

Lesson 79

Direct and Indirect Objects -- an overview

[Direct and indirect objects](#) confuse many people because it is often something that confuses us even in English. In this post, I will try to combine some English grammar with Italian grammar to make learning the use of direct and indirect object pronouns a bit easier!

In English, a direct object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb. Consider this sentence in English and Italian:

*John ate **the apple**.*
Giovanni ha mangiato **la mela**.

In both sentences, the apple (*la mela*) is the direct object because it receives the action of the verb (whereas John is the doer of the action -- which makes him the subject of the sentence). In the next sentence, we will have a direct object and an indirect object. An indirect object indicates **to whom** or **for whom** the action is done and who/what receives the direct object.

*I wrote **Marie a letter**.*
Ho scritto **a Maria una lettera**.

The direct object is indicated in **green**. | The *indirect object* is **bolded**.

As you can see, **Maria** is the **indirect object** because she is the receiver of the direct object and an indirect recipient of the action. In English, indirect objects can stand alone without a preposition, but this is not possible. In Italian, when the *indirect object is not* a pronoun, the preposition, **a**, must precede it (the pronoun in Italian already conveys the idea of 'to whom' or 'for whom').

Let's look at how direct and indirect objects can be replaced by pronouns in the example below:

1. *I wrote a letter.*
Ho scritto una lettera.

2. *I wrote it. (it = la lettera)*
L'ho **scritta**.

([the direct object pronouns la and lo elide with conjugations of avere](#))
([the past participle always agrees with the direct object pronouns lo and la](#))

3. *I wrote it to Maria. (it = la lettera)*
L'ho scritta **a Maria**.

(the past participle agrees with the direct object pronoun)

4. *I wrote a letter to her. (to her = a Maria)*
Le ho scritto una lettera.

(indirect object pronoun never affect the past participle)

5. I wrote it to her.
Gliel'ho scritta.

(remember that the past participle must agree in gender with the direct object pronoun)

Some verbs in Italian function differently than in English. The following verbs take indirect objects (while in English they would take direct objects). Remember that when the indirect object is a noun or proper noun, that the preposition, **a**, must precede it:

- chiedere *to ask*

Hai chiesto **a Giovanni** quando comincia la festa?
Did you ask John when the party starts?

- consigliare *to advise*

Il professore ha consigliato **agli studenti** che devono studiare molte ore per l'esame.
The professor advised the students that they have to study many hours for the exam.

- credere *to believe*

Il poliziotto non ha creduto **a mia madre**.
The policeman did not believe my mother.

- dare fastidio *to bother*

Il mio figlio dà fastidio **a mio marito** quando fa la stessa domanda 10 volte.
My son bothers my husband when he asks the same question 10 times.

- domandare *to ask*

Gli domando un piccolo prestito.
I am asking him for a small loan.

- fare bene *to do well; to do good*

Gli esercizi fisicali fanno bene **a tuo padre**.
The physical exercises are doing your father good.

- fare male *to do harm*

Quando Giuseppe beve troppo latte, **gli** fa male.
When Giuseppe drinks too much milk, it does him harm.

- fare paura *to scare*

I gatti neri fanno paura **a Luisa**.
Black cats scare Luisa.

- rispondere *to respond*

Mio figlio ha risposto **al medico** che sta bene.
My son responded to the doctor that he is well.

- somigliare *to resemble, to look like*

La Kidman somiglia **a Annamaria**, vero?
Nicole Kidman resembles Annamaria, don't you think?

- telefonare *to phone*

Non dimenticare di telefonare **a Marco**! Chiama da ieri.
Don't forget to phone Marco! He has been calling since yesterday.

- voler bene *to love, to be fond of*

Voglio bene **a Luisa**.
I am fond of Luisa.

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