prendere il caffelatte? Si sta freddando tutto! Roberta se piangi ancora vengo di là e ti ammazzo! Francooooooo! Dov'è Franco? Roberta non piangere, vatti a pettinare invece. Sono le sette e mezzo. Perderete l'autobus. Ma dimmi tu che razza di figli!

(Adapted from B. Reggiani and A. Salvatore, *Il libronuovo*, IGDA, Novara; also reproduced in Chapter 21)

Valentina, wake up, Roberta wake up . . . Franco get out of bed. Kids, its five past seven! Franco, quick, go and have a shower. Valentina get dressed. It's ten past seven! Kids, your *caffelatte* is ready! Franco, have you had a shower? Dry the floor. Roberta, why are you crying? Valentina, come on, let her put your yellow skirt on. It's quarter past seven! Come on, are you coming to have this *caffelatte* or not? It's all getting cold! Roberta if you keep on crying, I'll come over there and kill you! Francooooooo! Where's Franco? Roberta don't cry, go and comb your hair instead. It's half past seven. You'll miss the bus. Honestly, tell me, what sort of kids have I got!

Of course in written Italian, we do not have the same direct contact as in spoken Italian to help get our message across. Pauses must be represented by punctuation and emphasis and emotions must be expressed by an accurate choice of words.

40.4.2 Subordination

The organisation of written discourse is usually much more complex than that of speech, since written discourse has to use a range of grammatical and syntactical devices to create a logical texture and facilitate comprehension and communication. Phrases are usually more complex and there is a clear preference for a pattern of subordination between main and dependent clauses (see 30.3 and below).

Italian has a particularly complex system of relationships between clauses due to having existed for so long only as a written and literary language. For example the system of sequence of tenses (see Chapter 30 and Appendix III), and the use of different verb moods (indicative, subjunctive, conditional, etc.), creates a network of relationships between clauses, which is very effective in written communication but also very difficult to learn.

Let's see how we could transform a spoken passage like the one above into a piece of narrative description:

Ecco cosa succede a casa mia tutte le mattine all'ora del risveglio. Devo chiamare ad alta voce Valentina, Roberta e Franco, dicendo loro di svegliarsi, di alzarsi, di andare a fare la doccia e vestirsi!!! Alle sette e dieci la colazione è pronta, ma Franco non ha ancora fatto la doccia e deve asciugare per terra. Intanto Roberta piange e Valentina deve aiutarla a mettere la gonna. Alle sette e un quarto il caffelatte sta diventando freddo e Roberta piange ancora. Devo minacciarla per farle smettere di piangere e per farla pettinare, mentre, intanto, non trovo più Franco. A questo punto sono già le sette e mezzo e i ragazzi rischiano di perdere l'autobus. Ditemi voi che razza di figli ho!

Here is what happens in my house every morning when it's time to get up. I have to call at the top of my voice Valentina, Roberta and Franco, telling them to wake up, get up, go and have a shower and get dressed. At ten past seven, breakfast is ready, but Franco has not yet had a shower and has to mop up the floor. Meanwhile Roberta is crying and Valentina has to help her to put her skirt on. At quarter past seven, the *caffelatte* is becoming cold and Roberta is still crying. I have to threaten her to make her stop crying and get her hair combed, while, meanwhile, I can't find Franco any more. At this point it's already half past seven and the kids risk missing the bus. Tell me what kind of kids I've got!

40.4.3 Pronouns

References to known people or objects are made by using pronouns, which therefore create the thread of the discourse. The Italian system of pronouns is rather complex (see Chapter 3) including both stressed (3.3) and unstressed (3.4) pronouns. See if you can find all the pronouns used in the text above. Learners need to have a firm grasp of these pronouns.

Questo, quello

Demonstrative pronouns such as **questo**, **quello** etc. (see 3.8) are largely used in spoken language where it is clear which person or object is being referred to because of their physical presence and the fact that the speaker can point to them, whether they are near him/her (**questo**) or further away (**quello**).

In written Italian, of course, demonstrative pronouns can only make references to people or things previously mentioned, not those seen. In the case of **questo** and **quello**, the first refers to something that has just been mentioned, while the second will be used when referring to something more distant in the text. Let's see an example of this:

Stamattina ho incontrato Stefania sull'autobus, mentre andavo a scuola. Poi, quando ero già arrivato, ho incontrato anche Raffaella. Questa (Raffaella) mi ha salutato affettuosamente. Quella (Stefania), invece, ha fatto finta di non riconoscermi.

This morning I met Stefania on the bus, while I was going to school. Then when I had (already) arrived, I met Raffaella as well. The latter (Raffaella) greeted me affectionately. The former (Stefania) on the other hand pretended not to recognise me.

While in written language **questa** means 'the latter' and **quella** 'the former', **quella** tends to express dislike or at least a lack of friendliness. Care must be taken in using these very common pronouns in writing; the reader must be able to identify easily people or things referred to by the pronouns.

40.4.4 Conjunctions

Conjunctions (see Chapter 5) are also important words that allow us to construct the complex phrases typical of a written text. We can distinguish *coordinating* conjunctions (see 5.2) such as **e**, **o**, **oppure**, **né**, **sia** from *subordinating* conjunctions (see 5.3) such as **che**, **se**, **sebbene**, **poiché**. The preference of written Italian for constructing sentences made up of subordinating clauses means that conjunctions are very important in the organisation of a text.

When using subordinating conjunctions it is important to know which verb mood (see 2.1.5) is normally used in the subordinate clause they introduce. Many of these conjunctions require the use of the subjunctive mood (see 2.3.14), as in the case of **sebbene**, **benché**, **purché**, **affinché** (see 5.3.5 and the examples in 33.3.1 and 39.3.2).

40.4.5 Adverbs

Adverbs (see Chapter 6) are also important for constructing complex phrases. This is especially true when having to create a time context, where adverbs play an essential role in creating a network of relationships of time among the actions, events or facts we are writing about (for examples see Chapter 36).

40.4.6 Tenses and moods of verbs

Finally, to write fluently in Italian we need to be completely familiar with the complex system of verb tenses and inflexions. Even more importantly, we need to know how to use the system known as the sequence of tenses (see Appendix III and Chapter 30), which allows us to write Italian with accuracy, elegance and effectiveness. See also 40.6.1 below on the use of the subjunctive in more formal contexts.

40.4.7 Omission of elements

In the more casual pattern of the spoken language, elements are sometimes omitted. For example the **non** of the negative pair **non . . . mica**:

Non sai mica a che ora comincia la festa?

You don't happen to know what time the party begins?

Hai mica visto Giorgio a scuola?

You haven't by chance seen Giorgio at school?

Illustrations of oral communication techniques are found in Chapter 41.

40.5 Informal written communication

While faxes tend to reproduce the style of a formal business letter (see Chapter 42) the new more direct forms of communication such as email or SMS are encouraging the spread of a simpler, more accessible language – one that is more akin to the spoken language. Here we look at some key features of emails and SMS.

40.5.1 Emails

Emails can vary in formality, in the same way as letters. Generally, in emails people take less care over spelling and are more inclined to use an informal register. As seen in the email below, for example, this means using indicative rather than subjunctive verb forms (**non so se ti è mai arrivato**), disconnected clauses, informally phrased questions, abbreviations, numbers not written out in text (**1 settimana**), imperative forms (**fatti viva**):

Ciao Carla! sono secoli che non so niente di te. Ti avevo spedito un email, non so se ti è mai arrivato, rispondimi per vedere se è giusto l'indirizzo. Qui tutto normale (il che è tanto), siamo appena stati una settimana in Spagna, sulla spiaggia al sole, molto bello, lontano dal freddo. Cosa fate a Pasqua? Non avete voglia di venire a trovarci in Toscana? Avete già altri piani? Noi andremo 1 settimana. Fatti viva, bacioni.

Hi Carla! It's ages since I've heard anything from you. I had sent you an email, I don't know if you ever got it, answer my email so I can see if the address is right. Here everything's normal (which is saying something), we have just been a week in Spain, on the beach in the sunshine, really nice, far from the cold. What are you doing at Easter? Don't you want to come and see us in Tuscany? Have you already got other plans? We'll go there for a week. Get in touch, love.

Sometimes however an email can take the place of a formal or official letter and in this case the opening and closing phrases will be very similar to those used in a letter (see Chapter 42).

40.5.2 SMS (text messages)

The language of text messages (known as SMS in Italian) on mobile phones is very similar to that of newspaper headlines, with verbs omitted, prepositions omitted and participles or adjectives used on their own. Here are some real life examples of SMS

(text messages) received on a mobile phone. The 'normal' non-abbreviated version of each message is given underneath. In the English translation, the omitted words are shown in brackets:

Bene. Contenta festeggiato anche con te. Baci. Torna presto.
 (Bene. Sono contenta di aver festeggiato anche con te. Baci. Torna presto.)
 Good. Glad (I) celebrated with you too. Kisses. Come back soon.

Individuata giacca.
 (La giacca è stata individuata.)
 Jacket (has been) identified.

Fatto contratto nuova casa.
 (Ho fatto il contratto per la nuova casa.)
 (Have) done the contract for the new house.

Causa sciopero controllori di volo, arrivo domani mattina.
 (A causa di uno sciopero dei controllori di volo, arrivo domani mattina.)
 Because of an air traffic controllers' strike, I'll get there tomorrow morning.

As in English, there is a whole language made up of abbreviations and 'codes' you can use to speed up the process of messaging; these are especially popular with the under-21s! Here are just a few examples:

Al7cie	<i>Al settimo cielo</i>	In seventh heaven
Ba	<i>Bacio</i>	Kiss
Ba&tab	<i>Baci e abbracci</i>	Kisses and hugs
C6?	<i>Ci sei?</i>	Are you there?
6	<i>sei</i>	you are
+o-	<i>più o meno</i>	more or less
X	<i>per</i>	for
X'	<i>perché</i>	why/because

Here are a few examples of SMS using abbreviations and codes:

Grazie ancora a te e a Massimo x ieri sera! 1 bella cena!
 Thanks again to you and to Massimo for yesterday evening! A lovely dinner!

Dimmi quando 6 libera!
 Tell me when you are free!

40.6 Formal and informal registers

The distinction between formal and informal registers is not a hard and fast one, rather a sliding scale. It applies mainly to written texts. At the informal end of the scale, the language of written texts tends to be similar to that of spoken Italian (see 40.5). There are, however, certain features which separate the formal from the informal register.

40.6.1 Subjunctive or indicative?

An important marker of formality in Italian is the use of the subjunctive even in those cases where it is optional. The subjunctive tends to be used in a more formal style of text, while the spoken and informal register normally uses the indicative. Deciding whether to use indicative or subjunctive can often be a question of personal

choice but is very dependent on the context. Here are some examples where there is a choice between subjunctive and indicative, depending on how formal or informal the context is. In the pairs of examples below, the first uses the subjunctive, the second the indicative:

In conditional sentences in the past context (see 38.3.2):

Se tu me *l'avessi detto* prima, avrei potuto accompagnarti.

Se tu me lo *dicevi* prima, avrei potuto accompagnarti.

If you had told me earlier, I could have given you a lift.

After **pensare** (see 27.1.1):

Penso che si *debba* prendere in considerazione questo fatto.

I think one must take this fact into consideration.

Penso che *devi* prendere l'autobus delle 7.00.

I think you should get the 7.00 bus.

After **sperare** (see 2.3.15, 26.2.1):

Spero che la nostra collaborazione *possa* continuare.

I hope our collaboration can continue.

Spero che *ti piacciono* le lasagne.

I hope you like lasagne.

After **qualunque** (see 3.9.2):

Qualunque cosa *faccia*, non vincerà mai le elezioni.

Whatever he does, he will never win the elections.

Qualunque cosa *vuoi*, non fare complimenti.

Whatever you want, don't stand on ceremony.

40.6.2 **Passive, *si passivante*, *si impersonale***

Another important marker of formality is the use of the passive, the **si impersonale** and the **si passivante**. The passive, **si impersonale** and **si passivante** are particularly common in instructional texts and scientific papers and also in the press (see 42.8 and 42.9 respectively) where they express objectivity and impersonality. These forms are far less common in the spoken language and in informal texts. Note the difference in the following texts:

Si passivante, si impersonale

Cosa *si fa* al mare? Di giorno *si fanno* i bagni e la sera *si fa* una passeggiata sul lungomare.

What does one do at the seaside? In the daytime one goes swimming and in the evening one goes for a walk along the sea front.

Personal *noi* form

Cosa *facciamo* al mare? Di giorno *facciamo* i bagni e la sera *facciamo* una passeggiata sul lungomare.

What do we do at the seaside? In the daytime we go swimming and in the evening we go for a walk along the sea front.

40.7 Word order

This final section looks at word order. Word order in both spoken and written Italian is extremely flexible. You can see examples of this throughout the book. Here are just a few points to look out for:

40.7.1 Noun + adjective

Unlike English where the *adjective + noun* order is rigidly fixed, in Italian the order is more flexible. We can say either:

adjective + noun
un grande giardino
 a big garden

or

noun + adjective
un giardino grande
 a big garden

The position of the adjective can make a difference in emphasis or even in meaning. This is fully illustrated in 1.4.5.

40.7.2 Subject-verb

English learners of Italian tend to translate sentences directly from English into Italian. In Italian, as in English, the sentence can have the order *subject-verb*:

Subject Verb
Gianni ha chiamato.
 Gianni called.
Il postino è arrivato.
 The postman's arrived.

But it is equally possible to reverse the order, to give *verb-subject*:

Verb Subject
Ha chiamato Gianni.
 Gianni called.
È arrivato il postino.
 The postman's arrived.

Often the 'normal' order is reversed or altered in order to emphasise who carried out the action:

Chi ha mangiato tutti i cioccolatini?
 Who ate all the chocolates?

Verb Subject
Li ha mangiati Sonia.
 Sonia ate them.

But in the first examples above, no particular emphasis is given to the subject. It might just as well be the dustman who has called, or someone else who has telephoned.

In exclamative sentences, using **che** or **come**, the subject usually has to follow the verb:

Com'è bella la tua casa!

How lovely your house is!

Che begli occhi (che) ha quel bambino!

What lovely eyes that child has!

Similarly, in interrogative sentences, the subject often comes *after* the verb:

Finiranno mai questo libro Franco e Anna?

Will Franco and Anna ever finish this book?

And it *has* to come after the verb when the interrogative sentence is introduced by interrogative words such as **che cosa**, **chi**, **come**, **dove**, **quale**, **quando**, **quanto**:

Quando finiranno il progetto di ricerche i nostri colleghi?

When will our colleagues finish their research project?

40.7.3 Subject-verb-object

When there is a noun direct object, the normal sentence order is *subject-verb-object*:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Object</i>
Gianni	vedrà	la sua amica stasera.
Gianni	will see	his friend tonight.

Again, when we want to place emphasis on the object (in this case **la sua amica**), the normal order can be changed, so that the *object* is placed first in the sentence::

<i>Object</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>
La sua amica	Gianni	la vedrà stasera.
Gianni will see his friend tonight.		
(lit. 'His friend, Gianni, will see her tonight')		

When we place the object first, we add a further direct object before the verb in the form of a direct object pronoun (**lo**, **la**, **li**, **le**). This is called *topicalisation*.

It is equally possible to emphasise the object of the sentence by moving it to the end:

Lo vedrò domani all'aeroporto mio padre.
I will see my father tomorrow at the airport.
(lit. 'Him I will see tomorrow at the airport my father')

40.7.4 Split sentence

In Italian, as in English, it is also possible to *split* the sentence, using a phrase with **essere**, to emphasise the person or object in question, while the rest of the sentence stays in the same position.

Emphasising the *subject* of the action:

Sei tu che mi chiami?

Is it you who is calling me?

È Luca che ci ha aiutato a fare trasloco.

It was Luca who helped us move.

(Compare the last example with the non-emphatic **Luca ci ha aiutato a fare trasloco.**)

Emphasising the *object* of the action:

È lei che ho visto con mio marito.

It was she that I saw with my husband.

È Naomi che sono andata a trovare a Genova.

It was Naomi that I went to see in Genova.

(Compare this with the non-emphatic **Sono andata a trovare Naomi a Genova.**)

41

Oral communication and telephone skills

41.1 Introduction

Chapter 40, Registers and styles, illustrates some differences between the spoken and written language. This chapter now looks specifically at the features of spoken Italian with which the foreign learner has to become familiar, including the use of the **Lei** form, the use of discourse markers specific to spoken Italian, the use of interjections, and finally the use of specific techniques needed to get your message across. Another feature of spoken Italian, not covered here, is the use of colloquialisms, illustrated in the many available texts on **Modi di dire**, which learners can consult to expand their grasp of colloquial expressions.

