

ITALIAN GRAMMAR TIPS

One of the main impulses behind the earworms approach is to really get your brain used to the linguistic patterns, even the melody, of the target language. We do this by offering the language in the form of the target language, spoken by native speakers, with a direct literal translation as well as a correct English interpretation, and by breaking a sentence down so that you understand all its constituent elements. In this way you intuitively learn about the structure, i.e. the grammar, of the language.

As an inquisitive language student, however, you will no doubt be searching for 'the rules' that these patterns are based on which will give you the tools to construct strings of vocabulary yourself. So here we have provided comments on the grammatical elements to help you to 'decode' the rules, gain a more complete picture, and to construct your own word groups.

The tips given here relate directly to the grammatical themes embedded in earworms Italian Volumes 1 and 2.

1) Don't say 'I'

Notice that you don't actually use the word 'I' = **io** most of the time. It is of course OK to say: **io vorrei**, (**I would like**) or **io voglio** (**I want**), **io ho** (**I have**) or **io posso** (**I can**), but the 'o' at the end of **voglio**, **ho** and **posso** already signifies the so-called 'first person singular' = the 'I' form, so the 'I' can be left out without any misunderstanding.

'You' (part 1. – part 2. is in section 6.)

In the same way, where the person/persons being addressed is obvious from the ending of the verb 'you' (= **Lei**, **Voi** or **tu**), is usually omitted.

By the way, as you see here there are three main types of 'you':

'**Lei**' is used in everyday formal situations to a person you don't know well.

'**tu**' is informal and only used to address a close friend, a family member or a child.

'**Voi**' is used when addressing more than one person. This is something like saying 'you guys'.

Example Vol. 2, Track 1. : The waiter says:

Here you are ... (talking to one person): **Ecco a Lei**.

Here you are ... (talking to two people or more): **Ecco a Voi**.

As mentioned above the actual word 'you' is often left out.

Examples:

a) 'Have you a table for two?' (Vol. 1, Track 3) In this case the plural 'you' is used, because you are not addressing the waiter personally, 'you' means 'you and your restaurant team'.

Logically this should translate as: '**Avete voi ...?**' but the 'voi' can be left out and it can still be understood '**Avete un tavolo per due?**'

b) 'Are you (plural) ready to order?' (Vol. 2, Track 9) is actually '**Siete voi ...?**'

Again the 'voi' is usually left out '**Siete pronti per ordinare?**'

c) Vol. 2, Track 9.

The question '**Do you want ...?**' when speaking to a friend is '**Tu vuoi ...?**', but again the '**you**', here '**Tu**', is usually left out '**Vuoi un antipasto?**'

Below in the 'Verbs' section, the words for I (io), you (Lei / tu / Voi) and we (noi), are generally not spoken.

2) Linguistic gender of nouns – feminine beer and masculine coffee!

For traditional rather than any logical reasons, things are grouped into masculine or feminine in Italian. '**Un**' is usually the masculine and '**una**' the feminine version of the English 'a'. (**una** birra / **un** caffè). **Uno** is also used in front words beginning with certain sounding letters.

There are actually seven versions of '**the**' in Italian, depending on gender and also the sound of the word which follows:

Masculine:

1. '**il**' (e.g. il vino = the wine), 2. '**lo**' (e.g. lo zucchero = the sugar), 3. Plural '**i**' (e.g. i vini = the wines), 4. Plural '**gli**' (e.g. gli alberghi = the hotels), 5. '**l**' in front of words beginning with a vowel (e.g. l'aglio / l'ascensore).

Feminine:

6. '**la**' (e.g. la camera = the room), 7. Plural '**le**' (e.g. le camere = the rooms). Also '**l**' in front of words beginning with a vowel (e.g. l'aria condizionata / l'ora / l'acqua).

Guessing the gender

The linguistic gender of a thing is usually pretty easy to guess. If the word ends in '**o**' like 'passaporto', it is probably **masculine**, so '**un** passaporto'. If it ends in '**a**' it is probably feminine e.g. 'casa', so '**la** casa', '**una** casa'. (Of course there are exceptions.) Also words ending in '**ione**' (which by the way, are often the same as English words ending in **ion**) tend to be feminine (televisione, nazione, colazione).

Just for fun, after listening to the earworms Italian Vol. 1 + 2 a few times, test whether you know the gender of most nouns. You can guess many of them.

