





**Geraldine Ludbrook**

**AN INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH SYNTAX**

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Geraldine Ludbrook, *An Intermediate English Syntax*

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As a consequence of the recent innovations in Italian university curricula, it has become imperative for foreign language teaching to provide students with the means of achieving higher abilities in a shorter period of time. In fact, most university courses now require an intermediate/advanced target level, with language focusing on specific competencies. These new requirements have also made a different approach to traditional English grammar necessary.

This book is intended as a rapid and efficient reference guide to those aspects of English syntax that present the greatest obstacles for Italian students. It does not aim to be a complete grammar course. Rather it adopts a comparative and contrastive approach to specific syntactic processes, focusing on the common difficulties encountered by Italian students. All the examples are therefore provided with Italian translations to aid students in this analytical process, and to make the book also suitable for independent study. The book will be useful for adult students at an intermediate to advanced level who wish to improve both their comprehension of formal written texts and their own written style. It may also be a helpful guide for students handling the translation of a written text.

The text starts from the basic sentence structures, then moves on through various aspects of the language, focusing primarily on stylistic issues, such as structural and rhetorical inversion, formal and informal strategies, emphatic structures, and ellipsis. The complex question of concord—the agreement of person, number, gender and tense—is examined at some length, as significant difficulties for students may ensue from the contrast between the grammatical concord in formal English and the notional concord of informal or colloquial style. In addition to the purely syntactic aspects, the English tense system is also addressed, offering students an approach that once again highlights the similarities and disparities between the English and Italian systems.

Geraldine Ludbrook

To indicate different degrees of acceptability of certain grammatical forms, the following symbols have been used:

- \* to indicate unacceptable ungrammatical forms
- ? to indicate acceptable ungrammatical forms, not recommended for use
- ☒ to highlight contrastive points, where English usage differs from Italian

# 1 BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURE

English sentences follow a few basic structures. Each pattern may be expanded to form more complex sentences, for example by the addition of adjectives, adverbs or relative and participial clauses, but the fundamental order rarely changes. In spoken English, focus on one element is generally signalled by intonation, usually falling on the last element in a clause (*Give it to me, not to him*). In written English, emphasis is shifted by stylistic variations in the word order. Some of the principal modifications are: shifting the element to be stressed to the beginning or to the end of the sentence (*Never had he cried so much*); inverting word order (*It was Peter who won first prize*); rearranging the sentence, such as from the active to the passive voice (*The first prize was won by Peter*).

## 1.1 Affirmative sentences

The basic structure for intransitive verbs is Subject-Verb:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>
<i>I</i>	<i>run.</i>
<i>He</i>	<i>is waiting.</i>

The basic structure for transitive verbs is Subject-Verb-Direct Object (**DO**):

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>DO</b>
<i>I</i>	<i>sent</i>	<i>a letter.</i>
<i>She</i>	<i>sold</i>	<i>her car.</i>
<i>They</i>	<i>made</i>	<i>a cake.</i>

Transitive verbs may have a direct and an indirect object (**IO**). The indirect object may be placed before the direct object. In this case, emphasis is on the direct object:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>IO</b>	<b>DO</b>	
<i>I</i>	<i>sent</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>a letter.</i>	(not flowers)
<i>They</i>	<i>brought</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>a present.</i>	(not wine)

The indirect object may also follow the direct object with a preposition (**P**). In this case, emphasis is on the indirect object:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>DO</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>IO</b>	
<i>I</i>	<i>sent</i>	<i>a letter</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>her.</i>	(not to him)
<i>They</i>	<i>brought</i>	<i>a present</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>us.</i>	(not for John)

The direct object (noun or pronoun) may be modified by a noun or adjective complement that follows it.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>DO</b>	<b>Complement</b>
<i>I</i>	<i>find</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>unpleasant.</i>
<i>We</i>	<i>thought</i>	<i>the test</i>	<i>a useless exercise.</i>

Copular verbs (*be, seem, become*) are followed by a noun, adjective or adverb phrase. The same pattern is used with the verbs *feel, taste* and *smell*.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Complement</b>
<i>He</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>interested.</i>
<i>They</i>	<i>became</i>	<i>friends</i>
<i>She</i>	<i>seemed</i>	<i>tired.</i>
<i>The rose</i>	<i>smells</i>	<i>sweet.</i>

See Appendix IV for further details on verb patterns.

### 1.1.1 Auxiliary verbs

English allows constructions with multiple auxiliary verbs. In this case, it is always the first auxiliary that receives tense and person inflection.

*The windows must be able to be reached easily.*  
 Le finestre si devono poter raggiungere facilmente.

*He had been going to clean the house, but gave up.*  
 Stava per mettersi a pulire la casa, ma ci rinunciò.

The primary auxiliary verbs *be, have* and *do* have a grammatical function in forming the progressive and perfect aspects, the passive voice and negative and interrogative constructions.

The modal auxiliary verbs (*can, could, dare, may, might, must, need, ought to, shall, should, will, would*) are used together with the infinitive of a verb to modify their mood or attitude. See 8 for more information on auxiliary verbs.



*He'll never do that again.*  
(*He won't do that again.*)  
Non lo farà mai più.

*I can wait no longer.*  
(*I can't wait any longer.*)  
Non posso più aspettare.

However, a double negative may be used to express a positive idea either as a specific stylistic choice:

*No-one has absolutely nothing to say.*  
Non c'è nessuno che non abbia proprio nulla da dire.

Or in a very informal, colloquial style:

? *I haven't done nothing wrong.*  
(*I haven't done anything wrong.*)  
Non ho fatto niente di male.

*Not* may be used to cancel a negative prefix, often to make a negative comment more polite:

*Kate is not infrequently rude.*  
Non di rado Kate è maleducata.

*It is not unknown for her to arrive late.*  
Non è inconsueto che lei arrivi tardi.

Other examples of negative phrases:

*He was promoted not long ago.*  
Ha avuto una promozione non molto tempo fa.

*She is none too kind in her behaviour to children.*  
Non è proprio gentile nel suo comportamento verso i bambini.

*We were greeted by none other than the Prime Minister.*  
Ci ha salutato nientemeno che il primo ministro.

Some common mistakes with negative constructions are the following:

*I don't know anybody.*  
Non conosco nessuno.  
\* I don't know nobody.

*Nobody helped me.*  
Nessuno mi ha aiutato.  
\*Anybody helped me.

### 1.3 Interrogative sentences

In Italian, interrogation is generally expressed with intonation alone: *Vive a Londra? Studia filosofia?* although, in direct questions, verb and subject may be inverted: *È arrivata la posta? Cosa fa tuo fratello?*

English has two basic structural patterns for interrogation.

#### 1.3.1 Yes/No question inversion

Yes/no questions are formed by using an auxiliary verb at the beginning of the sentence:

<b>Auxiliary</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Main verb</b>	<b>Complement</b>
<i>Have</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>got</i>	<i>a match?</i>
<i>Has</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>finished</i>	<i>the book?</i>
<i>Can</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>swim?</i>	

If the corresponding non-interrogative sentence has no auxiliary, the auxiliary *do* (*does, did*) is used:

<b>Auxiliary</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Main verb</b>	<b>Complement</b>
<i>Do</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>understand</i>	<i>the question?</i>
<i>Does</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>know</i>	<i>the answer?</i>
<i>Did</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>follow</i>	<i>the course?</i>

#### 1.3.2 *Wh-* question inversion

Content questions are formed using a *wh-* interrogative word (*who, whom, whose, what, which, why, when, where, how*) at the beginning of the sentence.

If the element questioned is the subject, the interrogative pronoun or adjective simply occurs in subject position, with no variation from non-interrogative clause structure:

<b>Int. word</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Complement</b>
<i>Who</i>	<i>said</i>	<i>that?</i>
<i>What</i>	<i>came</i>	<i>first?</i>

If a non-subject is questioned, the interrogative word comes first, an auxiliary verb is second, and the rest of the sentence follows:

<b>Int. word</b>	<b>Auxiliary</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>
<i>Where</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>live?</i>
<i>Why</i>	<i>did</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>leave?</i>
<i>How much</i>	<i>does</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>cost?</i>
<i>Whose book</i>	<i>can</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>use?</i>

In formal style, a preposition may precede the *wh-* word. In this case the objective form *whom* replaces the less formal *who*. In informal style, the preposition is placed at the end of the phrase.

Informal: *What logic did you prove your theory with?*

Formal: *With what logic did you prove your theory?*

Con quale logica hai provato la tua teoria?

Informal: *Who did you speak to about the question?*

Formal: *To whom did you speak about the question?*

Con chi hai parlato della questione?

Negative questions can have two forms. In informal style, the auxiliary verb is made negative and the contracted form is used:

*Why didn't you help him?*

Perché non l'hai aiutato?

In formal style, the full form is used, and *not* follows the subject rather than the verb:

*Is it not true he has been found guilty?*

Non è forse vero che è stato giudicato colpevole?

☞ Note that, unlike Italian, English distinguishes between the interrogative adverb *Why?* and the conjunction of the reply *Because*:

*Why did you buy that book?*

Perché hai comprato quel libro?

*Because I'm interested in geography.*

Perché mi interessa la geografia.

Note also the difference between the pronoun *what*, used for general interrogation, and *which*, used for a choice between a limited number of options:

*What's your favourite food?*  
Qual è il tuo cibo preferito?

*Which wine would you like to drink? Red or white?*  
Quale vino vorresti bere? Rosso o bianco?

In indirect questions, Subject-Verb inversion is not used.

*She asked if I had enjoyed the play.*  
Mi ha chiesto se mi era piaciuta la commedia.

*He asked what Marxism was.*  
Ha chiesto cos'era il marxismo.

See 6.6 for tense agreement in reported speech.

As in Italian, in English interrogation can also be expressed with intonation to convey incredulity or surprise:

*He was elected chairman?*  
(I don't think he is suitable for the role.)  
È stato eletto presidente?

*She got the job?*  
(I think someone else should have got it.)  
A lei hanno dato il posto?

### 1.3.3 Tag questions

Yes/No questions are often formed by a statement followed by a question tag. If the statement contains an auxiliary verb, the tag uses the same auxiliary. If there is no auxiliary in the statement, then *do* (*does, did*) is used. The tense and pronoun of the tag match that of the statement, unlike the Italian *vero? / non è vero?*, which is invariable.

An affirmative statement is followed by a negative tag:

*You know the answer, don't you?*  
Sai la risposta, non è vero?

*He could swim, couldn't he?*  
Sapeva nuotare, non è vero?

A negative statement is followed by a positive tag:

*You don't know the answer, do you?*  
Non sai la risposta, vero?

*They couldn't come, could they?*  
Non potevano venire, vero?

The main function of this kind of question is to request confirmation of the initial statement. In this case, the tag has a falling intonation:

*You don't know him, do you? ↓*  
Non lo conosci, vero?

*It's terribly cold today, isn't it? ↓*  
Fa freddissimo oggi, non è vero?

If instead the tag is a real question, the intonation of the tag rises:

*It is time to leave, isn't it? ↑*  
È ora di partire, non è vero?

*You haven't forgotten the food, have you? ↑*  
Non hai dimenticato il cibo, vero?

The *there is (are)* construction may also be used in question tags:

*There were some books on the table, weren't there?*  
C'erano dei libri sul tavolo, non è vero?

*But there wasn't a pen, was there?*  
Ma non c'era una penna, vero?

When the subject of the sentence is a generic noun or pronoun, the impersonal plural pronoun *they* and a plural verb form are used in the question tag. Some examples:

*Everyone is here, aren't they?*  
Tutti sono qui, non è vero?  
\* Everyone is here, isn't he?

*No-one likes losing, do they?*  
A nessuno piace perdere, non è vero?  
\* No-one likes losing, does he?

Note also the unusual concord with the negative tag of the first person singular of the verb *be*:

*I am going to be President, aren't I?*  
Sarò Presidente, non è vero?

The positive tag is instead regular:

*I'm not going to win, am I?*  
Non vincerò, vero?

#### **1.4 Exclamations**

There are several ways of expressing surprise or amazement in English in which the subject and verb are inverted.

An interrogative form may be used punctuated with an exclamation mark instead of a question mark. Often this structure is reinforced by the adverb *ever*:

*Have I (ever) made a fool of myself!*  
Che figura da scemo ho fatto!

*Has that boy grown!*  
Quanto è cresciuto quel ragazzo!

*Did we ever have fun!*  
Quanto ci siamo divertiti!

A negative interrogative form may be used punctuated with an exclamation mark instead of a question mark, with a positive meaning:

*Aren't we lucky!*  
Come siamo fortunati!

*Haven't they been kind!*  
Quanto sono stati gentili!

*Didn't she look wonderful!*  
Com'era stupenda!

Exclamations with adjectives and adverbs use *How...!* and invert the normal Subject-Verb-Complement order:

*How tall he is!*  
Quanto è alto!

*How fast they can run!*  
Come corrono veloci!

Exclamations with singular nouns use the structure *What a...!* and Subject-Verb-Complement inversion:

*What a tall boy he is!*  
Che ragazzo alto!

*What a sad story he told me!*  
Che storia triste mi ha raccontato!

Exclamations with plural and uncountable nouns use the structure *What...!* and inversion as above:

*What fast runners they are!*  
Che corridori veloci!

*What luck we had!*  
Che fortuna abbiamo avuto!



Some nouns ending in *-f* or *-fe* can have two plural forms:

*hoof* → *hoofs* (*hooves*)

*scarf* → *scarfs* (*scarves*)

e) Sometimes there is an internal vowel change:

*man* → *men*    *tooth* → *teeth*    *foot* → *feet*

f) Foreign words—mainly Italian—that end in *-o*, can take their original plural *-i* (mainly for musical terms) or, more commonly, the plural is formed with the English *-s* suffix:

*concerto* → *concerti* or *concertos*    *tempo* → *tempi* or *tempos*

g) Some words that are Greek or Latin in origin retain their original plurals:

*datum* → *data*    *hypothesis* → *hypotheses*    *radius* → *radii*

Sometimes the Greek or Latin original plural is retained in scientific language, whereas an English form is used in less technical contexts. Compare:

*There are no formulas for success.*

Non esistono ricette per il successo.

*Mathematical formulae express general relationships in symbols.*

Le formule matematiche esprimono in simboli dei rapporti generali.

*The book contained indexes of names and subjects.*

Il libro conteneva indici di nomi e di materie.

*Economic indices can be very accurate.*

Gli indici economici possono essere molto precisi.

Note that *data*, the plural of *datum*, is not only used as a plural noun but also as a singular noun, especially in scientific language:

*The data have (has) been fed into the computer.*

I dati sono stati inseriti nel computer.

Words of non-classical origin, mainly French or Hebrew, may also have double plurals. Some examples are:

*Government bureaux* (British English)    *bureaus* (American English)

uffici governativi

*cherubs* (of human beings)

*cherubim* (of angels)

*The children were cherubs. Cherubim decorate the ceiling.*  
I bambini erano degli angioletti. I cherubini ornano il soffitto.

### ≠ **Plural complement**

When a singular noun is attributed to several people separately the complement in English is plural, whereas it is singular in Italian.

*They saved our lives. We washed our faces.*  
Ci hanno salvato la vita. Ci siamo lavati il viso.  
\* They saved our life. \* We washed our face.

*There was great social change in the 18th and 19th centuries.*  
Ci furono enormi cambiamenti sociali nel XVIII e XIX secolo.  
\* There was great social change in the 18th and 19th century.

In constructions with collective noun + plural complement, the principle of proximity applies and verb agreement is most commonly made with the plural complement rather than with the singular collective noun:

*A group of us are planning to visit the museum.*  
Un gruppo di noi ha intenzione di visitare il museo.

*A team of football players are training in the park.*  
Una squadra di calcio si sta allenando nel parco.

Some other set phrases with plural complements:

*Let's make friends. I shook hands with him.*  
Facciamo amicizia. Gli ho stretto la mano.

### **2.1.2 Singular nouns with plural reference**

≠ Uncountable nouns are generally singular in form, plural in meaning, and are followed by a singular verb. Several of the uncountable nouns in English are countable in Italian. They include: *advice, baggage, business, fruit, furniture, hair, information, knowledge, luggage, money, news, progress, rubbish.*

*His advice was excellent. The furniture is antique.*  
I suoi consigli furono preziosi. I mobili sono antichi.  
\* His advices were excellent. \* The furnitures are antique.

*The news is good.*  
Le notizie sono buone.  
\* The news are good.

*I need some information.*  
Ho bisogno di un'informazione.  
\* I need an information.

If it is necessary to specify a singular form, use may be made of expressions such as *a piece of*, *an item of*, *a bit of*, or a specific countable noun.

*He brought me a piece of good news and a piece of bad news.*  
Mi ha portato una buona notizia e una cattiva.

*Would you like a piece of fruit? (Would you like a pear?)*  
Vuoi un frutto?

Some of these nouns do have a plural form and can be used with plural verbs:

a) in technical contexts:

*The market for tropical fruits is expanding.*  
Il mercato per i frutti tropicali è in espansione.

*The company invested moneys in real estate.*  
La società fece degli investimenti immobiliari.

b) in specific, countable contexts. Compare:

*Business is bad.*  
Gli affari vanno male.

*Many small businesses have closed because of the recession.*  
Molte piccole aziende hanno chiuso a causa della recessione.

*His hair is long.*  
Ha i capelli lunghi.

*He has three hairs on his chin.*  
Ha tre peli sul mento.

The names of certain animals have only a singular form, but their meaning, and verb, may be singular or plural. Some examples are: *fish*, *sheep*, *deer*, *trout*, *salmon*. Compare:

*I found a lost sheep.*  
Ho trovata una pecora smarrita.

*Three sheep were standing in the field.*  
C'erano tre pecore nel campo.

Reference to animals that are hunted is usually singular; it is plural in non-technical reference. Compare:

*He shoots duck in Scotland.*  
Va a caccia di anatre in Scozia.

*They bought three ducks for their pond.*  
Hanno comprato tre anatre per lo stagno.

A few nouns ending in *-(e)s* are invariable, with the same form in the singular and plural. Some examples are: *means, series, species*.

≠ A group of collective nouns have a singular form, plural meaning and are used with a plural verb form. They include *cattle, clergy, people, police*.

*The police are coming.*  
Arriva la polizia.  
\* The police is coming.

*People are sometimes generous.*  
Qualche volta la gente è generosa.  
\* People is sometimes generous.

*The clergy have been persecuted for their faith.*  
Il clero è stato perseguitato per la sua fede.

However, *people* may be used in a plural form with a plural verb when it refers to the population of a country or race:

*The peoples of the Pacific region.*  
I popoli del Pacifico.

Note how a proper noun may also have a collective function:

*Buckingham Palace is where the Queen lives.*  
Buckingham Palace è dove risiede la Regina.

*Buckingham Palace have confirmed the news.*  
Buckingham Palace ha confermato la notizia.

### 2.1.3 Plural nouns

Some nouns are always plural in English. Some of the most common of these nouns are: *arms, clothes, customs, earnings, savings, thanks*.

*His thanks were gratefully received.*  
I suoi ringraziamenti furono molto graditi.

*The soldiers laid down their arms.*  
I soldati deposero le armi.

Another group of plural nouns are objects made up of two parts: *binoculars, glasses, pyjamas, scales, scissors, trousers*. For singular reference, the construction *a pair of* is used.

*I've bought some new scales (a new pair of scales).*  
Ho comprato una nuova bilancia.  
\* I have bought a scale.

*I need some scissors (a pair of scissors).*  
Ho bisogno di una forbice.  
\* I need a scissor.

Note that the plural names of countries (such as *the United States, The Netherlands*) generally take a singular verb:

*The United States is sending troops to Africa.*  
Gli Stati Uniti stanno inviando truppe in Africa.

*The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy.*  
I Paesi Bassi sono una monarchia costituzionale.

Plural names of titles also take a singular verb:

Gulliver's Travels is one of my favourite books.  
*I viaggi di Gulliver è uno dei miei libri preferiti.*

### 2.1.4 Collective nouns



Collective nouns can take either a singular or a plural verb with singular or plural reference. Some of the most common collective nouns in English are: *army, audience, family, government, jury, majority, minority, navy, public, staff, team.*

The verb is singular if the word refers to the single group or unit:

*The team is playing extremely well this year.*  
La squadra gioca benissimo quest'anno.

The verb is plural if the word refers to the individuals who make up the unit. In this case the plural reference may be translated with the Italian *i membri / i giocatori*:

*The jury have been unable to come to an agreement.*  
I membri della giuria non sono riusciti a trovare un accordo.

In American English collective nouns are generally used with a singular verb, whilst in British English both singular and plural are possible.

However, a subject may sometimes be used with a singular verb and then be referred to by a plural pronoun, especially if the pronoun is some distance from the noun. A possible example is:

*John's family lives in Liverpool, but they are moving to Leeds soon.*  
La famiglia di John abita a Liverpool, ma presto si trasferirà a Leeds.

In addition, the singular-plural concord with collective nouns also applies to possessive adjectives:

*A group of students left (its) their books in the classroom.*  
Un gruppo di studenti ha lasciato i libri nell'aula.

Again, the concept of proximity means that the plural possessive adjective in the example above would be more common.

The choice of relative pronouns is also affected by the singular - plural concord with collective nouns. When the unit is considered as a single unit, the impersonal relative pronoun *which* is used:

*Jane's family, which lives next-door, has decided to move.*

La famiglia di Jane, che abita nella casa accanto, ha deciso di traslocare.

On the contrary, when reference is to the members of the collective group, the personal relative pronoun *who* is used:

*The family, who agree on most things, have quarrelled.*

I membri della famiglia, che concordano sulla maggior parte delle cose, hanno litigato.

See also **10** on relative clauses.

### 2.1.5 Compound nouns

Compound nouns are made up of different combinations. Some examples are:

- a) noun + noun: *school teacher, gold medal, street name.*
- b) noun + gerund: *bird-watching, mountain-climbing, trout fishing.*
- c) gerund + noun: *dining room, swimming pool, racing track.*

In compound nouns, it is generally the last word that is made plural:

<i>school teachers</i>	<i>world languages</i>	<i>swimming pools</i>
insegnanti	lingue mondiali	piscine

Occasionally it is the first word that is made plural:

a) if the word contains an adverb or preposition:

<i>brothers-in-law</i>	<i>passers-by</i>
cognati	passanti

b) if the first word is a noun followed by an adjective. (See also **4.1.1**):

<i>poets laureate</i>	<i>notaries public</i>
poeti laureati	notai

If the first word contains the words *man* or *woman*, both words are made plural:

<i>menservants</i>	<i>women teachers</i>	<i>gentlemen farmers</i>
domestici	maestre	gentiluomini di campagna

In a very few cases, the adjectival noun may have a plural form as part of a singular noun. This is especially the case of plural nouns (see **2.1.3** above).

<i>a customs officer</i>	<i>a savings account</i>
un ufficiale di dogana	un libretto di risparmio

### 2.1.6 Acronyms and abbreviations

The plural of most acronyms is made with the *-s* suffix. Once punctuated with an apostrophe (*CD's*), plural acronyms are today usually written with no punctuation:

MP →	MPs	<i>Members of Parliament</i>
VIP →	VIPs	<i>Very Important People</i>

The plurals of Latin acronyms are formed by doubling:

MS → MSS	PS → PSS
<i>manuscripts</i>	<i>postscripts</i>

Most abbreviations form their plural with the *-s* suffix:

vol. → vols.	ed. → eds.
<i>volumes</i>	<i>editors</i>

Some, however, form their plural with doubling:

p. → pp.	l. → ll.
<i>pages</i>	<i>lines</i>

## 2.2 Proper nouns

Proper nouns are written with an initial capital letter and include personal names (*John, Mr Smith, The Times*), calendar items (*Easter, January, Monday*), geographical names (*Italy, America*). Some unique common nouns can also function as proper nouns, for example: *Nature, Heaven, Hell*.

Proper nouns do not generally have a plural form and are used with the definite article only in certain restricted cases. See **3.1** for further details.

However, personal names can sometimes be used as countable nouns, as in the following examples:

a) to denote typical characteristics:

*He is no Einstein.*  
Non è un Einstein.

*She is a real Cassandra.*  
È una vera Cassandra.

b) to refer to people or places with the same name:

*There are two Venices: one in Italy and the other in California.*  
Ci sono due città chiamate Venezia: una in Italia e l'altra in California.

*There are millions of John Smiths.*  
Ci sono milioni di persone col nome di John Smith.

*The Moores are waiting outside.*  
La famiglia Moore aspetta fuori.

c) to refer to a product of someone's work:

*He's just bought a Renoir.*  
Ha appena comprato un (quadro di) Renoir.

*We'd like a new Jaguar.*  
Ci piacerebbe una nuova Jaguar.

Proper nouns may also function as adjectives:

*We've just read a Shakespeare play.*  
Abbiamo appena letto una commedia di Shakespeare.

Proper nouns may also be eponyms, common nouns that derive from the names of people. Some of the best-known in English are: *sandwich, cardigan, wellington*.

### **2.3 Verbs as nouns**

The infinitive or an infinitive phrase can be used as a noun:

*To know him is to love him.*  
Conoscerlo è amarlo.

If the action is used in a general sense, the *-ing* form can be used:

*Getting to know people can sometimes be difficult.*  
Conoscere le persone può qualche volta essere difficile.

However, it is more usual to use the construction introduced by *it* (see **3.4** Introductory *It*):

*It is very useful to know how to use a computer well.*  
È molto utile sapere usare bene il computer.

## 2.4 Adjectives as nouns

Adjectives can sometimes function as nouns. Some examples are:

a) adjectives connected with a noun that is omitted:

<i>a daily</i> ( <i>a daily newspaper</i> ) un quotidiano	<i>a comic</i> ( <i>a comic actor</i> ) un comico
---	---

b) adjectives, preceded by the definite article, referring to abstract qualities in formal style:

<i>the sublime</i> il sublime	<i>the unusual</i> l'insolito
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c) adjectives, preceded by the definite article, referring to groups or classes of people:

<i>the rich</i> i ricchi	<i>the poor</i> i poveri	<i>the blind</i> i ciechi	<i>the old</i> gli anziani
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Note that while the verb form with class nouns is always plural, the noun itself is not made plural:

*The young enjoy having a good time.*  
Ai giovani piace divertirsi.  
\*The youngs enjoy having a good time.

