

ITALY MADE EASY

# Ask Manu Italiano [Ep.024]

How to use the Particle NE  
(Lesson 2 of 4)

# How to use the particle NE

By Manu Venditti

We continue our journey to unveil all the secrets of this little grammatical monster we call 'NE'.

This is the the second Episode of **Ask Manu Italiano** dedicated to this topic. Make sure you watch and study **Episode 23** before moving on to this episode.

## NE in compound tenses

Whenever we need to use **NE** in a compound tenses, that is verbal tenses made up of two parts: the auxiliary verb and the past participle - **NE** will cause the **AGREEMENT** of the past particles with the noun that **NE** is replacing.

Some compound tenses that you are familiar with are the **PASSATO PROSSIMO** (the tense I used in this lesson's examples) and **FUTURO ANTERIORE**. The actual tense does not matter here. What matters is that it is a compound tense with a past participle!

By **AGREEMENT** we mean that the past participle will change its form to reflect the **gender** (masculine or feminine) and **number** (singular or plural) of the thing that **NE** is replacing.

## An example

**QUANTE TORTE AVETE COMPRATO?**

*How many cakes have you bought?*

**NE ABBIAMO COMPRATE TRE.**

*We bought three (of them)*

Since here the **NE** is replacing "the cakes", which in Italian is feminine plural, the past participle of the verb has to also be feminine plural (COMPRATE).

It would be incorrect to say:

\*\*\* NE ABBIAMO COMPRATO TRE.

## Another example

**QUANTI PANINI AVETE COMPRATO?**

*How many sandwiches have you bought?*

**NE ABBIAMO COMPRATI 50.**

*We bought 50 (of them).*

Here the **NE** is replacing "the sandwiches", which in Italian is masculine plural, so the past participle of the verb has to also be masculine plural (COMPRATI).

## BUT careful!

When the noun that **NE** is replacing is served or comes in a container, then the **AGREEMENT** will happen with the container, not the actual thing that we are replacing. Hold on, here's what I mean!

## For example

If you had too much wine and said:

**HO ESAGERATO CON IL VINO...**

*I went overboard with the wine...*

And then specified how much you had:

**NE HO BEVUTI TRE BICCHIERI**

*I drank 3 glasses (of the wine)*

**NE HO BEVUTE TRE BOTTIGLIE**

*I drank 3 bottles (of the wine)*

As you can see the agreement of the past particles changes to masculine plural in the first sentence, but it changes to feminine plural in the second, But **NE** is still referring to the wine, right? Yes and no! It's referring to the container of the wine.

So we had 3 glasses/bicchieri (masculine plural) or 3 bottles/bottiglie (feminine plural).

## Another scenario: NE alongside another pronoun

Whenever the **NE** appears alongside another pronoun, **NE** takes the **second position** and the first pronoun **changes its vowel** from **I** to **E**.

**Say what?**

let's say that your sentence has an indirect object (let's say "to you") and a noun which we are referring to in terms of quantity (therefore replaced by **NE**), this would happen:

**QUANTI REGALI MI PORTI?**

*How many presents are you bringing me?*

**TI PORTO 4 REGALI.**

*I bring you 4 presents.*

*(Literally: to you I bring 4 presents)*

The **TI** here means "TO YOU". Right?

Cool! But we could save time and words by also replacing the word REGALI. Well, the NE would need to be used here, since we are talking about the QUANTITY of a noun that we are replacing.

So we should have:

\*\*\* TI NE PORTO 4.

But we don't like the sound of that. So we say:

**TE NE PORTO 4.**

*I bring you 4 (of them, the presents).*

*(Literally: To you of them I bring 4).*

The TI changed its vowel to E.

## This is how Indirect Object Pronouns change when preceding NE

(to me) MI -> ME

(to you) TI -> TE

(to him) GLI -> GLIE

(to her) LE -> GLIE

(to us) CI -> CE

(to you guys) VI -> VE

(to them) GLI -> GLIE

So, for example, we could say:

**ME NE DAI DUE** (*You give me two of them*)

**TE NE DO DUE** (*I give you two of them*)

**GLIENE DO DUE** (*I give him/her two of them*)

**CE NE DAI DUE** (*You give us two of them*)

**VE NE DO DUE** (*I give you guys two of them*)

**GLIENE DO DUE** (*I give them two of them*)

Yes, **GLIENE** can mean "*to him*", "*to her*", "*to them*" PLUS NE.

There is no confusion in this, since we can only use pronouns when the noun that they are replacing is already known. In English, I can't say "him" unless we know who you are talking about. What guy? Can't say THEM, unless we know of THEY are. Same in Italian.

## Mystery solved (from Ask Manu Italiano Episode 23)

Remember the sentence:

**SONO ANDATO IN UFFICIO ALLE 9 E NE SONO USCITO SOLO ORA!**

*I went to the office at 9 and only got out now!*

We were trying to understand we used NE to replace "the office" and not CI, which is the particle that we usually use to replace places.

Have you had time to think about it?

So, yes. CI does replace places. For example:

**VADO A ROMA.**

*I'm going to Rome.*

**CI VADO DOMANI.**

*I'm going (there) tomorrow.*

**CON CHI CI VAI?**

*Who are you going (there) with?*

*With whom are you going (there)?*

**CI** replaces a place much like **THERE** does that in English.

**NE**, as you may recall from Episode 23, kinda means "**OF IT**" or "**OF THEM**" or "**OF THAT**".

Try replacing "the office" of our mystery sentence with both and see what happens.

**WITH NE (the right particle):**

**SONO ANDATO IN UFFICIO ALLE 9 E NE SONO USCITO SOLO ORA**

We'd have:

*I went to the office at 9 and only got out **OF IT** now!*

**WITH CI (the wrong particle):**

**SONO ANDATO IN UFFICIO ALLE 9 E CI SONO USCITO SOLO ORA**

We'd have:

*I went to the office at 9 and only got out **THERE** now!*

See, it doesn't work. It doesn't make sense, or at least, it does not render the idea we were trying to confer.

So **NE** is the right particle for this sentence!

## To sum things up...

The **KEY** to using **NE** is that "**OF**" idea.

That is, **NE** kinda means:

**OF SOMETHING** (of it, of them, of that thing...)

**OF SOMEBODY** (of him/his, of her/hers, of them/theirs)

DON'T MISS NEXT WEEK'S LESSON FOR SOME  
USEFUL PRACTICE EXERCISES FOR YOU