

# VERB USAGE REVIEW

This section provides a comprehensive review of Italian verbs to foster an in-depth understanding of the Italian verb system: the regular and irregular conjugation of the verbs, the usages of the moods and tenses, and how it differs from the English verb system. The formation and use of each mood and tense is discussed thoroughly, illustrating the regular conjugation, the spelling changes (if any), and the irregularities.

## Subject Pronouns

Proper verb conjugation requires an understanding of subject pronouns and how they're used. Subject pronouns are words that take the place of subject nouns:

Geir is Norwegian. He lives in Trondheim.

In the preceding example, the pronoun “He” replaces the name “Geir” in order to avoid repetition. Table 1 shows the most common Italian subject pronouns and their corresponding English subject pronouns.

**Table 1 Italian and English Subject Pronouns**

Person	Singular		Plural	
	Italian	English	Italian	English
First person	<i>io</i>	I	<i>noi</i>	we
Second person	<i>tu</i>	you (informal)	<i>voi</i>	you
	<i>Lei</i>	you (formal)	<i>Loro</i>	you (very formal)
Third person	<i>lei</i>	she	<i>loro</i>	they
	<i>lui</i>	he		

In English, subject pronouns are always used with verb forms, for example “I go,” “you have.” The verb form itself—go—does not identify the subject: It could be “I go,” “you go,” “we go,” or “they go,” just as it could be “I have,” “you have,” “we have,” or “they have.” Unlike English, in Italian the verb ending is different for each person in the majority of verb tenses, so the verb ending itself identifies the subject. For this reason, subject pronouns are superfluous, and they are normally omitted when the verb is expressed.

Vado a Roma.

Vai a Roma.

I go to Rome.

You go to Rome.

In the preceding examples, the verb form *vado* includes the information that the subject is “I.” Understanding which subject pronoun is needed, however, whether or not you choose to use it, enables you to correctly conjugate a verb in any tense.

Note the following about the use of subject pronouns and their corresponding verb forms:

- Note that *io* (“I”) is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence. In case of coordinated subjects, if a third person is conjoined with *io* or *noi*, the *noi* form of the verb must be used as in the last example below:

<i>Io abito a Firenze, e tu?</i>	I live in Florence, what about you?
<i>Noi abitiamo a New York.</i>	We live in New York.
<i>Io e Carlo abitiamo a Roma.</i>	Carlo and I live in Rome.

- When speaking to someone there are four ways to express the English “you” according to how many people are being addressed and the level of formality:
  - **When addressing one person**, use:
    - Tu* and/or its corresponding verb form in an informal setting, including relatives, friends, fellow students, children, and people with whom you are on a first-name basis. For example:

<i>Tu sei fantastico.</i>	You are terrific.
---------------------------	-------------------

*Lei* in a formal situation for a person (male or female) you do not know well or a person to whom you wish to show respect. The corresponding verb form for polite form, *Lei*, is the third-person singular (*lei*), the same as “she.” *Lei* means, therefore, both “you (formal)” (male or female) and “she.” In writing the polite form, *Lei* is often capitalized in order to distinguish it from *lei* (“she”).

<i>Marta, anche <u>tu</u> studi l'italiano?</i>	Marta, do <u>you</u> study Italian too?
<i>Signora Rossi, anche <u>Lei</u> studia l'italiano?</i>	Mrs. Rossi, do <u>you</u> study Italian too?
<i>Signor Rossi, anche <u>Lei</u> studia l'italiano?</i>	Mr. Rossi, do <u>you</u> study Italian too?
<i>Anche lei studia l'italiano.</i>	She, too, studies Italian.

- **When addressing two or more people**, use:
    - Voi* both in formal and informal situations.
- |                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Che cosa prendete (voi)?</i> | What are you having? |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
- The use of *Loro* to address two or more people in a formal way is restricted to extremely formal situations and is rarely used today.
- *Lui* and *lei* mean “he” and “she,” respectively. In formal literary language, the forms *egli* (“he”) and *ella* (“she”) can be used. The subject pronoun “it” (and the plural form “they” when the reference is to animal and inanimate things) usually is not stated in Italian.

<i>È vero.</i>	It is true.
<i>I quadri di Marsha? Sono bellissimi!</i>	Marsha's paintings? They're beautiful!

# The Basics on Verbs

---

In Italian, most verb forms have the following basic structure:

root + grammatical ending

Except in some irregular verbs, the root or stem generally does not change and expresses the meaning of the verb. The ending, added to the infinitive stem, conveys important information including:

- **Person:** Who or what is doing the action
- **Mood:** The attitude or disposition of the speaker toward the sentence
- **Time:** When the action takes place

For example, *canto* (“I sing”) consists of the root *cant*, which conveys the meaning “sing,” and the ending *o*, which expresses present tense, “I” form. Therefore, *canto* means “I sing” (present tense, “I” form).

In the dictionary, you’ll find the verb listed under its infinitive form. In English the infinitive consists of “to” + verb, for example “to speak” or “to talk.” In Italian, the infinitive form is one word consisting of: stem + infinitive ending. Italian regular verbs are divided into three groups according to the ending of the infinitive form. These groups are also called first, second, and third conjugations. The infinitive regular endings are *-are*, *-ere*, and *-ire*, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 The Italian Regular Infinitive**

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Stem or Root</b>	<b>Infinitive Ending</b>	<b>Conjugation</b>
<i>parlare</i> (“to talk”)	<i>parl-</i>	<i>-are</i>	first
<i>vedere</i> (“to see”)	<i>ved-</i>	<i>-ere</i>	second
<i>dormire</i> (“to sleep”)	<i>dorm-</i>	<i>-ire</i>	third

Therefore, the infinitive indicates to which group the verb belongs. By dropping the infinitive ending, you have the root of the verb. Why is it so important to know which group a verb belongs to? Because each group has its own set of endings that are added to the root and vary according to the subject, the tense, and the mood. If, therefore, you memorize the pattern of the *-are* group, you know the pattern for every regular verb within that group: *parlare* (“to speak”), *cantare* (“to sing”), *abitare* (“to live”), and so on. The great majority of *-are* verbs are regular. The first step in mastering Italian verbs is to become familiar with the regular endings.

To help you out, the endings of four regular verbs are highlighted in bold in order to facilitate their identification. The model verbs are: *parlare*, *credere*, *finire*, and *partire*.

Irregular verbs are called irregular because they don’t follow the pattern of the conjugation to which they belong or because they have a change in the stem.

Minor spelling changes don't make a verb irregular. For example, verbs belonging to the *-are* group that end in *-care*, *-gare*, or *-iare* undergo internal spelling changes in certain tenses to preserve the hard or soft sound of the conjugated verb form (*c/g + a, o, u* hard sound, as in "cat", "golf"; *c/g + i, e* soft sound as in "george", "cello"). There are no spelling changes in the second and third group.

You should memorize the irregular verbs. Only four *-are* verbs, and their compounds, are irregular. They are *andare*, *dare*, *fare*, and *stare*. The majority of irregular verbs belong to the *-ere* group. Some verbs are irregular in only some tenses, and there are "families" of irregularities. When it is possible, a pattern of irregularity will be provided, in order to facilitate the acquisition of the irregular forms.

## Italian Moods and Tenses

---

In Italian, there are seven moods. The four definite moods (*modi finiti*) are the:

- **Indicative:** The most commonly used mood in everyday conversation. It is used for ordinary statements and questions.
- **Conditional:** The conditional mood allows a softening of the tone of a request or advice and it expresses what would happen under certain circumstances.
- **Subjunctive:** Whereas the indicative is used to express or indicate facts, the subjunctive mood conveys the opinions and attitude of the speaker. The subjunctive often follows verbs such as *pensare* ("to think").
- **Imperative:** The imperative gives a command.

The three "indefinite moods" or "non personal forms" (*modi indefiniti*), in which the subject remains undefined, are the:

- **Infinitive**
- **Gerund**
- **Participle**

Tense can be simple or compound. The simple tenses consist of one word. Table 3 shows the simple tenses and their equivalents in English of the verb *parlare* ("to talk"). Note that the Italian tenses might have two equivalent English translations.

**Table 3 The Simple Tenses**

<b>Italian</b>		<b>English</b>		
<i>Indicativo presente</i>	<i>io parlo tu parli lui/lei/Lei parla noi parliamo voi parlate loro parlano</i>	Present Indicative	I talk you talk he/she/it talks we talk you talk they talk	I am talking you are talking he/she/it is talking we are talking you are talking they are talking
<i>Indicativo imperfetto</i>	<i>io parlavo tu parlavi lui/lei/Lei parlava noi parlavamo voi parlavate loro parlavano</i>	Equivalent to Imperfect Indicative (past descriptive)	I used to talk you used to talk he/she/it used to talk we used to talk you used to talk they used to talk	I was talking you were talking he/she/it was talking we were talking you were talking they were talking
<i>Indicativo futuro</i>	<i>io parlerò tu parlerai lui/lei/Lei parlerà noi parleremo voi parlerete loro parleranno</i>	Future	I will talk you will talk he/she/it will talk we will talk you will talk they will talk	I am going to talk you are going to talk he/she/it is going to talk we are going to talk you are going to talk they are going to talk
<i>Indicativo passato remoto*</i>	<i>io parlai tu parlasti lui/lei/Lei parlò noi parlammo voi parlaste loro parlarono</i>	Past Absolute or Past Definite	I talked you talked he/she/it talked we talked you talked they talked	
<i>Condizionale presente or Condizionale semplice</i>	<i>io parlerei tu parleresti lui/lei/Lei parlerebbe noi parleremmo voi parlereste loro parlerebbero</i>	Present Conditional or Simple Conditional	I would talk you would talk he/she/it would talk we would talk you would talk they would talk	
<i>Congiuntivo presente</i>	<i>io parli tu parli lui/lei/Lei parli noi parliamo voi parliate loro parlino</i>	Present Subjunctive	that I (may) talk that you (may) talk that he/she/it (may) talk that we (may) talk that you (may) talk that they (may) talk	
<i>Congiuntivo imperfetto</i>	<i>io parlassi tu parlassi lui/lei/Lei parlasse noi parlassimo voi parlaste loro parlassero</i>	Imperfect Subjunctive	that I (might) talk that you (might) talk that he/she/it (might) talk that we (might) talk that you (might) may talk that they (might) talk	
<i>Imperative</i>	– <i>(tu) parla! (Lei) parli! (noi) parliamo! (voi) parlate! (Loro) parlino!</i>	Imperative	– Talk! – Let's talk! Talk! –	
<i>Infinito presente</i>	<i>parlare</i>	Infinitive Present	to talk	
<i>Gerundio presente</i>	<i>parlando</i>	Gerund Present	talking	
<i>Participio presente**</i>	<i>parlante</i>	Present Participle **	talking	
<i>Participio passato</i>	<i>parlato</i>	Past Participle	talked	

\* The past absolute is mainly used in literary works.

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

## COMPOUND TENSES

In English, the compound tenses are also called perfect tenses. Compound tenses are composed of two words. The first word is the auxiliary (or “helping”) verb, and it expresses mainly grammatical information such as person, tense, and mood. The other word, the past participle, expresses principally the meaning of the verb:

*ho cantato* = *ho* (auxiliary verb, *io* “I” form, present tense) + *cantato* (past participle of *cantare*, “to sing”) = I have sung

In English, to form the compound tenses the auxiliary verb “have” is used with the past participle—for example, “she has read the book,” “they had gone to the movie.” In Italian, the auxiliary (or “helping”) verbs are *essere* (“to be”) and *avere* (“to have”).

The perfect tenses are based on simple tenses, and they require the use of a helping verb in a simple tense plus the past participle. Therefore, to form the Italian compound tense you should know:

- How to form the past participle
- *Avere* and *essere* in their simple tenses
- Whether to use *essere* or *avere* as an auxiliary verb

How to form the past participle and whether to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verb are discussed in the next two sections.

Table 4 shows the compound tenses and the English equivalents of two Italian verbs: *parlare* (“to talk”), which uses *avere* as an auxiliary verb to form compound tenses, and *andare* (“to go”), which uses *essere* as an auxiliary verb.

**Table 4 The Compound Tenses**

<b>Auxiliary avere</b>	<b>Auxiliary essere</b>	<b>English</b>	
<b>Indicativo passato prossimo</b>		<b>Present Perfect</b>	
<i>io ho parlato</i> <i>tu hai parlato</i> <i>lui/lei ha parlato</i> <i>noi abbiamo parlato</i> <i>voi avete parlato</i> <i>loro hanno parlato</i>	<i>io sono andato/a</i> <i>tu sei andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei è andato/a</i> <i>noi siamo andati/e</i> <i>voi siete andati/e</i> <i>loro sono andati/e</i>	<i>I/you/he/she/we/</i> <i>they talked</i> <i>I/you/we/they have talked</i> <i>she/he/it has talked</i>	<i>I/you/he/she/we/</i> <i>they went</i> <i>I/you/we/they have gone</i> <i>she/he/it has gone</i>
<b>Indicativo trapassato prossimo</b>		<b>Past Perfect</b>	
<i>io avevo parlato</i> <i>tu avevi parlato</i> <i>lui/lei aveva parlato</i> <i>noi avevamo parlato</i> <i>voi avevate parlato</i> <i>loro avevano parlato</i>	<i>io ero andato/a</i> <i>tu eri andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei era andato/a</i> <i>noi eravamo andati/e</i> <i>voi eravate andati/e</i> <i>loro erano andati/e</i>	<i>I had talked</i> <i>you had talked</i> <i>she/he/it had talked</i> <i>we had talked</i> <i>you had talked</i> <i>they had talked</i>	<i>I had gone</i> <i>you had gone</i> <i>she/he/it had gone</i> <i>we had gone</i> <i>you had gone</i> <i>they had gone</i>
<b>Indicativo futuro anteriore</b>		<b>Future Perfect</b>	
<i>io avrò parlato</i> <i>tu avrai parlato</i> <i>lui/lei avrà parlato</i> <i>noi avremo parlato</i> <i>voi avrete parlato</i> <i>loro avranno parlato</i>	<i>io sarò andato/a</i> <i>tu sarai andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei sarà andato/a</i> <i>noi saremo andati/e</i> <i>voi sarete andati/e</i> <i>loro saranno andati/e</i>	<i>I will have talked</i> <i>you will have talked</i> <i>she/he/it will have talked</i> <i>we will have talked</i> <i>you will have talked</i> <i>they will have talked</i>	<i>I will have gone</i> <i>you will have gone</i> <i>she/he/it will have gone</i> <i>we will have gone</i> <i>you will have gone</i> <i>they will have gone</i>
<b>Indicativo trapassato remoto*</b>		<b>Past Perfect</b>	
<i>io ebbi parlato</i> <i>tu avesti parlato</i> <i>lui/lei ebbe parlato</i> <i>noi avemmo parlato</i> <i>voi aveste parlato</i> <i>loro ebbero parlato</i>	<i>io fui andato/a</i> <i>tu fosti andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei fu andato/a</i> <i>noi fummo andati/e</i> <i>voi foste andati/e</i> <i>loro furono andati/e</i>	<i>I had talked</i> <i>you had talked</i> <i>she/he/it had talked</i> <i>we had talked</i> <i>you had talked</i> <i>they had talked</i>	<i>I had gone</i> <i>you had gone</i> <i>she/he/it had gone</i> <i>we had gone</i> <i>you had gone</i> <i>they had gone</i>
<b>Condizionale passato</b>		<b>Conditional Perfect</b>	
<i>io avrei parlato</i> <i>tu avresti parlato</i> <i>lui/lei avrebbe parlato</i> <i>noi avremmo parlato</i> <i>voi avreste parlato</i> <i>loro avrebbero parlato</i>	<i>io sarei andato/a</i> <i>tu saresti andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei sarebbe andato/a</i> <i>noi saremmo andati/e</i> <i>voi sareste andati/e</i> <i>loro sarebbero andati/e</i>	<i>I would have talked</i> <i>you would have talked</i> <i>she/he/it would have talked</i> <i>we would have talked</i> <i>you would have talked</i> <i>they would have talked</i>	<i>I would have gone</i> <i>you would have gone</i> <i>she/he/it would have gone</i> <i>we would have gone</i> <i>you would have gone</i> <i>they would have gone</i>
<b>Congiuntivo passato</b>		<b>Equivalent to Past Subjunctive</b>	
<i>io abbia parlato</i> <i>tu abbia parlato</i> <i>lui/lei abbia parlato</i> <i>noi abbiamo parlato</i> <i>voi abbiate parlato</i> <i>loro abbiano parlato</i>	<i>io sia andato/a</i> <i>tu sia andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei sia andato/a</i> <i>noi siamo andati/e</i> <i>voi siate andati/e</i> <i>loro siano andati/e</i>	<i>that I may have talked</i> <i>that you may have talked</i> <i>that she/he/it may have talked</i> <i>that we may have talked</i> <i>that you may have talked</i> <i>that they may have talked</i>	<i>that I may have gone</i> <i>that you may have gone</i> <i>that she/he/it may have gone</i> <i>that we may have gone</i> <i>that you may have gone</i> <i>that they may have gone</i>
<b>Congiuntivo imperfetto</b>		<b>Equivalent to Past Perfect Subjunctive</b>	
<i>io avessi parlato</i> <i>tu avessi parlato</i> <i>lui/lei avesse parlato</i> <i>noi avessimo parlato</i> <i>voi aveste parlato</i> <i>loro avessero parlato</i>	<i>io fossi andato/a</i> <i>tu fossi andato/a</i> <i>lui/lei fossi andato/a</i> <i>noi fossimo andati/e</i> <i>voi foste andati/e</i> <i>loro fossero andati/e</i>	<i>that I might have talked</i> <i>that you might have talked</i> <i>that she/he/it might have talked</i> <i>that we might have talked</i> <i>that you might have talked</i> <i>that they might have talked</i>	<i>that I might have gone</i> <i>that you might have gone</i> <i>that she/he/it might have gone</i> <i>gone</i> <i>that we might have gone</i> <i>that you might have gone</i> <i>that they might have gone</i>

