

STROMMEN INC. · ITALIAN, TAUGHT THE STROMMEN WAY

Italiano dal **Vivo**

Conversazione, dialetti e cultura
per i livelli A1 e A2

LIVELLI A1 → A2 **PER** STUDENTI & TUTOR **EDIZIONE** PILOTA 2026

Italiano dal Vivo

A Strommen Inc. textbook for adult learners of Italian, levels A1 through A2. First edition, pilot release.

Published by Strommen Inc., Los Angeles, California. Written and curated by the Strommen language team and the Strommen network of native Italian tutors from Roma, Napoli, Palermo, Milano, Bologna and Firenze. © 2026 Strommen Inc. Distributed free for use with a Strommen tutor.

Italian spelling follows the Accademia della Crusca conventions for standard Italian. Regional dialect material is transcribed in the most common conventional spelling and labelled by city or region. Dialect glosses are descriptive, not prescriptive — your tutor will refine pronunciation in lesson.

How to use this book

This is a tutor-companion textbook. Every chapter is built around a **scene** — a place in Italy where the language gets used — and gives you four things:

1. **A dialogue.** Read it aloud with your tutor. The Italian is on the left, the English gloss below each line.
2. **Vocabulary and grammar.** The new pieces, explained briefly and laid out so you can refer back during conversation.
3. **Sidebars.** Slang, dialect comparisons, cultural notes, and a private "Tutor's corner" with teaching tips.
4. **A role-play.** A live conversation script you and your tutor run together. The role-plays start scripted and get more open as you progress.

Each role-play is tagged with a **tier**:

- **Tier 1 — Scripted:** read together, line by line. Builds confidence.
- **Tier 2 — Branching:** the script has decision points. Your tutor will choose the harder branch when you are ready.
- **Tier 3 — Improvised on a frame:** you and your tutor invent the specifics inside a scenario.
- **Tier 4 — Open:** you debate, plan, or negotiate. Grammar serves real intent.

When you finish A2, the next book begins at Tier 5 — the philosophical conversation over wine, in the subjunctive.

A note from the founder

Italian is not one language. It is the one you read in books and the dozen you hear on streets, in homes, at family lunches that last four hours, in the bar at seven in the morning when someone says *un caffè* and the barista understands the exact tone they meant.

I built Strommen because I wanted students to learn the second one. The textbook Italian is necessary — the conjugations matter, the articles matter, the difference between *essere* and *avere* matters. But it is the entrance to the room. The conversation happens after.

This book is structured around that idea. Every chapter is a scene. Every scene is somewhere specific — a bar in Roma, a Sunday lunch in Napoli, a market in Bologna, a meeting in Milano. The grammar shows up because the scene needs it, not the other way around.

The role-plays are the heart. They are written for your Strommen tutor to run with you, in real time. The early ones are scripted; the later ones are not. By the time you finish A2, you can walk into a trattoria in Firenze and order, ask, complain, and thank, and the waiter will respond to you as a person who speaks Italian — not as a tourist who is trying.

One last thing. The dialect material in this book is not decoration. Italy is regional. Knowing that *tengo famma* in Napoli means *ho fame* in standard Italian is the kind of detail that turns a learner into a guest. Your tutor will help you read the room — which register, which dialect, when to switch.

[FIND YOUR ITALIAN TUTOR →](#)

Garrett Strommen

FOUNDER, STROMMEN INC. · LOS ANGELES

Table of contents

FRONT MATTER

i	Colofone & how to use this book	3
ii	A note from the founder	4
iii	The Italian peninsula — <i>a dialect map</i>	6
iv	Pronunciation primer	8
♪	Interludio · <i>Cantiamo Volare</i> — Strommen sing-along	10

PART I — A1: LE BASI (FOUNDATIONS)

1	Saluti e Presentazioni · <i>Caffè in Roma</i>	12
2	Al Bar · <i>Espresso & cornetto</i>	18
3	In Famiglia · <i>Sunday lunch in Napoli</i>	24
4	Per la Città · <i>Asking directions in Palermo</i>	30
5	Al Mercato · <i>Mercato di Mezzo, Bologna</i>	36
6	Una Giornata Tipica · <i>A day in Milano</i>	42

PART II — A2: CONVERSAZIONI VERE (REAL CONVERSATIONS)

7	Al Ristorante · <i>Trattoria in Firenze</i>	50
7½	Alla Pizzeria · <i>Strommen classic — pizza al taglio in Roma</i>	54
8	Raccontare un Viaggio · <i>Recalling Venezia</i>	58
9	Al Telefono · <i>Business call to Milano</i>	60
10	Dal Medico · <i>Pronto soccorso in Bologna</i>	64
11	Opinioni e Preferenze · <i>Aperitivo with friends</i>	68
12	Pianificare il Futuro · <i>Planning a trip together</i>	72

BACK MATTER

A	CILS A2 — full mock exam & marking rubric	76
B	Dialect appendix · <i>Sicilian, Neapolitan, Romanesco, Milanese, Tuscan</i>	80

C	Verb conjugation tables	85
D	Glossary A1–A2	87
E	Find your Strommen Italian tutor	90

The Italian peninsula — a dialect map

Italy was a collection of city-states and kingdoms until 1861. Each region kept its language. Today, *italiano standard* — the version taught in schools — sits on top of dozens of regional varieties that are still spoken at home, at work, and in song.



This book teaches *italiano standard* as the spine. Throughout, sidebars titled **Dialect compare** show you the same phrase in two or three regional varieties so you start to hear what shifts: vowels open up, consonants double, articles change, the verb *tenere* takes over from *avere* in the south.

REGION / CITY	VARIETY	WHAT STANDS OUT	FEATURED CHAPTERS
Lazio / Roma	<i>Romanesco</i>	Truncated word endings, "annamo" for "andiamo," interjection "aó." Famously direct.	1, 2
Campania / Napoli	<i>Napoletano</i>	Uses <i>tenere</i> where standard uses <i>avere</i> ; vowels reduce at word-end; sung intonation.	3

REGION / CITY	VARIETY	WHAT STANDS OUT	FEATURED CHAPTERS
Sicilia / Palermo	<i>Siciliano</i>	Older Italo-Romance with Arabic, Greek, Norman, Spanish layers. <i>Bedda</i> for "bella," <i>talia</i> for "guarda."	4
Emilia-Romagna / Bologna	<i>Bolognese / Standard</i>	Bologna's open vowels and the famous double-consonant clarity in the standard.	5
Lombardia / Milano	<i>Milanese (meneghino)</i>	Short, businesslike, French-influenced vowels. Most Milanese switch easily between standard and dialect.	6, 9
Toscana / Firenze	<i>Toscano</i>	The basis of standard Italian, but with the famous <i>gorgia toscana</i> — "la casa" sounds like "la hasa."	7
Veneto / Venezia	<i>Veneto</i>	"L" softens to a glide; <i>ciao</i> itself is Venetian, from <i>s-ciào vostro</i> , "(I am) your slave."	8

WHY THIS MATTERS

If you only learn standard Italian, you will be understood everywhere — but you will not understand half of what you hear back. Knowing which region is in front of you, and what to expect from it, is the difference between speaking Italian and being part of an Italian conversation.

[WORK WITH AN ITALIAN DIALECT COACH →](#)

PRONUNCIA

Pronunciation primer

Italian is phonetic. If you read what is written, you are almost always right. The few traps are in C, G, GLI, GN, and the doubled consonants — and once you have them, you have them.

Vowels — five sounds, always

A

casa

like the a in "father"

E

bene

like the e in "bet"

I

vino

like the ee in "see"

O

sole

like the o in "open"

U

tu

like the oo in "moon"

STRESS

caffè · città

accent on the final vowel when written with a grave: à, è, ì, ò, ù

Two letters that change

C AND G — SOFT OR HARD DEPENDS ON WHAT FOLLOWS

SPELLING	SOUND	EXAMPLE
ca, co, cu	hard k	<i>casa, cosa, cugino</i>
ce, ci	soft ch (English "ch")	<i>cena, città</i>
che, chi	hard k (the h is silent)	<i>che, chi</i>
ga, go, gu	hard g	<i>gatto, gola</i>
ge, gi	soft j (English "j")	<i>gente, giro</i>
ghe, ghi	hard g (the h is silent)	<i>spaghetti, ghiaccio</i>

The two combinations English speakers fight

GLI

famiglia · figlio

GN

gnocchi · bagno

Press the tongue to the roof of the mouth and release into "lyee." Not "glee."

Like the *ny* in "canyon." The G is silent.

SC + E/I

pesce · sciopero
Like "sh" in English.

Z

pizza · grazie
Either "ts" (pizza) or "dz" (zero) — context decides.
Listen and copy.

Doubled consonants — they matter

Italian doubles consonants for real. *pala* (shovel) and *palla* (ball) are different words. Hold the consonant a fraction longer. Tuscans and Romans do this very crisply; in the south the doubling gets even more pronounced.

TUTOR'S CORNER

For the first three lessons, dedicate the last five minutes to pronunciation drills with the words from that chapter. Most A1 students self-correct quickly once they hear the difference between *cena* and *chena*, or *pala* and *palla*. Don't rush past it — the muscle memory built here pays back through B2.

FOR SINGERS: ITALIAN PRONUNCIATION FOR OPERA →



INTERLUDIO · STROMMEN CLASSIC



Cantiamo Volare

"Nel blu, dipinto di blu" — Domenico Modugno, 1958 — your first Italian song

TIPO

SING-ALONG · LISTENING +
PRONUNCIATION

FONTE

STROMMEN'S CLASSIC
ITALIAN LESSON

MATERIALE

YOUTUBE + FILL-IN-THE-
BLANK LYRICS

TEMPO LEZIONE

~20 MINUTI

Before you start Chapter 1, sing a song. *Nel blu, dipinto di blu* — better known as *Volare* — won San Remo in 1958, finished third at the first Eurovision, and has been the unofficial Italian song of every Italian abroad ever since. Modugno wrote it after dreaming he had blue hands and a blue face. The melody travels; the lyrics are not hard.

It is also the most effective single piece of Italian pronunciation practice you can do as a beginner. Notice how all the small words in Italian seem to stick onto the longer words — "*penso che un sogno così*" sounds like one long word with internal hills. Practicing this song will train your ear and loosen your accent before you even start the conjugations.

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON

1. Watch the video below as many times as you need. 2. Listen for the words in the bank below. 3. Fill the blanks. 4. Sing along on a fourth listen.

▶ WATCH ON YOUTUBE · STROMMEN SING-ALONG →

Direct link: youtube.com/watch?v=qjvzSaALee8 · also at strommeninc.com → [Volare lesson](#)

Word bank

LISTEN FOR THESE – DRAG EACH INTO THE RIGHT BLANK

<i>mentre</i>	while
<i>tuoi</i>	yours
<i>continuo</i>	I continue
<i>scompare</i>	it disappears
<i>occhi</i>	eyes
<i>cielo</i>	sky
<i>suona</i>	it plays
<i>stelle</i>	stars
<i>ancora</i>	still / again
<i>felice</i>	happy
<i>incominciavo</i>	I was beginning
<i>infinito</i>	infinite
<i>sogno</i>	dream
<i>dolce</i>	sweet

Il testo – fill in the blanks

DOMENICO MODUGNO · NEL BLU, DIPINTO DI BLU (1958)

Penso che un _____ così
non ritorni mai più.
Mi dipingevo le mani e la faccia di blu,
poi d'improvviso venivo dal vento rapito,
e _____ a volare nel cielo _____.

Ritornello:

Volare... oh oh!
Cantare... oh oh oh oh!
Nel blu, dipinto di blu,
felice di stare lassù.
E volavo, volavo _____,
più in alto del sole ed _____ più su,
mentre il mondo pian piano
spariva lontano laggiù.
Una musica _____ suonava soltanto per me.

(Ritornello)

Ma tutti i sogni nell'alba svaniscon perché,
quando tramonta la luna li porta con sé.
Ma io _____ a sognare
negli occhi tuoi belli,
che sono blu come un _____
trapunto di _____.

Ritornello (variante):

Volare... oh oh!
Cantare... oh oh oh oh!
Nel blu degli _____ tuoi blu,
felice di stare quaggiù.
E continuo a volare felice,
più in alto del sole ed ancora più su.
_____ il mondo pian piano _____
negli occhi tuoi blu.

La tua voce è una musica

dolce che _____ per me.

(Ritornello)

Nel blu degli occhi _____ blu,

felice di stare quaggiù.

