

INTREPID ITALIAN

15 MISTAKES IN ITALIAN 90% OF LEARNERS MAKE

Ciao ciao!

Grazie! Thank you for downloading this cheat-sheet. This guide features essential grammar and lots of example sentences. Want more? Crack the code and master Italian tenses with **my Intrepid Italian 30-Day Tenses Challenge**. For more details, visit

<https://bit.ly/tenses-challenge> or go to IntrepidItalian.com

Got a trip to Italy coming up? Remember, you don't need to be fluent in Italian to have meaningful interactions with the locals and create memories that will last a lifetime, but you can be **fluent enough for travel**.

Learning to use just a few words can do wonders for enhancing your travel experiences. Plus, it's a great way to show respect and make a good first impression. This is why I not only write detailed destination guides and create informative videos, I also created a [free travel phrase guide](#) and [online language courses](#) to help smart and savvy travellers like you get the most out of their travel experiences through the power of language.



Hi! I'm Michele, an Australian travel blogger and language educator and 'guide' behind [The Intrepid Guide](#). I help my readers and students enrich their travels with beautiful and [detailed destinations guides](#), [free travel phrase guides](#), and effective [online language courses](#) that follow my 80/20 method so they can enjoy meaningful interactions with the locals and avoid being

treated like a tourist. Over the past few years, I've travelled the world and learned several foreign languages using my unique building-block method which is the basis of all my language courses. Keep in touch with me via Instagram [@intrepiditalian](#) where I share daily Italian lessons.

Italian Grammar Check: Can you spot 15 errors 90% of learners make?

Making [mistakes in Italian](#) is totally normal — it's part of the learning process! They're nothing to stress about. In fact, they're actually super helpful because they show you the areas you need to work on. The trick is to spot them, fix them, and use what you've learned to speak more confidently and naturally.

This guide is designed to help you catch those tricky grammar slip-ups before they become habits. Each sentence might include a small mistake or two, and your mission is to do an Italian grammar check to spot the error and learn how to avoid it next time.

Take a look at these 15 sentences and see if you can spot anything that doesn't quite sound right.

1. Abito in Milano, ma vado spesso a Francia per lavoro.

While it's clear what the speaker means, there are two mistakes with the prepositions. These little words can be tricky because they don't always match the ones we use in English, and they can change depending on the context, just like we see here with **in** and **a**.

When we talk about being in a city or town in Italian, we need to use **a**, not **in**. So, instead of saying *abito in Milano*, it should be *abito a Milano*.

On the other hand, when we talk about going to a place, we usually use **in** (except for towns or small places, which take **a**). So, instead of saying *vado spesso a Francia*, the correct form is *vado spesso in Francia*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Abito a Milano, ma vado spesso in Francia per lavoro.

(I live in Milan, but I often go to France for work)

To explore this topic further, my [guide to Italian prepositions](#) is packed with clear explanations and lots of examples to help you master them!

2. Accompagno il mio fratello a casa e arrivo!

The problem here is in the use of the definite article **il** (the) before **mio fratello** (my brother). In Italian, we usually don't put the definite article before a possessive adjective when it's



referring to a singular family member. So instead of saying *il mio fratello*, we simply say *mio fratello*.

This rule applies to most family members in the singular form—**mia madre** (my mother), **mio padre** (my father), **mia sorella** (my sister), and so on. However, when the noun for the family member is paired with an adjective (**il mio bellissimo fratello** - my handsome brother) or is used in a diminutive form (**il mio fratellino** - my little brother), the definite article becomes necessary.

Here's the correct sentence:

Accompagno mio fratello a casa e arrivo!

(I take my brother home and I arrive!)

To learn more, have a look at my [guide to how to use Italian possessive adjectives](#) with all the rules for using them.

3. Anche se ho studiato molto, dubito che riesca a superare l'esame.

In this sentence, there's a mistake in the use of the subjunctive mood. While it's true that the verb **dubitare** (to doubt) usually triggers the subjunctive because it expresses uncertainty, there's a special rule when the subject of both the main clause and the dependent clause is the same, as in this case (where the subject is **io** – I).

