

# 22 The imperative

Imperatives (**gli imperativi**) are verb forms used for giving orders or making suggestions, e.g. *Wait! Don't come. Let's have a coffee.*

## ◎/+ 22.1 The formation of the imperative

### (a) Regular forms of the imperative

In Italian, unlike English, there are separate imperative forms depending on who is being addressed.

- **Tu** imperatives are used to address one person in a familiar way.
- **Lei** imperatives are the most common way of addressing one person formally.
- **Voi** imperatives are used to address several people, both those addressed individually as **tu** and those addressed formally as **Lei**. (In some parts of Italy **voi** may be used to address one person formally.)
- **Loro** imperatives are rarely used with several people individually addressed as **Lei**: **voi** is generally preferred.
- The **noi** form of the verb is used to make suggestions (*let's ... let's not/don't let's ...*).

	-are	-ere	-ire	
	<i>aspettare to wait</i>	<i>prendere to take</i>	<i>finire to finish</i>	<i>sentire to hear</i>
<b>tu</b>	<b>aspetta</b> non aspettare	prendi non prendere	finisci non finire	senti non sentire
<b>Lei</b>	aspetti non aspetti	prenda non prenda	finisca non finisca	senta non senta
<b>voi</b>	aspettate non aspettate	prendete non prendete	finite non finite	sentite non sentite
<b>noi</b>	aspettiamo non aspettiamo	prendiamo non prendiamo	finiamo non finiamo	sentiamo non sentiamo
<b>Loro</b>	aspettino	prendino	finiscano	dormano

⚠ **Attenti!** Regular verbs have no separate imperative form:

- **Tu**, **noi** and **voi** imperatives are identical to their present tense forms. It is important to note, however, that **tu** imperatives of **-are** verbs are identical to their present tense 3rd person singular form.
- **Lei** and **loro** imperatives are identical to their present subjunctive forms (pp. 298–9).
- Negative imperatives: it is important to note that the **tu** forms are composed of the verb infinitive, preceded by **non**. For all other forms, **non** precedes the normal imperative.
- Regular reflexive imperatives are formed as in the table above, but with reflexive pronouns (see table p. 282).

### (b) Irregular forms of the imperative

Verbs with an irregular present tense

If a verb has an irregular present tense, its imperative forms are also irregular and identical. See also the lists of irregular present tenses on pp. 239–40 Here are a few examples.

Infinitive	<b>tu:</b> identical to present tense	<b>voi:</b> identical to present tense	<b>Lei:</b> identical to present subjunctive	<b>noi:</b> identical to present tense
<b>bere</b>	bevi (non bere)	(non) bevete	(non) beva	(non) beviamo
<b>salire</b>	sali (non salire)	(non) salite	(non) salga	(non) saliamo
<b>uscire</b>	esci (non uscire)	(non) uscite	(non) esca	(non) usciamo
<b>venire</b>	vieni (non venire)	(non) venite	(non) venga	(non) veniamo
<b>sedersi</b>	siediti (non sederti*)	(non) sedetevi	(non) si sieda	(non) sediamoci

\* Or **non ti sedere**; see Imperatives with object and reflexive pronouns, pp. 282–3.

### + The eight main irregular imperatives

These verbs are entirely or partly irregular. The list below is complete. Irregularities are marked in bold.

Infinitive	<b>tu</b>	<b>voi</b>	<b>Lei</b>
avere	<b>abbi</b>	<b>abbiate</b>	abbia
essere	<b>sii</b>	<b>siate</b>	sia
sapere	<b>sappi</b>	<b>sappiate</b>	sappia
stare	<b>sta** /stai</b>	state	stia
andare	<b>va** /vai</b>	andate	vada
dare	<b>da** /dai</b>	date	dia
dire	<b>di**</b>	dite	dica
fare	<b>fa** /fai</b>	fate	faccia

**Attenti! Pronoun use:** when the five forms asterisked above are followed by a pronoun, the initial letter of that pronoun is doubled, except in the case of **gli**:

Fammi vedere. *Let me see.* Falle vedere. *Let her see.*

**But:**

Fagli vedere. *Let him see.*

For more on pronoun position with imperatives, see pp. 282–3.