Making or receiving a telephone call in Italian is probably one of the most difficult tasks for a non-native speaker to carry out. The later sections of this chapter give some standard telephone phrases to help you and also tell you how to spell your name when using the telephone.

41.2 The *Lei* form

Although the use of the **Lei** form applies to written Italian too, it is most important in spoken interaction. The **Lei** courtesy form, used to address people, is probably the most important characteristic inherited from the period of Spanish domination (the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries). The **Lei** form is an indirect way of addressing a person using the third person feminine instead of the second person **tu** or **voi**, as if we were speaking not to 'you' but to 'her'.

The **Lei** form of address is one of the most difficult patterns of language for foreigners to learn, since it sounds slightly unnatural and confusing. It is particularly alien to English speakers, who are used to interacting with others in a simple, more direct fashion. Even students from an Italian background, who in their family situation have only ever used **tu**, can find it difficult to use **Lei**.

Nonetheless the **Lei** form is an unavoidable part of everyday life and relationships in Italian society. Although the foreign learner will be treated with a certain amount of tolerance, among Italians failure to use it is perceived as an omission of a sign of respect and a serious infringement of good manners.

Here we highlight a few points that can cause difficulty when using the *Lei* courtesy form.

Verb forms

All verb forms must be in the *third person*:

<i>Tu</i>	<i>Lei</i>
Prendi un caffè? Would you like a coffee?	Prende un caffè?
Hai ragione! You are right!	Ha ragione!

Particular care should be taken over the imperative forms (see 2.3.22). The *Lei* form uses the present subjunctive (2.3.17):

<i>Tu</i>	<i>Lei</i>
Vieni. Accomodati. Come in. Have a seat.	Venga. Si accomodi.
Dammi quel libro. Give me that book.	Mi dia quel libro.

The *Lei* forms of imperatives most commonly needed, even by tourists or visitors, are those used to attract someone's attention or ask a question:

Senta! Listen!
Scusi! Excuse me!

Possessive

The possessive used (see 3.7) must be **Suo** rather than **tuo**:

<i>Tu</i>	<i>Lei</i>
Dimmi il tuo nome. Tell me your name.	Mi dica il Suo nome.
È tua questa giacca? Is this your jacket?	È Sua questa giacca?

Pronouns

Personal pronouns (see 3.2) must be in the *third person feminine*, both *direct* (**La**) and *indirect* (**Le**):

<i>Tu</i>	<i>Lei</i>
Non ti sento. I can't hear you.	Non La sento.
Ti chiedo scusa. I apologise to you.	Le chiedo scusa.
Ti piace Mozart? Do you like Mozart?	Le piace Mozart?

The **Lei** form of *direct* and *indirect* pronouns (3.4.1–2) often has to be used when speaking on the telephone, in a business situation:

Vuole che *La* faccia richiamare?

Do you want to be called back?

Vuole il catalogo? *Glielo* spedisco domani.

Do you want the catalogue? I'll send you it tomorrow.

41.3 Interjections

There is a range of interjections used in different situations to express different reactions and/or emotions (see 25.2).

41.4 Discourse markers

While discourse markers are found both in spoken and written Italian, there are some more suited to the informal context of the spoken language.

41.4.1 Discourse markers in conversation

Typical of spoken discourse are those phrases that try to involve the listener, for example **vero**, **è vero?**, **no?**, **non è vero?** and the northern Italian contraction **nevvero?**:

Ha studiato a Londra *Lei*, *non è vero?*

You studied in London, didn't you?

Andiamo tutti con la tua macchina, *no?*

We're all going with your car, no?

Quella ragazza è la nuova assistente, *vero?*

That girl is the new assistant, isn't she?

Molto bella la fidanzata di Walter, *nevvero?*

Very beautiful Walter's girlfriend, isn't she?

Some discourse markers summarise what you have just said:

insomma in short

allora so

in breve in short

Some reinforce what you have just said:

anzi on the contrary, in fact

In spoken Italian, unlike in written Italian, **anzi** can be used entirely on its own, at the end of a discourse.

Non ho nessuna intenzione di copiare il tuo tema. *Anzi.*

I've got no intention of copying your essay. Quite the contrary.

Other discourse markers are also used in written communication to join the parts of complex sentences. These are explained in Chapter 30 Combining messages. They are however used in a slightly different way in spoken Italian and we have tried to illustrate them in the following two examples. The discourse markers are in italics.

41.4.2 Dialogo (informal conversation)

Gita al mare

Carlo and Gianna are going to the seaside.

- C *Allora*, siamo pronti? Sono già le 11.00.
- G Ma vogliamo portare dei panini? *Così* mangiamo al mare a mezzogiorno senza dovere salire.
- C *Dunque* se ci fermiamo prima in paese, possiamo comprare un po' di prosciutto dal salumiere, *anzi* ci facciamo preparare i panini da lui.
- G Va bene, facciamo così, si fa prima . . . dai, su, andiamo!
- C E ora piove! Inutile andare al mare con questo tempo!
- G E *quindi* cosa vuoi fare?
- C Ma che ne so! Sei stata tu a volere andare al mare!
- G *Infatti* le previsioni del tempo erano brutte. *Perciò* ti ho detto, andiamo presto!
- C *Cioè*?
- G *Cioè* verso le 8.00 di mattina!
- C Sì, grazie!
- C Well, are we ready? It's already 11.00.
- G Shall we take some sandwiches? That way we can eat on the beach at midday instead of having to come up again.
- C Well, if we stop in the village first, we can buy a bit of ham at the grocer's, in fact we can have him make up some sandwiches for us.
- G Ok, let's do that, it'll be quicker . . . come on, get a move on, let's go!
- C And now it's raining! It's pointless going to the seaside with this weather!
- G So what do you want to do?
- C What do I know! It was you who wanted to go to the seaside!
- G In fact the weather forecast was bad. That's why I said to you, let's go early!
- C In other words?
- G In other words about 8.00 in the morning!
- C Yes, thanks a lot!

41.4.3 Lecture (formal context)

La riforma universitaria in Italia

A lecture on the reform of the Universities in Italy

Dunque oggi parliamo del sistema scolastico in Italia e in modo particolare dell'università. *Allora* la riforma universitaria prevede l'esistenza di due cicli: il cosiddetto "tre + due" *cioè* tre anni di corso di laurea di base più due anni di specializzazione per il Master. Il sistema universitario diventa *cioè* più simile a quello inglese, *anzi* a quello europeo, perché *in effetti* tutti i paesi membri della Unione Europea dovrebbero aderire ai provvedimenti della riforma Bologna. *In questo modo* la mobilità europea diventa una realtà. *Perciò* le università in Italia hanno dato il via ad una serie di cambiamenti, sia nell'organizzazione dei corsi, sia nel riconoscimento di esami superati all'estero.

So today we are talking about the education system in Italy and in particular about the universities. Now the reform of the universities provides for the existence of two cycles: the so-called 'three plus two' in other words three years of undergraduate degree course plus two years of specialisation for the Masters. The university system, in other words, becomes more similar to the British one, or rather to the European one, because in fact all the member countries of the EU should follow the provisions of the Bologna reform. In this way European mobility is becoming a reality. The Italian universities, therefore, have started a series of changes, both in the organisation of their courses, and in the recognition of exams taken abroad.

41.5 Techniques of oral communication

Some specific techniques needed in oral communication with others are illustrated below.

41.5.1 Attracting attention

In a restaurant or shop, the most normal way of attracting a waiter's or assistant's attention is to use the verb **sentire**:

Senta, scusi! Listen, excuse me! (lit.)

In the same context, the shop assistant wishing to start off a dialogue, will say:

Dica, signora! Tell me, signora. (lit.)

Similar phrases can be used to initiate or to join in a conversation in an informal social situation, using **tu**:

Senti Listen. (lit.)

Dimmi, Marco Tell me, Marco

41.5.2 Interrupting and getting your point across

For a range of phrases used to get your point across, see Chapter 27.

To interrupt while acknowledging points made by others, you can use:

Ecco. There! (I *told* you)

Vedi, io . . . You see, I . . .

Ho capito. Ma . . . I've got the point, but . . .

41.5.3 Asking/giving permission to speak

Asking permission:

Permetti?/Permette? May I speak? (lit. 'Will you allow . . .?')

Una parola? (May I have) a word?

Giving permission or inviting to speak:

Prego. Please.

Dica (pure). Please speak (please do).

41.5.4 Clarifying or explaining what has been said

Explaining what you have said:

cioè	that is, in other words
mi spiego	I'll explain myself
voglio dire	I mean

Checking someone has understood what you have said:

È chiaro?
Is that clear?

Mi spiego?
Am I explaining myself?

Giving examples:

Ad esempio, Per esempio
For example

Asking someone to repeat what he/she has said:

Può ripetere?	Can you repeat?
Non ho capito	I didn't understand
Non ho sentito	I didn't catch what you said
Può spiegare?	Can you explain?

41.6 Spelling on the telephone

On the phone, you often have to spell your name or the name of the place where you live (see Italian alphabet in Appendix I). Italians often use the names of city to represent the sounds they wish to clarify: A Ancona, G Genova, and so on.

Some letters such as J, K, X, Y (**i lunga** or **i greca**, **cappa**, **ics**, **ippsilon**) do not exist in the traditional Italian alphabet but can be used for spelling foreign names. Here is a list of the cities most often used for spelling. The less common letters (H, J, K, Q, X, Y, Z) just go by their name. They do not need to be spelled out since they are not easily confused with other letters.

A	Ancona	N	Napoli
B	Bologna	O	Otranto
C	Como	P	Palermo
D	Domodossola	Q	cu
E	Empoli	R	Roma
F	Firenze	S	Salerno
G	Genova	T	Torino
H	acca	U	Udine
I	Imola	V	Venezia
J	i lunga	W	doppio/a vi/vu
K	cappa	X	ics
L	Livorno	Y	ippsilon
M	Milano	Z	zeta

So to spell the name Jones you would have to say: **J**, **i lunga**, **O** come Otranto, **N** come Napoli, **E** come Empoli, **S** come Salerno.

41.7 Telephone phrases

Initial greetings, saying goodbye

Pronto.	Arrivederci.
Hello.	Goodbye.

Asking to speak to someone

Potrei parlare con il direttore?
Could I speak to the manager?

C'è il medico, per favore?
Is the doctor there, please?

Mi passa il dottor Caselli, per favore?
Could you pass me Dr Caselli, please?

Being put through

Attenda un momento. Gliela passo.
Wait a minute. I'll put you through (to him/her).

Le passo la linea.
I'll put you through.

Se vuole attendere . . .
If you want to hold on . . .

Le faccio il nuovo interno.
I'll dial the new extension for you.

Mi potrebbe passare . . . ?
Could you put me through to . . . ?

Saying someone is not there/not available

Mi dispiace, non c'è in questo momento.
I'm sorry. He's out at the moment.

È sull'altra linea.
He's on the other line.

È in riunione.
She/he's in a meeting.

Un momento. Non è in ufficio.
Just a minute. He's not in his office.

Credo che sia nel palazzo.
I think he's somewhere in the building.

Cercherò di rintracciarlo con l'intercom.
I'll try to page him on the intercom.

Vuole attendere?
Do you wish to hold?

Vuole provare più tardi?
Do you want to try later?

Non riesco a rintracciarlo.
I can't get hold of him.

Saying when someone is back

Dovrebbe essere qui più tardi.
He/she should be back later.

Leaving a message

Potrei lasciare un messaggio?
Could I leave a message?

Vuole lasciare un messaggio?
Would you like to leave a message?

Vuole ripetere il Suo nome?
Could you repeat your name?

Come si scrive, per favore?
How is it spelt, please?

Dove posso rintracciarla?
Where can I get hold of you?

Va bene. Glielo dico.
I'll tell him.

Calling back

Gli chiedo di chiamarLa appena torna (appena rientra).
I'll have him call you as soon as he gets back.

Vuole che La faccia richiamare?
Do you want me to have him call you back?

La faccio richiamare.
I'll have him call you back.

Può lasciare il Suo numero?
Can you leave your number?

La richiamiamo appena possibile.
We'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Ho preso nota del Suo numero.
I've made a note of your number.

Reasons for calling

Chiamo per fissare un incontro.
I'm calling to arrange a meeting.

E il motivo della chiamata?
And the purpose of your call?

Qual è il motivo della chiamata?
What is the purpose of your call/what is it about?

Mi può dire il motivo della Sua chiamata?
Can you tell me what it's about?

Fixing an appointment

Le va bene domani a mezzogiorno?
Would tomorrow at 12.00 suit you?

Adesso controllo i suoi impegni sull'agenda.
I'll just check his/her appointments in the diary.

Lei/lui sarà disponibile giovedì.
She/he'll be available Thursday.

Facciamo alle due?
Let's make it 2 o'clock?

Mi potrebbe chiamare per la conferma?
Will you call me back for confirmation?

Dovrei verificare.
I would need to check.

È abbastanza impegnata(o) in questo periodo.
She/He's rather busy at the moment.

Non sarà possibile nei prossimi giorni.
It won't be possible over the next few days.

L'appuntamento fissato in precedenza non è più possibile/conveniente.
The appointment arranged earlier is no longer possible.

Other useful phrases

Numero interno **contattare**
Extension number to contact

La linea è libera/occupata
The line is free/engaged

41.8 On the telephone

When greeting somebody on the telephone Italians say **Pronto** ('Hello'). Here are two examples of simple telephone conversations, the first using the polite **Lei** forms, the second using the familiar **tu**.

Call A

Pronto, sono Nicola Serra, vorrei parlare con l'avvocato Pira.
Hello, it's Nicola Serra, I'd like to speak to Mr (Lawyer) Pira.

Attenda un attimo, glielo passo subito.
Wait a minute, I'll pass him to you straightaway.

Pronto. Con chi parlo?
Hello, who am I speaking to?

Buongiorno avvocato, sono Serra.
Good morning, (Lawyer), I'm Serra.

Buongiorno dottor Serra, mi dica.
Good morning, Mr Serra, what can I do for you?

Call B

Pronto, sono Giulio Tramonti. C'è Andrea per favore?

Hello, it's Giulio Tramonti. Is Andrea there, please?

No, mi dispiace, è appena uscito.

No, I'm sorry, he's just gone out.

Posso lasciare un messaggio?

Can I leave a message?

Certo, dimmi.

Certainly, tell me.

Se possibile, Andrea dovrebbe richiamarmi stasera, dopo le 8.00. Devo dirgli una cosa importante.

If possible, Andrea should call me back tonight, after 8.00. I have to tell him something important.

Va bene. Glielo dirò certamente.

OK. I'll certainly tell him.

Grazie, arrivederci.

Thanks, goodbye.

Prego, arrivederci.

Not at all. Goodbye.

42

Written communication

42.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at different forms of written communication and see how the grammar structures used vary according to the type of communication. We look particularly at business correspondence, and give some pointers for compiling a CV and writing an essay or report. We also look at types of written language you may come across in everyday life in Italy: bureaucratic language, scientific and technical language, and journalistic language. For informal forms of written communication (emails and SMS), see 40.5.

42.2 Letters and faxes

Business letters are very important in the world of commerce, even more so now that faxes and emails have become the accepted means of communication, replacing the telephone call. Faxes tend to be a particularly important means of communication in small Italian businesses such as hotels. They follow the same style as letters but often use a cover sheet detailing the date, fax number and the number of pages being transmitted.

There is a set form for business letters in Italian, which tend to be more formal than their English equivalent. Here we look at just a few important features of letters and faxes. If you regularly need to send business letters, you should purchase one of the many books on **Corrispondenza commerciale** (business correspondence) available on the market. Here we give just a few important points regarding the layout of a business letter.

42.2.1 Date

The name of the town or city is indicated top right, followed by the day (in figures), the month (written in full) and the year:

Milano, 14 ottobre 2004

This is often abbreviated in faxes and less formal letters to **Milano, 14/10/04**.