**Table 4 (continued)**

<b>Infinito passato</b>		<b>Past Infinitive</b>	
<i>aver parlato</i>	<i>essere andato</i>	having talked	having gone
<b>Gerundio passato</b>		<b>Perfect Gerund</b>	
<i>avendo parlato</i>	<i>essendo andato</i>	having talked	having gone

\* The *trapassato remoto* is rarely used today.

## THE PAST PARTICIPLE

The English past participle is used to form the compound tenses (“he has worked,” “he had worked,” and so on). The regular past participle is formed by adding *-ed* to the verb (“watched,” “liked”). Some verbs have an irregular past participle (“gone” from “go,” “seen” from “see”). In Italian, as in English, the past participle is used to form the nine compound tenses as well as to form the passive voice with *essere* or as an adjective. The past participle may also be used as a noun:

<i>Abbiamo <u>comprato</u> la casa.</i>	We have <u>bought</u> the house. (compound)
<i>Siamo <u>andati</u> al cinema.</i>	We have <u>gone</u> to the cinema. (compound)
<i>La casa è stata <u>venduta</u>.</i>	The house has been <u>sold</u> . (passive)
<i>Il negozio è <u>chiuso</u>.</i>	The store is <u>closed</u> . (adjective)
<i>Gli <u>scritti</u> di Dante.</i>	The <u>writings</u> of Dante. (noun)

The Italian regular past participle is formed by dropping the infinitive endings *-are*, *-ere*, and *-ire* and adding *-ato*, *-uto*, and *-ito* as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Forming the Past Participle**

<b>Verb Group</b>	<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
<i>-are</i>	<i>parlare</i> (“to talk”)	<i>parlato</i> (“talked”)
<i>-ere</i>	<i>ricevere</i> (“to receive”)	<i>ricevuto</i> (“received”)
<i>-ire</i>	<i>finire</i> (“to end”)	<i>finito</i> (“finished”)

Some verbs ending in *-cere* add the ending *-iuto* when forming the past participle in order to keep the soft sound of the infinitive, as for example, *conoscere* (“to know”), *conosciuto*, and *piacere* (“to like”), *piaciuto*.

The past participles of all *-are* (with the exceptions of *fare*, which has a past participle of *fatto*) and most *-ire* verbs are regular and follow the above pattern.

The vast majority of *-ere* verbs have irregular past participles, and the irregularity must be memorized. Below is a list of commonly used *-ere* verbs that have an irregular past participle:

<b>Verb</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
<i>bere</i> (“to drink”)	<i>bevuto</i> (“drunk”)
<i>chiedere</i> (“to ask”)	<i>chiesto</i> (“asked”)
<i>chiudere</i> (“to close”)	<i>chiuso</i> (“closed”)
<i>decidere</i> (“to decide”)	<i>deciso</i> (“decided”)
<i>dipingere</i> (“to paint”)	<i>dipinto</i> (“painted”)

**Verb**

*dire* (“to say”)  
*leggere* (“to read”)  
*mettere* (“to put”)  
*perdere* (“to lose”)  
*prendere* (“to take”)  
*scegliere* (“to choose”)  
*vincere* (“to win”)

**Past Participle**

*detto* (“said”)  
*letto* (“read”)  
*messo* (“put”)  
*perso* (“lost”)  
*preso* (“took”)  
*scelto* (“chosen”)  
*vinto* (“won”)

Note the following on the irregular past participles:

- Many verbs ending in *-dere* and *-ndere* have a past participle ending in *-so* (for example, *prendere* and *preso*; *chiudere* and *chiuso*).
- Some verbs ending in *-ncere* and *-ngere* have a past participle ending in *-nto* (for example, *vincere* and *vinto*; *spingere* and *spinto*).
- Some verbs ending in *-gliere* have a past participle ending in *-lto* (for example, *scegliere* and *scelto*; *cogliere* and *colto*).

## AVERE OR ESSERE?

In order to form compound tenses in English, the auxiliary (“helping”) verb “to have” (“you have studied,” “I have gone”) is always used. In Italian, compound tenses may be formed with either *avere* or *essere* as an auxiliary verb. When selecting the correct auxiliary (“helping”) verb, keep the following in mind:

- The overwhelming majority of Italian verbs form the compound tenses with the helping verb *avere*. *Avere* is used with all transitive active verbs (those that can be followed by a direct object).
- All reflexive verbs (those with an infinitive ending in *-si*) always use *essere* as their helping verb—for example, *Mi sono svegliato presto* (“I woke up early”). See “The Reflexive Form.”
- The most common intransitive verbs (those that do not take a direct object) use *essere* as their helping verb. These verbs generally show motion or change of place, state, or condition and include those shown in Table 3.
- Verbs denoting atmospheric conditions, and some intransitive verbs, may be conjugated with *essere* or *avere* (*ha piovuto/è piovuto*, “it rained”).
- Verbs that use an indirect pronoun construction, such as the verb *piacere*, use *essere* as their helping verb—for example, *Ti è piaciuto il film?* (“Did you like the movie?”). See “Piacere and Verbs with Special Construction.” Also verbs used in impersonal construction, such as *accadere* (“to happen”) and *occorrere* (“to need”), use *essere* to form compound tenses. See “Impersonal Verbs and Expressions.”

Table 6 is a list of the most common intransitive verbs that form the compound tenses with *essere*.

**Table 6 Commonly Used Verbs That Take *essere* as Their Auxiliary Verb**

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
<i>andare</i>	to go	<i>andato/andata/andati/andate</i>
<i>arrivare</i>	to arrive	<i>arrivato/arrivata/arrivati/arrivate</i>
<i>cadere</i>	to fall	<i>caduto/caduta/caduti/cadute</i>
<i>diventare</i>	to become	<i>diventato/diventata/diventati/diventate</i>
<i>entrare</i>	to enter	<i>entrato/entrata/entrati/entrate</i>
<i>essere</i>	to be	<i>stato/stata/stati/state</i>
<i>morire</i>	to die	<i>morto/morta/morti/morte</i>
<i>nascere</i>	to be born	<i>nato/nata/nati/nate</i>
<i>partire</i>	to leave, to depart	<i>partito/partita/partiti/partite</i>
<i>restare</i>	to stay	<i>restato/restata/restati/restate</i>
<i>rimanere</i>	to remain	<i>rimasto/rimasta/rimasti/rimaste</i>
<i>stare</i>	to stay	<i>stato/stata/stati/state</i>
<i>succedere</i>	to happen	<i>successo/successa/successi/successesse</i>
<i>tornare</i>	to return	<i>tornato/tornata/tornati/tornate</i>
<i>uscire</i>	to go out	<i>uscito/uscita/usciti/uscite</i>
<i>venire</i>	to come	<i>venuto/venuta/venuti/venute</i>

Some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. When such verbs are followed by a direct object, they use *avere* as their helping verb. Note that the meaning of the verbs may change:

<b>Verb</b>	<b>Intransitive Use</b>	<b>Transitive Use</b>
<i>finire</i>	<i>Il film è finito alle 5:00.</i> The film was over at 5:00.	<i>Ho finito il libro.</i> I finished the book.
<i>cominciare</i>	<i>Le vacanze sono cominciate ieri.</i> The holidays started yesterday.	<i>Ha cominciato la lezione alle 8:00.</i> He began class at 8:00.
<i>cambiare</i>	<i>La mia vita è cambiata.</i> My life has changed.	<i>Hai cambiato lavoro.</i> You changed job.
<i>passare</i>	<i>Sono passato in ufficio.</i> I stopped by at the office.	<i>Ho passato le vacanze in Italia.</i> I spent the holidays in Italy.
<i>salire</i>	<i>Siamo saliti sul treno.</i> We boarded the train.	<i>Ho salito le scale di corsa.</i> I climbed the stair in a rush.
<i>scendere</i>	<i>Siamo scesi in cantina.</i> We went down in the cellar.	<i>Abbiamo sceso le scale.</i> We went down the stairs.

## Agreement with Subject

If the verb is conjugated with *avere*, the past participle is normally invariable:

Giulio ha studiato.

Giulio e Anna hanno studiato.

Anna ha studiato.

Anna e Silvia hanno studiato.

Giulio has studied/ Giulio studied.

Giulio and Anna have studied/ Giulio and Anna studied.

Anna has studied/Anna studied.

Anna and Silvia have studied/Anna and Silvia studied.

If the verb is conjugated with *essere*, the past participle agrees with the subject of the sentence in gender and in number. There are four possible forms:

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>Masculine</b>	-o	-i
<b>Feminine</b>	-a	-e

Giulio è andato.

Giulio e Anna sono andati.\*

Anna è andata.

Anna e Silvia sono andate.

Giulio has gone/Giulio went.

Giulio and Anna have gone/Giulio and Anna went.

Anna has gone/Anna went.

Anna and Silvia have gone/Anna and Silvia went.

\* If the subject includes both masculine and feminine, the past participle will be masculine *-i*.

## The Indicative Mood

---

The indicative mood allows you to express or indicate facts. It is used for ordinary statements and questions. It is the most commonly used mood in everyday conversation. There are four simple and four corresponding compound tenses:

### Simple Tenses

Present (*presente*)

Imperfect (*imperfetto*)

Future (*futuro*)

Past definite (*passato remoto*)

### Compound Tenses

Present perfect (*passato prossimo*)

Past perfect (*trapassato prossimo*)

Future perfect (*futuro anteriore*)

Past anterior (*trapassato remoto*)

## THE PRESENT TENSE

The present indicative is a simple tense that expresses what is happening now. It is equivalent to the English present tense (“I work”, “I do work”) and the English present progressive (“I am working”). The Italian present tense expresses:

- Actions that take place habitually:

*Prendo un caffè tutte le mattine.*

I have a coffee every morning.

- Actions taken at the moment of speaking:

*Vado a casa adesso.*

I am going home now.

- Actions planned for the near future. Usually there is another word in the sentence that indicates a future time:

*Arrivano tra due ore.*

They're arriving in two hours.

*Quest'estate vado al mare.*

This summer I'll be going to the beach.

The Italian present tense accompanied by the preposition *da* + “a time expression” corresponds to the English present perfect tense (“I have worked,” “I have been working for/since” + time expression). It is used to

- Express an action or state that began in the past and continues in the present. Present tense + *da* + time expression to express length of time:

<i>Lavoro qui da dieci anni.</i>	I have been working here for ten years.
<i>Abitano a Roma dal 2001.</i>	They have been living in Rome since 2001.

- Ask how long something has been going on: *da quanto tempo* or *quanto tempo è che* + present:

<i>Da quanto tempo studi italiano?</i>	How long have you been studying Italian?
<i>Studio italiano da un anno.</i>	I have been studying Italian for one year.

## Regular forms

The present tense of a regular verb is formed by dropping the infinitive endings – *are*, –*ere*, and –*ire* and adding the appropriate ending (see Table 7) to the remaining stem. Note that, unlike English, in Italian the ending is different for each person. In the present indicative, –*ire* verbs fall into two groups. The endings are the same but in the second pattern –*isc*– is inserted between the stem and the ending in all forms but *noi* and *voi*.

**Table 7 The Present Tense of Regular Verbs**

<b>Drop</b>	<b>– are</b>	<b>–ere</b>	<b>–ire (1)</b>	<b>–ire (2) (–isc)</b>
<i>(io)</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>-isco</i>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-isci</i>
<i>(lui/lei/Lei)</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-isce</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>-iamo</i>	<i>-iamo</i>	<i>-iamo</i>	<i>-iamo</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>-ate</i>	<i>-ete</i>	<i>-ite</i>	<i>-ite</i>
<i>(loro)</i>	<i>-ano</i>	<i>-ono</i>	<i>-ono</i>	<i>-iscono</i>

For example:

***parlare***: *parlo, parli, parla, parliamo, parlate, parlano*  
***vivere***: *vivo, vivi, vive, viviamo, vivete, vivono*  
***dormire***: *dormo, dormi, dorme, dormiamo, dormite, dormono*  
***capire***: *capisco, capisci, capisce, capiamo, capite, capiscono*

Here are some examples of verbs conjugated in present tense:

<i>Tu parli italiano.</i>	You speak Italian.
<i>Lei vive a Roma.</i>	She lives in Rome.
<i>Voi dormite molto.</i>	You sleep a lot.

Note the following:

- The verb form for *noi* is the same in the four patterns.
- The *-ere* and *-ire* (*dormire*) patterns differ only in the *voi* form.
- The *loro* form has the stress on the third vowel from the end—for example, *PArlano, VIvono, DOrmono, caPIscono*.
- Verbs ending in *-cere* and *-gere* alternate soft and hard sound of *-c* and *-g* (*c/g + a, o, u* hard sound, as in “cat,” “golf”; *c/g + i, e* soft sound as in “george,” “cello”):

***vincere***: *vinco, vinci, vince, vinciamo, vincete, vincono*

For reflexive verbs, simply place the reflexive pronoun before the verb (*mi alzo, ti alzi . . .*).

The majority of *-ire* verbs follow the second pattern (example: *capire*) and insert the *-isc*, but there is a relatively small group (many of which are very frequently used) that follows the first pattern (example: *dormire*). The following is a list of the most common *-ire* verbs that, like *dormire*, do not require the insertion of *-isc*:

- *Aprire* (“to open”)
- *Coprire* (“to cover”) and its compounds
- *Divertirsi* (“to have fun”)
- *Dormire* (“to sleep”)
- *Partire* (“to leave”)
- *Seguire* (“to follow”) and its compounds
- *Sentire* (“to feel,” “to hear”) and its compounds
- *Servire* (“to serve”)
- *Vestire* (“to dress”)

## Spelling changes

Certain *-are* verbs require spelling changes in the present indicative in order to keep the original sound of the verb. These changes do not make the verbs irregular.

