



ROUTLEDGE  
**INTENSIVE**  
ITALIAN  
**COURSE**

Anna Proudfoot, Tania Batelli-Kneale,  
Anna Di Stefano and Daniela Treveri Gennari

ROUTLEDGE INTENSIVE LANGUAGE COURSES

ROUTLEDGE

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INTENSIVE ITALIAN COURSE

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Acknowledgements  
How to use this book  
Glossary

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UNIT 0

COMINCIAMO DA ZERO

Introduction  
Alphabet  
Spelling  
Capital letters  
Pronunciation  
Stress  
Written accents  
Using a dictionary  
Using a grammar reference book

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UNIT 1

CIAO, MI CHIAMO ...

**Functions**

Greeting someone: **buongiorno, buona sera, ciao**, etc.  
Meeting people, introducing oneself and others  
Formal (**Lei**) or informal (**tu**) 'you'  
Indicating nationality  
Asking for something, ordering food and drink

**Grammar**

Present tense of **essere** and **chiamarsi**  
Nouns (singular)  
Indefinite articles **un, uno, una, un'**  
Subject pronouns **io, tu, lui, lei, Lei, noi, voi, loro**  
Adjectives of nationality **inglese, italiano** (singular form only)

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UNIT 2

AMICI E FAMIGLIA

**Functions**

Describing or indicating someone or something  
Talking about jobs and professions

**Grammar**

Nouns (singular and plural)  
Definite article: **il, lo, la, l', i, gli, le**  
Adjectives (singular and plural)  
Demonstratives: **questo, quello**  
Possessives: **mio, tuo, suo, nostro, vostro, loro**  
Present tense of regular verbs ending in **-are**  
Present tense of irregular verbs **avere, fare**

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**Functions**

Making travel arrangements

Making accommodation arrangements

Expressing notions of availability, time, place and cost

**Grammar****C'è, ci sono**

Numbers, prices

Time, days of the week, dates

Expressions of frequency

Prepositions: **a, con, da, di, fra, in, per, su, tra**

Combined prepositions: **al, dal, del, nel, sul**

Present tense of regular verbs ending in **-ere, -ire**

**Ci vuole, ci vogliono****FACCIAMO UN PÓ DI SHOPPING!****Functions**

Shopping for items, requesting

Describing or indicating something

Talking about availability

Talking about size, quantity, etc.

Describing someone or something by physical characteristics

**Grammar**

Indefinite adjectives: **alcuni, dei/delle, qualche**

Indefinite pronouns: **qualcosa, qualcuno**

Direct object pronouns: **lo, la, li, le** and **ne**

Weights, quantities, measures: **un litro di, un chilo di**, etc.

Invariable adjectives

Position of adjectives

Present tense irregular verbs: **andare, dare, dire, fare, sapere, stare, uscire, venire**

**DONNE E LAVORO****Functions**

Talking about the present

Talking about daily routines

**Grammar**

Present tense of reflexive verbs

Present tense of **stare** + gerund

Frequency

Interrogatives

Negatives

Expressions of time (present)

**TUTTI A TAVOLA!**

### Functions

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Expressing a desire, preference, need Stating what you want

Stating a preference (for objects, persons, courses of action)

Expressing likes and dislikes

### Grammar

Indefinites: **niente di buono, qualcosa da mangiare**

Present tense of **piacere**

Present tense of **preferire**

Present tense of **bisogna, aver bisogno di**

Present tense modal verbs: **dovere, potere, volere**

Indirect object pronouns with impersonal verbs **mancare, occorrere, servire**

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## UNIT 7

### TROVARE LA STRADA GIUSTA

#### Functions

Specifying place

Specifying manner

Explaining where to find something, how to get there, etc.