42.2.2 The recipient/addressee

The name and address of the recipient can be written either on the left or on the right. On the first line of the letter is the name of the addressee, with the appropriate

title in full or in abbreviated form. On the second line is the street, with street number following it; on the third line is the CAP (**Codice Avviamento Postale** or postcode) followed by the name of the town or city. If the town is not the provincial capital, you may add in brackets the abbreviation for the province. For example:

Egregio Dott. Augusto Parente
Via G. Verdi, 42
43100 FELINO (PR)

You may address a specific person within a company:

Ing. Carlo Biancardi
Direttore Tecnico
Metaldomus

When replying to an Italian business letter, the *title* of the addressee must be used even if he/she hasn't used it when signing.

When writing to a company, the name of the company or organisation are preceded by the abbreviation **Spett.** (**spettabile** 'worthy of respect'):

Spett. Bianchi S.p.A.*

or

Spett. Ditta Bianchi S.p.A.

NOTE

* **Società per Azioni or PLC**

The name of the office or department can be given either:

(a) after the company name:

Spett. Bianchi S.p.A.
Ufficio Contabilità

or

(b) as the addressee:

Spett. Ufficio Marketing
Bianchi S.p.A.

If you want to mark the letter for the attention of someone specific (English 'FAO'), you can use:

Alla cortese attenzione del Sig. Di Giacomo
Alla cortese attenzione dell'Amministratore Delegato

42.2.3 Academic, honorary and other titles

For a fuller discussion on when and how to use professional titles, see 20.9. Professional qualifications are not generally used to address people in English, with the exception of 'Doctor' but they are always used in Italy where it is normal to address people as **Ingegnere**, **Avvocato** both in speaking and writing:

Sig.	signore	Sig. Carlo Rossi
Sig.na	signorina	Sig.na Carla Rossi
Sig.ra	signora	Signora Celina Ginelli

Sig.a	See note	
Dott.	Dottore	Dott. Carlo Rossi
Ing.	Ingegnere	Ing. Carlo Rossi
Avv.	Avvocato	
Rag.	Ragioniere	
Prof.	Professore	

NOTE When you don't know whether a woman is married or not, you should address her as **Sig.a**.

If you know the name of the person, use their name and title:

Gentile Signora Bianchi, Egregio Signor Rossi

If you don't know their name, use their title only:

Egregio Direttore

Usually **Egregio** (abbreviated **Egr.**) is used for a man, **Gentile** (abbreviated **Gent.**) for a woman:

**Egregio Professore, Egregio Dottore, Egregio Signore;
Gentile Signora, Gentile Dottoressa, Gentile Professoressa.**

42.2.4 References

You may find the following *references* on a business letter:

Rif.	ref.
Vs. Rif.	Your ref.
Ns. Rif.	Our ref.

The word **Oggetto** indicates what the letter or fax is about:

Oggetto: Richiesta di campione, prezzi e condizioni di pagamento.
Re: Request for samples, prices and terms of payment.

42.2.5 Salutation ('Dear . . .')

When addressing a letter to a company or organisation, no salutation is used. The name is given at the top of the letter along with the address **Egregio, Gentile**, etc. (see 42.2.2) and is not repeated at the beginning of the letter.

42.2.6 Some common abbreviations in commercial letters

All	allegato/i	enclosures/enclosed
C.P.	casella postale	postbox
C.A.P.	codice di avviamento postale	postcode
c/c	conto corrente	current account
corr.	corrente	current
c.m.	corrente mese	this month
lett.	lettera	letter
n./N°	numero	number
p.c.	(per conoscenza)	for information only
p.c.c.	(per copia conforme)	copy to

p.v.	prossimo venturo	next (month)
Racc.	raccomandata	registered post
u.s.	ultimo scorso	last (month)

42.2.7 Opening and closing phrases

In formal correspondence, you may use either the **voi** form, if addressing the company, or the **Lei** form if addressing one person. The pronouns and possessives will correspond, with **vostro** for the **voi** form and **Suo** for the **Lei** form:

Opening

In risposta alla vostra/Sua (lettera) . . .

In reply to your letter . . .

Riguardo alla vostra/Sua (lettera) . . .

With regard to your letter . . .

In riferimento all vostra/Sua del 10 c.m. . . .

With reference to your letter of the 10th of this month . . .

Abbiamo il piacere di informarvi/informarLa . . .

We have the pleasure to inform you . . .

Vi/Le comunichiamo che . . .

We inform you that . . .

Ci dispiace dovervi/doverLa informare . . .

We are sorry to have to inform you . . .

Closing

Speriamo in una vostra/Sua sollecita risposta . . .

We look forward to a speedy reply . . .

In attesa di una vostra/Sua risposta . . .

Awaiting your reply . . .

. . . siamo a vostra/Sua disposizione . . .

. . . we are at your disposal . . .

Vi/La salutiamo distintamente

Yours faithfully

42.2.8 Signature

The signature at the bottom indicates the name and position of the writer. The actual signature is generally handwritten. The abbreviation **p** indicates that the person has been authorised to write on behalf of someone else.

42.3 Curriculum vitae

A CV (curriculum vitae) should be laid out as simply as possible, using the correct terminology. Since it is in note form, the syntax will be different from that of a letter, report or essay and nearer to the concise style of a newspaper headline. For examples of letters of application, to accompany the CV, we recommend using a

textbook of **Corrispondenza Commerciale**; model letters are also available to download online from various websites, such as www.ottimittare.com/curriculum_vitae/.

Here is an example of a basic CV for an English student applying for a work placement in Italy:

Curriculum vitae

COGNOME: Carrington
NOME: Lucinda
RESIDENZA: 52 Troy Close
 Headington
 Oxford
 OX3 7SQ
 Inghilterra

NUMERO DI CELLULARE: +44 7779 579 593
EMAIL: lucindacarrington@hotmail.co.uk

LUOGO E DATA DI NASCITA: Inghilterra 17/08/1985
CITTADINANZA: Inglese
STATO CIVILE: Nubile

CURRICULUM SCOLASTICO: Winstanley College, Winstanley Road, Billinge, Inghilterra

TITOLO DI STUDIO:

2003 Esami di A-level (esami di maturità)
 Psicologia
 Lingua e Letteratura Inglese
 Francese

2003–6 Attualmente iscritta al corso di laurea in Lingue presso Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, Inghilterra

LINGUE CONOSCIUTE: Inglese (madre lingua)
 Italiano (buona conoscenza)
 Francese (buona conoscenza)

ESPERIENZA DI LAVORO:

Maggio 2004: Lavoro *part-time* come commessa presso Warehouse, Oxford, Inghilterra.

Sett 2002: Lavoro *part-time* come impiegata presso Lloyds TSB Bank, Wigan, Inghilterra.

ESPERIENZE ALL'ESTERO

Apr – luglio 2005: Stagista presso Siemens Orsi Spa, Genova, Italia.

Apr 2003: Assistente personale presso uno studio legale, Parigi, Francia.

REFERENZE: Anna Benevento
 Dept of Modern Languages
 Oxford Brookes University
 Gipsy Lane Campus
 Oxford
 OX3 0BP

Tel: +44 1865 483720
 Fax: +44 1865 483791
 Email: abenevento@brookes.ac.uk

42.4 Extended writing: differences between English and Italian

One of the main differences between English and Italian writing is the length of the sentences. Whereas English places high value on the ability to write concisely and without excessive flourishes, Italian writers, especially in political commentary or in academic writing, feel the need to embellish simple structures and to construct a tissue of complex phrases. The Italian learner should not attempt to reproduce these but should gradually build on his/her basic writing skills, to transform the simple sentences of the beginner into something more complex. The main features of extended writing on which to focus are:

- The use of coordinated clauses, linked by a conjunction or other discourse marker (see 30.2).
- The use of main and subordinate clauses, linked by appropriate conjunctions (see 30.3).
- The use of a more appropriate lexis, rather than that of spoken Italian (see 40.3).
- The use of further discourse markers appropriate to written Italian (see 42.5 below).

When writing a longer text, it should be remembered that punctuation may be used in a different way from that used in English, for example the use of quote marks differs (see 31.2).

42.5 Writing essays, making connections

Writing an essay tests your ability to link ideas in a language. All Italian children are taught at school to make a **scaletta** or essay plan. This is also good practice for learners of Italian, who have to find a way of making their essay sound fluent and natural. Italians tend to use longer sentence structures than English writers and it is essential to practise the different ways in which clauses can be joined (see also Chapter 30). Sentences may be composed of coordinated clauses or subordinated clauses.

Depending on how the ideas in the essay link together, the subordinate clauses (see 30.3) may be relative clauses or clauses giving cause/effect, purpose, time or manner, and they may be introduced by conjunctions. (See the individual Chapters 31 to 39.) Alternatively, connecting words, for example coordinating conjunctions (see 30.2) and other discourse markers, can be used to link your ideas in the essay. The different types of clauses can be used to make or emphasise your points, to contrast with what has been said earlier, to explain something said earlier, and so on.

42.6 Reports

Transforming facts and figures into cohesive text is a skill often required in a work situation or in business. There are certain standard phrases and verbs that are used in compiling a report based on statistics in addition to the connecting words already mentioned above. Here are a few.

Describing figures

Si aggira intorno ai 60 milioni.

The figure is around 60 million.

Al censimento erano poco più di 150.000 persone.

At the census, there were a little over 150,000 people.

Percentages and proportions

Circa i quattro quinti/i due terzi/un quarto/la metà

About four-fifths, two-thirds, a quarter, half

I lavoratori autonomi per il 37% investono in immobili.

37% of self-employed workers invest in property.

Il 27% ha un conto in banca.

27% have a bank account.

Pochi, meno del 20 per cento, hanno una seconda casa.

Few, less than 20%, have a second home.

Una percentuale più o meno analoga è titolare di un conto in banca.

More or less the same percentage has a bank account.

Un reddito pari al 10%

An income equal to 10%

Lower than, higher than; more than, less than

In comparisons, you can use the words **superiore** 'higher than', **inferiore** 'lower than', **uguale** 'same as', with reference to another category, to estimates or to the average:

Era superiore alla media.

It was greater than average.

Erano 3 mila in più di quanti si pensava.

They were 3,000 more than expected.

Sono il 2,5% contro una media del 9,5%.

They are 2.5% against an average of 9.5%.

Hanno un reddito inferiore del 34% a quello dei lavoratori autonomi.

They have an income 34% lower than that of self-employed workers.

Un tasso di nascita inferiore alla media

A birth rate lower than the average

Meno della media

Less than average

La stragrande maggioranza

The overwhelming majority

Avoiding essere

Various verbs can be used instead of **essere**:

Il reddito individuale media risulta/è risultato di 50.000 euro.

The average income is/was 50,000 euros.

L'aumento maggiore *si registra/si è registrato* nel settore bancario.
The greatest increase is/was in the banking sector.

La spesa in questo settore *ha raggiunto* i 10 milioni.
The expenditure in this sector reached 10 million.

Sempre in crescita *si dimostra* la spesa per le automobili.
Still growing is the expenditure on cars.

La crescita *ha interessato* sia gli alberghi che le pensioni.
The increase was seen both for hotels and for guest houses.

Other verbs used in report-writing

Un reddito alto *caratterizza* il 16% delle famiglie italiane.
A high income is a feature of 16% of Italian families.

I generi alimentari *occupano* il posto più importante.
Foodstuffs occupy the most important position.

Le voci più importanti *riguardano* i beni di lusso.
The most important categories relate to luxury goods.

I dati *si riferiscono* al 2003.
The figures refer to 2003.

Where does the money go?

***Su* ogni 100 euro spesi per i generi alimentari, gli italiani ne *hanno destinati* in media 40 alla carne.**

Out of every 100 euros spent on foodstuffs, Italians spent on average 40 euros on meat.

Alle spese per la salute *è stato destinato* il 5,5% del totale.
5.5% of the total was spent on health.

Nel 2004 *incidono* soltanto per il 42%.
In 2004 they account only for 42%.

Le voci "Alimentari" e "Arredamento" *coprono* nel 2003 il 43% delle spese totali.

The categories 'Foodstuffs' and 'Furnishings' cover in 2003 43% of total expenditure.

La spesa maggiore *è andata* ai beni alimentari.
The biggest expenditure went on foodstuffs.

Up or down?

La struttura dei consumi *si è modificata* notevolmente.
The structure of consumer expenditure has changed considerably.

***Si è ridotta* l'incidenza delle spese per l'alimentazione.**
The proportion of expenditure on food has decreased.

***È cresciuta* del 18% la spesa per i beni di lusso.**
The expenditure on luxury goods has grown by 18%.

***Cresce* dal 13 al 15% circa.**
It is growing from 13 to 15% approximately.

Gli studenti *sono aumentati*; il numero di studenti è *aumentato*.
The students have increased; the number of students has increased.

Gli studenti *sono diminuiti*; il numero di studenti è *diminuito*.
The students have decreased; the number of students has decreased.

Order or position

Ha battuto la spesa per . . .
It beat the expenditure on . . .

In testa è . . .
At the top (of the list) is . . .

In cima alla graduatoria . . .
At the top of the league table . . .

Al primo posto . . .
In first place . . .

Vince la montagna con il 15% dei turisti stranieri.
The mountains win, with 15% of foreign tourists.

Seguiti da . . .
Followed by . . .

Comparison

contro i 10.000 del 2000/contro il 39% del 2004
compared to the 10,000 in 2000/compared to 39% in 2004

paragonato a
compared to

La situazione è cambiata molto rispetto a dieci anni fa.
The situation has changed a lot compared to ten years ago.

La disoccupazione giovanile in Italia è alta in confronto ad altri paesi europei.
Youth unemployment in Italy is high compared to other European countries.

'Yes'/'No'/'Don't know'

Gli intervistati
The interviewees

I "non so" sono il 10 per cento.
The 'don't knows' are 10%.

According to

Dalla ricerca i lavoratori dipendenti appaiono come scarsi risparmiatori.
From the study, employed workers seem to be poor savers.

Ecco le sette categorie-tipo che emergono dalla ricerca.
Here are the seven category types which emerge from the study.

Stando ai risultati dell'indagine . . .
According to the results of the study . . .

L'indagine rivela . . .

The study reveals . . .

Risulta dalla tabella . . .

It emerges from the table . . .

Con riferimento (in riferimento) alle tabelle . . .

With reference to the tables . . .

In base ai dati (del 2003) . . .

According to the figures from 2003 . . .

Dati recenti indicano . . .

Recent figures indicate . . .

Secondo le rivelazioni del 2003 . . .

According to the findings of 2003 . . .

42.7 Bureaucratic language

Every day both Italians and foreign visitors are repeatedly confronted by the web of bureaucratic, highly technical and often mysterious language used by the Italian public administration (and often by private enterprise as well) in order to provide the public with 'information'.

The effect produced by this type of language is to make the average Italian feel like a defendant in a court of law, when in reality he is merely being given information as to where to stamp his bus or train ticket.

To illustrate this, we have chosen just one original example from the funicular station in Mergellina, Naples. Note the use of the **si passivante** in this official notice **Si informano i Signori viaggiatori** 'The esteemed passengers are informed' rather than the more usual **Informiamo i Signori viaggiatori** 'We inform the esteemed passengers' or the passive form **I signori viaggiatori sono informati** 'The esteemed passengers are informed' (see Chapters 2 and 19, and also 40.6.2).

Si informano i Signori Viaggiatori che, ai sensi del regolamento, articolo 567 del 19/11/1973, essi devono munirsi di titolo di viaggio precedentemente all'ingresso sulle vetture della Funicolare. I titoli di viaggio vanno timbrati nelle apposite obliterate collocata nell'androne della Stazione.

The approximate translation is:

The esteemed passengers are informed that, as prescribed by the relevant ruling, clause 567, of 19/11/1973, travel documents must be purchased in advance of boarding the carriages of the Funicular. The travel documents must be stamped in the specially provided punching machines, located in the entrance hall of the station.

The same concept could perfectly well be expressed by a few simple words, perhaps with an arrow indicating where passengers should insert the tickets:

Timbrare il biglietto qui.

Stamp your ticket here.

Individuals are also prone to using overly formal language when they have to deal with a formal situation. In particular the third person is often used referring to oneself, as though speaking of someone else, instead of using the first person 'I' form. This is done in applications, requests, declarations, and often in CVs addressed to an institution or public office, in order to stress the objectivity and impersonality of the information given. In such cases the formula used is **il sottoscritto** (for men) or **la sottoscritta** (for women), literally 'the undersigned'; all verbs used are in the third person. Vocabulary too tends to be formal.