### + Esercizi

1 Give the **tu**, **Lei** and **voi** imperative forms of the phrases below.

(a) parlare più piano

(c) finire il lavoro

(b) scendere subito

(d) partire subito

2 Give the negative **tu** and **voi** imperatives of the phrases (a)–(d) above.

3 What are the **tu** and **Lei** imperatives of the following phrases?

(a) scegliere una canzone

(d) venire dentro

(b) rimanere un po' di più

(e) tradurre il brano

(c) tenere la destra

- ✦ 4 Rewrite the sentences below by substituting the **tu** imperative for the **Lei** form. Then provide **voi** imperatives for sentences (a)–(c).

- (a) **Abbia** pazienza, è inutile arrabbiarsi.  
 (b) **Stia** tranquillo, finiremo in tempo.  
 (c) **Faccia** quello che vuole, per me è lo stesso.  
 (d) **Dica** a mio marito che farò tardi stasera.  
 (e) **Dia** l'assegno a mio cugino.

### ✦ (c) Pronouns and imperatives

#### Reflexive imperatives

These are formed exactly like other imperatives. Note that the negative **tu** imperative is formed with **non** + infinitive, and that in this case there are two possible reflexive pronoun positions: either before or after the infinitive (see Imperatives with object and reflexive pronouns below). It is also important to note where the spoken stress falls.

	<b>accomodarsi</b> <i>to come in, sit down</i>	<b>mettersi</b> <i>to put on/to put oneself</i>	<b>servirsi</b> <i>to help oneself</i>
<b>tu</b>	accomodati non accomodarti/ti accomodare	mettiti non metterti/non ti mettere	serviti non servirti/non ti servire
<b>voi</b>	(non) accomodatevi	(non) mettetevi	(non) servitevi
<b>Lei</b>	(non) si accomodi	(non) si metta	(non) si serva
<b>noi</b>	(non) accomodiamoci	(non) mettiamoci	(non) serviamoci
<b>loro</b>	(non) si accomodino	(non) si mettano	(non) si servano

#### ⚠ **Attenti! Pay attention to the stress patterns:**

Irrespective of whether the infinitive is stressed on the final vowel (e.g. **accomodarsi**) or on the previous vowel (e.g. **mettersi**), the stress pattern is the same for all imperatives except the **tu** negative form:

- In **tu**, **lei** and **loro** imperatives the spoken stress is on the vowel of the stem.
- In **noi** and **voi** imperatives the stress falls on the penultimate vowel of the verb ending.
- In the **tu** negative form the stress falls where it normally does in the infinitive. For **-are** and **-ire** verbs, this is on the infinitive vowel ending. For **-ere** verbs, the stress is usually in the stem (**mettere**, **perdere**, **ricevere**), but some common verbs have the stress on the infinitive vowel ending (e.g. **avere**, **rimanere**, **sedere**, **tenere**).

#### Imperatives with object and reflexive pronouns

Pronouns are usually attached to the end of the **tu**, **voi** and **noi** imperative forms but always come before the **Lei** and **Loro** forms.

<b>tu</b>	<b>voi</b>	<b>noi</b>	<b>Lei</b>	<b>Loro</b>
<b>Prendilo</b> <i>Take it</i>	<b>Prendetelo</b> <i>Take it</i>	<b>Prendiamolo</b> <i>Let's take it</i>	<b>Lo</b> prenda <i>Take it</i>	<b>Lo</b> prendano <i>Take it</i>
<b>Sbrigati</b> <i>Hurry up</i>	<b>Sbrigatevi</b> <i>Hurry up</i>	<b>Sbrighiamoci</b> <i>Let's hurry up</i>	<b>Si</b> sbrighi <i>Hurry up</i>	<b>Si</b> sbrighino <i>Hurry up</i>