- All verbs ending in *-care* and *-gare* such as *cercare* (“to look for”), *pagare* (“to pay”), add an *-h* to the infinitive stem in the *tu* and *noi* forms so that the hard sounds *c* and *g* of the stem are retained (*c/g + a, o, u* hard sound, as in “cat,” “golf”; *c/g + i, e* soft sound as in “george,” “cello”):

***cercare***: *cerco, cerchi, cerca, cerchiamo, cercate, cercano*

***pagare***: *pago, paghi, paga, paghiamo, pagate, pagano*

- Verbs ending in *-iare* such as *studiare* (“to study”), *cominciare* (“to start”), *mangiare* (“to eat”), and *lasciare* (“to leave”) drop the *-i* from the infinitive stem when the verb ending begins with *-i* (*tu* and *noi* forms).

***studiare***: *studio, studi, studia, studiamo, studiate, studiano*

***cominciare***: *comincio, cominci, comincia, cominciamo, cominciate, cominciano*

***mangiare***: *mangio, mangi, mangia, mangiamo, mangiate, mangiano*

***lasciare***: *lascio, lasci, lascia, lasciamo, lasciate, lasciano*

Exception: Some verbs ending in *-iare* retain the *-i* of the stem in the *tu* form if the *-i* is stressed. The *-i* of the *noi* and *voi* form drop:

**inVIare (“to send”):** *invio, invii, invia, inviamo, inviate, inviano*  
**sCIare (“to ski”):** *scio, scii, scia, sciamo, sciate, sciano*

## Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs do not adhere to any set pattern of rules and, therefore, must be memorized. Note, though, that for most verbs the *noi* and *voi* forms are regular.

Verbs ending in *-are* are mainly regular. Only four *-are* verbs are irregular in the present tense:

- **andare (“to go”):** *vado, vai, va, andiamo, andate, vanno*
- **dare (“to give”):** *do, dai, dà, diamo, date, danno*
- **fare (“to do,” “to make”):** *faccio, fai, fa, facciamo, fate, fanno*
- **stare (“to stay”):** *sto, stai, sta, stiamo, state, stanno*

Here is a brief list of very common verbs that are irregular in the present tense:

- **essere (“to be”):** *sono, sei, è, siamo, siete, sono*
- **avere (“to have”):** *ho, hai, ha, abbiamo, avete, hanno*
- **dovere (“to have to”):** *devo, devi, deve, dobbiamo, dovete, devono*
- **potere (“to be able”):** *posso, puoi, può, possiamo, potete, possono*
- **rimanere (“to remain”):** *rimango, rimani, rimane, rimaniamo, rimanete, rimangono*
- **salire (“to go up”):** *salgo, sali, sale, saliamo, salite, salgono*
- **sapere (“to know”):** *so, sai, sa, sappiamo, sapete, sanno*
- **scegliere (“to choose”):** *scelgo, scegli, sceglie, scegliamo, scegliete, scelgono*
- **uscire (“to go out”):** *esco, esci, esce, usciamo, uscite, escono*
- **venire (“to come”):** *vengo, vieni, viene, veniamo, venite, vengono*
- **volere (“to want”):** *voglio, vuoi, vuole, vogliamo, volete, vogliono*

Some verbs have an irregular infinitive and their present tense is “regular” based on the Latin or old Italian infinitive form. For example:

**bere (old form: *bevere*):** *bevo, bevi, beve, beviamo, bevete, bevono*  
**dire (Latin: *dicere*):** *dico, dici, dice, diciamo, dite, dicono*

Verbs ending in *-urre* retain the Latin stem *-ducere* (*condurre, introdurre, produrre, tradurre*):

**tradurre (Latin: *traducere*):** *traduco, traduci, traduce, traduciamo, traducete, traducono*

Verbs ending in *-orre* are usually formed similarly to the Latin infinitive *ponere*, so they belong to the *-ere* verbs:

**porre:** *pongo, poni, pone, poniamo, ponete, pongono*

Verbs ending in *-arre* are conjugated as follows:

**trarre:** *traggo, trai, trae, traiamo, traete, traggono*

## PRESENT PERFECT

The corresponding compound tense of the present tense is the *passato prossimo*, or present perfect, a tense expressing an action or state of being that occurred at a particular time in the past. The present perfect is equivalent to either the present perfect (“I have worked”) or the simple past (“I worked”) in English:

*Ho pagato il conto.*                      I paid the bill/I have paid the bill.

Prepositions such as *per* (“for”), *in* (“in”), or precise times or dates, which specify the temporal limits or completeness of a past event, indicate that *passato prossimo* is needed:

*Ho studiato per cinque ore.*                      I studied for five hours.  
*Sono nata nel 1966.*                                  I was born in 1966.

The following words and expressions often require the use of *passato prossimo*:

- *Scorso* (“last”), *l’anno scorso* (“last year”), *il mese scorso* (“last month”), and so on
- *Ieri* (“yesterday”), *ieri sera* (“last night”), *l’altro ieri* (“the day before yesterday”), and so on
- *Da . . . a* (“from . . . to”)
- *Fino a* (“until”)
- *Tutto il giorno* (“all day long”)
- *Alla fine* (“finally”)
- *Poi* (“then”)
- *Una volta* (“one time”)
- *Fa* (“ago”; for example, *due giorni fa*, “two days ago”)

See page 52 for the use of present perfect with the verbs *volere*, *dovere*, and *potere*.

The present perfect, *passato prossimo*, is a compound tense that consists of two parts:

- The present tense of an auxiliary (“helping”) verb, either *avere* (*ho, hai, ha, abbiamo, avete, hanno*) or *essere* (*sono, sei, è, siamo, siete, sono*).
- The past participle of the verb you want in the past.

Note that in English, only the auxiliary verb “have” may be used to form the compound tenses. See the Italian past participle section for an explanation on forming the Italian past participle, and see the “Avere or Essere?” section for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs. The chart below shows examples of the formation of the present perfect. The helping verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the present tense. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Present Perfect with avere</b>	<b>Present Perfect with essere</b>
(io)	<i>ho lavorato/ricervuto/dormito</i>	<i>sono arrivato/arrivata</i>
(tu)	<i>hai lavorato/ricervuto/dormito</i>	<i>sei arrivato/arrivata</i>
(lui/lei)	<i>ha lavorato/ricervuto/dormito</i>	<i>è arrivato/arrivata</i>
(noi)	<i>abbiamo lavorato/ricervuto/dormito</i>	<i>siamo arrivati/arrivate</i>
(voi)	<i>avete lavorato/avorato/dormito</i>	<i>siete arrivati/arrivate</i>
(loro)	<i>hanno lavorato/ricervuto/dormito</i>	<i>sono arrivati/arrivate</i>

## IMPERFECT

The imperfect is a past simple tense. It expresses continuous, repeated, habitual actions, situations, or events in the past. It describes what was going on at a certain time and what used to happen. The imperfect focuses on a past action considered in its length and in its progress. It expresses an unfinished past action or a past action whose coordinates (start, end . . .) are not specified. The imperfect is the ideal tense for describing people, places, events, weather and time in the past. The imperfect is not a tense in English and therefore has several English equivalents. It is commonly translated as:

- “used to . . .,” as in “We used to eat breakfast at 9,”
- “would . . .,” as in “I would take long walks on the beach,”
- “was + ing,” “were + ing,” as in “while he was eating . . .,”
- or simple past—for example “We played soccer when we were younger.”

In the use of indicative past tenses in Italian, there is a contrast between the imperfect on one hand and the *passato prossimo* (present perfect), on the other. The imperfect is used to:

- Express habitual or repeated action in the past. The English equivalent is “used to.” Time expressions like *sempre* (“always”), *spesso* (“often”), *di solito* (“usually”), *generalmente* (“generally”), and *tutti i giorni* (“every day”) indicate the use of imperfect.

*Giocavamo a calcio tutti i lunedì.*  
*Andavano spesso al mare.*

We used to play soccer on Mondays.  
They would often go to the ocean.

- Describe a person, place, thing, or state of mind in the past.

*Da piccola avevo i capelli biondi.*  
*La casa era grande e c'era anche*  
*un bel giardino.*

When I was a child, I had blonde hair.  
The house was big and there was a  
nice garden as well.

- Describe what was going on when something else happened. The “interrupted” action takes the imperfect; the other action takes the present perfect. *Mentre* (“while”) is immediately followed by the imperfect.

*Mentre facevo colazione, è andata*  
*via la luce.*

While I was having breakfast,  
the lights went out.

- Express two or more actions occurring simultaneously in the past.

*Quando studiavo all'Università*  
*Lavoravo come cameriera.*

When I was studying at the university,  
I used to work as a waitress.

- To tell what time, day, or month it was in the past (never the present perfect).

*Erano le 2 quando arrivammo.*      It was 2 o'clock when we arrived.

See page 52 for the use of imperfect with the verbs *volere*, *dovere*, and *potere*.

The Italian imperfect tense accompanied by the preposition *da* + “a time expression” corresponds to the English past perfect tense (“I had worked,” “I had been working for/since” + time expression). It expresses how long (or since when) an action had been going on. The construction is: imperfect + *da* + time expression to express length of time.

*Lavoravano alla Fiat da dieci anni.*      They had been working at Fiat for ten years.

## Forming the imperfect

The imperfect tense is formed by dropping the infinitive ending *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire* and adding the appropriate ending, as shown in Table 8, to the remaining stem. The ending is different for each person.

**Table 8 Imperfect Regular Forms**

Drop	–are	–ere	–ire
(io)	–avo	–evo	–ivo
(tu)	–avi	–evi	–ivi
(lui/lei/Lei)	–ava	–eva	–iva
(noi)	–avamo	–evamo	–ivamo
(voi)	–avate	–evate	–ivate
(loro)	–avano	–evano	–ivano

For example:

**parlare:** *parlavo, parlavi, parlava, parlavamo, parlavate, parlavano*

**vivere:** *vivevo, vivevi, viveva, vivevamo, vivevate, vivevano*

**dormire:** *dormivo, dormivi, dormiva, dormivamo, dormivate, dormivano*

**capire:** *capivo, capivi, capiva, capivamo, capivate, capivano*

Note the following about the imperfect tense:

- The endings are the same for all conjugations. The only difference is the characteristic vowel that each conjugation maintains (*-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*).
- The verbs ending in *-ire* do not fall into two groups as for the present tense (*dormo, capisco*).
- The main stress falls on the second syllable from the end—for example, *faCEvo, eraVAmo, beVEvi*. The *loro* form has the stress on the third vowel from the end—for example, *faCEvano, Erano, beVEvano*.

Compared to the the present tense, the imperfect is a more regular tense. Only a few verbs are irregular in this tense. The verb *essere* is irregular:

**essere:** *ero, eri, era, eravamo, eravate, erano*

The verbs *fare* (“to do,” “to make”), *bere* (“to drink”), *dire* (“to say”), and *tradurre* (“to translate”) conjugate according to the Latin or old Italian infinitive.

***fare* (Latin *facere*):** *facevo, facevi, faceva, facevamo, facevate, facevano*

***bere* (Latin *bibere*, old Italian *bevere*):** *bevevo, bevevi, beveva, bevavamo, bevevate, bevevano*

***dire* (Latin *dicere*):** *dicevo, dicevi, diceva, dicevamo, dicevate, dicevano*

***tradurre* (Latin *traducere*):** *traducevo, traducevi, traduceva, traducevamo, traducevate, traducevano*

*C'era* and *c'erano* correspond to the English “there was” and “there were.”

For reflexive verbs, simply place the reflexive pronoun before the verb (*mi alzavo, ci vedevamo*).

## PAST PERFECT

The corresponding compound verb of the imperfect tense is the *trapassato prossimo*, the past perfect, a tense expressing an action or state of being that had happen before another past action. The Italian past perfect, *trapassato prossimo*, is the equivalent of the English past perfect, or pluperfect (“I had seen,” “we had traveled”). Both actions are in the past. The action that took place before takes the past perfect. The more recent event may be expressed in the present perfect or the imperfect.

*Il treno era già partito, quando sono arrivato alla stazione.* The train had already left when I arrived at the station. (**Note:** First the train left, then the subject arrived at the station.)

*Quando aveva 30 anni Alberto Tomba aveva già vinto tre medaglie olimpiche.* When Alberto Tomba was 30, he had already won three Olympic medals. (**Note:** First Alberto Tomba won three Olympic medals, then he turned 30.)

*Non avevo mai visto un panorama così bello.* I have never seen such a beautiful view. (**Implied:** Now the subject has seen it, and is in fact looking at it.)

\* When the past perfect is used with *mai* (“never”), the more recent action is implicit. English may use the present perfect (“have”+ past participle), while Italian uses the past perfect.

In Italian, the *trapassato prossimo* is formed by combining the imperfect tense of the appropriate helping verb (*avere*: *avevo, avevi, aveva, avevamo, avevate, avevano* or *essere*: *ero, eri, era, eravamo, eravate, erano*) plus the past participle of the main verb. See the Italian past participle section for an explanation on forming Italian past participles, and see the “Avere or Essere?” section for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs. The chart below shows examples of the formation of the past perfect. The helping verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the imperfect tense. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Past Perfect with avere</b>	<b>Past Perfect with essere</b>
(io)	avevo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	ero arrivato/arrivata
(tu)	avevi lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	eri arrivato/arrivata
(lui/lei)	aveva lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	era arrivato/arrivata
(noi)	avevamo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	eravamo arrivati/arrivate
(voi)	avevate lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	eravate arrivati/arrivate
(loro)	avevano lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	erano arrivati/arrivate

## FUTURE

In English, the future is expressed with the auxiliary verb “will” (“we will win”) or the phrase “to be going to” (“tomorrow I am going to Rome by train”). In Italian, the future is a simple tense, consisting of one word. The usage of the future in Italian corresponds in general to its usage in English.

*Quest'anno vinceremo il campionato.* This year we will win the title.  
*Andrà a Roma in treno.* He will go to Rome by train.

More often than in English, the future is replaced by the present tense to refer to a definite event, especially if it is in the immediate future.

*Domani vado al mare.* Tomorrow I'm going to the beach.  
*Ti chiamo dopo.* I'll call you later.

To express tentative plans by contrast, the future tense is used.

*Che cosa fai quest'estate?* What are you doing this summer?  
*Forse farò un viaggio in Italia.* Maybe I will take a trip to Italy.

In Italian, there is no equivalent for “to be going to,” which is expressed by the ordinary future or by the present tense.

*Mi sposerò a giugno.* I am going to get married in June.  
*Stasera vado al cinema.* Tonight I am going to the movies.

The future is used after *quando* (“when”), *appena* (“as soon as”), and *se* (“if”) when the verb of the main clause is in the future tense. The future tense is used in both cases in Italian. In English, the future tense is used in the main clause, and the present tense immediately follows “when/if.”

*Quando finirò l'università, mi iscriverò a un corso di specializzazione.* When I graduate, I will apply for graduate school.

One very common use of future tense in Italian is to express probability or conjecture about circumstances in the present. In English, probability can be expressed with *probably*, *must*, or *can*.

*Che ore saranno? Non so, saranno le 8.* What time do you think it is? I don't know, it must be around 8.  
*Questa torta peserà tre chili!* This cake probably weighs around six pounds!  
*Sai dov'è Giada? Sarà a casa.* Do you know where Giada is? She must be home.

## Forming the future tense

In Italian, the future tense is expressed with one word. It is formed by dropping the infinitive ending *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire* and adding the endings shown in Table 9 to the remaining stem.