Giving an order

#### Grammar

Prepositions expressing place

Adverbs and prepositions of place

Ci (there, to there)

Imperative (order) forms

Adverbs

---

## UNIT 8

### ANDIAMO IN VACANZA

#### Functions

Talking about events and actions in the past

Describing how things used to be

#### Grammar

Present perfect (*passato prossimo*): **ho mangiato, sono andato/a**

Direct object pronouns with *passato prossimo*: **l'ho mangiata**

Phrases expressing past time

Imperfect (*imperfetto*)

Combination of *passato prossimo* and imperfect

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## UNIT 9

### STUDIARE E LAVORARE IN ITALIA

#### Functions

Talking about future plans

Expressing hopes, intentions

Expressing probability

#### Grammar

Future tense

Present tense used to express future

Future perfect tense

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Verb and infinitive: **spero di, penso di, ho intenzione di**

Future and future perfect used to express probability

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## UNIT 10

### PRONTO? MI SENTI?

#### Functions

Asking permission

Asking about possibility

Asking about ability

Making a polite request

#### Grammar

Present tense: **potere, sapere**

Omission of **potere** in certain situations/contexts

Present conditional

Using the conditional to express polite request

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## UNIT 11

### A CHE ORA CI VEDIAMO?

#### Functions

Specifying time:

time at which, time from when, time until when Expressing repetition and frequency

#### Grammar

Clauses of time 'until', 'when', 'since', 'before', 'after', 'during'

Prepositional phrases: **prima di, dopo di, fino a, da**

Conjunctions: **prima che, dopo che, mentre, finché**

Adverbs expressing time: **appena, non appena**

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## UNIT 12

### L'ITALIA MULTIETNICA

#### Functions

Making a comparison Expressing greater or lesser extent

Expressing equality

#### Grammar

Comparative adjectives

Comparative adverbs

Terms of comparison: **più, meno di/che, tanto quanto, così come**

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## UNIT 13

### AAA AFFITTASI APPARTAMENTO

#### Functions

Focusing on the action

Explaining how something is done

#### Grammar

**Si passivante: si affitta, si vende (affittasi, vendesi)**

Prepositions expressing location

Centuries: **in un palazzo del 500**

Dates and phrases: **il 1° settembre, per brevi periodi**



UNIT 14

LA VITA ITALIANA

Functions

Reading Italian literary passages or newspaper articles

Reading more complex texts

Grammar

Conditional mood (*condizionale*)

Non-finite verb forms: infinitive, gerund, participle

Past historic (*passato remoto*)

Pluperfect (*trapassato*)

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UNIT 15

SCUOLA E UNIVERSITÀ

Functions

Expressing causes and reasons

Expressing result and effect

Grammar

Conjunctions

Forming complex sentences

Using gerund

Clauses, phrases and verbs of cause and reason

Clauses, phrases and verbs of result and effect

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UNIT 16

INNAMORARSI SU INTERNET

Functions

Expressing an opinion

Asking an opinion

Agreeing, disagreeing

Grammar

Introduction to the subjunctive

Present subjunctive

Verbs of opinion followed by **che** and subjunctive

Agreement: **essere d'accordo**

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UNIT 17

GLI ITALIANI? PIZZA E MAFIA

Functions

Expressing belief, certainty, uncertainty

Expressing concession

Expressing exception and reservation

Expressing condition

Grammar

Subjunctive after **sapere, non sapere, pensare, (non) è vero che**

Clauses and phrases of concession

Clauses and phrases of exception and reservation

Clauses of condition

Imperfect subjunctive

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UNIT 18

ANDIAMO AL CINEMA?

**Functions**

Expressing pleasure and satisfaction

Expressing regret, doubt, hope and fear

Expressing other emotions

**Grammar**

Subjunctive after verbs expressing emotion

Forms of the perfect subjunctive

Use of the perfect subjunctive

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UNIT 19

PUBBLICITÀ, PROMOZIONE E PRODOTTI

**Functions**

Expressing intention or purpose

Expressing results of action

**Grammar**

Conjunctions and phrases expressing purpose

Conjunctions and phrases expressing result

Subjunctive in purpose clauses

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UNIT 20

IMMAGINI DELL'ITALIA

**Functions**

Reading the press

Expressing certainty and uncertainty

Expressing conjecture, hearsay

**Grammar**

Conditional used to express hearsay Passive: focus on action *Si impersonale*: Si dice che ...