A class noun always has a generic meaning and cannot be made specific. In specific references, an adjective + noun is used:

*The rich people that I know are always depressed.*

I ricchi che conosco sono sempre depressi.

\* The rich that I know are always depressed.

*A poor person does not have much money.*

Un povero non ha molti soldi.

\* A poor does not have much money.

Class nouns cannot be used with the genitive case:

*The standard of living of the unemployed is often very low.*

Il tenore di vita dei disoccupati è spesso piuttosto basso.

\* The unemployed's standard of living is often very low.

Nationality nouns refer to the people of a country and take a plural verb form. They are always written with a capital letter:

*The French are known for their style and the Italians for their cuisine.*

I francesi sono noti per il loro stile e gli italiani per la loro cucina.

Nationality nouns add the *-s* plural suffix with the exception of those ending in *-sh*, *-ch* or *-ese*, which do not take a plural form:

*The English have always had uneasy relations with the French.*

Gli inglesi hanno sempre avuto rapporti tesi con i francesi.

*The Germans were allied with the Japanese and the Italians in the war.*

Durante la guerra, i tedeschi erano alleati con i giapponesi e con gli italiani.

## 2.5 Possession

### 2.5.1 Genitive case

Modern English has two types of genitive constructions. The most common places the possessor before the possessed item with the addition of the *'s* suffix. This construction is generally used with people, animals or personified objects (cities, countries, collective nouns):

*Jane's car*  
la macchina di Jane

*London's streets*  
le strade di Londra

With plural nouns ending in *-s* and with classical proper names ending in *-s*, the apostrophe alone is added:

*the students' results*  
i risultati degli studenti

*Euripides' plays*  
i drammi di Euripide

Other names that end in *-s*, can either add *'s* or the apostrophe alone:

*Keats' (Keats's) poetry*  
la poesia di Keats

*Hans' (Hans's) brother*  
il fratello di Hans

If there is more than one possessor of a single object, the *'s* is added to the last name:

*Victoria and Albert's marriage lasted until he died.*  
Il matrimonio di Victoria e Albert durò fino alla morte di lui.

If there is more than one possessor of different subjects, each name takes the *'s* suffix:

*Both John's and Jack's marriages have broken down.*  
I matrimoni di John e di Jack sono falliti entrambi.

More than one genitive construction may occur in the same sentence.

*Do you know where John's sister's son lives?*  
Sai dove abita il figlio della sorella di John?

The genitive case is not only used to convey possession. Some of its other uses are:

a) in expressions of time, distance, and worth:

*today's paper*  
il giornale di oggi

*two pounds' worth of potatoes*  
due sterline di patate

*in three years' time*  
fra tre anni

*a kilometre's distance*  
la distanza di un chilometro

b) in descriptions:

*a winter's night*  
una notte d'inverno

*a girls' school*  
una scuola per ragazze.

Difficulties with the genitive case may arise with the subjective and objective genitive forms. Compare:

*Sarah's invitation to the party arrived by post.*  
(Sarah was invited - objective genitive)  
L'invito alla festa per Sarah arrivò per posta.

*Sarah's invitation was really surprising.*  
(Sarah invited - subjective genitive)  
L'invito di Sarah fu davvero sorprendente.

Nouns may be omitted when used with the genitive case:

*Susan's essay is better than Peter's essay.*  
La tesina di Susan è migliore della tesina di Peter.

*Susan's is better than Peter's.*  
Quella di Susan è migliore di quella di Peter.

The noun may also be omitted with locational genitives:

*I went to my sister's.*  
(*I went to my sister's house.*)  
Sono andato da mia sorella.

*We visited St. David's.*  
(*We visited St. David's church.*)  
Abbiamo visitato la chiesa di St. David.

*I must go to the baker's to buy some bread.*  
(*I must go to the baker's shop to buy some bread.*)  
Devo andare dal fornaio per comprare del pane.

Note that with very well-known shops, the genitive apostrophe is often omitted:

*My mother shops at Harrods.*  
Mia madre si serve da Harrods.

### 2.5.2 **Of + noun**

When the possessor is inanimate, the *of* + noun construction is used:

<i>the back of my hand</i>	<i>the leg of the chair</i>
il dorso della mia mano	la gamba della sedia

The *of* + noun construction may also be used with proper names or animate possessors when greater emphasis is given to the possessor. Compare:

*Shakespeare's plays are better known than his sonnets.*  
I drammi di Shakespeare sono più conosciuti dei suoi sonetti.

*I have read all the plays of Shakespeare but not those of Pinter.*  
Ho letto tutti i drammi di Shakespeare, ma non quelli di Pinter.

### 2.5.3 **Double genitive**

The *of* + noun structure can combine with the -'s genitive to form the double genitive. This construction can only be used with a definite animate possessor.

<i>a friend of John and Sue's</i>	<i>a sonnet of Shakespeare's</i>
un amico di John e Sue	un sonetto di Shakespeare

☞ The -'s genitive may also be replaced by a possessive pronoun:

<i>a friend of theirs</i>	<i>a sonnet of his</i>
un loro amico	un suo sonetto
* a their friend	* a his sonnet

<i>this friend of mine</i>	<i>some friends of ours</i>
questo mio amico	degli amici nostri
* this my friend	* some our friends

A more specific reference may be obtained with the use of numbers:

<i>one of their friends</i>	<i>two of his sonnets</i>
uno dei loro amici	due dei suoi sonetti

### 2.5.4 Noun + noun

An alternative to the *of* + noun construction is the noun + noun structure. This structure is used when the first noun classifies the second in some way. The two nouns may be joined to form a compound noun, linked by a hyphen, or written as two separate words. For example:

<i>a shoulder bag</i>	una borsa a tracolla
<i>a handbag</i>	una borsetta
<i>a sports bag</i>	un borsone da ginnastica
<i>a shopping bag</i>	una borsa della spesa
<i>a golf bag</i>	una sacca da golf

### 2.5.5 Possessive adjectives

≠ In English, possessive adjectives always agree with the gender of the possessor and not with the noun possessed:

<i>his book</i>	<i>her books</i>
il suo (di lui) libro	i suoi (di lei) libri

Possessive adjectives can never be used with the definite article:

<i>my house</i>	<i>our suitcases</i>
la mia casa	le nostre valigie
* the my house	* the our suitcases

They can, however, be used with numbers and expressions of quantity:

<i>his two friends</i>	<i>their many mistakes</i>
i suoi due amici	i loro molti errori
* the his two friends	* the their many mistakes

Possessive adjectives are used with clothes, parts of the body, personal objects, family relations, and personal abilities:

<i>Put on your coat.</i>	<i>I have lost my pen.</i>
Mettiti il cappotto.	Ho perso la penna.
*Put on the coat.	* I have lost the pen.

*Her mother had died years before.*  
La madre le era morta anni prima.  
\* The (her) mother had died years before.

*Her French was perfect.*  
Il suo francese era perfetto.  
\* The her French was perfect.

However, in prepositional phrases – especially with physical contact – when reference to the possessor has already been made, the definite article is more usual. Compare:

*She put her hand on his shoulder.*  
Lei gli mise la mano sulla spalla.  
\* She put the hand on the his shoulder.

*She hit me on the shoulder with a book.*  
Mi ha colpito sulla spalla con un libro.

Possessive adjectives (and genitive nouns) may also be used with gerund constructions.

*I was sorry about his (John's) leaving so early.*  
Mi è dispiaciuto che egli (John) partisse così presto.

*The girl's (her) arriving on time was a great help.*  
Il fatto che la ragazza (lei) fosse arrivata in orario fu di grande aiuto.

## 2.6 Gender



In English, nouns referring to people are generally neutral with regard to gender. *Friend*, for example, corresponds to the Italian *amico / amica*. Gender is indicated by personal pronouns or possessive adjectives, by the context, or by the addition of a gender-specific adjective. Compare:

*My friend is French.*  
Il mio amico / La mia amica è francese.

*My friend and her husband live in Paris.*  
La mia amica e suo marito abitano a Parigi.

*My women friends all work for the same company.*  
Le mie amiche lavorano per la stessa ditta.

However, some nouns have different forms for male and female reference, for example:

*uncle - aunt*  
zio - zia

*brother - sister*  
fratello - sorella

*king - queen*  
re - regina

Note that, as English does not have a generic male plural reference, both male and female forms must be specified.

*My uncle and aunt have just celebrated their wedding anniversary.*  
I miei zii hanno appena festeggiato l'anniversario di matrimonio.  
\*My uncles have just celebrated their wedding anniversary.

*Have you got any brothers and sisters?*  
Hai fratelli?  
\* Have you got any brothers?

When referring to professions or titles, there may be a specific form for the female noun, for example:

*prince - princess*  
principe - principessa

*hero - heroine*  
eroe - eroina

*usher - usherette*  
maschera (al teatro)

Today the tendency is to avoid these female nouns in professional contexts and instead to use nouns that can refer to both men and women, such as *author*, *poet*, *head teacher*, *police officer*, instead of *authoress*, *poetess*, *head-mistress/master*, *policewoman/man*. Similarly, the words *man* and *mankind* have traditionally been used to describe humanity in general. Today *human beings* or *men and women* are more acceptable alternatives.

Nouns indicating animals are generally neuter when the sex of the animal is unknown or unimportant. Male-female forms are used in more specific contexts. Compare:

*The dog bit the postman.*  
Il cane ha morso il postino.

*The bitch had four puppies.*  
La cagna partorì quattro cuccioli.

Some examples of male-female pairs:

*bull - cow*  
il toro - la mucca

*tiger - tigress*  
la tigre - la tigre (femmina)

*he-goat - she-goat*  
il caprone - la capra

*male frog - female frog*  
la rana - la rana (femmina)

### 3 ARTICLES AND PRONOUNS

#### 3.1 Articles

In English, the use of articles (definite and indefinite) depends on two basic factors: the class of noun they precede (singular, plural, uncountable), and whether reference is generic or specific.

##### 3.1.1 Definite article

The definite article *the* is used to indicate a *particular* thing or things.

The definite article is always used with singular countable nouns in *specific* contexts:

*I studied the text for the exam.*

Ho studiato il testo per l'esame.

*We bought the book he needed.*

Abbiamo comprato il libro che gli serviva.

The definite article is used before uncountable nouns in *specific* contexts:

*The death of the actress was tragic.*

La morte dell'attrice fu tragica.

*The time he spent at university was happy.*

Il periodo che ha trascorso all'università è stato felice.

The definite article is used before plural countable nouns in *specific* contexts:

*The theories he put forward were wrong.*

Le teorie che proponeva erano sbagliate.

*The texts we read are interesting.*

I testi che abbiamo letto sono interessanti.

☐ The definite article is **not** used before uncountable nouns in *generic* contexts:

*Death is inevitable.*

La morte è inevitabile.

\* The death is inevitable.

*Time goes faster as you get older.*

Il tempo passa più veloce man mano che si invecchia.

\* The time goes faster as you get older.

The definite article is **not** used before plural countable nouns in *generic* contexts:

*Theories are often insufficient.*

Le teorie sono spesso insufficienti.

\* The theories are often insufficient.

*Philosophical texts can be hard to understand.*

I testi filosofici possono essere difficili da capire.

\* The philosophical texts can be hard to understand.

The context is made *specific*:

a) when the noun is made definite by the addition of a clause:

*The time (that) he spent at university.*

Il tempo che ha trascorso all'università.

*The text (that is) used in the course.*

Il testo che viene usato nel corso.

b) when clearly implied by the context:

*The children are in the garden.*

I (nostri) bambini sono nel giardino (di casa).

*I'm seeing the doctor this afternoon.*

Vado dal (mio) medico oggi pomeriggio.

c) with the construction *the ... of*:

*the death of the actress*

la morte dell'attrice

*the beauty of the sunset*

la bellezza del tramonto

Note that reference is **not** made specific by an adjective:

*I love English literature.*  
Amo la letteratura inglese.  
\* I love the English literature.

*I love modern English literature.*  
Amo la letteratura inglese moderna.  
\* I love the modern English literature.

*I love the literature of the Renaissance.*  
Amo la letteratura del Rinascimento.

*I love the literature that deals with social problems.*  
Amo la letteratura che affronta problemi sociali.

The definite article can also be used with a singular noun for a class of animals or things:

*The dog is man's best friend.*  
Il cane è il miglior amico dell'uomo.

*The philosopher seeks truth.*  
Il filosofo cerca la verità.

The definite article is used before superlatives and ordinal numbers:

<i>the best</i>	<i>the worst</i>	<i>the first, the second, the third</i>
il migliore	il peggiore	il primo, il secondo, il terzo

☒ The definite article is generally **not** used:

a) with possessive adjectives:

*This is my car.*  
Questo è la mia auto.  
\* This is the my car.

b) with names of meals unless the reference is defined. Compare:

*We have breakfast at 8 a.m.*  
Facciamo colazione alle 8.  
\* We have the breakfast at 8 a.m.

*The breakfast you cooked us was delicious.*  
La colazione che ci hai preparato era squisita.

c) with the names of games:

*He enjoys watching football on TV.*  
Gli piace guardare il calcio alla televisione.  
\* He enjoys watching the football on TV.

d) with vehicles defining means of transport:

*They go to work by car.*  
Vanno al lavoro in macchina.  
\* They go to work by the car.

e) the names of people:

*Here is Mrs Smith.*  
Ecco la signora Smith.  
\* Here is the Mrs Smith.

Note, however, the following exceptions:

*The John Smith (that) I know has red hair.*  
Il John Smith che io conosco ha i capelli rossi.

*The young Shakespeare was already a master of language.*  
Il giovane Shakespeare era già un maestro nell'uso del linguaggio.

*The Browns live in the city centre.*  
La famiglia Brown abita in centro città.

f) with the names of countries or cities, unless plural or defined in some way:

*He loved Spain, The Netherlands and the United States.*  
Amava la Spagna, i Paesi Bassi e gli Stati Uniti.  
\* He loved the Spain, The Netherlands and the United States.

*The London of my childhood was so different from London today.*  
La Londra della mia infanzia era così diversa dalla Londra odierna.

Some exceptions are: *the Argentine* (or *Argentina*), *the Soviet Union*, *The Hague*, *the City*, *the Bronx*.

g) with the names of single mountains:

*Mount Everest*

*Ben Nevis*

*Mount Fuji*

Note that mountain ranges, however, use the article:

*The Alps*

*The Dolomites*

*The Pennines*

h) with the names of lakes:

*Lake Windermere*

*Bassenthwaite Lake*

Note that the names of rivers use the article:

*the Thames*

*the Nile*

*the Mississippi*

i) before months, years and percentages:

*He left in January.*

*È partito a gennaio.*

*\* He left in the January.*

*He was born in 1590.*

*Nacque nel 1590.*

*\* He was born in the 1590.*

*Inflation has reached 10%*

*L'inflazione ha raggiunto il 10%*

*\* The inflation has reached the 10%*

The definite article is used, however, before decades:

*The Great Depression began in the US in the 1930s.*

*La grande depressione ebbe inizio negli Stati Uniti negli anni trenta del Novecento.*

and before references defined with the constructions listed above:

*He left in the January of 1980.*

*È partito nel gennaio del 1980.*

*The November that we separated was a sad month.*  
Il novembre nel quale ci siamo separati fu un mese triste.

With nouns referring to institutions (*church, hospital, school, prison, court* etc.) the use or omission of the definite article can change the meaning of the sentence. The use of the article implies reference to the building; without the article the reference is to the institution. Compare:

*I went to church to pray.*  
Sono andato in chiesa per pregare.

*I went to the church to listen to a concert.*  
Sono andato in chiesa per sentire un concerto.

*She went to hospital.*  
È stata ricoverata in ospedale.

*She went to the hospital to visit her friend.*  
È andata all'ospedale a trovare un'amica.

The noun *home* can be used without the article if used alone:

<i>We are at home.</i>	<i>They went home.</i>
Siamo a casa.	Sono andati a casa.

If described by an adjective, thus referring to the building, the article is used:

*We have just moved to the new home on the hill.*  
Ci siamo appena trasferiti nella nuova casa sulla collina.

The uncountable noun *work* is generally used without the definite article:

<i>He is at work.</i>	<i>He goes to work by bus.</i>
È al lavoro.	Va al lavoro in autobus.

As a countable noun, *work* is used with the definite article in specific contexts:

*We admired the work of art.*  
Abbiamo ammirato l'opera d'arte.

*They read the complete works of Shakespeare.*  
Hanno letto le opere complete di Shakespeare.

*The road works will be finished by the end of the year.*  
I lavori stradali saranno completati entro la fine dell'anno.

The definite article usually precedes adjectives in a noun phrase. However, when used with *all, both, half, double, twice, triple* etc. the definite article follows the adjective:

*We played cards all (the) evening.*  
Abbiamo giocato a carte tutta la sera.

*Both (the) dictionaries gave an inadequate definition.*  
Entrambi i dizionari davano una definizione inadeguata.

*I bought twice the amount of sugar I needed.*  
Ho comprato due volte lo zucchero che mi serviva.

### 3.1.2 Indefinite article

The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before singular countable nouns; *a* is used before words beginning with a consonant, or a consonant sound:

<i>a book</i>	<i>a bed</i>	<i>a tree</i>
<i>a one-year plan</i>	<i>a university</i>	<i>a European</i>
* an one-year plan	* an university	* an European

*an* is used before words beginning with a vowel, or a vowel sound:

<i>an edition</i>	<i>an accident</i>	<i>an apple</i>
<i>an X-ray</i>	<i>an hour</i>	<i>an heir</i>
* a X-ray	* a hour	* a heir

☒ The indefinite article is typically used with singular countable nouns.

*He is a doctor.*  
Fa il medico.  
\* He is the doctor.

*I am a student.*  
Sono studente.  
\* I am student.

However, the indefinite article is often omitted when two qualities are compared or contrasted:

*As doctor and researcher she had enormous professional success.*  
Come medico e ricercatore lei ebbe un enorme successo professionale.

The indefinite article is also omitted when reference is made to a profession or office held by one person:

*George VI became king in 1936.*  
George VI divenne re nel 1936.

*She became head teacher in 1999.*  
È diventata preside nel 1999.

With plural countable nouns, no article is used in generic reference. In specific reference the partitive *some* and *any* are used. Compare:

<i>They were thieves.</i>	<i>Some thieves broke into our house.</i>
Erano dei ladri.	Dei ladri sono entrati in casa nostra.
* They were some thieves.	

The indefinite article can be used with a singular noun to indicate general classification:

<i>A dog is a faithful animal.</i>	<i>A doctor treats ill people.</i>
Il cane è un animale fedele.	Un medico cura gli ammalati.

It is also used in expressions of ratio:

<i>once a month</i>	<i>100 km an hour</i>
una volta al mese	100 chilometri all'ora
* once in the month	* 100 km the hour

The use of the indefinite article changes the meaning of the words *few* and *little*:

*I have read a few books this year.*  
Ho letto alcuni (non molti) libri quest'anno.

*Few books will give you the right answer.*  
Pochissimi libri ti daranno la risposta giusta.

*I have a little time. I will give you a hand.*  
Ho un po' di tempo (non molto). Ti darò una mano.

*I have little time left to finish the essay. I can't help you now.*  
Mi è rimasto pochissimo tempo per completare la tesina. Non ti posso aiutare ora.

Note, however, that *quite a few* means 'a lot of':

*I have got quite a few books to read by Monday.*  
Ho parecchi libri da leggere per lunedì.

The indefinite article does not modify the meaning of *a lot of (lots of)* :

*He has a lot of (lots of) books to read for the exam.*  
Ha molti libri da leggere per l'esame.

☒ In English care must be taken not to confuse the indefinite article (*a / an*) with the number *one*, which is used to indicate 'one only/not more than one'. In Italian, there is no distinction between the indefinite article (*un / una / uno*) and the number *one (uno)*.

*He explained a grammar point.*  
Spiegò un elemento di grammatica.

*He explained (only) one grammar point.*  
Spiegò un (solo) elemento di grammatica.

The indefinite article can, however, have a numerical sense in the following contexts:

a) after *not* in expressions such as *not a word, trace, penny*:

*Not a (one) word was said about his bankruptcy.*  
Non si sentì neanche una parola riguardo al suo fallimento.

*Not a (one) penny was spent on research.*  
Non si spese neanche una lira per la ricerca.

b) with numbers:

*a (one) hundred soldiers*  
cento soldati

*a (one) thousand pounds*  
mille sterline

Note the construction with *half*:

*one and a half years*  
*a year and a half*  
un anno e mezzo  
\* one and a half year

*nine and a half weeks*  
nove settimane e mezza  
\* nine weeks and a half

Although the indefinite article is not generally used with proper nouns, it can be used to convey the meaning 'a certain':

*There is a John Smith on the phone.*  
C'è un certo John Smith al telefono.

It can also have the meaning 'the same' in a few expressions such as:

*Birds of a feather flock together.*  
Ogni simile ama il suo simile.

*They were much of a height.*  
Erano pressappoco della stessa altezza.

The indefinite article generally precedes adjectives before a noun. In the following cases it follows the adjective:

a) after *half, many, no less* (American English, however, uses the expression *a half litre, a half hour*):

*You need half a litre of milk for this recipe.*  
Ci vuole mezzo litro di latte per questa ricetta.

*I'll be ready in half an hour.*  
Sarò pronto fra mezz'ora.

*Many a time I thought I had made a mistake.*  
Molte volte ho pensato di aver sbagliato.

*We met no less a person than Prince Charles.*  
Abbiamo conosciuto nientemeno che il principe Carlo.

b) after adjectives preceded by *so, as, too, how, however, such*:



*John is in hospital.* — *I know.*  
John è in ospedale. — Lo so.  
John is in hospital. — \* I know it.

*Can you buy some bread?* — *I'll try and remember.*  
Puoi comprare del pane? — Cercherò di ricordarmelo.  
Can you buy some bread? — \* I'll try and remember it.

However, if reference is to a preceding noun, the pronoun is necessary:

*Explain your reasons. I just can't understand them.*  
Spiega le tue ragioni. Proprio non le capisco.

*We had a terrible accident. He'll never forget it.*  
Abbiamo fatto un incidente spaventoso. Non lo dimenticherà mai.

The subject pronoun must be omitted in passive phrases after the conjunction *as* when the main clause is the implied subject of secondary clause.

*As will be shown below, Einstein's hypothesis is correct.*  
Come si dimostrerà più avanti, l'ipotesi di Einstein è corretta.  
\* As it will be shown below, Einstein's hypothesis is correct.

*The results are often positive, as was the case last year.*  
I risultati sono spesso positivi, com'è accaduto l'anno scorso.  
\* The results are often positive, as it was the case last year.

The object cannot be repeated as both noun and pronoun:

*I will buy the book tomorrow.*  
Il libro lo compro domani.  
\*The book I will buy it tomorrow.

*We picked the flowers in the wood.*  
I fiori li abbiamo raccolti nel bosco.  
\*The flowers we picked them in the wood.

A double subject or object is only possible when introduced as a noun followed by a comma in very informal style for reasons of emphasis:

*That film, you've just got to see it.*  
Quel film, lo devi davvero vedere.

*Tom, he was a real nuisance.*  
Tom, lui sì che è stato una vera scocciatura.

English has no polite personal pronoun. The pronoun *you* is used in both formal and informal reference, corresponding to the Italian *tu* and *Lei*. Additional formality or politeness is conveyed by the use of certain formulas. No capitalisation is used.

*May I help you?*  
Posso aiutarLa?

*Could I possibly ask you to leave?*  
Lei è pregata di andarsene.

*Would you mind opening the window?*  
Le dispiacerebbe aprire il finestrino?

Archaic English uses a familiar second person pronoun *thou* (possessive adjective *thy*; possessive pronoun *thine*). It is still occasionally used in poetry.

### 3.2.2 Imperative and pronouns

In English the second person imperative is formed with the base of the verb. Generally no subject or object pronoun is used.

The imperative is used to give orders, suggestions, requests and invitations:

*Come over here!*  
Vieni qui!

*Have a drink.*  
Bevi qualcosa.

*Stop doing that!*  
Smettila!

*Help me.*  
Aiutami.

Negative imperatives are formed with the auxiliary *don't*. This form is used even with the auxiliary verb *be*.

*Don't drink any more.*  
Non bere più.

*Don't be so silly.*  
Non essere così sciocco.

The imperative can, however, be used with the subject pronoun *you* to stress the speaker's authority. The pronoun is always placed at the beginning of the phrase:

*You do what I tell you, or there'll be trouble.*  
Fa' quello che ti dico, o saranno guai.

*You listen to me!*  
Ascoltami tu!

Or to express contrast between two alternative actions:

*You answer the first question and I'll answer the second.*  
Rispondi alla prima domanda e io risponderò alla seconda.

The pronoun may also be used in a negative imperative:

*Don't you do that!*                      *I love her and don't you try to deny it.*  
Non farlo proprio!                      La amo e tu non provare a negarlo.

The imperative can also be used with an impersonal subject, either singular or plural:

*Somebody come and help me.*    *Everybody get ready to leave.*  
Qualcuno venga ad aiutarmi.    Preparatevi tutti a partire.

The first person imperative is formed with *let us (let's)+ bare infinitive*:

*Let us go now.*                              *Let's give them a hand.*  
Andiamo ora.                              Diamogli una mano.

The negative adds *not* before the bare infinitive in formal style:

*Let's not be afraid.*                      *Let's not stop right now.*  
Non abbiamo paura!                      Non fermiamoci proprio ora!

In informal style, the negative auxiliary *don't* can be used before *let's*:

*Don't let's go.*                              *Don't let's stop.*  
Non andiamo!                              Non fermiamoci!

The third person imperative is formed with *let him (her, it, them)*:

*Let them eat cake.*

Che mangino focaccia!

*Let her come at 10.*

Che venga alle 10.

This is, however, a very uncommon form in modern English except in very formal contexts.

### 3.2.3 Impersonal pronouns

English has two indefinite impersonal pronouns: *one* and *you*. *One* is the more formal pronoun; *you* is less formal and more commonly used. Both correspond to the Italian impersonal *si*.

*One must always do one's duty.*

Si deve sempre fare il proprio dovere.