**Table 9 The Future Tense**

Drop	-are (a changes to e)	-ere	-ire
(io)	-erò	-erò	-irò
(tu)	-erai	-erai	-irai
(lui/lei/Lei)	-erà	-erà	-irà
(noi)	-eremo	-eremo	-iremo
(voi)	-erete	-erete	-irete
(loro)	-eranno	-eranno	-iranno

For example:

**parlare:** *parlerò, parlerai, parlerà, parleremo, parlerete, parleranno*

**prendere:** *prenderò, prenderai, prenderà, prenderemo, prenderete, prenderanno*

**capire:** *capirò, capirai, capirà, capiremo, capirete, capiranno*

Note that:

- *-are* verbs change the vowel *a* of the infinitive in *-e*.
- *-io* and *lui/lei* forms are stressed and have an accent mark on the final vowel.

For reflexive verbs, simply place the reflexive pronoun before the verb (*mi alzerò, ci capiremo*).

## Spelling changes and irregular forms

As in the present tense, verbs ending in *-care* and *-gare*, such as *cercare* ("to look for") and *pagare* ("to pay"), require a spelling change in order to keep the original sound of the verb. Such verbs add an *-h* to the infinite stem in all forms of the future tense so that the hard sounds *c* and *g* of the stem are retained (*c/g + a, o, u* hard sound; *c/g + i, e* soft sound).

**cercare:** *cercherò, cercherai, cercherà, cercheremo, cercherete, cercheranno*

**pagare:** *pagherò, pagherai, pagherà, pagheremo, pagherete, pagheranno*

Verbs ending in *-ciare* and *-giare* drop the *i* in all forms of the future tense:

**cominciare:** *comincerò, comincerai, comincerà, cominceremo, comincerete, cominceranno*

**mangiare:** *mangerò, mangerai, mangerà, mangeremo, mangerete, mangeranno*

The following *-are* verbs keep the *-a* vowel of the stem. Their conjugation is similar to the verb *essere*:

**dare:** *darò, darai, darà, daremo, darete, daranno*

**fare:** *farò, farai, farà, faremo, farete, faranno*

**stare:** *starò, starai, starà, staremo, starete, staranno*

**essere:** *sarò, sarai, sarà, saremo, sarete, saranno*

The following two groups of verbs have irregular future stems:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Future Stem</b>	<b>Endings: -ò, -ai, -à, -emo, -ete, -anno</b>
<i>andare</i> (“to go”)	<i>andr-</i>	<i>andrò, andrai, andrà, andremo, andrete, andranno</i>
<i>avere</i> (“to have”)	<i>avr-</i>	<i>avrò, avrai, avrà, avremo, avrete, avranno</i>
<i>cadere</i> (“to fall”)	<i>cadr-</i>	<i>cadrò, cadrà, cadrà, cadremo, cadrete, cadranno</i>
<i>dovere</i> (“to have to”)	<i>dovr-</i>	<i>dovrò, dovrai, dovrà, dovremo, dovrete, dovranno</i>
<i>potere</i> (“to be able to”)	<i>potr-</i>	<i>potrò, potrai, potrà, potremo, potrete, potranno</i>
<i>sapere</i> (“to know”)	<i>sapr-</i>	<i>saprò, saprai, saprà, sapremo, saprete, sapranno</i>
<i>vedere</i> (“to see”)	<i>vedr-</i>	<i>vedrò, vedrai, vedrà, vedremo, vedrete, vedranno</i>
<i>vivere</i> (“to live”)	<i>vivr-</i>	<i>vivrò, vivrai, vivrà, vivremo, vivrete, vivranno</i>
<i>bere</i> (“to drink”)	<i>berr-</i>	<i>berrò, berrai, berrà, berremo, berrete, berranno</i>
<i>rimanere</i> (“to remain”)	<i>rimarr-</i>	<i>rimarrò, rimarrà, rimarrà, rimarremo, rimarrete, rimarranno</i>
<i>tenere</i> (“to keep”)	<i>terr-</i>	<i>terrò, terrai, terrà, terremo, terrete, terranno</i>
<i>venire</i> (“to come”)	<i>verr-</i>	<i>verrò, verrai, verrà, verremo, verrete, verranno</i>
<i>volere</i> (“to want”)	<i>vorr-</i>	<i>vorrò, vorrai, vorrà, vorremo, vorrete, vorranno</i>

## FUTURE PERFECT

The Italian future perfect, *futuro anteriore*, is the equivalent of the English future perfect “shall/will have seen.” It expresses an action that will happen in the future before another future action.

*Andremo al cinema appena avrai  
finito di lavorare.  
Quando arriverai, mi sarò già  
laureato.*

We will go to the movie as soon as you  
(will) have finished work.  
By the time you arrive, I’ll have  
already graduated.

In conversational Italian, the simple future or the present perfect can be used instead. Like the simple future, the future perfect can also be used to convey probability.

*Quella macchina sarà costata  
un occhio della testa.  
Avrà telefonato alle sei.*

That car must have cost an arm and  
a leg.  
He must have phoned at six.

In Italian, the future perfect is formed by combining the future tense of the appropriate helping verb (*avere*: *avrò, avrai, avrà, avremo, avrete, avranno* or *essere*: *sarò, sarai, sarà, saremo, sarete, saranno*) plus the past participle of the main verb. See the Italian past participle section for an explanation on forming Italian past participle, and see the “Avere or Essere?” section for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs. The chart below shows examples of the formation of the future perfect. The auxiliary verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the future tense. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Future Perfect with avere</b>	<b>Future Perfect with essere</b>
(io)	avrò lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	sarò arrivato/arrivata
(tu)	avrà lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	sarai arrivato/arrivata
(lui/lei)	avrà lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	sarà arrivato/arrivata
(noi)	avremo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	saremo arrivati/arrivate
(voi)	avrete lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	sarete arrivati/arrivate
(loro)	avranno lavorato/ricevuto/dormito	saranno arrivati/arrivate

## PAST DEFINITE

The definite past, *passato remoto*, like the present perfect, *passato prossimo*, expresses an action which was completed in the past. Students of Italian are advised to use the present perfect (*passato prossimo*) in everyday conversation and to learn the forms of the past definite in order to understand them and to recognize them when they are used, mainly in literature.

### Forming the past definite

The *passato remoto*, the definite past, is a one-word tense and it is formed by dropping the infinitive ending *-are*, *-ere*, and *-ire* and adding the appropriate ending, as shown in Table 10 to the remaining stem. The ending is different for each person.

**Table 10 The Past Definite**

<b>Drop</b>	<b>-are</b>	<b>-ere</b>	<b>-ire</b>
(io)	-ai	-ei (-etti)	-ii
(tu)	-asti	-esti	-isti
(lui/lei/Lei)	-ò	-é (-ette)	-ì
(noi)	-ammo	-emmo	-immo
(voi)	-aste	-este	-iste
(loro)	-arono	-erono (-ettero)	-irono

For example:

**parlare:** parlai, parlasti, parlò, parlammo, parlaste, parlarono  
**credere:** credei (credetti), credesti, credé (credette), credemmo, credeste,  
crederono (credettero)  
**capire:** capii, capisti, capì, capimmo, capiste, capirono

For reflexive verbs, simply place the reflexive pronoun before the verb (*mi alzai*, *si chinò*, *ci capimmo*).

Note that:

- The *lui/lei* regular forms are stressed and have an accent mark on the final vowel (except *-ette*).
- The *loro* form has the stress on the third vowel from the end, for example *parLArono*, *creDEttero*, and *caPIrono*.
- The regular *-ere* verbs have two possible different forms for *io/lui-lei/loro*.

The past definite is a highly irregular tense.

The verbs *essere* and *avere* have irregular forms:

**essere:** *fui, fosti, fu, fummo, foste, furono*  
**avere:** *ebbi, avesti, ebbe, avemmo, aveste, ebbero*

The following verbs are like *essere* in that they are irregular in all their forms:

**dare:** *diedi (detti), desti, diede (dette), demmo, deste, diedero (dettero)*  
**dire:** *dissi, dicesti, disse, dicemmo, diceste, dissero*  
**fare:** *feci, facesti, fece, facemmo, faceste, fecero*  
**stare:** *stetti, stesti, stette, stemmo, steste, stettero*

There are very few *-ere* verbs that have a regular past definite form (for example, *dovere, potere, credere, ricevere, vendere, temere*). The majority of the verbs that have an irregular past definite follow a pattern: The irregularity only occurs in the *io, lui/lei, and loro* forms. The *tu, noi, and voi* forms are regular. Also, there is often a link between the irregular past participle and the past definite irregular forms. Below is a list of *-ere* verbs that have an irregular past definite; when there is a similarity, the form of the irregular past participle is also given:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>	<b>Irregular Past Definite <i>io-lui/lei-loro</i></b>
<i>chiedere</i> ("to ask")	<i>chiesto</i>	<i>chiesi, chiese, chiesero</i>
<i>conoscere</i> ("to know")		<i>conobbi, conobbe, conobbero</i>
<i>decidere</i> ("to decide")	<i>deciso</i>	<i>decisi, decise, decisero</i>
<i>leggere</i> ("to read")	<i>letto</i>	<i>lessi, lesse, lessero</i>
<i>nascere</i> ("to be born")		<i>nacqui, nacque, nacquero</i>
<i>perdere</i> ("to lose")	<i>perso</i>	<i>persi, perse, persero</i>
<i>prendere</i> ("to take")	<i>preso</i>	<i>presi, prese, presero</i>
<i>rispondere</i> ("to answer")	<i>risposto</i>	<i>risposi, rispose, risposero</i>
<i>sapere</i> ("to know how")		<i>seppi, seppe, seppero</i>
<i>scrivere</i> ("to write")	<i>scritto</i>	<i>scrissi, scrisse, scrissero</i>
<i>vedere</i> ("to see")		<i>vidi, vide, videro</i>
<i>venire</i> ("to come")		<i>venni, venne, vennero</i>
<i>vincere</i> ("to win")	<i>vinto</i>	<i>vinsi, vinse, vinsero</i>
<i>vivere</i> ("to live")		<i>vissi, visse, vissero</i>
<i>volere</i> ("to want")		<i>vollì, volle, vollero</i>

Note that, unlike the regular forms, the irregular *lui/lei* forms are not accented on the final vowel.

## PAST ANTERIOR

The corresponding compound of the past definite is the past anterior, *trapassato remoto*. It expresses a past action that had taken place before a past action expressed in the *passato remoto*. It is very rarely used today; it is only used in written Italian, after the conjunctions *dopo che* ("after that"), *non appena* ("as soon as"), and *quando* ("when") in conjunction with the past definite.

*Non appena ebbe finito di lavorare, uscì.*

He went away as soon as he had finished working.

In Italian, the *trapassato remoto* is formed by combining the past definite of the appropriate helping verb (*avere: ebbi, avesti, ebbe, avemmo, aveste, ebbero* or *essere: fui, fosti, fu, fummo, foste, furono*) with the past participle of the main verb.

## The Conditional Mood

---

The conditional mood allows a softening of the tone of a request or advice, as in “I would like a glass of water” instead of “I want a glass of water.” It makes it possible to dissociate oneself with what is being said and to express what would occur under certain conditions or circumstances. In Italian, there is one simple and one corresponding compound tense. The simple conditional corresponds to English “would + verb infinitive” and the perfect conditional corresponds to English “would have + past participle.”

### PRESENT (SIMPLE) CONDITIONAL

Like its English equivalent, it is used to add politeness to:

- **Requests:** *Vorrei noleggiare una macchina.* (“I would like to rent a car.”)
- **Wishes:** *Sarebbe bello incontrarsi di nuovo.* (“It would be nice to meet again.”)
- **Preferences:** *Preferirei non uscire.* (“I would rather not go out.”)
- **Advice:** *Dovresti smettere di fumare.* (“You should quit smoking.”)
- **Offers:** *Vorresti venire con noi?* (“Would you like to come with us?”)

The conditional may be used by reporters and journalists to describe an action that is unsure or not known to be true.

*Si dice che l'attore sarebbe a Firenze.* It is rumored (said) that the actor is in Florence.

The present conditional is used in conditional sentences. See the “Conditional Sentences” section. See page 52 for the use of conditional with the verbs *volere*, *dovere*, and *potere*.

Note that when the English “would” is used to express “used to,” the imperfect is used in Italian:

*Ogni domenica andavamo al cinema.* Every Sunday we would (used to) go to the movies.

Also, to express actions that, in the past, were perceived as occurring in the future, English uses the simple conditional while Italian uses the past conditional (see next section on Perfect Conditional).

The simple conditional is formed by dropping the infinitive ending and adding the endings shown in Table 11. Note that in *-are* verbs, the *-a* of the infinitive ending changes to *-e* (*parlare: parlar-*), while *-ere* and *-ire* verbs maintain the characteristic vowel.

**Table 11 The Present Conditional of Regular Verbs**

<b>drop</b>	<b>–are (a becomes e)</b>	<b>–ere</b>	<b>–ire</b>
(io)	–erei	–erei	–irei
(tu)	–eresti	–eresti	–iresti
(lui/lei/Lei)	–erebbe	–erebbe	–irebbe
(noi)	–eremmo	–eremmo	–iremmo
(voi)	–ereste	–ereste	–ireste
(loro)	–erebbero	–erebbero	–irebbero

For example:

**parlare:** parlerei, parleresti, parlerebbe, parleremmo, parlereste, parlerebbero  
**prendere:** prenderei, prenderesti, prenderebbe, prenderemmo, prendereste, prenderebbero  
**capire:** capirei, capiresti, capirebbe, capiremmo, capireste, capirebbero

## Spelling changes and irregular forms

As in the future tense, verbs ending in *–care* and *–gare*, such as *cercare* (“to look for”) and *pagare* (“to pay”), require a spelling change in order to keep the original sound of the verb. Here an *–h* is added to the infinitive stem in all forms so that the hard sounds *c* and *g* of the stem are retained (*c/g* + *a, o, u* hard sound; *c/g* + *i, e* soft sound).

*cercare:* cercherei, cercheresti, cercherebbe, cercheremmo, cerchereste, cercherebbero

*pagare:* pagherei, pagheresti, pagherebbe, pagheremmo, paghereste, pagherebbero

Verbs ending in *–ciare* and *–giare* drop the *i* in all forms:

*cominciare:* comincerò, comincerai, comincerà, cominceremo, comincerete, cominceranno

*mangiare:* mangerò, mangerai, mangerà, mangeremo, mangerete, mangeranno

The conditional stem is always the same as the future stem, even in the case of irregular verbs. The endings are regular.

**essere:** sarei, saresti, sarebbe, saremmo, sareste, sarebbero  
**dare:** darei, daresti, darebbe, daremmo, dareste, darebbero  
**fare:** farei, faresti, farebbe, faremmo, fareste, farebbero  
**stare:** starò, starai, starà, staremo, starete, staranno

The following verbs have irregular future/conditional stems and regular endings:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Conditional Stem</b>	<b>Regular Endings (-ei, -esti, -ebbe, -emmo, -este, -ebbero)</b>
<i>andare</i> (“to go”)	<i>andr–</i>	<i>andrei, andresti, andrebbe, andremmo, andreste, andrebbero</i>
<i>avere</i> (“to have”)	<i>avr–</i>	<i>avrei, avresti, avrebbe, avremmo, avreste, avrebbero</i>
<i>cadere</i> (“to fall”)	<i>cadr–</i>	<i>cadrei, cadresti, cadrebbe, cadremmo, cadreste, cadrebbero</i>
<i>dovere</i> (“to have to”)	<i>dovr–</i>	<i>dovrei, dovresti, dovrebbe, dovremmo, dovreste, dovrebbero</i>
<i>potere</i> (“to be able to”)	<i>potr–</i>	<i>potrei, potresti, potrebbe, potremmo, potreste, potrebbero</i>
<i>sapere</i> (“to know”)	<i>sapr–</i>	<i>saprei, sapresti, saprebbe, sapremmo, sapreste, saprebbero</i>
<i>vedere</i> (“to see”)	<i>vedr–</i>	<i>vedrei, vedresti, vedrebbe, vedremmo, vedreste, vedrebbero</i>
<i>vivere</i> (“to live”)	<i>vivr–</i>	<i>vivrei, vivresti, vivrebbe, vivremmo, vivreste, vivrebbero</i>

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Conditional Stem</b>	<b>Regular Endings</b> (-ei, -esti, -ebbe, -emmo, -este, -ebbero)
<i>bere</i> ("to drink")	<i>ber-</i>	<i>berrei, berresti, berrebbe, berremmo, berreste, berrebbero</i>
<i>rimanere</i> ("to remain")	<i>rimarr-</i>	<i>rimarrei, rimarresti, rimarrebbe, rimarremmo, rimarreste, rimarrebbero</i>
<i>tenere</i> ("to keep")	<i>terr-</i>	<i>terrei, terresti, terrebbe, terremmo, terreste, terrebbero</i>
<i>venire</i> ("to come")	<i>verr-</i>	<i>verrei, verresti, verrebbe, verremmo, verreste, verrebbero</i>
<i>volere</i> ("to want")	<i>vorr-</i>	<i>vorrei, vorresti, vorrebbe, vorremmo, vorreste, vorrebbero</i>

## PERFECT CONDITIONAL

In Italian, the perfect conditional is formed by combining the present conditional of the appropriate helping verb (*avere*: *avrei, avresti, avrebbe, avremmo, avreste, avrebbero* or *essere*: *sarei, saresti, sarebbe, saremmo, sareste, sarebbero*) plus the past participle of the main verb. See the "Past Participle" section for an explanation on forming the Italian past participle, and see the section "Avere or Essere?" for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs.