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UNIT 21

POLITICA E SOCIETÀ

**Functions**

Relating or reporting a story or event

Relating or reporting a story or event in indirect speech

Asking indirect questions

**Grammar**

Direct speech

Indirect or reported speech

Sequence of tenses in reported speech

Quoting sources

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UNIT 22

L'ANGOLO DELLA POSTA

**Functions**

Giving an order or command

Requesting

~~Wanting someone to do something~~

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Allowing someone to do something

Suggesting, advising

### Grammar

Verbs of requiring, requesting and advising

with verb infinitive

with **che** and subjunctive

Verbs **fare**, **lasciare** and infinitive

Past conditional

Conditional sentences (*periodo ipotetico*):

with imperfect subjunctive and present conditional

with pluperfect subjunctive and past conditional

[Answer key](#)

[Vocabulary](#)

[Index](#)

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Photograph of Konrad ([unit 12](#)) by Daniela Treveri Gennari.

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is based on our own experience as practising teachers in higher education institutions and Italian classes for adult learners. It is intended for anyone studying Italian, at any age, wherever they are learning it. It is especially suited to students taking an accelerated course in Italian from scratch at university who need to reach a high level in as short a time as possible. It can also be used by students on a regular beginners' course or by those who want to revise or consolidate their knowledge. Since it goes beyond what is normally covered by a regular beginners' course, you can continue to use it into the second year and beyond.

The situations covered in the book are all those normally covered by beginners' course books: meeting people and introducing oneself, making travel arrangements, booking accommodation, eating in a restaurant, etc. However, we also cover situations such as working and studying in Italy and renting an apartment, and we include materials focused on the Italian media, including cinema, television, the press and advertising.

The book is organised both by functions and notions and by grammar structures, with particular emphasis on the structures students find difficult. In terms of grammar structures [Units 1–15](#) cover simple sentences, including the forms and use of the full range of indicative tenses: present, future, imperfect, perfect, pluperfect, past historic, as well as gerund, infinitive and participles. [Units 16–22](#) cover complex sentences, and the use and forms of the subjunctive: present, imperfect, perfect and pluperfect.

Each unit includes several activities for the learner to carry out in class, including reading , writing , speaking , vocabulary  and listening . There are recordings to go with the course and the authors are developing a website, which can be used as an additional resource by teachers using *Intensive Italian*. All the transcripts of the audio recordings will be found on the website, along with suggestions for further study. An *Intensive Italian Workbook* will also be available, with a range of exercises covering the same structures as the main book.

Each unit contains a Key vocabulary explaining any colloquial expressions or phrases contained in the unit. At the end of the book is a more general vocabulary list which contains most of the useful words found in [Units 1–14](#). From [Unit 15](#) onwards, we expect learners to be able to use a good dictionary and we encourage them to look up any words they don't know. [Unit 0](#) gives some guidance on using a dictionary. Any key colloquialisms, however, are still explained in the Key vocabulary inside the units.

The alphabetical index includes all grammar structures and functions covered and also includes key words in Italian. Grammar structures are listed in English with a few more important ones listed in Italian as well. The photos contained in the book are all recent and show aspects of Italian life not always shown in course books!

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# GLOSSARY

## Active construction

An active construction is one where the subject of the sentence is the person carrying out the action, the event taking place. A verb can have an **active** form: **chiudono la porta a mezzanotte** ‘they shut the door at midnight’ or a **passive** form (see below).

## Adjective

Adjectives describe or give information about a noun. They can be descriptive (size, shape, colour, nationality, other qualities), demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative or possessive: see the relevant headings.

## Adverb

Adverbs give information about a verb, saying how, where or when, for example, something is done. Adverbs of quantity such as **molto**, **poco** can also add further information about an adjective or another adverb.