Con te... con te...

CULTURAL NOTE · WHY THIS SONG MATTERS

Modugno performed *Volare* at the 1958 Festival di San Remo with his arms thrown wide — the gesture that became the song's visual signature. It topped the Billboard charts in America for five weeks, the only Italian-language song ever to do so. Italian-American families adopted it as a wedding closer. The opening line — "*penso che un sogno così non ritorni mai più*" — is the line a lot of Italians of a certain age quote without thinking, the way an American might quote a Beatles lyric. Sing this in front of any Italian over forty and watch their face change.

LINGUIST'S NOTE · THE SMALL-WORDS-STICK-ON RULE

Italian sings the way it speaks. Articles, prepositions, and pronouns lean into the words next to them: "*di blu*" becomes one breath; "*degli occhi*" is one beat, not three. Native speakers move between syllables; learners stop between words. The fastest cure is singing. Modugno gives you ninety perfect seconds of it.

TUTOR'S CORNER

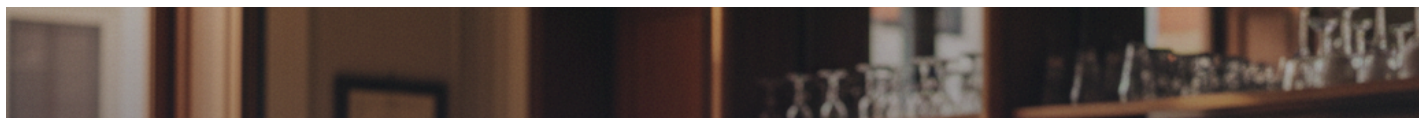
Run this in three passes. Pass 1: the student listens with eyes closed, no lyrics. Pass 2: they fill in the blanks. Pass 3: they sing along, accenting the *liaison* — letting the small words slide into the long words. If the student is shy about singing, hum the melody with them on the second pass. Do not correct individual sounds during the song; correct after, with one focused note. The goal here is the music of the language, not perfection.

Answer key (after you've tried)

THE BLANKS, IN ORDER

sogno · incominciavo · infinito · felice · ancora · dolce · continuo · cielo · stelle · occhi · mentre · scompare · suona · tuoi

[FULL STROMMEN VOLARE LESSON \(WITH AUDIO\) →](#)



CAPITOLO UNO · ROMA

01

Saluti e Presentazioni

Greetings, introductions, and the first decision: tu or Lei?

LIVELLO

A1 · FOUNDATION

GRAMMATICA

ESSERE · SUBJECT
PRONOUNS · TU VS LEI

SCENA

BAR SANT'EUSTACHIO,
ROMA

ROLE-PLAY TIER

1 · SCRIPTED

The first thing you ever say in Italian decides how the rest of the conversation goes. Choose *ciao* with a stranger your own age and you start as friends. Choose *salve* with an older shopkeeper and you sound respectful but not stiff. Choose *buongiorno, signora* with a grandmother in a Roman bar and she will treat you like family within a week.

The greetings

Italian splits greetings two ways at once: by time of day, and by formality. You don't need every variant on day one; you need four.

THE FOUR GREETINGS TO LEARN FIRST

ITALIAN	WHEN	REGISTER
Ciao	Any time	Informal. Friends, family, people your own age.
Salve	Any time	Neutral. Safe with anyone you don't know.
Buongiorno	Morning until ~5pm	Formal-friendly. Default in shops, hotels, offices.
Buonasera	From ~5pm	Formal-friendly evening version.

DIALECT COMPARE · "HEY"

Standard: *ciao* · Romanesco: *aó* (rough "ay-oh," only with people you know well) · Napoletano: *uè* · Siciliano: *picciò* (from *picciotto*, "young man")

DIALOGO 1 · AL BAR, MATTINA

Anna walks into Bar Sant'Eustachio at 8:30 a.m. The barista, Marco, is behind the counter.

ANNA *Buongiorno!*
Good morning!

MARCO *Buongiorno, signorina. Mi dica.*
Good morning, miss. Tell me. (= what can I get you?)

ANNA *Un caffè, per favore.*
A coffee, please.

MARCO *Subito.*
Right away.

Notice that Anna said *buongiorno*, not *ciao*. She did not know Marco. He is older. She is in a place of business. Three signals that point at the same answer.

Essere — to be

The single most useful Italian verb you will learn. Memorize it now and you can introduce yourself, ask where someone is from, and describe almost anything.

ESSERE · PRESENT TENSE

PRONOUN	FORM	EXAMPLE
io	sono	Sono Anna. I am Anna.
tu	sei	Sei italiano? Are you Italian? (informal)
lui / lei / Lei	è	Lei è la signora Rossi? Are you Ms. Rossi? (formal)
noi	siamo	Siamo americani. We are American.
voi	siete	Siete di Roma? Are you from Rome? (plural)
loro	sono	Sono spagnoli. They are Spanish.

Italian usually drops the subject pronoun because the verb ending already tells you who is doing the action. *Sono Anna* is more natural than *Io sono Anna*. Use the pronoun only for emphasis or to clarify.

tu or Lei — the formality choice

Italian has two ways of saying "you" in the singular. *Tu* is informal. *Lei* — written with a capital L when it means "you" — is formal. *Lei* takes the same verb form as *she*, which is the same word. Context tells you which.

QUICK RULE

USE LEI (FORMAL)	USE TU (INFORMAL)
Anyone you don't know	Friends, family
Older people you're not close to	People your own age in social settings
Customer service, shops, offices, professionals	Children, peers at university
Anyone you address by title (signore, dottore, ingegnere)	When the other person switches to <i>tu</i> first

CULTURAL NOTE · THE "DIAMOCI DEL TU" MOMENT

At some point an older Italian, a colleague, or a friend's parent will say *diamoci del tu* — "let's use *tu* with each other." That is your invitation. Accept it. Switching to *tu* when offered is friendliness; refusing it is awkward. Switching *before* being invited is presumption.

Chiamarsi — to be called

This is how you introduce yourself in Italian. The verb is reflexive — literally "I call myself."

CHIAMARSI · PRESENT TENSE

io	<i>mi chiamo</i>	Mi chiamo Anna.
tu	<i>ti chiami</i>	Come ti chiami? What's your name? (informal)
lui / lei / Lei	<i>si chiama</i>	Come si chiama? What's your name? (formal)
noi	<i>ci chiamiamo</i>	Ci chiamiamo Rossi.
voi	<i>vi chiamate</i>	Vi chiamate Anna e Marco?
loro	<i>si chiamano</i>	Si chiamano Bianchi.

DIALOGO 2 · IN UFFICIO

First day at a new office. Anna meets her supervisor, Sig.ra Bianchi.

- SIG.RA B.** *Buongiorno. Come si chiama?*
Good morning. What is your name?
- ANNA** *Mi chiamo Anna Russo. Piacere.*
My name is Anna Russo. Pleased to meet you.
- SIG.RA B.** *Piacere mio. Io sono la signora Bianchi.*
The pleasure is mine. I am Ms. Bianchi.
- ANNA** *È italiana, signora?*
Are you Italian, ma'am?
- SIG.RA B.** *Sì, sono di Roma. E Lei?*
Yes, I'm from Rome. And you?
- ANNA** *Sono americana, di Los Angeles.*
I'm American, from Los Angeles.

VOCABULARY

buongiorno	good morning / hello (until ~5pm)
buonasera	good evening
ciao	hi / bye (informal)
salve	hello (neutral)
piacere	pleased to meet you
piacere mio	the pleasure is mine
come ti chiami? / come si chiama?	what's your name? (inf. / form.)
mi chiamo...	my name is...
sono di...	I'm from...
il signore / la signora / la signorina	sir / ma'am / miss
arrivederci / arrivederLa	goodbye (neutral / formal)
a presto	see you soon

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · ROMANESCO

Daje! — pronounced "da-yeh." Roman all-purpose enthusiasm. "Let's go!" "C'mon!" "Yes!" The Roma football fans yell it; the barista says it when you order the right thing. Strictly informal. Save it for friends.

TUTOR'S CORNER

Spend ten minutes on the *tu/Lei* drill before the role-play. Give the student five scenarios — a barista, a colleague, the colleague's grandmother, a child, a fellow tourist — and have them pick the register before you start. The decision needs to become automatic, because once they're under cognitive load in the dialogue they will revert to *tu* by default.

Esercizi

1. Coniuga *essere*: Marco e Anna _____ italiani. Tu _____ americano. Io _____ di Roma. Noi _____ studenti.
2. Coniuga *chiamarsi*: Come _____ (tu)? Come _____ (Lei)? (Io) _____ Anna.
3. Choose *tu* or *Lei* for: (a) an 8-year-old child, (b) a dentist, (c) a friend's mother you've just met, (d) a fellow student in a language class.
4. Translate: "Good morning. My name is Marco. I am from Bologna. Pleased to meet you."
5. You walk into a shop at 7 p.m. and want to greet the owner, whom you've never met. What do you say?

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 1 · SCRIPTED

Primo incontro in un caffè romano

It is Tuesday morning, 9:00. The student is on day three of a trip to Rome. They walk into Bar Sant'Eustachio. The tutor plays the barista, who is friendly but busy. Read the script as written, then run it again switching roles.

STUDENTE: Buongiorno!

TUTOR (BARISTA): Buongiorno, dica.

STUDENTE: Un caffè, per favore.

TUTOR: Subito. Lei è americano/a, vero?

STUDENTE: Sì, sono di [città]. Mi chiamo [nome].

TUTOR: Piacere. Io sono Marco.

STUDENTE: Piacere mio.

TUTOR VARIATIONS (RUN AFTER THE SCRIPTED PASS)

- Switch the barista to *tu* mid-conversation. Student must follow.
- Make the barista an older signora. Student must use *Lei* throughout.
- Add a Romanesco line: "Ah, ariveniteci, eh!" ("Hey, come back, yeah!") on the way out. Discuss what the student understood.

RUN THIS ROLE-PLAY WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 1

1. sono · sei · sono · siamo
2. ti chiami · si chiama · mi chiamo
3. (a) tu · (b) Lei · (c) Lei · (d) tu
4. *Buongiorno. Mi chiamo Marco. Sono di Bologna. Piacere.*
5. *Buonasera.* (After 5pm, with someone you don't know, *buonasera* beats *salve* for warmth.)

02

Al Bar

An espresso, a cornetto, and the small ritual that runs the country

LIVELLO

A1 · FOUNDATION

GRAMMATICA

ARTICOLI · -ARE VERBS ·
PRENDERE

SCENA

BAR DI QUARTIERE,
TRASTEVERE

ROLE-PLAY TIER

1 → 2

An Italian bar is not what an American bar is. It serves espresso in the morning, panini at lunch, an *aperitivo* at dusk, and a *digestivo* after dinner. People stand. They drink the coffee fast. They pay at the *cassa* first, then bring the receipt to the counter. Learning to order here is learning how Italy starts every weekday.

Articles — il, la, lo, l', i, le, gli

Italian nouns have gender — masculine or feminine — and every noun needs the right article. The article changes with the first sound of the noun, not always its first letter. This sounds harder than it is; you learn it by ear in two weeks.

DEFINITE ARTICLE · "THE"

GENDER / NUMBER	FORM	WHEN TO USE	EXAMPLES
Masculine singular	il	before most consonants	il caffè, il cornetto, il libro
Masculine singular	lo	before s+consonant, z, gn, ps, x, y	lo zucchero, lo studente, lo gnocco
Masculine singular	l'	before any vowel	l'amico, l'espresso
Feminine singular	la	before any consonant	la pasta, la signora, la birra
Feminine singular	l'	before any vowel	l'amica, l'acqua
Masculine plural	i	before most consonants	i caffè, i cornetti
Masculine plural	gli	before vowels, s+consonant, z, gn	gli amici, gli studenti, gli zii
Feminine plural	le	always	le paste, le signore

Regular -are verbs

Most Italian verbs end in *-are*, *-ere*, or *-ire*. The *-are* group is the largest and the most regular. Learn this pattern and you have hundreds of verbs unlocked.

PARLARE · TO SPEAK — THE MODEL -ARE VERB

PRONOUN	FORM	ENDING
io	<i>parlo</i>	-o
tu	<i>parli</i>	-i
lui / lei / Lei	<i>parla</i>	-a
noi	<i>parliamo</i>	-iamo
voi	<i>parlate</i>	-ate
loro	<i>parlano</i>	-ano

Apply the same pattern to *ordinare* (to order), *mangiare* (to eat), *pagare* (to pay), *guardare* (to look), *abitare* (to live).