Here are some extracts from a CV, in which the writer attempts to use this formal style. Note the use of: the rather old-fashioned **ivi** instead of **lì** or **ci**; **trascorrere**, **soggiornare** rather than the simpler **passare**; **in qualità di** rather than **come**; **sopraindicati** 'the above-mentioned'; and the rather pompous **calandosi nelle realtà locali** and **riuscendo . . . ad allargare i propri orizzonti socio-culturali**:

Curriculum Vitae di Policastri (Carmelo)

Il sottoscritto Carmelo Policastri, nato a Eboli il 16.01.1975 ed ivi residente alla Via della Mercanzia, numero civico 27, ha conseguito il Diploma di Maturità Scientifica nell'anno 1993, presso il Liceo Scientifico Statale di Eboli, riportando la votazione finale di 52/60.

Negli anni 1991–1992 il sottoscritto ha trascorso entrambe le stagioni estive nell'Isola di Jersey (Channel Islands) al fine di approfondire e perfezionare la conoscenza della lingua inglese, l'estate del 1994 ha soggiornato invece a Hannover (Germania) per poter prendere dimestichezza con la lingua tedesca.

In ognuno dei periodi sopraindicati, il sottoscritto ha sempre cercato e trovato lavoro in campo turistico-alberghiero, calandosi al meglio delle proprie possibilità nelle realtà locali.

Guida-interprete, in qualità di lavoratore stagionale, già dal 1999, presso le Grotte di Pertusa, ha avuto ulteriori possibilità di venire a contatto con turisti provenienti da ogni parte del mondo, riuscendo, così, ad allargare i propri orizzonti socio-culturali.

Eboli, 30.03.2004

Carmelo Policastri

42.8 Scientific and technical language

Another feature of today's written Italian, widespread in public administration, as well as in many professional areas (for example, medicine, finance, education) is the tendency to use a lavish sprinkling of obscure technical terminology. This applies not only to specialist texts or communication, but also to communications intended to provide information for the general public.

Here are some examples. The first is taken from the reply to a letter to the health column of a newspaper, in which the reader asks about his nosebleeds:

La sintomatologia descritta è aspecifica e necessita di un inquadramento adeguato in quanto numerose possono essere le cause che fanno nascere una epistassi.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica*, 18 November 1995)

The symptomology described is aspecific and needs an adequate contextualisation, inasmuch as the causes that can produce a nosebleed are numerous.

Although examples such as this can be found in countries around the world, the extent to which the phenomenon has penetrated practically every area of life is perhaps unique to Italy. Road signs are a good example (the 'technical' words are in italics in this example):

Inizio *carreggiata* a traffico *canalizzato*. *Preselezionare corsia*.
Get in lane.

Another feature of scientific and technical language is the use of the passive form (see 19.2), a very common way to place less emphasis on the person who does something, and more on the action itself, or on its object. Here is an example:

La struttura a doppia elica del Dna *fu scoperta* da Watson e Crick.
The double helix structure of DNA was discovered by Watson and Crick.

42.9 Journalistic language

The language of the press is a mixture of styles. The 'Cronaca' section for example tends to use the Italian equivalent of the language of the tabloid press, for example exaggeration and hyperbole, and a simplification of syntax in the headlines. In other sections, for example 'Politica', the language can be obscure and difficult to access, not only because of the more complex syntax but because of the 'coded' references, historical, mythical, geographical, etc. that pepper the text. Features of journalistic language include the following.

42.9.1 Use of headlines without whole verbs

Newspaper headlines are kept as short as possible and are often composed entirely of nouns, participles or adjectives, without a complete verb:

Domani bus fermi
Buses on strike tomorrow

Minorenne arrestato a Cagliari
Juvenile arrested in Cagliari

Ragazza uccisa da clandestino
Girl killed by illegal immigrant

Prodi stanco e deluso
Prodi tired and disillusioned

42.9.2 Use of the passive, *si impersonale*, *si passivante*

As seen in 2.1.7 and 19.2, the passive form of verbs is a very common way to place less emphasis on the person who does something, and more on the action itself, or on its object. It is therefore very common to use passive constructions whenever the formality of a statement requires an impersonal approach. An example of the passive used in an official notice has already been shown above (see 42.7). **Si** is often found in newspaper reports in phrases such as **si dice**, **si comunica** (see 2.1.8 and 19.5).

42.9.3 Use of hyperbole and exaggerated language

Taking its cue from television, the press, and in particular the sports pages, uses hyperbole extensively. The style is intended to convey the excitement of the moment:

LONDRA – Finisce tra gli applausi l'ultima partita di Gianfranco Zola con la maglia del Chelsea. Un diluvio di applausi prima dell'incontro. E alla fine quando Zola è stato salutato da una vera e propria ovazione.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 8 August 2004)

London. The last match of Gianfranco Zola with the strip of Chelsea ends in applause. A flood of applause before the match. And at the end when the crowd said goodbye to Zola with a real ovation.

**Deportivo "galattico", Milan horror
il mesto addio alla Champions**

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 7 April 2004)

'Galactic' Deportivo, Milan horror
the sad goodbye to the Champions

Hyperbole also extends to nouns and adjectives, where there is often a prefix such as **arci-**, **iper-**, **stra-**, **super -**, **ultra-** or a suffix such as **-issimo**:

In tutto lo stadio soltanto due striscioni: "Chelsea contro il razzismo" e "Tolleranza zero al razzismo", slogan appropriati per una partitissima "inglese", dove gli stranieri in campo sono la stragrande maggioranza.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 25 March 2004)

In the whole stadium only two banners: 'Chelsea against racism' and 'Zero tolerance for racism', appropriate slogans for an English super-match, where the foreign players are the overwhelming majority.

Sette minuti di straordinario Milan cancellano dal campo il Deportivo La Coruna, sommerso da un supergol di Sheva.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 23 March 2004)

Seven minutes of Milan extra time wipe from the field Deportivo La Coruna, sunk by a supergoal from Sheva.

Adriano ha segnato un bellissimo gol.

(Adapted from *La Repubblica* online, 2 August 2004)

Adriano scored a beautiful goal.

42.9.4 Use of references and rhetorical devices

Far more than the British press, Italian newspapers, which were never intended for a mass market, make use of a coded language that can be difficult for even the Italian reader to access. This includes historical and literary references, understood only by an elite. Take this example from the press, where reference to the Forche Caudine, an episode in Roman history, is used to describe how Prodi is in an impossible situation with no way out.

Benvenuti alle forche caudine.

Welcome to the Caudine forks.

(Article by Raffaella Matarazzo, 6 October 2003, www.cafebabel.com)

People are also referred to by their titles or characteristics. For example, **il Cavaliere** 'the Cavalier' is used to refer to Berlusconi, a reference to an honorary award given for services to industry. In the same way, Giovanni Agnelli, the head of Fiat, was referred to as **l'Avvocato** 'the lawyer'.

The press also makes use of metaphor, metonym, synecdoche and other rhetorical devices. For example the use of **il carroccio** to refer to the **Legha Nord** party is a reference to the cart drawn by oxen which, in medieval times, used to carry the standard of the **comune** (district) into battle. Similarly, **Via delle Botteghe Oscure** was the headquarters of the PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra) but is used to refer to the party itself.

42.9.5 Use of foreign words

Another example of 'coded' language is the use of foreign words, in particular English words. Many of these are now so much an accepted part of the language that they are barely regarded as foreign. Examples include **il ticket** 'voucher' or 'amount payable for healthcare costs', **il budget** 'budget', **il welfare** as in **Ministero del Welfare**. Most foreign words are masculine in gender and have no distinct plural form. Some are used in a different sense from the English original, for example **il mobbing** 'bullying' or **il footing** 'jogging'.

Il Mobbing è un fenomeno sociale che si manifesta in un insieme di azioni e comunicazioni tra persone dello stesso ambito lavorativo, volto a determinare una condizione di debolezza in una persona allo scopo di emarginarla dall'ambiente.

(Adapted from www.mobbingonline.it,
retrieved 11 August 2004)

Mobbing is a social phenomenon which manifests itself in a series of actions and communications between people in the same work environment, directed at bringing about a condition of weakness in a person with the aim of marginalising him from the environment.

Per fare footing è bene fare uso di calzature specifiche per la corsa.

(Adapted from www.kwsalute.kataweb.it,
retrieved 11 August 2004)

For jogging, it is best to use shoes specially designed for running.

Appendix I

Spelling and pronunciation

Sounds and letters

It is often said that Italian is easy to learn, because it is spoken as it is written. This is not completely true, but certainly, compared with other languages such as English or French, Italian enjoys the advantage of a near ‘phonological’ system of spelling, in which each letter of the alphabet almost always corresponds to only one ‘sound’. Consequently it is usually easy to know how to pronounce an Italian word found in a written text, by simply following some straightforward general rules. The same is true when we need to write down words that we have heard in their spoken form.

However sounds and letters do not always correspond. There are some sounds (‘phonemes’) that are represented by two or three letters, for example [ʃ] = *sc*; there are also some letters that can represent two different sounds, for example *c* can be either [k] as in *ca* or [tʃ] as in *ce*.

The alphabet

The Italian alphabet is composed of twenty-one letters. Below, you will find a table showing the relationship between the written letters of the alphabet and the sounds of the spoken language. The table shows each letter, the way the letter is written in Italian, its symbol in the (IPA) International Phonetics Association alphabet, some examples of its use and, where necessary, notes on English words that use similar sounds, to help you with the pronunciation. Where there are no notes, the pronunciation of the letters is just the same as in English. Following the table there are a few practical tips on some difficulties of Italian pronunciation faced by native English speakers.

The letters *j*, *k*, *w*, *x*, *y*, shown after the main table, do not belong to the Italian alphabet, although they are often used to write words of foreign origin.

<i>Letter</i>		<i>Phoneme</i>		<i>Examples</i>
A	a	[a]	as in English ‘ah!’	amore
B	bi	[b]		bocca, cibo
C	ci	[k]	before consonants and a, o, u:	crudo, casa, chiesa
		[tʃ]	‘k’ as in English ‘cat’ before vowels e, i: ‘ch’ as in English ‘church’ see note 1	Luciano, cera, acciuga

The alphabet

D	di	[d]		<i>dono, piede</i>
E	e	[e]	see note 4	<i>elegante, perché</i>
		[ɛ]	see note 4	<i>ecco, vieni</i>
F	effe	[f]		<i>facile, caffè</i>
G	gi	[g]	before consonants and vowels a, o, u: 'g' as in English 'go'	<i>grotta, gola, alghe</i>
		[dʒ]	before vowels e, i: 'j' as in English 'judge'	<i>rifugio, angelo</i>
H	acca		see note 1	<i>ho, hanno</i>
I	i	[i]	see note 2	<i>idea, idiota</i>
L	elle	[l]		<i>lettera, collo</i>
M	emme	[m]		<i>mela, ombrello</i>
N	enne	[n]		<i>naso, anno</i>
O	o	[o]	see note 4	<i>voce, dito, ora</i>
		[ɔ]	see note 4	<i>buono, ospite, Antonio</i>
P	pi	[p]		<i>pele, spalla, tappo</i>
Q	qu	[kw]		<i>acqua, questo, Pasqua</i>
R	erre	[r]		<i>rosa, birra, pranzo</i>
S	esse	[s]	see note 3	<i>riso, solo, cassa</i>
		[z]	see note 3	<i>rosa, socialismo</i>
T	ti	[t]		<i>vita, petto, torre</i>
U	u	[u]		<i>uva, auguri, burro</i>
V	vu/vi	[v]		<i>volto, avventura</i>
Z	zeta	[dz]	see note 3	<i>socializzare, zero</i>
		[ts]	see note 3	<i>palazzo, zucchero</i>

Foreign letters

<i>Letter</i>		<i>Phoneme</i>	<i>Examples</i>
J	i lunga	[dʒ]	<i>jeep</i>
K	cappa	[k]	<i>km (for chilometro)</i>
W	doppio vu/vi	[w]	<i>weekend</i>
X	ics	[ks]	<i>taxi, xenofobo</i>
Y	ipsilon/i greca	[i]	<i>whisky, yogurt</i>

Consonant clusters

<i>Letter</i>		<i>Phoneme</i>	<i>Examples</i>
CH	[k]	'c' as in English 'camera', see note 1	<i>che, chi</i>
GH	[g]	'g' as in English 'go', see note 1	<i>ghetto, ghiro</i>
GLI	[ʎ]	the nearest equivalent in English is 'lyi' as in 'million'	<i>figli, bottiglia, aglio</i>
GN	[ɲ]	the nearest equivalent in English is 'ny' as in 'canyon'	<i>agnello, gnocchi, ogni</i>
SC	[ʃ]	before e, i: 'sh' as in English 'shoot'	<i>scena, pesci, piscina</i>
SC	[sk]	before a, o, u: 'sk' as in English 'school'	<i>sciopero, usciamo, prosciutto</i>
SCH	[sk]	'sk' as in English 'school'	<i>scamorza, scogli, scudo</i>
		see note 1	<i>schema, fischi</i>

Notes

1 The letter 'h'

The letter **h** does not represent any sound in Italian; it is not pronounced. It is used to distinguish different consonant sounds as in the case of **c**, **g** and **sc** before the vowels **e** and **i**. When followed by **h**, 'c' is pronounced [k] as opposed to [tʃ], **g** is pronounced [g] rather than [dʒ], 'sc' is pronounced [sk] rather than [ʃ].

2 The letter 'i'

The letter 'i' in the groups **cia**, **cio**, **ciu**; **gia**, **gio**, **giu**; **scia**, **scio**, **sciu** is not pronounced; it is a written way of representing the consonant sound.

3 The consonants 's' and 'z'

Each of the two letters **s** and **z** corresponds to two different sounds: voiced, [z] and [dz] and voiceless respectively [s] and [ts] respectively. This distinction is not considered important by Italian speakers themselves. A few tips may however help in the pronunciation of the two different sounds of each letter:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| s is voiceless [s] | at the beginning of a word (spesa , scala , sale , sordo) |
| | after a consonant (falso , pensare , corso) |
| | when double (passo , assicurazione , messa) |
| voiced [dz] | before a voiced consonant, even at beginning of a word (asma , smetti) |
| | |
| z is voiceless [ts] | after l (balzo , alzare , calze) |
| | in -ezza (bellezza , carezza , altezza) |
| | before -ia -ie -io (amicizia , pazienza , divorzio , zio , spazio) |
| voiced [dz] | in -izzare , -izzazione , etc. (nazionalizzare , privatizzazione) |
| | between vowels (ozono , azalea) |

4 Open and closed vowels

Both **e** and **o** have two different sounds: open and closed. For example **e** has an open sound [ɛ] as in English *pet* and a closed sound [e] as in English *hey!*. The letter **o** has open sound [ɔ] as in English *or* and a closed sound [o] as in English *oh!* Both open and closed sounds are represented in written Italian by the same letter **e** or **o**. The open vowels only occur in stressed syllables; when unstressed, vowels are always closed. The distinction between the two sounds is not very important in spoken Italian; Italians themselves may disagree on the 'correct' pronunciation of some words (especially when they speak different regional varieties of Italian).

Where necessary, the open and closed vowels can be distinguished by using the grave accent for the open sound è, ò and acute accent for the closed é, ó; many good dictionaries do this. However this is not done in normal written Italian, simply because usually the distinction is not considered very important.

Only in a few cases is the distinction important in avoiding confusion between two words. In such cases, the written language indicates the open vowel sound with an obligatory accent, as in, for example:

è	is	/	e	and
tè	tea	/	te	you
ho	I have	/	o	or

NOTE The letter **h** is silent in Italian. See note 1 above.

5 The consonant groups 'gl, gn, sc'

The sounds [ʎ], [ɲ], [ʃ] have no corresponding letters in the alphabet and are therefore represented in written Italian by groups of two or three letters (see table above). In the **sc** clusters with **a, o, u**, the letter **i** is not pronounced as a separate sound (see note 2 above). When these consonants are in the middle of a word their pronunciation is always strong (see note 6 below).