## Agreement

In Italian, adjectives, articles and, in some cases, past participles have to ‘agree with’ the noun or pronoun they accompany or refer to. This means that their form varies according to whether the noun/pronoun referred to is masculine or feminine (gender), singular or plural (number).

## Article

Italian has three types of article: the definite article **il**, **lo** (etc.) ‘the’, the indefinite article **un**, **una** (etc.) ‘a’ and the partitive **dei**, **delle**, **degli** (etc.) ‘some’, ‘any’.

## Auxiliary verb

Auxiliary verbs such as **avere**, **essere** are used in combination with the past participle to form compound tenses, both active **ho mangiato** ‘I have eaten’, **siamo andati** ‘we have gone’ and passive **è stato licenziato** ‘he was sacked’. See also **Modal verb**.

## Clause

A clause is a section or part of a sentence which contains a subject and a verb. Complex sentences are made up of a series of clauses. The main clause (or clauses) is the part of a sentence which makes sense on its own and does not depend on any other element in the sentence. A subordinate clause always depends on another clause, and is often introduced by a conjunction such as **che**. There are various types of subordinate clause.

## Comparative

When one person, object or activity is compared with another, a comparative form is used: **La pasta napoletana è migliore di quella siciliana** Neapolitan pasta is better than Sicilian pasta’.

## Compound tenses

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Compound tenses are tenses consisting of more than one element. In Italian, the compound tenses are formed by the auxiliary **avere** or **essere**, and the past participle: they include compound perfect, pluperfect, future perfect. See also **Simple tenses**.

## Conditional

The conditional is not a tense, but a verb mood. It can be used on its own, particularly as a polite way of expressing a request: **Le dispiacerebbe aprire la finestra?** 'Would you mind opening the window?' It can also be used in conditional sentences, where the meaning of the main sentence is dependent on some condition being fulfilled: **Andrei in vacanza anch'io, se avessi tempo** 'I would go on holiday too if I had the time'.

## Conjugation

The way in which verb forms change according to the person, tense or mood, for example: **(io) vado** 'I go', **(noi) andremo** 'we will go', **le ragazze sono andate** 'the girls went'. The word 'conjugation' is also used to mean the regular patterns of verbs ending in **-are**, **-ere**, **-ire** to which verbs belong.

## Conjunction

A linking or joining word, usually linking two words, phrases or clauses within a sentence. Conjunctions can either be coordinating, linking two phrases or clauses of equal weight (examples include **e**, **o**) or subordinating, linking main clause and subordinate clause (such as **perché**, **benché**, **mentre**, **quando**).

## Countable

A noun is countable if it can normally be used in both singular and plural, and take the indefinite articles **un**, **una** (etc.): **un bicchiere** 'a glass', **una pizza** 'a pizza', whereas an uncountable noun is one which is not normally found in the plural, e.g. **zucchero** 'sugar' or an abstract noun such as **tristezza** 'sadness'.

**Definite article** *see* **Article**

## Demonstrative

A demonstrative adjective or pronoun is one which demonstrates or indicates the person or object we are talking about: **questo carrello** 'this trolley', **quel professore** 'that teacher'.

## Direct object

A direct object, whether noun or pronoun, is one which is directly affected by the action or event. The direct object can be living or inanimate. It is always used with a **transitive** verb: **I miei figli hanno mangiato tutti i cioccolatini** 'My sons ate all the chocolates', **Li ho visti in città ieri sera** 'I saw them in town yesterday evening'.

**Feminine** *see* **Gender**

## Finite verb

A verb which has a subject and is complete in itself, as opposed to **infinitives** or **participles** which

have to depend on another verb: **ieri siamo andati in piscina** ‘Yesterday we went to the swimming pool’, **Domani i ragazzi torneranno a scuola** ‘Tomorrow the children will go back to school’.