*You never know what to do when you are down.*

Non si sa mai che fare quando si è giù di morale.

The pronouns *we* and *they* can also be used with less generic reference:

*What shall we do today?*

Che si fa oggi?

*They say she is very wealthy.*

Si dice che sia molto ricca.

### 3.2.4 Possessive pronouns



In English, possessive pronouns have a different form from possessive adjectives, and are never used with the definite article:

*She is my mother.*

È mia madre.

*She is mine.*

È (la) mia.

*Jane and Jenny are her daughters.*

Jane e Jenny sono figlie sue.

*They are hers.*

Sone (le) sue.

### 3.2.5 Reflexive and emphatic pronouns



Reflexive pronouns have a singular and plural form: *self/ selves*. English has few verbs that are obligatorily reflexive: *absent oneself (from)*, *avail oneself (of)*, *perjure oneself*, *pride oneself (on)*.

*He prided himself on his knowledge.*

Era orgoglioso della propria cultura.

Some verbs change meaning when used as reflexive verbs. Compare

*I applied myself to the job.*  
Mi sono dedicato al lavoro.

*I applied for the job.*  
Feci domanda del posto di lavoro.

*I apply the rules.*  
Applico le regole.

Generally, however, reflexive actions are expressed with a possessive adjective.

*Put on your hat.*  
Mettiti il cappello.

*I broke my leg.*  
Mi sono rotta la gamba.

Transitive verbs with the same subject and object may be used with reflexive pronouns to stress the reflexive action or for contrastive purposes. Compare:

*I got up, washed and dressed.*  
Mi sono alzato, lavato e vestito.

*First I washed the children then I washed myself.*  
Prima ho lavato i bambini, poi mi sono lavata io.

*After his accident, he wasn't able to dress himself for a month.*  
Dopo l'incidente non era in grado di vestirsi da solo per un mese.

Reflexive pronouns are also used with an emphatic function with a noun or pronoun. The reflexive pronoun is placed straight after the noun or pronoun in formal style, expressing the Italian *in persona*:

*I myself will see to the problem.*  
Io stessa affronterò il problema.

*The Queen herself presented the prize.*  
La Regina in persona ha presentato il premio.

In informal style, the pronoun is placed after the object and is closer to the Italian *da solo*:

*We finished the exercise ourselves.*  
Abbiamo finito gli esercizi da soli.

*He wrote the essay himself.*  
Ha scritto la tesina da solo.

The same idea may also be expressed with a reflexive pronoun and the preposition *by*:

*He wrote the essay (all) by himself.*  
Ha scritto la tesina (proprio) da solo.

### 3.2.6 Reciprocal pronouns

☞ Reciprocal actions are expressed in English with the reciprocal pronouns *each other* and *one another* (*l'un l'altro*).

a) *each other* is used between two persons

*Jane and Peter looked at each other.*  
Jane e Peter si sono guardati.

b) *one another* is used between more than two persons:

*The students all helped one another.*  
Tutti gli studenti si sono aiutati.

In informal English, however, *one another* is also used between two persons:

*Jane and Peter looked at one another.*  
Jane e Peter si sono guardati.

Some care must be taken not to confuse reflexive pronouns with reciprocal pronouns. Compare:

*She looked carefully at herself in the mirror.*  
Si guardò attentamente allo specchio.

*They looked into each other's eyes for a long time.*  
Si guardarono a lungo negli occhi.

*Self-help books teach us to love ourselves.*  
I manuali di psicologia popolare insegnano a voler bene a se stessi.

*They have loved each other since they were children.*  
Si amano da quando erano bambini.

In English, prepositions are placed before reciprocal pronouns, unlike in Italian where prepositions are placed between the pronouns:

*They are afraid of each other.*                      *They are made for each other.*  
Hanno paura l'uno dell'altro.                      Sono fatti l'uno per l'altro.

### 3.3 **There is (are)**

With indefinite subjects, the pattern *there is (are)* + subject is commonly used:

*There is a student in the classroom.*  
C'è uno studente nell'aula.  
\* It is a student in the classroom.

*There are some books on the table.*  
Ci sono dei libri sul tavolo.  
\* They are some books on the table.

In a literary or formal style, *there* is used before intransitive verbs with Subject-Verb inversion:

*There appeared a shadow at the door.*  
Un'ombra apparve alla porta.

*There exists a link between the end and the means.*  
Esiste un nesso tra il fine e i mezzi.

*His speech was short. There followed long applause.*  
Il suo discorso fu breve. Ne seguì un lungo applauso.

### 3.4 **Introductory It**

The use of the pronoun *it* as a personal pronoun is dealt with below (3.5).

#### **Cleft sentences**

To focus emphasis on one element in a sentence, the construction *it + be ... (that)* can be used, as in the following examples. The element to be stressed is moved to the beginning of the sentence. Note that the singular pronoun *it*

and a singular verb form are used for both singular and plural reference. This structure is generally limited to formal, written English.

Place: *It is here that he lives.*  
È qui che vive.

Time: *It was then that he understood.*  
Fu allora che capì.

Motion: *It was to London and then Paris that they went.*  
Fu a Londra a poi Parigi che andarono.

Manner: *It was with great horror that I learnt the truth.*  
Fu con orrore che scoprii la verità.

Means: *It was by working hard that he passed the exam.*  
Fu lavorando sodo che riuscì a superare l'esame.

Duration: *It was two whole months that he waited for her.*  
Fu per due lunghi mesi che l'aspettò.

In time expressions, the same structure may be used with *since*:

*It is years since I have seen you.*  
Sono anni che non ti vedo.

*It was months since he had died.*  
Era morto da mesi.

Attention may also be focused on one element of the sentence with the use of a *wh-* clause. In this case, the element to be stressed is placed at the end of the sentence.

*Peter enjoys reading Shakespeare.*  
A Peter piace leggere Shakespeare.

*What Peter enjoys is reading Shakespeare.*  
Ciò che piace a Peter è leggere Shakespeare.

*They went to Oxford.*  
Andarono a Oxford.

*Where they went was Oxford.*  
Fu a Oxford che andarono.

A common error is to translate the Italian construction into English:

Ciò che piace a Peter è leggere Shakespeare.

\*What that Peter enjoys reading is Shakespeare.

\*That what Peter enjoys reading is Shakespeare.

Another kind of cleft construction in English consists of the construction *the one / ones* and a relative clause. In this case *the one* is used for singular reference and *the ones* for plural reference. As above, the element to be stressed is placed at the end of the sentence.

*John killed Mike.*

*The one who killed Mike was John.*

Chi uccise Mike fu John.

*Tom and his wife went to prison.*

*The ones that went to prison were Tom and his wife.*

Chi andò in carcere furono Tom e sua moglie.

A common error with this construction is the following:

*The one who arrived last was Peter.*

Chi arrivò per ultimo fu Peter.

\* Who arrived last was Peter.

The construction *He who arrived last was Peter* is possible, but extremely rare in modern English.

### **It + adjective**

*It* may also introduce constructions with *adjective + that* clause or infinitive.

*It* may either head the sentence:

*It is likely (that) inflation will rise.*

È probabile che l'inflazione salga.

*It wasn't easy to find a taxi.*

Non è stato facile trovare un taxi.

Or may directly precede the adjective:

*Economists think it likely (that) inflation will rise.*

Gli economisti ritengono che sia probabile che l'inflazione salga.

*You won't find it easy to get a taxi.*  
Non ti sarà facile trovare un taxi.

See also **7.1.4** Infinitive and adjectives.

### **It + verb**

*It* acts as a subject for impersonal verbs such as *appear, happen, look, seem*:

*It looks like rain.*                      *It happens to be my birthday today.*  
Sembra che pioverà.              Si dà il caso che oggi sia il mio compleanno.

*It* is also used in expressions of time, distance, weather and temperature:

*What time is it?*                                      *It's six o'clock.*  
Che ore sono?                                      Sono le sei.

*How far is it to Oxford?*                              *It's 20 kilometres.*  
Quando dista Oxford?                              Sono 20 chilometri.

*It's raining.*    *It's hot.*  
Piove.    Fa caldo.

See **6.2.1** for *it is time* + hypothetical past tense.

## **3.5 Gender**



In English, pronouns refer to biological gender (see **2.6** for information on nouns and gender).

The pronoun *he* refers to a person or animal regarded as male; *she* to a person or animal regarded as female; *it* to an inanimate object. The plural pronoun *they* is used for both animate and inanimate subjects.

*It* is also used for a person or animal not yet considered male or female. New-born babies, for instance, are often referred to with the neutral pronoun:

*When was it born?*                                      *Is it a boy or a girl?*  
Quando è nato?                                      È maschio o femmina?

*It* is also used to introduce a person whose identity is not yet known. The singular verb can be followed by a plural pronoun:

At the door:     *Who is it?*                    *It's us. It's Mary and Tom.*  
Chi è?                                        Siamo noi. Siamo Mary e Tom.

On the phone:    *Who's speaking?*        *It's me. It's John.*  
Chi parla?                                 Sono io. Sono John

Note the use of the object pronoun in this construction. The more grammatically correct subject pronoun—*It is I / he / she etc.*—is rarely used.

However, if the person is visible to the speaker, the personal pronoun is used:

*Who are you?*                *I'm Mary.*  
Chi sei?                        Sono Mary.

*Who's he?*                    *He's my teacher.*  
Chi è lui?                     È mio insegnante.

Besides reference to a female person or thing, *she (her)* can also be used in a personification of countries and cities:

*London taxi drivers must know the city and her streets very well.*  
I tassisti londinesi devono conoscere bene la città e le sue strade.

*Ireland wants all the help the world can give her.*  
L'Irlanda ha bisogno di tutto l'aiuto che il mondo le può dare.

Also for inanimate objects, such as ships and hurricanes, cyclones or typhoons, which traditionally have female names, even though male names are now sometimes used.

*The Queen Elizabeth II was recently sold. She was bought by a cruise company.*  
La Queen Elizabeth II è stata venduta di recente. È stata acquistata da una compagnia di crociere.

*Typhoon Tracy is a terrible one. She'll hit Florida this evening.*  
Il tifone Tracy è terribile. Colpirà la Florida stasera.

It is even possible to find the female pronoun used with reference to a car or boat (mainly by their owners):

*I have a great car. She does twenty kilometres to the litre.*  
La mia macchina è stupenda. Fa venti chilometri con un litro.

*This boat is a beauty. I sailed in her to Greece.*  
Questa barca è una bellezza. Ho navigato con lei fino in Grecia.

The traditional use of the male pronoun *he* (*him, his*) to refer to both females and males should now be avoided. The English language does not have a singular pronoun that refers to both men and women. However, some alternatives that are recommended are:

a) using the forms: *he or she* (*his or her*), *he/she*, *s/he*, *one*, *you*:

*Each student should develop his skills.*  
Ciascuno studente dovrebbe sviluppare le sue capacità.

is better formulated as

*Each student should develop his or her skills.*  
*You should develop your skills.*  
*One should develop one's skills.*

b) using the plural noun (pronoun), possessive *they/their*, and a plural verb, when necessary:

*Students should develop their skills.*

The neutral pronoun *it* is generally used for animals unless the animal's sex is known or important, as with household pets:

*My dog Fluffy has hurt her paw.*  
La mia cagnolina Fluffy si è ferita la zampa.

*Rex, our turtle, has just died; he lived for twenty-five years.*  
Rex, la nostra tartaruga, è morta; è vissuta per venticinque anni.

## 4 MODIFICATION

### 4.1 Adjectives

Adjectives in English are invariable as to gender (male/female) and number (singular/plural), with the exception of the demonstratives (*this, that*) which have a plural form before plural nouns (*these, those*).

#### 4.1.1 Position of adjectives



In English, adjectives of quality generally precede the nouns they modify.

*The government adopted a wise policy.*

Il governo ha adottato una politica saggia.

\*The government adopted a policy wise.

*He bought a red sports car.*

Ha comprato una macchina sportiva rossa.

\* He bought a sports car red.

With several adjectives of quality in the same sentence, the usual order is the following, although it would be unusual to find all the adjectives in the same sentence.

a) general description	<i>elegant</i>	<i>beautiful</i>
b) size	<i>large</i>	<i>small</i>
c) age	<i>old</i>	<i>new</i>
d) shape	<i>round</i>	<i>square</i>
e) colour	<i>black</i>	<i>red</i>
f) origin	<i>Dutch</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
g) material	<i>wooden</i>	<i>plastic</i>
h) purpose	<i>dining table</i>	<i>kitchen chair</i>

Some more likely examples:

*a thick antique walking stick*

un grosso e antico bastone da passeggio

*a new red plastic raincoat*

un nuovo impermeabile rosso di plastica

*a famous European book fair*

una famosa fiera del libro europea

Some adjectives of French origin follow their noun. They include:

*notary public*  
notaio

*poet laureate*  
poeta laureato

*Secretary General*  
Segretario Generale

*prince consort*  
principe consorte

Some adjectives follow the direct object (noun or pronoun) as an adjective complement:

*I find her friend unpleasant.*  
Trovo la sua amica sgradevole.

*She thinks me mad.*  
Mi crede pazza.

Or if they are linked to a noun complement.

*He is a hero worthy of honour.*  
È un eroe degno di onore.

*There were generous funds available for research.*  
C'erano generosi finanziamenti disponibili per la ricerca.

Adjectives derived from verbs, especially participles and adjectives ending in *-able*, *-ible*, follow the noun when they express an action or occurrence rather than a state or quality, replacing a relative clause (see **10.7**). Compare:

*He is an adopted child.*  
È figlio adottivo.

*The child adopted by that family is French.* (= that was adopted)  
Il bambino adottato da quella famiglia è francese.

*The document had no imaginable value.*  
Il documento non aveva nessun possibile valore.

*It was the worst situation imaginable.* (= that could be imagined)  
Era la peggiore situazione immaginabile.

Some adjectives in historical names follow the proper noun they describe.

*Alfred the Great was a king of England.*  
Alfredo il Grande fu re d'Inghilterra.

*Charles the Fat was the son of Louis the German.*  
Carlo il Grasso era il figlio di Luigi il Tedesco.

≠ Adjectives follow a complement of measure, whereas in Italian adjectives precede it.

*The wall is six metres high.*  
Il muro è alto sei metri.  
\* The wall is high six metres.

*The table is three feet long and two feet wide.*  
Il tavolo è lungo tre piedi e largo due.  
\* The table is long three feet and wide two feet.

*He is twenty years old.*  
Ha vent'anni.  
\* He is old twenty years.

Most adjectives can be used both attributively (before a noun) and predicatively (as a subject or object complement):

*a pretty girl*  
una ragazza carina

*She looks pretty.*  
Sembra carina.

However, some adjectives can only be used attributively. The main adjectives are: *chief, former, main, mere, only, principal, same, very.*

*the main problem*  
il problema principale  
\* The problem is main.

*my only son*  
il mio unico figlio  
\* My son is only.

Some adjectives usually only act as predicates to the verbs *be, seem, become, fall* and are used to indicate a condition or state. They often begin with *a-*, for example *alike, afraid, awake, aware.*

*She is alone.*  
È sola.

*The children seem asleep.*  
I bambini sembrano addormentati.

With the adverbs *too* and *enough*, adjectives also always act as predicates.

*She is too ill to sit the exam.*  
È troppo malata per sostenere l'esame.

*She wasn't well enough to sit the exam.*  
Non stava bene abbastanza da sostenere l'esame.  
\* *She wasn't enough well to sit the exam.*

Some adjectives change meaning when they change position.  
Compare:

*John is ill today.* (temporary condition)  
Oggi John sta male.

*John is an ill man.* (permanent condition)  
John è un uomo ammalato.

*I took the late train.*  
Ho preso il treno che parte a ora tarda.

*The train was late today.*  
Oggi il treno è arrivato in ritardo.

*The present Prime Minister is married.*  
L'attuale primo ministro è sposato.

*The Prime Minister is present.*  
Il primo ministro è presente.

The adjectives *little*, *old* and *young* also change meaning according to their position in the sentence. When used before other adjectives they have a literal meaning, and refer to age and size:

*an old German manuscript*  
un antico manoscritto tedesco

*a little brown book*  
un libriccino marrone

*a young company manager*  
un giovane dirigente di azienda

Placed next to the noun they can take on figurative meaning and refer to an inherent quality. They may correspond to the Italian pejorative and diminutive suffixes (*-etto*, *-accio*, *-ino*, *-otto*):

*a dirty old man*  
uno sporcaccione (anche giovane)

*a silly little woman*  
una donnetta sciocca (anche grande)

*an ambitious young man*  
un giovanotto ambizioso

Sometimes pairs of adjectives are inverted in Italian and English. Compare:

*She was wearing a black and white coat.*  
Indossava un capotto bianco e nero.  
\* She was wearing a white and black coat.

*We got home safe and sound.*  
Siamo arrivati a casa sani e salvi.  
\* We got home sound and safe.

☞ Adjectives in English are invariable; there is no agreement of number or gender. Adjectives may therefore modify more than one noun without repetition.

*a fat man and woman*  
un uomo grasso e una donna grassa

*red cars and books*  
macchine rosse e libri rossi

*Greek and Roman vases and statues*  
vasi e statue greci e romani

*English law, institutions and customs.*

la giurisprudenza inglese, le istituzioni inglesi e i costumi inglesi

Adjectives, and degree adverbs, may be repeated for emphasis:

*It was a hot, hot day.*

È stata una giornata davvero calda.

*He is much, much better now.*

Sta molto, molto meglio ora.

#### 4.1.2 Compound adjectives

Compound adjectives may be formed with an adjective/adverb and a present participle, or with an adjective/adverb and a past participle. They are generally linked with a hyphen:

*a good-looking man*

un uomo attraente

*a slow-moving train*

un treno lento

*a highly-respected lawyer*

un avvocato molto rispettato

*a well-paid job*

un lavoro ben pagato

Nouns can function as adjectives by the addition of the *-ed* suffix. The meaning is 'with':

*the blue-eyed children*

i ragazzi dagli occhi azzurri

*the red-haired woman*

la donna dai capelli rossi

Numbers and nouns can be combined to form adjectives. In this case, the adjectival noun does not take the plural form.

*a ten-foot pole*

the pole is ten feet long

un bastone lungo dieci piedi

\* a ten-feet pole

*a four-year-old boy*

the boy is four years old

un ragazzo di quattro anni

\* a four-years-old boy

See also Appendix II for the use of hyphens.

#### 4.1.3 Adjectives and pronouns

≠

Adjectives in English are not generally used without a noun or pronoun. Most adjectives are used with the pronouns *one / ones* to avoid repetition of a noun mentioned previously.

*He bought two new pens, a cheap one and an expensive one.*  
Ha comprato due penne nuove, una da pochi soldi e una costosa.  
\* He bought two new pens, a cheap and an expensive.

Adjectives can, however, be used as pronouns in the following cases:

a) cardinal and ordinal numbers:

*We bought two books but she bought three.*  
Noi abbiamo comprato due libri, ma lei ne ha comprati tre.

*He was the first to arrive and the last to leave.*  
È stato il primo ad arrivare e l'ultimo ad andarsene.

b) superlative forms:

*She was the best in the class, and I was the worst.*  
Lei era la migliore della classe e io il peggiore.

Comparative forms may also be used as pronouns, but often the superlative form is preferred in informal style:

*He was the better of the two students.*  
? He was the best of the two students.  
Lui era il migliore dei due studenti.

c) colours, although the use of a pronoun is more usual:

*He chose the red book. I chose the blue (one).*  
Lui scelse il libro rosso e io quello blu.

d) with two adjectives in opposition:

*He was torn between the old world and the new.*  
Era diviso tra il mondo vecchio e quello nuovo.

Possessive adjectives cannot be used as pronouns. Possessive pronouns or the pronoun *own* must be used:

*She bought her book and I bought mine (my own).*

Lei ha comprato il suo libro e io il mio.

\* *She bought her book and I bought the my.*

### **Some and any**

*Some* and *any* are used as adjectives before plural countable nouns or mass nouns. *Some* is used in affirmative sentences, or in requests and offers. *Any* is used in negative and interrogative sentences:

*Some choices must be made.*

Certe scelte si devono fare.

*He didn't want to make any decisions.*

Non voleva prendere decisioni.

*Some* and *any* are also used as pronouns:

*There were some delicious cakes. I couldn't eat any.*

C'erano delle torte squisite. Non ne potevo mangiare nessuna.

*Some believe in euthanasia; others do not.*

Alcuni credono nell'eutanasia; altri no.

The adjective *some* before a singular noun can have an indefinite reference (*un qualche/un certo*):

*Some student was looking for you earlier.*

Un qualche studente ti cercava prima.

*There was some change in his behaviour.*

Ci fu un certo cambiamento nel suo comportamento.

The adjective *any* before a noun + positive verb can have the meaning *qualsiasi*:

*Any student knows where the library is.*

Qualsiasi studente sa dov'è la biblioteca.

### **Each and every**

The pronoun *each* refers to members of a group individually:

*Each of the boys is responsible for his own choice.*  
Ciascuno dei ragazzi è responsabile della sua scelta.

It functions also as an adjective:

*Each boy is responsible for his own choice.*  
Ciascun ragazzo è responsabile della sua scelta.

*Every* refers to members of a group collectively:

*Every choice is difficult.*  
Ogni scelta è difficile.

*Each* and *every* are used with a singular verb. However, when the gender of the subject is unknown or generic, the plural pronoun *they* and the possessive adjective *their* are used:

*Every person has to make their own choice. They must decide on their own.*  
Ciascuno deve fare la sua scelta. Ciascuno deve decidere da solo.

*Every* can only be an adjective, but its compounds function as pronouns:

*Everyone must make a decision.*  
Tutti devono prendere una decisione.

*Everything can be discussed.*  
Tutto si può discutere.

### **Either, neither, both, all**

*Either*, *neither* and *both* refer to two elements. *Either* and *neither* refer to one of two elements and are followed by a singular verb; *both* is followed by a plural verb:

*Ask James or Jane. Either of them knows.*  
Chiedi a James o a Jane. Sia l'uno che l'altro lo sanno.

*Neither is making progress.*  
Nessuno dei due sta facendo progressi.

*Both are studying for their final exams.*  
Entrambi studiano per gli esami finali.

Note, however, that in informal English, the plural form of the verb is possible—although not advisable—with *either* and *neither*, especially in the *of* construction. See 11.2 for *either*, *neither* and *both* in correlation.

*Neither of the boys has finished his meal.*  
? Neither of the boys have finished their meal.  
Nessuno dei (due) ragazzi ha finito il pasto.

*Either of them likes pizza.*  
? Either of them like pizza.  
A sia l'uno che l'altro piace la pizza.

The adjective *all* can refer to a singular or to a plural noun:

*He lived in Brighton all his life.*  
Ha vissuto a Brighton tutta la vita.

*He must have read all the books in the library.*  
Deve aver letto tutti i libri della biblioteca.

*All* and *both* may follow the subject pronoun. In this case they are placed immediately before the main verb, but after an auxiliary verb:

*We all passed the exam.*  
Tutti noi (Noi tutti) abbiamo superato l'esame.  
\* All we passed the exam.

*They both chose to study English literature.*  
Entrambi hanno deciso di studiare letteratura inglese.  
\* Both they chose to study English literature.

<i>They have all arrived now.</i> Ora sono arrivati tutti.	<i>We are both happy to help you.</i> Siamo entrambi felici di aiutarvi.
---	---

*All* and *both* may also precede the subject pronoun. In this case the preposition *of* must be used:

*All of us passed the exam.*  
Noi tutti abbiamo superato l'esame.  
\* All us / All we passed the exam.

*Both of them chose to study English literature.*  
Entrambi scelsero di studiare letteratura inglese.

*All* is rarely used as a pronoun in modern English. Some alternatives are:

*(All know the answer.)*  
*All of us (them) know the answer.*  
*Everyone knows the answer.*  
Tutti sanno la risposta.

*All* is not generally used with a negative verb. *Not all* and a positive verb is more common. Compare:

*Not all people like children.*  
Non a tutti piacciono i bambini.

Care must be taken when translating the Italian *tutto*. Compare:

*I read the whole page.*  
Ho letto tutta la pagina.  
\* I read the all page.

*They visit us every day.*  
Ci vengono a trovare tutti i giorni (ogni giorno).  
\* They visit us all the days.

*I read all the books.*  
Ho letto tutti i libri.  
\*I read the all books.

### **None**

The pronoun *none* corresponds to ‘not any’. When it refers to mass nouns, it is followed by a singular verb:

*They have lots of money, but none is spent on other people.*  
Loro hanno molto danaro, ma non ne spendono per gli altri.

When it refers to plural countable nouns, it is generally followed by a plural verb:

*I have several pairs of shoes, but none are very new.*  
Ho molte paia di scarpe, ma nessuno di nuovo.

However, in formal writing, *none* is followed by a singular verb:

*There are many choices, but none is acceptable.*  
Esistono molte scelte, ma nessuna è accettabile.

*None* is also used in the *of* construction.

*None of us enjoys jazz.*  
A nessuno di noi piace il jazz.

A common error is to confuse *none* and *no-one* ('no person'):

*None of the students knew the answer.*  
Nessuno degli studenti sapeva la risposta.  
\*No-one of the students knew the answer.

*No-one knew the answer. (No person knew the answer.)*  
Nessuno sapeva la risposta.  
\*No-one person knew the answer.

See **1.2** Negative sentences.

### **Such and so**

The adjective *such* is used with the indefinite article before singular countable nouns:

*I have never heard of such a thing.*  
Non ho mai sentito una cosa simile.

Before plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns, no article is used:

*Such children should not be out so late.*  
Bambini del genere non dovrebbero essere fuori così tardi.

*We saw such beauty in the mountains!*  
Abbiamo visto una tale bellezza in montagna!

In sentences in which the subject of the main clause is different from that of the secondary clause, *such* is qualified by the clause *such (a) + noun ... that*:

*She was such a brilliant teacher that we went to all her lessons.*  
Era un'insegnante così brillante che frequentavamo tutte le sue lezioni.

When the subject of main and secondary clause is the same, *such* is qualified by the construction *such (a) + noun ... as to*:

*He is such an idealist as to believe in a perfect society.*  
È così idealista da credere in una società perfetta.