Prendere — to take, to have (food/drink)

Prendere is the verb you use to "have" a coffee, a beer, a meal — not *avere*. Memorize the formula *prendo un...* ("I'll have a...").

PRENDERE · PRESENT TENSE

io	<i>prendo</i>	Prendo un caffè.
tu	<i>prendi</i>	Cosa prendi?
lui/lei/Lei	<i>prende</i>	Lei cosa prende?
noi	<i>prendiamo</i>	Prendiamo due cappuccini.
voi	<i>prendete</i>	Cosa prendete, ragazzi?
loro	<i>prendono</i>	Prendono sempre l'espresso.

DIALOGO · LA CONSUMAZIONE VELOCE

8:15 a.m. A neighborhood bar in Trastevere. The student is standing at the counter.

STUDENTE *Buongiorno. Un caffè e un cornetto alla crema, per favore.*
Good morning. An espresso and a cream-filled cornetto, please.

BARISTA *Allo zucchero, il caffè?*
With sugar?

STUDENTE *Sì, grazie. Quanto pago?*
Yes, thank you. How much do I owe?

BARISTA *Due euro e cinquanta. Prima paga alla cassa, poi viene qui con lo scontrino.*
€2.50. Pay at the register first, then come back here with the receipt.

CULTURAL NOTE · STANDING OR SITTING?

In most Italian bars the price changes depending on where you drink. *Al banco* (at the counter, standing) is the standard price. *Al tavolo* (at a table) is often two to three times more. Tourists pay the table price; locals stand. If a barista hands you a coffee at the counter, drink it there — sitting down with it after the fact gets uncomfortable looks.

DIALECT COMPARE · "GIVE ME A COFFEE"

Standard: *un caffè, per favore* · Romanesco (informal, with a known barista): *"daje 'n caffè"* · Neapolitano: *"piglia 'nu caffè"* — using *prendere* instead of *prendere*, very characteristic of the south.

How an Italian bar actually works

The bar is more than coffee. It is a one-stop-shop — for busy professionals in the morning, *pensionati* (retirees) in the afternoon, friends meeting before dinner, and anyone who needs a quick *panino* at lunch. The *baristi* are lifers — many have worked the same counter for thirty years — and there are usually two people on shift: the person at the *cassa* (register) and the person *al banco* (at the counter).

THE ITALIAN BAR FLOW — TWO-STEP SERVICE

1. **Alla cassa** — pay first at the register, usually by the door. The cashier hands you *lo scontrino* (the receipt).
2. **Al banco** — bring the *scontrino* to the counter. Say *"scusi"* to the barista. They'll answer *"prego"* (Italian for "welcome" — used here as an invitation to order). Now you order.

If you order coffee at the counter without paying first, the barista will gently send you back to the *cassa*. It is not rude. It is the system.

The coffee menu — the secret one

If you order *un caffè*, you get an espresso. Everything else is a variation. There is no English-language menu for this — it is a "secret menu" the same way In-N-Out has one. Once you know the names, you order like a local.

AL BANCO VOCAB · THE REAL COFFEE MENU

un caffè	a standard espresso — short, condensed, the default
un caffè lungo	a "long" espresso, slightly longer brew — closer to what Americans expect
un caffè ristretto	extra short, extra concentrated
un caffè macchiato	espresso "stained" with a dab of steamed milk
un caffè latte	milk with a dab of coffee. Never just "latte" — you'll be served a glass of milk.
un cappuccino	espresso + steamed milk + foam. Morning only — see cultural note below.
un caffè corretto	"corrected" with a shot of grappa, sambuca, or whiskey
al vetro	served in a small clear glass instead of a porcelain cup — a Roman favorite
un cappuccio	short for <i>cappuccino</i> — friendly, common

If you're hungry — panini, tramezzini, cornetti

SANDWICHES, BY NAME

un panino	a sandwich on a roll — the workhorse
...al prosciutto cotto / crudo	with cooked ham / cured (prosciutto) ham
...alla cotoletta	with a breaded veal cutlet
...con melanzane	with eggplant
un tramezzino	crustless triangular sandwich on soft white bread. <i>Al tonno e pomodoro, prosciutto cotto e formaggio, tonno e carciofini.</i>
una ciabatta	a rustic-bread sandwich, more substantial

BREAKFAST — IL DOLCE

un cornetto	an Italian "croissant" — less buttery and slightly sweeter than the French version
cornetto vuoto / alla crema / alla marmellata / al cioccolato / alla Nutella	plain / cream / jam / chocolate / Nutella
una bomba con crema	a "bomb" — a heavy, custard-filled doughnut, often Roman

"LO SCALDO?" — THE SANDWICH-HEATING EXCHANGE

If you order a sandwich, the barista will almost always ask "*Lo scaldo?*" ("Should I heat it?"). If they don't ask, and you want it heated, say "*Può scaldarlo, per favore?*" ("Could you heat it, please?"). The whole exchange takes three seconds and is your signal to the barista that you know how the place works.

CULTURAL NOTE · THE CAPPUCCINO RULE

Italians drink cappuccino in the morning, usually before 11. After lunch, never. Ordering a cappuccino after a meal will not get you thrown out — but it will mark you as a visitor. After lunch you order *un caffè* (an espresso), full stop. If you want milk in your post-lunch coffee, ask for *un caffè macchiato*.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · ROMANESCO

Annàmo — Romanesco contraction of *andiamo* ("let's go"). You will hear it constantly: "*annàmo a pijà un caffè*" = "let's go grab a coffee." Strictly informal; do not use it with strangers.

USEFUL AT THE COUNTER

<i>vorrei...</i>	I would like... (more polite than <i>prendo</i>)
<i>quanto costa?</i>	how much is it?
<i>quant'è?</i>	how much total?
<i>posso pagare con la carta?</i>	can I pay by card?
<i>solo contanti?</i>	cash only?
<i>lo scontrino</i>	the receipt — keep it; the barista will ask
<i>grazie / prego</i>	thank you / you're welcome

TUTOR'S CORNER

The article drill (il vs lo vs l' vs la) is where A1 students lose confidence. Don't introduce all eight forms at once — drill *il / la / l'* first across 20 nouns, then add *lo* with its specific triggers, then plurals. The student should be able to look at any noun and produce the right article in under 2 seconds before you move on. Spaced repetition for two lessons solves this.

Esercizi

- Aggiungi l'articolo: _____ caffè · _____ studente · _____ amica · _____ zucchero · _____ gnocco · _____ birra · _____ americano · _____ espresso
- Coniuga *parlare*: io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, voi _____, loro _____
- Coniuga *prendere*: Anna e Marco _____ due cappuccini. Io _____ un caffè macchiato. Voi cosa _____?
- Traduci: "I'd like an espresso and a plain cornetto, please. How much is it?"
- You are at the counter at 2 p.m. and want milk in your coffee. What do you order — and what do you not order?

La colazione veloce

7:50 a.m. The student walks into a busy neighborhood bar. The barista (tutor) is moving fast. Start scripted; tutor escalates to Tier 2 with branching choices on the second pass.

Pass 1 — scripted

STUDENTE: Buongiorno. Un cappuccino e un cornetto alla crema.

BARISTA: Cornetto caldo o freddo?

STUDENTE: Caldo, grazie.

BARISTA: Subito. Quattro euro.

STUDENTE: Posso pagare con la carta?

BARISTA: Sì, certo.

PASS 2 — TIER 2 BRANCHES THE TUTOR INTRODUCES

- The card reader doesn't work — student must ask for cash exchange or alternative.
- Cornetto alla crema is sold out — student must pick another.
- Time is now 2:30 p.m. — student must *not* order the cappuccino.
- Student orders a panino. Tutor asks "Lo scaldo?". Student must answer with the right form.
- The barista offers a Romanesco line: "E che te metto, daje, un caffettino?" ("So, what'll I get you, c'mon, a little coffee?"). Student translates and responds.

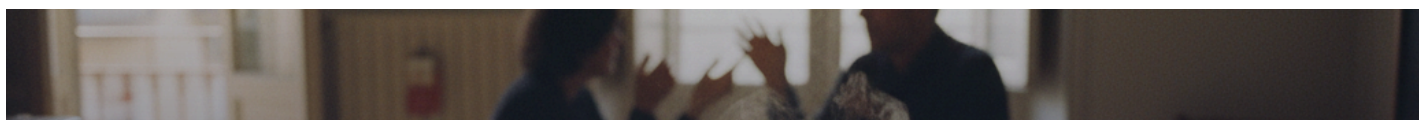
PRACTICE ROMANESCO WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

COMPITI · STROMMEN HOMEWORK

Write your own short dialogue in which you make *una brutta figura al bar* — a "bad showing" at the bar. Maybe you ordered cappuccino after lunch. Maybe you sat down and didn't pay the table price. Maybe you walked to the counter before paying at the cassa. Use as much Italian as you can, and bring the dialogue to your next lesson. (It is fine to mix in some English where you don't have the words yet — that is the point.)

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 2

1. il caffè · lo studente · l'amica · lo zucchero · lo gnocco · la birra · l'americano · l'espresso
2. parlo · parli · parla · parliamo · parlate · parlano
3. prendono · prendo · prendete
4. Vorrei un caffè e un cornetto vuoto, per favore. Quanto costa?
5. Order un caffè macchiato; do not order a cappuccino after lunch.



CAPITOLO TRE · NAPOLI

03

In Famiglia

Sunday lunch at a Neapolitan kitchen table — and the verb that makes the south different

LIVELLO

A1 · FOUNDATION

GRAMMATICA

AVERE · POSSESSIVES ·
FAMILY VOCAB

SCENA

PRANZO DELLA DOMENICA,
NAPOLI

ROLE-PLAY TIER

2 · BRANCHING

If Italy has a national religion it is Sunday lunch. In Napoli it goes from one until four. The grandmother has been cooking since nine. The kids are running around. Someone's uncle is arguing about the pasta water. The visitor — you — has to know how to introduce themselves to twenty people at once, and how to compliment the food without sounding rehearsed.

Avere — to have

Second-most-used verb in the language after *essere*. Used for possession (*I have a sister*), for many idioms (*I'm hungry*, *I'm 30 years old*, *I'm cold*), and as the helper verb in past tense.

AVERE · PRESENT TENSE

io	ho	Ho due fratelli. I have two brothers.
tu	hai	Hai fame? Are you hungry?
lui/lei/Lei	ha	Lei ha un figlio. She has a son.
noi	abbiamo	Abbiamo una casa a Napoli.
voi	avete	Avete bambini?
loro	hanno	Hanno tre cani.

The "h" is silent. *ho* sounds like "o," *hai* like "ai," *ha* like "a." It's there to distinguish these forms in writing from the conjunctions *o*, *ai*, *a*.

AVERE IDIOMS – THESE ARE NOT OPTIONAL, LEARN THEM NOW

ITALIAN	LITERAL	MEANING
<i>ho fame</i>	I have hunger	I'm hungry
<i>ho sete</i>	I have thirst	I'm thirsty
<i>ho caldo / ho freddo</i>	I have heat / I have cold	I'm hot / I'm cold
<i>ho sonno</i>	I have sleep	I'm sleepy
<i>ho paura</i>	I have fear	I'm afraid
<i>ho ragione / ho torto</i>	I have reason / I have wrong	I'm right / I'm wrong
<i>ho venticinque anni</i>	I have 25 years	I'm 25 years old

DIALECT COMPARE · "I'M HUNGRY"

Standard: *ho fame* · Neapolitano: *tengo famma* (using *tenere* for possession instead of *avere*) · Siciliano: *tegnu fami* · Romanesco: *c'ho 'na fame* (literally "I've got a hunger," with *c'* for emphasis).

The *tenere*-for-possession pattern is the single most recognizable marker of southern Italian. If someone says "*tengo 'na cosa importante*" instead of "*ho una cosa importante*" ("I have something important"), they are from south of Rome — or they speak Spanish.

