The Basics: Subjects, Verbs and Objects

subject (who is doing the action)
verb (the action)
object (who or what the action is being done to).

This is known as **SVO** word order.
The good news is that **English follows the same structure!**

Examples:
Io bevo caffè. (I drink coffee.)
Io (I) is the subject, **bevo** (drink) is the verb and **caffè** (coffee) is the object.

Maria non mangia la pizza. (Maria does not eat pizza.)

2. Omitting Subject Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. They include: I, you, he, she, it, they, etc. Here's where we depart from the English similarities: In Italian, **you can omit the subject pronoun when the subject is implied by the sentence.** Native Italian speakers rarely use pronouns because the verb endings indicate that information.

For instance:
Bevo caffè. ([**I**] drink coffee.)
Non mangia la pizza. ([**Maria**] doesn't eat pizza).

3. Adding Indirect Objects

Some verbs in Italian can take an indirect object.

Vincenzo da un libro **a Maria**. (Vincenzo gives a book **to Maria**.)
Vincenzo (the subject) gives a book (the direct object) to Maria (the indirect object).

In Italian, indirect objects are **generally introduced with the preposition a (to) and they come after the direct object.**
If, however, the direct object is longer than a couple of words, the indirect object can **come before it**.
For example:
Vincenzo da **a Maria** un libro che ha comprato al negozio. (Vincenzo gave **Maria** a book that he bought at the store.)

Italian prepositions **normally accompany a noun or a verb** and come right after that noun or verb:

Ho la penna di Lucrezia. (I have Lucrezia's pen.)
The preposition di shows that Lucrezia owns la penna.

One complication is that prepositions **often combine with the articles that follow them** to create contractions.

Andiamo al mare. (We are going to the sea.)
a + il mare → al mare

5. Adding Adjectives

Adjectives **describe or modify nouns, pronouns or other adjectives.**

In Italian, there are two things you need to keep in mind:

1. Adjectives **follow nouns, come after the noun**
2. Adjectives **agree in gender and number** with the word they're modifying.

•If an adjective ends in **-a**, it is **feminine** and changes to **-e** in the plural.
•If an adjective ends in **-o**, it is **masculine** and changes to **-i** in the plural.
•If an adjective ends in **-e**, it is **either feminine or masculine** and changes to **-i** in the plural.

Una mucca nera (a black cow) is singular feminine and becomes mucche nere
Un pollo bianco (a white chicken) is singular masculine and becomes polli bianchi
Un maiale nero (a black pig) is singular masculine and becomes maiali neri

Generally, sentences will be constructed using this formula: **subject**, **adjective** (describing the subject), **verb**, **object**, **adjective** (describing the object).

Let's break that down:

Una mucca bianca mangia grano.(A white cow eats grain.)
Una mucca is the subject here, while bianca is the adjective that describes it.
Mangia is the verb.
Grano is the object.

The position of adjectives isn't totally consistent in Italian. Sometimes adjectives can go either before or after a noun.

There are also **prenominal adjective** that <mark>**come before the noun.**</mark>

Una macchina **grande** (a big car). The first example shows the size of the car (the adjective comes after the noun "car")
Una **grande** macchina (an expensive, impressive car). The second gives the impression that the car, whatever its size, is impressive. (the adjective comes before the noun "car")

Other adjectives that go before the noun include:

•piccolo (small)
•buono (good)
•cattivo (bad)
•giovane (young)
•vecchio (old)
•bello (beautiful)
•brutto (ugly)

<mark>6. Adding Adverbs</mark>

An adverb's function is to answer the question, "how?" and modify a verb.

In English, you can usually spot an adverb by the ending -ly:
quick→ quickly
clumsy→ clumsily
sweet→ sweetly

How do you make an Italian adverb, then? Just **add the suffix -mente to the** adjective.

veloce (quick) → veloce**mente** (quickly)
goffo (clumsy)→goffa**mente** (clumsily)
dolce (sweet)→dolce**mente** (sweetly)

The adverb is usually placed **after the verb** it modifies:
Lui corre **rapidamente**. (He runs **fast**.)

Or it's placed **after the verb-object phrase**:
Io bevo caffè **velocemente**. (I drink coffee **quickly**.)

I polli bianchi **vanno** felicemente **all'aia**. (The white chickens go happily to the barnyard.)
Let's break it down:

I polli — subject
bianchi — adjective
vanno — verb
felicemente — adverb
all'aia — preposition and object

Le mucche **non guidano** **i trattori**. (Cows don't drive tractors.)
Breaking it down, we get:

Le mucche — subject
non — negation
guidano — verb
i trattori — object

In English *who, whom* and *that* are used to talk about people and *which* and *that* are used to talk about things. In Italian you use **che** for all of these.

1. Quella signora **che** ha il piccolo cane nero si chiama Maria - That lady **who** has the little black dog is called Maria.
2. Mio padre, **che** ha sessant'anni, va in pensione. My father, **who**'s sixty, is retiring.
3. Una persona **che** detesto è la mia insegnante. - A person **whom** I detest is my teacher.
4. L'uomo **che** hanno arrestato è francese. - The man **that** they've arrested is French.
5. La squadra **che** ha vinto è la Juventus - The team **which** or **that** won is Juventus.

In English you can miss out the relative pronoun: *a person I detest; the man they've arrested.*
In Italian, *you can **NEVER** miss out* **che**.

Remember: in English *who* is used both as a question word, and as a relative pronoun.
In Italian: **chi** is used in questions, and **che** is used as a relative pronoun:

Chi va al concerto? **Who**'s going to the concert?
La ragazza **che** hai incontrato ieri si chiama Carla. **-** The girl **(that)** you met yesterday is Carla.