When this happens, the construction of the subordinate clause changes from **che + subjunctive** to **di + infinitive**. So, instead of saying *dubito che riesca*, the correct form is *dubito di riuscire*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Anche se ho studiato molto, dubito di riuscire a superare l'esame.

(Although I studied a lot, I doubt I will pass the exam)

Want to master the subjunctive mood? Check out my [guide to Italian subjunctive](#), complete with easy-to-understand explanations and plenty of examples that will make it easier to understand!

4. Sandro vuole tornare a casa, lui manca la sua famiglia.

The mistake here is related to the verb **mancare** (to miss), which works a bit differently in Italian than in English. In English, we say that someone misses something, but in Italian, the construction is the opposite: the subject of the sentence is actually the person or thing



being missed, not the person who feels the absence. So, it's like saying that something is missing *to* someone.

In this case, instead of saying *lui manca la sua famiglia*, we should say *gli manca la sua famiglia*, where *gli* is the indirect object pronoun for "to him" (so, it literally means "his family is missing to him").

Here's the correct sentence:

Sandro vuole tornare a casa, gli manca la sua famiglia.

(Sandro wants to go back home, he misses his family)

To learn more about how the verb *mancare* works, read my [guide to saying "I miss you" in Italian](#).

5. Ieri ho andato al centro commerciale e ho comprato una rossa sciarpa

After doing an Italian grammar check, we can see there are two mistakes in this sentence. First, in Italian, we don't use the auxiliary verb **avere** (to have) with motion verbs like **andare** (to go). Instead, we use **essere** (to be). So, the correct form of that passato prossimo is *sono andato*, not *ho andato*.

The second mistake has to do with the placement of the adjective **rossa** (red) before the noun **sciarpa** (scarf). In Italian, adjectives that describe colours usually come after the noun they describe, which is the opposite of English, where adjectives usually come before the noun. So instead of saying *una rossa sciarpa*, we should say *una sciarpa rossa*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Ieri sono andato al centro commerciale e ho comprato una sciarpa rossa.

(Yesterday, I went to the mall and bought a red scarf)

To find out more about the use of auxiliary verbs in compound tenses and the placement of adjectives, take a look at my [guide to passato prossimo](#) and read about the [use of Italian adjectives here](#).

6. Io amo la carne, mentre lui piace il pesce.

The mistake here comes from the use of the verb **piacere** (to like). In Italian, *piacere* doesn't work the same way as "to like" does in English. Instead of saying that *someone likes something*, Italian flips the structure: the subject becomes the thing that is liked, and the person who likes it is expressed with an indirect object pronoun or the preposition *a* +



name/noun. So, instead of saying *lui piace il pesce* (he likes fish), the correct form is *a lui piace il pesce* (literally, the fish is pleasing to him).

Here's the correct sentence:

Io amo la carne, mentre a lui piace il pesce.

(I love meat, while he likes fish)

Want to master the verb *piacere*? Explore my guide to [saying "I like" in Italian!](#)

7. Da piccolo sono andato spesso al mare con i nonni

In this sentence, the mistake lies in the use of the passato prossimo instead of the imperfetto. The passato prossimo is used for actions that occurred at a specific, well-defined moment in the past, usually once. On the other hand, the imperfect is used for actions that happened regularly or habitually in the past, especially when describing actions that were part of a routine, as in this case, where going to the sea with your grandparents was something that occurred repeatedly. So, instead of saying *da piccolo sono andato spesso*, we need to say *da piccolo andavo spesso* to convey that this was a regular, habitual action.

Here's the correct sentence:

Da piccolo andavo spesso al mare con i nonni.

(As a child, I used to go to the sea often with my grandparents)

To better understand the difference between these two key past tenses, take a look at my guides to the [Italian imperfect tense](#) and [the passato prossimo](#). They'll help you get a clear idea of when to use each one!

8. Professore, gli posso parlare un attimo?

The mistake here is with the choice of the [pronoun](#). In Italian, when we want to be formal — such as when addressing a teacher, boss, or stranger — we need to use the formal subject pronoun **Lei** (with a capital L) and its corresponding [direct object](#) (**La** - her) and [indirect object](#) (**Le** - to her) pronouns, whether the person we're speaking to is a man or a woman.

