

Master Regular Italian Verb Conjugations (present tense)

The meaning of conjugation

So what exactly is a conjugation- *una coniugazione*?

A conjugation is a basic process (common to most languages) by which you change the verb ending in order to indicate **who- chi** is doing the action (me, you, he/she, we, you, they), **with what intention- con che intenzione** (realistic, wish, opinion, order, etc.) and **when- quando** (present, past, future, etc.).

In simpler terms, conjugating is when you turn a verb like “to dance”- *ballare* into “she danced” - *lei ballò* or “ they will dance”- *loro balleranno* depending on what you mean exactly.

Verbs - *i verbi* in general are action words, so this explains why we always need some “agent” who is the do-er of these actions.

This “somebody” usually comes in the form of pronouns - *pronomi*. So if you ask: “*chi balla?*” - “who dances?”, the answer might be *tu balli* - you dance or *loro ballano* - they dance or even *lei balla* - she dances.

To correctly conjugate a verb, you need to know who- *chi* is doing the action. Here are the seven Italian pronouns you need to know about:

Io – I

Tu – You

Lui/Lei – He/She

Noi – We

Voi – You

Loro – They

Remember that the English “it” is a special case. You can either use “*lui*,” “*lei*” or “*loro*” depending on what “it” is being replaced with.

Use “*lui*” if the noun being replaced is masculine in gender, “*lei*” if it’s feminine and “*loro*” if it’s plural.

Verb groups

In the Italian conjugation of verbs, there are three basic groups- *tre gruppi* divided according to the verb ending in the infinitive- *all'infinito*:

1. with the infinitive in **-ARE**: **parlare** (to talk), **entrare** (to enter) and **studiare** (to study)
2. with the infinitive in **-ERE**: **scrivere** (to write), **leggere** (to read) and **vedere** (to see)
3. with the infinitive in **-IRE**: **costruire** (to build), **sentire** (to feel/to hear) and **colpire** (to hit)

When conjugating a regular verb, the ending drops and is replaced with something else that we will see just in a second.

Now that you know that Italian conjugations are divided into three groups, let's see in greater detail how each group behaves according to the person who does the action.

To make things easier for you, we will only be looking at verbs in the present tense.

Much like in English, in Italian, the present tense is used to talk about habitual actions, basic truths, descriptions and actions happening at the moment of speaking.

Quiz #1

Now let's do a little quiz to revise what we've just learnt.

Which pronouns can you use, in Italian, to express the English "it"?

1. Lui/lei, voi
2. Lui/lei, io
3. Lui/lei, loro

The answer is C, lui/lei, loro.

Regular verb conjugations

"-are" verbs

In the present tense, if a verb ends with “-are”, like *studiare* -to study, the “-are” is dropped. You then add the corresponding ending:

Io studio (I study)

Tu studi (you study)

Lui/lei studia (he/she studies)

Noi studiamo (we study)

Voi studiate (you study)

Loro studiano (they study)

“-ere” verbs

On the other hand, if a verb ends with “-ere,” like *vedere*- to see, the “-ere” is dropped and changed into the following:

Io vedo (I see)

Tu vedi (you see)

Lui/lei vede (he/she sees)

Noi vediamo (we see)

Voi vedete (you see)

Loro vedono (they see)

“-ire” verbs

Lastly, verbs ending with “-ire,” such as *sentire* -to feel or to hear, drop the “-ire” and become:

Io sento (I feel/hear)

Tu senti (you feel/hear)

Lui/lei sente (he/she feels/hear)

Noi sentiamo (we feel/hear)

Voi sentite (you feel/hear)

Loro sentono (they feel/hear)

Quiz #2

Now, let’s see, with a quick quiz, how would you conjugate the verb *camminare*- to walk in the third person plural (they run).

Would you say:

Loro camminate
Loro camminano
Loro cammina

Loro camminano is the correct way to say they walk, in Italian.

Irregular verb conjugations

As it often happens, some of the most common verbs are irregular and, although they continue to follow a pattern to a certain point, they can differ quite a lot from what you expect.

Let's start with the most important Italian irregular conjugations: *essere* -to be and *avere*- to have.

Here's how you conjugate *essere*:

Io sono (I am)
Tu sei (you are)
Lui/lei è (he/she is)
Noi siamo (we are)
Voi siete (you are)
Loro sono (they are)

So, for example, if we wanted to say: *you are young*, we would have to say: *voi siete giovani*.

While, a phrase like: *tu sei molto gentile*, can be translated with: *you are very kind*.

On the other hand, the verb *avere*- to have, in the present tense becomes:

Io ho (I have)
Tu hai (you have)
Lui/lei ha (he/she has)
Noi abbiamo (we have)
Voi avete (you have)

Loro hanno (they have)

For example, to express that *I am hungry*, in Italian we actually use the auxiliary have and not be so we would say: *Io ho fame*.

Same goes for *I am thirsty*. In Italian we translate it with: *Io ho sete*, or more simply, *ho sete*.

Did you know that, in Italian, to tell your age you also need to use *avere*- to have and not to be? Just like this: (*io*) *ho 26 anni*- I am 26 years old or even *lui ha 35 anni*- he is 35 years old.

Let me show you a few more very important irregular verbs that you'll need to know in order to speak and understand basic Italian.

There's an endless list of them, but here are the most frequently used:

Andare (to go)

Dare (to give)

Dire (to say/tell)

Fare (to do)

Potere (can)

Sapere (to know)

Uscire (to go out/exit)

Venire (to come)

Volere (to want)

This chart shows you how each one of them is conjugated in the present tense.

	DIRE	DARE	FARE	ANDARE	VENIRE	VOLERE	SAPERE	POTERE	USCIRE
io	<i>dico</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>faccio</i>	<i>vado</i>	<i>vengo</i>	<i>voglio</i>	<i>so</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>esco</i>
tu	<i>dici</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>fai</i>	<i>vai</i>	<i>vieni</i>	<i>vuoi</i>	<i>sai</i>	<i>puoi</i>	<i>esci</i>
lui/lei	<i>dice</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>viene</i>	<i>vuole</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>può</i>	<i>esce</i>
noi	<i>diciamo</i>	<i>diamo</i>	<i>facciamo</i>	<i>andiamo</i>	<i>veniamo</i>	<i>vogliamo</i>	<i>sappiamo</i>	<i>possiamo</i>	<i>usciamo</i>
voi	<i>dite</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>fate</i>	<i>andate</i>	<i>venite</i>	<i>volete</i>	<i>sapete</i>	<i>potete</i>	<i>uscite</i>
loro	<i>dicono</i>	<i>danno</i>	<i>fanno</i>	<i>vanno</i>	<i>vanno</i>	<i>vogliono</i>	<i>sanno</i>	<i>possono</i>	<i>escono</i>

Unfortunately there's no magic wand that can make you wake up one day and magically have you remember all of them by heart so, all you have to do is practise a lot.

Quiz #3

Do you think that you know enough about Italian conjugations? Let's do a quick test.

Fill in the blank with the correct verb, paying attention to the subject and the tense:

Adele e Giovanna ____ sempre insieme.

(Adele and Giovanna always go out together).

Esce

Esci

Escono

Adele e Giovanna escono sempre insieme. Well done!