

Il verbo piacere

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Introduction

This document explains how *piacere* is used when something is pleasing to someone.

In English, we use the terms *I like, you like* etc.

In Italian, in this context, the verb *piacere* means “[something] is pleasing to me”, “[something] is pleasing to you”, and so on.

Example

Italian statement	Mi piace la pizza
Literal translation	Pizza is pleasing to me
Actual translation	I like pizza

IOP (indirect object pronoun)

English	Italian IOP and verb	Literal translation
		Here, “it” refers to the object or subject of the sentence, which has not yet been shown, for example an apple, a pizza, a city, or music.
I like	Mi piace	To me it is pleasing
You like	Ti piace	To you it is pleasing
He likes	Gli piace	To him it is pleasing
She likes	Le piace	To her it is pleasing
We like	Ci piace	To us it is pleasing
You (plural) like	Vi piace	To you (plural) it is pleasing
They like	Gli piace	To them it is pleasing. Notice that “he likes” and “they like” use the same IOP. <i>Gli piace</i> (meaning they like) is informal. You could use <i>A loro piace</i> instead. This is more formal but it is absolutely clear what is meant.

A note about IOPs

In this context, think of “mi” as meaning “to me”, and “ti” as meaning “to you” etc. This will help when understanding more complex sentences.

The sentence structure

	IOP (indirect object pronoun)	Verb	Article *not all subjects need an article	Subject
Singular nouns/subject. E.g a photo.	Mi	piace	la	foto
	Mi piace la foto <i>I like the photo</i>			
Use with other verbs	Mi	piace		ballare
	Mi piace ballare <i>I like to dance</i>			
Plural nouns/subjects e.g. trains	Mi	piacciono	i	treni
	Mi piacciono i treni <i>I like trains</i>			

*As a rule, cities do not need an article, for example *Mi piace Roma*.

*If a verb follows piacere, no article is needed, e.g. *Mi piace nuotare*.

Adding molto, poco and non

Mi piace molto la mela I like (the) apple very much

Mi piace poco il caffè I like (the) coffee a little

Non mi piacciono i cani I don't like dogs

Tips

- The thing being liked is the subject of the sentence. *It's not about you, it's about the subject.*
- The person doing the liking is the recipient (the indirect pronoun).
- Remember that "piace" is used for singular subjects or when followed by a verb, and "piacciono" is used for plural subjects.

Using piacere with specific groups of people

When using indirect pronouns: *le* (to her), *gli* (to him) and *gli* (to them), it may not be clear who “her”, “him” or “them” are.

In this situation, we need to use the person’s name first. For example, Marco. We need to say “to Marco”, so add “A” in front of the name: A Marco (to Marco).

This structure can also be used with other descriptions, such as sister, brother, or doctor.

Examples of using specific groups of people

Italian	Translation	Meaning	Comment
A Marco piace la musica	<i>Music is pleasing to Marco.</i>	Marco likes (the) music	
Ad Anna piace la musica	<i>Music is pleasing to Anna</i>	Anna likes (the) music	Notice “Ad” rather than “A”. The extra “d” is added to make the phrase sound smoother and to avoid a double vowel sound.
Ad Anna e Marco piace la musica	The music is pleasing to Anna and Marco	Anna and Marco like (the) music	Notice that it is <i>piace</i> and not <i>piacciono</i> . There may be two people, but the subject of the sentence is “the music”, which is singular in this context.
A Chiara piacciono i gatti	The cats are pleasing to Chiara	Chiara likes the cats	Multiple cats, so <i>piacciono</i> .
A mia sorella piace il dottore	The doctor is pleasing to my sister	My sister likes the doctor	The doctor is the subject of the sentence. Be careful not to confuse this with “the doctor likes my sister.”

Notes: Once it has been established who “him”, “her”, or “them” refers to, switch to indirect pronouns *gli*, *le* and *gli* (them).

Using piacere with contrast/emphasis

Consider these two sentences:

- 1) *I* like pizza. How about **you**? *I vs You*
- 2) **She** likes classical music. **He** doesn't. *Her vs Him*

Both sentences create contrast/comparison with emphasis: *I like pizza. How about **YOU**? She likes classical music. **He** doesn't.*

It is incorrect to say: *Mi piace la pizza. E tu?* This is because “Mi piace” means “pleasing **to me**”. It requires a response “And **to** you?” which is “e a te?”