6 Double consonants

'Double' or 'strong' consonants are a very common and frequent feature of the Italian language. Generally they are represented in writing by two letters (as in **palla**). In some cases however a consonant that is normally pronounced single is 'reinforced' and has a 'strong' sound in the spoken language, due to its position in the phrase. This happens in the case of consonants following certain monosyllabic words (particularly in central and southern varieties of Italian), as in:

è vero [ev'vero] **a casa** [ak'kasa] **sto bene** [st b'bene]

Likewise, the consonant clusters **gl** [ʎ], **gn** [ɲ], **sci** [ʃ] are always given a 'strong' sound in the middle of a word, although this is not represented in writing:

figlio [fiʎʎo] **ogni** [oɲɲi] **lasciare** [lafʃare]

Speakers of English as their mother tongue often find it difficult to reproduce exactly the sound of the Italian double consonants. It may help to know that a 'strong' consonant is always found after a short vowel, while the corresponding single consonant is always found after a long vowel, as in these examples:

pāla/pālla **sēte/sētte** **fāto/fātto** **cāro/cārro**

7 Accent marks

In addition to the cases above, the accent mark is also used to distinguish between words with the *same vowel sounds*, but different meanings:

sé	himself/herself	se	if	
lì/là	there	li	them	} direct object } pronouns
		la	her	
né	nor	ne	of it (partitive)	

Words with the stress on the last syllable are also written with an accent mark, as:

perché	why
città	city
caffè	coffee
università	university
libertà	freedom

Italians have tended to have a fairly flexible attitude to (and occasional disagreements over) the question of whether accents should be grave or acute. In recent years, there has been a tendency to use the acute accent on all the closed vowels including **a, i** and **u**. Serianni (*Grammatica Italiana*, UTET 1989) recommends adopting the grave accent for **à, ì, ù** while keeping the option of grave and acute only in the case of **è/é** and **ò/ó** where it is needed to distinguish between open and closed vowels. This is the system adopted here.

Stress

Sometimes, particularly in dictionaries and textbooks, accent marks are used to indicate on which syllable the stress falls, in words where there might be some doubt:

àncora/ancóra	anchor/still
pàgano/pagàno	they pay/pagan
chilogràmmo	kilogram
chilòmetro	kilometre

8 Spelling conventions

On the whole, Italian spelling conventions follow English when it comes to capital letters. But note how Italian uses a capital letter for:

Names of centuries

il Duecento	the 13th century
il Duemila	the year 2000

Names of titles unless accompanied by proper names

il Re	the king
il Papa	the Pope
il Conte	the count
re Vittorio Emanuele II	King Victor Emanuel

Appendix II

Irregular verbs

These two lists include all the common Italian irregular verbs. In the first list are included verbs with only two irregular tenses: simple perfect and/or past participle. In the second list are verbs with several irregular tenses. Verbs normally requiring **essere** in compound tenses are marked with a † and those using both **avere** and **essere** with ‡. Tenses not appearing in the list are regular.

A List of verbs with two irregular tenses

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Simple perfect</i>	<i>Past participle</i>
accendere	to light	accesi	acceso
accludere	to enclose	acclusi	accluso
accorgersi	to realise	mi accorsi	accorto
affliggere	to afflict	afflissi	afflitto
aggiungere	to add	aggiunsi	aggiunto
alludere	to allude	allusi	alluso
ammettere	to admit	ammisi	ammesso
appendere	to hang	appesi	appeso
apprendere	to learn	appresi	appreso
aprire	to open	aprii(apersi)	aperto
assistere	to assist	assistei (assistetti)	assistito
assolvere	to absolve	assolsi	assolto
assumere	to assume	assunsi	assunto
attendere	to wait	attesi	atteso
avvolgere	to wrap	avvolsi	avvolto
chiedere	to ask	chiesi	chiesto
chiudere	to shut	chiusi	chiuso
comprendere	to understand	compresi	compreso
concedere	to concede	concessi	concesso
concludere	to conclude	conclusi	concluso
condurre	to conduct	condussi	condotto
confondere	to confuse	confusi	confuso
conoscere	to know	conobbi	conosciuto
convincere	to convince	convinsi	convinto
coprire	to cover	coprii (copersi)	coperto

APPENDIX II

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Simple perfect</i>	<i>Past participle</i>
correggere	to correct	corressi	corretto
correre [‡]	to run	corsi	corso
costringere	to force	costrinsi	costretto
crescere [‡]	to grow	crebbi	cresciuto
cuocere	to cook	cossi	cotto
decidere	to decide	decisi	deciso
dedurre	to deduct	dedussi	dedotto
deludere	to delude	delusi	deluso
descrivere	to describe	descrissi	descritto
difendere	to defend	difesi	difeso
diffondere	to spread	diffusi	diffuso
dipendere [†]	to depend	dipesi	dipeso
dipingere	to paint	dipinsi	dipinto
dirigere	to direct	diressi	diretto
discutere	to discuss	discussi	discusso
distendere	to distend	distesi	disteso
distinguere	to distinguish	distinsi	distinto
distruggere	to destroy	distrussi	distrutto
dividere	to divide	divisi	diviso
eleggere	to elect	elessi	eletto
emergere [†]	to emerge	emersi	emerso
erigere	to erect	eressi	eretto
escludere	to exclude	esclusi	escluso
esigere	to demand	esigei (esigetti)	esatto
esistere [†]	to exist	esistei (esistetti)	esistito
espellere	to expel	espulsi	espulso
esplodere	to explode	esplosi	esploso
esprimere	to express	espressi	espresso
estendere	to extend	estesi	esteso
estinguere	to extinguish	estinsi	estinto
fingere	to pretend	finsi	finto
fondere	to melt	fusi	fuso
friggere	to fry	frissi	fritto
fungere	to perform	funsi	(funto)
giungere [‡]	to reach	giunsi	giunto
illudere	to illude	illusi	illuso
immergere	to immerse	immersi	immerso
imprimere	to impress	impressi	impresso
incidere	to record	incisi	inciso
indurre	to induce	indussi	indotto
infliggere	to inflict	inflissi	inflitto
infrangere	to infringe	infransi	infranto
insistere	to insist	insistei (insistetti)	insistito
intendere	to intend	intesi	inteso
interrompere	to interrupt	interruppi	interrotto
introdurre	to introduce	introdussi	introdotta
invadere	to invade	invasi	invaso

List of verbs with two irregular tenses

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Simple perfect</i>	<i>Past participle</i>
iscrivere	to enrol	iscrissi	iscritto
leggere	to read	lessi	letto
mettere	to put	misi	messo
mordere	to bite	morsi	morso
muovere	to move	mossi	mosso
nascere [†]	to be born	nacqui	nato
nascondere	to hide	nascosi	nascosto
occorrere [†]	to be needed	occorse	occorso
offendere	to offend	offesi	offeso
offrire	to offer	offrii (offersi)	offerto
perdere	to lose	persi (perdetti)	perso (perduto)
permettere	to allow	permisi	permesso
persuadere	to persuade	persuasi	persuaso
piangere	to weep	piansi	pianto
piov [‡]	to rain	piovve	–
porgere	to offer	porsi	porto
prendere	to take	presi	preso
pretendere	to pretend	pretesi	preteso
produrre	to produce	produssi	prodotto
promettere	to promise	promisi	promesso
proteggere	to protect	protessi	protetto
pungere	to sting	punsi	punto
radere	to shave	rafi	raso
raggiungere	to reach	raggiunsi	raggiunto
redigere	to draft	redassi	redatto
reggere	to support	ressi	retto
rendere	to give back	resi	reso
resistere	to resist	resistei (resistetti)	resistito
respingere	to reject	respinsi	respinto
ridere	to laugh	risi	riso
ridurre	to reduce	ridussi	ridotto
riflettere	to reflect	riflessi (riflettei)	riflesso (riflettuto)
rincrescere	to regret	rincresbbe	rincresciuto
risolvere	to resolve	risolsi, risolvetti	risolto
rispondere	to reply	risposi	risposto
rivolgere	to turn to	rivolosi	rivolto
rompere	to break	ruppi	rotto
scalfire	to scratch	scalfii	scalfitto (scalfito)
scendere [‡]	to go down	scesi	sceso
scommettere	to bet	scommisi	scommesso
sconfiggere	to defeat	sconfissi	sconfitto
scoprire	to discover	scoprii	scoperto
scorgere	to notice	scorsi	scorto

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Simple perfect</i>	<i>Past participle</i>
scrivere	to write	scrissi	scritto
scuotere	to shake	scossi	scosso
seppellire	to bury	sepolsi	seppellii
smettere	to stop	smisi	smesso
soffrire	to suffer	soffrii	sofferto
sorgere [†]	to rise	sorsi	sorto
sorprendere	to surprise	sorpresi	sorpreso
sorridere	to smile	sorrisi	sorriso
sospendere	to suspend	sospesi	sospeso
spargere	to spread	sparsi	sparsa
spegnere	to switch off	spensi	spento
spendere	to spend	spesi	speso
spingere	to push	spinsi	spinto
stendere	to spread out	stesi	steso
stringere	to tighten	strinsi	stretto
succedere [†]	to succeed to, to happen	successi	successo
svolgere	to develop	svolsi	svolto
tendere	to hold out	tesi	teso
tingere	to dye	tinsi	tinto
tradurre	to translate	tradussi	tradotto
trascorrere	to pass	trascorsi	trascorso
uccidere	to kill	uccisi	ucciso
ungere	to oil	unsi	unto
vincere	to win	vinsi	vinto
volgere	to turn	volsi	volto

B List of verbs with several irregular tenses

<i>accadere</i> [‡]	to happen as <i>cadere</i>
<i>accogliere</i>	to welcome as <i>cogliere</i>
<i>andare</i> [‡]	to go pres. indic. <i>vado, vai, va, andiamo, andate, vanno</i> future <i>andrò</i> pres. condit. <i>andrei</i> ; pres.subjunc. <i>vada, vada, vada, andiamo, andiate, vadano</i> imperat. <i>va', andate</i>
<i>apparire</i> [†]	to appear pres. indic. <i>appaio, appari, appare, appariamo, apparite, appaiono</i> simp. perf. <i>apparvi (apparii, apparsi)</i> . . . past. part. <i>apparso</i>
<i>appartenere</i>	to belong as <i>tenere</i>
<i>assalire</i>	to assault as <i>salire</i>
<i>avere</i>	to have see Chapter 2

List of verbs with several irregular tenses

<i>avvenire</i> [†]	to happen as venire
<i>bere</i>	to drink pres. indic. bevo . . . simp. perf. bevvi . . . future berrò pres. condit. berrei . . . pres. subjunc. beva . . . past part. bevuto
<i>cadere</i> [†]	to fall pres. indic. cadrò . . . simp. perf. caddi . . . pres. condit. cadrei . . .
<i>cogliere</i>	to collect pres. indic. colgo, cogli, coglie, cogliamo, cogliete, colgono simp. perf. colsi . . . past part. colto
<i>comparire</i> [†]	to appear pres. indic. compaio, compari, compare, compariamo, comparite, compagno simp. perf. comparvi (comparii) . . . past part. comparso
<i>dare</i>	to give pres. indic. do, dai, dà, diamo, date, danno simp. perf. diedi, desti, diede, demmo, deste, diedero (dettero) future darò, darai, darà, daremo, darete, daranno pres. condit. darei, daresti, darebbe, daremmo, dareste, darebbero pres. subjunc. dia, dia, dia, diàmo, diàte, diano imperf. subjunc. dessi, dessi, desse, dessimo, deste, dessero imper. da', date
<i>dire</i>	to say pres. indic. dico, dici, dice, diciamo, dite, dicono simp. perf. dissi, dicesti, disse, dicemmo, diceste, dissero pres. subjunc. dica . . . imperf. subjunc. dicessi . . . past part. detto imperat. di', dite
<i>disfare</i>	to undo as soddisfare
<i>dispiacere</i> [†]	to displease as piacere
<i>disporre</i>	to arrange, place, put as porre
<i>distrarre</i>	to distract as trarre
<i>dolere</i>	to hurt pres. indic. mi dolgo, ti duoli, si duole, ci dogliamo, vi dolete, si dolgono simp. perf. mi dolsi, ti dolesti . . . future mi dorro . . . pres. subjunc. dolga, dolga, dolga, dogliamo, dogliate, dolgano
<i>dovere</i>	to have to see Chapter 2
<i>esporre</i>	to expose as porre
<i>essere</i> [†]	to be see Chapter 2
<i>estrarre</i>	to extract as trarre

<i>fare</i>	to do, make pres. indic. faccio, fai, fa, facciamo, fate, fanno simp. perf. feci, facesti, fece, facemmo, faceste, fecero future farò . . . pres. condit. farei . . . pres. subjunc. faccia, faccia, faccia, facciamo, facciate, facciamo imperf. subjunc. facessi . . . imperat. fa', fate past part. fatto
<i>godere</i>	to enjoy future godrò . . .
<i>imporre</i>	to impose as porre
<i>morire</i> [†]	to die pres. indic. muoio, muori, muore, moriamo, morite, muoiono future morirò . . . (morirò . . .) pres. condit. morrei, morresti . . . (morirei, moriresti . . .) pres. subjunc. muoia, muoia, muoia, moriamo, moriate, muoiano past part. morto
<i>opporre</i>	to oppose as porre
<i>ottenere</i>	to obtain as tenere
<i>parere</i> [†]	to appear pres. indic. paio, pari, pare, paiamo, parete, paiono simp. perf. parvi, paresti . . . future parrò . . . pres. condit. parrei . . . pres. subjunc. paia, paia, paia, paiamo, paiate, paiano past part. parso
<i>porre</i>	to place, put pres. indic. pongo, poni, pone, poniamo, ponete, pongono simp. perf. posi, ponesti, pose, ponemmo, poneste, posero future porrò, porrai . . . pres. condit. porrei, porresti . . . pres. subjunc. ponga, ponga, ponga, poniamo, poniate, pongano imperf. subjunc. ponessi . . . past part. posto
<i>potere</i>	to be able to see Chapter 2
<i>prevedere</i>	to predict as vedere
<i>proporre</i>	to propose as porre
<i>raccogliere</i>	to collect as cogliere
<i>rimanere</i> [†]	to remain pres. indic. rimango, rimani, rimane, rimaniamo, rimanete, rimangono simp. perf. rimasi, rimanesti . . . future rimarrò . . . pres. condit. rimarrei . . . pres. subjunc. rimanga, rimanga, rimanga, rimaniamo, rimaniate, rimangano past part. rimasto
<i>riuscire</i> [†]	to succeed as uscire
<i>salire</i> [‡]	to go up pres. indic. salgo, sali, sale, saliamo, salite, salgono pres. subjunc. salga, salga, salga, saliamo, saliate, salgano

List of verbs with several irregular tenses

<i>sapere</i>	to know pres. indic. so, sai, sa, sappiamo, sapete, sanno simp. perf. seppi, sapesti, seppe, sapemmo, sapeste, seppero future saprò . . . pres. condit. saprei . . . pres. subjunc. sappia, sappia, sappia, sappiamo, sappiate, sappiano imperat. sappi, sappiate
<i>scegliere</i>	to choose pres. indic. scelgo, scegli, scegli, scegliamo, scegliete, scelgono simp. perf. scelsi, scegliești, scelse, scegliemmo, scegliești, scelsero pres. subjunc. scelga . . . past part. scelto
<i>sciogliere</i>	to untie, loosen, melt, dissolve pres. indic. sciolgo, sciogli, scioglie, sciogliamo, sciogliete, sciolgono simp. perf. sciolsi, sciogliești, sciolsi, sciogliemmo, sciogliești, sciolsero pres. subjunc. sciolga . . . past part. sciolto
<i>soddisfare</i>	to satisfy pres. indic. soddisfo, soddisfi, soddisfa, soddisfiamo, soddisfate, soddisfano simp. perf. soddisfecì, soddisfacești . . . future soddisferò, soddisferai . . . pres. subjunc. soddisfaccia . . . imperf. subjunc. soddisfacessi past part. soddisfatto
<i>sostenere</i>	to maintain, assert as tenere
<i>stare</i> [†]	to be pres. indic. sto, stai, sta, stiamo, state, stanno simp. perf. stetti, stesti, stette, stemmo, steste, stettero future starò, starai . . . pres. condit. starei, starești . . . pres. subjunc. stia, stia, stia, stiàmo, stiàte, stiano imperf. subjunc. stessi . . . imperat. sta', state
<i>supporre</i>	to suppose as porre
<i>svenire</i> [†]	to faint as venire
<i>tacere</i>	to be silent, to fall silent pres. indic. taccio, taci, tace, tacciamo, tacete, tacciono simp. perf. tacqui, tacești, tacque, tacemmo, tacești, tacquero pres. subjunc. taccia, taccia, taccia, tacciamo, tacciate, tacciano
<i>tenere</i>	to hold pres. indic. tengo, tieni, tiene, teniamo, tenete, tengono simp. perf. tenni, tenesti, tenne, tenemmo, teneste, tennero future terrò, terrai . . . pres. condit. terrei, terrestri . . . pres. subjunc. tenga, tenga, tenga, teniamo, teniate, tengano
<i>togliere</i>	to take off, take away, remove pres. indic. tolgo, toglì, toglie, togliamo, togliete, tolgono simp. perf. tolsi, togliesti, tolse, togliemmo, toglieste, tolsero pres. subjunc. tolga . . . past part. tolto
<i>trarre</i>	to draw pres. indic. traggo, trai, trae, traiamo, traete, traggono simp. perf. trassi, traesti, trasse, traemmo, traeste, trassero future trarrò, trarrai . . . pres. condit. trarrei . . . pres. subjunc. tragga . . . imperat. trai, traete past perf. tratto

<i>udire</i>	to hear pres. indic. odo, odi, ode, udiamo, udite, odono future udirò . . . (udirò) pres. subjunc. oda, oda, oda, udiamo, udiate, odano imperat. odi, udite
<i>uscire</i> [†]	to go out pres. indic. esco, esci, esce, usciamo, uscite, escono pres. subjunc. esca, esca, esca, usciamo, usciate, escano imperat. esci, uscite
<i>valere</i> [‡]	to be worth pres. indic. valgo, vali, vale, valiamo, valete, valgono simp. perf. valsi, volesti, valse, valemmo, valeste, valsero future varrò, varrai . . . pres. condit. varrei, varresti . . . pres. subjunc. valga, valga, valga, valiamo, valiate, valgano past part. valso
<i>vedere</i>	to see simp. past vidi, vedesti, vide, vedemmo, vedeste, videro future vedrò, vedrai . . . pres. condit. vedrei, vedresti . . . past part. visto (veduto)
<i>venire</i> [†]	to come pres. indic. vengo, vieni, viene, veniamo, venite, vengono simp. perf. venni, venisti, venne, venimmo, veniste, vennero future verrò, verrai . . . pres. condit. verrei, verresti . . . pres. subjunc. venga, venga, venga, veniamo, veniate, vengano
<i>vivere</i> [‡]	to live simp. perf. vissi, vivesti, visse, vivemmo, viveste, vissero future vivrò, vivrai . . . pres. condit. vivreì, vivresti . . . past part. vissuto
<i>volere</i>	to want to see Chapter 2

Appendix III

Sequence of tenses

This is a simplified schematic outline of the ‘sequence of tenses’ between a main and a dependent clause. Here we indicate only the most frequent and important cases, with dependent verbs in the indicative, conditional and subjunctive moods. Other combinations are possible, as illustrated in Chapter 2 Verbs and in Chapters 30 and 31.