The adverb *so* also follows the same patterns.

*He was so boring that we never attended any of his classes.*  
Era così noioso che non abbiamo mai frequentato le sue lezioni.

*He is so dishonest as to steal from his own mother.*  
È talmente disonesto da rubare alla propria madre.

*Such* and *so* can also be used in elliptical constructions.

*Such* replaces an adjective and noun:

*They say he is a great pianist. In fact he was such when he was a child.*  
Dicono che è un grande pianista. In effetti, lo era da bambino.

*So* replaces an adjective:

*My raincoat is really worn out. So is my brother's.*  
Il mio impermeabile è davvero consunto. E così anche quello di mio fratello.

### **Quantity expressions**

Some expressions of quantity can be used both with countable and uncountable nouns and so can take both plural and singular verb forms. Some of these expressions are: *a lot of, lots of, most*.

*A lot of (Lots of) people sat in the park.*  
Molte persone erano sedute nel parco.

*A lot of (Lots of) time is needed to finish this task.*  
Ci vuole molto tempo per completare questo compito.

*Most students listen to music while they study.*  
La maggior parte degli studenti ascolta musica mentre studia.

*Most antique furniture is very expensive.*  
La maggior parte dei mobili antichi è molto costosa.

Some expressions of quantity modify uncountable nouns and take a singular verb form. They include: *a great deal of, a large quantity of, a large amount of*:

*A great deal of patience was needed with that boy.*  
C'è voluta molta pazienza con quel ragazzo.

Other expressions of quantity modify plural countable nouns and take a plural verb form. They include: *a (great) number of, a good/great many*:

*A number of people are listening to the speech.*  
Molte persone ascoltano il discorso.

*A good many students have enrolled for the course.*  
Un bel numero di studenti si è iscritto al corso.

Like *a lot (lots) of*, the expression *plenty of* can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns and so takes both singular and plural verb forms:

*There were plenty of chairs in the room.*  
C'erano molte sedie nella stanza.

*There is plenty of furniture to be cleaned.*  
Ci sono molti mobili da pulire.

A rhetorical expression *many a* is used with a singular noun and a singular verb for a plural reference:

*Many a teacher has resigned in desperation over her students.*  
Molte insegnanti si sono dimesse disperate a causa dei loro studenti.

## 4.2 Adverbs

Adverbs of manner are generally formed with the *-ly* suffix added to adjectives:

*a quick race*  
una corsa rapida

*he ran quickly*  
corse rapidamente

Some adjectives and adverbs have the same form. Some of the most common are: *early, far, fast, hard, long, low, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly*.

*fast development*  
sviluppo rapido

*it developed fast*  
si sviluppò rapidamente

*a daily paper*  
un quotidiano

*it is published daily*  
esce quotidianamente

Some adjectives ending with the *-ly* suffix cannot be used as adverbs:

*a friendly greeting*  
un saluto amichevole

He greeted me *in a friendly way*.  
Mi salutò amichevolmente.

*a motherly hug*  
un abbraccio materno

She spoke *in a motherly manner*.  
Parlò maternamente.

### 4.2.1 Position of adverbs

Adverbs of manner generally follow the verb they modify.

*She sang beautifully.*  
Cantò molto bene.

They follow the object if there is one.

*She sang the song beautifully.*  
Cantò bene la canzone.

☐ The adverb does not usually separate the direct object from the verb:

*He speaks French well.*  
Parla bene il francese.  
\* He speaks well French.

*We like music very much.*  
Ci piace molto la musica.  
\* We like very much music.

If there is a long object clause, the adverb may precede the verb:

*She kindly told us where we could take a bus to the station.*

Ci disse gentilmente dove potevamo prendere un autobus per la stazione.

The adverb may separate the verb from its direct object only when it is used with a prepositional phrase after the verb:

*She reminded us kindly of our appointment.*

Ci ha gentilmente ricordato del nostro appuntamento.

An adverb modifies the verb it is closest to. Note how the position of the adverb can alter the meaning of a sentence:

*They accused him wrongly of copying the text.*

È stato ingiustamente accusato di aver copiato il testo.

*They accused him of copying the text wrongly.*

È stato accusato di aver copiato il testo in modo sbagliato.

### **Time adverbs**



In English, time expressions tend to be placed at the end of the sentence. They are used at the beginning for greater emphasis, especially when comparing two different times.

*He's going to Dublin tomorrow.*

Domani va a Dublino.

*Tomorrow he's going to Dublin; next week he's going to Paris.*

Domani va a Dublino; la settimana prossima andrà a Parigi.

If there is more than one time reference, the order is usually from the specific to the general:

*He died at 10 am on Tuesday December 20th 1999.*

È morto martedì 20 dicembre 1999 alle 10.

Expressions of general time, such as *recently*, *now*, *once*, *soon*, *one day*, are also placed at the end, or at the beginning of a sentence. They may also be placed before the verb:

*They bought a new house recently.*  
*Recently, they bought a new house.*  
*They recently bought a new house.*  
Di recente hanno comprato una nuova casa.

Inversion is also used after time adverbials, such as *hardly*, *barely*, *no sooner*, placed at the beginning of a sentence to emphasise the rapidity with which one action followed another. Past tenses are generally used with this pattern.

*Hardly had I left the house when it began to rain.*  
Ero appena uscito di casa che iniziò a piovere.  
\* Hardly I had left the house when it began to rain.

*Barely had I finished the meal when I had to go out.*  
Avevo appena finito il pasto quando dovetti uscire.  
\* Barely I had finished the meal when I had to go out.

A common error is to invert subject and main verb:

*No sooner did she answer the question than she was asked another.*  
Non appena ebbe risposto alla domanda gliene fu fatta un'altra.  
\* No sooner answered she the question than she was asked another.

### **Place adverbs**

Adverbs of place are generally placed after adverbs of manner, but before adverbs of time:

*They played loudly in the garden all afternoon.*  
Giocarono rumorosamente in giardino tutto il pomeriggio.

*He ate quickly in the kitchen last night.*  
Mangiò velocemente in cucina ieri sera.

Adverbs of direction, such as *to*, *away*, *from*, can follow verbs of movement and precede other adverbials:

*He went to Norwich by car the following morning.*  
Andò a Norwich in macchina la mattina successiva.

*We walked away angrily after the argument.*  
Ci allontanammo arrabbiati dopo il litigio.

Like time adverbials, adverbs may be placed at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis or contrast:

*Inside it is warm; outside it is cold.*  
Dentro fa caldo; fuori fa freddo.

*Here I'm happy. At boarding school I was not.*  
Qui sono felice. In collegio non lo ero.

Inversion of subject and verb may also be used with an adverbial phrase of place introduced by a preposition for dramatic effect.

*In came a girl.*  
Entrò una ragazza.

*By the wall stood a man.*  
Accanto al muro stava un uomo.

*In the room sat a solitary figure.*  
Nella stanza stava seduta una figura solitaria.

Inversion is also possible with the place adverbs *here* and *there*. Note how the meaning changes:

*The bus is there.*  
L'autobus è lì.

*The book you were looking for is here.*  
Il libro che cercavi è qui.

*There goes the bus.*  
Ecco l'autobus che parte.

*Here is the book you were looking for.*  
Ecco qua il libro che cercavi.

There is no inversion with transitive verbs or when the subject is a pronoun.

*Away they ran.*  
Corsero via.  
\* Away ran they.

*Here they are.*  
Eccoli qui.  
\* Here are they.

### **Frequency adverbs**

Adverbs of frequency, such as *always*, *never*, *occasionally*, *often*, *twice*, are normally placed:

a) after the simple tenses of *be*:

*Industrial expansion is often slowed down by war.*  
La crescita industriale è spesso frenata dalla guerra.

b) before the simple tenses of all other verbs:

*He usually runs before breakfast.*  
Di solito va a correre prima di colazione.

c) before the past participle in compound tenses:

*Conditions for factory workers have always improved over time.*  
Nel corso del tempo le condizioni degli operai sono sempre migliorate.

Most frequency adverbs (with the exception of *always*) can be used at the beginning or the end of a sentence for emphasis:

*Usually he runs before breakfast, but today he ran later.*  
Di solito va a correre prima di colazione, ma oggi è andato più tardi.

*He runs before breakfast usually. This morning he didn't go out.*  
Di solito va a correre prima di colazione. Stamani non è uscito.

See **4.2.2** for inversion with negative adverbials.

### **Adverbs of degree**

Adverbs of degree, such as *fairly, hardly, almost, quite, very, nearly*, modify other adverbs or adjectives. They are normally placed before the adverb or adjective they modify.

*The test we did was fairly difficult.*  
Il test che abbiamo fatto era piuttosto difficile.

*I'll be very lucky to pass it.*  
Sarò molto fortunato se lo supererò.

The adverb *enough*, however, follows the adjective or adverb.

*The test was easy enough.*  
Il test era piuttosto facile.

*They worked well enough.*  
Hanno lavorato abbastanza bene.

The adverb *fairly* is generally used with a positive implication, whereas *rather* has a negative reference:

*I speak French fairly well, but I write it rather badly.*

Parlo abbastanza bene il francese, ma lo scrivo piuttosto male.

The adverb *quite* can have two meanings. When used with an absolute or strong adjective or adverb, it implies ‘totally’. In other contexts, *quite* weakens the adjective or adverb it modifies. Compare:

*You are quite right!*

Hai proprio ragione!

*They quite like their new house.*

La nuova casa gli piace abbastanza.

### **Sentence adverbs**

Sentence adverbs, such as *fortunately*, *luckily*, *sadly*, are usually placed at the beginning of the sentence they modify, separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma. This kind of adverb usually expresses the speaker’s opinion.

*Unfortunately, we were unable to get to the concert.*

Sfortunatamente non siamo riusciti ad andare al concerto.

*Understandably, he had some problems after his divorce.*

Comprensibilmente ha avuto qualche problema dopo il divorzio.

They can be placed at the end of the sentence as an additional comment on the preceding phrase.

*He’s back in town, unfortunately.*

È di nuovo in città, sfortunatamente.

Note how the position of the adverb can modify the meaning.

*They helped us naturally.*

Ci aiutavano in maniera naturale.

*Naturally, they helped us*

Naturalmente, ci hanno aiutato.

*Clearly, he didn’t understand the lesson at all.*

Chiaramente, non ha capito affatto la lezione.

*He didn’t understand the lesson at all clearly.*

Non ha capito la lezione in maniera del tutto chiara.

#### 4.2.2 Formal and informal style

In informal English, adverbs (with the exception of adverbs of frequency and degree) are usually placed at the beginning or the end of a sentence.

In formal English, adverbs can be placed in the middle of the sentence, before the main verb:

*We will now start the lesson.*  
(*We will start the lesson now.*)  
Ora iniziamo la lezione.

*The study carefully examined the issue.*  
(*The study examined the issue carefully.*)  
La ricerca studiava accuratamente la questione.

The same formal / informal positioning is found with conjunctions:

*England won the battle. She didn't, however, win the war.*  
(*England won the battle. However, she didn't win the war.*)  
L'Inghilterra vinse la battaglia. Però non vinse la guerra.

#### Negative adverbials

Negative adverbials such as *never, rarely, seldom, hardly ever, not until, not only, only, little, few* are followed by Subject-Verb inversion in rhetorical style when they modify the verb.

*Never have I been so unhappy.*  
(*I have never been so unhappy.*)  
Mai sono stato così infelice.

*Rarely can we see such poverty.*  
(*We can rarely see such poverty.*)  
Raramente si vede tanta povertà.

In the patterns above there is complete inversion of the subject and verb. If there is no other auxiliary verb present, auxiliary *do* (*does, did*) must be used.

*Seldom did he come and visit us.*  
(*He seldom came and visited us.*)  
Raramente venne a trovarci.

*Only now do they understand.*  
(*They understand only now.*)  
Solo ora capiscono.

*Not until they were home did they realise they had been robbed.*  
(*When they were home they realised they had been robbed.*)  
Fu solo quando furono arrivati a casa che si resero conto di essere stati scippati.

*Little does she know that things will soon change.*  
(*She does not know that things will soon change.*)  
Non sa proprio che le cose presto cambieranno.

Inversion is used in the same way with negative adverb phrases such as *on no condition, under no circumstances, on no account, in no way.*

*Under no circumstances must you tell them the answer.*  
Per nessun motivo devi dire loro la risposta.

*To no other person have I revealed the secret.*  
A nessun altro ho rivelato il segreto.

However, if the negative element does not modify the verb, no inversion is necessary.

<i>Not even I could do that.</i>	<i>Only they knew the reason.</i>
Nemmeno io riuscirei a farlo.	Solo loro sapevano il motivo.

A common error is to invert subject and main verb:

*Never does he come to the lessons.*  
Non viene mai alle lezioni.  
\*Never comes he to the lessons.

*Only at the last minute did they see the red light.*  
Solo all'ultimo minuto videro il semaforo rosso.  
\*Only at the last minute saw they the red light.

Inversion may also be used with other adverbs in rhetorical style for emphasis:

*Well do I remember the happiness of my childhood.*  
Ricordo bene la felicità della mia infanzia.

*Often did he regret having spoken so harshly.*  
Spesso si pentiva di aver parlato in modo così severo.

## 5 COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

English uses the following comparative correlatives:

- a) *as ... as* for equational comparison;
- b) *more ... than* or *less ... than* for differential comparison.

### 5.1 Equational comparison

To express the same degree, *as ... as* is used with both adjectives and adverbs. A common error is to omit the first element in this structure:

*Her results were as good as mine.*

I suoi risultati sono stati buoni quanto i miei.

\* Her results were good as mine.

*I called to him as loudly as I could.*

L'ho chiamato il più forte possibile.

\* I called to him loudly as I could.

With negative verb forms, the construction *so ... as* can also be used:

*The lecturer was not as (so) good as they had said.*

Il conferenziere non era bravo quanto avevano detto.

### 5.2 Differential comparison

The pronouns *more* and *less* are used with the comparative construction *more/less ... than*:

*I drank more than John.*

Ho bevuto più di (quanto non abbia fatto) John.

*They have less than we do.*

Hanno meno di (quanto non abbiamo) noi.

However, *more/less ... than* are also used with expressions of measure or degree without a comparative function:

*The tree is less than four metres tall.*

L'albero è alto meno di quattro metri.

*He drove at more than 100 km an hour.*  
Corse a più di 100 chilometri all'ora.

The construction may also correspond to the Italian *più/piuttosto*:

*I was more happy than angry.*  
Ero felice piuttosto che arrabbiata.

*They were less stupid than confused.*  
Erano confusi più che stupidi.

Higher degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs are expressed with the structure *more ... than*. The comparative suffix *-er* may also be used.

One-syllable adjectives take the *-er* suffix (*bigger, smaller, faster*); three-syllable adjectives take the *more* comparative form (*more beautiful, interesting*).

*He is more intelligent than me.*      *She is younger than her friend.*  
È più intelligente di me.      È più giovane della sua amica.

Two-syllable adjectives may take both forms (*more clever/cleverer, more simple/simpler*).

However, adjectives ending in *-y* tend to take the *-er* suffix (*happier, prettier*) and adjectives ending in *-ful/-less* and *-ed/-ing* tend to use the *more ... than* construction (*more useful, hopeless, surprised, boring ... than*).

One-syllable adverbs tend to take the *-er* suffix (*harder, faster*). Other adverbs use the *more* comparative structure (*more happily, slowly*).

*The train goes more slowly than the car, but the plane goes faster.*  
Il treno viaggia più lentamente dell'auto, ma l'aereo va più velocemente.

However, in informal style, the *-er* suffix can be used with some two-syllable adverbs formed from one-syllable adjectives, such as *slow, cheap, sharp clear*:

*We worked quicker than our colleagues.*  
(*We worked more quickly than our colleagues.*)  
Abbiamo lavorato più velocemente dei colleghi.

The complement may be an object pronoun in informal English or a subject pronoun + verb in a more formal style. Compare:

*He is happier than me.*  
È più felice di me.

*He is happier than I am.*  
È più felice di quanto non lo sia io.

Lower degrees of comparison are expressed with the structure *less ... than*:

*They are less happy than their cousins.*  
Sono meno felici dei loro cugini.

*He spoke less confidently after his accident.*  
Parlava con meno sicurezza dopo l'incidente.

A common error is to use the pronouns *that* or *then* instead of *than*:

*I know more than he does.*  
So di più di quanto non sappia lui.  
\* I know more that he does.

*He will come earlier than me.*  
Arriverà prima di me.  
\* He will come earlier then me.

Comparative structures are often reinforced with adverbs such as *much, far, a great deal, a good deal*:

*My brother is much taller than I am, but I can run a great deal faster.*  
Mio fratello è molto più alto di me, ma io so correre molto più veloce.

*The Queen is far richer than most people.*  
La Regina è molto più ricca della maggior parte della gente.

In informal, spoken English, a grammatically incorrect agreement between *more/less/few* and plural nouns is commonly heard, but not recommended:

*There are more books to read than he said.*  
? There's more books to read than he said.  
Ci sono più libri da leggere di quanti lui non abbia detto.

*There were fewer people than we expected.*  
? There was less people than we expected.  
C'erano meno persone di quanto ci si aspettava.

Similarly, a comparison between two elements is often expressed with the grammatically incorrect superlative.

*He is the richer of the two brothers.*

? He is the richest of the two brothers.

È il più ricco dei due fratelli.

Adjectives and adverbs that have the *-er* comparative suffix form the superlative *the -est*; adjectives and adverbs that take the *more* construction, add *the most* as their superlative form:

*He is the richest man in the world.*

È l'uomo più ricco del mondo.

*They worked the hardest of all.*

Hanno lavorato più di tutti.

*That was the best solution we could have found.*

Quella era la soluzione migliore che avremmo potuto trovare.

*They climbed the most rapidly of all the group.*

Si arrampicavano più rapidamente di tutto il gruppo.

Lowest degrees of comparison are expressed with *the least* structure:

*He is the least arrogant man I know.*

È l'uomo meno arrogante che conosca.

*She spoke Chinese the least rapidly of them all.*

Parlava il cinese meno velocemente di tutti.

The superlative is usually formed with the definite article *the*. However, it may also convey an idea of absolute value without the use of the article:

*dearest friend*

amica carissima

*kindest regards*

i migliori saluti

*best wishes*

saluti cordiali

Also note the common phrase:

*Last but not least.*

L'ultimo ma non il meno importante.

The superlative form of the adjective does not require a noun:

*She is the fastest.*

È la più veloce.

*I am the best.*

Sono il migliore.

The preposition *in* is used with the superlative form to refer to place; the preposition *of* is used when there is no place reference.

*He is the worst driver in the world / in the family.*

È il peggior guidatore del mondo / della famiglia.

*She is the tallest of all the students / of the three sisters.*

È la più alta di tutti gli studenti / delle tre sorelle.

Superlative constructions are often reinforced by adverb phrases such as *the very, by far the*:

*Mary is the very best of friends.*

Mary è la migliore amica possibile.

*Bill Gates is by far the richest man in the world.*

Bill Gates è di gran lunga l'uomo più ricco del mondo.

### 5.3 Parallel change

The idea of parallel change is expressed by *the + comparative ... the + comparative*.

*The more planning is done, the quicker a solution will be found.*

Più si progetta, più velocemente si troverà una soluzione.

A common error with this construction is the omission of the article:

*The sooner the problem is resolved, the better it will be.*

Prima il problema viene risolto, meglio sarà.

\* Sooner the problem is resolved, better it will be.

Both nouns and verbs may be omitted in this construction:

*The smaller the better.*

(*The smaller the computer the better it is.*)

Più piccolo è meglio è.

## 5.4 Gradual change

Gradual increase or decrease is expressed by two comparatives, especially with the verbs *get* and *become*:

*The situation is becoming more and more difficult to control.*  
La situazione si sta facendo sempre più difficile da controllare.

*The temperature is getting higher and higher.*  
La temperatura si sta alzando sempre di più.

## 5.5 As and like

*As* is a conjunction, and so is generally followed by a verb:

<i>Write as Peter does.</i>	<i>Do as I say not as I do.</i>
Scrivi come fa Peter.	Fa' come dico e non come faccio.

*Like* is a preposition, and is used only with a noun, pronoun or gerund:

<i>Write like Peter.</i>	<i>Do like me.</i>
Scrivi come Peter.	Fa' come me.

Both *as* and *like* can be used with nouns. *As* indicates identity, *like* indicates comparison. Compare:

<i>He works as a doctor.</i>	(= <i>He is a doctor.</i> )
Lavora come (in quanto) medico.	(= Fa il medico)

<i>He works like a slave.</i>	(= <i>He works hard, but is not a real slave.</i> )
Lavora come (se fosse) uno schiavo.	

*I'm not speaking to you as a teacher, but as a friend.*  
(= *I am both your teacher and your friend.*)  
Non ti parlo come insegnante, ma come amico.

*He speaks like a friend, but he does not behave as a friend does.*  
Parla come (se fosse) un amico, ma non si comporta da amico.

## 5.6 Other uses of as

Some other uses of *as* that may cause problems for Italian students:

a) *such as* (come, ad esempio). This construction is used before a list of examples.

*Some large American cities, such as Chicago, New York and Seattle.*  
Alcune grandi città americane come Chicago, New York e Seattle.

It may also be separated in a more formal style:

*I think such capital punishment as hanging should be abolished.*  
Credo che pene capitali come l'impiccagione dovrebbero essere abolite.

b) *as* (siccome, poiché). *As* may be used as a conjunction:

*As he could not ride a bicycle, he didn't take part in the race.*  
Poiché non sapeva andare in bicicletta, non partecipò alla gara.

c) *as* (mentre, quando, man mano che)

*As he was crossing the road, he tripped and fell.*  
Mentre attraversava la strada, inciampò e cadde.

*The army got weaker as the war continued*  
L'esercito s'indebolì man mano che la guerra continuava.

d) *as to/as for* (in quanto a, per quanto riguarda)

*As to (for) that question, they have not decided yet.*  
In quanto a quella questione, non hanno ancora deciso.

e) *as far as* (per quanto, per quel che)

*As far as I know he has finished his studies.*  
Per quel che ne so, ha finito gli studi.

f) *as yet* (finora)

*As yet nothing is known about the accident.*  
Finora non si sa niente dell'incidente.

g) *as/so long as* (finché)

*I will never forget you as (so) long as I live.*  
Non ti dimenticherò finché vivo.

h) *as of / from (a partire da)*

*It will be law as of (from) 1st May.*  
Sarà legge a partire dal 1 maggio.

i) *so as to (così... da)*

*I was so stupid as to believe him.*  
Sono stata così stupida da credergli.

## 6 THE TENSE SYSTEM

In English there is a clear distinction between tenses and time. Unlike other inflected languages, such as Italian, English has only two basic tenses: the present tense and the past tense. There is no future tense; reference to the future is supplied by the modal auxiliaries *will/shall* or by verb phrases such as *be + going to* or *be + -ing*. The present tense does not only refer to present time; it may also refer to future and past time. Likewise, the past tense does not only refer to past time.

English verbs have two aspects: continuous and perfect. The progressive aspect expresses a temporary event or state. The progressive aspect is always expressed with the verb *be + present participle* of the main verb (*-ing* form).

The perfect aspect refers to duration of time to the present or the present result of a past event. In English the perfect aspect is always expressed with the auxiliary verb *have + past participle* of the main verb.

### 6.1 Simple present tense

Like Italian, the simple present tense is used to express:

a) general or eternal truths (*presente acronico*).

*London is the capital of England.*  
Londra è la capitale dell'Inghilterra.

*Water boils at 100° centigrade.*  
L'acqua bolle a 100° C.

*I speak German.*  
Parlo tedesco.

b) habits (*presente iterativo*), often reinforced by the use of frequency adverbs (see 4.2 Adverbs).

*I always get up at 6 am.*  
Mi alzo sempre alle 6.

*They never read history books.*  
Non leggono mai libri di storia.

### 6.1.1 Historic Simple Present

The Simple Present may also be used to refer to past time (*presente storico*). Some of the most common uses are:

a) in dramatic narration to add colour:

*The crowd screams as the player kicks a goal.*  
Il pubblico urla mentre il giocatore segna il gol.

b) to refer to writers and their works:

*Shakespeare's tragedies explore the problem of good and evil.*  
Le tragedie di Shakespeare esplorano il problema del bene e del male.

c) with 'communication' verbs, such as *hear, learn, tell, write*, to express a present effect of information received in the past.

*I hear the President is about to resign.*  
Ho sentito (Sento) che il Presidente sta per dimettersi.

*She tells me you have got married recently.*  
Mi ha detto (dice) che ti sei sposato di recente.

d) in newspaper headlines:

<i>MP kills wife.</i>	<i>Dollar drops to record low.</i>
Onorevole uccide moglie.	Il dollaro scende al minimo storico.

### 6.1.2 Future simple present

The simple present can be used to refer to future time (*presente pro futuro*). While future reference is common in Italian, especially in colloquial speech, in English this use is restricted to a planned action or series of actions within a predetermined time frame, such as timetables and calendars:

*My birthday falls on a Monday next year.*  
Il mio compleanno cade (cadrà) di lunedì l'anno prossimo.

*The last train leaves at 10 p.m. this evening.*  
L'ultimo treno parte (partirà) alle 22 stasera.

*I'm going to the cinema this evening.*

Vado (Andrò) al cinema stasera.

\* I go to the cinema this evening.

*I'll give you a hand.*

Ti do (darò) una mano.

\* I give you a hand.

### 6.1.3 Simple present in secondary clauses



The simple present is also used in secondary time clauses with reference to future time. In these cases, the secondary clause is headed by a time adverbial such as *when, after, as soon as*. The main clause has a verb in the future tense, usually formed with the modal auxiliaries *will/shall*. In Italian two future tenses are generally used.

*When I go to the library, I'll take out that book for you.*

Quando andrò in biblioteca, ti prenderò a prestito il libro.

\* When I will go to the library, I'll take out that book for you.

*He'll come to the meeting as soon as he finishes the report.*

Verrà alla riunione non appena avrà finito il rapporto.

\* He will come to the meeting as soon as he will finish the report.

The same sequence of tenses is found in secondary clauses beginning with the hypothetical *if*.

*If you come to the library, I'll give you a lift home.*

Se verrai in biblioteca, ti accompagnerò a casa.