This may feel a bit strange when talking to a man, because **Lei** and its related pronouns are technically in the third person feminine, but that's simply how formal Italian works! So, instead of saying *gli posso parlare*, we should say *Le posso parlare*.

Here's the correct sentence:



Professore, Le posso parlare un attimo?

(Professor, may I speak with you for a moment?)

Want to learn more about formal speech in Italian? Check out my [guide to the formal “you”](#) and how to use it correctly in conversation.

9. Se avrei più soldi, farei la vita bella

Ouch, my ears! This sentence contains one of the worst [grammar mistakes in Italian](#): using the conditional when we should use the subjunctive! Specifically, in this type of “if” clause where we’re imagining a hypothetical situation that may or may not happen, we need the imperfect subjunctive in the first part of the sentence, not the conditional. So, instead of *se avrei* (if I would have), it should be *avessi*. (If I had).

There’s also a small issue with **vita bella** (beautiful life). In Italian, certain fixed expressions always place the adjective before the noun, and **bella vita** (beautiful life) is one of them.

Here’s the correct sentence:

Se avessi più soldi, farei la bella vita.

(If I had more money, I would live the good life)

Check out my guides to the [conditional](#) and [subjunctive](#) moods, and this one on the [use of Italian adjectives](#). They’ll make these concepts much clearer and help you avoid these tricky mistakes!

10. Non so perché, ma io ammalo sempre durante le vacanze!

After doing a proper Italian grammar check, did you notice something missing here? A pronoun! In Italian, **ammalarsi** is a reflexive verb, which means the subject is both performing and experiencing the action. This might not be immediately obvious because in English we simply say “to get sick,” but in Italian, we need to use a reflexive pronoun to show that the subject is also the receiver of the action. So, instead of *io ammalo* (I get sick), the correct form is *mi ammalo*, where **mi** is the reflexive pronoun for “myself.”

Here’s the correct sentence:

Non so perché, ma mi ammalo sempre durante le vacanze!

(I don’t know why, but I always get sick during the holidays!)

Take a look at my guides to [reflexive verbs](#) and [reflexive pronouns](#) to learn how to use them properly in Italian!



11. Tuo papà e tua mamma sono simpatiche veramente!

This sentence contains a couple of important mistakes. First, the adjective **simpatiche** (nice) doesn't agree correctly with the nouns it refers to. In Italian, when an adjective refers to two nouns of different genders (like **papà**—father, which is masculine, and **mamma**—mum, which is feminine), it must take the masculine plural form. So, instead of *simpatiche* (feminine plural), the correct form here is *simpatici* (masculine plural).

The second issue concerns the position of the adverb **veramente** (really). In Italian, when an adverb modifies an adjective, it must be placed before the adjective. So, instead of saying *simpatici veramente* (really nice), the correct word order is *veramente simpatici*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Tuo papà e tua mamma sono veramente simpatici!

(Your dad and mum are really nice!)

For further insights into how Italian sentence structure works? Check out my [guide to word order in Italian](#) and learn more about the [agreement of Italian adjectives here](#).

12. I Queen scrissero canzoni indimenticabili! Simone mi da sempre consigli su quali ascoltare.

There are two things we need to adjust in this sentence. First, let's talk about the verb **scrissero**. It's almost there, but not quite right. **Scrivere** (to write) is an irregular verb, meaning it doesn't follow the typical conjugation rules for -ere verbs in the passato remoto. The correct third-person plural form in this tense is actually **scrissero**.

Next, let's look at the verb **da**. Do you see the issue here? It's missing an accent! In Italian, the verb **dare** (to give) requires the accent in the third-person singular present form (**dà**) to distinguish it from the preposition da (from). Without the accent, it could cause some confusion!

Here's the correct sentence:

I Queen scrissero canzoni indimenticabili! Simone mi dà sempre consigli su quali ascoltare.

(The Queen wrote unforgettable songs! Simone always gives me advice on which ones to listen to)



To avoid these common mistakes, check out my [guide to Italian irregular verbs](#). It will help you understand these tricky cases!