(Vol. 1) *Caffè, cappuccino, tè, birra, acqua, bottiglia, vino, casa, insalata, tavolo, finestra, dessert, conto, carta di credito, taxi, centro, aeroporto, cinema, teatro, macchina, paio di scarpe, paio di pantaloni, negozio, buon ristorante, bar, pizzeria, stazione di polizia, cabina telefonica, ufficio postale, banca, biglietto per l'autobus, tabaccheria, valigia, stanza, bagno, prima colazione, pomeriggio, problema, televisione, aria condizionata, frigorifero, crema solare, mal di stomaco, mal di testa, macchina fotografica, passaporto, portafoglio, gelato, tiramisù, sera.*

(Vol. 2) *Cellulare, cognac, stesso, piccolo paese italiano, buon compleanno, buon fine settimana, il viaggio, posto, camera, chiave, valigie, settimana, bagno, doccia, modulo, firma, litro, antipasto, risotto, bistecca, trota, caprese, l'aglio, vita, mio fratello, mia sorella, mia madre, mio padre, mia moglie, mio marito, donna, marito, figlio, figlia, chiesa.*

3) Adjectives

– Descriptive words often 'agree' with the nouns they qualify, like:

vino rosso / vino bianco = red wine / white wine

insalata mista = mixed salad

– Here are some other important adjectives (these ones come before the noun):

buono / buona (good)

poco (little or not much / few)

qualcosa (something)

tanto (quite a lot)

tutti / ogni (all, every) e.g. tutti i giorni = every day

primo (first)

ultimo (last)

altri / altro (other, another)

4) Verbs: to have or not to have?

The verb 'have': (firstly dealing with: **I** have, **you** have, **we** have)

I have ...	(io) Ho ...		
You have	(lei) Ha	(question: Ha ...?	= Do you have ...?)
You have (addressing 2 or more)	(voi) Avete	(question: Avete ...?	= Do you have ...?)
You have (informal)	(tu) Hai	(question: Hai ...?	= Do you have ...?)
We have	(noi) Abbiamo	(question: Abbiamo ...?	= Do we have ...?)

The question is the same as the statement, just with question marks added and some vocal intonation.

The negative: To make a negative add '**non**' in front of the verb.

Examples:

I have ... = Ho ...

I don't have ... = Non ho ... (Non ho molta fame. = I'm not very hungry.)

We have ... = Abbiamo ...

We don't have ... = Non abbiamo ...

Summary:

Statement	Negative	Question
You have...	You don't have...	Do you have...?
Ha...	Non ha...	Ha...?

The verb 'want': (firstly dealing with: **I want, you want, we want**)

I want ...	(io) Voglio ...		
You want	(lei) Vuole	(question: Vuole ...?)	= Do you want ...?
You want (addressing 2 or more)	(voi) Volete	(question: Volete ...?)	= Do you want ...?
You want (informal)	(tu) Vuoi	(question: Vuoi ...?)	= Do you want ...?
We want	(noi) Vogliamo	(question: Vogliamo ...?)	= Do we want ...?

For the Negative just add 'non'!

The verb 'speak': (firstly dealing with: **I speak, you speak, we speak**)

I speak ...	(io) Parlo ...		
You speak (formal)	(lei) Parla	(question: Parla ...?)	= Do you speak ...?
You speak (addressing 2 or more)	(voi) Parlate	(question: Parlate ...?)	= Do you speak ...?
You speak (informal)	(tu) Parli	(question: Parli ...?)	= Do you speak ...?
We speak	(noi) Parliamo	(question: Parliamo ...?)	= Do we speak ...?

The verb 'can': (firstly dealing with: **I can, you can, we can**)

I can ...	(io) Posso ...		
You can (formal)	(lei) Può	(question: Può ...?)	= Can you ...?
You can (addressing 2 or more)	(voi) Potete	(question: Potete ...?)	= Can you ...?
You can (informal)	(tu) Puoi	(question: Puoi ...?)	= Can you ...?
We can	(noi) Possiamo	(question: Possiamo ...?)	= Can we ...?

'Do they ...?' and 'Does it ...?':

Questions are not made with **do** or **does** as in English, as you see above a question is the same as the statement but with question marks.

Examples:

1.

Statement: **It costs** ... = (esso/essa) **Costa** ... (As above the 'it' = esso/essa is generally left out.)

It costs 10 euros = **Costa** dieci euro.

Question: **Does it cost** 10 euros? = **Costa** dieci euro? (lit.: Costs it 10 euros?)

2.

Statement: **They cost** 20 euros = **Costano** venti euro.