Since the verb *piacere* uses the preposition **a** (to), the pronouns used are called **pronomi indiretti tonici** (emphatic **indirect** object pronouns).

Pronomi Tonici	Meaning	To use with Piacere	Meaning
me	Me	A me	To me
te	You	A te	To you
lei	Her	A lei	To her
lui	Him	A lui	To him
lei	You (formal)	A Lei	To you (formal)
noi	Us	A noi	To us
voi	You (plural)	A voi	To you (plural)
loro	Them	A loro	To them

A note on pronomi tonici

All the examples above start with “A” followed by the *pronomi tonici*. If you are trying to describe a specific group of people, for example the women, the men, or the audience, this involves a contraction of “to” and “the”.

For example:

English	Italian	Actual Translation	Comment
The men don't like running	Agli uomini non piace molto correre	To the men, running is not pleasing.	Remember, <i>piacere</i> involves “pleasing to me, you, us, the women, the men etc.” A + gli uomini = Agli uomini.

This document does not explore this contraction in depth, as the focus is the verb *piacere*.

Example sentences of contrast and emphasis using piacere, and asking someone's opinion

Consider the sentence: "I like pizza. How about you?" Mi piace la pizza. E a te?

Now imagine a more emphatic version: "Well *I* like the pizza — how about *you*?"

Maybe the pizza in question looked bad.

Maybe there was doubt that the second person would like the pizza.

Maybe the person speaking has a stubborn tone.

To convey this emphasis, we need to add pronomi tonici at the start of the sentence.

Italian	Translation	Meaning
A me piace la pizza. E a te?	To me pizza is pleasing. And to you?	I like pizza. How about you?
A lei piace la musica classica, ma a lui no.	Classical music is pleasing to her, but not to him.	She likes classical music. He doesn't.
A te piacciono i dolci, e a lui?	Sweets are pleasing to you, and to him?	You like sweets, what about him?
A loro piace il cane, ma a te no.	The dog is pleasing to them but not to you.	They like the dog but you don't.

When to use “mi piace” and “a me piace”

I like Florence	
Mi piace Firenze	A me piace Firenze
<p>This is the standard way to say “I like Florence”. It is a statement expressing an opinion.</p>	<p>This is the emphatic way to say <i>I like Florence</i>. It’s used with contrast/comparison.</p> <p>A me piace Firenze, e a te? <i>I like Florence, and how about you?</i></p> <p>A me piace Firenze, ma a lui no. <i>I like Florence, but he doesn’t.</i></p> <p>A noi piace mangiare al ristorante. A lei no. <i>We like to eat at the restaurant, but she doesn’t.</i></p> <p>A loro piace ballare. A noi no. <i>They like to dance. We don’t.</i></p> <p>A Maria piacciono i cani. A me no. <i>Maria likes dogs. I don’t.</i></p>
<p>It’s also perfectly natural and common to ask: <i>Mi piace Firenze, e a te?</i></p> <p>When using <i>A me...</i>, there is deliberate emphasis.</p>	

Responses to questions like those seen above will be explored further.

Replying to piacere questions: positive and negative responses

Ti piace la musica rap? Do you like rap music?

This question has no contrast or emphasis between two people or pronouns. For example, it's not "A me piace la musica rap, e a te?" It's just one question where one pronoun is used.

How to answer: positive and negative responses.

Ti piace la musica rap?

