

Absolute Superlatives: The Suffix *-issimo*

The absolute superlative is expressed in a variety of ways in Italian. In this lesson, we will examine one of the most common ways: the suffix *-issimo*.

In English, the absolute superlative is expressed by using *very + adjective*, *adjective + suffix -est*, or *most + adjective*.

In Italian, the suffix *-issimo* may be used by dropping the final vowel of an adjective or an adverb. The meaning is *very*, *extremely*, or *highly*. There are then four forms of the superlative, corresponding in gender and number with the subject. Take a look at the following table:

	Masculine Singular	Feminine Singular	Masculine Plural	Feminine Plural
cattivo (<i>bad</i>)	cattivissimo	cattivissima	cattivissimi	cattivissime
buono (<i>good</i>)	buonissimo	buonissima	buonissimi	buonissime
bello (<i>beautiful</i>)	bellissimo	bellissima	bellissimi	bellissime

NB: When forming the absolute superlative with adjectives ending in *-co*, *-go*, *-ca*, and *-ga* an *h* is added before the suffix *-issimo* to adjectives that add in the *h* in the plural stems. For example, the adjective *ricco* becomes *ricchissimo*, but *simpatico* becomes *simpaticissimo*.

It is sometimes possible to add *-issimo* to nouns in today's colloquial Italian and you will hear it done from time to time. For example, the use of *campionissimo* (the greatest champion) - to name just one out of many examples - is not uncommon. Because this is a somewhat new and affected tendency, it is best to avoid this usage in formal speech and writing.

Example Sentences:

Le quattro sorelle erano **bellissime**.
The four sisters were extremely beautiful.

Questo è un compito **difficilissimo!**
This is an extremely difficult task!

Questa sera non esco - sono **stanchissima**.
I'm not going out tonight - I'm extremely tired.

Sandro ha le gambe **lunghe**.
Sandro has very long legs.

Mia madre è una cuoca **bravissima**.
My mother is a very good cook.

Mia cugina sa nuotare **benissimo**.
My cousin can swim very well!

Absolute Superlatives: The Prefixes *stra-* and *arci-*

There are a number of prefixes you can employ with select adjectives, and sometimes nouns and verbs, in order to create a superlative. Following, we will cover two popular prefixes, highlighting some commonly used examples.

stra-

stracotto → *overcooked; very much in love (jokingly)*. Also: *beef pot roast which is cooked for a long time*

Ieri sera siamo stati in quel nuovo ristorante italiano sul lungofiume, ma la pasta che ci hanno servito era **stracotta**. *Last night we checked out that new Italian restaurant on the riverfront, but the pasta we were served was overcooked.*

Giorgio è innamorato **stracotto** di Manuela.
Giorgio is madly in love with Manuela.

Domenica mia madre vuole fare lo **stracotto**.
Sunday my mother wants to make a pot roast.

strafamoso → *extremely famous*

La sorella di Nicola conduce un programma sportivo in TV. È **strafamosa**.
Nicola's sister hosts a sports show. She's super famous.

strafatto → *overly ripe (fruits); really high or drunk (from the slang fatto)*

Ho tagliato l'anguria che abbiamo comprato questa mattina, ma era **strafatta** e ho dovuto buttarla via.
I sliced up the watermelon we bought this morning, but it was too ripe and I had to throw it away.

Non mi piace uscire con Beppe - è sempre **strafatto** entro mezzanotte.
I don't like going out with Beppe - he's always super drunk by midnight.

stralunato → *upset, distressed, agitated; dazed*

Dopo l'incontro con sua sorella, Giuseppina sembrava **stralunata**.
After the encounter with her sister, Giuseppina seemed upset.

stramaledetto → *goddamned*

Quello **stramaledetto** gatto ha pianto tutta la notte!
That goddamned cat cried all night!

strapagato → *extremely well paid, overpaid*

Dopo le cinque del pomeriggio tutti i bar del quartiere finanziario pullulano di agenti di borsa **strapagati**.
After 5 p.m. all bars in the financial district are packed with overpaid investment brokers.

straricco → *filthy rich*

Silvio Berlusconi è un uomo **straricco**.
Silvio Berlusconi is a filthy rich man.

stravecchio → *aged food and drink, specifically a longer aged parmesan and a type of brandy*

Il parmigiano stravecchio che abbiamo comprato è costato un sacco di soldi.
The stravecchio parmesan that we bought cost a ton of money.

strapotente → *overwhelmingly powerful*

Sua madre è una critica letteraria **strapotente**.
Her mother is an overwhelmingly powerful literary critic.

strapotere → *unchallenged and overwhelming power*

Lo **strapotere** degli imperatori romani era ben noto nel mondo antico.
The excessive power of Roman emperors was well known in the ancient world.

strafare → *to do more than is required or appropriate, to exaggerate, to overdo it*

Pensiamo di fare una bella festa, ma non vogliamo **strafare**.
We are planning on having a nice reception, but we don't want to overdo it.

stramaledire → *to curse violently*

L'ho sentito **stramaledire** il giorno in cui ha accettato quell'incarico.

I heard him curse the day in which he accepted that position.

strapagare → *to overpay*

Molte persone pensano che i calciatori **sono strapagati**.

Many people think that soccer players are overpaid.

straparlare → *to blabber, to jab, to talk too much in an over the top way, to divulge information*

Cerca di non **straparlare** stasera. Non voglio che tutti sappiano cosa è successo.

Be careful not to blabber on tonight. I don't want everyone to know what happened.

stravincere → *to win easily, to have a landslide victory*

Il candidato per il quale ho votato **ha stravinto** le elezioni presidenziali.

The candidate for whom I voted had a landslide victory in the presidential elections.

arci-

arcicontento → *extremely happy*

Teodoro si è trasferito a Roma e ora sembra **arcicontento**.

Teodoro moved to Rome and he now seems extremely happy.

arcinoto → *well known*

Ho conosciuto un autore stimato ed **arcinoto** che forse
hai sentito nominare.

*I met a respected and well known author that perhaps
you've heard of.*

arcipopolare → *extremely popular*

Frequenta solo i club **arcipopolari**.
She only goes to extremely popular clubs.

arcistufo → *really fed up, sick and tired*

Ero **arcistufa** del suo comportamento e non volevo
vederlo più.
*I was absolutely fed up with his behavior and I didn't want
to see him anymore.*