Family vocabulary

LA FAMIGLIA

<i>il padre / la madre</i>	father / mother
<i>il figlio / la figlia</i>	son / daughter
<i>il fratello / la sorella</i>	brother / sister
<i>il nonno / la nonna</i>	grandfather / grandmother
<i>il nipote / la nipote</i>	grandson, nephew / granddaughter, niece
<i>lo zio / la zia</i>	uncle / aunt
<i>il cugino / la cugina</i>	cousin (m / f)
<i>il marito / la moglie</i>	husband / wife
<i>il suocero / la suocera</i>	father-in-law / mother-in-law
<i>il cognato / la cognata</i>	brother-in-law / sister-in-law
<i>i genitori</i>	parents
<i>i figli / i fratelli</i>	children / siblings

Possessive adjectives

Italian possessives agree with the gender and number of the thing owned, not the owner. *Il mio libro* ("my book") is masculine because *libro* is masculine. *La mia macchina* ("my car") is feminine because *macchina* is feminine.

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES – FULL TABLE

OWNER	M. SG.	F. SG.	M. PL.	F. PL.
my	<i>il mio</i>	<i>la mia</i>	<i>i miei</i>	<i>le mie</i>
your (sg, inf.)	<i>il tuo</i>	<i>la tua</i>	<i>i tuoi</i>	<i>le tue</i>
his / her / your (form.)	<i>il suo</i>	<i>la sua</i>	<i>i suoi</i>	<i>le sue</i>
our	<i>il nostro</i>	<i>la nostra</i>	<i>i nostri</i>	<i>le nostre</i>
your (pl)	<i>il vostro</i>	<i>la vostra</i>	<i>i vostri</i>	<i>le vostre</i>
their	<i>il loro</i>	<i>la loro</i>	<i>i loro</i>	<i>le loro</i>

The family exception: with singular, unmodified family members, drop the article. *Mio padre*, not *il mio padre*. *Mia sorella*, not *la mia sorella*. Bring the article back if the family word is plural (*i miei fratelli*), modified (*il mio fratello maggiore*), or affectionate (*la mia mamma*). And *loro* always keeps the article: *il loro padre*.

DIALOGO · PRANZO DELLA DOMENICA

Vomero, Napoli. 1:15 p.m. Anna is at Marco's parents' apartment for the first time. The nonna (Marco's grandmother) is bringing pasta to the table.

NONNA *Anna, siediti, siediti. Hai fame?*
Anna, sit down, sit down. Are you hungry?

ANNA *Sì, signora, grazie. Ho molta fame.*
Yes, ma'am, thank you. I'm very hungry.

NONNA *Brava. Allora, lui è mio figlio Giuseppe, il padre di Marco. Lei è mia nuora Lucia.*
Good. So, this is my son Giuseppe, Marco's father. This is my daughter-in-law Lucia.

ANNA *Piacere. Quanti figli avete?*
Pleased to meet you. How many children do you have?

LUCIA *Abbiamo tre figli: Marco, Sofia e Luca. Sofia ha venti anni, Luca quindici.*
We have three children: Marco, Sofia, and Luca. Sofia is 20, Luca is 15.

NONNA *Mangia, mangia! Tieni famma, no?*
(in dialect) Eat, eat! You're hungry, right?

CULTURAL NOTE · THE FIRST COMPLIMENT MATTERS

The first thing you say after the first bite at an Italian Sunday lunch is the most important sentence you will produce that day. "*Buonissimo, signora, complimenti!*" ("Delicious, ma'am, my compliments!") to the grandmother who cooked is the safe answer. "*Mi ricorda la cucina di mia nonna*" ("It reminds me of my own grandmother's cooking") is the answer that gets you invited back.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · NAPOLETANO

Guagliò! — pronounced "gwa-LYO." A vocative form of *guaglione* ("young man/guy"). Used by everyone in Napoli to call a younger person — boy, son, friend, waiter. The female form is *guagliona*. Like all dialect, do not use with strangers unless you grew up there.

TUTOR'S CORNER

The article-with-family-member rule is the textbook trap. Drill it with one negative-example exercise per lesson: have the student say "*mia sorella*", then "*le mie sorelle*", then "*la mia sorella maggiore*", then "*il loro padre*", paying attention to the article reappearing. The plural and the modified forms are where they reliably forget the article.

Esercizi

1. Coniuga *avere*: io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, voi _____, loro _____.
2. Aggiungi il possessivo "my": _____ padre, _____ madre, _____ fratelli, _____ sorelle, _____ nonna, _____ cugini.
3. Aggiungi "their": _____ padre, _____ macchina, _____ figli.
4. Traduci: "I'm thirsty and a little cold. How old are your children?"
5. Translate the dialect line: "*Tieni famma, no?*" Now write the same idea in standard Italian.

Il primo pranzo a Napoli

The student is meeting their host family for the first time. The tutor plays the role of the mother, the nonna, and a teenage cousin in rotation. The conversation lasts about six minutes. Use the script as backbone; the tutor improvises follow-up questions when the student handles a branch well.

Beat 1 — arrival

TUTOR (MADRE): Welcomes student, asks if they're hungry, asks where they're from.

STUDENTE: Greets formally, accepts the offer to eat, gives city of origin, says "*ho molta fame*".

Beat 2 — introductions

TUTOR (NONNA): Introduces 3 family members in dialect-tinted Italian ("Lui è mio figlio..."). Student must follow.

STUDENTE: Asks each person at least one question (age, where they're from, what they do — but only with *avere* and *essere*; no other verbs yet).

Beat 3 — the first bite

TUTOR (NONNA): Serves pasta. Pauses.

STUDENTE: Compliments the food using a full sentence, not just "*buono!*"

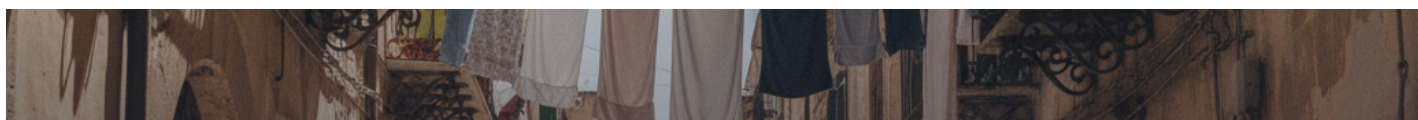
TUTOR BRANCHES

- The nonna asks "*Tieni famma?*" — student must recognize it as "*hai fame?*" and respond.
- A teenage cousin uses *tu* with the student. Does the student reciprocate, or stay on *Lei*? The student should reciprocate.
- The nonna asks about the student's own family in the U.S. Student must produce 3-4 sentences about siblings/parents using *avere* and possessives correctly.

TRAIN WITH A NEAPOLITAN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 3

1. ho · hai · ha · abbiamo · avete · hanno
2. mio padre · mia madre · i miei fratelli · le mie sorelle · mia nonna · i miei cugini
3. il loro padre · la loro macchina · i loro figli
4. *Ho sete e un po' di freddo. Quanti anni hanno i vostri figli?*
5. "You're hungry, right?" → standard "*Hai fame, no?*" (or formal "*Ha fame, no?*")



04

Per la Città

Asking directions in Palermo — where the language layers thicken

LIVELLO

A1 · FOUNDATION

GRAMMATICA

PREPOSIZIONI · -ERE / -IRE
· IMPERATIVE

SCENA

MERCATO DI BALLARÒ,
PALERMO

ROLE-PLAY TIER

2 · BRANCHING WITH
DIALECT NOISE

Palermo is where Italian stops being one thing. Arabic ruled the city for two hundred years. Norman kings built cathedrals in three languages. Spanish viceroys ran the place for another two hundred. The result, on the street, is Siciliano — a language older than Italian, with its own grammar, sounding nothing like the Italian you have learned. Mixed into that is standard Italian, used in shops, schools, the news. You will hear both. Knowing which is which is the start of getting around.

The basic prepositions — a, in, da, su

PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

PREPOSITION	USES	EXAMPLES
a	cities, "to/at" + specific places	a Palermo · a casa · al bar · al ristorante
in	countries, regions, in/inside, modes of transport	in Italia · in Sicilia · in centro · in macchina
da	"from," "at someone's place"	da Roma · da mia nonna · vengo da Los Angeles
su	on, on top of	sul tavolo · sulla mappa
di	"of," origin	sono di Roma · una casa di pietra

Articulated prepositions: when a preposition meets a definite article, they fuse. $a + il = al$ · $in + la = nella$ · $su + i = sui$ · $da + l' = dall'$. Learn the patterns by ear — you will use them in every sentence.

-ere and -ire verbs (the other two families)

THE THREE REGULAR PATTERNS SIDE BY SIDE

PRONOUN	-ARE · PARLARE	-ERE · SCRIVERE	-IRE · PARTIRE	-IRE (-ISC) · CAPIRE
io	<i>parlo</i>	<i>scrivo</i>	<i>parto</i>	<i>capisco</i>
tu	<i>parli</i>	<i>scrivi</i>	<i>parti</i>	<i>capisci</i>
lui/lei	<i>parla</i>	<i>scrive</i>	<i>parte</i>	<i>capisce</i>
noi	<i>parliamo</i>	<i>scriviamo</i>	<i>partiamo</i>	<i>capiamo</i>
voi	<i>parlate</i>	<i>scrivete</i>	<i>partite</i>	<i>capite</i>
loro	<i>parlano</i>	<i>scrivono</i>	<i>partono</i>	<i>capiscono</i>

Two flavors of -ire: the simple group (*partire, dormire, sentire, aprire*) and the -isc- group (*capire, finire, preferire, pulire*). The -isc- group inserts -isc- in every form except *noi* and *voi*. There is no rule for which verb takes which — you learn it word by word.

Tu-imperative — telling someone what to do

For directions and quick instructions, the informal imperative is what you use. The formula:

INFORMAL (TU) IMPERATIVE

VERB TYPE	FORM	EXAMPLE
-are verbs	drop -re, change -a → -a	gira! parla! aspetta!
-ere / -ire verbs	drop -re	scrivi! prendi! senti! apri!
-isc verbs	use the io stem + -i	finisci! capisci!

Useful imperatives for directions: *vai* (go), *gira* (turn), *prendi* (take), *attraversa* (cross), *continua* (continue), *torna* (go back). Formal (Lei) imperative is different — covered in Ch. 9.

DIALOGO · VADO AL TEATRO MASSIMO

Outside the Cattedrale di Palermo, late morning. The student stops a Palermitano (a man in his sixties).

STUDENTE *Mi scusi, signore. Per il Teatro Massimo?*
Excuse me, sir. To get to the Teatro Massimo?

SIGNORE *Allora, vai dritto per Via Vittorio Emanuele, prendi la seconda a destra, e dopo cento metri vedi il teatro. Sulla sinistra.*
OK, go straight along Via Vittorio Emanuele, take the second right, and after 100 meters you'll see the theatre. On the left.

STUDENTE *È lontano?*
Is it far?

SIGNORE *No, dieci minuti a piedi.*
No, ten minutes on foot.

SIGNORE *Picciuttè, talìa bene quann'attraversi, eh!*
(in dialect) Kid, look carefully when you cross, eh!

STUDENTE *Grazie mille!*
Thanks so much!

DIALECT COMPARE · "LOOK!"

Standard: *guarda!* · Siciliano: *talìa!* (from late Latin *talea*, retained in Sicilian and a few other southern varieties). If a Palermitano says "*talìa*" they are speaking Sicilian; if they say "*guarda*" they are speaking Italian. Most code-switch fluidly within one sentence.

Direction vocabulary

PER LA CITTÀ – PLACES

<i>la via / il corso / la piazza</i>	street / avenue / square
<i>il bagno / l'aeroporto / il museo</i>	bathroom / airport / museum
<i>la chiesa / lo stadio / la galleria</i>	church / stadium / gallery (or shopping arcade)
<i>il caffè / il bar / il cinema</i>	coffee bar / bar / cinema
<i>il tabacchi (il tabaccaio)</i>	tobacco/news shop — sells stamps, bus tickets, lottery

ASKING — THE POLITE OPENINGS

<i>Posso chiedere un'informazione?</i>	May I ask for some information?
<i>Mi scusi, un'informazione?</i>	Excuse me, a quick question?
<i>Per cortesia? / Per favore? / Per piacere?</i>	Please? — three flavors, all interchangeable
<i>Sono persa / persa.</i>	I'm lost. (feminine / masculine — match your gender)
<i>Dov'è il bagno?</i>	Where's the bathroom? (the most-asked Italian sentence in the world)

DIREZIONI — THE WORDS YOU'LL HEAR BACK

<i>a destra / a sinistra</i>	right / left
<i>sempre dritto</i>	straight ahead
<i>in fondo</i>	at the end (of the street)
<i>fino a...</i>	all the way to...
<i>la prima / la seconda / la terza</i>	the first / second / third (turn)
<i>all'incrocio / all'angolo</i>	at the intersection / at the corner
<i>il semaforo</i>	the traffic light
<i>un isolato / due isolati</i>	a block / two blocks
<i>è lontano? — no, è vicino</i>	is it far? — no, it's near
<i>a cento / duecento metri</i>	100 / 200 meters away
<i>su / giù</i>	up / down
<i>davanti / dietro</i>	in front / behind
<i>vicino a / subito a</i>	close to / right at
<i>attraversa la strada</i>	cross the street
<i>poi...</i>	then...