The following chart shows examples of the formation of the perfect conditional. The auxiliary verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the conditional present. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Perfect Conditional with <i>avere</i></b>	<b>Perfect Conditional with <i>essere</i></b>
<i>(io)</i>	<i>avrei lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sarei arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>avresti lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>saresti arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(lui/lei)</i>	<i>avrebbe lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sarebbe arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>avremmo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>saremmo arrivati/arrivate</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>avreste lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sareste arrivati/arrivate</i>
<i>(loro)</i>	<i>avrebbero lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sarebbero arrivati/arrivate</i>

The perfect conditional expresses an unfulfilled action in the past and action that cannot be fulfilled in the present and or future. It can convey a sense of regret.

*L'estate scorsa mi sarebbe piaciuto andare in Sicilia.*

*Avrei cenato volentieri a casa, ma il frigorifero è vuoto.*

Last summer I would have liked to go to Sicily (but I didn't).

I would have had dinner at home, but the refrigerator is empty.

The perfect conditional is also used to report actions that, in the past, were perceived as occurring in the future (the future seen from the point of view of the past), which English expresses with simple conditional.

*Lunedì ha detto che mercoledì sarebbe venuto.*

*Mario disse che sarebbe arrivato in orario.*

On Monday he said he would come on Wednesday.

Mario said he would arrive on time.

Like the conditional, the conditional perfect is used by reporters and journalists to describe an action that is unconfirmed and to dissociate/distance oneself from the uncertain reported news.

*I due attori si sarebbero sposati a Venezia.*

The two actors are presumed to have been married in Venice.

See the “Dovere, Potere, and Volere” section for the use of perfect conditional with the verbs *volere*, *dovere*, and *potere*.

See the “Conditional Sentences” section for the use of perfect conditional in conditional sentences.

## The Subjunctive Mood

---

Whereas the indicative is used to express or indicate facts, the subjunctive mood conveys the opinions and attitude of the speaker. It expresses uncertainty, doubt, possibility, or personal feelings rather than fact. The subjunctive often follows verbs such as *pensare* (“to think”), *volere* (“to want”), *sperare* (“to hope”), and many impersonal expressions that imply an opinion; *è necessario/bisogna* (“it’s necessary”), *è possibile* (“it’s possible”), where the action of the verb is not a fact (indicative) but rather a supposition, belief or desire. Note the difference in meaning in the following two sentences:

*Stefania si laurea a giugno.*                      Stefania is graduating in June.  
*Penso che Stefania si laurei a giugno.*      I think Stefania is graduating in June.

The first sentence conveys a fact, and therefore uses the indicative mood in Italian (the present tense in this example). The second sentence conveys a belief, not a fact, and therefore uses the subjunctive. English has a subjunctive mood as well, but it is used infrequently:

We would prefer that he go home immediately.  
 I wish I were there.

## MAIN USES OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

The subjunctive is generally preceded by a main clause and introduced by *che*.

<b>Main Clause</b>	<b>+ che + Dependent Clause</b>	
<b>Indicative</b>		<b>Subjunctive</b>
<i>È importante</i>	<i>che</i>	<i>tu capisca il congiuntivo.</i>
It is important	that	you understand the subjunctive.

Certain conditions expressed in the main clause of a sentence require the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. When the verb or expression in the independent/main clause denotes certainty (for example, *sapere che* [“to know that”], *vedere che* [“to see that”]), the indicative is used in the dependent clause. If the main clause expresses a desire, a demand, or a hope, the subordinate clause will be in the subjunctive. There are certain verbs that announce the use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause. The following verbs prompt the use of the subjunctive. They express emotion, opinion, doubt, demand, or uncertainty:

- Verbs expressing opinion, belief: *avere l'impressione* (to have the impression), *credere* (to believe), *immaginare/immaginarsi* (to imagine), *pensare* (to think), *supporre* (to suppose).
- Verbs expressing doubt, uncertainty: *dubitare* (to doubt), *chiedersi/domandarsi* (to wonder), *non essere sicuro* (to not be sure), *non sapere* (to not know), *non capire* (to not understand).
- Verbs expressing emotions: *augurarsi* (to hope), *avere paura* (to be afraid), *dispiacere* (to be sorry), *essere contento/felice* (to be glad/happy), *non vedere l'ora* (to look forward), *piacere* (to like), *preferire* (to prefer), *preoccuparsi* (to be worried), *sperare* (to hope), *temere* (to fear).
- Verbs expressing will or desire: *chiedere* (to require), *desiderare* (to wish), *esigere* (to require), *impedire* (to prevent), *insistere* (to insist), *lasciare* (to let, to allow), *ordinare* (to order), *pregare* (to beg), *pretendere* (to demand), *proibire* (to prohibit), *proporre* (to propose), *suggerire* (to suggest), *vietare* (to forbid), *volere* (to want).
- Verbs indicating expectations: *aspettare* (to wait), *aspettarsi* (to expect), *attendere* (to wait).

The subjunctive is used only when the main clause and the subordinate clause have two different subjects. An infinitive is used if there is no change of subject. The preposition *di* is often required before the infinitive (see the Appendix of Verbs Used with Prepositions for a listing of the verbs that require a preposition before the infinitive).

*Spero di arrivare presto.*

I hope to arrive soon.

*Spero che Luisa arrivi presto.*

I hope Luisa arrives soon.

## Impersonal verbs and expressions

Impersonal expressions are expressions with no specific subject: for example, "It is important that. . ." In Italian the subjunctive is used after certain impersonal expressions of necessity, possibility, probability, and opinion that indicates the speaker's attitude.

Here is a list of impersonal expressions requiring the subjunctive:

*(è un) peccato che*

it is a pity that

*bisogna che*

it is necessary that

*è (im)possibile che*

it is (im)possible that

*è bene che*

it is good that

*è giusto che*

it is right that

*è importante che*

it is important that

*è necessario che*

it is necessary that

*è probabile/improbabile che*

it is (im)probable that

*è difficile che*

it is unlikely that

*è facile che*

it is probable that

*è incredibile che*

it is incredible that

*è l'ora che*

it is time that

*è meglio che*

it is better that

*è strano che*

it is strange that

<i>pare che</i>	it seems that
<i>può darsi che</i>	it is possible
<i>sembra</i>	it seems

Note the following about when *not* to use the subjunctive:

- Impersonal expressions that indicate certainty require the indicative in the dependent clause. Example of such expressions are:

<i>è ovvio che</i>	it is obvious that
<i>è vero che</i>	it is true that
<i>è certo che</i>	it is sure that
<i>è sicuro che</i>	it is certain that

- If no subject is specified, an infinitive is used after an impersonal expression:

<i>È importante <u>mangiare</u> bene.</i>	It is important to eat well. (no subject)
<i>È importante <u>che tu mangi</u> bene.</i>	It is important that you eat well. (subject = “you”)

## THE SUBJUNCTIVE TENSES

The Italian subjunctive mood has two simple and two corresponding compound tenses.

### **Simple Tenses**

Present (*presente*)  
Imperfect (*imperfetto*)

### **Compound Tenses**

Present perfect (*passato*)  
Past perfect (*trapassato*)

See Table 3 and Table 4 for a quick correlation between the Italian subjunctive tenses and the English equivalent.

The tense to be used in the subjunctive is determined by:

- The tense of the verb in the main clause
- The time relationship between the two clauses

When the main/independent clause is in the present tense (*io penso*/I think), the dependent clause may be in the present tense if its action occurs at the same time or in the future, or in the past tense if its action had happened in the past, as in the following examples:

<i>Penso che Vincent <u>parli</u> bene.</i>	I think Vincent speaks well.
<i>Penso che Vincent <u>abbia parlato</u> bene.</i>	I think Vincent has spoken well.

The conditions that call for the use of the present and present perfect subjunctive also apply to the use of the imperfect and past perfect subjunctive. If the verb that announces the use of the subjunctive is in the main clause or an impersonal expression is in a past tense or the conditional, the imperfect subjunctive is used in the subordinate clause.

For example:

<i>Penso che lui <u>abbia</u> ragione.</i>	I think he is right.
<i>Pensavo che lui <u>avesse</u> ragione.</i>	I thought he was right.
<i>Voglio che tu <u>venga</u> a cena.</i>	I want you to come to dinner.
<i>Vorrei che tu <u>venissi</u> a cena.</i>	I would like you to come to dinner.

The past perfect subjunctive is used in place of the past perfect indicative whenever the subjunctive is required. It is also used when a verb in a dependent clause is in the past tense or in the conditional and the action of the dependent clause occurred before the action of the independent clause:

<i>Pensavo che Vincent <u>parlasse</u> bene.</i>	I thought Vincent spoke well.
<i>Pensavo che Vincent <u>avesse parlato</u> bene.</i>	I thought Vincent had talked well.

## Present-tense subjunctive

The present-tense subjunctive is formed by dropping *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire* and adding its characteristic endings to the infinitive stem, as shown in the following Table 12. The subjunctive endings for the *-ere* and *-ire* verbs are the same. Verbs ending in *-ire* that insert *-isc* in the indicative present tense do so also in the subjunctive.

**Table 12 The Present Tense Subjunctive of Regular Verbs**

Drop	-are	-ere	-ire	-ire (-isc)
(io)	-i	-a	-a	-isca
(tu)	-i	-a	-a	-isca
(lui/lei)	-i	-a	-a	-isca
(noi)	-iamo	-iamo	-iamo	-iamo
(voi)	-iate	-iate	-iate	-iate
(loro)	-ino	-ano	-ano	-iscano

**parlare:** *parli, parli, parli, parliamo, parliate, parlino*

**prendere:** *prenda, prenda, prenda, prendiamo, prendiate, prendano*

**dormire:** *dorma, dorma, dorma, dormiamo, dormiate, dormano*

**capire:** *capisca, capisca, capisca, capiamo, capiate, capiscano*

For reflexive verbs, simply place the reflexive pronoun before the verb (*mi alzi, ti alzi*).

Note that:

- The singular forms of the present tense (*io/tu/lui/lei*) are the same. It is advisable, therefore, to use the personal subject pronoun if it is not clear from the context:

<i>Spero che <u>tu</u> venga.</i>	I hope that you are coming.
<i>Spero che <u>lui</u> venga.</i>	I hope that he is coming.

- The *noi* and *voi* forms (first- and second-person plural) have the same endings for the *-are*, *-ere*, and *-ire* verbs.

## Spelling changes

As in the present indicative, certain *-are* verbs require spelling changes in the present subjunctive in order to keep the original sound of the verb. These changes do not make the verbs irregular.

- Verbs ending in *-care* and *-gare*, such as *cercare* (“to look for”) and *pagare* (“to pay”), add an *-h* to the infinite stem in all forms so that the hard sounds *c* and *g* of the stem are retained (*c/g* + *a, o, u* hard sound; *c/g* + *i, e* soft sound).

***cercare***: *cerchi, cerchi, cerchi, cerchiamo, cerchiate, cerchino*

***pagare***: *paghi, paghi, paghi, paghiamo, paghiate, paghino*

- Verbs ending in *-iare* such as *studiare* (“to study”), *cominciare* (“to start”), *mangiare* (“to eat”), and *lasciare* (“to leave”) drop the final *-i* of the root in all forms.

***studiare***: *studi, studi, studi, studiamo, studiate, studino*

***cominciare***: *cominci, cominci, cominci, cominciamo, cominciate, comincino*

***mangiare***: *mangi, mangi, mangi, mangiamo, mangiate, mangino*

***lasciare***: *lasci, lasci, lasci, lasciamo, lasciate, lascino*

Some verbs ending in *-iare* retain the *-i* of the stem in the *io/tu/lui-lei/loro* forms if the *-i* is stressed. The *-i* of the *noi* and *voi* form drop:

***invIare* (to send)**: *invii, invii, invii, inviamo, inviate, inviino*

***sCIare* (to ski)**: *scii, scii, scii, sciamo, sciate, sciino*

## Irregular verbs

The verbs that follow are completely irregular in the subjunctive and must be memorized. An easy way to memorize the following irregular forms (except the verb *dovere*) is to derive them from the *noi* form of the present indicative (for example *abbiamo* for the verb *avere*) and simply remove the last syllable (*-mo*) from it:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Present Indicative</b>	<b>Present Subjunctive</b>
<i>avere</i>	( <i>noi abbiamo</i> )	<i>abbia, abbia, abbia, abbiamo, abbiate, abbiano</i>
<i>dovere</i>		<i>debba, debba, debba, dobbiamo, dobbiate, debbano</i>
<i>sapere</i>	( <i>noi sappiamo</i> )	<i>sappia, sappia, sappia, sappiamo, sappiate, sappiano</i>
<i>dare</i>	( <i>noi diamo</i> )	<i>dia, dia, dia, diamo, diate, diano</i>
<i>essere</i>	( <i>noi siamo</i> )	<i>sia, sia, sia, siamo, siate, siano</i>
<i>stare</i>	( <i>noi stiamo</i> )	<i>stia, stia, stia, stiamo, stiate, stiano</i>

If a verb has an irregular form in the indicative present tense, it is irregular also in the present tense subjunctive. Note that:

- All the endings have the same characteristic vowel *-a*, regardless of whether they are *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire*.
- *Noi* and *voi* forms are regular.

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Present Indicative</b>	<b>Present Subjunctive</b>
<i>andare</i>	<i>vado</i>	<i>vada, vada, vada, andiamo, andiate, vadano</i>
<i>bere</i>	<i>bevo</i>	<i>beva, beva, beva, beviamo, beviate, bevano</i>
<i>dire</i>	<i>dico</i>	<i>dica, dica, dica, diciamo, diciate, dicano</i>
<i>fare</i>	<i>faccio</i>	<i>faccia, faccia, faccia, facciamo, facciate, facciano</i>
<i>potere</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>possa, possa, possa, possiamo, possiate, possano</i>
<i>rimanere</i>	<i>rimango</i>	<i>rimanga, rimanga, rimanga, rimaniamo, rimaniate, rimangano</i>
<i>salire</i>	<i>salgo</i>	<i>salga, salga, salga, saliamo, saliate, salgano</i>
<i>scegliere</i>	<i>scelgo</i>	<i>scelga, scelga, scelga, scegliamo, scegliate, scelgano</i>
<i>tenere</i>	<i>tengo</i>	<i>tenga, tenga, tenga, teniamo, teniate, tengano</i>
<i>togliere</i>	<i>tolgo</i>	<i>tolga, tolga, tolga, togliamo, togliate, tolgano</i>
<i>uscire</i>	<i>esco</i>	<i>esca, esca, esca, usciamo, usciate, escano</i>
<i>venire</i>	<i>vengo</i>	<i>venga, venga, venga, veniamo, veniate, vengano</i>
<i>volere</i>	<i>voglio</i>	<i>voglia, voglia, voglia, vogliamo, vogliate, vogliano</i>

### Present perfect subjunctive

In Italian, the present perfect subjunctive is formed by combining the present tense subjunctive tense of the appropriate auxiliary verb (*avere: abbia, abbia, abbia, abbiamo, abbiate, abbiano* or *essere: sia, sia, sia, siamo, siate, siano*) plus the past participle of the main verb. See the “Past Participle” section for an explanation on forming Italian past participle, and see the “Avere or Essere?” section for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs.