\* If you will come to the library, I will give you a lift home.

*If you go to Paris, you'll speak French.*

Se andrai a Parigi parlerai francese.

\* If you will go to Paris, you'll speak French.

Note, however, that the auxiliary *will* may be used in the secondary *if* clause to indicate insistence (*se insisti a... / continui a... / ti ostini a...*).

*If you will stay up late, of course you will be tired in the morning.*

Se continui a stare alzato fino a tardi, naturalmente sarai stanco la mattina.

## 6.2 Simple Past Tense



In Italian the use of a past tense depends mainly on the temporal location of an action or state (*prossimo* or *remoto*); in English the simple past tense is used when two conditions are fulfilled: 1) the action or state is finished; 2) the time period is past. Compare:

*Dinosaurs lived over 150 million years ago.*

I dinosauri vissero più di 150 milioni di anni fa.

*She lived here until yesterday.*

Ha vissuto qui fino a ieri.

The most common error for Italian students is to use the present perfect tense instead of the simple past tense, especially for recent past actions.

The simple past tense is used for:

a) past states:

*I was a very good student at university.*

Sono stato uno studente bravissimo all'università.

\* I have been a very good student at university.

*They had a hard life during World War II.*

Hanno avuto una vita dura durante la seconda guerra mondiale.

\* They have had a hard life during World War II.

b) past events:

*I passed the exam last week.*

Ho superato l'esame la settimana scorsa.

\* I have passed the exam last week.

*We got up early this morning and went for a run.*

Ci siamo alzati presto stamattina e siamo andati a correre.

\* We have got up early this morning and have gone for a run.

c) past habits, often reinforced by frequency adverbs. Past habits are often expressed with the Italian *imperfetto iterativo*:

*I never played with other children when I was a child.*

Non giocavo con altri bambini da ragazzo.

*He always helped his mother do the shopping.*  
Aiutava sempre sua madre a fare le spese.

### 6.2.1 Hypothetical past tense



In certain structures, the simple past tense can have a present or future reference, corresponding to the Italian *congiuntivo*:

a) in secondary clauses introduced with *if* to refer to an improbable hypothesis. The verb in the main clause has the present conditional construction *would (should / could / might) + bare infinitive*:

*If he studied harder, he would pass the exam.*  
Se studiasse di più supererebbe l'esame.

*They might help us with our research if we paid them.*  
Potrebbero aiutarci con le ricerche se li pagassimo.

A common error is to confuse the conjunctive and conditional forms:

\* If he would study harder, he would pass the exam.

b) similar tense agreement is found in adverbial clauses of condition and concession, such as *even if, as if, as though*:

*Even if he arrived, it would be too late*  
Anche se arrivasse, sarebbe troppo tardi.

*He acts as if he were the king.*  
Si comporta come se fosse il re.

*They talk as though they knew what they are saying.*  
Parlano come se sapessero quello che dicono.

Confusion between the conjunctive and conditional forms is common:

\* They talk as though they would know what they are saying.

c) in sub-clauses after certain expressions of supposition and wishes, such as *it's time, wish, would prefer, would rather*:

*It's time the government called an election.*  
È ora che il governo indica le elezioni.

*I wish he weren't Prime Minister.*  
Magari non fosse primo ministro.

*I'd prefer you didn't smoke in here.*  
Preferirei che tu non fumassi qui dentro.

In hypothetical sentences, subject and verb can be inverted and *if* omitted in a more formal style.

*Were I you, I would work a little harder.*  
(*If I were you, I would work a little harder.*)  
Se fossi in te, lavorerei un po' di più.

*Should anything happen, let me know.*  
(*If anything should happen, let me know.*)  
Se dovesse succedere qualche cosa, fammi sapere.

## 6.3 Perfect Aspect

### 6.3.1 Present Perfect



The present perfect can cause some difficulties for Italian students. Unlike the Italian *passato prossimo*, which it resembles, the present perfect is closely related to the present, linking past and present time. It can sometimes also extend into the future. The present perfect tense is used in the following ways:

a) to express a state that began in the past and continues up to the present time (duration form). The present perfect corresponds to the Italian present tense in this use. In Italian the time expression is often brought to the front of the sentence for additional emphasis, whereas in English it is placed at the end.

*We have been here since 10 o'clock.*  
Siamo qui dalle dieci. (È dalle dieci che siamo qui.)  
\* We are here since 10 o'clock.

*We have been here for hours.*  
Siamo qui da ore. (Sono ore che siamo qui.)  
\* We are here from / since hours.

Note the use of the prepositions *for* and *since* to introduce the complement of time. *For* expresses the duration of the action or state (*da quanto tempo*): *for a long time, for several days, for two years*. *Since* indicates when the action or state began (*da quando*): *since last week, since ten o'clock, since I was a child*. The preposition *for* may sometimes be omitted and replaced with another emphatic expression:

*I have lived here (for) ten years.  
these ten years.  
ten years now.  
for the last ten years.*

b) to express an action that has been repeated many times up to the present. It is often reinforced with a frequency adverb. In this context the present perfect corresponds to the Italian *passato prossimo*:

*I have been to Paris several times.  
Sono stato a Parigi diverse volte.*

*Whenever I have invited him, I have always met with a polite refusal.  
Ogni volta che l'ho invitato, ho sempre avuto un cortese rifiuto.*

A common error is to use the auxiliary *be* instead of *have*:

*He has gone to Paris.  
È andato a Parigi.  
\* He is gone to Paris.*

c) to refer to an indefinite past in which the time is not specified. Here, too, it corresponds to the Italian *passato prossimo*. It may be reinforced by the use of adverbs such as *ever, never* and *before*:

*I have never seen any paintings by Renoir.  
Non ho mai visto un quadro di Renoir.*

*Has he ever been abroad?  
È mai stato all'estero?*

The present perfect is generally used in this sense with adverbs such as *just, already, recently, lately, yet*, emphasising that the action has taken place in the recent past:

*I have just seen one of Fellini's early films.*  
Ho appena visto uno dei primi film di Fellini.

*He has recently been abroad.*  
È stato all'estero di recente.

The present perfect tense is also used with superlative constructions and with the construction *it (this) is the first (second, third, only) time*:

*It's the best book I have ever read.*  
È il miglior libro che abbia mai letto.

*This is the first time I've ever seen him run to school.*  
È la prima volta che lo vedo correre a scuola.

The present perfect tense may also be used as an alternative to the simple present tense in secondary clauses of time or of condition. In this kind of clause it corresponds to the Italian *futuro anteriore*:

*When you've eaten the whole cake, I'll give you some more.*  
Quando avrai mangiato tutta la torta, te ne darò ancora.  
\* When you will have eaten the whole cake, I'll give you some more.

*He'll give us a hand as soon as he has finished that job.*  
Ci darà una mano non appena avrà finito quel lavoro.  
\* He'll give us a hand as soon as he will have finished that job.

### 6.3.2 Past Perfect

The past perfect expresses actions or states that took place before a definite reference point in the past. It is sometimes called 'past in the past', and is often the equivalent of the present perfect in the past. It is rarely used in independent sentences, and is usually co-ordinated with the past tense.

When used to refer to past events or states that preceded another past action, the past perfect corresponds to the Italian *trapassato*:

*When I phoned her it was too late: she had already accepted their proposal.*  
Quando le telefonai era troppo tardi: aveva già accettato la loro proposta.

When used with the prepositions *for* and *since* to express a state that continued until a certain past time (**6.3.1a**), the past perfect corresponds to the Italian *imperfetto*.

*They had lived in London for two months when they moved to Bath.*  
Vivevano a Londra da due mesi quando si trasferirono a Bath.

The simple past is often used when the sequence of actions is clear, especially with conjunctions such as *after*, *before*, *as soon as*.

*After I finished (had finished) my meal, I went for a walk.*  
Dopo aver finito il pasto, sono uscita per una passeggiata.

*We worked (had worked) together for weeks before we got to know each other.*  
Lavorammo (Avevamo lavorato) insieme per settimane prima di conoscerci.

After the conjunction *when*, the use of the past tense and the past perfect produce different meanings. Compare:

*When she sang, she stood up.*  
Quando (Mentre) cantava, stava in piedi.

*When she had sung, she stood up.*  
Dopo aver cantato, si alzò in piedi.

The past perfect tense is the past of the present perfect:

a) in reported speech (see **6.6** below):

*“I have never been to the United States”.*  
“Non sono mai stata negli Stati Uniti”.

*She said she had never been to the United States.*  
Disse che non era mai stata negli Stati Uniti.

b) with superlative constructions and *it was the first (second, last, only) time*:

*They were the best friends (that) we had ever had.*  
Erano i miglior amici che avessimo mai avuto.

*It was the first time (that) I had heard that song.*  
Era la prima volta che avevo sentito quella canzone.

c) in secondary clauses introduced with *if* to refer to an impossible hypothesis. The verb in the main clause has the past conditional construction *would* (*should / could / might*) + perfect infinitive.

A common error is to confuse the past conditional and past perfect forms:

*If she hadn't been an artist, he would have married her.*  
Se non fosse stata un'artista, lui l'avrebbe sposata.  
\* If she wouldn't have been an artist, he would have married her.

In hypothetical sentences, subject and verb can be inverted and *if* omitted in a more formal style.

*Had he accepted that job, he would have been promoted earlier.*  
(*If he had accepted that job, he would have been promoted earlier.*)  
Se avesse accettato quel lavoro, sarebbe stato promosso prima.

d) in adverbial clauses of condition and concession in the past:

*Even if they had helped, it would have been too late.*  
Anche se avessero dato il loro aiuto, sarebbe stato troppo tardi.

*She spoke as if she had met the Queen.*  
Parlava come se avesse conosciuto la Regina.

and in sub-clauses after certain expressions of supposition and wishes:

*I wish he hadn't married her.*  
Magari non l'avesse sposata.

#### **6.4 Progressive Aspect**

The progressive aspect serves to express the temporary nature of an action or of a state.

*What are you reading?*  
Cosa leggi?

*The girls were playing in the courtyard.*  
Le ragazze giocavano nel cortile.

*They've been travelling for months.*  
Sono mesi che viaggiano.

*He'd been listening to the radio before he went to bed.*  
Aveva ascoltato la radio prima di andare a letto.

#### 6.4.1 Present progressive



The present progressive is used to express temporary actions and temporary states, although the latter use is less common. In Italian the progressive aspect (*stare / andare / venire + gerundio*) is used in rare cases to express an action that is taking place; generally both temporary and permanent actions are expressed with the simple present tense. Compare the following examples:

*What are you doing?*                      *I'm watching TV.*  
Cosa fai?                                      Guardo la TV.

*What do you do?*                              *I work in a factory.*  
Cosa fai nella vita?                      Lavoro in una fabbrica.

*I usually speak Italian, but I'm speaking English at the moment.*  
Di solito parlo italiano, ma in questo momento parlo inglese.

*I live in Inghilterra, but I'm working in France for a few months.*  
Abito in Inghilterra, ma attualmente lavoro in Francia per qualche mese.

The present progressive can be used with an adverbial such as *always, constantly, all the time* to express a repeated habit. This structure is often used to express annoyance or irritation.

*Students are always coming in late.*  
Gli studenti arrivano sempre in ritardo.

*They are constantly opening and shutting the door.*  
Aprono e chiudono la porta senza sosta.

The present progressive can be used to refer to a planned future arrangement with an expression of future time:

*We are going to Paris next week.*  
Andiamo (Andremo) a Parigi la settimana prossima.

#### **6.4.2 Past progressive**

The past progressive is used to describe temporary actions and states in the past. It is used to express incomplete actions. Compare:

*I was listening to 'La Traviata'.*  
Ascoltavo (Stavo ascoltando) 'La Traviata'.

*I listened to 'La Traviata'.*  
Ho ascoltato 'La Traviata'.

It is often marked by a definite time adverbial.

*When he came in I was listening to 'La Traviata'.*  
Quando entrò, stavo ascoltando 'La Traviata'.

*We were just leaving when the telephone rang.*  
Stavamo uscendo quando squillò il telefono.

The use of the simple past tense in this kind of construction implies that the second action was a consequence of the first. Compare:

*When he arrived we listened to 'La Traviata'.*  
Quando è arrivato abbiamo ascoltato 'La Traviata'.

*We left when the telephone rang.*  
Quando il telefono ha squillato, siamo usciti.

The past progressive is also used for descriptions and corresponds to the Italian *imperfetto descrittivo*.

*The sun was shining and the birds were singing.*  
Il sole splendeva e gli uccelli cantavano.

The past progressive is also used in colloquial speech for greater politeness, corresponding to the Italian *imperfetto di intenzione/modestia*.

*I was wondering whether you would like to go out for dinner.*  
Mi chiedevo se ti andrebbe di andare a cena.

*I was wanting to speak to you.*  
Avrei avuto voglia di parlarti.

### 6.4.3 Present perfect progressive



The present perfect progressive has the same meaning as the present perfect, but stresses the duration of the action and its result. Compare:

*He has studied English for five years.*  
Studia inglese da cinque anni.

*He has been studying English for years, but still doesn't know it well.*  
Sono anni che studia inglese, ma non lo sa ancora bene.

The present perfect progressive can also express the temporary nature of the action:

*He has worked for this company since he was twenty.*  
Lavora per questa ditta da quando aveva vent'anni.

*He's been working as a gardener for a few weeks while waiting to start university.*  
Lavora da qualche settimana come giardiniere in attesa di iniziare l'università.

As with the past progressive above, the present perfect progressive is used to express an incomplete action. Compare:

*We have read 'War and Peace'.*  
Abbiamo letto (tutto) 'Guerra e Pace'.

*We have been reading 'War and Peace'.*  
Abbiamo letto (parte di) Guerra e Pace.

The present perfect progressive is also used for a series of repeated actions while the present perfect simple is used for a single action or a specified number of actions. Compare:

*I have written a couple of letters this morning.*  
Ho scritto un paio di lettere stamattina.

*I have been writing letters all morning.*  
È tutta la mattina che scrivo lettere.

*She's just run to work.*  
È appena corsa al lavoro.

*She's been running round the park for hours.*  
Sono ore che corre nel parco.

The present perfect progressive is often used with time expressions that also stress the uninterrupted nature of the action, such as *all day*, *all year*, *for ages*, *for years*.

#### **6.4.4 Past perfect progressive**

The past perfect progressive is the past of the simple past progressive and the present perfect progressive. It corresponds to the *trapassato* and the *imperfetto* respectively.

*She was watching TV.*  
Guardava la TV.

*She said she had been watching TV.*  
Disse che aveva guardato la TV.

*I have been waiting for hours.*  
Aspetto da ore.

*He knew I had been waiting for hours.*  
Sapeva che aspettavo da ore.

#### **6.4.5 State verbs**

Verbs that refer to states are not normally used in the progressive tenses.

The main groups of state verbs are:

- a) verbs expressing feelings, such as *like*, *love*, *hate*, *enjoy*;
- b) verbs referring to intellectual states, such as *forget*, *understand*, *know*;
- c) verbs about wants, such as *want*, *need*, *require*;
- d) verbs of perception: *feel*, *hear*, *see*, *smell*, *taste*;
- e) verbs of being/having/owning, such as *appear*, *seem*, *belong*, *possess*.

Some state verbs can have a dynamic meaning and are used in progressive tenses. Compare the following sentences:

*He always thinks he's right.*                      *I'm thinking about the problem.*  
Crede sempre di avere ragione.              Sto considerando il problema.

*We have (got) a car.*                                      *He's having a cigarette.*  
Possediamo una macchina.                      Sta fumando una sigaretta.

*He doesn't hear very well.*                      *The court is hearing the witness.*  
Non sente bene.                                      La corte sta ascoltando il testimone.

State verbs can have a progressive aspect when they refer to temporary states. Compare:

*I enjoy sport.*  
Mi piace lo sport.

*I'm not enjoying this game much.*  
Non mi diverte molto questa partita.

*She is a human rights lawyer.*  
È un avvocato per i diritti umani.

*She is being very aggressive today.*  
Si sta comportando in maniera molto aggressiva oggi.

Sometimes the progressive aspect adds very little difference in meaning:

*They feel (are feeling) very optimistic.*  
Si sentono ottimisti.

*My back hurts (is hurting).*  
Mi fa male la schiena.

## 6.5 Future time

Both the present simple tense and the present continuous can be used with future time reference. See **6.1.2** and **6.4.1** above.

### 6.5.1 *Will and shall*

The modal auxiliary verb *will* (negative *won't*), which is the closest English structure to the Italian *futuro*, refers to future time in the following cases:

a) neutral future:

*She will be 20 in December.*  
Avrà vent'anni a dicembre.

*What will the world be like in the 21st century?*  
Come sarà il mondo nel XXI secolo?

A more casual future form is *will* + progressive infinitive:

*“What will you be doing this weekend?”*  
— Cosa farai questo fine settimana?

*“On Saturday I'll be cleaning and on Sunday I'll be gardening.”*  
— Sabato farò le pulizie e domenica lavorerò in giardino.

*Will* is found in main clauses when the secondary clause is a time clause or a hypothetical *if* clause with a present tense:

*If I finish in time, I'll come to the party.*  
Se finirò in tempo, verrò alla festa.

*They'll ring us as soon as the lesson ends.*  
Ci telefoneranno non appena finirà la lezione.

b) intention and certainty:

*I will definitely graduate next year.*  
Mi laureerò sicuramente l'anno prossimo.

*We will surely go to the party.*  
Andremo di sicuro alla festa.

c) objective prediction:

*That will be Peter at the door.*  
Sarà Peter alla porta.

*The price of petrol will rise next year.*  
Il prezzo della benzina aumenterà l'anno prossimo.

*Will* + perfect infinitive is used with past reference in a prediction:

*That will have been Peter who rang just now.*  
Sarà stato Peter a telefonare proprio ora.

See **6.5.2** for subjective prediction with *be* + *going to*.

The modal auxiliary *shall* is generally only used in British English in the first person *I/we*.

It is used in a very similar way to *will* to express intention.

*We shall give you the results as soon as possible.*  
Vi daremo i risultati al più presto.

In a slightly obsolete usage, it can be used to express a promise also with the second and third persons.

*You shall be punished for your disobedience.*  
(Ti prometto che) sarai punito per la tua disobbedienza.

*Britain shall win the war.*  
(Vi prometto che) la Gran Bretagna vincerà la guerra.

See **8.2.4** for other uses of *will* and *shall*.

See **6.1.3** for the use of *will* in hypothetical *if* phrases.

### **6.5.2** *Be going to*

The semi-modal construction *be going to* + infinitive is used to refer to future time in two main ways:

a) to express intention:

*I am going to study Anthropology at university.*  
Studierò (Ho intenzione di studiare) antropologia all'università.

*They are going to eat at a Chinese restaurant this evening.*  
Hanno intenzione di mangiare al ristorante cinese questa sera.

The past form *was (were) going to* often implies that the intention was not carried out:

*I was going to ring you, but I forgot.*

Avevo intenzione di chiamarti, ma mi sono dimenticato.

b) for subjective predictions based on personal observations:

*You are going to be late unless you hurry up.*

Farai tardi se non ti sbrighi.

*Tom is going to miss the train. He is still queuing at the ticket office.*

Tom perderà il treno. È ancora in coda alla biglietteria.

### 6.5.3 *Be + infinitive*

*Be + infinitive* is used for formal official future arrangements with the meaning 'expected to' or 'due to':

*Dr. Jones is to present his work to the Royal Society today.*

Il Dr. Jones presenterà il suo lavoro alla Royal Society oggi.

It is often used in newspapers, and is reduced in headlines to the infinitive:

*Pope to visit US.*

Il Papa visita gli Stati Uniti.

It is also used to report orders or instructions:

*Students are to enrol by the end of November.*

Gli studenti sono tenuti a iscriversi entro il mese di novembre.

*Soldiers are to report to headquarters.*

I soldati si presenteranno (dovranno presentarsi) al comando.

*Be + infinitive* is very often used in the passive form, i.e. with the passive infinitive:

*No-one was to be seen.*

Non si faceva vedere nessuno.

*Some traces of dialect are still to be found in this area.*

Si possono trovare ancora delle tracce di dialetto in questa zona.

*Be* + infinitive can also refer to future in the past. It has two forms with different meanings: *was (were)* + infinitive for actions that probably took place, and *was (were)* + perfect infinitive for actions that did not take place. Compare:

*Jones was to publish his results.* (and he probably did)

Jones doveva pubblicare (avrebbe pubblicato) i suoi risultati.

*Jones was to have published his results.*

(but for some reason he didn't)

Jones avrebbe dovuto pubblicare i suoi risultati.

*Be* + infinitive can also convey a sense of destiny:

*He won the Nobel Prize. Two years later he was to die.*

Vinse il premio Nobel. Due anni dopo sarebbe morto.

## 6.6 Sequence of tenses: reported speech



Direct speech is generally reported with a back-shift of one tense (present → past; past → past perfect; present perfect → past perfect). Note the following points.

The simple past tense may be reported with the past perfect or with another simple past tense:

*"I learnt it at school".*      *He said he learnt (had learnt) it at school.*

*"L'ho imparato a scuola".*      *Ha detto che l'aveva imparato a scuola.*

The future tense with *will* is reported with a present conditional. Italian reports the future with *condizionale perfetto*:

*"We'll study Logic next term".*

Studieremo Logica il prossimo semestre.

*He said they would study Logic the next term.*

Ha detto che avrebbero studiato Logica il semestre successivo.

\* *He said they would have studied Logic the next term.*

Present conditional forms do not change in reported speech:

*“I’d like to see that film”.*  
*“Vorrei vedere quel film”.*

*He said he’d like to see that film.*  
Ha detto che gli sarebbe piaciuto vedere quel film.  
\* He said he would have liked to see that film.

The past conditional in this context expresses an unfulfilled action in the past. Compare the example above, which expresses probable fulfilment, with:

*He said he would have liked to see that film last week if he had had the time.*  
Ha detto che gli sarebbe piaciuto vedere quel film la settimana scorsa se avesse avuto il tempo.

Direct *yes/no* questions are reported with the regular Subject-Verb order. The tense changes are the same as above:

<i>“Do you like Bach?”</i>	<i>She asked if I liked Bach.</i>
<i>“Ti piace Bach?”</i>	Mi ha chiesto se mi piaceva Bach.
<i>“Have you ever read Kafka?”</i>	<i>She asked if I had ever read Kafka.</i>
<i>“Hai mai letto Kafka?”</i>	Mi chiese se avevo mai letto Kafka.

The indirect question is introduced by *if* or *whether* without any change in meaning:

*She asked if/whether I wanted to take her out for dinner.*  
Mi ha chiesto se volevo portarla fuori a cena.

In other contexts *if* simply expresses a condition:

*If he comes, we’ll discuss the question.*  
Se verrà, discuteremo della questione.

*Whether* expresses a doubt, the idea of *if ... or not*:

*I don’t know whether he will come (or not).*  
Non so se verrà o meno.

*Whether ... or* corresponds to the Italian *sia che ... o no*:

*Whether he comes or not, I don't care.*  
Che venga o meno, non m'importa.

Indirect *Wh*-questions are formed with the regular Subject-Verb order as follows. The tense changes are the same as above:

*"What is your name?"*                      *He asked what my name was.*  
"Qual è il tuo nome?"                      Ha chiesto qual era il mio nome.

*"Where do you live?"*                      *They asked us where we lived.*  
"Dove vivete?"                              Ci hanno chiesto dove vivevamo.

Pronouns and possessives change in reported speech:

*Jane said, "I am leaving you".*              *She said she was leaving me.*  
Jane disse: "Ti lascio".                      Disse che mi lasciava.

*"My thesis is wrong", he stated.*  
"La mia tesi è sbagliata", dichiarò lui.

*He stated that his thesis was wrong.*  
Egli dichiarò che la sua tesi era sbagliata.

Adverbials of time and place also change in reported speech:

*"Stay here".*                                      *She told me to stay there.*  
"Resta qui".                                      Mi disse di restare lì.

*"He arrived yesterday".*                      *They told us he had arrived the day before.*  
"È arrivato ieri".                              Ci dissero che era arrivato il giorno prima.

Sometimes directional verbs also change:

*"Come and see me," she said.*              *She invited me to go and see her.*  
"Vieni a trovarmi", disse.                      Mi invitò ad andarla a trovare.

## 7 ELEMENTS OF THE VERB PHRASE

In English, verbs can be divided into three different classes: transitive, intransitive, and copular. Appendix IV sets out some of the main verb patterns for each class. Uses of the infinitive, the bare infinitive, the *-ing* participle and the gerund are examined below.

### 7.1 Infinitive

The infinitive of verbs can take different forms.

bare infinitive: *study*

present infinitive: *to study*

negative infinitive: *not to study*

continuous infinitive: *to be studying*

perfect infinitive: *to have studied*

perfect continuous infinitive: *to have been studying*

present infinitive passive: *to be studied*

perfect infinitive passive: *to have been studied*

perfect continuous infinitive passive: *to have been being studied*

#### 7.1.1 Bare infinitive

The bare infinitive is used:

a) after modal auxiliary verbs, such as *can*, *will*:

*I can swim.*

So nuotare.

*It will rain.*

Pioverà.

b) with constructions such as *had better*, *would rather*:

*You had better work a bit harder.*

Faresti meglio a lavorare un po' di più.

*I'd rather finish this chapter before I take a break.*

Preferirei finire questo capitolo prima di prendere una pausa.

c) after verbs such as *make*, *have*, *help*, *let*. The most common of these are *make* and *let*:

*She made us repeat the exercise.*

Ci ha fatto ripetere l'esercizio.

*Then she let us leave before the end of the lesson.*  
Poi ci ha permesso di uscire prima della fine della lezione.

d) after verbs of perception + object to express a complete action perceived:

<i>I heard him come in.</i>	<i>We saw them cross the road.</i>
L'ho sentito entrare.	Li abbiamo visti attraversare la strada.

When followed by the gerund, the perception may be of an incomplete action:

<i>I heard him coming in.</i>	<i>We saw them crossing the road.</i>
L'ho sentito mentre entrava.	Li abbiamo visti mentre attraversavano la strada.