ITALIANS GESTICULATE — READ THE HAND, NOT JUST THE WORD

When an Italian gives you directions, they gesture before they finish the sentence. The hand goes left, the eyes shoot left, and only then comes the word "*sinistra*." If you miss a word, watch the hand. It is rarely wrong.

A Strommen-classic example from a tutor in Los Feliz:

"Prima, giri a sinistra su Via Hillhurst. Poi, giri a sinistra su Viale Los Feliz. Sempre dritto. In fondo."

Transportation — getting around

TRASPORTI

<i>l'autobus / il tram / la metro / il treno</i>	bus / tram / metro / train
<i>la fermata dell'autobus / del tram</i>	bus stop / tram stop
<i>la stazione (della metropolitana)</i>	the (metro) station
<i>un biglietto</i>	a ticket
<i>il tabacchi · il timbro</i>	where you buy bus tickets · the on-board validation stamp
<i>Scende alla prossima?</i>	Are you getting off at the next stop? (used to push past someone politely)
<i>l'entrata / la salita / l'uscita</i>	entrance / boarding / exit
<i>Su quale binario è il treno per...?</i>	What platform is the train to... on?
<i>il capolinea</i>	the last stop / end of the line
<i>il tassametro / prezzo fisso</i>	the taxi meter / a flat rate
<i>Accenda il tassametro, per favore.</i>	Turn the meter on, please. (if a taxi driver tries to skip it)

STROMMEN CLASSIC · THE TABACCHI TRICK

In most Italian cities, bus and tram tickets are not sold on the bus. They are sold at *tabacchi* (tobacco/news shops, marked with a black "T" sign), in advance. Once on board, find the small yellow or red box and *timbra il biglietto* — stamp it. An un-stamped ticket is treated the same as no ticket if a controller asks. The €50 fine for traveling untimbrated is the most common rookie tax tourists pay in Italy.

One more stop — la gelateria

A small detour, because no one walks past one. Ordering gelato has its own micro-vocabulary.

GELATO — THE ASKS

<i>un gelato</i>	a gelato
<i>Cono o coppetta?</i>	Cone or cup? (often spelled <i>coppetta</i> on signs)
<i>Piccolo / medio / grande</i>	small / medium / large
<i>Che gusti?</i>	Which flavors?
<i>Posso avere...?</i>	Can I have...?
<i>Con la panna?</i>	With whipped cream on top? (yes, always.)

CULTURAL NOTE · "CHE GUSTI?" IS AN INVITATION, NOT A QUIZ

The *gelataio* wants you to pick two or three flavors per scoop-size — they go on top of each other in one cup or cone. Italians pick complementary pairs: *pistacchio* + *stracciatella*, *limone* + *fragola*, *nocciola* + *caffè*. A single flavor is allowed; it just means you've never tried this place's *pistacchio*.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · SICILIANO

Minchia! — a deeply Sicilian exclamation. Strictly vulgar in literal meaning, but constantly used as an interjection: surprise, shock, frustration, delight. Cousin to "damn!" in tone. Do not use with strangers, employers, or anyone older than you unless you know they would not mind.

CULTURAL NOTE · THE LONG ANSWER

Italians, especially southerners, will rarely give you a 5-word direction. You will get a story: landmarks, side comments, what used to be there, and only at the end the actual turn. Listen for the verb in the imperative (*vai, gira, prendi*) and the right/left/landmark; everything else is context. If you miss a word, the gesture usually carries it.

TUTOR'S CORNER

For the imperative drill, use a hand-drawn map of a 6-block area. Place a starting "X" and a destination "★." Give the student 90 seconds to write the directions in the tu-imperative. Then swap maps and have them *give* the directions out loud while you follow on the paper. This is the fastest way to surface gaps in *prendi/gira/attraversa*.

Esercizi

1. Aggiungi la preposizione: Vado _____ Palermo · Sono _____ Italia · Vengo _____ Los Angeles · Il libro è _____ tavolo (su+il)
2. Coniuga *capire*: io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, voi _____, loro _____.
3. Forma l'imperativo (tu): andare _____, girare _____, prendere _____, finire _____, attraversare _____.
4. Traduci: "Excuse me, where is the bus stop? Is it far? — No, take the second street on the right, the bus stop is at the corner."
5. Translate the dialect line: "*Picciuttè, talìa bene!*"

Mi sono perso a Palermo

The student is in Palermo and has lost their group. They need to get to (a) the Teatro Massimo, (b) the Mercato di Ballarò, or (c) the train station — the tutor picks. The tutor plays three different people the student stops on the way: a young woman (standard Italian), an older man (Italian with Sicilian interjections), and finally a vendor (mostly Sicilian — comprehension test).

Person 1 — standard Italian, simple directions. Student must follow and confirm.

Person 2 — Italian with Sicilian interjections. The tutor drops in _____, _____, _____. Student listens for the Italian content, ignores the dialect for now.

Person 3 — mostly Sicilian. Tutor speaks in Sicilian (with help). Student must say "*Mi scusi, può ripetere in italiano standard, per favore?*" ("Sorry, can you repeat in standard Italian, please?")

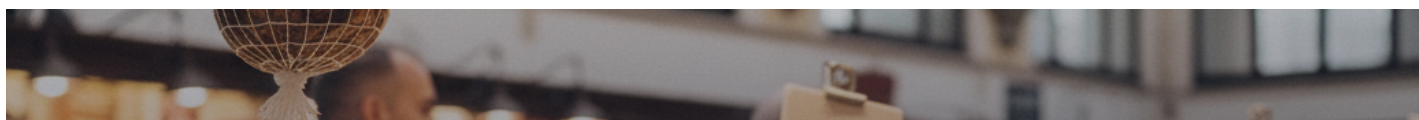
TUTOR BRANCHES

- Student is given the wrong directions by Person 2 and arrives at the wrong place. They must go back and ask again.
- Person 3 starts with a Sicilian greeting "*Bedda, donna vai?*" ("Pretty one, where are you going?"). Student must (a) recognize it is informal and (b) ask politely to switch to Italian.

[LEARN SICILIAN WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →](#)

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 4

1. a Palermo · in Italia · da Los Angeles · sul tavolo
2. capisco · capisci · capisce · capiamo · capite · capiscono
3. va! · gira! · prendi! · finisci! · attraversa!
4. *Mi scusi, dov'è la fermata dell'autobus? È lontano? — No, prendi la seconda strada a destra, la fermata è all'angolo.*
5. "Kid, look carefully!"





Bologna is the food capital. Tortellini, tagliatelle, mortadella, parmigiano — all from here or nearby. Mercato di Mezzo is the small covered market just off Piazza Maggiore. Stalls of cheese, salumi, fresh pasta, fruit. The vendors know their product better than anyone, and they want you to know it too. Learning to ask *quanto costa*, give a weight, and accept a sample is how you stop being a tourist here.

Numbers — 1 to 1,000

THE NUMBERS YOU ACTUALLY NEED

RANGE	FORMS
1–10	<i>uno · due · tre · quattro · cinque · sei · sette · otto · nove · dieci</i>
11–20	<i>undici · dodici · tredici · quattordici · quindici · sedici · diciassette · diciotto · diciannove · venti</i>
20–100	<i>venti · trenta · quaranta · cinquanta · sessanta · settanta · ottanta · novanta · cento</i>
Compounds	<i>ventuno · ventidue · trentatrè · cinquantasei · novantanove</i>
Hundreds	<i>centocinquanta (150) · duecento · trecentocinquanta · mille (1,000)</i>

Two written-but-spoken rules: (1) the final vowel of 20, 30, etc. drops before *uno* and *otto*: *ventuno*, *trentotto*. (2) *tre* takes an accent when it follows another number: *ventitré*, *trentatré*.

Money and weight

PESI E PREZZI

<i>l'euro / il centesimo</i>	euro / cent
€2,50 → " <i>due euro e cinquanta</i> "	€2.50 — Italians use a comma where English uses a dot
<i>un etto / un chilo</i>	100 grams / 1 kg — "etto" is the unit you'll use most at markets
<i>mezzo chilo</i>	half a kilo (500g)
<i>un quarto</i>	a quarter (kilo) — 250g
<i>una fetta / un pezzo</i>	a slice / a piece
<i>quanto costa? / quant'è?</i>	how much is it? / how much total?
<i>è caro / a buon prezzo</i>	it's expensive / it's a good price

The partitive — "some" cheese, "some" wine

To say "some" in Italian, use *di* + *the definite article*. The fusion gives you *del / dello / dell' / della / dei / degli / delle*.

PARTITIVO

WHAT YOU WANT	HOW TO SAY IT
some bread	<i>del pane</i>
some cheese	<i>del formaggio</i>
some wine	<i>del vino</i>
some water	<i>dell'acqua</i>
some pasta	<i>della pasta</i>
some olives	<i>delle olive</i>
some grapes	<i>dell'uva (singular in Italian)</i>

DIALOGO · AL BANCO DEL FORMAGGIO

A Wednesday morning at the Mercato di Mezzo. The student is at the cheese stall.

- STUDENTE** *Buongiorno. Vorrei del parmigiano, per favore.*
Good morning. I'd like some parmesan, please.
- VENDITORE** *Certo. Quanto ne vuole? Un etto, due?*
Of course. How much do you want? 100g, 200?
- STUDENTE** *Due etti. È stagionato?*
200 grams. Is it aged?
- VENDITORE** *Trentasei mesi. Vuole un assaggio?*
36 months. Want a taste?
- STUDENTE** *Volentieri. Mmm, buonissimo. Quanto costa?*
Yes, please. Mmm, delicious. How much is it?
- VENDITORE** *Trentacinque euro al chilo. Per due etti, sette euro.*
€35 a kilo. For 200g, €7.
- STUDENTE** *Prendo due etti. Vorrei anche della mortadella, mezzo etto.*
I'll take 200g. I'd also like some mortadella, 50g.

CULTURAL NOTE · THE ASSAGGIO

At a good market stall — cheese, salumi, olive oil — the vendor often offers *un assaggio*, a taste. Accept. It is not pressure; it is how the vendor demonstrates the product. Compliment honestly ("*è ottimo*" — "it's excellent") and decide. Refusing flatly without trying can read as cold. If you don't want any, smile and say "*magari un'altra volta, grazie*" ("maybe another time, thanks").

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD MARKET CHAT

"*Quello buono*" — "the good one." Vendors point at one of two stacks and say "*questo è quello buono*". Trust it. Italians grade their own product candidly; if the vendor calls something "*quello buono*", take that one.

DIALECT COMPARE · NUMBERS

Numbers stay almost identical across regions, but pronunciation drifts. In Napoli *due* often softens to "*ddo*" with a doubled "d"; in Roma *tre* can shorten to "*tre*" with the final vowel almost dropped. Listen for it but stay on standard yourself — numbers are not the place to experiment.

TUTOR'S CORNER

Numbers are the place where students lose fluency under pressure. Drill in pairs: tutor calls a price ("*sette euro e cinquanta*"), student writes the number. Then reverse — tutor shows a written price, student says it. Aim for 20 numbers in 90 seconds before moving on. This is the bottleneck that decides whether the market role-play feels real or panicked.

Esercizi

1. Scrivi i numeri: 12 _____, 21 _____, 38 _____, 65 _____, 100 _____, 250 _____.
2. Aggiungi il partitivo: Prendo _____ pane, _____ mortadella, _____ olive, _____ acqua, _____ formaggio.
3. Traduci: "I'd like some parmesan, 300 grams. How much is it?"
4. You buy 2 etti of mortadella at €18/kg. How much is it? Say it in Italian.
5. Translate: "It's a bit expensive. Do you have something cheaper?" (use *caro* and *qualcosa di meno caro*)

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 2 · BRANCHING, BARGAINING

La spesa al Mercato di Mezzo

The student has €30 and a shopping list: parmesan, mortadella, fresh tortellini, a bottle of Lambrusco. The tutor plays three vendors. The student must move from stall to stall, ordering by weight and managing the total spend.

