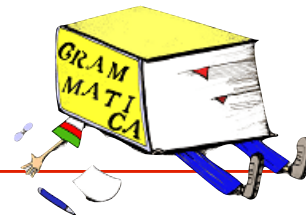




13 gennaio  
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# Scuola di Italiano

## Erriva la Grammatica!



## THE PLACEMENT OF ITALIAN ADJECTIVES

BY SANDRO CUCCIA

One of the most elusive concepts to beginning students of Italian is the placement of adjectives with respect to the noun they refer to. Do they go before or after the noun? Let's explore this important topic.

### < Italian Adjectives – Fact #1 >

Generally, Adjectives FOLLOW a noun they modify when they are descriptive adjectives:

- "La mela **rossa**." → ["The red apple."]
- "Il tavolo **verde**." → ["The green table."]
- "Maria ha degli occhi **azzurri stupendi!**" → ["Maria has splendid blue eyes!"]

As to be expected, sometimes there are cases where adjectives PRECEDE the noun.

There are no fixed rules! (of course not!)

### < Italian Adjectives – Fact #2 >

AN adjective placed **AFTER** the noun is **DENOTATIVE** (having a LITERAL meaning). Whereas an adjective placed **BEFORE** the noun is **CONNOTATIVE** (having a SUGGESTIVE or FIGURATIVE meaning).

#### \*\*\* Background \*\*\*

**Connote** does not mean the same as **denote**.

**DENOTE** refers to the literal, primary meaning of something, whereas **CONNOTE** refers to other characteristics suggested or implied by that thing. Thus, one might say that the word 'mother' **denotes** 'a woman who is a parent' but **connotes** qualities such as 'protection' and 'affection'.

\*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*

→ "Roberto è un **giocatore grande**."

["Roberto is a **large** player."] = A LITERAL meaning (DENOTATIVE).

→ "Roberto è un **grande giocatore**."

["Roberto is a **great** player."] = The meaning is FIGURATIVE (CONNOTATIVE).

We don't know if Roberto is big or small, but the important thing is that he never misses a touchdown; he's a great player.

→ "Paolo è un **amico vecchio**."

["Paolo is a friend who is advanced in years."] = A LITERAL (DENOTATIVE) meaning.

→ "Paolo è un **vecchio amico**."

["Paolo is a 'long-standing' friend."] = A FIGURATIVE (CONNOTATIVE) meaning.

→ "Ho visto un **film nuovo**." [literally: "I've seen a new (i.e.; recently released) movie."]

→ "Ho visto un **nuovo film**." ["I've seen another movie." (a 'new-to-me' movie)]

### < Italian Adjectives – Fact #3 >

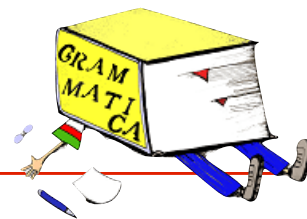
Sometimes the meaning **does not change**, regardless of *where* you place the adjective.

→ "Questa è una **poesia bella**." ["This is a beautiful poem."]  
*is the same as...*

→ "Questa è una **bella poesia**." ["This is a beautiful poem."]



# Continua...



However...

## < Italian Adjectives – Fact #4 >

Some adjectives **ALWAYS** come **AFTER** the noun.

These include:

### < a >

Adjectives that describe **color, shape, nationality, religion, category**:

- occhi **azzurri**
- una scatola **quadrata**
- un ragazzo **italiano**
- una signora **cattolica**

### < b >

Adjectives that come from the **present participle** (-ente or -ante) or the **past participle** (-uto, -ato, -ito):

- il morto **vivente** [the living dead (i.e.; 'zombie')]
- un cadavere **ambulante** [a walking corpse]
- un mostro **gigante** [a giant monster]
- un paese **evoluto** [a developed country]
- il pane **bruciato** [the burnt bread]
- un pollo **bollito** [a boiled chicken]

### < c >

Adjectives modified by a **suffix** (-ino, -etto, -uccio, -accio, -astro):

- "Sandrino è un bambino **piccolino**." ["Sandrino is a tiny child."]
- "Paolo è un po' **grandetto**." ["Paolo is a bit on the big side."]
- "Lui è un uomo **poveraccio**." ["He is a poor little thing."]
- "La neve è di un colore **giallastro**." ["The snow has a yellowish color."]

## < Italian Adjectives – Fact #5 >

English adjectives require a specific order: quantity, quality, size, age, etc.

In Italian, **the order doesn't really matter** when there is **more than one adjective**.

- "Professor Sandrino is a handsome, tall, young man."
- = "Professore Sandrino è un uomo **bello, alto e giovane**."
- = "Professore Sandrino è un uomo **giovane, alto e bello**."
- = "Professore Sandrino è un uomo **alto, giovane e bello**."

