



## Italian verbs in the trapassato prossimo

### Conjugating regular Italian verbs in the trapassato prossimo

The Trapassato Prossimo is used for an action that happened before another one in the past. The other past tenses may be used for the other action meaning, passato prossimo, passato remoto, imperfect, etc. The Trapassato Prossimo ("Past Perfect" or "Pluperfect") is formed by using either the verb *essere* or *avere* in the imperfect tense followed by the past participle of the verb you want to use. For Example if you wanted to say "I ate after he arrived" you would first identify which action happened first. In this case it is "he arrived" thus this is the verb that needs to be conjugated in the trapassato prossimo (the other or "I ate" in the passato prossimo). You would first conjugate *essere* in the imperfect tense and then follow it with *arrivato*, the past participle for *arrivare*. With the subject pronouns included it would look like this;

**Io ho mangiato dopo lui era arrivato.**

Regular past participles are easy to form. You simply remove the infinitive ending and apply the past participle ending as shown below;

Verbs ending in ARE use ATO, for example; *mangiare* - are = mangi + ato = mangiato

Verbs ending in ERE use UTO, for example; *credere* - ere = cred + uto = creduto

Verbs ending in IRE use ITO, for example; *finire* - ire = fin + ito = finito

There are many verbs that use an irregular past participle. These you will need to commit to memory and many of these can be found on pages 54 & 55 of *Italian Verb Drills* by Paola Nanni-Tate I like to use math equations as an example of conjugating verbs in various tenses but first here are the past participle endings for all regular verbs;

Verbs ending in ARE    Verbs ending in ERE    Verbs ending in IRE

ato

uto

ito

To conjugate the regular ARE verbs in the trapassato prossimo = conjugated auxiliary verb + (infinitive verb – infinitive ending = verb stem + past participle ending) = conjugated verb.

Example;

**Avevamo (to have for we in the imperfect) + [Parlare (To Speak) - are = Parl + ato (past participle ending)] = Avevamo Parlato (we had spoken)**

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Parlare conjugated in the trapassato prossimo

Io	avevo parlato	I had spoken
Tu	avevi parlato	You had spoken
Lui/Lei	aveva parlato	He/She/It had spoken
Noi	avevamo parlato	We had spoken
Voi	avevate parlato	Y'all had spoken
Loro	avevano parlato	They had spoken

To conjugate the regular ERE verbs in the trapassato prossimo = conjugated auxiliary verb + (infinitive verb – infinitive ending = verb stem + past participle ending) = conjugated verb.

Example;

**Avevamo (to have for we in the imperfect) + [Credere (To Believe) - ere = Cred + uto (past participle ending)] = Avevamo Creduto (we had believed)**

Credere conjugated in the trapassato prossimo

Io	avevo creduto	I had believed
Tu	avevi creduto	You had believed
Lui/Lei	aveva creduto	He/She/It had believed
Noi	avevamo creduto	We had believed
Voi	avevate creduto	Y'all had believed
Loro	avevano creduto	They had believed

To conjugate the regular IRE verbs in the trapassato prossimo = conjugated auxiliary verb + (infinitive verb – infinitive ending = verb stem + past participle ending) = conjugated verb.

Example;

**Avevamo (to have for we in the imperfect) + [Sentire (To Hear) - ire = Sent + ito (past participle ending)] = Avevamo Sentito (we have heard)**

Credere conjugated in the trapassato prossimo

Io	avevo sentito	I had heard
Tu	avevi sentito	You had heard
Lui/Lei	aveva sentito	He/She/It had heard
Noi	avevamo sentito	We had heard
Voi	avevate sentito	Y'all had heard
Loro	avevano sentito	They had heard



## Choosing the correct auxiliary verb when using the Trapassato Prossimo

The selection of which auxiliary verb to use with the Trapassato Prossimo is the same as the Passato Prossimo:

- "1. All transitive verbs (the verbs which can take a direct object...) use the auxiliary avere.*
- 2. All reflexive verbs use the auxiliary essere ...*
- 3. Intransitive verbs ... can use avere or essere ..."*

Due to the third point, some memory work is required to determine which verbs use essere. You can find a list of common verbs conjugated with Essere in the Passato Prossimo on page 53 of the book Verb Drills by Paola Nanni-Tate

It is important to note here than when you use a verb in the the Trapassato Prossimo as with the Passato Prossimo with the verb essere, the past participle must agree with the subject in gender and number. For example the verb andare or "to go"

Lui era andato (he had gone) or Lei era andata (she had gone)

Gli uomini sono andati (the men went) or Le donne sono andate (the women went)

As is always the case with gender when the plural subject is a mix of masculine and feminine you use the masculine. Now lets look at the verb Andare in the trapassato prossimo = conjugated auxiliary verb + (infinitive verb – infinitive ending = verb stem + past participle ending that agrees in gender and number) = conjugated verb. Example;

**eravamo (to be for we in the imperfect) + [Andare (To go) - are = And + ati (past participle ending for masculine plural)] = eravamo Andati (We had gone)**

Andare conjugated in the passato prossimo

Io	ero andato or andata	I had gone
Tu	eri andato or andata	You had gone
Lui/Lei	era andato or andata	He/She/It had gone
Noi	eravamo andati or andate	We had gone
Voi	eravate andati or andate	Y'all had gone
Loro	erano andati or andate	They had gone