The following chart shows examples of the formation of the present perfect. The auxiliary verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the present subjunctive. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare, ricevere, dormire, and arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Present Perfect with <i>avere</i></b>	<b>Present Perfect with <i>essere</i></b>
<i>(io)</i>	<i>abbia lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sia arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>abbia lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sia arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(lui/lei)</i>	<i>abbia lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>sia arrivato/arrivata</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>abbiamo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>siamo arrivati/arrivate</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>abbiate lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>siate arrivati/arrivate</i>
<i>(loro)</i>	<i>abbiano lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>siano arrivati/arrivate</i>

The present perfect subjunctive is used in place of the indicative present perfect and indicative past definite whenever the subjunctive is required. The main clause is in the present tense.

<i>Giulio <u>ha superato</u> l'esame.</i>	Giulio passed the exam.
<i>Spero che Giulio <u>abbia superato</u> l'esame.</i>	I hope Giulio passed the exam.

### Imperfect subjunctive

The conditions that call for the use of the present subjunctive (see “Main Uses of the Subjunctive Mood” section) also apply for the use of the imperfect subjunctive.

The imperfect subjunctive is used in dependent *che* clauses when the verb in the main tense is in the past tense or present conditional.

<i>Pensavo che lui fosse italiano.</i>	I thought he was Italian.
<i>Vorrei che tu venissi qui.</i>	I would like you to come here.

The imperfect subjunctive is a simple tense and it is formed by dropping the infinitive ending *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire* and adding the appropriate ending, as shown in the following Table 13, to the remaining stem.

**Table 13 The Imperfect Subjunctive Regular Forms**

<b>Drop</b>	<b>-are</b>	<b>-ere</b>	<b>-ire</b>
<i>(io)</i>	<i>-assi</i>	<i>-essi</i>	<i>-issi</i>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>-assi</i>	<i>-essi</i>	<i>-issi</i>
<i>(lui/lei/Lei)</i>	<i>-asse</i>	<i>-esse</i>	<i>-isse</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>-assimo</i>	<i>-essimo</i>	<i>-issimo</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>-aste</i>	<i>-este</i>	<i>-iste</i>
<i>(loro)</i>	<i>-assero</i>	<i>-essero</i>	<i>-issero</i>

***parlare***: *parlassi, parlassi, parlasse, parlassimo, parlaste, parlassero*

***vivere***: *vivessi, vivessi, vivesse, vivessimo, viveste, vivessero*

***dormire***: *dormissi, dormissi, dormisse, dormissimo, dormiste, dormissero*

***capire***: *capissi, capissi, capisse, capissimo, capiste, capissero*

Note the following about the imperfect subjunctive:

- The endings are the same for all conjugations. The only difference is the characteristic vowel that each conjugation maintains (*-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*)
- The main stress falls on the second syllable from the end—for example, *caPIssi*, *caPIsse*, *caPIste*. The *noi* and the *loro* forms have the stress on the third vowel from the end—for example, *caPIssimo*, *caPIssero*.

The following verbs have an irregular imperfect subjunctive:

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Imperfect Subjunctive</b>
<i>dare</i>	<i>dessi, dessi, desse, dessimo, deste, dessero</i>
<i>stare</i>	<i>stessi, stessi, stesse, stessimo, steste, stessero</i>
<i>essere</i>	<i>fossi, fossi, fosse, fossimo, foste, fossero</i>

As in the imperfect indicative, the verbs *fare* (to do, to make), *bere* (to drink), *dire* (to say), and *tradurre* (to translate) conjugate according to the Latin infinitive to form the subjunctive imperfect.

***fare* (Latin *facere*)**: *facessi, facessi, facesse, facessimo, faceste, facessero*

***bere* (Latin *bibere*, old Italian *bevere*)**: *bevessi, bevessi, bevesse, bevessimo, beveste, bevessero*

***dire* (Latin *dicere*)**: *dicessi, dicessi, dicesse, dicessimo, diceste, dicessero*

***tradurre* (Latin *traducere*)**: *traducessi, traducessi, traducesse, traducessimo, traduceste, traducessero*

## Past perfect subjunctive

In Italian, the past perfect subjunctive is formed by combining the imperfect subjunctive of the appropriate auxiliary verb (*avere*: *avessi, avessi, avesse, avessimo, aveste, avessero* or *essere*: *fossi, fossi, fosse, fossimo, foste, fossero*) plus the past participle of the main verb. See the “Past Participle” section for an explanation on forming the Italian past participle, and see the “Avere or Essere?” section for an explanation of when to use *essere* or *avere* as auxiliary verbs. The following chart shows examples of the formation of the past perfect. The helping verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the imperfect subjunctive. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

	<b>Past Perfect with <i>avere</i></b>	<b>Past Perfect with <i>essere</i></b>
(io)	<i>avessi lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>fossi arrivato/arrivata</i>
(tu)	<i>avessi lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>fossi arrivato/arrivata</i>
(lui/lei)	<i>avesse lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>fosse arrivato/arrivata</i>
(noi)	<i>avessimo lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>fossimo arrivati/arrivate</i>
(voi)	<i>aveste lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>foste arrivati/arrivate</i>
(loro)	<i>avessero lavorato/ricevuto/dormito</i>	<i>fossero arrivati/arrivate</i>

## Imperative Mood

The imperative expresses orders, pleas, exhortations, advice (“be good,” “stay at home,” “let’s go”). In the negative form, the imperative expresses a prohibition. The imperative has only the present tense. Because of the special nature of its usage, there is no third-person form of the imperative. The imperative is used only when addressing someone directly—thus, only the “you” forms exist. In Italian, the imperative mood can be expressed informally and formally. There is also a command form for *noi* corresponding to the English command expressions “let’s” or “let’s not.”

	<b>Informal</b>	<b>Formal</b>
addressing one person	tu	Lei
addressing two or more people	voi	(loro)
let’s	noi	–

Only the *tu* form of *-are* verbs; *avere* and *essere* have a separate imperative form. All other subjects use for the imperative either the present indicative or the present subjunctive forms for that person.

## INFORMAL IMPERATIVE: AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE

The affirmative imperative forms for *tu*, *noi*, and *voi* are identical to the corresponding present-tense forms, with one difference: The *tu* imperative of regular

–are verbs ends in –a, while the present tense ends in –i (*tu parli*). The negative imperative *noi* and *voi* forms are identical to those in the affirmative: the *non* precedes the affirmative verb form. The negative form of imperative for *tu* in all conjugations is formed with *non* + the infinitive of the main verb. The following chart shows examples of the formation of the forms of the imperative informal.

	<b>parlare</b>	<b>scrivere</b>	<b>partire</b>	<b>finire</b>
( <i>tu</i> )	<i>parla!</i> (non <i>parlare!</i> )	<i>scrivi!</i> (non <i>scrivere!</i> )	<i>parti!</i> (non <i>partire!</i> )	<i>finisci!</i> (non <i>finire!</i> )
( <i>noi</i> )	(non) <i>parliamo!</i>	(non) <i>scriviamo!</i>	(non) <i>partiamo!</i>	(non) <i>finiamo!</i>
( <i>voi</i> )	(non) <i>parlate!</i>	(non) <i>scrivete!</i>	(non) <i>partite!</i>	(non) <i>finite!</i>

The verbs *avere* and *essere* have irregular imperative forms—for example, *Sii te stessa!* (Be yourself!)

	<b>avere</b>	<b>essere</b>
( <i>tu</i> )	<i>abbi!</i>	<i>sii!</i>
( <i>noi</i> )	<i>abbiamo!</i>	<i>siamo!</i>
( <i>voi</i> )	<i>abbiate!</i>	<i>siate!</i>

The following verbs have irregular *tu* imperatives that are frequently used instead of the present-tense forms. The other imperative forms of these verbs are regular, including the negative forms.

***andare:*** *va'* (*vai*)  
***dare:*** *da'* (*dai*)  
***fare:*** *fa'* (*fai*)  
***stare:*** *sta'* (*stai*)  
***dire:*** *di'*

## INFORMAL IMPERATIVE WITH PRONOUNS

In informal affirmative imperative, object (direct or indirect, combined forms, *ci* or *ne*) and reflexive pronouns are attached to the end of the verb to form one word, no matter how long the word becomes:

<i>Scrivimi appena possibile!</i>	Write me us soon as possible!
<i>Diciamoglielo!</i>	Let's say it to him.
<i>Sbrigati per favore!</i>	Hurry up please!

When the short imperative *tu* form of *andare*, *dare*, *fare*, *stare*, or *dire* is used with a pronoun, the apostrophe disappears and the first consonant of the pronoun is doubled (except for the pronoun *gli*).

<i>dì + mi = dimmi tutto!</i>	Tell me everything!
<i>da' + le = dalle il libro!</i>	Give her the book!

If the imperative is negative, the pronouns may be placed either before or after the verb.

<i>Telefonale!</i>	<i>Non le telefonare!</i>	<i>Non telefonarle!</i>
<i>Telefoniamole!</i>	<i>Non le telefoniamo!</i>	<i>Non telefoniamole!</i>
<i>Telefonatele!</i>	<i>Non le telefonate!</i>	<i>Non telefonatele!</i>

See the “Reflexive Verbs” section for details of the position of the reflexive pronoun and the imperative.

## FORMAL IMPERATIVE

The formal *Lei* and *Loro* imperative forms are the correspondending forms of present subjunctive—for example, *Venga venga!* (Come in!).

	<b>parlare</b>	<b>scrivere</b>	<b>partire</b>	<b>finire</b>
( <i>Lei</i> )	( <i>non</i> ) <i>parli!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>scriva!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>parta!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>finisca!</i>
( <i>Loro</i> )	( <i>non</i> ) <i>parlino!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>scrivano!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>partano!</i>	( <i>non</i> ) <i>finiscano!</i>

For the irregular forms, see the irregularities of the present subjunctive.

The negative imperative is formed by inserting *non* before the affirmative form.

The object and reflexive pronouns are not attached to the polite *Lei* and *Loro* forms. Pronouns must always precede the verb both in the affirmative and negative imperative.

*Dott. Berge, non si preoccupi!*  
*Signora, si accomodi!*

Dr. Berge, don't worry!  
Madam, take your seat!

The formal *Loro* imperative forms are seldom if ever used:

*Prego, si accomodino, signori . . .*  
*cosa desiderano?*

Please, take a seat, sirs . . . what would  
you like to order?

## The Nonpersonal Forms

---

The three verb moods that do not change to agree with the subject are called *modi indefiniti* or *forme implicite* (“nonpersonal forms”). The nonpersonal forms are:

- The infinitive (*infinito*), present and past
- The gerund (*gerundio*), present and past
- The participle (*participio*), present and past

The past participle has already been discussed on page 12. Because the Italian present participle has mainly an adjective or noun value, its form has not been included in the verb charts. The best approach is to observe that adjectives and nouns ending in *-ante* and *-ente* may be derived from verbs.

*Questa è una storia divertente.*

This is an amusing story.

The adjective *divertente* in the preceding example derives from the verb *divertire* (“to amuse”).

## INFINITIVE

In English, the infinitive consists of *to* + verb (for example, “to speak,” “to talk”). In Italian, the infinitive form is *one word* consisting of stem + infinitive ending. The Italian infinitive has two tenses:

- The **present** has three main endings: *-are*, *-ere*, and *-ire* (*cantare*, *prendere*, *finire*).
- The **past** is composed of *avere* or *essere* plus the past participle of the main verb.

The following chart shows examples of the present infinitive and of the formation of the past infinitive. The helping verbs *avere* and *essere* are in the infinitive. The past participle of the verbs *lavorare*, *ricevere*, *dormire*, and *arrivare* are given. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

### Present Infinitive

*lavorare* (to work)  
*arrivare* (to arrive)  
*ricevere* (to see)  
*dormire* (to sleep)

### Past Infinitive

*aver(e) lavorato* (having worked)  
*essere arrivato/arrivata/arrivati/arrivate* (having arrived)  
*aver(e) ricevuto* (having believed)  
*aver(e) dormito* (having slept)

Note that in the past infinitive, *aver* is generally used instead of the full verb *avere*. There is a fourth type of infinitive ending in *-rre*, but there are very few of them: *produrre* (“to produce”), *tradurre* (“to translate”), *porre* (“to put”), *trarre* (“to pull”), and their compound verbs. The conjugation of these verbs is based on the Latin infinitive form (for example: *producere*, *traducere*, *ponere*).

The infinitive may be used alone in the following cases:

- **As the subject or direct object of a sentence:** In English, either the gerund (–ing form) or infinitive is used.

*È importante parlare almeno due lingue straniere.*  
*È vietato fumare.*

It is important to speak at least two foreign languages.  
Smoking is prohibited.

- **As an imperative, to express a “generic instructions” addressed to everybody:** For this reason, it is frequently used in public notices, in recipes, and in instructions for the use of machines.

*Spingere.*  
*Non disperdere nell'ambiente.*  
*Cuocere in forno per 20 minuti.*

Push. (sign on a door)  
 Do not litter.  
 Bake for 20 minutes.

- **After impersonal expressions that contain *essere*:**

*Sarebbe meglio aspettare.*  
*È necessario riempire il modulo.*

It would be better to wait.  
 It is necessary to fill out the form.

Certain verbs, including verbs of perception and impersonal verbs, can be followed by an infinitive. Below is a list of the most common verbs followed by the infinitive. If one of these verbs is followed by another verb, the first verb is conjugated, and the second verb is used in the infinitive—for example, *Sai nuotare?* (Can you swim?).

*amare* (“to love”)  
*ascoltare* (“to listen”)  
*bastare* (“to be enough”)  
*bisogna* (“it is necessary”)  
*desiderare* (“to wish”)  
*dovere* (“must,” “to have to”)  
*fare* (“to make”)  
*gradire* (“to appreciate”)  
*guardare* (“to look at”)  
*lasciare* (“to let,” “to allow”)  
*occorrere* (“to be necessary”)  
*osare* (“to dare”)  
*osservare* (“to observe”)  
*parere* (“to seem”)  
*piacere* (“to like”)  
*potere* (“to be able”)  
*preferire* (“to prefer”)  
*sapere* (“to know how”)  
*sembrare* (“to seem”)  
*sentire* (“to hear,” “to listen”)  
*vedere* (“to see”)  
*volere* (“to want”)

Certain verbs require a preposition before the infinitive. For example, the verb *andare* requires the preposition *a*. If *andare* is followed by another verb (to go dancing), the sequence *andare* + *a* + infinitive is used. As in the first example below, *andare* is conjugated, and the second verb is used in the infinitive (for example, *Vado a ballare* [I go dancing]). In English, either the -ing form gerund or the infinitive can be used:

<i>Vado a ballare.</i>	I'm going dancing.
<i>Hanno deciso di partire in treno.</i>	They decided to leave by train.
<i>Proviamo a entrare.</i>	Let's try to go in.

The Appendix of Verbs Used with Prepositions lists verbs requiring the preposition *a* and a list of verbs requiring the preposition *di*.