Stall 1 — cheese. Order parmesan with an assaggio. Ask about the aging. Decide quantity.

Stall 2 — salumi. Order mortadella by weight. Vendor offers prosciutto too — student must politely decline and stay on budget.

Stall 3 — fresh pasta. Order tortellini for two. Ask whether they're meat ("*al ragù*") or cheese ("*al formaggio*").

Stall 4 — wine. Ask the vendor to recommend a Lambrusco under €10.

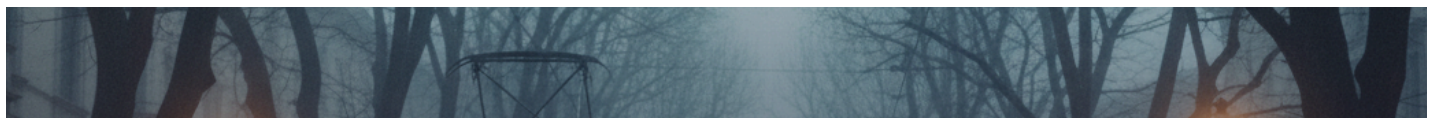
TUTOR BRANCHES

- The cheese is €40/kg and the student has miscalculated — they need to scale back.
- The mortadella vendor accidentally weighs out 300g instead of 200g — student must ask them to take some off.
- The wine vendor pushes a more expensive bottle. Student must hold the budget without offending.

PRACTICE MARKET ITALIAN WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 5

1. dodici · ventuno · trentotto · sessantacinque · cento · duecentocinquanta
2. del pane · della mortadella · delle olive · dell'acqua · del formaggio
3. *Vorrei del parmigiano, trecento grammi. Quanto costa?*
4. 2 etti = 200g = 0.2 kg × €18 = €3.60 → *"tre euro e sessanta"*
5. *È un po' caro. Ha qualcosa di meno caro?*



CAPITOLO SEI · MILANO

06

Una Giornata Tipica

Morning fog, tram bells, and the daily rhythm of Milano

LIVELLO

A1 → A2 BRIDGE

GRAMMATICA

RIFLESSIVI · ORA ·
ANDARE/VENIRE/FARE

SCENA

UNA GIORNATA TIPICA,
MILANO

ROLE-PLAY TIER

2 · BRANCHING WITH
RAPID FOLLOW-UPS

Milano runs on a clock. Coffee at seven, tram at eight, work by nine, lunch break that is precisely an hour, *aperitivo* at seven, dinner late. Describing your own day in Italian — when you wake up, what you do, where you go — is the most useful single skill at A1 level. Almost every conversation a beginner has with a tutor begins here.

Reflexive verbs

A reflexive verb is one where the subject does something to themselves. *Mi sveglio* = "I wake myself up." Italian uses many more reflexives than English does, especially for daily routines.

SVEGLIARSI · TO WAKE UP

io	mi sveglio	Mi sveglio alle sette.
tu	ti svegli	A che ora ti svegli?
lui/lei	si sveglia	Lei si sveglia presto.
noi	ci svegliamo	Ci svegliamo alle otto.
voi	vi svegliate	Vi svegliate tardi?
loro	si svegliano	Si svegliano alle sei.

Key reflexives for your day: *svegliarsi* (wake up), *alzarsi* (get up), *lavarsi* (wash up), *vestirsi* (get dressed), *prepararsi* (get ready), *divertirsi* (have fun), *addormentarsi* (fall asleep), *riposarsi* (rest).

Telling time

CHE ORA È? · CHE ORE SONO?

WHAT TIME IT IS	HOW TO SAY IT
1:00	<i>È l'una</i>
2:00 · 3:00 · etc.	<i>Sono le due · Sono le tre...</i>
2:15	<i>Sono le due e un quarto</i>
2:30	<i>Sono le due e mezzo / e mezza</i>
2:45	<i>Sono le tre meno un quarto / le due e quarantacinque</i>
12:00 noon · midnight	<i>È mezzogiorno · È mezzanotte</i>
At what time?	<i>A che ora?</i>
At 7am	<i>Alle sette di mattina</i>

Andare, venire, fare — three irregulars you will use every day

THE THREE TOGETHER

PRONOUN	ANDARE · GO	VENIRE · COME	FARE · DO/MAKE
io	<i>vado</i>	<i>vengo</i>	<i>faccio</i>
tu	<i>vai</i>	<i>vieni</i>	<i>fai</i>
lui/lei	<i>va</i>	<i>viene</i>	<i>fa</i>
noi	<i>andiamo</i>	<i>veniamo</i>	<i>facciamo</i>
voi	<i>andate</i>	<i>venite</i>	<i>fate</i>
loro	<i>vanno</i>	<i>vengono</i>	<i>fanno</i>

fare covers an enormous range: *faccio colazione* (I have breakfast), *faccio sport* (I work out), *faccio la spesa* (I go grocery shopping), *fa freddo* (it's cold out), *che lavoro fa?* (what do you do for work?).

DIALOGO · LA MIA GIORNATA

A Strommen tutor (Marco) and a student (Anna) on a video lesson. Marco asks Anna to describe her typical day.

MARCO Allora, Anna, raccontami una giornata tipica. A che ora ti svegli?

So, Anna, tell me about a typical day. What time do you wake up?

ANNA Mi sveglio alle sei e mezzo. Faccio colazione — un caffè e una fetta di pane — poi vado al lavoro.

I wake up at 6:30. I have breakfast — a coffee and a slice of bread — then I go to work.

MARCO A che ora arrivi al lavoro?

What time do you arrive at work?

ANNA Alle otto e un quarto. Lavoro fino all'una, poi pranzo con i colleghi.

8:15. I work until 1, then I have lunch with colleagues.

MARCO E la sera?

And in the evening?

ANNA Torno a casa alle sette. Mi riposo un po'. Spesso vado in palestra. Ceno alle nove e mezzo, e mi addormento intorno alle undici.

I get home at 7. I rest a bit. I often go to the gym. I have dinner at 9:30, and I fall asleep around 11.

DIALECT COMPARE · "LET'S GO!"

Standard: *andiamo!* · Romanesco: *annàmo!* · Napoletano: *jammo!* (or *jamme bell'* — "let's go, beautiful," friendly, the title of an old Neapolitan song) · Siciliano: *amuninni!* · Milanese (dialect, rare today): *"ndémm!"*.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD

"Faccio tardi" — literally "I'm doing late," meaning "I'm going to be late." Used constantly: *"faccio tardi al lavoro"*, *"faccio tardi a cena"*. The Italian instinct is to use *fare* where English uses "to be."

CULTURAL NOTE · PRANZO AND CENA

Pranzo (lunch) in much of Italy is the larger meal of the day, eaten between 12:30 and 2. *Cena* (dinner) is later — 8 or 9 in the north, 9 or 10 in the south. American "early-bird dinner" at 6 will not match any restaurant schedule; most kitchens are not open before 7:30.

TUTOR'S CORNER

Have the student write their own daily routine for homework in 8 sentences using reflexives and times. The next lesson, run it as a quick-fire interview: you ask *"a che ora ti svegli? cosa fai dopo? a che ora pranzi?"* rapid-fire, and the student must answer without stopping. This drill turns rehearsed material into reflex.

Esercizi

1. Coniuga al riflessivo: *alzarsi* — io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, loro _____.
2. Scrivi le ore: 7:30 _____, 14:15 _____, 18:45 _____, 24:00 _____.
3. Coniuga *fare*: io _____ colazione · tu _____ sport · noi _____ la spesa · loro _____ tardi.
4. Traduci: "I wake up at 7. I have breakfast, then I go to work by tram. I work until 6 in the evening. I have dinner at 9."
5. Write a 5-sentence description of your own day in Italian.

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 2 · BRANCHING WITH RAPID FOLLOW-UPS

Una giornata milanese

The student is on a video call with a Strommen tutor for a level check. The tutor's job is to keep the conversation flowing in Italian for six minutes, switching topics rapidly. The student describes their day, then is asked unscripted follow-ups.

Beat 1 (90s): Student gives a 5-sentence summary of their day, using reflexives + times.

Beat 2 (90s): Tutor asks 3 unscripted follow-ups: "E nel weekend?" · "Cosa fai dopo cena?" · "Vai spesso in palestra?"

Beat 3 (90s): Tutor flips it: "now you ask me about my day." Student must produce questions in *tu*.

Beat 4 (90s): Tutor introduces a problem — "oggi faccio tardi al lavoro perché il tram è in ritardo" ("today I'm going to be late because the tram is delayed"). Student must respond with sympathy and a follow-up question.

TUTOR BRANCHES

- Tutor speeds up dramatically on Beat 2. Student must ask "può ripetere più lentamente, per favore?"
- Tutor switches to *Lei* for Beat 3 to test whether the student can shift register cleanly.

LEARN MILANESE WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 6

1. mi alzo · ti alzi · si alza · ci alziamo · si alzano
2. Sono le sette e mezzo · Sono le due e un quarto · Sono le sette meno un quarto · È mezzanotte
3. faccio · fai · facciamo · fanno
4. *Mi sveglio alle sette. Faccio colazione, poi vado al lavoro in tram. Lavoro fino alle sei di sera. Ceno alle nove.*
5. (open answer — your tutor will correct)



CAPITOLO SETTE · FIRENZE

07 Al Ristorante

A Florentine trattoria, four courses, and the past tense that lets you tell a story

LIVELLO A2 · REAL CONVERSATIONS	GRAMMATICA PASSATO PROSSIMO CON AVERE · CIBO	SCENA TRATTORIA, FIRENZE	ROLE-PLAY TIER 3 · IMPROVISED ON A FRAME
---	---	------------------------------------	---

A Tuscan trattoria is the place to learn the past tense. You ate the pasta. You ordered the wine. You finished the steak. You enjoyed it. Every sentence wants to be in the past — the meal is the story you are about to tell your friends — and Italian has one tense that handles 90% of what you need: the *passato prossimo*.

First — the kinds of eateries

Italian doesn't have one word for "restaurant." It has half a dozen. Knowing which one is in front of you tells you what to expect and how to behave.

THE EATERY TYPOLOGY

NAME	WHAT IT IS
<i>il ristorante</i>	The most formal end of the spectrum. Tablecloths, full menu, real wine list. Like the difference between an <i>albergo</i> (3-4 star hotel) and a <i>pensione</i> (1-2 star).
<i>la trattoria</i>	Rustic, family-run, limited menu, minimal décor, food-first. The cook is making everything from scratch — they are happiest when the whole table orders the same primo.
<i>l'osteria</i>	Historically a place that sold wine plus a few simple dishes. Today often interchangeable with <i>trattoria</i> .
<i>la tavola calda</i>	"Warm table" — like a cafeteria. The food is already cooked; you choose, you eat there or take it away.
<i>la vinoteca / l'enoteca</i>	Wine-focused. Bottles to take away or a glass at the counter with small bites.
<i>la pizzeria</i>	Pizza-specialized. See Chapter 7b — its own thing entirely.
<i>la pizza al taglio · la pizza rustica</i>	Square pizza, baked in trays, sold by weight. True Italian fast food.
<i>il bar</i>	Many bars turn into a <i>tavola calda</i> during the 1-2pm lunch hour for the businessmen nearby.

STROMMEN CLASSIC · BELLA FIGURA VS BRUTTA FIGURA

Italian doesn't have a word for "etiquette" — it has *la bella figura* ("the beautiful figure," looking good in front of others) and *la brutta figura* ("the ugly figure," embarrassing yourself). Every social situation is read through this lens. At a trattoria:

Brutta figura — what not to do

- Ask for "*da portare via*" (to-go) at a sit-down ristorante. Portions are small enough to finish.
- Show up for dinner at 7pm. Kitchens are barely starting; you'll dine with the other *stranieri*.
- Ask for *burro per il pane* (butter for the bread). It isn't served.
- Ask for *ghiaccio* (ice). Not happening.

Bella figura — what to do

- Order in courses, in order: *antipasto, primo, secondo, contorno, insalata, dolce, caffè, digestivo*.
- Ask for "*un piatto tipico*" — the typical local dish. You'll be respected for it.
- Tip modestly — a euro per person is enough. American-sized tips are awkward.
- End the meal with a *caffè* (espresso) and then a *digestivo* — grappa, amaro, or limoncello.