<i>Main verb</i>	<i>Dependent verb</i>	<i>Example</i>	
PRESENT TENSE			
<i>Later</i>	Indicative future	Pensa che tu	verrai
	Indicative present		vieni
	Conditional present		verresti
	Subjunctive present		venga
<i>Same time</i>	Indicative present	Pensa che tu	vieni
	Conditional present		verresti
	Subjunctive present		venga
<i>Earlier</i>	Indicative compound perfect	Pensa che tu	sei venuto
	Indicative simple perfect		venisti
	Indicative imperfect		venivi
	Conditional past		saresti venuto
	Subjunctive past		sia venuto
	Subjunctive imperfect		venissi
PAST TENSE			
<i>Later</i>	Indicative imperfect	Pensava che tu	venivi
	Conditional past		saresti venuto
<i>Same time</i>	Indicative imperfect	Pensava che tu	venivi
	Subjunctive imperfect		venissi
<i>Earlier</i>	Indicative pluperfect	Pensava che tu	eri venuto
	Subjunctive pluperfect		fossi venuto
FUTURE TENSE			
<i>Later</i>	Indicative future	Penserà che tu	verrai
	Conditional present		verresti
	Subjunctive present		venga
<i>Same time</i>	Indicative future	Penserà che tu	verrai
	Indicative present		vieni
<i>Earlier</i>	Indicative compound future	Penserà che tu	sarai venuto

Appendix IV

Verbs and prepositions

Complex sentences often make use of verbs linked to infinitives. Most verbs are linked to the verb infinitive by a preposition such as **a** or **di**. A few verbs do not need any preposition but are followed directly by the verb infinitive. Here we provide a list of the most common verbs (in alphabetical order) grouped into categories according to the preposition normally used, along with some examples. If you want to use a verb not contained in this list and are not sure which preposition is needed, you can check in any good Italian dictionary.

Note that the verb + infinitive construction can *only* be used where the subject of the main verb and the subject of the verb infinitive is the *same*. In cases where the subject of the main verb and the subject of the dependent verb is *not* the same, the verb cannot be followed by an infinitive but must be followed by **che** and a dependent clause. In Section 4, we give examples of verbs that involve an action carried out by another person.

1 Verbs followed directly by infinitive

amare	to love to
desiderare	to desire to
dovere	to have to
osare	to dare to
potere	to be able to
preferire	to prefer to
sapere	to know how to
volere	to want to

Examples

Devo andare in banca.

I have to go the bank.

Sai nuotare bene?

Do you know how to swim well?

Non oso chiamarlo.

I don't dare call him.

Non voleva venire con noi.

She didn't want to come with us.

Verbs followed by *a*

Also in this category are impersonal verbs and/or verbs used mainly impersonally with the sense of 'one':

basta	to be enough to
bisogna	to be necessary to
conviene	to be advisable to
dispiace	to regret
occorre	to be necessary to
piace	to please

Examples

Basta mangiare cose sane per dimagrire.

You only have to eat healthy things to lose weight.

Bisogna portare il vino a casa di Gianluca stasera.

We ('one') must take wine to Gianluca's house tonight.

Ti piace andare al cinema?

Do you like going to the cinema?

Ci conviene prendere il bus delle 8.00.

We should get the 8.00 bus.

Impersonal expressions of verb (normally **essere**) and adjective are also followed by the infinitive directly:

è difficile	it's difficult
è facile	it's easy
è importante	it's important
è impossibile	it's impossible
è possibile	it's possible
è probabile	it's probable

Examples

Non è facile trovare un posto di lavoro.

It's not easy to get a job.

Era importante arrivare presto la mattina.

It was important to arrive early in the morning.

2 Verbs followed by *a*

This category covers: verbs of beginning, continuing or succeeding such as **cominciare**; verbs of onward action of some kind, such as **continuare**; and verbs of movement such as **andare**, **venire**.

abituarsi	to get used to
andare	to go to
aver difficoltà	to have difficulty in
cominciare	to begin to
continuare	to continue to

correre	to run to
decidersi	to make one's mind up to
divertirsi	to enjoy oneself
esitare	to hesitate
fare bene	to do well to
fare male	to be a bad idea to
fare meglio	to do better to
fare presto	to be quick to
fermarsi	to stop to
imparare	to learn
impegnarsi	to commit oneself
iniziare	to begin to
mettersi	to begin to
passare	to pass to
prepararsi	to get ready to
provare	to try to
rimanere	to stay
rinunciare	to give up
riprendere	to begin again
riuscire	to succeed in
sbrigarsi	to hurry
stare	to stay
tornare	to return to
venire	to come

Examples

Vado a comprare il giornale.

I'm going to buy the newspaper.

Ho cominciato a fumare a 12 anni.

I began smoking at age 12.

Ci siamo abituati a vederlo sempre in giro.

We got used to seeing him always around.

Sono rimasta a casa a studiare.

I stayed home to study.

3 Verbs followed by *di*

This category covers: verbs that communicate information such as **dire**; verbs expressing emotion such as **essere contento**, **vergognarsi**; verbs expressing opinion, belief or hope such as **credere**, **pensare**; verbs of remembering, forgetting and realising such as **ricordare**; and verbs of deciding and choosing such as **decidere**, **scegliere**.

accettare	to accept, agree to
accorgersi	to realise, to notice
affermare	to assert
ammettere	to admit
annunciare	to announce

aspettare	to wait to
aspettarsi	to expect to
augurarsi	to wish
cercare	to try to
cessare	to stop
comunicare	to communicate
confermare	to confirm
credere	to believe
decidere	to decide to
dichiarare	to declare
dimenticare	to forget to
dire	to say, tell
dubitare	to doubt
essere + adjective	to be
fare a meno di	to do without
far finta	to pretend to
 fingere	to pretend to
finire	to finish
immaginare	to imagine
informare	to inform
lamentarsi	to complain
mancare	to fail to
meravigliarsi	to be amazed at
negare	to deny
offrire	to offer to
(mi) pare	to seem to
pensare	to think of, to intend to
pentirsi	to regret
preoccuparsi	to worry about
promettere	to promise to
raccontare	to recount
rendersi conto	to realise
ricordare	to remember
ricordarsi	to remember
rifiutarsi	to refuse
ritenere	to maintain
sapere	to know (but see also section 1 above)
scegliere	to choose
smettere	to finish, to end
sognare	to dream of
sperare	to hope to
spiegare	to explain
stancarsi	to tire of
stupirsi	to be amazed at
tentare	to try to
vergognarsi	to be ashamed of

Examples

Ho deciso di partire domani sera.
I've decided to leave tomorrow evening.

Mi ha detto di aver visto un fantasma.
He told me he had seen a ghost.

Spero di vederlo domani mattina.
I hope to see him tomorrow morning.

Sono proprio contenta di rivederlo.
I am really happy to see him again.

Pensavo di organizzare una festa.
I thought I would organise a party.

4 Verbs involving other people

Most verbs that invite, force, advise others to do something will either use no preposition or will use the preposition **a** with the person involved (i.e. as indirect object); they will use **a**, occasionally **di**, to link the verb to the infinitive that follows (in the list below, **qcn** is used as abbreviation for **qualcuno**):

aiutare qcn a	to help someone to
chiedere a qcn di	to ask someone to
comandare a qcn di	to command someone to
consigliare a qcn di	to advise someone to
convincere qcn a	to persuade someone to
costringere qcn a	to force someone to
dire a qcn di	to tell someone to
domandare a qcn di	to ask someone to
forzare qcn a	to force someone to
impedire a qcn di	to prevent someone from
incoraggiare qcn a	to encourage someone to
insegnare a qcn a	to teach someone to
invitare qcn a	to invite someone to
mandare qcn a	to send someone to
obbligare qcn a	to oblige someone to
ordinare a qcn di	to order someone to
permettere a qcn di	to allow someone to
persuadere qcn a	to persuade someone to
pregare qcn di	to beg someone to
proibire a qcn di	to forbid someone to
raccomandare a qcn di	to recommend someone to
suggerire a qcn di	to suggest to someone to
vietare a qcn di	to forbid someone from

Examples

Ho aiutato mio fratello a fare i compiti.
I helped my brother to do his homework.

5 Fare, lasciare and verbs of seeing, hearing, feeling

The following verbs however are followed directly by the infinitive, and then the person involved:

fare	to make
lasciare	to let

Examples

Faccio venire Marco.

I'll have Marco come.

Constructions with **fare, lasciare** are covered in detail in 21.7.

The same applies to verbs such as **sentire** 'to hear, to feel', **vedere** 'to see':

Ho visto arrivare Gianna.

I saw Gianna arriving.

Index

a

- combined with definite article **al, alla**, etc. 4.2
- common uses 4.3.1
- expressing manner 37.4.2
- expressing place 4.3.1, 37.3.2, 37.3.4
- expressing purpose 33.2
- expressing time 7.8
- followed by verb infinitive 4.4.1
- with pronoun 18.4.1, 18.4.4
- see also* prepositions
- abbastanza** 3.4.4, 10.4.1, 17.5.4, 28.3.2
- abbreviations in business correspondence 42.2.2–4, 42.2.6
- accents to indicate stress Appendix I
 - in truncated words (*città*, etc.) Appendix I
 - on open/closed vowels Appendix I
- active voice of verbs 2.1.7
 - tables of active conjugations: regular verbs 2.2.1; irregular verbs 2.2.3
- adjectives 1.4, 10.2–3
 - agreement with nouns 1.5
 - common adjective patterns ending in **-o/-a** and in **-e** 1.4.2; exceptions to adjective patterns 1.4.3; plural 1.4.2;
see also bello, buono, grande
 - comparative form 1.4.6
 - gender 1.4.2
 - intensifying 10.4
 - invariable adjectives 1.4.4
 - pairs of adjectives used for emphasis 10.4.4–5
 - past participle used as adjective 2.3.28, 10.3.6–7
 - position 1.4.5
 - present participle used as adjective 2.3.27
 - superlative 1.4.7–8
 - used as adverb 6.2.2
 - see also* demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, possessive
- admiration 25.3.2
- adverbs 6, 10.4.1, 10.5.1
 - adjective used as adverb 6.2.2, 37.4.3
 - adverbial phrases formed with prepositions 6.2.3
 - ci, vi, ne** indicating place 6.2.5
 - comparative form 6.3
 - forming adverbs 6.2.1
 - superlative form 6.3
 - see also* manner, place, time
 - see also bene, male, più, meno, molto, poco*
- advising 24.1–4
 - asking for advice 24.5
- affatto** *see* negatives
- agreement and disagreement 27.2
- al, alla** 4.2; *see also a*
- alcuni, alcune** 3.9.3; *see also* indefinites and negatives
- allora** 35.2
- altro** 3.9.3
- amazement 25.2, 25.6.1
- anche**
 - coordinating conjunction 30.2
- andare**
 - idiomatic expressions: **come va?** 20.1; **me ne vado** 3.4.4, 6.2.5; **(non) mi va** 23.2.3, 25.4.6, 28.2.3, 28.3.3
 - irregular forms: conditional 2.3.12; future 2.3.4; imperative 2.3.23; present indicative 2.3.3; present subjunctive 2.3.17
 - used in passive construction 2.1.7, 19.2.3
- anger 25.4.8
- annoyance 25.4.6
- antipathy 25.4.9
- anxiety 26.3.3
- any, anyone 3.9.1–2
 - after negative 3.9.3; *see also* indefinites
- apologies 20.7
- appena** 36.4.3
- appreciation 25.3.3

- approval 25.3.3
- articles 1.3
- definite **il, la**, etc. 1.3.4
 - combined with prepositions: *see a, con, da, di, in, su*
 - expressing a generalisation 1.3.5
 - specifying known person or object 1.3.5
 - with name of place 1.3.5
 - with professions, using **fare** 1.3.5, 8.3.3
 - gender of articles 1.3.1–2
 - indefinite **un, una**, etc. 1.3.2
 - omission with professions using **essere** 1.3.5, 8.3.3
 - partitive **del, della**, etc. 1.3.3; used to express ‘any’ 11.6.1
- aspect
- in past tenses 13.2, 13.5–6
- attracting attention 41.5.1
- auxiliary verbs
- avere** or **essere** as auxiliary 2.1.6
 - in compound tenses 2.1.6
 - in past tenses 2.1.6, 2.3.7, 13.3
- availability 11.5–8, 11.10
- avere**
- expressing availability using **ci** 11.2.1, 11.5.1
 - idiomatic uses: **aver bisogno** 23.3.2; **aver paura** 26.3.1–2, 26.3.4; **aver voglia** 23.2.2
 - irregular forms 2.2.4
 - see also* auxiliary verbs
- basta**
- expressing annoyance 25.4.6
 - in result clauses 35.4
- belief 27.1
- bello**
- changing form before noun 1.4.5
 - in compliments 25.3.1
- bene** 6.2.4
- comparative form 6.3
 - expressing approval 25.3.3
 - in exclamations 20.6
 - used as intensifier 10.4.1
 - benino, benone** 37.4.4
- bere**
- all forms 2.3.3
- bisogna** 23.3.1
- bisogno: aver bisogno** 23.3.2
- c'è bisogno di** 23.3.3
- boredom 25.4.7
- buono**
- changing form before noun 1.4.5
 - comparative and superlative forms 1.4.6–8
 - expressing taste and smell 10.2.6
 - in compliments 25.3.1
- calculations 7.4
- camminare** using **avere** 2.1.6
- care, -gare** verbs ending in 2.3.3
- causes and reasons 34
- dependent clause expressing cause, reason 34.3.1
 - dovere** expressing cause 34.6
 - gerund expressing cause 34.3.3
 - imperfect expressing cause 34.8
 - past participle expressing cause 34.3.4
 - phrases of cause or reason 34.2, 34.4
 - using **per** 34.3.2
 - verbs meaning ‘to cause’ 34.5
- c'è, ci sono** 3.4.5, 6.2.5
- expressing existence, availability 11.1, 11.2.1; + **ne** 11.6.5
 - expressing location, time, frequency 11.9
 - expressing non-availability 11.10.1
 - expressing quantity with **ne** 11.7
 - expressing some 11.6; something, someone 11.8
- cercare**
- forms 2.3.3; **cercare di** 4.4, Appendix IV
- certainty and uncertainty 32.2
- certo**
- position 1.4.5
 - see also* indefinites
- certo/incerto (è)** 32.2 *see also* impersonal phrases
- che**
- conjunction 5.3.1
 - interrogative 3.6, 15.3.1
 - relative pronoun 3.5.1; *see also* relative clauses
 - in comparisons 17.3.3–6
 - in exclamations 25.3.1
 - in relative clause 2.3.26, 9.3
 - in reported speech 31.3
 - in place of **perché** 34.3.1
 - used to combine messages 30.5
- che cosa** 3.6, 15.3.1
- chi**
- interrogative 3.6, 15.3.1
 - possessive ‘whose’ **di chi è?** 9.4
 - relative pronoun 3.5.4
- chiaro (è)** 32.5; *see also* impersonal verb phrases
- chiedere** irregular forms 2.3.8, 2.3.30; used in request 21.5.1–2
- chissà** 26.4.6
- ci**
- adverb of place 6.2.5
 - combined pronoun **ce (ne)** 3.4.6
 - direct object pronoun 3.4.1
 - indirect object pronoun 3.4.2
 - particle 3.4.5