Note that the subjunctive is used if there is a change of subject after the verbs and in expressions that normally require the infinitive (with or without a preposition), especially verbs and expressions of thought, doubt, hope, fear, promise, denial, or desire:

<i>Spero di finire il lavoro domani.</i>	I hope to finish the work tomorrow.
<i>Spero che tu finisca il lavoro domani.</i>	I hope you'll finish the work tomorrow.

The infinitive is also used after the following prepositions.

- **Per:** The preposition *per* immediately followed by the infinitive expresses purpose. In English an infinitive alone may be used, or “in order to”:

*Vado in Italia per studiare l'italiano.*    I am going to Italy (in order) to study Italian.

- **Da:** The preposition *da* immediately followed by the infinitive expresses purpose and use of the noun it refers to.

*Dove sono le lettere da spedire?*    Where are the letters to be mailed?  
*È un film da vedere.*    It is a movie to see.  
*Non ho tempo da perdere.*    I don't have time to waste.

- **Other prepositions requiring the infinitive.** These prepositions are usually followed by the -ing form of the verb in English: *prima di* (before), *invece di* (instead of), *senza* (without), *dopo* (after, always followed by the past infinitive).

*Rifletti prima di parlare!*    Think before speaking!  
*Dopo esserci alzati, abbiamo fatto colazione.*    After getting up, we had breakfast.

## GERUND

The gerund is one of the Italian verb forms corresponding to the English -ing form. It expresses contemporaneity to the verb of the main tense. It has two forms: present and past.

*Correndo sono caduto.*    I fell while I was running.

The present (or simple) tense is formed by dropping the ending of the infinitive (-are, -ere, or -ire) and adding -ando, -endo, or -endo. The simple gerund is invariable. The past gerund is formed with the present gerund of *avere* (*avendo*) or *essere* (*essendo*) plus the past participle of the main verb. When the past gerund is formed with *essere* (*essendo*), the past participle agrees with the subject in gender and number.

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Present Gerund</b>	<b>Past Gerund</b>
<i>cantare</i> (to sing)	<i>cantando</i> (singing)	<i>avendo cantato</i> (having sung)
<i>andare</i> (to go)	<i>andando</i> (going)	<i>essendo andato/andata/andati/andate</i> (having gone)
<i>perdere</i> (to lose)	<i>perdendo</i> (losing)	<i>avendo perso</i> (having lost)
<i>capire</i> (to understand)	<i>capendo</i> (understanding)	<i>avendo capito</i> (having understood)

Note the gerund of the following verbs derives from Latin or old forms:

<i>bere</i> (from <i>bevere</i> )	<i>bevendo</i>
<i>dire</i> (from <i>dicere</i> )	<i>dicendo</i>
<i>fare</i> (from <i>facere</i> )	<i>facendo</i>
<i>tradurre</i> (from <i>traducere</i> )	<i>traducendo</i>
<i>trarre</i> (from <i>trahere</i> )	<i>traendo</i>

Other verbs ending in *-durre* use the Latin stem *-duc* (for example, *produrre*, *producendo*).

Reflexive and object pronouns follow the gerund and are attached to it to form one word. In the compound gerund, they are attached to *avendo* or *essendo*.

*Vedendolo tutti i giorni, ho potuto apprezzare il suo valore.*  
*Essendomi laureata a pieni voti, ho trovato subito lavoro.*

*Seeing him every day, I could appreciate his value.*  
*Having graduated with full marks, I immediately found a job.*

## Stare + gerund

The main use of the gerund is with the present tense of *stare* to form the progressive form of the present (action currently in progress: *I am working*) or with the imperfect tense of *stare* (action in progress in the past: *I was working*). It is never used with compound tenses.

In English, the present progressive is also used to express a future action. In Italian, the present indicative is used instead. Note that whereas the present indicative *lavoro* can mean both “I work” and “I am working,” *sto lavorando* can only mean “I am working (right now)”. Similarly, *lavoravo* can mean “I used to work” and “I was working,” and *stavo lavorando* can only mean “I was working.” The progressive forms are used less frequently in Italian than in English. They may always be replaced by the simple forms of the present and imperfect.

**Table 14 Present Tense of stare + Gerund = Present Progressive**

<b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Present Tense of stare + Gerund of Main Verb</b>		
<i>lavoro</i>	<i>(io) sto</i>		I am working
<i>lavori</i>	<i>(tu) stai</i>		you are working
<i>lavora</i>	<i>(lui/lei) sta</i>	<i>lavorando</i>	he/she is working
<i>lavoriamo</i>	<i>(noi) stiamo</i>		we are working
<i>lavorate</i>	<i>(voi) state</i>		you are working
<i>lavorano</i>	<i>(loro) stanno</i>		they are working

**Table 15 Imperfect of stare + Gerund = Past Progressive**

<b>Imperfect</b>	<b>Imperfect Tense stare + Gerund of Main Verb</b>		
<i>lavoravo</i>	<i>(io) stavo</i>		<i>I was working</i>
<i>lavoravi</i>	<i>(tu) stavi</i>		<i>you were working</i>
<i>lavorava</i>	<i>(lui/lei) stava</i>	<i>lavorando</i>	<i>he/she was working</i>
<i>lavoravamo</i>	<i>(noi) stavamo</i>		<i>we were working</i>
<i>lavoravate</i>	<i>(voi) stavate</i>		<i>you were working</i>
<i>lavoravano</i>	<i>(loro) stavano</i>		<i>they were working</i>

The structure *stare* + gerund can also be used with the present or imperfect subjunctive of *stare*.

**present:** *stia, stia, stia, stiamo, stiate, stiano* + gerund of main verb  
**imperfect:** *stessi, stessi, stesse, stessimo, steste, stessero* + gerund of main verb

<i>Il bambino sta dormendo.</i>	The baby is sleeping.
<i>Stavano lavorando.</i>	They were working.
<i>Penso che lui stia dormendo.</i>	I think he is sleeping.
<i>Pensavo che loro stessero lavorando.</i>	I thought they were working.

## The Reflexive Form

---

Italian verbs can have a reflexive form. A reflexive infinitive is identifiable by the ending *-si*:

*lavare* + *si* = *lavarsi*  
*mettere* + *si* = *mettersi*  
*divertire* + *si* = *divertirsi*.

Note that the final *-e* of the infinitive is omitted. Reflexive pronouns are: *mi*, *ti*, *si*, *ci*, *vi*, and *si*. The following chart shows the subject pronouns with their corresponding Italian reflexive pronouns and English reflexive pronouns:

<b>Subject Pronouns</b>	<b>Reflexive Pronouns</b>	<b>English Reflexive Pronouns</b>
<i>io</i>	<i>mi</i>	myself
<i>tu</i>	<i>ti</i>	yourself
<i>lui/lei</i>	<i>si</i>	himself/herself
<i>Lei</i>	<i>Si</i>	yourself
<i>noi</i>	<i>ci</i>	ourselves
<i>voi</i>	<i>vi</i>	yourselves
<i>loro</i>	<i>si</i>	themselves

Note that the form for the third-person singular (*lui/lei*) and plural (*loro*) pronoun is the same: *si*. Also, when the word “*si*” means “yes,” it is spelled with an accent in order to distinguish it from the pronoun “*si*.”

Reflexive verbs, like all other verbs, are conjugated in the various tenses and moods according to the infinitive ending (*alzarsi*: *-are*; *mettersi*: *-ere*; *divertirsi*: *-ire*) and according to any spelling changes or irregularities. Reflexive verbs, unlike other verbs however, must be preceded by their appropriate reflexive pronoun.

For simple tenses, if you know the conjugation of a verb (for example, *mettere*, “to put”), in order to conjugate it in a reflexive way (for example, *mettersi* “to put oneself”), simply put the reflexive pronouns before the simple tenses (*mi metto*, *ti metti*, *si mette*). Table 16 shows, as an example, the reflexive present tense of the verbs *alzarsi* (“to get up”), *mettersi* (“to put oneself”), *divertirsi* (“to have fun”), and *trasferirsi* (“to move”).

**Table 16 The Indicative Present Tense of Reflexive Verbs**

	<b>alzarsi</b>	<b>mettersi</b>	<b>divertirsi</b>	<b>trasferirsi</b>
<i>(io)</i>	<i>mi alzo</i>	<i>mi metto</i>	<i>mi diverto</i>	<i>mi trasferisco</i>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>ti alzi</i>	<i>ti metti</i>	<i>ti diverti</i>	<i>ti trasferisci</i>
<i>(lui/lei)</i>	<i>si alza</i>	<i>si mette</i>	<i>si diverte</i>	<i>si trasferisce</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>ci alziamo</i>	<i>ci mettiamo</i>	<i>ci divertiamo</i>	<i>ci trasferiamo</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>vi alzate</i>	<i>vi mettete</i>	<i>vi divertite</i>	<i>vi trasferite</i>
<i>(loro)</i>	<i>si alzano</i>	<i>si mettono</i>	<i>si divertono</i>	<i>si trasferiscono</i>

All reflexives verbs use *essere* as auxiliary verb to form compound tenses. The following list shows the example of the formation of the present perfect of a reflexive verb, *alzarsi*. The past participle agrees with the subject in number and gender when the verb is conjugated with *essere*.

**Indicativo (passato prossimo)**

*mi sono svegliato/svegliata*  
*ti sei svegliato/svegliata*  
*si è svegliato/svegliata*  
*ci siamo svegliati/svegliate*  
*vi siete svegliati/svegliate*  
*si sono svegliati/svegliate*

**Present Perfect**

I woke up  
 you woke up  
 he/she woke up  
 we woke up  
 you woke up  
 they woke up

Here are examples of usages of the reflexive compound tenses:

*Giacomo si è svegliato tardi.*  
*Penso che Pierasi sia laureataa.*  
*Penso che Giacomo e Piera*  
*si fossero sposati.*  
*Piera e Marta si erano arrabbiatea.*

Giacomo woke up late.  
 I think Piera graduated.  
 I thought Giacomo and Piera had  
 married.  
 Piera and Marta had gotten angry.

**POSITION OF THE REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS**

The reflexive pronouns usually precede the conjugated verb forms or attach to the infinitive and the gerund, as in the following examples:

*Mi lauro a giugno.*  
*Vorrei alzarmi presto.*

I am graduating in June.  
 I would like to get up early.

In the affirmative informal imperative, the reflexive pronoun attaches to the end of the verb form and makes one word with it, as shown in the following table. In the informal negative commands, there are two choices: The pronoun can precede the verb (first option) or attach at the end (second option) as shown below:

**Table 17 Informal Imperative and Reflexive Pronouns**

<b>Informal</b>	<b>Affirmative imperative</b>	<b>Negative imperative</b>	
		<b>first option</b>	<b>second option</b>
<i>(tu)</i>	<i>alzati!</i>	<i>Non ti alzare!</i>	<i>Non alzarti!</i>
<i>(noi)</i>	<i>alziamoci!</i>		<i>Non alziamoci!</i>
<i>(voi)</i>	<i>alzatevi!</i>	<i>Non vi alzate!</i>	<i>Non alzatevi!</i>

Note that in the second option of the *tu* form, the infinitive drops the final *-e* before the pronoun.

In the verb charts, in the negative imperative of the *tu* form, only the second option will be displayed, but both are possible.

If the infinitive is preceded by a form of *dovere*, *potere*, or *volere*, the reflexive pronoun either attaches to the infinitive (which drops its final *-e*) or precedes the conjugated verb. Note that the reflexive pronoun agrees with the subject even when attached to the infinitive.

<i>Mi alzo presto.</i>	I get up early.
<i>Devo alzarmi presto.</i>	I have to get up early.
<i>Mi devo alzare presto.</i>	I have to get up early.

## HOW ITALIAN REFLEXIVE VERBS TRANSLATE INTO ENGLISH

A reflexive verb is a verb whose action refers back to the subject, such as “I see myself in the mirror” or “He considers himself intelligent.” In both of these examples, the subject and direct object are the same. Generally, when a verb is reflexive in English, it is also reflexive in Italian—for example, *farsi male* (“to hurt oneself”). The opposite is not true. When a verb is reflexive in Italian, it is not necessarily reflexive in English, as for examples the verbs below:

<i>laurearsi</i>	to graduate
<i>isciversi</i>	to enroll

Many transitive verbs (those that can be followed by a direct object) can be non-reflexive or reflexive depending upon whether the subject is acting upon itself or upon someone or something else.

<i>Giada lava la macchina.</i>	Giada is washing the car. (“car” = direct object)
<i>Giada si lava.</i>	Giada washes herself.

Note that the nonreflexive verb forms the compound tenses with *avere*, while the reflexive form always uses *essere*:

<i>Giada ha lavato la macchina.</i>	Giada washed the car.
<i>Giada si è lavata.</i>	Giada washed herself.

Often the action refers back to “part of oneself” as, for example, *mi lavo le mani* (I wash my hands). Note that, in these cases, reflexive meaning is often expressed in English by a possessive adjective rather than a reflexive verb. In the Italian sentences, the use of the reflexive pronoun identifies the subject and possession is understood; thus, the definite article is used rather than the possessive as it is used in English.

<i>Mi sono lavato i capelli.</i>	I washed my hair.
<i>Si è messo il cappotto.</i>	He put his coat on.

Often an Italian reflexive corresponds to the English verbs “to get,” “to fall,” or “to become” as in the examples below:

<i>arrabbiarsi</i>	to get angry
<i>alzarsi</i>	to get up
<i>ubriacarsi</i>	to get drunk
<i>innamorarsi</i>	to fall in love
<i>addormentarsi</i>	to fall asleep

In Italian reflexive verbs are commonly used to express reciprocal actions. While English uses “each other” and “one another,” Italian uses the plural reflexive pronouns *ci*, *vi*, and *si* with the correspondent plural forms of the verb.

<i>Ci vediamo domani.</i>	See you tomorrow. (Literally: We see each other tomorrow.)
<i>Dove vi incontrate?</i>	Where are you meeting (each other)?
<i>Gianna e Alberto si sposano a giugno.</i>	Gianna and Alberto are getting married in June.

Here are a few common verbs that can have reciprocal meaning with their transitive counterpart:

<i>aiutare</i> (to help)	<i>aiutarsi</i> (to help each other)
<i>amare</i> (to love)	<i>amarsi</i> (to love each other)
<i>baciare</i> (to kiss)	<i>baciarsi</i> (to kiss each other)
<i>capire</i> (to understand)	<i>capirsi</i> (to understand each other)
<i>conoscere</i> (to know)	<i>conoscersi</i> (to know each other, to meet [for the first time])
<i>incontrare</i> (to meet)	<i>incontrarsi</i> (to meet each other)
<i>odiare</i> (to hate)	<i>odiarsi</i> (to hate each other)
<i>salutare</i> (to greet)	<i>salutarsi</i> (to greet each other)
<i>sposare</i> (to marry)	<i>sposarsi</i> (to get married)
<i>vedere</i> (to see)	<i>vedersi</i> (to see each other)

Note that the transitive counterpart forms the compound tenses with *avere* while the reflexive form always uses *essere*:

<i>La madre ha abbracciato il figlio.</i>	The mother embraced the son.
<i>Madre e figlio si sono abbracciati.</i>	Mother and son embraced each other.

A group of Italian reflexive verbs have a form that is reflexive, though there is not any real reflexive meaning. In English, the equivalent verb is not reflexive. Following is a list of verbs that in Italian have only reflexive form, but no reflexive meaning:

<i>accorgersi di</i> (“to realize”)
<i>arrabbiarsi</i> (“to get angry”)
<i>congratularsi con</i> (“to congratulate”)
<i>fidarsi di</i> (“to trust”)
<i>ostinarsi a</i> (“to persist”)
<i>pentirsi di</i> (“to repent”)
<i>ribellarsi</i> (“to rebel”)
<i>vergognarsi</i> (“to be ashamed”)

*Si è pentito di aver detto tante bugie.* He repented of having told so many lies.  
*Si vede che si vergogna.* One can see he is ashamed.