Passato prossimo with avere

The Italian past tense for completed actions is built from two pieces: a helper verb (*avere* or *essere*) and a past participle. With most verbs the helper is *avere*. The structure: **subject + avere (conjugated) + past participle**.

FORMING THE PAST PARTICIPLE

INFINITIVE ENDS IN	PAST PARTICIPLE ENDS IN	EXAMPLES
-are	-ato	parlare → parlato · mangiare → mangiato · ordinare → ordinato
-ere (regular)	-uto	credere → creduto · vendere → venduto
-ire	-ito	finire → finito · capire → capito · dormire → dormito

Critical irregular past participles to memorize: *fatto* (fare), *detto* (dire), *letto* (leggere), *scritto* (scrivere), *preso* (prendere), *bevuto* (bere), *visto* or *veduto* (vedere), *aperto* (aprire), *chiuso* (chiudere), *messo* (mettere), *offerto* (offrire).

EXAMPLE · MANGIARE · TO EAT (IN THE PAST)

io	<i>ho mangiato</i>	Ho mangiato la pasta.
tu	<i>hai mangiato</i>	Hai mangiato bene?
lui/lei	<i>ha mangiato</i>	Marco ha mangiato la fiorentina.
noi	<i>abbiamo mangiato</i>	Abbiamo mangiato tutto.
voi	<i>avete mangiato</i>	Avete già mangiato?
loro	<i>hanno mangiato</i>	Hanno mangiato in trattoria.

Restaurant vocabulary

AL RISTORANTE – BY THE COURSE

<i>l'antipasto</i>	appetizer — bruschetta, salumi, crostini
<i>il primo (piatto)</i>	first course — almost always pasta, risotto, or soup
<i>il secondo</i>	second course — meat or fish
<i>il contorno</i>	side dish, ordered separately
<i>il dolce</i>	dessert
<i>il caffè (post-pasto)</i>	the espresso at the end — never with milk after a meal
<i>il vino della casa</i>	the house wine — usually a safe bet at a trattoria
<i>il conto, per favore</i>	the check, please
<i>coperto</i>	the cover charge per person, standard at sit-down restaurants

DIALOGO · UNA TRATTORIA FIORENTINA

Trattoria Sostanza, Firenze. Evening. The student is with a friend. The waiter (cameriere) arrives.

CAMERIERE *Buonasera. Avete prenotato?*
Good evening. Did you reserve?

STUDENTE *Sì, a nome Rossi, per due.*
Yes, under Rossi, for two.

CAMERIERE *Bene. Da questa parte, prego. Volete vedere il menù?*
Good. This way, please. Would you like to see the menu?

STUDENTE *Sì, grazie. E un litro di vino della casa, rosso.*
Yes, thanks. And a liter of house red wine.

[10 MINUTES
LATER]

CAMERIERE *Avete deciso?*
Have you decided?

STUDENTE *Sì. Come antipasto prendiamo i crostini misti. Come primo, una pappa al pomodoro per me, e per la mia amica le pappardelle al cinghiale.*
Yes. As an appetizer we'll have the mixed crostini. For the first, a pappa al pomodoro for me, and for my friend the wild boar pappardelle.

CAMERIERE *E come secondo?*
And for the second?

STUDENTE *Una fiorentina da condividere, al sangue.*
A fiorentina steak to share, rare.

CULTURAL NOTE · THE RULES OF A TUSCAN TRATTORIA

Order in waves, not all at once — antipasto and primo first, then decide on secondo after. Bread is on the table but is not your dinner; the Tuscans eat it deliberately unsalted (*pane sciocco*), which surprises every first-timer. Steak (*la bistecca alla fiorentina*) is ordered by weight (1.2 kg is normal for two people) and almost always rare — asking for it well done is met with a look. Splitting the bill is fine. Tipping is small or nothing; the *coperto* is the cover charge.

THE VERBS YOU'LL HEAR FROM THE WAITER

Da bere? / Cosa vogliono i signori da bere?	To drink? / What would the ladies/gentlemen like to drink?
Che consiglia?	What do you recommend?
Faccio io? / Facciamo noi?	"Shall I do it?" — waiter offering to choose for you
Sì, faccia Lei! / Fai tu!	Yes, you choose! (formal / informal — let the waiter pick)
Subito!	Right away!
Prendo lo stesso.	I'll have the same.
Mi scusi! Il conto, per favore!	Excuse me! The bill, please!
Acqua naturale (liscia, senza gas) / gassata (con gas)	still water / sparkling water
Un litro / mezzo litro di vino rosso (bianco) della casa	A liter / half-liter of house red (white)
Birra alla spina — che birra avete?	Draft beer — which one do you have?

THE FULL MENU — BY COURSE

Antipasti

misto di verdura · affettati · bruschetta · crostini mixed vegetables · cured meats · grilled bread w/ topping · little toasts

Primi

spaghetti cozze e vongole · penne · carbonara · lasagne · tortellini al ragù / al formaggio spaghetti with mussels and clams · penne · carbonara · lasagna · tortellini with meat sauce / cheese

Secondi

bistecca fiorentina — ben cotta / media rara / al sangue Florentine steak — well-done / medium-rare / rare

pesce alla griglia / al forno · calamari · fritto misto grilled / oven-baked fish · squid · mixed fry

vitello arrosto · agnello · straccetti con carciofi / funghi roast veal · lamb · sliced beef with artichokes / mushrooms

Contorni

patate · cicoria · spinaci · carciofi alla romana potatoes · chicory · spinach · Roman-style artichokes

Dolci

la frutta · un gelato · un sorbetto · crostata · torta fruit · gelato · sorbet · fruit tart · cake

STROMMEN CLASSIC · THE DIGESTIVO COURSE

The meal isn't finished after the dolce. The *caffè* comes next (an espresso, never a cappuccino at this hour), and then the waiter asks: "*Grappa? Amaro? Limoncello?*"

- **Grappa** — clear distilled grape pomace, sharp and warming. The traditional choice in the north.
- **Amaro** — bitter herbal liqueur. *Averna* from Sicily is the most common; *Fernet-Branca* from Milano is the cult favorite.
- **Limoncello** — sweet lemon liqueur from the Amalfi coast, served ice-cold.

Choose one. Or accept the waiter's *offerta della casa* — the on-the-house pour — which arrives unannounced at good places. Sip, don't shoot. The point is to settle the stomach (*digestivo* = digestive), not to start a second round.

VEGETARIAN ITALIAN — THE PHRASES THAT SAVE THE NIGHT

Italian menus are heavy on meat and fish; vegetarian options exist but they require asking. The right phrases:

- "*Siamo vegetariani. Che piatti ci consiglia?*" — "We're vegetarian. What dishes do you recommend?"
- "*Non mangiamo carne né pesce, ma mangiamo formaggi, latte e uova.*" — "We don't eat meat or fish, but we eat cheese, milk, and eggs." (sets the line clearly)
- "*Può fare questo piatto senza carne?*" — "Can you make this dish without meat?"
- "*C'è brodo di carne nella zuppa?*" — "Is there meat broth in the soup?" (the hidden-meat trap)
- "*È vegetariano?*" — "Is it vegetarian?" (the simplest check)

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD / TUSCAN

"*Una cosa pazzesca*" — "an insane thing," meaning amazing/great. Italians say this about food constantly: "*questa pasta è una cosa pazzesca*". Tuscan-specific: "*ganzo*" meaning "cool" or "great." Strictly informal — useful with friends, not with the waiter.

DIALECT COMPARE · THE FAMOUS GORGIA

In Tuscany, especially Firenze, the hard *c* between vowels weakens into a soft "h" sound. *la casa* becomes *la hasa*; *Coca-Cola* becomes *hoha hola*. This is the *gorgia toscana*. Not a separate language — just the Tuscan accent. Listen for it; don't mimic it as a beginner.

TUTOR'S CORNER

Past participles are the choke point at A2. Give the student a list of 20 verbs (mixed regular and irregular) and have them produce the past participle in 60 seconds. Then have them produce a full *passato prossimo* sentence with the first person singular for each. Repeat across three lessons. Once the irregular participles are automatic, story-telling unlocks immediately.

Esercizi

1. Forma il passato prossimo: io / mangiare → _____; tu / bere → _____; lei / prendere → _____; noi / ordinare → _____; voi / fare → _____; loro / vedere → _____.
2. Coniuga al passato prossimo: *Ieri sera io (mangiare) _____ in trattoria, (ordinare) _____ la fiorentina, e (bere) _____ un bicchiere di Chianti.*
3. Traduci: "Last night we went out (use *uscire* with *essere* — preview) and we ate at a trattoria. I had the pappa al pomodoro, my friend had the wild boar pasta, and we shared a fiorentina."
4. Order an antipasto, primo, secondo, and a glass of red wine. Write the full order in Italian.
5. You finished the meal. Ask for the bill, ask if they take cards, and say goodbye.

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 3 · IMPROVISED ON A FRAME

Una cena in trattoria

*Full dinner from arrival to bill. The student plays themselves, the tutor plays the waiter and one chatty diner at a neighboring table. The student must navigate the menu (improvise from the actual Sostanza menu the tutor projects on screen), handle two surprises, and tell a small story at the end of the meal using *passato prossimo*.*

Beat 1 — arrival & ordering. Reservation under student's name. Order an antipasto, a primo, and a secondo + contorno. Use polite forms.

Beat 2 — surprise 1. One dish is sold out. Pick another.

Beat 3 — between courses. The diner at the next table starts a friendly conversation in *tu*: "*Da dove venite, ragazzi?*" Student answers and asks back.

Beat 4 — surprise 2. A dish arrives wrong (the wrong primo). Student must politely correct.

Beat 5 — telling a story. The diner asks "*Cosa avete fatto oggi?*" Student must produce 4-5 sentences in *passato prossimo* about the day — what they visited, where they walked, what they ate at lunch.

Beat 6 — paying. Ask for the bill, ask whether they accept cards, settle up.

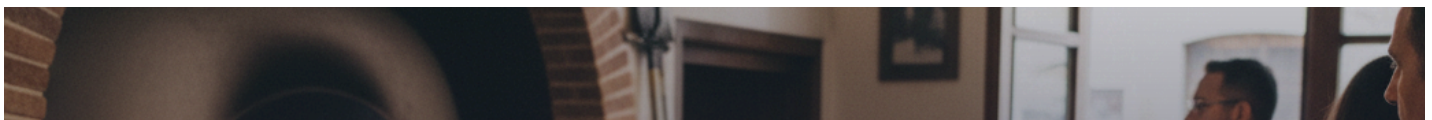
TUTOR BRANCHES

- The waiter uses the Tuscan gorgia heavily on Beat 1. Student must follow.
- The neighboring diner is Florentine and uses "*ganzo*" and "*una cosa pazzesca*" — student must understand the register.
- The bill is wrong (overcharged). Student must politely flag it.

LEARN TUSCAN WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 7

1. ho mangiato · hai bevuto · ha preso · abbiamo ordinato · avete fatto · hanno visto
2. ho mangiato · ho ordinato · ho bevuto
3. (model) *Ieri sera siamo usciti e abbiamo mangiato in trattoria. Io ho preso la pappa al pomodoro, la mia amica le pappardelle al cinghiale, e abbiamo condiviso una fiorentina.*
4. (model) *Come antipasto prendo i crostini misti. Come primo, le pappardelle al cinghiale. Come secondo, la fiorentina al sangue, con un contorno di fagioli. E un calice di Chianti rosso.*
5. *Il conto, per favore. Accettate la carta? Grazie mille, arrivederci.*



CAPITOLO SETTE ½ · STROMMEN CLASSIC

7½ Alla Pizzeria

The closest thing Italy has to fast food — and a counter ritual nobody warns you about

LIVELLO A2 · STROMMEN CLASSIC LESSON	GRAMMATICA PARTITIVO · IMPERATIVI AL BANCO	SCENA PIZZA AL TAGLIO, ROMA	ROLE-PLAY TIER 2 → 3 · COUNTER IMPROVISATION
---	---	---------------------------------------	---

Pizza in Italy is the closest thing to homegrown fast food — and like every other Italian food genre, it is very specific. Don't expect Hawaiian pizza any time soon. There are two species of pizzeria, and they are not interchangeable: the sit-down *pizzeria* (where pizzas are round, single-serving, cooked in a wood-burning oven), and the stand-up *pizzeria al taglio* (where pizzas are rectangular, baked in trays, sold by weight, eaten standing or walking).