Answer	Meaning	Comment
Sì	Yes	A simple affirmative answer.
Sì mi piace	Yes, I like it.	There isn't a word "it" here. It is assumed by the answer that "it" means the subject, which is rap music in this example.
Sì mi piace la musica rap	Yes, I like rap music.	Full grammatical answer, but not always necessary to say, since it is obvious we are talking about rap music here.
No	No	A simple negative answer.
No, non mi piace	No, I don't like it	There isn't a word "it" here. It is assumed by the answer that "it" means the subject, which is rap music in this example.
No, non mi piace la musica rap	No, I don't like rap music	Full grammatical answer, but not always necessary to say, since it is obvious we are talking about rap music here.
No, non mi piace la musica rap ma mi piace la musica R&B	No, I don't like rap music, but I do like R&B music.	In this full sentence, it is clear that one type of music is liked but another is not liked. Notice that even though this sentence creates a "contrast", it is not a contrast set up by the original person, so it is still ok

		to use the IOP, and not the <i>pronomi tonici</i> .
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Using adverbs to intensify meaning

Use adverbs to describe more precisely how much something is liked, such as *molto*, *moltissimo*, *abbastanza*, *poco*, and *affatto*. For example, “I like chocolate a lot” = *Mi piace molto il cioccolato*.

First, look at *molto*. The other adverbs will follow the same rule when they are used with *piacere*.

Quick reminder about molto

The placement of *molto* can be confusing because it can have different meanings: “very”, “a lot”, “much”, or “many”.

The table below gives examples, but for *piacere*, look at the yellow highlighted example.

Function	Meaning	Rule & Placement	Example
Adverb	"Very"	Goes before the adjective or adverb it modifies.	Sei molto gentile. <i>You are very kind.</i>
Adverb	"A lot" / "Much"	Goes after the verb it modifies	Mi piace molto il caffè. <i>I like the coffee a lot.</i>
Adjective	"Many" / "A lot of"	Changes (<i>molto</i> , <i>molta</i> , <i>molti</i> , <i>molte</i>) to agree with the noun, and goes before the noun.	Ci sono molti libri. <i>There are many books.</i>

What if there are two verbs?

For example, *I like running a lot*. *Molto* will still be placed after *piacere*: *Mi piace molto correre*.

Examples of saying how much we like something

Adverb	Meaning	Example Sentence	Translation (Literal)	Translation (Natural English)
Molto	A lot	Mi piace molto il cioccolato.	Chocolate is very pleasing to me.	I like chocolate a lot .
Moltissimo	Very much / Extremely	Ti piacciono moltissimo i film d'azione.	Action films are extremely pleasing to you.	You like action films very much .
Abbastanza	Enough / Quite a bit	Ci piace abbastanza viaggiare in treno.	Travelling by train is quite pleasing to us.	We quite like traveling by train.
Poco	Little / Not much	Mi piace poco la musica classica.	Classical music is little pleasing to me.	I like classical music a little .
Affatto	At all (Requires a <i>non</i>)	Non mi piace affatto il caffè amaro.	Bitter coffee is not pleasing to me at all.	I don't like bitter coffee at all .

How to agree with piacere

Earlier, we looked at using *piacere* to create contrast, for example: “I like music — how about you?”

Now we will look at how to agree with a statement when *piacere* is used, and when it isn't.

Example without piacere

	Italian	English	Comment
Person 1	Parlo Italiano	<i>I speak Italian</i>	This is a statement from person 1. They are not directly asking a question. But in conversation we may still reply with an answer. <i>Anch'io</i> or <i>Io no</i> .
Person 2	Anch'io Or Io no	<i>Me too.</i> <i>Not me</i>	

Examples of agreeing or disagreeing with piacere

When responding to statements with *piacere*, remember that it means “pleasing to me”, so the response also needs to reflect “to me”, whether positive or negative.

Since the response needs to include “to me”, we use *pronomi tonici*.

Agree	I also disagree
Anche a me	Neanche a me
Anche a te	Neanche a te
Anche a lei	Neanche a lei
Anche a lui	Neanche a lui
Anche a Lei	Neanche a Lei
Anche a noi	Neanche a noi
Anche a voi	Neanche a voi
Anche a loro	Neanche a loro

Example sentences with anche and neanche

Statement	Response	Comment
A Marco non piacciono i film horror <i>Marco doesn't like horror films.</i>	Neanche a me <i>Neither do I</i>	Confirming that they also don't like horror films.
A tua sorella piace uscire la sera <i>Your sister likes going out in the evening</i>	Anche a me! Me too!	Agreeing that they also like to go out in the evening.
Agli studenti non piace studiare la storia <i>The students don't like studying history</i> <i>Reminder: it's "agli" because the literal structure is "to the students, studying history is not pleasing".</i> <i>A + gli = Agli.</i>	Neanche a noi <i>Neither do we</i>	Confirming that they also don't like studying history.
A lui non piace alzarsi presto He doesn't like waking up early.	Neanche a lei Neither does she	Agreeing that she also doesn't like waking up early.