### 7.1.2 Infinitive after verbs

The infinitive may follow a verb to indicate future time reference (see *be* + infinitive 6.5.3 above):

<i>The worst is still to come.</i>	<i>They are to leave soon.</i>
Deve ancora arrivare il peggio.	Partiranno tra poco.

With the verbs *expect*, *help*, *hope*, *promise*, *want* the infinitive may replace the subject + future tense when the subject of the two verbs is the same:

*I hope to graduate next June.*  
(*I hope I'll graduate next June.*)  
Spero di laurearmi il prossimo giugno.

The infinitive may also be used for reference to future in the past:

*They had expected to be accepted for the course.*  
(*They had expected they would be accepted for the course.*)  
Avevano immaginato di essere accettati al corso.

Certain verbs are followed by the infinitive form of another verb:

*He managed to get a raise.*  
È riuscito a ottenere un aumento.

Some of the most common of these verbs are: *agree, choose, decide, expect, hope, manage, promise, refuse, seem, want, would like, would love, would prefer.*

Some verbs can be used with a noun or pronoun before the infinitive. After verbs such as *want, would like*, the infinitive corresponds to the Italian *congiuntivo*:

*I never ask her to help me.*  
Non le chiedo mai di aiutarmi.

*They wanted the students to buy the books.*  
Volevano che gli studenti comprassero i libri.  
\* They wanted that the students bought the books.

The most common of these verbs are: *ask, beg, choose, expect, help, like, need, prefer, prepare, promise, want, wish.*

Some verbs must be used with a noun or pronoun before the infinitive:

*The committee allowed the candidate to explain his answer.*  
La commissione ha permesso al candidato di spiegare la sua risposta.

The error of omitting the object is commonly found in impersonal scientific style:

*The results permit us (me / the authors) to draw a conclusion.*  
I risultati permettono di trarre una conclusione.  
\* The results permit to draw a conclusion.

The most common of these verbs are: *advise, allow, challenge, command, enable, encourage, forbid, force, invite, order, permit, persuade, recommend, remind, request, tell.*

These verbs are often used in the passive form, where no object is necessary:

*We were allowed to park in the garden.*  
Ci fu permesso di parcheggiare in giardino.

*He was told to hand in the exam paper.*  
Gli fu detto di consegnare il compito.

### 7.1.3 Infinitive of purpose and consequence

The infinitive is also used to express purpose:

*He stopped talking to have a glass of water.*  
Smise di parlare per bere un bicchiere d'acqua.

Purpose can also be indicated with the constructions *in order / so as*:

*He studied at night in order to improve his education.*  
Ha studiato di notte per migliorare la sua cultura.

*They came in quietly so as not to wake us up.*  
Sono entrati in silenzio per non svegliarci.

A common error is to confuse the infinitive of purpose with the construction *for + gerund*:

*We went to the zoo to see the animals.*  
Siamo andati allo zoo per vedere gli animali.  
\* We went to the zoo for seeing / for to see the animals.

The infinitive expresses the purpose of a specific action; the *for + gerund* construction expresses general purpose of a noun. Compare:

*I want a book to learn English with.*  
Voglio un libro con cui imparare l'inglese.

*This is a book for learning English.*  
Questo è un libro per imparare l'inglese.

The infinitive is also used to express consequence:

*He looked at the list to find his name had been omitted.*  
Ha guardato l'elenco per scoprire che il suo nome era stato omissso.

Consequence is also expressed with the adverbs *too* and *enough*:

*I am too tired to go on.*  
Sono troppo stanco per continuare.

*You are clever enough to do better.*

Sei abbastanza intelligente per ottenere risultati migliori.

See **4.1.1** and **4.2.1** for further information on *too* and *enough*.

### 7.1.4 Infinitive + adjectives

The infinitive is used with adjectives in two important constructions:

a) introduced by *it*:

*It is important to tell the truth.*

È importante dire la verità.

*It was easy to help them.*

È stato facile aiutarli.

b) when the subject of the main verb is the object of the infinitive, the following construction is also possible:

*He is easy to please.*

È facile da accontentare.

*They were hard to believe.*

Erano difficili da credere.

## 7.2 -ing participle and gerund

The *-ing* participle is used in progressive tenses (*I'm waiting*) and in *-ing* participle clauses (*Running quickly, she entered the room*). The gerund is an *-ing* participle used as a noun (*I like swimming*).

### 7.2.1 Nominal gerund

The gerund may function as a noun:

a) as the subject of a sentence or the complement of a verb:

*Swimming is my favourite sport.*

Il nuoto è il mio sport preferito.

*I like running in the park.*

Mi piace correre nel parco.

b) in a noun + noun compound:

*a swimming pool*

una piscina

*long-distance running*

corsa campestre

c) immediately after prepositions:

*I'm interested in learning Greek.*  
Mi interessa imparare il greco.

*Before playing the game, read the rules.*  
Prima di giocare, leggi le regole.

*We're looking forward to having some free time.*  
Non vediamo l'ora di avere un po' di tempo libero.

The verb + preposition + gerund construction refers to the subject of the verb:

*They objected to getting up early.*  
Dissero che non gli andava di alzarsi presto.

When preceded by a possessive adjective or pronoun, the gerund may refer to another person:

*They objected to my (me) getting up late.*  
Si sono lamentati che mi sono alzato tardi.

### 7.2.2 **-ing participle and gerund after verbs**

Some verbs are generally followed by the *-ing* participle of another verb:

*He risked losing all his power.*  
Rischio di perdere tutto il suo potere.

Some of the most common of these verbs are: *admit, appreciate, avoid, delay, dislike, enjoy, finish, imagine, mind, practise, risk, suggest.*

Some verbs can be followed by either infinitive or *-ing* participle without any significant change in meaning:

*They started to play (playing) chess.*  
Iniziarono a giocare a scacchi.

However two *-ing* forms are not generally used together:

*They are starting to play (not playing) chess.*

Some examples are: *begin, continue, intend, recommend, start.*

Sometimes the meaning of the sentence changes when a verb is followed by the infinitive or the *-ing* participle. The two main groups are:

a) verbs such as *forget, regret, remember* which refer to the future when followed by the infinitive and refer to the past when followed by the *-ing* participle. Compare:

*I must remember to apply for the job.*  
Devo ricordarmi di fare domanda per il posto.

*I remember applying for the job.*  
Mi ricordo di aver fatto domanda per il posto.

*We regret to tell you that he has died.*  
Ci rincresce dirvi che è morto.

*I regret telling her that secret.*  
Mi rincresce di averle confidato quel segreto.

b) the verbs *mean* and *try*.

*Try* + infinitive means ‘to make an attempt’:

*I tried to learn French, but didn't learn much.*  
Ho tentato di imparare il francese, ma non ho imparato molto.

*Try* + *-ing* participle means ‘to make an experiment’:

*My feet hurt.*                      — *Try changing shoes.*  
Mi fanno male i piedi.        — Prova a cambiare scarpe.

*Mean* + infinitive expresses intention:

*I meant to tell you the news.*  
Avevo intenzione di dirti la notizia.

*Mean* + *-ing* participle expresses implication or meaning:

*Unemployment often means having to sell your house.*  
La disoccupazione spesso significa dover vendere casa.

The choice of infinitive or *-ing* participle can produce a slight difference in meaning with verbs such as *like, hate, love, prefer* where the infinitive may refer to a specific situation and the *-ing* participle to a more general situation. Compare:

*I hate shopping.*  
Odio fare acquisti.

*I love to shop at Harrods.*  
Amo fare acquisti da Harrods.

### 7.3 Phrasal and prepositional verbs

A prepositional verb is a verb + preposition combination.

Some common prepositional verbs:

*account for*

*consist of*

*look after*

*agree with*

*deal with*

*look for*

*apply for*

*decide on*

*pay for*

*ask for*

*depend on*

*rely on*

*associate with*

*lead to*

*see to*

*believe in*

*listen to*

*talk about*

*care about*

*look at*

*talk to*

The preposition cannot be separated from its verb, and is placed before the object.

*I looked for the book.*

*They dealt with the problem.*

Ho cercato il libro.

Hanno affrontato il problema.

\* I looked the book for.

\* They dealt the problem with.

Some verbs require a preposition in English but not in Italian.

*I'm waiting for the bus.*

*Look at the moon!*

Aspetto l'autobus.

Guarda la luna!

\* I'm waiting the bus.

\* Look the moon!

*Let's listen to some music.*

*He will pay for the dinner.*

Ascoltiamo della musica.

Egli pagherà la cena.

\* Let's listen some music.

\* He'll pay the dinner.

See **12** for other prepositions.

A phrasal verb is a verb + adverb combination.

Some common phrasal verbs:

*break down*  
*break out*  
*bring up*  
*bring back*  
*carry out*

*find out*  
*give up*  
*look up*  
*put aside*  
*put off*

*take off*  
*take over*  
*think over*  
*turn down*  
*work out*

The adverb can be placed either before or after the object when it is a noun:

*I looked up the word in the dictionary.*

*I looked the word up in the dictionary.*

*Ho cercato la parola nel dizionario.*

*He took off his coat.*

*He took his coat off.*

*Si è tolto il cappotto.*

However, if the object is a pronoun, the adverb must follow the pronoun:

*I looked it up in the dictionary.*

*L'ho cercato nel dizionario.*

*\* I looked up it in the dictionary.*

*He took it off.*

*L'ha tolto.*

*\* He took off it.*

Verb + adverb + preposition combinations are also possible. In these cases the object must follow the preposition:

*I am fed up with your complaints.*

*Sono stufo delle tue lamentele.*

*We've run out of paper.*

*Abbiamo esaurito la carta.*

Some common combinations:

*catch up with*  
*look out for*  
*face up to*

*get away with*  
*give in to*  
*go back on*

*put up with*  
*run up against*  
*stand up to*

#### 7.4 Subjunctive

The present and past subjunctive forms are the same as the bare infinitive. This use of the subjunctive is very common in American English. In British English, the modal auxiliary *should* + bare infinitive is more commonly used.

The subjunctive is generally found:

a) after the verbs *ask, command, demand, insist, order, propose, recommend, request, suggest*:

*They demand that he (should) appear before the court.*  
Esigono che appaia dinanzi alla corte.

*I proposed that a decision (should) be made as soon as possible.*  
Ho proposto che si prendesse una decisione al più presto.

b) in the construction *it is desirable / essential / important / necessary / vital that*:

*It is important that each person (should) have the same opportunities.*  
È importante che ciascuno abbia le stesse opportunità.

*It is vital that every citizen (should) receive the same treatment.*  
È vitale che ciascun cittadino riceva lo stesso trattamento.

See **6.2.1** for the hypothetical past tense.

There are also formulaic subjunctive expressions:

<i>God save the Queen.</i>	Dio salvi la Regina.
<i>Heaven forbid.</i>	Dio non voglia.

Inversion is commonly found in such expressions:

<i>Come what may.</i>	Accada quel che accada.
<i>Be that as it may.</i>	Sia come sia.
<i>Suffice it to say...</i>	Basti dire...
<i>Far be it for me to...</i>	Lungi da me il...
<i>Difficult as it may seem...</i>	Per quanto possa sembrare difficile...

## 7.5 Ellipsis

To avoid repetition, and for stylistic reasons, elements of the sentence may be omitted.

### 7.5.1 Of verbs

a) The main verb may be replaced with an auxiliary verb:

*John always talks loudly, and I hate it when he does.*  
John parla sempre a voce alta e mi dà fastidio quando lo fa.

*Her father wanted her to come home early, and was angry when she didn't.*  
Suo padre voleva che lei tornasse a casa presto e si arrabbiava quando non lo faceva.

b) with comparatives, the main verb may be replaced by a subject pronoun and auxiliary verb (or by the less grammatical object pronoun alone) or by a noun:

*He always gets up earlier than I do (than me).*  
Si alza sempre prima di me.

*They did better in the exam than we did (than us).*  
I loro risultati erano migliori dei nostri.

*We travel more than John (does).*  
Noi viaggiamo più di John.

c) *to* may be used to replace an infinitive form of the verb:

*If he does the job I won't have to (do it).*  
Se il lavoro lo fa lui non lo dovrò fare io.

*I don't have to get up early every day, but I want to (get up).*  
Non devo alzarmi presto ogni giorno, ma lo voglio fare.

d) the verb *be* may be omitted in constructions with a noun/adjective/adverb when the subject of the main clause and secondary clause are the same:

*An excellent student, she never failed an exam.*  
Studentessa modello, non è mai stata bocciata a un esame.

*Late again, he missed his train.*  
Di nuovo in ritardo, ha perso il treno.

e) after the concessive adjunct *whatever*, the verb is often omitted; after *however*, the subject and verb can be omitted:

*We can't accept his arriving so late, whatever the reason (is).*  
Non possiamo accettare il suo ritardo, qualunque ne sia il motivo.

*I have never really liked his novels, however brilliant (they are).*  
Non mi sono mai piaciuti i suoi romanzi, per quanto brillanti.

### 7.5.2 Of *that* conjunction

After verbs like *believe, consider, expect, find, know, think*, the conjunction *that* is often omitted, especially in a more informal style:

*I believe (that) you're late.*  
Credo che tu sia in ritardo.

*John thought (that) his friend had slept too long.*  
John pensava che il suo amico avesse dormito troppo.

Note that if the subject of the two clauses is the same, the construction corresponds to the Italian *di* + infinitive:

*They know (that) they have won the lottery.*  
Sanno di aver vinto la lotteria.  
\* They know to have won the lottery.

*He knows (that) he is the best.*  
Sa di essere il migliore.  
\* He knows to be the best.

### 7.5.3 In subordinate clauses

Past or present participles may be used to replace a clause beginning with *as/since/because* when the subject of both clauses is the same:

*Painted, the house looked much better*  
(*Because the house had been painted, it looked much better.*)  
Dipinta, la casa aveva un aspetto migliore.

*Being late, he caught a taxi.*  
(*As he was late, he caught a taxi.*)  
Essendo in ritardo, ha preso un taxi.

A clause may be replaced by present participle when two actions with the same subject take place simultaneously:

*He always talked smoking a cigarette.*  
(*He always talked while he was smoking a cigarette.*)  
Parlava sempre fumando (mentre fumava) una sigaretta.

*The men walked along the street, talking about the match.*  
(*While the men walked along the street, they were talking about the match.*)  
Gli uomini passeggiavano per la strada parlando della partita.

If the two actions are consecutive, the perfect participle is necessary to avoid ambiguity:

*Having finished his homework, he went out for a run.*  
(*After he had finished his homework, he went out for a run.*)  
Avendo finito (Finiti) i compiti, andò a correre.  
\* Finished his homework, he went out for a run.

#### 7.5.4 Of subject and verb

In some clauses, both subject and verb may be omitted. This is generally found in an answer to a question that expands the question by adding information to it.

*Do you love him?* — *Very much.*  
Lo ami? — Molto.

*Would you like some wine?* — *Just a little.*  
Vorresti del vino? — Solo un po'.

#### 7.5.5 Of object clauses

Object clauses can be omitted and replaced with *so* or *not*.

*You told me so.* — *If you want to go you may do so.*  
Me l'hai detto tu. — Puoi andare se vuoi  
\* You told me it. — \*If you want to go you may do it.

*So* replaces a positive clause; *not* replaces a negative clause:

*I hope so.* — *I hope not.*  
Spero di sì. — Spero di no.  
\* I hope yes. — \* I hope no.

The negation may sometimes be conveyed with the verb:

<i>I don't think so.</i> ( <i>I think not.</i> )	<i>I don't suppose so.</i> ( <i>I suppose not.</i> )
Penso di no.	Suppongo di no.

This pattern cannot however be used with the verbs *hope* and *be afraid*:

<i>We hope not.</i>	<i>I am afraid not.</i>
Speriamo di no.	Temo di no.
* We don't hope so.	* I am not afraid so.

*So* and *not* may also replace conditional clauses:

*I hope I will graduate next year.*  
*If so, I will have a great summer holiday.*  
*If not, I will have to work all summer.*

Spero di laurearmi l'anno prossimo.  
In caso affermativo, mi farò una bella vacanza estiva.  
In caso negativo, dovrò lavorare tutta l'estate.

### 7.5.6 In additions

Affirmative additions to affirmative statements are formed with *so* - auxiliary verb - subject (*anch'io, io pure*). As with tag questions, if there is no auxiliary verb in the statement, the auxiliaries *do* (*does, did*) are used.

*I am English. So is Peter.*  
Io sono inglese. Lo è anche Peter.

*They have got three children. So have we.*  
Hanno tre figli. Anche noi.

*We won some money. So did they.*  
Abbiamo vinto dei soldi. Anche loro.

Negative additions to negative statements are formed with *neither/nor* - auxiliary - subject (*neanch'io, neppure io*).

<i>I'm not English.</i>	<i>Neither (Nor) is Peter.</i>
Io non sono inglese.	Neppure Peter lo è.

*They haven't got any children.*  
Non hanno figli.

*Neither (Nor) have we.*  
Neppure noi ne abbiamo.

*We didn't win anything.*  
Non abbiamo vinto niente.

*Neither (Nor) did they.*  
E neppure loro.

There is no inversion in denials to affirmative and negative statements:

*They are late.*  
Loro sono in ritardo.

— *I'm not.*  
— Io no.

*He can't come.*  
Lui non può venire.

— *We can.*  
— Noi sì.

## 8 MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS

Modal auxiliary verbs are used to modify the mood and meaning of other verbs. Some general rules for modal verbs:

a) modal verbs are followed by the bare infinitive form of another verb:

*I can drive.*  
So guidare.

*They must leave.*  
Devono partire.

Exceptions are the modal *ought to* and the semi-modal *used to*:

*I ought to work harder.*  
Dovrei lavorare di più.

*She used to be a good student.*  
Era una brava studentessa.

b) there is no distinction of person or number:

*He can drive.*  
Sa guidare.

*I must leave.*  
Devo partire.

c) the negative is formed by adding *not*:

*He can't swim.*  
Non sa nuotare.

*You shouldn't pay.*  
Non dovresti pagare.

d) the interrogative is formed by inverting modal verb and subject:

*Can you sing?*  
Sai cantare?

*Shall we go?*  
Andiamo?

e) most modal verbs refer only to the present and near future:

*I might leave now.*  
Potrei anche partire ora.

*Can we have a party tomorrow?*  
Possiamo fare una festa domani?

f) past and future tenses are usually supplied by semi-auxiliary verb forms:

*I had to work yesterday.*  
Ho dovuto lavorare ieri.

*I'll be able to vote next year.*  
Potrò votare l'anno prossimo.

## 8.1 Past and future reference

As modal verbs generally have present or future time reference, the past and future tenses are usually supplied by semi-auxiliary verb forms or by verb phrases. Some of the most common are: *be able (to)*, *be going (to)*, *have (got) (to)*.

### 8.1.1 Ability

The modal *can* is used to express general ability, corresponding to the Italian *saper (fare)*. It is also often used with verbs of perception and understanding:

*I can swim.*

So nuotare.

\* I know to swim

*They can speak French.*

Sanno parlare francese.

\* They know to speak French.

*I can't hear you very well.*

Non ti sento (Non riesco a sentirti) molto bene.

*They just can't understand the teacher.*

Proprio non capiscono (non riescono a capire) l'insegnante.

The semi-auxiliary *be able to* is used for future reference and perfect and progressive constructions:

*I don't think I'll be able to come.*

Non credo che potrò venire.

\* I don't think I will can come.

*Have you been able to finish the book?*

Sei riuscito a finire il libro?

In the affirmative, *could* is the past tense of *can* in indirect speech:

*"I can swim".*

"So nuotare".

*She said she could swim.*

Disse che sapeva nuotare.

and when expressing general actions that are continuous or repeated:

*I could speak to her whenever I met her.*

Potevo parlarle ogni volta che la vedevo.

With specific single actions, the semi-auxiliary verbs *be able to* or *manage to* are used:

*I was able to (managed to) speak to her before she left.*

Riuscii a parlarle prima che lei partisse.

\* I could speak to her before she left.

In the negative, and with verbs of perception and understanding, both alternatives can be used with specific actions:

*They couldn't (weren't able to) speak to her yesterday.*

Non riuscirono a parlarle ieri.

*She could (was able to) understand the teacher this morning.*

È riuscita a capire l'insegnante stamattina.

### 8.1.2 Permission

The modal verb *might* is the past of *may* when indicating permission in reported speech:

*"May I come in?"*

Posso entrare?

*She asked if she might come in.*

Ha chiesto se poteva entrare.

For other past and future reference, the verb phrases *be allowed to* or the more formal *be permitted to* are used:

*We were allowed to stay out late.*

Ci fu permesso di stare fuori fino a tardi.

*He will be permitted to work on his own after his training.*

Avrà il permesso di lavorare da solo dopo il suo addestramento.

### 8.1.3 Obligation

In the present, intrinsic obligation and obligation imposed by the speaker is expressed with *must*:

*I must study more.*

Devo studiare di più.

*You must go home now.*

Devi andare a casa ora.

External obligation is expressed with *have (got) to* or the more formal and impersonal *be to*:

*You have (got) to be very careful when handling dynamite.*  
Si deve stare molto attenti quando si usa la dinamite.

*All soldiers are to report at 9 p.m.*  
Tutti i soldati si devono presentare alle 21.

See **6.5.3** for the use of *be to* in the past.

*Have to* and *be to* also supply the missing forms of *must* in the past and future. *Have got to* is not generally used in the past.

*You'll have to buy a dinner suit if you want to go to the reception next week.*  
Dovrai comprarti uno smoking se vuoi andare al ricevimento la settimana prossima.

*They had to hurry home after the party as it was too late.*  
Dovettero correre a casa dopo la festa perché era troppo tardi.

Although *have to* is used as an auxiliary verb, the negative and interrogative forms are supplied by *do* (*does, did*):

*I don't have to vote.*  
Non devo votare.  
\* I haven't to vote.

*Do you really have to go now?*  
Devi davvero partire ora?  
\* Have you really to go now?

#### **8.1.4 Modals + perfect infinitive**

Modal verbs can be used with the perfect infinitive (*have* + past participle of the main verb) for past reference.

*It must have been John.* (past deduction)  
Dev'essere stato John.

*It couldn't have been John.* (negative past deduction)  
Non può essere stato John.

*We may (might) have arrived late.* (past possibility)  
Forse siamo arrivati in ritardo.

*The party would have been more fun with music.* (past conditional)  
La festa sarebbe stata più divertente con la musica.

Take care with the following constructions.

*He could have gone to the party.*  
Sarebbe potuto andare alla festa.

*He was able to go to the party.*  
È riuscito ad andare alla festa.

*You should have seen a doctor. Why didn't you?*  
Avresti dovuto consultare un medico. Perché non l'hai fatto?

*You shouldn't have got so angry. It wasn't at all necessary.*  
Non avresti dovuto arrabbiarti così. Non era proprio necessario.

## 8.2 Other uses

### 8.2.1 *Must* and *have to*



The negative forms *mustn't* and *don't have to* have very different meanings. *Mustn't* is used to express a negative order or warning, similar to a negative imperative. *Don't have to* simply implies that something is not necessary. Both are expressed in Italian with the same form.

*You mustn't touch that wire! It is dangerous.*  
Non devi toccare il filo! È pericoloso.

*You don't have to go to the meeting.*  
Non devi andare (Non occorre che tu vada) alla riunione.  
\*You mustn't go to the meeting.

Note the use of *must* as a noun:

*That exhibition is a must.* = You must go and see it.

### 8.2.2 Deduction

The auxiliary *must* is also used to express a deduction, corresponding to the Italian *dovere* + *infinito* (*presente* or *passato*)

*He must be extremely rich to be able to buy that yacht.*  
Dev'essere ricchissimo per potersi comprare quello yacht.

*The company must have gone bankrupt.*  
La ditta dev'essere andata in fallimento.

A continuous infinitive structure (present or perfect) may also be used in English:

*She must be going through a very bad period.*  
Deve star passando un brutto periodo.

*He must have been feeling depressed after his wife's death.*  
Dev'essersi sentito molto depresso dopo la morte di sua moglie.

Negative deductions are expressed with *can't* + infinitive or *can't/couldn't* + perfect infinitive:

<i>He can't be poor.</i> Non dev'essere povero. * He mustn't be poor.	<i>They couldn't have arrived on time.</i> Non devono essere arrivati in orario. * They mustn't have arrived on time.
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The modals *will*, *may* and *might* are also used for deductions, corresponding to the Italian *futuro ipotetico*, with varying degrees of certainty:

*If you speak to him, he'll tell you he doesn't care about money.*  
Se parli con lui, ti dirà che non gli interessano i soldi.

*He may have won the lottery, I'm not sure.*  
Avrà vinto la lotteria, non ne sono sicuro.

*They might have been delayed.*  
Avranno avuto un contrattempo.

*Will*, *may* and *might* are used with future perfect and future progressive constructions:

*He will have arrived in Paris by now.*  
Sarà arrivato in Parigi a quest'ora.

*They may be boarding the plane right now.*  
Forse stanno (staranno) salendo sull'aereo proprio adesso.

### 8.2.3 Possibility

The modals *can*, *may* and *might* are used to express possibility. *May* and *might* are used to express a real possibility; *can* is used to express a theoretical possibility:

*It may rain later today.*  
Forse pioverà più tardi.  
\* It can rain later.

*I might be late for the meeting.*  
Forse arriverò in ritardo alla riunione.  
\* I can be late for the meeting.

*It can often rain a lot in spring.*  
Può piovere molto in primavera.

*He can get very depressed on rainy days.*  
Può anche diventare molto depresso nei giorni di pioggia.

### 8.2.4 *Will and shall*

The use of *will* and *shall* for future time reference has been examined in 6.5.1 above. In addition, *will* is used:

a) to formulate requests:

*Will you help me write the essay?*  
Mi aiuti a scrivere il saggio?

and tags to imperatives in informal requests:

*Give me a hand, will you?*  
Mi dai una mano?

b) to express insistence and repetition. In this case the contracted form is rarely used.

*They will always forget to wipe their shoes.*  
Continuano a dimenticare di pulirsi le scarpe.

*He will never eat vegetables.*  
Si rifiuta sempre di mangiare verdura.

*Shall* is used in offers or suggestions with a first person subject:

*It's very hot in here. Shall I open the window?*  
Fa molto caldo qui dentro. Volete che apra la finestra?