Question: **Do they cost** 20 euros? = **Costano** venti euro? (lit.: Cost they 20 euros?)

The only difference between the statement and the question is the sound at the end of the question, the so-called inflexion.

5) Possessives (my, your, our, his, her)

As with 'you' there is a formal and an informal way (used with friends and family) of expressing '**your**'.

'**Your**' (formal) is '**il Suo / la Sua**' depending on the gender of the object in question. Suitcase is feminine (la valigia) so 'your suitcase' is 'la Sua valigia'. When talking to a friend you would say 'la tua valigia'. Cognac is masculine (il cognac) so 'your cognac' is 'il Suo cognac'.

My = la mia / il mio ... (la mia valigia = my suitcase)

Our = il nostro / la nostra ... (la nostra valigia = our suitcase)

As well as 'your', 'il suo / la sua' (small 's') means 'his' and 'her'.

'**Your**' when talking to two or more people = **vostra / vostro** (masc. / fem. things) **vostri** (plural)

For example, if you say: 'your car' (talking to two people) it is: **la vostra** macchina. If the waiter says to two people: 'Here are your cognacs.' He would say Ecco a Voi – **i vostri** cognacs.

6) Me, him, her, us, you (i.e. when a person is the 'object' of a sentence)

In the sentence ...

She likes **him**.



We call '**She**' the '**subject**' (the acting person) and '**him**' the '**object**', the person being acted upon.

Likewise:

He likes **her**.



'**He**' = **subject** and '**her**' = **object**.

So now let's look at the Italian **object** pronouns. (Pronoun means I, me, he, him, she, her etc.)

you (informal) = **ti**

you (formal) = **la**

How great to see **you**. = 'Che bello vederti.' Or: 'Che bello veder**la**.'



Can I help **you**? = Posso aiutar**la**?

(Notice the object - here '**you**' - gets stuck on to the verb.)

me = **mi**

him, her = **gli / le**

us = **ci**

Can you bring **me** ...? Può portarmi ...?

Can you bring **us** ...? Può portarci ...?

Can you bring **him / her** ...? Può portargli / portarle ...?

Can you tell **me** ...? Può dirmi ...?

Can you tell **us** ...? Può dirci ...?

Can you tell **him / her** ...? Può dirgli / dirle ...?

7) Comparatives

slower (more slowly) – bigger – later – more interesting etc.

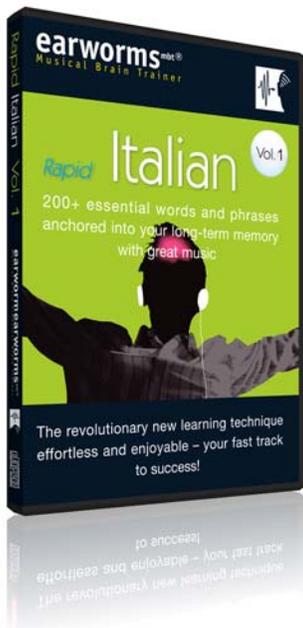
Comparatives are pretty simple in Italian – just add 'more' = '**più**'. E.g.:

interesting = interessante more interesting = più interessante

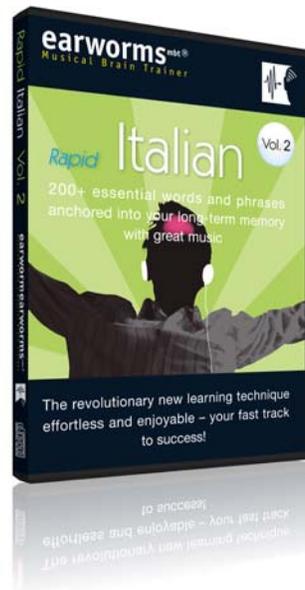
slow = lento slower = più lento (lit.: more slowly)

big = grande bigger = più grande (lit.: more big)

late = tardi later = più tardi (lit.: more late)



earworms Italian Vol. 1



earworms Italian Vol. 2

earworms MBT Italian Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 are your survival kit of immediately useful words and phrases for your visit to Italy.

Listen a few times to be able to ask for a table in a restaurant, order food and drink, take a taxi, rent a car, buy tickets, deal with money, numbers, times and days, ask for directions, deal with typical problems, hold a simple conversation and more.

Try the demos - experience something 'a little different'. After a few listenings, Italian words will be popping out of your memory... ... when you least expect them!

Read what other learners have said about how effective learning with earworms is and download a free Sample album:

www.earwormslearning.com/set_reviews.php

Play a sample:

Click here