## Gender

All nouns in Italian have a gender: they are either masculine or feminine, even if they are inanimate objects. Even where living beings are concerned, grammatical gender is not always the same as natural gender: **una tigre** ‘a tiger’ (either sex unless specified), **un ippopotamo** ‘a hippopotamus’. Gender is important since it determines the form of the noun, the article and the adjective.

## Gerund

A gerund is a verb form ending in **-ando** or **-endo**: **parlando** ‘speaking’, **sorridendo** ‘smiling’, **finendo** ‘finishing’. The gerund is most often used in Italian along with the verb **stare** to express an action or event in progress: **sto finendo** ‘I’m just finishing’.

## Idiomatic

An idiomatic expression is one which cannot normally be translated literally, for example **ubriaco fradicio** literally ‘soaking drunk’.

## Imperative

The imperative mood is the verb mood used to express orders, commands or instructions: **state fermi** ‘keep still’, **si accomodi** ‘sit down’, **andiamo** ‘let’s go’.

## Impersonal (verbs, verb forms)

Impersonal verbs or verb forms do not refer to any one particular person. They can generally be translated by English ‘it’ and use the third person form: **non serve protestare** ‘it’s no good protesting’.

## Indefinite article *see* Article

## Indefinites

An adjective or pronoun used to refer to a person or thing in a general way, rather than a **definito** person or thing. Examples are: **alcuni** ‘some’, **certi** ‘certain’, ‘some’, **qualche** ‘some’, **qualcuno** ‘someone’, **qualcosa** ‘something’.

## Indicative (verbs)

The verb mood we use most in speaking and writing is the indicative mood. Within this mood are a full range of tenses: present **mangio** ‘I eat’; compound perfect **ho mangiato** ‘I have eaten’; future **mangerò** ‘I will eat’ etc., etc. The verb mood used to express uncertainty is the subjunctive, which also has a full range of tenses. See **Subjunctive**.

## Indirect object

An indirect object, whether noun or pronoun, is one which is indirectly affected by the action or event, for example **ho mandato delle cartoline ai miei amici** ‘I sent some postcards to my friends’ or **Marco telefonava a sua madre ogni sera** ‘Marco used to phone his mother every evening’.



## Infinitive

The infinitive of a verb is the form always given in a dictionary and is recognised by its endings **-are**, **-ere**, **-ire**: for example **chiacchierare** ‘to chat’, **sorridere** ‘to smile’ and **partire** ‘to leave’. It cannot be used on its own but depends on a finite verb form, often a modal verb: **vorrei ringraziare i telespettatori** ‘I would like to thank the TV audience’.

## Interrogative

Interrogative words are used to ask questions or indirect questions. They include **chi** ‘who’, **come** ‘how’, **cosa** ‘what’, **dove** ‘where’, **quando** ‘when’, **perché** ‘why’, **quanto** ‘how much’ and interrogative adjectives such as **quale** ‘which’, **quanti** ‘how many’, ‘how many’.

## Intransitive (verbs)

See also **Transitive verbs**. Intransitive verbs are verbs which **cannot** be used with a direct object such as **Siamo arrivati alla stazione con un’ora di ritardo** ‘We arrived at the station an hour late’. Many of these verbs take the auxiliary **essere**. Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively (see **Transitive verbs**).

## Invariable

Invariable nouns have the same form for both singular and plural: **un film**, **dei film** ‘a film, some films’ or for both masculine and feminine: **un artista**, **un’artista** ‘an artist’. An invariable adjective is one which does not change form to agree with the noun, whether masculine or feminine, singular or plural: **un vestito rosa** ‘a pink dress’, **una giacca rosa** ‘a pink jacket’.

## Irregular (noun or verb)

A noun or verb which does not follow a standard pattern: **un uovo** ‘one egg’ **due uova** ‘two eggs’, **andare** ‘to go’ **vado** ‘I go’, **vai** ‘you go’, **va** ‘he/she goes’, **andiamo** ‘we go’ **andate** ‘you (pl.) go’, **vanno** ‘they go’.