What if the answer is to disagree with a statement?

If the original statement is...	And you want to Disagree...
POSITIVE (e.g., <i>piace</i>)	A me invece no <i>(But not for me) Polite</i> A me no <i>(Not me) more direct.</i>
NEGATIVE (e.g., <i>non piace</i>)	A me invece sì <i>(But I do!) Polite.</i> A me sì <i>(I do.) This is a more direct answer and is not as polite as A me invece sì.</i>

Example sentence of disagreeing with a positive or negative statement:

A Paolo piace il vino rosso

Paolo likes red wine

Anche a me

Me too

A Luisa piacciono i gatti

Luisa likes cats

A me invece no

But I don't

A me non piace il caldo

I don't like the heat

Neanche a me

Me neither

A loro non piace la verdura

They don't like vegetables

A me invece sì

But I do.

Summary of agreeing or disagreeing with piacere

If the original statement is...	And you want to Agree...	And you want to Disagree...
POSITIVE (e.g., <i>piace</i>)	Anche a me	<p>A me invece no <i>(But not for me)</i> <i>Polite</i></p> <p>A me no <i>(Not me) more</i> <i>direct.</i></p>
NEGATIVE (e.g., <i>non piace</i>)	Neanche a me	<p>A me invece sì <i>(But I do!) Polite.</i></p> <p>A me sì <i>(I do) More direct</i></p>

Summary of the whole document

This document explains the usage and structure of the Italian verb "piacere," which expresses liking something by indicating that something is pleasing to someone. It clarifies differences from English expressions and provides examples, grammar rules, and usage tips.

- **Meaning of piacere:** "Piacere" means "[something] is pleasing to me/you," contrasting with English "I like/you like." For example, "Mi piace la pizza" literally means "Pizza is pleasing to me," but translates naturally as "I like pizza."
- **Indirect Object Pronouns (IOPs):** The verb uses indirect object pronouns like "mi," "ti," "gli," "le," "ci," "vi," and "gli" to indicate to whom something is pleasing. Each corresponds to English pronouns with a literal translation such as "To me it is pleasing."
- **Sentence structure:** The typical order is indirect object pronoun + verb (piace/piacciono) + article + subject. Singular subjects use "piace," plural subjects use "piacciono." The subject is the thing liked, not the person liking it.
- **Using piacere with specific people:** To clarify who "him," "her," or "them" refers to, the preposition "A" is added before names or descriptions (e.g., "A Marco piace la musica"). The form "Ad" is used before vowels for euphony.
- **Expressing contrast and emphasis:** When contrasting preferences between people, emphatic pronouns ("pronomi tonici") are used with "A" (e.g., "A me piace la pizza, e a te?"). These differ from the usual indirect object pronouns and are used to emphasize or ask opinions.
- **Answering piacere questions:** Simple answers can be "Sì" or "No," with or without repeating the phrase (e.g., "Sì mi piace"). Full answers include the subject for clarity but are not always necessary. Negative answers require "non" before the verb.
- **Using adverbs to intensify liking:** Adverbs like "molto," "moltissimo," "abbastanza," "poco," and "affatto" modify how much something is liked. Placement rules vary; for piacere, "molto" follows the verb (e.g., "Mi piace molto il cioccolato").
- **Agreeing and disagreeing with piacere statements:** Responses use emphatic pronouns with phrases like "Anche a me" (me too) or "Neanche a me" (me neither) for agreement, and "A me invece no" or "A me invece sì" for polite disagreement. More direct forms also exist.
- **Summary of agreeing/disagreeing phrases:** Positive statements are agreed with "Anche a me" and disagreed with "A me invece no" or "A me no." Negative statements are agreed with "Neanche a me" and disagreed with "A me invece sì" or "A me sì."