

# Italian Sentence Structure

## ▷ How do I construct a sentence in Italian?

The first thing we want to address here is the fact that you are better off not worrying too much about the sentence structure in Italian and go with the general idea that **Italian and English use a very similar structure, in most cases.**

Both Italian and English are **S V O languages**. That is:

**Subject + Verb + Object**

<b>IO</b>	<b>MANGIO</b>	<b>LA MELA</b>
S	V	O

<b>I</b>	<b>EAT</b>	<b>THE APPLE</b>
S	V	O

<b>JUN</b>	<b>STUDIA</b>	<b>ITALIANO</b>
S	V	O

<b>JUN</b>	<b>STUDIES</b>	<b>ITALIAN</b>
S	V	O

# ASK MANU ITALIANO

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Of course you should remember that in Italian the **subject is omitted** in most cases and that Italian tends to use **definite articles before the Object a lot** more often than English does, but at the core, they are more similar than different.

## ▷ When is the structure different then?

When **pronouns** are involved in Italian, you have to remember that these **go right before the verb!**

My name is Manu

<b>(IO)</b>	<b>MI CHIAMO</b>	<b>MANU</b>
S	V	O

Technically speaking that "**MI**", which means "*myself*" is already the **Object** of the sentence, but we prefer to just think of it **as** being **part of the verb**, so we don't get confused!

Alex loves me

<b>ALEX</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>AMA</b>
S	O	V

Here the difference between English and Italian stands out, since the Object is clearly in the "*wrong*" place! But that's because pronouns (direct, indirect and reflexive) **always go right before the verb.**

Take it as a fact of life. A **rule**. The norm.

Alex does not love me

<b>ALEX</b>	<b>NON</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>AMA</b>
S	V	O	V

When making the sentence **negative** things look even **more weird**, but again, what's happening is simply that the **pronoun must go before the verb**. And **as usual** the **NON** goes **before the verb**... so nothing too weird here, really!

Remember that in Italian we **do not have** words like **DO, DOES, DID** used in English to create questions, negative or emphatic sentences.

### ▷ **What happens in longer sentences?**

Generally speaking, we'll have the same word order as English. Or better, the **same order for the blocks of words** that make up the sentence.

*Domani vado a Firenze per vedere una mostra*

Tomorrow I'm going to Florence to see an exhibition

Here we have the following "**blocks**" (groups of words that must remain together):

▷ **DOMANI**

▷ **VADO A FIRENZE**

▷ **PER VEDERE UNA MOSTRA**

While the **previous sentence** represents the most *standard* way of expressing our concept, **in Italian we can freely shuffle the blocks around** to confer a slightly **different meaning**.

## ASK MANU ITALIANO

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We can say, for example:

▶ *Vado a Firenze per vedere una mostra domani*

By putting the **DOMANI** at the **end** of the sentence, we are **stressing the WHEN** we are doing something, **rather than the WHAT** we are doing (expressed in the first example above).

*Domani vai a Firenze per vedere una mostra*

Tomorrow you are going to Florence to see an exhibition

*Domani vai a Firenze per vedere una mostra?*

Tomorrow are you going to Florence to see an exhibition?

This last sentence often confuses you, since **the structure in English would be different** when we are asking a **question**.

But we can, in spoken English, do the same thing as in Italian, that is, **asking a question** using exactly the same structure as the statement, but **raise our pitch**:

▶ Tomorrow you are going to Florence to see an exhibition (right)?

You see? **Same structure as in Italian!** No verb inversion, no DO's or DOES or DID's! ;-)

Also remember that, in most cases, in Italian adjectives FOLLOW the noun they are describing.

*Questo è un libro interessante*

This is an interesting book

## ▷ It's tricky in questions...

The time when you really have to be alert and think about sentence structure in Italian should be when you're asking questions.

This is because **questions** do have a **different structure from English**. Let's have a look:

*Quando arriva il bus?*

When does the bus arrive?

As you can see in Italian we start with the **Question Word** (just like in English) but **then we put the verb**, with the **subject** coming **in last**.

*Quanto costa questo libro?*

How much does this book cost?

*Perché è triste Maria?*

Why is Maria sad?

Once again, **Italian** follows the **structure**:

**QUESTION WORD + VERB + SUBJECT ...?**

## ▷ But why?

I'll be honest with you. **That is not the best question** you could ask. Languages do their own thing, no point in going crazy trying to understand why. Let's **just get familiar** with the "exception" and start using it!

## ▷ **The secret to structuring questions**

When using "*Question Words*" you must use this structure:

**QUESTION WORD + VERB + SUBJECT ...?**

Question Words include:

- ▷ **QUANDO** = When
- ▷ **DOVE** = Where
- ▷ **PERCHÉ** = Why
- ▷ **CHI** = Who
- ▷ **QUANTO** = How much
- ▷ **COME** = How
- ▷ **CHE COSA / CHE / COSA** = What
- ▷ **QUALE** = Which

Just remember to have the **verb immediately follow these words** and throw the **subject** of your sentence **after the verb**, if you need to specify a subject.

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## ▷ EXERCISE

Translate the sentences into Italian

1. Tomorrow I want to go to the cinema

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2. My sister is sweet and pretty, but her husband is rude and ugly.

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3. Three years ago I bought a house but now I want to sell it because I have a new job in Milan.

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4. Why don't you call the doctor?

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5. Where is Sandra going?

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## ▷ ANSWERS

Here are some possible translations for the exercises presented in this episode.

1. Domani voglio andare al cinema
2. Mia sorella è dolce e carina, ma suo marito è maleducato e brutto.
3. Tre anni fa ho comprato una casa ma adesso la voglio vendere.
4. Perché non chiami il dottore?
5. Dove va Sandra?

## ▷ YOUR NOTES