There is also a group of transitive verbs that can be used reflexively and that slightly changes the meaning of the verb between the reflexive form and the transitive counterpart. Therefore the reflexive form and the transitive counterpart translate into English with different verbs, as in some of the following examples:

### **Intransitive Reflexive**

*alzarsi* (to get up)  
*annoiarsi* (to get bored)  
*gonfiarsi* (to swell up)  
*irritarsi* (to get irritated)  
*offendersi* (to take offense)  
*spaventarsi* (to get frightened)  
*stupirsi* (to be astonished)  
*decidersi* (to make up one's mind)  
*svegliarsi* (to wake up)

### **Transitive**

*alzare* (to raise)  
*annoiare* (to bore)  
*gonfiare* (to inflate)  
*irritare* (to irritate)  
*offendere* (to offend)  
*spaventare* (to frighten)  
*stupire* (to astonish)  
*decidere* (to decide)  
*svegliare* (to awaken)

The reflexive form in Italian is used to express other meanings beside the literal one. Many transitive verbs can be used reflexively or not, depending on whether the speaker wishes to stress his own involvement.

*Ho comprato un portatile.* I bought a laptop.  
*Mi sono comprata un portatile!* I bought myself a laptop!

## Impersonal Verbs

---

Impersonal verbs do not have a determinate subject and they are only conjugated in indefinite moods (infinitive, gerund, participle) and in the third-person singular, as for example the verb *accadere* (“to happen”). In English, the subject of impersonal verbs is always expressed and it is “it” (“it rains”). In Italian, the subject is not expressed.

Impersonal verbs can be grouped as follows:

- Verbs only used in impersonal form, as *bisognare* (“to be necessary”) and *occorrere* (“to be necessary”).
- **Verbs for expressing weather conditions:** *piovere* (to rain), *grandinare* (to hail), *nevicare* (to snow). In compound tenses, this group of verbs can use either *essere* or *avere* (*ha piovuto, è piovuto* [it rained]).
- **The verb *fare* in expressions such as *fa freddo, fa caldo* (it is hot, it is cold).**
- **Verbs that have a “personal” conjugation but are often used in the impersonal form.** The most common are: *bastare* (“to be enough”), *convenire* (“to be better”), *parere* (“to seem”), *sembrare* (“to seem”), *succedere* (“to happen”), *essere necessario* (“to be necessary”), *essere opportuno* (“to be convenient”), *essere certo* (“to be sure”), *essere evidente* (“to be evident”), *essere chiaro* (to be clear).

Here are examples of impersonal verbs in different tenses.

<i>Per andare a Fiesole bisogna prendere l'autobus.</i>	To go to Fiesole it is necessary to take a bus.
<i>Conveniva aspettare.</i>	It was better to wait.

Compound tenses of impersonal verbs are formed with *essere*. Verbs that express weather conditions can also use *avere*.

<i>Che cosa è successo?</i>	What happened?
-----------------------------	----------------

Any verb can be used in an impersonal form if the form of the third-person singular of the verb is preceded by the pronoun *si*. It corresponds to the English impersonal construction “one,” “you,” “we,” “they,” people + verb—for example: *Qui si mangia bene*. (Here one eats well.) When a reflexive verb is used in this impersonal construction, both an impersonal and a reflexive pronoun are needed. The pronouns used are *ci si* (not *si si*)—for example, *Ci si diverte sempre alle feste di Simona*. (One always has a good time at Simona’s parties.)

## Piacere and Verbs with Special Construction

---

In Italian, there are some verbs that have a special construction, such as the verb *piacere*. The verb *piacere* corresponds to the English verbs “to like,” “to enjoy.” Its construction, however, is quite different from that of the verb “to like.” In Italian, the verb “to like” is similar in structure to the English phrase “to be pleasing to.” In order to say that “you like pizza Margherita,” you must say that “pizza Margherita is pleasing to you.”

I like Italian music.	Italian music appeals to me.	<i>Mi piace la musica italiana.</i>
I like antique watches.	Antique watches appeal to me.	<i>Mi piacciono gli orologi antichi.</i>

In the Italian construction, the person or thing that is pleasing is the subject (Italian music, watches) of the sentence and it usually follows the verb. The person who likes appears as the indirect object of the verb (“to me”). The verb *piacere* agrees with the subject; consequently, if what is liked is singular, *piacere* is used in the third-person singular form; if what is liked is plural, *piacere* is used in the third-person plural form. The person to whom someone/something is pleasing is the indirect object, often replaced by an indirect pronoun (*mi, ti, gli/le, ci, vi, gli*). When the subject is an infinitive, the singular form of third-person *piacere* is used (“I like to read,” “Reading is pleasing to me”). The following chart shows the Italian indirect object pronouns and the present tense of *piacere*.

<b>Subject Pronouns</b>	<b>Indirect Pronouns</b>	<b>piacere</b>
(io)	mi	<i>piace</i> + singular noun or verb <i>piacciono</i> + plural noun
(tu)	ti	
(lui)	gli	
(lei/Lei)	le/Le	
(noi)	ci	
(voi)	vi	
(loro)	gli	

The subject pronouns are *never used* in this construction.

<i>Mi piace la pizza Margherita.</i>	I like pizza Margherita.
<i>Ci piacciono i bambini.</i>	We like the children.
<i>Ti piace viaggiare in treno?</i>	Do you like traveling by train?
<i>Mi piacerebbe studiare il francese.</i>	I would like to study French.
<i>Gli piaceva andare a cavallo.</i>	He used to like to ride a horse.
<i>Sono sicura che ti piacerà il film.</i>	I am sure you will like the movie.

In all compound tenses, *piacere* is conjugated with *essere*. Its past participle (*piaciuto*) agrees in gender and number with the subject (the person or thing that it is liked).

<i>Mi è piaciuto il libro.</i>	I liked the book.
<i>Mi sono piaciuti i libri.</i>	I liked the books.
<i>Mi è piaciuta la fotografia.</i>	I liked the picture.
<i>Mi sono piaciute le fotografie.</i>	I liked the pictures.
<i>Mi sarebbe piaciuto venire.</i>	I would have liked to come.

In the first example above, the past participle *piaciuto* is masculine and singular agreeing with *libro*, which is also masculine and singular. In the second example above, the past participle *piaciuti* is masculine and plural, agreeing with *libri*, which is also masculine and plural.

When the indirect object is a noun, it must be preceded by the preposition *a*.

<i>A Fabio piace la musica italiana.</i>	Fabio likes Italian music.
<i>A Fabio piacciono gli spaghetti al dente.</i>	Fabio likes spaghetti.

The negative of *piacere* is *non* + *piacere* (for example, *Non mi piace la cioccolata* [I don't like chocolate]). The verb *dispiacere*, used in the same way as *piacere*, means "to be sorry."

Other common verbs used with this special construction are: *bastare* ("to be enough"), *mancare* ("to miss"), *occorrere* ("to be needed"), *sembrare* ("to seem"), *servire* ("to need," "have a use for"), and *andare* ("to feel like"). The verb *andare* in its personal construction as shown in the verb chart means "to go"; when used with the special construction it means "to feel like":

<i>Ti va di andare al cinema?</i>	Do you feel like going to the movie?
<i>Non sono andato perché non mi andava.</i>	I didn't go because I didn't feel like it.
<i>Mi manca Marco.</i>	I miss Marco.

## Dovere, Potere, and Volere

---

The verbs *dovere* (“to have to,” “must”), *potere* (“to be able to,” “can”), and *volere* (“to want”) can be used autonomously or can be followed by another verb. When they're followed by another verb (“I want to study”), the first verb is conjugated in the desired tense, and the second verb immediately follows in the infinitive. For example:

<i>Posso pagare con la carta di credito?</i>	Can I pay by credit card?
<i>Puoi ripetere, per favore?</i>	Can you repeat that, please?
<i>Voglio studiare il francese.</i>	I want to study French.
<i>Dobbiamo fare gli esercizi.</i>	We have to do the exercises.

In compound tenses, when used by themselves and not followed by an infinitive, these verbs use *avere* as a helping verb.

<i>Sei andata? Ho dovuto.</i>	Did you go? I had to.
-------------------------------	-----------------------

When followed by an infinitive, *volere*, *potere*, and *dovere* take *avere* or *essere* depending on whether the verb in the infinitive normally requires *avere* or *essere*. However, in conversational Italian, the tendency is to use *avere*. Below are two examples of the verb *potere* in the present perfect:

<i>Non <u>ho</u> potuto dormire.</i>	I couldn't sleep.
<i>È' <u>potuto</u> partire.</i>	He was able to leave.

In the preceding examples, the verb *potere* uses *avere* as a helping verb when is followed by the verb *dormire*, because *dormire* requires *avere* to form the compound tenses (for example, *Ho dormito* [I slept]). In the second example, *potere* uses *essere* as a helping verb, because it's followed by the verb *andare*, and *andare* requires *essere* to form the compound tenses (for example, *Sono andato* [I went]).

When the modal verb (*volere*, *potere*, *sapere*, *dovere*) is followed by a reflexive verb, two constructions are possible, depending on the position of the reflexive pronoun. When the reflexive pronoun precedes the verb, *essere* is used; when the reflexive pronoun is attached to the infinitive of the verb, *avere* is used.

<i>Bruno <u>si è</u> dovuto svegliare presto.</i>	Bruno had to wake up early.
<i>Bruno <u>ha</u> dovuto svegliarsi presto.</i>	Bruno had to wake up early.

*Volere*, *potere*, and *dovere* take on different meanings depending on the tense in which they're used.

### Present perfect and imperfect

The verbs *volere*, *potere*, *dovere*, and *sapere* are generally used in the imperfect. Note that the examples below slightly changes in meaning whether used in the present perfect or imperfect:

<i>Voleva partire.</i>	She wanted to leave (uncertain whether the subject left or not).
<i>È' voluta partire.</i>	She wanted to leave (and did so).

The examples have the same meaning, but in the first example, the use of imperfect express the intention of leaving and it doesn't specify whether she left or not. In the second example, the subject did in fact leave.

## Present conditional

The present conditional of *dovere*, *potere*, and *volere* is often used instead of the present tense, to soften the impact of a statement or request.

- **Dovere:** *dovrei, dovresti . . .* means “should” or “ought to” (in addition to “would have to”) in contrast to the present tense *devo* (I must, I have to).

*Dovresti metterti il cappotto.*                      You should put on your coat.

- **Potere:** *potrei, potresti . . .* is equivalent to English “could,” “would be able to,” and “would be allowed.”

*Potrebbe dirmi che ore sono?*                      Could you tell me what time is it?  
*Potrei andare io al tuo posto, se vuoi.*      I could go on your behalf, if you like.

- **Volere:** *vorrei, vorresti . . .* means “would want” or “would like”

*Vorresti venire a cena?*                      Would you like to come to dinner?  
*Vorrei studiare il francese.*                      I would like to study French.

## Past conditional

The past conditional of *dovere* + infinitive is equivalent to English “should have” or “ought to have” + past participle (done something):

*Saresti dovuto arrivare puntuale.*                      You should have arrived on time.

The past conditional of *potere* + infinitive is equivalent to English “could (might) have” + past participle:

*Avrei potuto fare di più.*                      I could have done more.

The past conditional of *volere* + infinitive is equivalent to English “would have liked to” + infinitive:

*Avrebbe voluto fare di più.*                      He would have liked to do more.

# Conditional Sentences

---

Conditional sentences have two parts: the *se/if* clause and the main clause. In the sentence “If it rains I shall stay home,” “if it rains” is the if clause, and “I shall stay at home” is the main clause. There are three kind of conditional sentences:

- **Type 1 (probable):** When real or possible situations are described, the *se* clause is in the indicative, and the main clause is in the indicative or the imperative, as shown in the examples below:

- “se clause” in the present + main clause: present/future/imperative

<i>Se piove, non vengo.</i>	If it rains, I am not coming.
<i>Se sto male, non partirò.</i>	If I am feeling bad, I will not leave.
<i>Se arrivi prima, prendi un posto per me.</i>	If you arrive early, take a seat for me.

- “se clause” in the future + main clause in the future:

<i>Se <u>potrò</u>, lo farò.</i>	If <u>I can</u> I'll do it.
----------------------------------	-----------------------------

The above example is the only tense sequence that differs from English: *se* + future in Italian; *if* + present in English.

- **Type 2:** When hypothetical, imaginary situations (likely or unlikely to happen) are described, the *se* clause is in the imperfect subjunctive, and the main clause is in the conditional, as in the example below:

<i>Se vincessi alla lotteria farei un viaggio intorno al mondo.</i>	If I won the lottery, I would travel around the world.
---	--

- **Type 3:** When improbable or impossible situations (unlikely to happen or to have happened, contrary to fact) are described, the *se* clause is in the past perfect subjunctive, and the main clause in the conditional. To talk about a contrary-to-fact or imaginary situation entirely in the past, use *se* + past perfect subjunctive + past conditional. The order of the two clauses can be switched.

<i>Se lo avesse saputo prima, non ci sarebbe andato.</i>	If he had known sooner, he wouldn't have gone.
<i>Se non avessi perso l'autobus, non ti avrei incontrato.</i>	If I hadn't missed the bus, I wouldn't have met you.

In spoken Italian, the sequence *se* + imperfect indicative + imperfect indicative is often used instead of *se* + past perfect subjunctive + perfect conditional and the preceding examples can also translate as below.

<i>Se lo sapeva, non ci andava.</i>	If he had known sooner, he wouldn't have gone.
<i>Se non perdevo l'autobus non ti incontravo.</i>	If I hadn't missed the bus, I wouldn't have met you.

Note that the conditional is never used in the *se* clause. When *se* means “whether,” it may be followed by any tenses, just as in English.

## The Passive Form

---

The form of a verb can be active or passive. The active voice is the most commonly used in everyday conversation. The passive voice is mainly used when trying to deemphasize the doer of the action, such as in news. In the active voice, the subject makes the action, as in the following example: The sun lights the earth. “The sun” is the subject doing the action of “lighting.” “The earth,” the object, receives the action of the verb. In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon by the action

of the verb: The object of the active voice becomes the subject, and the subject becomes the agent.

**Active voice:** The sun (subject) lights (verb) the earth (object).

**Passive voice:** The earth (subject) is lighted (verb) by the sun (agent).

As in English, in Italian the passive is formed as follows:

subject + *essere* in the desired tense + past participle + *da* + agent (if mentioned)

The verb *essere* is conjugated in the same tense as the corresponding/equivalent active: The passive exists in the different tenses and moods (except for the imperative and the infinitive). The past participle agrees with the subject in gender and number. If the agent is expressed, the agent (with or without the article) is preceded by the preposition *da*. Here are examples in different tenses.

- active form (present tense)

*Il sole illumina la terra.*

The sun lights the earth.

passive voice (present tense of the verb *essere* + the past participle)

*La terra è illuminata\* dal sole.*

The earth is lighted by the sun.

**Note:** The past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject.

- active form (present perfect)

*La polizia ha arrestato il ladro.*

The police have arrested the thief.

passive voice (present perfect of *essere* + the past participle)

*Il ladro è stato arrestato dalla polizia.*

The thief has been arrested by the police.

- active form (future)

*L'insegnante informerà gli studenti.*

The teacher will inform the students.

passive voice (future tense of *essere* + the past participle)

*Gli studenti saranno informati\* dall'insegnante.*

The students will be informed by the teacher.

**Note:** The past participle agrees in gender and number with the subject.

The impersonal *si* construction is often used instead of the passive voice when the agent is not expressed. The verb is in the third-person singular or plural depending on whether the noun used with the verb (considered the subject in Italian) is in the singular or plural. Note that the noun usually follows the verb.

*Si compra oro.*

We buy gold. (Gold is bought.)

*Si comprano abiti usati.*

We buy used clothes. (Used clothes are bought.)

English uses “one,” “they,” “you,” “we,” or the passive voice to express the *si* construction found in Italian.

