



IRREGULAR NOUNS MAKE LEARNING ITALIAN A HOOT!!!

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Most Italian nouns follow the rules – masculines end in ‘o’, feminines in ‘a’ – but as we all are painfully aware of... there are exceptions!

Learning Italian, or any foreign language, can be tough. But, you've stuck with it and you have learned quite a bit. Be proud of that; it's quite an achievement if you think that you are not in a position of being totally immersed in the language. You may be starting to feel confident with your Italian, and that's a good thing, (here comes the other shoe) until you stumble upon an irregular noun. You might use the wrong gender or forget that in the plural it doesn't follow the regular rules. Frustrating... believe me, I know from personal experience. Want some good news? Here it is... these mistakes are easy to overcome! As I frequently tell you, with repetition, listening and some memorization, you'll never say it was "la problema" again!

1.) Irregular, but very common, nouns like: *il problema / i problemi, la mano / le mani, and others*

As with a number of Italian nouns, it's easy to make a mistake by applying the rules you already know on assigning gender to these words. For example, one easy mistake to make is to forget that "*problema*" is masculine and takes the masculine article "*il*". Or that "*mano*" is feminine and takes the article "*la*". In the plural, the "*a*" turns to an "*i*" instead of an "*e*", making it "*i problemi*".

2.) *Il tema / i temi*

Just like "*il problema*", "*il tema*" (topic or theme) is masculine. Yes, it follows masculine rules in the plural form.

3.) *la mano / le mani*

Same issue, but you might try remembering this one by recalling the expression, "give me a hand." Practice saying "*dammi una mano*" enough and "*una mano*" will finally stick! Next time you're in school, try this with everyone you see! Guaranteed to work!

4.) *il paio / le paia*

"The pair" in Italian; for example: *un paio di scarpe, due paia di occhiali*, etc. It's a tricky combination. Starting off masculine singular, in the plural it becomes "*le*" and ends in "*a*". Go figure!

5.) *il riso / le risa*

"The laugh" with a plural form "*laughter*". This is similar to "the pair(s)," the laugh or laughter also has irregular endings. [This does not apply to the word for rice, by the way.]

6.) *l'uovo / le uova*

Are you seeing a trend here? "The egg" ends in "o", but "the eggs" uses "*le*" with an "*a*" ending. Isn't this fun?

7.) *il braccio / le braccia*

"The arm" and "the arms" also follow the pattern of "laugh" and "egg."

8.) *il dito / le dita*

"The finger" is singular masculine, but "the fingers" are feminine plural with the singular ending "*a*".

9.) *il labbro / le labbra*

"The lip" and "the lips" are using the same pattern we've seen before. What is it about body parts?!

10.) *il lenzuolo / le lenzuola*

Another common example where a masculine single changes to plural feminine. Again, this one can be recalled by repeating it often and making a mental note of all the other nouns that follow suit.

11.) *il muro / i muri / le mura*

The simple word "*muro*" actually changes meanings as it changes endings. "*Il muro*" is a wall, "*i muri*" is the plural form: the walls within a house or other building, but "*le mura*" are walls surrounding a city, like the ones that circle many Italian towns that were erected for protection during the middle ages.

12.) *il ginocchio / le ginocchia*

Like other words we've seen here, the masculine singular "*il ginocchio*" becomes plural feminine with a singular ending: "*le ginocchia*".

On the next page we look at some tabular information that will help bring this topic into better focus.



Continua...



| IRREGULAR NOUNS | MASCULINE | FEMININE |
|---|---|---|
| Some nouns have an irregular plural. | <i>uomo/uomini</i> (man/men) | |
| <p>Some nouns have an irregular feminine form.</p> <p>Notice that often people prefer to use only the masculine form of the nouns indicated in bold instead of the irregular feminine form. (e.g. "La Signora Rossi è il presidente della società" - Ms. Rossi is the president of the company)</p> | <i>attore</i> (actor) <i>scrittore</i> (writer) <i>pittore</i> (painter) <i>imperatore</i> (emperor) direttore (director) <i>dottore</i> (doctor) presidente (president) <i>poeta</i> (poet) avvocato (lawyer) | <i>attrice</i> <i>scrittrice</i> <i>pittrice</i> <i>imperatrice</i> <i>direttrice</i> <i>dottoressa</i> <i>presidentessa</i> <i>poetessa</i> <i>avvocatessa</i> |
| <p>Some nouns have only the singular form.</p> <p>This includes all nouns ending with an accented vowel, as well as all foreign nouns. (e.g. "un re, due re" - one king, two kings)</p> | <i>re/re</i> (king/kings) <i>tassi/tassi</i> (taxi/taxis) <i>caffè/caffè</i> (coffee/coffees) <i>hotel/hotel</i> (hotel/hotels) <i>sport/sport</i> (sport/sports) <i>yogurt/yogurt</i> (yogurt(s)) | <i>gru/gru</i> (crane/cranes) <i>città/città</i> (city/cities) <i>università/università</i> (university/universities) |
| Some nouns are used only in the plural form. | <i>occhiali</i> (glasses) | <i>forbici</i> (scissors) |
| Some masculine nouns end with "a" and form the plural ending with "i". | <i>poeta/poeti</i> (poet/poets) <i>problema/problemi</i> (problem/problems) | |
| Some feminine nouns end with "o" and form the plural ending with "i". | | <i>mano/mani</i> (hand/hands) |
| Some nouns are masculine in the singular form, but become feminine in the plural, ending with "a". | <i>braccio</i> (arm) <i>labbro</i> (lip) <i>dito</i> (finger) <i>ginocchio</i> (knee) <i>uovo</i> (egg) | <i>braccia</i> (arms) <i>labbra</i> (lips) <i>dita</i> (fingers) <i>ginocchia</i> (knees) <i>uova</i> (eggs) |
| Nouns ending with "co/ca" or "go/ga" add an "h" in the plural form. | <i>lago/laghi</i> (lake/s) | <i>amica/amiche</i> (female friend/s) |
| Some masculine nouns ending with "co" or "go" do not add the "h". | <i>amico/amici</i> (friend/s) <i>medico/medici</i> (doctor/s) | |
| Feminine nouns ending with "cia" or "gia" become "ce" or "ge" for the plural when a consonant precedes the ending "cia" or "gia". | | <i>arancia/arance</i> (orange/oranges) <i>frangia/frange</i> (fringe/fringes) |



IN BOCCA AL LUPO
CON IL TUO
STUDIO DI ITALIANO!