13. Avete visto il nuovo ragazzo di Paola? Ha proprio dei belli occhi!

See that **belli**? It doesn't sound quite right! That's because the adjective **bello** (beautiful, nice) has some special rules when it comes before a noun: its ending changes depending on the gender, number, and the first letter of the word it describes. For example, when **bello** comes before a masculine plural noun that starts with a vowel (like **occhi** - eyes), it changes to **begli**. So, instead of *dei belli occhi*, the correct form is *dei begli occhi*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Hai visto il nuovo ragazzo di Paola? Ha proprio dei begli occhi!

(Have you seen Paola's new boyfriend? He really has beautiful eyes!)

Want to get a clearer understanding of how to use this popular Italian adjective? My [guide to Bene, Bravo, Bello, Buono in Italian](#) is packed with insights into their meanings and correct usage!

14. Siamo stanche! Quanto tempo mettiamo ad arrivare a casa?

In Italian, we don't use **stare** when talking about feeling tired or exhausted. For conditions like tiredness, we use the verb **essere** instead. So, instead of saying *stiamo stanche*, we should say *siamo stanche*. It's easy to get confused with these two verbs, as both can translate to "to be," but they're not always interchangeable, which makes them one of the most [common mistakes in Italian](#)!

Now, let's look at *Quanto tempo mettiamo ad arrivare a casa*? Here, there's an issue with the verb **mettere**: it's missing the pronoun **ci**! In Italian, when talking about how long it takes to do something, we need to use the pronominal verb **metterci**, meaning "to take (time)." Pronominal verbs are those where a basic verb combines with one or more pronouns that change its meaning. For example, the verb **mettere** on its own means "to put," but when combined with the pronoun **ci**, it changes meaning to "to take time." So, in this phrase, instead of saying *Quanto tempo mettiamo*, the correct form is *Quanto tempo ci mettiamo*.

Here's the correct sentence:

Siamo stanche! Quanto tempo ci mettiamo ad arrivare a casa?

(We are tired! How long does it take us to get home?)



Check out all the [differences between essere and stare here](#) and take a look at my guide to [Italian pronominal verbs](#) to learn more about structures like *metterci*!

15. Ciao bella, ti sono piaciuti i crisantemi?

Grammatically, there's nothing wrong with this sentence! The [indirect object pronoun](#) **ti** (to you) is in the right position, and the past participle **piaciuti** (liked) matches perfectly with **crisantemi** (chrysanthemums). But let's take a closer look—because even when grammar is on point, there are some cultural nuances to keep in mind.

First, let's talk about **Ciao bella** (Hello, beautiful). While it's a super popular [Italian greeting](#), it can sometimes be perceived as flirtatious, especially if it's coming from a man. So, context is key! If you're chatting with a close friend, it's perfectly fine, but in more formal or unfamiliar situations, you might want to skip it and go with something more neutral.

Now, about those **crisantemi** (chrysanthemums). In Italy, these flowers are strongly associated with cemeteries, where they are traditionally used to decorate tombs. Giving them to a friend, partner, or anyone outside this context could lead to some awkward moments!

Make sure to read my guide to the [most important Italian customs](#) to avoid cultural missteps while you are in Italy — it's packed with tips to help you act like a local!



Grazie!

I hope you enjoyed this cheat-sheet and learned something new. Remember, don't worry about not being able to remember it all, you're learning more than most other people do so you should be very proud of yourself. I know I am!

Want more language resources? Check out my guide on top-rated [languages tools, courses, and apps here](#). If you enjoyed this compact language guide and you want to discover how I can help you boost your language skills, [check out my popular language courses here](#).

If you have any feedback on this guide or want to share any suggestions for future material you'd love me to create, feel free to get in touch at michele@theintrepidguide.com

*As a thank you for downloading this guide, I'm proud to offer you a **special reader discount**. Simply use the code **TRAVEL20** at checkout to **GET 20% OFF** any purchase of my online travel language courses. [Check out my language courses here](#) or visit intrepiditalian.com.

Please do keep in touch and follow me on:

My website: [The Intrepid Guide](#)

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/theintrepidguide/>

YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/theintrepidguide>

Italian YouTube channel: <https://youtube.com/intrepiditalianwithmichele>

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/intrepidguide>

Instagram: [@intrepidguide](#) | Instagram: [@intrepiditalian](#) (For daily Italian lessons)

With all the encouragement in the world, I wish you success!

Happy learning!

Michele