- ciascuno** 3.9.3; *see also* indefinite pronouns
- ciò** 3.8.2
- cioè** 5.2.3, 41.5.4
- clauses**
- coordinated 30.2
 - main and dependent 30.3–5
 - of cause 34.3.1
 - of concession, exception, reservation 39.2.2, 39.3.2
 - of condition 38.2–4
 - of consequence, result 35.2, 35.3
 - of time 36.1–2, 36.3.2, 36.4.2–3, 36.5.1–2
 - relative 3.5, 9.3; replaced by gerund 2.3.26; replaced by participle 2.3.27
 - subordinate 30.3
 - see also* combining messages
- co, -go** *see* nouns
- col** 4.2; *see also* **con**
- colours** 10.2.3
- combining messages** 30
- come**
- conjunction *see* **come se**
 - exclamative 25.3.1
 - in comparisons 1.4.6, 17.2.3
 - interrogative adverb 6.2.4, 8.3.1, 10.6–7, 15.3.3; with **stare**, **andare** 20.1
 - preposition 4.5: describing action 37.4.6; in spelling 41.6
- come mai?** 15.3.3, 34.7
- come se + subjunctive** 2.3.15, 37.3.6
- cominciare**
- compound tenses using **avere/essere** 2.1.6
 - forms 2.3.3
 - with **a** and dependent infinitive 4.4
- commands** *see* orders
- commiseration and sympathy** 20.8
- comparison** 1.4.6, 17
- see also* adjectives, adverbs (comparative, superlative)
- compliments** 20.6, 25.3.1
- compound perfect** 2.3.7, 13.3
- forms: regular verbs 2.2.1; irregular verbs 2.2.4
- compound tenses** 2.1.5
- with **avere/essere** 2.1.6
 - see also* compound perfect, future perfect, past anterior, past conditional, perfect subjunctive, pluperfect, pluperfect subjunctive
- con**
- combined with definite article **col**, etc. 4.2
 - common uses 4.3.2
 - in adverbial phrases 6.2.3
 - with stressed pronouns 18.4.1
 - see also* prepositions
 - concession 39; clauses of concession 39.3
- conclusive conjunctions** 35.3
- condition**
- expressing a condition 38
- conditional mood** 2.3.11–13; present 2.3.12; past 2.3.13
- expressing opinion 24.2.4
 - expressing unconfirmed reports 30.5.1, 31.4
 - expressing polite request 21.5.3, 22.1.1, 22.4.3
 - modal verbs: **dovere** 23.3.4; **potere** 22.4.1: **volere** 21.3.3, 23.2.1
- conditional sentences** 38.2–6
- condolences** 20.8
- conjugations** *see* verbs
- conjunctions** 5
- coordinating conjunctions 5.2, 30.2; expressing result 35.2
 - followed by indicative, conditional or subjunctive 5.3.1–5, 30.5
 - subordinating conjunctions 5.3, 30.3, 30.5
- consigliare** 24.1.1, 24.2.2, 24.5
- conviene** 24.7; *see* impersonal verbs
- cosa** interrogative 3.6, 15.3.1
- così**
- in comparisons **così . . . come** 35.3
 - in sentences expressing result 35.4
- credere** 2.2.1
- belief 27.1.2
 - expressing opinion 26.4.1, 29.5
 - forms 2.2.1
- cui**
- relative pronoun 3.5.2, 34.4, 36.2.3–4, 36.5.1
 - expressing ownership 3.5.2
- currency** 7.10
- da**
- combined with definite article **dal**, **dalla**, etc. 4.2
 - common uses 4.3.3
 - expressing purpose 33.4.2
 - expressing time from when 36.5.1
 - followed by verb infinitive 4.4.2
 - with stressed pronouns 18.4.1
 - see also* prepositions
- dal, dalla**, etc. 4.2; *see also* **da**
- dare**
- irregular forms: imperative 2.3.23; present indicative 2.3.3; simple past 2.3.8
 - subjunctive 2.3.17; *see also* Appendix II (B)
 - passive form 19.3.2
 - with direct or indirect object 18.4.3
 - with indirect object 18.4.2
- dates** 7.7, 11.9.2; in letters 42.2.1
- days of week** 13.8.1; (frequency) 11.9.3

- death, euphemisms for 11.10.6, *see also* condolences
- definite articles *see* articles, definite
- del, della**, etc. 1.3.3, 4.2; *see also* **di**
- demonstrative adjectives 3.8; **questo, quel** 3.8.1; pronouns **questo, quello** 3.8.1
- dependent clauses 30.3, 30.5
 using indicative, conditional or subjunctive 30.5
 using subjunctive 2.3.14, 2.3.15
- describing someone or something 10
- desperation 25.4.2
- di**
 combined with definite article **del, della**, etc. 4.2; as partitive 1.3.3, 11.6.1
 common uses 4.3.4
 expressing origin 10.3.1
 expressing ownership 4.3.4, 9.4
 expressing place 37.3.3
 followed by verb infinitive 4.4.3
 in adverbial phrases 37.4.2
 in comparisons 17.3
 with stressed pronouns 18.4.1
see also prepositions
- difficile** 32.4 *see also* impersonal verb phrases
- diminishing the intensity of adjectives 10.5, 17.2.2, 17.5.3; of adverbs 17.5.6
- dire**
 giving advice 24.2.4
 irregular forms: imperative 2.3.23; imperfect subjunctive 2.3.19; past participle 2.3.30; present indicative 2.3.3; present subjunctive 2.3.17; simple perfect 2.3.8; *see also* Appendix II
 making a point 27.1.5, 27.2.3
si dice 31.4
 with indirect object pronoun 18.4.2, 19.3.1–2
- direct object pronouns *see* pronouns
- direct speech 31.1.1, 31.2
- disagreement 25.4.5, 27.2.2
- disappointment 25.4.3
- disapproval 25.4.5
- discourse markers 41.4
- disgust 25.4.10
- dislikes 28.3
- dispiacere, mi dispiace** 21.2.1–2, 22.4.3, 25.4.1, 25.4.3, 28.3.1
- dissatisfaction 25.4.4
- division 7.4
- dopo** 36.4.1
dopo aver, dopo che 36.4.2
- doubt 26.4
- dove interrogative 6.2.4, 15.3.3
- dovere**
 conditional ‘ought to’ 23.3.4
 imperfect/perfect tenses changing meaning 13.6.8
 irregular forms: conditional 2.2.4, 2.3.12; present indicative 2.2.4; present subjunctive 2.2.4
 used as modal verb with infinitive 4.4.5
 used to express cause 34.6
- dunque** 35.2
- effects *see* result
- emotions: positive 25.3; negative 25.4; neutral 25.5; *see also* doubt, fear, happiness, hope, indifference, resignation
- emphasis
 emphasising objectivity 40.6.2
 emphasising the action using passive 19.2; **si impersonale** 19.5; **si passivante** 19.4; word order 19.6
 emphasising the adjective 1.4.5
 using **stesso** 3.3.3; using subject pronouns 18.3
- enthusiasm 25.3.8
- essere**
 auxiliary in compound tenses 2.1.5–6; compound perfect 2.3.7, 13.3
 auxiliary in passive constructions 2.1.7, 2.2.2, 19.2.1, 19.5
 expressing availability: using **ci** 11.1, 11.2.1, 11.5, 11.6.1–5; with **ne** 11.6.5
 expressing feelings **essere** or **rimanere** 25.3.2
 idiomatic uses: **essere d’accordo** 27.2.1; **essere del parere** 27.1.4; **essere in grado di** 22.3.4; **essere sul punto di** 14.4.2
 in split sentence construction 40.7.4
 irregular forms: conditional 2.3.12; future 2.3.4; imperative 2.3.23; imperfect indicative 2.3.6; imperfect subjunctive 2.3.19; past participle 2.3.30; present indicative 2.2.4; present subjunctive 2.3.17; simple past 2.3.8
 used to give or elicit personal information 8.1, 8.3, 8.5; **essere** or **stare** 10.6
- exception 39
- exclamation 40.3.1
- excuses 20.7
- existence 11.1–2, non-existence 11.10
- facile** 32.4; *see also* impersonal verb phrases

fare

idiomatic uses: **parcela** 25.4.2; **fare attenzione** 24.1.3, 24.4; **fare bene** 25.3.3; **fare male** 25.4.5; **fare pena** 25.3.5; **fare schifo** 28.3.4; **fare una proposta** 24.3.2; **niente da fare** 3.9.1
 irregular forms: imperative 2.3.23;
 imperfect subjunctive 2.3.19; present indicative 2.3.3; present subjunctive 2.3.17; simple past 2.3.8
 occurrence **si fa** 11.3.4
 talking about profession 1.3.5, 8.3.3
 used in calculations 7.4
 used with infinitive 2.3.1, 4.4.5, 21.7, 33.3.2

fear 26.3.1, 26.3.5

fin (da) 36.5.1

fino a, finché 36.5.2

formal register 40.6; *see also* **Lei** and passive and subjunctive

forse 26.4.4

fra *see* **tra**

frequency 36.6

future

future perfect tense forms 2.2.1; uses 2.3.5, 26.4.2

future tense: forms 2.2, 2.3.4; used to express probability 2.3.4, 26.4.2

talking about future actions and events 14, 30.5.3, 30.6.3; actions happening later 36.4; using present tense 2.3.3, 14.3

see also Appendix III

gender *see* adjectives, articles, nouns

gerund 2.3.25–26

expressing cause 34.3.3

forms 2.3.25;

in conditional sentences 38.5.1

in same time context 30.6.1

used with **stare** 2.3.26, 12.3; imperfect 13.5.5

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

good wishes 20.4

grande 1.4.2, 1.4.5, 10.2.1, 10.3.3

comparative 1.4.6; superlative 1.4.7–8

gratitude 25.3.3

greetings

examples in dialogues 8.1, 8.6, 9.1

welcoming, greeting and taking leave 20.1–3

happiness 25.3.2

hearsay 31.4

hope 2.3.15, 26.2

hostility 25.4.9

how *see* questions

hypothesis 38

identification and personal information 8, in CV 42.3

il, lo, la, etc., *see* article, definite

imperative 2.3.22, 21.2

irregular forms 2.2.4, 2.3.23, Appendix II

negative 2.3.24, 21.3

regular forms 2.2.1

replaced by indicative 21.1, 21.2.1–2

used to give an order 21.1; negative 21.3

with unstressed pronouns 18.4.2

imperfect indicative 2.3.6, 13.5

aspect of verbs 13.5–6

irregular forms 2.2.4, Appendix II

regular forms 2.2.1

used in conditional sentences 38.3.2

imperfect subjunctive 2.3.19

used in conditional sentences 38.3, 38.4

impersonal **si** *see* **si impersonale**

impersonal verb phrases 32.2, 32.4–5; *see also*

(è) certo, chiaro, difficile, facile,

impossibile, improbabile, ovvio,

possibile, probabile, sicuro

impersonal verbs 23.3.5, 27.1.3; *see also*

basta, bisogna, conviene, occorrere,

parere, sembrare, servire

impossibile (è) 32.4; *see also* impersonal verb

phrases

improbabile (è) 32.4; *see also* impersonal verb phrases

in

combined with definite article (**nel, nella**, etc.) 4.2

common uses 4.3.5

expressing manner 6.2.3

expressing place 4.3.5; 1.3.4; 37.3.2, 37.3.4

with disjunctive pronouns 18.4.1

see also prepositions

in- as prefix (**inutile**, etc.) 10.5.3

indefinite:

adjectives 3.9.2, 3.9.3; *see also* **qualche**

articles *see* articles, indefinite

pronouns 3.9.1, 3.9.3

indicating *see* specifying person or object

indicative mood 2.3.2–3

indifference 25.5.1

indirect questions 38.7.2

indirect speech 31.3

infinitive 2.3.1

dependent on verb 2.3.1, 30.5

expressing English ‘-ing’ 2.3.1

in conditional sentences 38.5.3

used as negative imperative 2.3.1, 2.3.24

used as noun 2.3.1

used in earlier time context 30.6.2

used in instructions and recipes 21.4

used in same time context 30.6.1

with unstressed pronouns 3.4

- inflexions
 of nouns and adjectives 1.3.2, 1.4.2
 of verbs 2.1.4
- intensity (degrees of) 10.4, 17.5
- interest 25.3.8
- interjections 41.3, 25.2
- interrogatives 3.6; *see also* **che, chi, come, dove, perché, quale, quando, quanto**
- interrupting 41.5.2
- intransitive *see* verbs, intransitive
- introducing someone 8.1, 8.3
- invariable *see* adjectives, nouns
- irregular verbs 2.2.3–4; *see also* Appendix II and individual verbs
- irritation 25.4.6
- knowing, not knowing 32.3; *see also* **sapere**
- la** *see* article, definite and pronouns, direct object
- lasciare** with infinitive 2.3.1, 21.7
- le** *see* pronouns, direct object; pronouns, indirect object
- Lei** polite ‘you’ form 41.2; in imperative 2.3.22, 21.1, 21.2.1
- stressed object pronoun, after preposition 3.3.2
- stressed subject pronoun 3.3.1; used for emphasis 3.3.1; in introductions 8.2
- letters 42.2
- li** *see* pronouns, direct object
- likes 28.2; *see also* dislikes
- lo** *see* article, definite and pronouns, direct object
- location *see* place
- loro**
- polite ‘you’ plural form in imperative 2.3.22, 21.2.4
- stressed object pronoun 3.3.2
- stressed subject pronoun 3.3.1
- see also* possessives
- lui**
- stressed object pronoun 3.3.2
- stressed subject pronoun 3.3.1
- magari** 38.6
- mai** 6.2.4; **non . . . mai** 13.8.2, 16.3
- main and dependent clauses 30.3, 30.5
- manner 37.4; *see also* adverbs
- material(s) 10.2.4
- meglio** 6.3; *see also* adverbs
- meno** idiomatic expression; **meno male** 25.3.4
- in calculations 7.4
- in comparisons 1.4.6, 6.3, 17.2.2
- mi** *see* pronouns, direct object
- mio** *see* possessives
- modal verbs 4.4.5; and **dovere, potere, volere**
- molto**
- as adjective of quantity 6.2.2
- as adverb of quantity 6.2.2
- comparative 6.3
- moods *see* verbs
- ne** 3.4.4
- adverb of place 6.2.5
- agreement with past participle 3.4.7
- availability 11.6.5; quantity available 11.7
- combined pronouns 3.4.6
- see also* pronouns, personal
- né** as coordinating conjunction 30.2.3
- neanche** in concessive clause 39.3.10
- necessario** (è) 23.3.5
- need 23.3
- negatives 3.9.1, 3.9.3, 11.10
- negative sentences 16
- nel, nella, etc.** 4.2, *see also* **in**
- niente** *see* 3.9.1
- nostro** *see* possessives
- nouns 1.1–2
- agreement of noun and adjective 1.2, 1.5
- common noun patterns in -o; in -a; in -e 1.2.3
- gender 1.2.1
- invariable 1.2.5
- nouns ending in -co, -go, -ca, -ga 1.2.3
- other noun patterns 1.2.4
- singular/plural 1.2.2; irregular plurals 1.2.6
- nulla** *see* 3.9.1
- number singular/plural
- adjectives 1.4.2
- articles 1.3.3, 1.3.4
- nouns 1.2.2
- numbers 7; cardinal 7.2; ordinal 7.3
- o** as coordinating conjunction 30.2.3
- obligation 23.3.3, 23.3.4
- occorrere** 23.3.5
- occurrence 11.3
- ogni** 3.9.2, 36.6.1–2
- ognuno** 3.9.1
- ongoing actions *see* **stare** and gerund
- opinion 27, 29.5
- oppure** as coordinating conjunction 30.2.3
- oral communication 41
- orders 21.2, 21.5–6
- ought to *see* **dovere**
- ovvio** 32.5; *see also* impersonal verb phrases
- ownership 9.4
- expressed by possessive pronouns and adjectives 3.7