## Masculine see Gender

## Modal verb

A verb which is used with a verb infinitive. In Italian the modal verbs are **potere** ‘to be able to’, **dovere** ‘to have to’, **volere** ‘to want to’: **posso lavorare domani** ‘I can work tomorrow’, **devo lavorare domani** ‘I have to work tomorrow’, **voglio lavorare domani** ‘I want to work tomorrow’.

## Mood

The four main ways in which verbs can express actions or events are known as **moods**. These four moods – all of which, except the imperative, have a full range of tenses – are the indicative (e.g. **vado** ‘I go’), subjunctive (e.g. **che io vada** ‘that I may go’), conditional (e.g. **andrei** ‘I would go’) and imperative (**vada!** ‘go!’). See also non-finite verb forms (**Infinitive**, **Gerund**, **Participle**).

## Negative

A statement is negative when it specifies an action or event which has not taken place or will not take place.

place. Negative words or phrases turn a positive statement or question into a negative one. Examples of negative words in Italian include: **nessun** 'no', **nessuno** 'nobody', **niente** 'nothing', **non ... mai** 'not ever', 'never', **non ... ancora** 'not yet', **non ... più** 'no longer', 'no more'.

**Non-finite verb forms** *see* Infinitive, Gerund, Participle

## Noun

A noun indicates a person, place, thing or event, for example: **un assistente** 'an assistant', **la festa** 'the party'. Nouns are inextricably linked to the articles (**il, un, etc.**) and to any adjectives that accompany them. All nouns have a gender and this determines the form of the adjectives and articles that go with them.

## Number

Number is the distinction between **singular** and **plural**. Verb forms alter according to the number of the subject: **il ragazzo nuota** 'the boy swims', **i ragazzi nuotano** 'the boys swim'.

## Object

In grammatical terms, an object is the person or thing affected by the action or event, as opposed to the subject, which is the person or thing responsible for it. See **Direct object**, **Indirect object**.

## Participle (present, past)

Verbs normally have a present participle and a past participle. The participles cannot be used on their own but are found together with other verb forms. The **past participle** is used with **avere** or **essere** to form the **passato composto**. When used with **essere**, it agrees with the subject. The **present** participle is less frequently used, changes form when used as an adjective, e.g. **cantanti**.

**Partitive article** *see* Article

## Passato composto

We use this term for the compound past, a past tense formed by auxiliary and participle: **ho mangiato** 'I ate', **sono andato** 'I went'. Some textbooks call it the **passato prossimo** 'perfect tense'.

**Passato remoto** *see* **Passato semplice**

## Passato semplice

We use the term for the **simple past**, e.g. **andai** 'I went'. Some books call this tense **passato remoto** 'English past definite', 'past historic' or 'past absolute'.

## Passive (verb forms)

A passive construction is one in which the subject of the sentence is the person or thing **affected** by the action or event taking place (as opposed to an **active** construction): **tutti gli studenti sono stati promossi** 'all the students were moved up a class'.

## Person

The verb subject can be a first person (**io** 'I'), second person (**tu** 'you'), third person (**lui, lei** 'he', 'she') and so on. Most verbs have three singular persons (English 'I', 'you', 'he/she'), and three plural (English 'we', 'you', 'they').

### Personal pronouns *see also* Pronouns

Personal pronouns can be subject pronouns **io, tu, lui** 'I', 'you', 'he', etc.; direct object pronouns **mi, ti, lo, la** 'me', 'you', 'him', 'her', etc.; indirect object pronouns **mi, ti, gli, le** 'to me', 'to you', 'to him', 'to her', etc.; disjunctive pronouns, used as stressed direct object or after a preposition (**con**) **me, te, lui, lei** ('with me', 'with you', 'with him', 'with her', etc.

### Plural *see* Number

### Possessive

Possessive adjectives and/or pronouns denote ownership: **il mio orologio** 'my watch', **la nostra macchina** 'our car'.

### Preposition

Prepositions give further information about a person, action or event, for example on time or place, value or purpose: examples include **a, con, da, di, in, per, su** and the combined forms **al, da, del, nel, sul**, etc.