*It's a lovely day. Shall we go out for a walk?*  
È una giornata bellissima. Andiamo a fare una passeggiata?

Note how, in the above cases, *will* and *shall* correspond to the Italian *presente*.

### 8.2.5 *Used to*

Past habits and states may be expressed using the semi-modal *used to*. Unlike the simple past tense, *used to* indicates that a continuous habit or state is now discontinued:

*She used to smoke.*

Un tempo fumava (ora non più).

*I used to live in London in the sixties. Then I moved to Oxford.*

Abitavo a Londra negli anni sessanta. Poi mi sono trasferito a Oxford.

*There used to be a fountain here.*

Un tempo qui c'era una fontana.

The negative and interrogative constructions can take two forms:

a) *used to* can act as a modal auxiliary. This is a relatively rare construction and the contracted form is extremely rare:

*I used not to like school*

Una volta non mi piaceva la scuola.

*Used they to live in Clapham?*

Un tempo abitavano a Clapham?

b) more commonly, the negative and interrogative are formed with *did* (*didn't*):

*I didn't use to like school.*

Una volta non mi piaceva la scuola.

*Did they use to live in Clapham?*

Un tempo abitavano a Clapham?

*Used to* only refers to past time; present habits and states are expressed with the simple present and can be reinforced with the frequency adverb *always*:

*I always get up early.*

Mi alzo sempre presto.

The semi-modal *used to* should not be confused with the adjective phrase *to be used to* which is followed by the *-ing* form of the verb and expresses 'familiarity with'. The verb *to be* may be used with all tenses, and the verb *to get* may also be used in an active context:

*They were used to always being tired.*  
Si erano abituati ad essere sempre stanchi.

*I will never get used to being a father.*  
Non mi abituerò mai ad essere padre.

### 8.2.6 *Would*

Besides the semi-modal *used to* and the simple past tense, the modal auxiliary *would* is also used to express a repeated past action. Unlike *used to*, the repeated action is not necessarily discontinued.

*I would meet my girlfriend every afternoon after school.*  
Incontravo la mia ragazza ogni pomeriggio dopo la scuola.

*He would never give up without a fight, and he still doesn't.*  
Non si arrendeva mai senza battersi, e ancora non lo fa.

However, *would* cannot be used for past states. A common error is the following:

*He used to be (He was) lazy when he was younger.*  
Era molto pigro da giovane.  
\* He would be very lazy when he was younger.

☞ *Would* is also used to convey future in the past and corresponds in Italian to the *condizionale passato*:

*No-one knew that one day he would be king.*  
Nessuno sapeva che un giorno sarebbe diventato re.  
\*No-one knew that one day he would have been king.

See 6.6 Sequence of tenses in reported speech.

### 8.2.7 *Should*

*Should* is generally used as the past tense of *shall* (see 8.2.4). In addition, it has the following uses:

a) advice or recommendation:

*You should see a doctor.*  
Dovresti vedere un medico.

*She shouldn't complain.*  
Non dovrebbe lamentarsi.

b) probable deduction (see **8.2.2**):

*They should be here soon.*  
Dovrebbero essere qui tra poco.

*He should have arrived by now.*  
Dovrebbe essere già arrivato.

*Should* + perfect infinitive is used to express an obligation that was not fulfilled:

*You should have got up earlier.*  
Avresti dovuto alzarti prima.

*They should have worked harder.*  
Avrebbero dovuto lavorare di più.

In all the above cases, *should* may be replaced with the modal *ought to*.

*Should* also corresponds to the Italian *congiuntivo* in the following cases:

a) in clauses introduced by *that* to express an opinion:

*It is strange that she should be late.*  
È strano che lei sia in ritardo.

*I find it amazing that he should have so much money.*  
Trovo sorprendente che lui abbia così tanti soldi.

See **7.4** for further information on the subjunctive.

b) in *if* clauses instead of the simple present tense to add uncertainty to a condition:

*If you should see him, tell him the news.*  
Se dovessi vederlo, digli la notizia.

*If we should accept the offer, we will need more money.*  
Se dovessimo accettare l'offerta, ci serviranno altri soldi.

c) in informal style, *should* is also used in *that*-clauses after a verb or phrase expressing volition, replacing the formal subjunctive form:

*He suggested that I (should) stay for lunch.*  
Ha suggerito che io resti a pranzo.

*It is necessary that he (should) make a decision.*  
È necessario che egli prenda una decisione.

### 8.2.8 *Need*

The full verb *to need* can also act as a modal auxiliary verb.

*To need* is generally followed by the infinitive of the main verb and expresses necessity:

*I need to clean the car.*  
Devo lavare (È necessario che io lavi) la macchina.

*He doesn't need to work.*  
Lui non deve lavorare (Non occorre che lavori).

*We needed to find a new cleaning lady.*  
Avevamo bisogno di trovare una nuova domestica.

With a passive meaning, *to need* can be followed by the *-ing* form:

*My hair needs cutting. (= My hair needs to be cut.)*  
I miei capelli hanno bisogno di un taglio (di essere tagliati).

As a modal auxiliary verb, *need* is followed by the bare infinitive of the main verb and is generally used in the negative or interrogative forms:

*You needn't come if you don't want to.*  
Non devi venire (Non occorre che tu venga) se non vuoi.

*Need I come too?*  
Devo venire anch'io?

In formal cases, it is found with a positive verb, usually with an implicitly negative reference:

*All you need do is reply.*  
Devi solo rispondere.

*He need have no fear.*  
Non deve avere paura.

*Needn't* expresses absence of obligation, similar to *don't have to*, whereas *mustn't* expresses negative obligation (see **8.1.3**):

*I needn't read the book.*                      *You mustn't touch that!*  
Non è necessario che io legga il libro.    Non devi toccarlo!

In the past, there is a difference between *didn't need to* (something that was not necessary and so not done) and *needn't have* (something that was done but that was not necessary). Compare:

*I didn't need to read that book.*  
Non ho dovuto leggere il libro (non l'ho letto).

*I needn't have read the book.*  
Non c'era bisogno che leggessi il libro (l'ho letto inutilmente).

### **8.2.9 Dare**

The verb *dare* is a modal auxiliary (followed by a bare infinitive) and also a semi-auxiliary (followed by an infinitive). In addition, as a semi-auxiliary it may be followed by a bare infinitive. It is generally used in the negative and interrogative forms, and the meaning in all three cases is *osare*.

<i>I dare not tell him the truth.</i>	<i>Dare we go in?</i>
<i>I don't dare to tell him the truth.</i>	<i>Do we dare to go in?</i>
<i>I don't dare tell him the truth.</i>	<i>Do we dare go in?</i>
Non oso dirgli la verità.	Osiamo entrare?

As a modal auxiliary, it is used in exclamations with a present or past reference:

<i>How dare you say that!</i>	<i>How dared they say that!</i>
Come osi dire ciò!	Come hanno osato dire ciò!

As a semi-auxiliary with a bare infinitive it is often used in negative exclamations:

*Don't you dare say that again!*  
Non osare dirlo ancora!

*Dare* is also a full verb with the meaning *sfidare*:

*They dared us to follow them.*  
Ci sfidarono a seguirli.

*I daresay*, also written *I dare say*, expresses the Italian *futuro suppositivo*:

*I daresay he is brilliant, but he isn't much fun.*  
Sarà anche brillante, ma non è molto divertente.

*I daresay you will need to rest after your long journey.*  
Penso che dovrete riposarvi dopo il lungo viaggio.

### **8.3 Primary auxiliaries: *be, have, do***

The uses of the auxiliary *be* have been examined elsewhere:

#### **6.4** Progressive aspect

#### **6.5** Future time (*be to, be going to*)

#### **9** Passive

Some uses of the auxiliary *have* have already been explained:

#### **6.3** Perfect aspect

##### **7.1.1** *had better / would rather* + bare infinitive

##### **8.1.3** and **8.2.1** (*have to*)

In **6.4.5** brief mention was made of *have* as a state verb and as a dynamic verb. It should be added that *have* as a dynamic verb, in expressions such as *have a meal, a bath, a party, a good time*, acts as a full verb and the auxiliary *do* (*does, did*) is used for the negative and interrogative forms. Compare:

*I haven't got a big car.*  
Non ho una macchina grande.

*I don't have a big breakfast.*  
Non faccio una prima colazione molto grande.

*Has he been to Australia?*  
È stato in Australia?

*Did you have a good time at the party?*  
Vi siete divertiti alla festa?

*Have* is used in the construction *have* + object + bare infinitive with the following meanings:

a) 'to cause' (*far sì che*):

*The lawyer had his client confess to the crime.*

L'avvocato ha fatto sì che il suo cliente confessasse il crimine.

b) 'to experience'. The bare infinitive can also be replaced by the *-ing* participle:

*Would you like to have people laugh (laughing) at you all the time?*

Ti piacerebbe che la gente ridesse sempre di te?

c) 'to permit'. The bare infinitive can also be replaced by the *-ing* participle:

*I won't have you come (coming) home so late!*

Non ti permetterò di tornare così tardi!

d) 'to want'. *Have* is usually preceded by *would*:

*She would have us believe she wrote that poem herself.*

Vorrebbe farci credere che la poesia l'ha scritta lei.

*Have* is also used in the passive construction *have* + object + past participle with the following meanings:

a) 'to cause' (*far fare*). Unlike Italian, the object pronoun is placed between the auxiliary and the past participle. *Have* may be replaced in this construction with the less formal *get*.

*He had the car cleaned.*

Ha fatto pulire la macchina.

\* He had cleaned the car.

*I got the dress shortened.*

Ho fatto accorciare il vestito.

\* I got shortened the dress.

b) 'to experience':

*She's had this explained to her three times.*

Se l'è fatto spiegare già tre volte.

c) 'to permit':

*I won't have my books treated like that.*

Non permetto che i miei libri vengano trattati in quel modo.

This construction can also be used with *make* (with verbs of perception and intellect) and *get*; both verbs are used reflexively.

*I couldn't make myself understood.*

Non riuscivo a farmi capire.

*He wants to make himself heard.*

Vuole farsi sentire.

*She got herself suspended for stealing.*

Si è fatta sospendere per furto.

The auxiliary verb *do* has been examined above:

## 1.2 Negative sentences

## 1.3 Interrogative sentences

In addition, the auxiliary verb *do* (*does, did*) can be added to an affirmative sentence to give greater emphasis to the verb. This is mainly used in informal spoken English and is reinforced by intonation stress of the auxiliary.

*I do like John.*

Quanto mi piace John.

*He does want to read that book.*

Vuole davvero leggere quel libro.

The same use of the auxiliary expresses emphatic denial:

*You are wrong. He did pass the exam.*

Hai torto. Certo che ha superato l'esame.

The same structure may also be used for very polite imperatives.

*Do come in.*

Entri, la prego.

*Do have some more.*

Ne prenda ancora, la prego.

## 9 THE PASSIVE VOICE

### 9.1 Formation

The passive form of the verb is formed by the appropriate tense of the verb *to be* + past participle. The object of the active form becomes the subject of the passive form.

Active: *They attribute the painting to Leonardo.*  
Attribuiscono il quadro a Leonardo.

Passive: *The painting is attributed to Leonardo.*  
Il quadro è attribuito a Leonardo.

☒ The passive may have a continuous form which is translated with either a simple passive or a continuous active form.

Active: *They are translating the novel into German.*  
Stanno traducendo il romanzo in tedesco.

Passive: *The novel is being translated into German.*  
È in corso la traduzione in tedesco del romanzo.

### 9.2 Use

The passive is more commonly used in English than in Italian, which has various impersonal forms that are equivalent. Note how the passive may be translated into Italian.

*English is spoken here.*  
Qui si parla inglese.

*He was said to be rich.*  
Si diceva che egli fosse ricco.

*It is hoped he will change his mind.*  
Si spera che cambi idea.

*We were told to go away.*  
Ci hanno detto di andare via.

*The plan is being carried out.*  
Stanno eseguendo il progetto. (Il progetto è in corso di esecuzione.)

Passive constructions, introduced by *it*, are commonly found in formal and scientific English to express impersonal concepts and to report statements or information.

*It was predicted that the proof would be wrong.*  
Si prevedeva che la prova sarebbe stata errata.

*It is said that the politician is corrupt.*  
Si dice che quel politico sia corrotto.

Some of the verbs most commonly used in this way are: *believe, consider, estimate, expect, hope, know, say, state, suggest, suppose, think, understand.*

A passive form with the infinitive can be used to express an impersonal statement. It is often used to imply a certain caution on the part of the speaker and corresponds to the Italian impersonal form + *congiuntivo presente* or *passato*.

*He is said to be an alcoholic.*  
Si dice che sia un alcolista.

*The Queen was thought to be about to abdicate.*  
Si credeva che la Regina stesse per abdicare.

The passive + infinitive is used mainly with the following verbs: *allege, believe, consider, declare, estimate, expect, know, say, suppose, think, understand.*

The continuous infinitive is used with this passive structure when the action is progressive:

*The government is expected to be increasing prices next week.*  
Ci si aspetta che il governo alzerà i prezzi la settimana prossima.

The perfect infinitive is used when the action is past:

*The army is estimated to have killed 100 rebels.*  
Si calcola che l'esercito abbia ucciso 100 ribelli.

### **9.3 Agent**

The agent, which may be a person or a thing, is usually only added for reasons of identity or emphasis. The preposition *by* is used, which must not be confused with the prepositional complements *from* or *of*:

*The novel was translated into German by Hans Schmidt.*

Il romanzo fu tradotto in tedesco da Hans Schmidt.

\* The novel was translated into German from Hans Schmidt.

*The man was killed by a falling stone.*

L'uomo fu ucciso dalla caduta di una pietra.

\* The man was killed from a falling stone.

*The letter was sent to me from Germany.*

La lettera mi è stata spedita dalla Germania.

*His new house was made of wood.*

La sua nuova casa era fatta di legno.

See **12.1** for other uses of *by* and *of*.

#### **9.4 Direct and indirect object**

If the verb has both a direct and an indirect object, the passive may be formed in two ways. The most common form is with the indirect object as the subject of the passive verb. However, it is also possible to use the direct object as the subject of the passive verb. In both cases, emphasis falls on the element placed at the end of the sentence. Compare:

Active: *They wrote him a letter.*

Gli scrissero una lettera.

Passive: *He was written a letter* (and not a telegram).

Gli fu scritta una lettera.

*A letter was written to him* (and not to his brother).

Una lettera fu scritta a lui.

#### **9.5 Prepositions**

If the active verb is followed by a preposition and object, the preposition must be retained in the passive sentence.

*The lawyer looked at all the documents.*

L'avvocato esaminò tutti i documenti.

*All the documents were looked at by the lawyer.*

Tutti i documenti furono esaminati dall'avvocato.

This rule also applies to phrasal and prepositional verbs.

*The daughters look after their sick father.*

Le figlie hanno cura del padre malato.

*The sick father is looked after by his daughters.*

Il padre malato è curato dalle figlie.

*Poverty brought about the revolution.*

La povertà ha portato alla rivoluzione.

*The revolution was brought about by poverty.*

La rivoluzione fu causata dalla povertà.

## 10 RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relative clauses give information about a noun in the main clause. They can refer to this as subject or object.

*Historians who study the Classical world must know Latin.* (subject)  
Gli storici che studiano il mondo classico devono sapere il latino.

*A historian whom I know is teaching at Cambridge.* (object)  
Uno storico che conosco insegna a Cambridge.

Long and complex sentences with relative clauses are rarely used in spoken English and are uncommon in informal written English. It is more common to join shorter clauses with conjunctions.

### 10.1 Restrictive/non-restrictive relative clauses

There are two main kinds of relative clauses:

a) restrictive or defining relative clauses give important information to specify exactly what is being referred to:

*The social changes that took place in the 1950s were radical.*  
I cambiamenti sociali che ebbero luogo negli anni 50 furono radicali.

b) non-restrictive or non-defining relative clauses add extra information to the sentence. This kind of relative clause is separated from the noun head by commas and can also be added to the end of the sentence:

*Social changes, which may be radical, can take place quickly.*  
I cambiamenti sociali, che possono essere radicali, possono avvenire rapidamente.

*The reform was put forward by Mill, who upheld social changes.*  
La riforma fu proposta da Mill, il quale sosteneva i cambiamenti sociali.

### 10.2 Relative pronouns

In restrictive relative clauses, *who* and *that* are used to refer to people, *which* and *that* are used to refer to things. The pronoun *whom* is the formal object form of *who* and is generally used only in formal written English. Informal style always uses *who* for both subject and object.

In object clauses, the relative pronoun *who* or *that* may be omitted when it is the object of a verb:

*The man you can see over there is my father.*  
(*The man who (that) you can see over there is my father.*)  
L'uomo che vedi là è mio padre.

It is usual, especially in spoken English, to omit the relative pronoun whenever possible.

In non-restrictive relative clauses, *who* is used to refer to people, *which* is used to refer to things. The pronoun *that* is not used in non-restrictive clauses.

*I spoke to the librarian, who helped me with some research.*  
Ho parlato con il bibliotecario, il quale mi ha aiutato con alcune ricerche.  
\* I spoke to the librarian, that helped me with some research.

The relative pronoun may never be omitted in non-restrictive clauses.

The pronoun *whose* is used to indicate possession and usually refers to people:

*The writer whose book was published recently.*  
Lo scrittore il cui libro fu pubblicato di recente.

*Whose* may also be used for non-personal possession, although the construction of *which* is preferred in formal style. Compare:

*That book, whose cover is torn, is an old favourite of mine.*  
Quel libro, la cui copertina è strappata, è una mia vecchia passione.

*That book, the cover of which is gilded, is a rare antique.*  
Quel libro, la cui copertina è dorata, è una rarità di antiquariato.

### 10.3 Relative adverbs

The adverbs *when*, *where* and *why* can be used to replace relative pronouns + prepositions. Relative adverbs generally replace relative pronouns in a more informal style.

The adverb *when* can replace *in/on which* in expressions of time:

*the year when (in which) he started university*  
l'anno in cui ha iniziato l'università

*the day when (on which) he arrived*  
il giorno in cui è arrivato

The adverb *where* can replace *in/at which* in expressions of place:

*the city where (in which) he was born*  
la città nella quale è nato

The adverb *why* can replace *for which* after the noun *reason*:

*the reason why (for which) he chose to study history*  
il motivo per cui ha scelto di studiare storia

Some archaic forms of relative adverbs: *whence* (from where), *whither* (to which, where), *whereby* (by which). *Whence?* and *Whither?* are also archaic interrogative adverbs.

#### 10.4 Position of prepositions

In informal English, especially in spoken English, it is common for a preposition to be placed at the end of a relative clause. In formal, mainly written, English the preposition is placed before the relative pronoun *whom* or *which*. The pronouns *that* and *who* cannot be used after a preposition.

*This is the article (that) I was looking for.* (informal)  
*This is the article for which I was looking.* (formal)  
Questo è l'articolo che cercavo.

*Mrs Brown, who I spoke to yesterday, is very kind.* (informal)  
*Mrs Brown, to whom I spoke yesterday, is very kind.* (formal)  
La signora Brown, con la quale ho parlato ieri, è molto gentile.

#### 10.5 Sentential relative clauses

Sentential relative clauses are generally added as a comment to the whole preceding sentence or clause. The relative pronoun *which* is used. Sentential relative clauses may be replaced with a clause introduced by *and*.

*Prices slumped, which was a real disaster for them.*  
(*Prices slumped, and this was a real disaster for them.*)  
I prezzi crollarono, il che fu un vero disastro per loro.

*John graduated with honours, which is what we expected.*  
(*John graduated with honours, and this is what we expected.*)  
John si laureò con lode, il che era ciò che ci aspettavamo.

### 10.6 Nominal relative clauses

A relative clause may have a nominal function: subject, object or attribute. The nominal relative pronouns *what* (that which), *whoever* (anyone/people who), *whatever* (anything/all that) are used:

*What he did was inexcusable.*  
Ciò che ha fatto è stato imperdonabile.

*The teacher will give whoever passes the test a prize.*  
L'insegnante darà un premio a chiunque supera questo esame.

*He won't do it whatever you say.*  
Non lo farà qualunque cosa gli si dica.

### 10.7 Replacement of relative clauses

Restrictive relative clauses may be replaced by the present participle:

*The historian teaching in Cambridge.*  
(*The historian who is teaching in Cambridge.*)  
Lo storico che insegna a Cambridge.

Restrictive relative clauses may be replaced by the past participle (see **4.1.1**):

*Cars parked illegally will be removed.*  
(*Cars that have been parked illegally will be removed.*)  
Le macchine parcheggiate illegalmente verranno rimosse.

They may also be replaced by an infinitive when the subject of the main clause and relative clause are the same. This corresponds to the Italian *da* + verb:

*He has a lot of things to do.*  
(*He has a lot of things that he must do.*)  
Ha molte cose da fare.

Restrictive relative clauses may be reduced by the omission of both the relative pronoun and the verb, as in the following examples:

*It was the only book to be found.*  
(*It was the only book that was to be found.*)  
Era l'unico libro che si potesse trovare.

*We chose the best seats available.*  
(*We chose the best seats that were available.*)  
Abbiamo scelto i migliori posti disponibili.

Non-restrictive relative clauses may be abbreviated by apposition, as in the following examples:

*James Heckman, the economist, has just won the Nobel Prize.*  
(*James Heckman, who is an economist, has just won the Nobel Prize.*)  
James Heckman, l'economista, ha appena vinto il premio Nobel.

*The party, a real success, went on until 3 a.m.*  
(*The party, which was a real success, went on until 3 a.m.*)  
La festa, un vero successo, è continuata fino alle 3.

## 10.8 Inversion

In very formal writing, the Subject-Verb order is inverted in relative clauses when there is a short intransitive verb followed by a long subject.

*Emily Pankhurst was a woman on whose shoulders fell a difficult task.*  
Emily Pankhurst fu una donna sulle cui spalle cadde un compito difficile.

*James is a teacher in whose class sit a dozen noisy children.*  
James è un insegnante nella cui classe si trovano una dozzina di ragazzi rumorosi.

## 11 CO-ORDINATION AND CORRELATION

### 11.1 Co-ordination

Co-ordinating conjunctions that link compound sentences are *and*, *but*, *or*. If the subject of both clauses is the same, it is generally not repeated. Auxiliary verbs are also sometimes omitted:

*The flowers were fresh, and stood in a blue vase.*  
I fiori erano freschi e stavano in un vaso blu.

*The house was new, but not well built.*  
La casa era nuova, ma non ben costruita.

*Must he stay or (must he) go?*  
Deve restare o (deve) andarsene?

They also co-ordinate parts of sentences:

*The flowers were red and pink.*  
I fiori erano rosa e rossi.

*A new but badly-built house.*  
Una casa nuova, ma mal costruita.

*He ate little or nothing.*  
Mangiava poco o niente.

*Nor* means 'and not' and connects sentences:

*I have no friends. Nor do I have much money.*  
Non ho amici. E non ho neppure molti soldi.

*Neither* can have the same function. A less formal alternative to *nor* (*neither*) is *not ... either*:

*I can't swim; nor (neither) can I ski.*  
*I can't swim and I can't ski either.*  
Non so nuotare e neppure sciare.

*Nor* also connects parts of sentences:

*They do not read at all nor listen much to music.*  
Non leggono affatto e non ascoltano neppure molta musica.

If the verb negates the whole sentence, the conjunction *or* is used:

*He doesn't like poetry or prose very much.*  
Non gli piacciono molto né la poesia né la narrativa.

Sentences and clauses are also joined by connective adverbs which are often placed at the beginning of the sentence or clause and are usually separated from the second element by a punctuation break.

In formal style, the connectors *however (comunque)*, *therefore (perciò)*, *moreover (inoltre)*, *nevertheless (ciononostante)*, *though (però)* may be placed either at the beginning of the clause or sentence or in the middle, after the subject, after the auxiliary verb, or after the main verb:

*I won the lottery. Therefore, I didn't need to work any longer.*  
*I, therefore, didn't need to work any longer.*  
*I didn't, therefore, need to work any longer.*  
*I needed, therefore, to work no longer.*  
Ho vinto la lotteria. Perciò non avevo più bisogno di lavorare.

The following connectors can only be placed at the beginning of the clause or sentence: *yet and still (eppure)*, *although (sebbene)*, *besides (inoltre)*:

*They are vegetarians; yet (still) they eat fish.*  
Sono vegetariani eppure mangiano pesce.

*Although he was very naughty, he wasn't punished.*  
Sebbene fosse stato molto cattivo, non è stato punito.

*For (perché, poiché)* connects sentences in formal style. It is used at the beginning of the clause, but never at the beginning of a sentence or after *not*, *and* or *but*. A less formal, and more flexible, equivalent is *because* or *as*:

*He left the country for (because / as) he was in trouble with the law.*  
*Because / As he was in trouble with the law, he left the country.*  
Ha lasciato il paese perché aveva dei guai con la legge.

## 11.2 Correlation

Correct use of expressions of correlative co-ordination (*both ... and, either ... or, neither ... nor, not only ... but also*) may cause some problems for Italian students.

*Either ... or* emphasises the exclusive meaning of *or*:

*Either you speak to me or you listen to the music.*  
O parli con me o ascolti la musica.

*Both ... and* emphasises the additive meaning of *and*:

*Both Tom and Susan have dyed their hair.*  
Sia Tom che Susan si sono tinti i capelli.

*Neither ... nor* is the negative counterpart of *both ... and*:

*Neither Tim nor Sam has been to the theatre.*  
Né Tim né Sam sono andati al teatro.

All three constructions are generally only used in relation to two elements. It is unusual to find them referred to three or more.

*John, James or Sally will show you to the door.*  
O John o James o Sally ti accompagnerà alla porta.  
\* Either John or James or Sally will show you to the door.

It is important to use a correct correlation with these structures, which should modify parallel units and be placed next to the elements they modify. Compare the following examples:

a) modification of two verbs

*Either you hit the ball or you miss it.*  
O colpisci la palla o la manchi.  
\* You either hit the ball or you miss it.

*He both sings and plays the piano.*  
Canta e suona il pianoforte.  
\* He both sings and he plays the piano.

*He neither studies nor works.*

Non studia né lavora.

