
Lesson: 86

Indirect object pronouns

What is a pronoun?

Before we cover *indirect object pronouns*, we need to check that we know what we mean by a pronoun.

Basically, a pronoun is a word that replaces a noun.

*I see **Peter*** In this sentence, **Peter** is the noun.

*I see **him*** In this sentence, **him** is the pronoun that replaces the noun **Peter**.

Why 'indirect'?

In any given sentence, most verbs have and want a direct object, as generally an action happens to something. These are known as **direct objects**.

*I eat **the apple***

*I see **you***

*I study **Italian***

*I bought **a book***

Indirect object pronouns replace the recipient of the verb /action.

*I'll buy **you** an ice cream*

I'm not buying **you**, I'm buying the ice cream, and **you** are the recipient of that ice cream.

Using pronouns makes conversation more fluid and sound much more natural and native-like. We do it all the time in English, likewise in Italian!



Some examples

The following sentences are very similar, yet when we take out one element, it changes the meaning entirely.

- I buy her a book.*** **Her** (she) is the recipient of the object, which is the book.
- I buy her.*** In this sentence, **her** has now become the object that has been bought!
Not cool.
- I buy a book.*** The book is once again the object, but for whom, we don't know.
- I buy her a book.*** With all elements together again, the meaning is much clearer!

Direct or Indirect?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>I see a house</i> | | DIRECT | |
| <i>I sell a house</i> | | DIRECT | |
| <i>I sell you a house</i> | Sell what? | The house | DIRECT |
| | To whom? | You | INDIRECT |
| <i>I see you</i> | | DIRECT | |
| <i>I give my son a house</i> | Give what? | A house | DIRECT |
| | To whom? | My son | INDIRECT |



Pronomi indiretti

mi	<i>to me / for me</i>
ti	<i>to you / for you</i>
gli	<i>to him / for him</i>
le	<i>to her / for her</i>
Le	<i>to you / for you (formal)</i>
ci	<i>to us / for us</i>
vi	<i>to you guys / for you guys</i>
gli / loro	<i>to them / for them</i>

There is no need to worry about **egli**, **ella** or **esso**, if you have heard these before!!! They are a much older way of saying **he**, **she** and **it**, but are no longer used by any Italian and are only found in higher register written materials and old literature.

Mi

For me / to me

mi dai una penna *You give me a pen*

The indirect object pronoun must always go **BEFORE THE VERB!!!**
Literally, “*To me you give a pen*”



Ti

For you, to you

ti diamo un bacio	<i>We're giving you a kiss</i>
ti do 10 euro	<i>I'm giving you 10 euro</i>
ti va il gelato?	<i>Do you feel like ice cream? ("to you it goes well ice cream?")</i>
ti compro un gelato	<i>I'm buying you an ice cream</i>

Gli

For him, to him

gli dai un regalo	<i>I'm giving him a present</i>
gli date un dolce	<i>You guys are giving him a sweet</i>
gli danno problemi	<i>They are giving him problems</i>
non gli va di dormire	<i>He doesn't feel like sleeping (with him it doesn't go well to sleep)</i>

Le (not capitalized)

For her, to her

le dai un regalo	<i>You give her a present</i>	
le date un dolce	<i>You guys give her a sweet</i>	
le danno problemi	<i>They give her problems</i>	
le va di dormire	<i>She feels like sleeping</i>	<i>("to her it goes well to sleep")</i>



Le

For you, to you (formal) (always with a capital 'L')

Even though this is the same word as **for her** and **to her**, the context of the situation will inform us to whom we are referring. If someone is clearly addressing you and looking at you and uses **LE**, then they are referring to **you** politely.

Le do un regalo *I give you a present*

Le danno problemi? *Are they giving you problems?*

Le va di mangiare? *Do you feel like eating? ("to you does it go well to eat?")*

Ci

For us, to us

ci date un caffè *You guys give us a coffee*

ci dai 10 euro? *Will you give us 10 euro?*

ci danno problemi *They are giving us problems*

ci dà un pezzo di pizza, per favore? *Will you give us a piece of pizza, please, sir/ ma'am?*

Vi

For you guys, to you guys

vi do un abbraccio *I'll give you guys a hug*

vi dà le chiavi *He/she is giving you guys the keys*



vi diamo 5 minuti

We give you guys 5 minutes

vi danno un regalo

They are giving you guys a present

Gli

For them, to them

Even though this is the same word as **for him** and **to him**, context will again inform us as to whom we are referring.

gli dai un regalo

You give them a present

gli date un dolce

You guys give them a sweet

gli danno problemi

They give them problems

No gli va di dormire

They don't feel like sleeping ("to them it doesn't go well to sleep")

Loro

For them, to them

LORO is the traditional way to say **for them** and **to them**. For a long time, **GLI** has been used among people in speaking contexts yet it was originally considered incorrect. Nowadays, it is considered completely acceptable, yet I still prefer to use **LORO**. You may even find it easier, as it is placed in the same position of the sentence as **them** in English - after the verb!

Dai loro un regalo

You give them a present

Date loro un dolce

You guys give them a sweet

Danno loro problemi

They give them problems

A loro non va di dormire

They don't feel like sleeping ("to them it doesn't go well to sleep")



Manu's Tips

If all these different pronouns seem super confusing, here's a handy idea. In Italian, we have a bunch of pronouns for the subject, object, possessive and reflexive forms, but they exist in English too!

Subject pronouns	<i>I, you, he, she, it, we, you guys/all, they</i>
Object pronouns	<i>Me, you, him, her, it, us, you guys/all, them</i>
Possessive pronouns	<i>Mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs</i>
Reflexive pronouns	<i>Myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves</i>

Oh wow there's so many! As a native English speaker, you use them all the time without even thinking about when to use which one and why. In Italian, believe it or not, we use the exact same word for pronouns in the **first** and **second** person **singular** and **plural** (whether we need a **direct**, **indirect object**, or **reflexive** pronoun).

Despite this, I need you to understand exactly what you are replacing with the pronoun. Is it the recipient? Is it the object? This is very important so you can get it right whenever you are not referring to the first or second person.

So, with that information, we can see that in any given situation, we can use a pronoun, no matter what role pronoun performing.

If the sentence is about **me**, use **mi**

If the sentence is about **you**, use **ti**

If the sentence is about **us**, use **ci**

If the sentence is about **you guys**, use **vi**

Using this trick, try and "cheat" your way into getting them right. Anytime you are thinking that the verb has to do with **me**, you use **MI**, just put it before verb. You actually already do this with phrases that we have already learned.



Mi chiamo	I call myself	Reflexive	I do it to myself
Mi chiami	You're calling me	Direct object	I'm the object
Mi dai un libro	You give me a book	Indirect object	I'm the recipient

If you do it this way, even if you still aren't sure of the difference between direct, indirect and reflexive pronouns, no one will know because they are the same anyway! Also, remember that we've only looked at *indirect object pronouns*, not the others!

In the meantime, you do need to understand what you are replacing with the pronoun because in the **third person** the pronouns are all **different**, so you can't get away with this trick!

Your notes