### Pronoun

Pronouns stand in for and/or refer to a noun. There are various categories of pronoun: demonstrative (**questo, quello**); indefinite (**alcuni**), interrogative (**chi**), possessive (**il mio, i suoi**), reflexive (**mi, ti, si**), relative (**quello che**).

### Question

Direct questions sometimes begin with a question word: **Dove vai stasera?** 'Where are you going this evening?', sometimes not **Hai tempo di parlarmi?** 'Do you have time to speak to me?' Indirect questions are introduced by words such as **chiedere** 'to ask': **Mi ha chiesto se avevo tempo di parlargli** 'He asked me if I had time to speak to him'.

### Reflexive verb

A verb using a reflexive pronoun (English 'myself', 'himself') indicating that the subject and the object are one and the same: **mi lavo** 'I wash', **si è fatto male** 'he hurt himself'.

### Regular

A regular noun or verb is one which follows one of the main noun or verb patterns, in other words whose forms and endings can be predicted, for example **-are, parlare** 'to speak', **-ere, sorridere** 'to smile', **-ire, partire** 'to leave'.

### Relative

A relative pronoun introduces a relative clause which gives more information about a person or thing mentioned specifically: **Ho visto la studentessa che veniva sempre nel mio ufficio** 'I saw the studentess who always came in my office'.

who was always coming to my office’.

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## Reported speech

Also known as indirect speech, this is a way of relating words spoken or written by someone else. Reported speech is usually introduced by verbs such as **dire** ‘to say’, ‘to tell’, **scrivere** ‘to write’, **annunciare** ‘to announce’ and the conjunction **che**.

## Sentence

A sentence must have a verb and a subject. It can either be a simple sentence (one subject, one verb): **gli ospiti dormivano** ‘the guests were asleep’ or a complex sentence (main clause and one or more subordinate clauses): **mentre dormivano, i ladri hanno portato via tutto** ‘while they were asleep, the thieves took everything’.

## Simple tenses

Simple tenses are formed of one word only. See also **Compound tenses**.

## Singular *see* Number

## Stem *see* Verb stem

## Subject

The subject is usually a noun, pronoun or proper name denoting the person or object performing the action or the event taking place: **Mia madre ha comprato un tailleur** ‘My mother bought a suit’, **la festa si svolge a maggio** ‘the festival takes place in May’. In the case of a passive construction, the subject is the person or thing affected by the action: **Gli studenti sono stati criticati dagli insegnanti** ‘the students were criticised by their teachers’. With Italian verbs, it is not always essential to mention the subject explicitly since it is understood from the verb form: **abbiamo mangiato a mezzogiorno** ‘we ate at midday’.

## Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is used to express doubt or uncertainty. It is almost always used in complex sentences where one clause depends on another: **Abbiamo comprato un cagnolino in modo che i bambini imparino a prendere cura degli animali** ‘We bought a puppy so that the children can learn how to look after animals’, or where the subordinate clause depends on a main verb expressing uncertainty: **dubito che lui possa farcela** ‘I doubt if he can manage it’. However it can be found standing on its own, when used as an imperative form: **Vada via!** ‘Go away!’

## Subordinate (clauses)

A subordinate clause is one which depends on another clause, usually the main clause in a sentence. It can be introduced by a conjunction such as **che** ‘what’, **perché** ‘because’ or a relative pronoun such as **chi** ‘who’, ‘which’. See also **Clause** and **Conjunction**.

## Superlative

When one or more persons, objects or activities are compared with others, or a comparison is implied, the superlative form is used to express the concept of 'superior to all the rest': **la casa della mia amica Matilde era la più grande del paese** 'my friend Matilde's house was the biggest in the village'. See also **Comparative**.

### Synonym

A word with the same meaning as another word.

### Tense

A finite verb form which normally provides a clue as to the time setting for an action or event.

### Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs are verbs used with a direct object: **ho fumato una sigaretta** 'I smoked a cigarette'. Some verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, e.g. **umentare** to increase', **diminuire** to decrease', **cambiare** to change': **abbiamo aumentato il prezzo del biglietto** 'we have increased the price of the ticket', **il prezzo del biglietto è aumentato** the price of the ticket has increased'.

### Verb

A verb describes an action, event or state. It always has a subject and can also have an object. Its form varies according to mood and tense, and the person, gender and number of its subject.

### Verb stem

The stem of a verb is its base', the part of the verb which is left when you take away **-are, -ere, -ire** from the infinitive form. In a regular verb the ending changes but the stem does not normally change. In an irregular verb, the stem may change too.

### Voice

Verbs normally have two voices. See **active** and **passive**.

# Unit 0

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## Cominciamo da zero

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- Introduction
- Alphabet
- Spelling
- Capital letters
- Pronunciation
- Stress
- Written accents
- Using a dictionary
- Using a grammar reference book

# Introduction

Welcome to Italian! Italian is an easy language to learn. It doesn't have cases as German does (accusative, dative, etc.), it doesn't have inconsistent pronunciation as English does (just think of 'bough', 'cough', 'tough'), it doesn't have a different alphabet as Greek or Russian does. Italian pronunciation is always consistent. The grammar may seem difficult at first but if you get it wrong, nobody will mind. So relax and enjoy it! In this unit, we introduce you to some basic features of the language.

## Alphabet

The standard Italian alphabet has only 21 letters: unlike English, there is no 'j', 'k', 'w', 'x' or 'y'. These letters are considered 'foreign' and not usually included in printed alphabets. Learning the Italian alphabet – including the 'foreign' letters – will help you spell your name when visiting or telephoning Italy.



### 1 The alphabet

Listen to the alphabet pronounced on the recording (**Audio 0.1**) and say each letter out loud after the speaker.

A	a	N	enne
B	bi	O	o
C	ci	P	pi
D	di	Q	cu
E	e	R	erre
F	effe	S	esse
G	gi	T	ti
H	acca	U	u
I	i	V	vu
L	elle	Z	zeta
M	emme		

The 'foreign' letters – which you will need if your name is Janice, Kate, Warren, Xavier or Yvonne – are

J	i lunga	X	ics
K	cappa	Y	ipilon
W	doppio vu		

## Spelling

To avoid misunderstanding over the phone, most letters have a name – usually an Italian town

associated with them, which you can use when spelling your name: A (come) Ancona, D come Domodossola, etc. This is especially important for letters such as m/n/r, p/b, d/t, s/f or c/g which can easily be confused when you spell them over the phone, but less important for the more unusual letters (h, j, k, q, w, x, y, z).

A	Ancona
B	Bologna
C	Como
D	Domodossola
E	Empoli
F	Firenze
G	Genova
H	acca
I	Imola
J	i lunga
K	cappa
L	Livorno
M	Milano

N	Napoli
O	Otranto
P	Palermo
Q	cu
R	Roma
S	Savona
T	Torino
U	Udine
V	Venezia
W	doppio vu
X	ics
Y	ipsilon
Z	zeta

## Capital letters

In Italian letters are **maiuscola** 'upper case' or **minuscola** 'lower case', e.g. L (l *maiuscola*) and l (*minuscola*). Capital letters (*maiuscola*) are **not** used with days of week (**lunedì, domenica**) or months of year (**gennaio, giugno**) or with the personal pronoun **io**.



## 2 Spelling your name

Working with your partner, spell your name and surname in Italian. If he/she asks you to repeat it, use the names of the towns to avoid confusion.

### Example

Anna

A – enne – enne – a

A come Ancona, N come Napoli, N come Napoli, A come Ancona!



## 3 Get the names right!

Your colleague in Rome calls to give you a list of participants coming to the conference next month. Try to get their names right! Listen to the caller spelling their names (**Audio 0.2**) and write them down. Check your answer with the transcript Answer key on the website.



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