\* He neither studies nor he works.

b) modification of two nouns

*She will work either in London or in Oxford.*

Lavorerà o a Londra o a Oxford.

\* She will either work in London or Oxford.

*He writes both poetry and prose.*

Scrive sia poesia che prosa.

\* He both writes poetry and prose.

*They speak neither Chinese nor Japanese.*

Non parlano né il cinese né il giapponese.

\* They neither speak Chinese nor Japanese.

c) modification of two adjectives

*The news will make you either angry or sad.*

La notizia ti renderà o arrabbiato o triste.

\* The news will either make you angry or sad.

*We are both happy and relieved at the same time.*

Siamo sia felici che sollevati allo stesso tempo.

\* We both are happy and relieved at the same time.

*The results are neither satisfactory nor exact.*

I risultati non sono né soddisfacenti né precisi.

\* The results neither are satisfactory nor exact.

In a sentence with a preposition, two solutions are possible:

*I'll give it both to Jim and to Jane.*

*I'll give it to both Jim and Jane.*

Lo darò sia a Jim che a Jane.

*You can speak either to Mr Brown or to Mrs Smith.*

*You can speak to either Mr Brown or Mrs Smith.*

Puoi parlare con Mr Brown o con Mrs Smith.

In addition, it is important to create correlation between similar syntactic structures. The following sentence

*I dropped round both to speak to you and because I need to ask your advice.*

Ho fatto un salto sia per parlarti sia perché devo chiederti un consiglio.

would be better formulated as

*I dropped round both to speak to you and to ask your advice.*

Ho fatto un salto sia per parlarti che per chiederti un consiglio.

*Nor* and *neither* can also correlate with a negative in a previous clause or sentence:

*He isn't enjoying the film much; neither am I.*

Non gli piace molto il film; e neanche a me.

*We no longer sell books. Nor do we sell paintings.*

Non vendiamo più libri. E neppure quadri.

In formal style, *nor* may also correlate with a positive clause:

*They believed their position was correct. Nor were they wrong.*

Credevano che la loro posizione fosse corretta. E non avevano torto.

Care must be taken with the use of *not only*, which directly precedes the element of the sentence it refers to. In the emphatic pattern, with inversion, the subject must be repeated in the second phrase.

*Not only did he arrive late, but he also complained about the meal.*

Non solo è arrivato in ritardo, ma si è anche lamentato della cena.

*Not only will I give you some advice, but I'll also help you.*

Non solo ti darò un consiglio, ma ti aiuterò pure.

In a regular structure, without inversion, *not only* comes between subject and verb and the subject is not repeated. In neither of the following examples is Subject-Verb inversion correct:

*I'll give it not only to Jim but also to Jane.*

Lo darò non solo a Jim ma anche a Jane.

\* Not only will I give it to Jim but also to Jane.

*He likes not only writing but also reading.*

Non gli piace solo scrivere ma anche leggere.

\* Not only does he like writing but also reading.

The construction *as well as* is also used with two elements. The verb, however, is singular. Compare:

*Both my sister and my brother live in Brixton.*

Sia mia sorella sia mio fratello vivono a Brixton.

*My sister, as well as my brother, lives in Brixton.*

Mia sorella, oltre a mio fratello, vive a Brixton.

*As well as* is followed by the gerund form of a verb. It tends to emphasise the first element in the construction:

*As well as contacting possible employers, you could also write a CV.*

Oltre a contattare eventuali datori di lavoro, potresti anche scrivere un curriculum vitae.

## 12 PREPOSITIONS

This section does not attempt to provide a complete review of prepositions; it simply focuses on a few specific problems with prepositions that Italian students may encounter.

### 12.1 *By - with - of*

The preposition *by* is used to indicate the agent in passive constructions (9.3). In addition *by* can also indicate the method by which something was done.

*He was helped by having someone to talk to.*  
Fu aiutato dal fatto che aveva qualcuno con cui parlare.

*Whisky is made by a distillation process.*  
Il whisky si fa con un processo di distillazione.

The preposition *with* is used to indicate the instrument with which the action is carried out.

*He tied the papers together with a ribbon.*  
Raccolse le carte con un nastro.

*The novel was written with pen and paper.*  
Il romanzo fu scritto con carta e penna.

The preposition *of* is used to indicate the material of which an object is made.

*The walls were made of stone; the roof was made of wood.*  
I muri erano fatti di pietra; il tetto era fatto di legno.

Note how the change in preposition alters the meaning of the following phrases:

*This is a portrait by Henry VIII.*  
È un ritratto dipinto da Enrico VIII.

*This is a portrait of Henry VIII.*  
È un ritratto di Enrico VIII.

### 12.2 *By - within - in*

*By* means 'before a specific point in time' (*entro e non oltre*):

*You must finish by tomorrow.*  
Devi finire entro domani.

*By 1850 the Industrial Revolution was completed.*  
Entro il 1850, si completò la rivoluzione industriale.

*within* indicates ‘before the end of a period of time’ (*entro un periodo di tempo*):

*You must finish within the next two weeks.*  
Devi finire entro le prossime due settimane.

*Within two months of graduating, I had found a job.*  
Entro due mesi dalla laurea, avevo trovato un lavoro.

*in* indicates the period of time necessary to complete an action:

*I walked to his house in twenty minutes.*  
Sono andato a casa sua in venti minuti.

*in* also indicates a future time reference (*tra, fra*):

*I'll be with you in ten minutes' time (in ten minutes).*  
Sarò da voi fra dieci minuti.

### **12.3 At - in - on - over - above**

*at* indicates a generic place:

*John's at home, and Susan's at work.*  
John è a casa e Susan è al lavoro.

*in* indicates a specific, enclosed place:

*He's working in the garden, and she's working in the office.*  
Lui lavora in giardino e lei in ufficio.

*He's living in England, in London.*  
Abita in Inghilterra, a Londra.

The opposite of *in* is *out*:

*He's out at the moment.*  
È fuori in questo momento.

*on (upon)* indicates a position on a surface:

*He set out the meal on the table.*      *I lay down on my bed.*  
Mise il pasto sulla tavola.      Mi sono sdraiata sul letto.

The opposite of *on* is *off*:

*He was sitting on the wall, then fell off it.*  
Era seduto sul muro, poi è caduto giù.

*over* is similar to *on*, but covers the whole surface:

*They spread the cloth over the table.*  
Misero la tovaglia sul tavolo.

*I pulled the blanket over my legs.*  
Mi sono coperta le gambe con il plaid.

*over* also indicates no contact:

*The lamp hangs over the table.*      *The ball flew over my head.*  
La lampada pende sul tavolo.      La palla mi passò sopra la testa.

The opposite of *over* is *under*:

*I hid the suitcase under the bed.*  
Ho nascosto la valigia sotto il letto.

*above* is similar to *over*, but indicates an explicit or implied comparison. It is therefore often used to describe differences in level, both real and figurative:

*The plane rose above the clouds.*  
L'aereo salì oltre le nuvole.

*He lives in the flat above ours.*  
Abita nell'appartamento sopra al nostro.

*We were above such gossip.*  
Eravamo superiori a tali chiacchiere.

*It is very hot: 40 degrees above zero.*  
Fa molto caldo: quaranta gradi sopra lo zero.

The opposite of *above* is *below* or *beneath*:

*That job is below (beneath) your capacities.*  
Quel lavoro è al di sotto delle tue capacità.

#### 12.4 *In - to - into*

*in* is used with enclosed places, cities, countries:

<i>He lives in the United States.</i>	<i>They're sitting in the garden.</i>
Abita negli Stati Uniti.	Sono seduti in giardino.

*to* is used with a verb of motion:

*I went to the United States last year.*  
Sono andato negli Stati Uniti l'anno scorso.

*She jumped to the ground.*  
Saltò a terra.

*into* is used with a verb of motion to express movement from an external to an internal position:

*They ran into the garden.*  
Corsero in giardino.

*He was not allowed to come into the United States.*  
Non gli fu permesso di entrare negli Stati Uniti.

Compare also *on* and *onto*, where *onto* expresses a change in level:

<i>The meal is on the table.</i>	<i>He put the plate onto the table.</i>
Il pasto è sul tavolo.	Pose il piatto sul tavolo.

*into* is also used for transformations:

*I translated the text into French.*  
Ho tradotto il libro in francese.

*The witch changed into a black cat.*  
La strega si trasformò in un gatto nero.

### 12.5 **Between - among**

*between (fra, tra)* implies two or a definite, limited number:

*He is sitting between Jane and John.*  
È seduto fra Jane e John.

*What's the difference between milk, cheese, yoghurt and cream?*  
Che differenza c'è tra il latte, il formaggio, lo yogurt e la panna?

*among* implies an indefinite, unlimited number:

*This is the only statue among all the paintings in the gallery.*  
Questa è l'unica statua fra tutti i quadri della galleria.

*The cottage sat in the wood among hundreds of trees.*  
Il cottage stava nel bosco fra centinaia di alberi.

### 12.6 **Before - opposite - in front of**

*before* generally refers to time and should not be confused with the adverb *first*. Compare:

*First you should take notes, then write your essay.*  
Per prima cosa, dovresti fare degli appunti, poi scrivere il saggio.

*Before writing your essay, you should take notes.*  
Prima di scrivere il saggio, dovresti prendere degli appunti.

In formal style, *before* can also refer to place. The informal equivalent is *in front of*:

*He stood before the court.*  
Stava davanti alla corte.

*Let's meet in front of the cinema.*  
Incontriamoci davanti al cinema.

The opposite of *in front of* is *behind*:

*I stood behind him in the queue.*  
Ero dietro di lui nella coda.

*in front of* is not to be confused with *di fronte a*, which corresponds to *opposite*:

*We live opposite the factory.*  
Abitiamo di fronte alla fabbrica. (ossia: ‘dall’altra parte della strada’)

### 12.7 *Across - over - through*

The difference between the three prepositions lies in the way the action is carried out.

*across* indicates ‘from one side to another’:

*You must never run across the road.*  
Non devi mai attraversare la strada correndo.

*I want to travel across the Australian desert on a camel.*  
Vorrei attraversare il deserto australiano su di un cammello.

*over* has a similar meaning:

*He jumped over the stream.*                      *They walked over the Dolomites.*  
Saltò il ruscello.                                      Attraversarono le Dolomiti.

*over* can also mean ‘through all parts of’:

*They travelled all over the world.*  
Viaggiarono in tutto il mondo.

*through* indicates ‘in the middle of’:

*She walked through the wood to her grandmother’s.*  
Attraversò il bosco per andare dalla nonna.

*Don’t walk through that puddle!*  
Non camminare in mezzo alla pozzanghera!

## 12.8 *Until - as long as - to - as far as*

*until (till) (fino a)* and *as long as (fino a che, finché)* are used for time reference. *Until (till)* is used with a definite time expression:

*We'll wait until (till) 10 o'clock, then we'll leave.*  
Aspetteremo fino alle 10, poi partiremo.

*As long as* is used with an expression of time duration:

*I'll never forget him as long as I live.*  
Non lo dimenticherò finché vivo.

*from ... to* can also be used for time reference:

*I lived in New York from June to August.*  
Ho vissuto a New York da giugno ad agosto.

*to* and *as far as (fino a)* are used for distance:

*He walked with me to (as far as) the bus stop.*  
Mi accompagnò alla (fino alla) fermata.  
\* He walked with me until the bus stop.



*Thousands of people went to the concert.*  
Migliaia di persone sono andate al concerto.

*Millions of children are born every day.*  
Milioni di bambini nascono ogni giorno.

Note some expressions using plural numbers:

*They entered the bank in twos and threes.*  
Entrarono in banca in gruppi di due e di tre.

*The classroom was at sixes and sevens.*  
L'aula era in disordine.

*She was dressed to the nines.*  
Era vestita alla perfezione.

Expressions of time, distance, weight and measure always have a singular verb:

*Fifty years is a long time.*  
Cinquant'anni sono un tempo lungo.

*A million dollars is a lot of money.*  
Un milione di dollari sono un sacco di soldi.

In American English, a *billion* is a thousand million (1,000,000,000). In British English, a *billion* is a million million (1,000,000,000,000); in American English this is called a *trillion*. There is a gradual shift to the American usage.

The comma is used to divide numbers into groups of three figures:

<i>1,000 one thousand</i>	<i>2,300 two thousand three hundred</i>
mille	duemilatrecento

The point is used to indicate decimals:

<i>1.5 one point five</i>	<i>4.56 four point five six</i>
uno virgola cinque	quattro virgola cinquantasei

The figure 0 is called *nought* in British English and *zero* in American English. When numbers are said individually, it is often pronounced *oh*, like the letter O. In games, zero scores are called *nil* in British English, and *zero* in American English. In tennis, a zero score is called *love*.

*There is (are)* is also used with numerals when in Italian a personal construction is used:

*There are three of us.*  
Siamo in tre.  
\* We are in three.

*There were twenty-five students waiting in the hall.*  
Gli studenti che aspettavano nell'atrio erano venticinque.  
\* They were twenty-five students waiting in the hall.

### **Ordinal numbers**

Ordinal numbers written as figures add the last two letters of the written word:

<i>first</i> - 1st	<i>second</i> - 2nd	<i>third</i> - 3rd	<i>fourth</i> - 4th
primo	secondo	terzo	quarto

Ordinal numbers are usually preceded by the definite article:

<i>the first day</i>	<i>the twentieth week</i>	<i>the eighth day</i>
il primo giorno	la ventesima settimana	l'ottavo giorno

The titles of Kings, Wars etc. are written with Roman figures, and are read as ordinal numbers:

<i>Elizabeth II (Elizabeth the second)</i>	<i>Henry VIII (Henry the eighth)</i>
Elisabetta II	Enrico VIII

*World War II (the Second World War or World War Two)*  
la seconda guerra mondiale

Ordinal numbers are used when reading dates:

*9th December = the ninth of December*  
il nove dicembre

Dates can be written in different ways:

*9th December*

*December 9*

*December 9th*

Note that American English tends to put the month before the day expressed in cardinal numbers: *December 9*. This requires attention when writing dates in figures:

*9.12.2001*

in British English is

*9th December 2001*

in American English is

*September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001*

Years are usually read in pairs:

*1000 = ten hundred*

*1900 = nineteen hundred*

*1450 = fourteen fifty*

*1066 = ten sixty-six*

Note how the following years are read:

*900 = nine hundred*

*1901 = nineteen oh one*

*2000 = the year two thousand*

*2001 = two thousand and one*

The acronym BC (Before Christ) is placed after the date: *300 BC*.

The acronym AD (*Anno Domini*) is placed before the date: *AD 300*.

Decades are expressed with the plural form. Once punctuated with an apostrophe (*1890's*), decades are today generally not punctuated:

*the 1900s = the nineteen hundreds*

il Novecento

*the 1660s = the sixteen sixties*

gli anni sessanta del seicento

## APPENDIX II PUNCTUATION

### Comma

The comma is used in English to separate two main clauses in a complex sentence when the second clause is not closely identified with the first. Compare:

*He came and had tea with me.*  
È venuto a bere il tè con me.

*John drank beer, and Peter had whisky.*  
John ha bevuto birra, e Peter ha bevuto whisky.

Commas also separate items in a list of more than two items:

*He was hot, tired, and sad.*  
Era accaldato, stanco e triste.

*I bought a coat, a hat, and some gloves.*  
Ho comprato un cappotto, un cappello e dei guanti.

The use of the comma before the final *and* in lists is stylistic, but sometimes necessary to specify number:

*The dresses were red, blue, black and white.* (3 dresses)  
I vestiti erano rosso, azzurro, bianco e nero.

*The dresses were red, blue, black, and white.* (4 dresses)  
I vestiti erano rosso, azzurro, nero e bianco.

Commas are also used to divide parenthetical clauses from the rest of a sentence:

*On the one hand, he loves music; on the other, he hates musicians.*  
Da un lato ama la musica; dall'altro odia i musicisti.

The comma is also used to separate non-restrictive relative clauses from the rest of the sentence:

*That teacher, who has worked here for years, is about to retire.*  
Quell'insegnante, che lavora qui da anni, sta per andare in pensione.

## Colon

The colon is used in English before lists:

*He has invited some colleagues: Professors Smith, Brown and Jones.*  
Ha invitato dei colleghi: i professori Smith, Brown e Jones.

It is also used before a specification:

*The correct statement is the following: water boils at 100 degrees.*  
L'affermazione giusta è la seguente: l'acqua bolle a 100 gradi.

And to separate a book's title from its sub-title:

*A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914-2000.*  
Una guerra di nervi: soldati e psichiatri 1914-2000.

The colon may also be used to introduce quotations:

*Remember the ancient saying: Know thyself.*  
Ricordate l'antica massima: Conosci te stesso.

## Semi-colon

As English sentence structure tends to be relatively simple, the semi-colon is used less commonly than in Italian. Its main uses are to separate long items in a list in which there is at least one comma:

*The candidate must have a degree in psychology, sociology, or anthropology; experience in administration; and a reference letter from a supervisor.*

Il candidato deve avere una laurea in psicologia, sociologia o antropologia; esperienza di gestione; e una lettera di presentazione di un relatore.

It is also used to separate phrases that are similar in importance:

*It cannot be true in all cases; and it may be hoped that it is true in none.*  
Ciò non può essere vero in tutti i casi e si spera che non lo sia mai.

## Hyphen

The hyphen is used to join groups of words that act as an adjective or noun. See 4.1.2 compound adjectives:

*a twenty-year-old*  
un ventenne

*a blue-eyed boy*  
un ragazzo dagli occhi azzurri

The hyphen is also used to join some compound nouns, especially those formed with a participle, although there are no definite rules as to its use:

*starting-point*  
punto di partenza

*house-warming*  
festa di inaugurazione di una nuova casa

Hyphens are used with prefixes, such as *anti-Darwinians*, *pro-war*, *ex-wife*.

Hyphens are also used to indicate word division (*a capo*). A double hyphen is never used. As there are no precise rules regarding the division of words, it may be advisable to avoid dividing them. When it is absolutely necessary, some useful suggestions are: a) never divide a one-syllable word; b) divide a word either at the prefix or suffix (*hope-ful*, *govern-ment*, *a-political*, *re-read*).

### **Dash (—)**

The dash is used as an informal alternative to parentheses:

*I need to speak to him—and only to him—immediately.*  
Devo parlare con lui (e solo con lui) immediatamente.

The dash is also an informal equivalent to the colon:

*I haven't invited many people—just Jane, Tom, Susan, and Peter.*  
Non ho invitato molte persone: solo Jane, Tom, Peter e Susan.

While not incorrect, it is considered stylistically messy in English to use stops after a dash. Thus constructions such as —, and —. should be avoided.

### **Direct speech**

In English direct speech is generally punctuated as follows:

*“Your view is correct,” the teacher said, “and I agree with you.”*

Double or single quotation marks may be used, but a quotation within a quotation requires single marks inside double, or vice versa:

*“The term ‘utilitarianism’ is often misunderstood,” he said.*

Direct speech is never punctuated with angle brackets or introduced by a dash, as it is in Italian.

<<Vuoi sentire un po’ di musica?>>

— Vuoi sentire un po’ di musica?

*“Would you like to listen to some music?”*

The Italian use in hand-written documents of *virgolette alte-basse* for direct speech is never used in English:

*“Il tennis,, disse Carla.*

*“Tennis,” said Carla.*

Subject-Verb inversion can be used in direct speech with reporting verbs such as *say, add, answer, explain, reply, remark*. Inversion may occur when the subject is a noun (the pattern is rarely used with a pronoun) and when the reporting clause verb follows the direct speech or is placed in the middle of it.

*“Answer the question”, said the teacher.*

*“Rispondi alla domanda” disse l’insegnante.*

*“I can’t”, replied the student, “I don’t know the answer”.*

*“Non posso” rispose lo studente, “non so la risposta”.*

## **Capitalisation**

Capital letters are used in English:

a) to begin a sentence:

*He came in. Then he sat down.*

*È entrato. Poi si è seduto.*

Capital letters are also used following a comma to begin the main text of a letter:

*Dear John,*

*We wish you were here.*

*Caro John,*

*vorremmo che tu fossi qui.*

b) for the first person singular pronoun *I*:

*She gave a drink to me and I handed it to him.*

Lei diede a me un drink e io lo passai a lui.

c) with languages, nationalities and religions:

*My French teacher is Belgian and a Buddhist.*

Il mio insegnante di francese è belga e buddista.

d) with days of the week and months of the year:

*He was paid on the last Monday in June.*

È stato pagato l'ultimo lunedì di giugno.

e) with proper nouns and titles in specific reference; in general reference capitals are not generally used. Compare:

*He was King of England for twenty years.*

Fu re d'Inghilterra per vent'anni.

*I don't know the names of all the kings of England.*

Non so il nome di tutti i re d'Inghilterra.

*Professor Jones has just become professor at Hull University.*

Il professor Jones è appena diventato professore all'Università di Hull.

f) abstract nouns. Some words are written with capitals to indicate an abstract reference, and without to indicate a concrete reference. Compare:

*He entered the Church when he was 18.*

Ha preso i voti a diciotto anni.

*We looked round the church in the village.*

Abbiamo visitato la chiesa del villaggio.

*The State decides on taxation.*

Lo Stato decide su questioni di tassazione.

*He was in a terrible state before the wedding.*

Era in uno stato pietoso prima del matrimonio.

The same rule applies with personifications. Compare:

*I always choose Mother Nature's remedies.*

Scelgo sempre le cure di madre natura.

*The conservation group is working today for nature tomorrow.*

Il gruppo di conservazione sta lavorando oggi per la natura di domani.

## APPENDIX III IRREGULAR VERBS

**Type 1:** The three main parts of the verb have the same form.

bet	forecast	set
broadcast	hit	shut
burst	hurt	split
cost <sup>1</sup>	let	spread
cut	put	wet

<sup>1</sup> When used as a transitive verb, *cost* has a regular form as in *They costed the project.*

**Type 2:** Past tense and past participle have the same form, but are different from the base form.

BASE	PAST
bend	bent
bleed	bled
bring	brought
build	built
burn	burnt <sup>2</sup>
buy	bought
catch	caught
deal	dealt
dig	dug
dream	dreamt <sup>2</sup>
feed	fed
feel	felt
fight	fought
find	found
get	got <sup>3</sup>
hang	hung <sup>2</sup>
have	had
hear	heard
hold	held
keep	kept
lay	laid
lead	led
learn	learnt <sup>2</sup>
leave	left

lend	lent
light	lit <sup>2</sup>
lose	lost
make	made
mean	meant
meet	met
pay	paid
read	read
say	said
seek	sought
sell	sold
send	sent
shine	shone
shoot	shot
sit	sat
sleep	slept
slide	slid
smell	smelt <sup>2</sup>
spend	spent
spin	spun
stand	stood
stick	stuck
strike	struck
swing	swung
teach	taught
tell	told
think	thought
win	won

<sup>2</sup> These verbs may also have the *-ed* form (*burned, dreamed*, etc). The verb *hang* has both a regular past form *hanged* (*impiccato*) and an irregular past form *hung* (*appeso*).

<sup>3</sup> *Get* may also have the past participle *gotten* in American English.

**Type 3:** Past tense and past participle are different from each other

BASE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
be	was/were	been
beat	beat	beaten

become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bite	bit	bitten
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hide	hid	hidden
know	knew	known
lie <sup>4</sup>	lay	lain
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
see	saw	seen
shake	shook	shaken
sing	sang	sung
speak	spoke	spoken
steal	stole	stolen
swim	swam	swum
take	took	taken
tear	tore	torn
throw	threw	thrown
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

<sup>4</sup> *Lie (mentire)* is a regular verb as in *He lied shamefully about the funds.*

## APPENDIX IV      VERB PATTERNS

### Type 1: Intransitive verbs

Example: *The sun rises in the east.*

ache	disappear	rise
appear	fall	run
arise	go	travel
come	matter	walk

Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively.

Example: *My leg hurts.* (intransitive) *She hurt me.* (transitive)

break	feed	keep
burn	grow	move
close	hang	open
drop	hurt	ring

### Type 2: Transitive verbs

(a) Transitive verb + object + bare infinitive

Example: *They heard the bell ring.*

feel	help	see
have	let	smell
hear	make	watch

(b) Transitive verb + infinitive

Example: *They agreed to help us.*

agree	choose	forget <sup>5</sup>	mean	seek
aim	claim	happen	need <sup>5</sup>	seem
appear	continue <sup>5</sup>	hate <sup>5</sup>	offer	start <sup>5</sup>
apply	dare	hesitate	omit	swear
arrange	decide	hope	plan	tend
ask	demand	intend <sup>5</sup>	prefer <sup>5</sup>	threaten
attempt	deserve <sup>5</sup>	learn	pretend	try <sup>5</sup>
bear	desire	like <sup>5</sup>	promise	undertake
beg	determine	long	propose	venture

begin <sup>5</sup>	expect	love <sup>5</sup>	refuse	want
care	fail	manage	remember <sup>5</sup>	wish

<sup>5</sup> These verbs can also be used with *-ing*.

(c) Transitive verb + *-ing*

Example: *I enjoy skiing.*

admit	detest	hate	omit <sup>6</sup>	resent
advise	dislike	can't help	postpone	resist
appreciate	enjoy	imagine	practise	risk
avoid	escape	intend <sup>6</sup>	prefer <sup>6</sup>	start <sup>6</sup>
bear <sup>6</sup>	face	keep on	propose <sup>6</sup>	stop <sup>6</sup>
begin <sup>6</sup>	fancy	like <sup>6</sup>	recollect	suggest
continue <sup>6</sup>	favour	love <sup>6</sup>	recommend	try <sup>6</sup>
delay	finish	mind	regret <sup>6</sup>	
deny	forget <sup>6</sup>	miss	remember	

<sup>6</sup> These verbs can also be used with the infinitive.

### Type 3: Copular verbs

(a) Verb + noun

Example: *She seemed a fool, but became a brain surgeon.*

be	look	seem
become	prove	sound
feel	remain	stay
grow	resemble	turn (into)

(b) Verb + adjective

Example: *He looks happy, but he gets tired easily and sounds depressed.*

appear	get	seem
be	go	smell
become	grow	sound
come	keep	stay
fall	look	taste
feel	remain	turn

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