- panic 26.3.5
- parere** *see also* impersonal verbs
 expressing an opinion 27.1.3–4, 29.5
 expressing an unconfirmed report 31.4
- participles 2.3.27–28
- participles, past 2.3.28
 agreement with subject 2.3.28, with object 3.4.7
 used in compound tenses 2.3.28
 used in conditional sentences 38.5.2
- participles, present 2.3.27
 replaced by relative clause 2.3.27
 used as adjective 2.3.27
 used as noun 2.3.27
- partitive *see* article, partitive
- passato prossimo** *see* compound perfect
- passato remoto** *see* simple perfect
- passive construction 2.1.7, 2.2.2
 choice of auxiliary 19.2
si passivante 19.4; in formal register 40.6.2
see also verbs, passive
- past actions, events, situations 13
 expressed by present tense 13.7
 indicators of time 13.8
- past anterior 2.3.10
- past conditional *see* conditional mood, past
- past historic *see* simple perfect
- past tenses
 forms: regular verbs (active) 2.2.1;
 (passive) 2.2.2; irregular verbs (active) 2.2.3–4
 sequence of tenses 30.5, Appendix III
see also compound perfect, imperfect
 indicative, imperfect subjunctive, past
 anterior, perfect subjunctive, pluperfect
 indicative, pluperfect subjunctive,
 simple perfect
see also imperfect aspect, perfect aspect
see also past actions, events, situations
- patience 25.6.2
- per**
 common uses 4.3.6
 expressing cause 34.3.1–2, 34.4
 expressing opinion 27.1.4
 expressing place 4.3.6, 37.3.2
 expressing purpose 4.4.4, 33.2, 33.4
 expressing result 35.2, 35.4
 followed by verb infinitive 4.4.4
stare per 14.4.1, 30.6.3
 used in mathematical calculations 7.4
 with stressed pronouns 18.4.1
see also prepositions
- percentages 7.5
- perché**
 expressing purpose 33.3.1
 expressing reason or cause 5.3.2, 34.3.1
 expressing result and consequence 35.4
 interrogative 6.2.4
- perciò** 5.2.5, 35.2
- perfect aspect 13.2
 perfect and imperfect 13.6
see also compound perfect, simple perfect
 and past tenses
- perfect subjunctive 2.2.1, 2.2.4
see also subjunctive
- permettere** *see* permission; asking to speak 41.5.3
- permission: asking, granting, denying 22.1–2
- perplexity 25.5.3
- personal pronouns *see* pronouns
- persons of the verb 2.1.3
- pessimism 26.3.2
- piacere**
 compound tenses formed with **essere**
 28.2.1, 28.3.1
 expressing dislike 28.3.1
 expressing like 18.4.4, 28.2.1
 expressing preference 28.4
 idiomatic phrases **che piacere** 25.3.1;
per piacere 9.2.1; **mi fa piacere** 25.3.2
 in introductions 8.1, 20.2
 irregular forms: simple perfect 2.3.8,
 Appendix II
- pity 25.3.5
- più**
 in calculations 7.4
 in comparisons 17.2.1; comparative
 adjectives 1.4.6; comparative adverbs
 6.3
 negative **non . . . più** 16.3
- place
 adverbs of place 6.2.4, 37.2
 expressions of place, location 11.9.1
 prepositions of place 4.3, 4.5, 37.3
- pluperfect indicative 2.3.9
 irregular verbs 2.2.4
 regular verbs 2.2.1
- pluperfect subjunctive 2.3.20
 irregular verbs 2.2.4
 regular verbs 2.2.1
- plural *see* adjectives, articles, nouns, verbs
- poco, un po'**
 as adjective of quantity 6.2.2
 as adverb of quantity 6.2.2
 comparative 6.3
 diminishing intensity of adjective/adverb
 10.5.1, 17.5.3
- position
 position of noun and adjective 1.4.5
 position of possessives 3.7.2
 position of unstressed personal pronouns
 3.4
see place

- possessive adjectives 3.7; pronouns 3.7;
replaced by reflexive 3.4.3
- possibile** (è) 32.4 *see also* impersonal verb
phrases, **il più . . . possibile** 6.3
- possibility 32
- potere**
expressing possibility, opportunity
22.3.1
imperfect/perfect tenses changing
meaning 13.6.8
irregular forms: conditional 2.3.12; future
2.3.4; present indicative 2.2.4; present
subjunctive 2.2.4
used as modal verb with infinitive
4.4.5
used to ask permission 22.1.1
used to make a request 22.4.1–2
- preferences 28.4
- prefixes 10.5.3
- prepositions 4; *see also* **a, con, da, di, in, per, su**
combined with articles 4.2;
common uses 4.3
indicating place 4.5
indicating time 4.5
prepositional (adverbial) phrases
indicating manner 6.2.3, 37.4.2
used with stressed pronouns 3.3
used with verbs/verb infinitive 4.4
- presence *see* existence
- present situations, actions, events 12
indicators of present time 12.4
ongoing actions 12.3
regular actions 12.2.2
- present tense
present indicative forms: regular 2.2.1;
irregular 2.2.4
present subjunctive forms: regular 2.2.1;
irregular 2.2.4
used in newspapers to report past events
13.7.2
used to express future 14.3
used with **da** to express past 13.7.1
- prima** 36.3.1
- prima che, prima di** 36.3.2
- probabile** (è) 32.4; *see also* impersonal verb
phrases
- probability 32
- pronouns 3
agreement of past participle with direct
object pronoun 2.3.28, 3.4.7
agreement of past participle with subject
pronoun 2.3.28
ci 3.4.5
combined direct + indirect object
pronouns 3.4.6
direct object pronouns 3.4.1
disjunctive pronouns *see* stressed
pronouns
indirect object pronouns 3.4.2
ne 3.4.4
personal pronouns 3.2
position 3.4
reflexive pronouns: unstressed 3.4.3;
stressed 3.3.3
stressed pronouns 3.3: object 3.3.2;
reflexive 3.3.3; subject 3.3.1
subject pronouns 3.3.1
unstressed pronouns 3.4
see also demonstrative, indefinite,
interrogative, possessive, relative
see also **Lei**
see also **si impersonale**
see also **si passivante**
- pronunciation Appendix I
- proprio** 3.7.4; *see also* possessives
- pur** 33.2
- purpose 33
clauses and conjunctions expressing
purpose 33.3
infinitive expressing purpose 33.2
purpose of object 33.4
- qualche** 3.9.2; *see also* indefinites
- qualcosa** 3.9.1; *see also* indefinites
- qualcuno** 3.9.1; *see also* indefinites
- quale**: interrogative 3.6; relative 3.5.3
- qualsiasi** 3.9.2; *see also* indefinites
- qualunque** 3.9.2; *see also* indefinites
- quando**
interrogative 6.2.4
in time clause 5.3.4, 36.2.1, 36.5.1–2
- quantity 11.6, 11.7
questions about quantity 15.3.2
with **ne** 3.4.4
- quanto**
exclamative 25.3.1
in comparisons 1.4.6, 17.2.3, 17.3.7
interrogative adjective 3.6, 6.2.2,
15.3.2
interrogative adverb 3.6, 6.2.2, 15.3.2
questions 15.3.2
- quello/a/i/e** *see* demonstratives
- questions 3.6
how? 6.2.4, 10.6, 15.3.3 how much/
many? 3.6, 15.3.2
indirect questions 3.5.4, 5.3.2–3, 38.7.2;
with **chissà se** 26.4.6; **sapere** 29.2
interrogative adjectives 3.6
interrogative adverbs 3.6, 6.2.4
what? 3.6, 15.3.1
when? 6.2.4, 15.3.3
where? 6.2.4, 15.3.3
which? 3.6, 15.3.1

- who? 3.6, 15.3.1
- why? 6.2.4, 15.3.3
- see also* interrogatives
- questo/a/i/e** *see* demonstratives
- quoting (direct speech) 31.2
- recommending 24.1–3
- referring to someone or something *see*
 - pronouns, demonstrative, indefinite
- reflexive
 - reflexive pronouns: stressed 3.3.3; unstressed 3.4.3
 - reflexive verbs: 2.1.7
- regret 20.7, 25.4.1, 26.3.4
- relative
 - clauses 3.5, 9.5
 - pronouns 3.5
 - replacing ‘-ing’ form 2.3.26; by past participle 2.3.27
- remembering and forgetting 29.6
- repetition and frequency 36.6
- report, unconfirmed 31.4
 - using conditional 30.5.1; past conditional 30.5.2
- reporting indirect speech 31.3
- reporting information 31.4
- requests 21.1–3
- reservation 39
- resignation 25.5.2
- result 35
- sapere**
 - imperfect/perfect aspect changing meaning 13.6.9
 - irregular forms: conditional 2.3.12; future 2.3.4; imperative 2.3.23; present indicative 2.3.3; simple perfect 2.3.8; Appendix II
 - si sa** 32.3
 - used as modal verb 2.3.1, 4.4.5
 - used as noun 2.3.1
- se**
 - anche se** 5.3.5, 39.3.2
 - chissà se** 26.4.6
 - conjunction 5.3.3, 38.4
 - expressing a condition 5.3.3, 38.4
 - in indirect questions 5.3.3, 29.2, 38.7.2
 - neanche se** 39.3.10
 - other uses of **se** 38.7
- secondo** 27.1.4, 31.4
- sembrare** 27.1.3, 31.4
 - expressing an unconfirmed report 31.4
- sempre** 36.6.4
- sequence of tenses 30.5, Appendix III; *see also*
 - past tenses
- servire** 23.3.5
- shape, size 10.2.1–2
- si**
 - reflexive pronoun 3.4.3
 - si impersonale** 2.1.8, 19.5; in formal register 40.6.2; **ci si** 3.4.5; with plural adjective 19.5; with **proprio** 3.7.4; **si dice** 31.4; **si sa** 32.3
 - si passivante** 2.1.7 (d), 19.4; in formal register 40.6.2
- sia . . . che** 5.2.2
- sia . . . sia** 5.2.2
- siccome** 34.3.1
- simple perfect 13.4
- since 36.5.1
- social interactions 20
- some, someone, something 3.9.1, 3.9.3, 11.6; *see also* indefinites
- specifying a person or object 9.2.1–2, 9.3; personal details 8.3
- spelling Appendix I; on telephone 41.6
- sperare** 2.3.15, 26.2.1
- spesso** 36.6.4
- stare**
 - describing physical state 10.6
 - idiomatic use: **stare per** 14.4.1, 30.6.3
 - irregular forms: imperative 2.3.23; present indicative 2.3.3; present subjunctive 2.3.17; simple past Appendix II (B)
 - used with gerund 2.3.26, 12.3; imperfect 13.5.5
- stesso** with stressed reflexive pronouns 3.3.3
- su** *see also* prepositions
 - combined with article **sul**, **sulla**, etc. 4.2
 - common uses of 4.3.7
 - with stressed pronouns 18.4.1
- subjunctive mood 2.3.14–15, 2.3.21
 - expressing emotion 25.3.2, 25.4.1, 25.4.3
 - expressing opinion 27.1.1
 - expressing purpose 33.3
 - expressing restriction 39
 - expressing uncertainty 31.4, 32.3–4
 - forms 2.3.16–20
 - in conditional sentences 2.3.15, 5.3.3, 38.3–4, 38.6
 - subjunctive vs indicative 5.3 (in subordinate clauses), 9.3 (in relative clauses), 11.8 (after **qualcuno**), 17.3.7 (in comparative sentences) 27.2.2 (**non è vero**), 29.2 (after **sapere**), 29.3 (after **essere certo**), 36.3.2 (in time clauses), 36.5.2 (after **finché**), 38.2–4 (in conditional sentences), 39.3.2 (in concession clauses), 40.6.1 (in formal register)

- with conjunctions **benché, perché, purché, sebbene**, etc. 2.3.15, 5.3.5, 36.3.2, 39
- with indefinites **qualunque, qualsiasi**, etc. 2.3.15, 3.9.1
- see also* imperfect subjunctive, perfect subjunctive, pluperfect subjunctive, present subjunctive
- suffix 10.5.2, 37.4.4
- suggesting 24.2–3, 24.6
- sul, sulla**, etc. 4.2; *see also* **su**
- suo** *see* possessives
- superlatives *see* adjectives, adverbs, superlative forms
- surprise 25.6.1
- tale** in sentences expressing result 35.4;
see also indefinites
- tanto**
- adjective of quantity 6.2.2
 - adverb of quantity 6.2.2
 - in comparisons 17.2.3
 - in sentences expressing result 35.4
- telephone 41.6–8
- spelling on telephone 41.6
 - telephone phraseology 41.7
- tenses 2.1.5, 2.3; *see also* individual tenses, past tense, verbs
- thanks and appreciation 20.5
- ti** *see* pronouns, direct object
- time
- adverbs of time 6.2.4
 - duration of 36.5.1–3
 - expressions of time 36.7
 - prepositions expressing time 4.5; *see also* prepositions
 - referring to time 7.8
 - specifying time of actions, events 36
 - time context 30.4, 36.2–4; *see also* sequence of tenses
 - see also* frequency
- titles
- addressing someone 20.2, 20.9
 - written correspondence 42.2.2–3
- tra/fra**: common uses of 4.3.8; *see also* prepositions
- transitive *see* verbs
- trapassato** *see* pluperfect
- trapassato remoto** *see* past anterior
- troppo**
- adjective of quantity 6.2.2
 - adverb of quantity 6.2.2
 - in sentences expressing result 35.4
- tuo** *see* possessives
- tutto**
- adjective of quantity 6.2.2
 - adverb of quantity 6.2.2
- expressing frequency and repetition 36.6.1, 36.6.3
- un, uno, una**, etc. *see* article, indefinite until 36.5.2
- venire** irregular forms:
- conditional 2.3.12
 - future 2.3.4
 - present indicative 2.3.3
 - present subjunctive Appendix II
- verbs 2
- active 2.1.7
 - indicative regular verbs 2.2.1; irregular verbs 2.2.4
 - intransitive 2.1.6
 - irregular verb forms 2.2.4, Appendix II; *see also* **andare, avere, dare, dire, dovere, essere, fare, potere, stare, volere**
 - moods 2.1.5, 2.3; *see also* conditional, gerund, imperative, indicative, infinitive, participle, subjunctive
 - passive verb forms 2.1.7, 19.2; with **andare, essere, venire** 2.1.7, 19.2.1–3; *see also* passive construction
 - reflexive 2.1.7; *see also* reflexive pronouns
 - regular verb forms 2.2.1
 - tables of verb forms 2.2.1, 2.2.4, Appendix II
 - tenses 2.1.5, 2.3; *see also* compound past, future, future perfect, gerund, imperfect indicative, imperfect subjunctive, participle, past subjunctive, pluperfect indicative, pluperfect subjunctive, present indicative, present subjunctive, sequence of tenses, simple past
 - transitive 2.1.6
 - voice 2.1.7; *see also* active, passive *see also* auxiliary verbs, impersonal verbs, modal verbs
- vi**
- as adverb of place 6.2.5
 - as direct object pronoun 3.4.1; indirect object pronoun 3.4.2
- volere**
- conditional **vorrei** used in polite requests 23.2.1
 - idiomatic use **volere bene a** 28.2.2
 - imperfect/perfect tenses changing meaning 13.6.8
 - irregular forms: conditional 2.3.12; future 2.3.4; present indicative 2.2.4; present subjunctive 2.2.4

INDEX

- used as modal verb with infinitive 2.3.1,
4.4
- want or wish 23.2.1
- vorrei** *see* **volere**
- vostro** *see* possessives
- want 23.2
- weights and measures 7.9
- wishes 20.4
- word order 1.4.5, 19.6, 40.7