The two species

PIZZERIA · SIT-DOWN VS AL TAGLIO

TYPE	WHAT TO EXPECT
<i>pizzeria (sit-down)</i>	Tables, menus, waiters. Pizza is round, single-serving, thin (Roman) or higher-edged (Neapolitan). Eaten with fork and knife.
<i>pizzeria al taglio · pizza rustica</i>	Square trays at the counter. Order by weight or by length. Eaten on the spot, wrapped in paper. The true street food.

STROMMEN CLASSIC · BELLA FIGURA VS BRUTTA FIGURA AT THE PIZZERIA

Brutta figura

- Ordering "pepperoni" pizza in Italian. The word *peperoni* means *bell peppers*. What Americans call pepperoni doesn't exist on most Italian menus. If you want spicy salami, ask for *salame piccante*.
- Eating round pizza with your hands at a sit-down pizzeria. Fork and knife.

Bella figura

- Order a *fior di zucca* (a fried zucchini-flower appetizer, often stuffed with mozzarella and anchovy) or *olive ascolane* (deep-fried stuffed olives, a Marche specialty). The pizzaiolo will see you as someone who has eaten in Italy before.
- At the al-taglio counter, point at what you want and tell them *how much* by length — "*due euro di patate*" or "*un pezzettino di funghi*".

Sit-down pizzeria — the menu

ANTIPASTI

<i>olive ascolane</i>	breaded fried stuffed olives
<i>suppli</i>	Roman fried rice balls with a mozzarella core
<i>crocchette di patate</i>	potato croquettes
<i>fior di zucca</i>	battered fried zucchini flowers, usually stuffed
<i>filetto di baccalà</i>	battered cod fillet
<i>chele di granchio</i>	crab claws
<i>fritto misto</i>	mixed fry
<i>bruschetta · crostini</i>	grilled bread with topping · little toasts

PIZZE — THE REAL MENU

<i>Margherita</i>	tomato, mozzarella, basil — the original Neapolitan
<i>Napoletana</i>	tomato, mozzarella, anchovies, capers
<i>Capricciosa</i>	"capricious" — artichokes, ham, mushrooms, olives, often egg
<i>Funghi</i>	mushrooms
<i>Funghi porcini</i>	porcini mushrooms — premium
<i>Salame piccante</i>	spicy salami (the Italian "pepperoni" you actually want)
<i>Salsiccia · zucchini e salsiccia</i>	sausage · zucchini and sausage
<i>Tonno e cipolla</i>	tuna and onion
<i>Ortolana / primavera</i>	"vegetable garden" — assorted vegetables, often with eggplant and bell peppers
<i>Patate</i>	thinly sliced potatoes — a Roman favorite
<i>Focaccia</i>	no tomato, often rosemary and oil — closer to bread than pizza
<i>Rossa / Bianca</i>	"red" (tomato only) / "white" (no tomato, just oil)

TO DRINK

The classics: *birra alla spina* (draft beer), *Nastro Azzurro*, *Peroni*. House wine is fine but the pizzeria is the one Italian sit-down meal where beer is the default. A liter of *acqua naturale* on the side, almost always.

The pizza al taglio counter — the ritual

This is where most tourists freeze. You walk in, there is a glass counter of fifteen rectangular trays, no menu, no English, and someone behind the counter looking at you with a knife. Here is the script.

DIALOGO · PIZZA AL TAGLIO IN VIA FLORIDA, ROMA

12:30 p.m., lunch crowd, no time. The student walks up to the counter at Antico Forno.

- PIZZAIOLO** *Prego!*
Go ahead!
- STUDENTE** *Vorrei un pezzo di Margherita, e poi un pezzettino di patate.*
I'd like a piece of Margherita, and then a small piece of potato.
- PIZZAIOLO** *(taglia) Va bene così? Basta così?*
(cutting) OK like this? Enough?
- STUDENTE** *Un po' di meno. Sì, basta così.*
A little less. Yes, that's enough.
- PIZZAIOLO** *Anche?*
Anything else?
- STUDENTE** *No mi scusi, vorrei due euro di funghi invece. Poi basta.*
No sorry, I'd like two euros of mushroom instead. Then that's it.
- PIZZAIOLO** *La scaldo? La piego?*
Should I heat them up? Fold them?
- STUDENTE** *Calda per favore, e piegata. Mangio subito.*
Hot please, and folded. I'll eat it right away.

THE AL-TAGLIO MICRO-VOCABULARY

Vorrei un pezzo di... / un pezzettino di...	I'd like a piece of... / a tiny piece of...
Due euro di... / tre euro di...	Two euros of... / three euros of... (how Italians measure their slice)
Anche...? · Poi...	Anything else...? · Then...
No mi scusi, vorrei ____ invece.	No sorry, I'd like ____ instead.
Va bene così? / Basta così?	Is this OK? / Enough?
Di più / di meno / la metà	more / less / half
Mangi subito? / da mangiare subito?	Are you eating it right now?
Da portare via · mangio subito	To take away · I'll eat it now
La scaldo? · caldo per favore / fredda va bene così	Should I heat it? · hot please / cold is fine
La piego? · piegato grazie / lasciala aperta per favore	Should I fold it? · folded thanks / leave it open please
Un pezzo ripieno di cicoria / spinaci / prosciutto e formaggio	A stuffed piece with chicory / spinach / ham and cheese

PAGAMENTO – MONEY WORDS YOU'LL NEED

<i>il resto</i>	change (the money back)
<i>spicci</i>	coins, small change
<i>cambio</i>	change (as in "change for a bill")
<i>Ha spicci?</i>	Do you have small change?
<i>un centesimo · cinquanta centesimi</i>	one cent · 50 cents

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · ROMANESCO AT THE COUNTER

At a Roman pizza al taglio, the pizzaiolo may speak fast and clipped: "*E che te metto?*" ("So what'll I get you?"), "*sta margherita è fresca, daje*" ("this margherita is fresh, c'mon"), "*Anche 'n po' de funghi?*" ("Also a little mushroom?"). The compressed articles (*'sta · 'n po' · de*) are pure Romanesco. Don't panic — point at what you want, repeat the names, you're fine.

TUTOR'S CORNER

The hardest part of this lesson is the speed of the counter. Run the role-play with a 30-second timer per beat. The student is allowed to point and gesture as much as they want; the goal is to get the order in within the time, not to construct perfect sentences. Italians solve this with body language; so should the student. Once they can hit the time, drop the timer and run it again for cleaner Italian.

Esercizi

1. Traduci: "I'd like a piece of Margherita and a small piece of potato. Heat it, please. To eat right now."
2. The counter person asks "*Anche?*". You want two euros of mushroom — what do you say?
3. You don't want it folded. What do you say?
4. List five pizza varieties from this chapter (Italian names only).
5. What's the difference between *peperoni* and "pepperoni"? Why is this a *brutta-figura*?

Pranzo veloce, due euro di patate

Student walks into a busy pizza al taglio counter at lunch. They have €10 and 5 minutes before they need to meet a friend at the Pantheon. Tutor plays the pizzaiolo. Student must (a) pick two slices from a menu the tutor describes verbally, (b) handle a "va bene così?" portion check, (c) decide heating + folding + eat-here/to-go, (d) pay and get change.

Beat 1 — selection. Tutor lists what's on the counter today. Student picks two.

Beat 2 — portion. Tutor cuts; "va bene così?" Student adjusts up or down.

Beat 3 — service. Tutor asks "la scaldo? la piego? mangi subito o da portare via?" in one fast string. Student handles all three.

Beat 4 — pay. Tutor names a total (e.g. "sette e venti" = €7.20). Student pays with a €20 and asks for the right change.

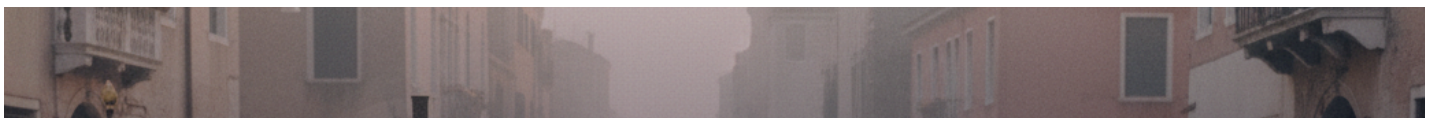
TUTOR BRANCHES

- Tutor switches mid-sentence to Romanesco. Student must keep up.
- The tutor cuts the slice too big and the student needs to ask for less *after* the cut.
- Tutor doesn't have small change and asks "ha spicci?" Student must answer.

PRACTICE PIZZA-AL-TAGLIO WITH A ROMAN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 7½

1. Vorrei un pezzo di Margherita e un pezzettino di patate. La scaldi, per favore. Mangio subito.
2. Sì, due euro di funghi, per favore.
3. Lasciala aperta per favore. (or "non piegata, grazie")
4. Margherita · Capricciosa · Napoletana · Funghi · Ortolana (or any 5 from the menu)
5. *Peperoni* in Italian means bell peppers. American "pepperoni" (spicy salami) is *salame piccante* in Italian. Ordering "una pizza ai peperoni" gets you a bell-pepper pizza — a classic brutta figura.



08

Raccontare un Viaggio

Telling about a trip to Venice — and the second helper verb that changes how you talk about the past

LIVELLO

A2 · REAL CONVERSATIONS

GRAMMATICA

PASSATO PROSSIMO CON
ESSERE · PIACERE

SCENA

VENEZIA (RACCONTATA
DOPO)

ROLE-PLAY TIER

3 · OPEN-ENDED
NARRATION

Chapter 7 covered actions you do to things — *ho mangiato* the pasta, *ho ordinato* the wine. This chapter covers actions about movement and change — you went, you arrived, you stayed, you fell in love with the city — which use a different helper verb: *essere*. And the participle agrees with the subject. Don't panic; the logic is clean.

Passato prossimo with essere

THE VERBS THAT TAKE ESSERE

CATEGORY	VERBS
Motion (no object)	<i>andare · venire · partire · arrivare · uscire · entrare · tornare · salire · scendere · cadere</i>
Change of state	<i>nascere · morire · diventare · crescere · invecchiare · ingrassare · dimagrire</i>
Stay, be, exist	<i>essere · stare · rimanere</i>
Reflexives	<i>all reflexive verbs (mi sono svegliato, ti sei alzato, ci siamo divertiti...)</i>
Pleasing / interesting	<i>piacere · interessare · servire · bastare</i>

Participle agreement with essere: the past participle agrees with the subject in gender and number. *Marco è andato. Anna è andata. Anna e Marco sono andati* (mixed group → masculine plural). *Anna e Lucia sono andate* (all feminine → feminine plural).

EXAMPLE · ANDARE · TO GO (PAST)

io (m / f)	<i>sono andato / andata</i>	Sono andato a Venezia.
tu (m / f)	<i>sei andato / andata</i>	Sei mai andata in Italia?
lui / lei	<i>è andato / andata</i>	Marco è andato a Verona.
noi (m / f / mixed)	<i>siamo andati / andate</i>	Siamo andate insieme.
voi	<i>siete andati / andate</i>	Siete arrivati ieri?
loro	<i>sono andati / andate</i>	Sono partiti la mattina presto.

Piacere – to please (= to like)

Italian doesn't say "I like Venice." It says "Venice is pleasing to me." The verb agrees with what is liked, not with who likes it.

THE PIACERE PATTERN

WHAT IS LIKED	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
singular	<i>mi/ti/gli/le/ci/vi/gli piace + sg.</i>	Mi piace Venezia. I like Venice.
plural	<i>mi/ti/gli/le/ci/vi/gli piacciono + pl.</i>	Mi piacciono i gondolieri. I like the gondoliers.
infinitive (an activity)	<i>mi piace + inf.</i>	Mi piace camminare. I like walking.
past — agrees w/ thing liked	<i>mi è piaciuto/a + sg.</i> <i>mi sono piaciuti/e + pl.</i>	Mi è piaciuta Venezia. Mi sono piaciuti i canali.

DIALOGO · RACCONTARE IL WEEKEND

Monday morning, language lesson. The tutor asks the student about their weekend in Venice.

TUTOR *Allora, dove sei stata nel weekend?*
So, where did you go this weekend?

STUDENTE *Sono andata a Venezia per due giorni. Sono partita venerdì sera in treno e sono arrivata alle dieci.*
I went to Venice for two days. I left Friday evening by train and arrived at 10.

TUTOR *E ti è piaciuta?*
And did you like it?

STUDENTE *Sì, moltissimo. Mi sono piaciuti soprattutto i piccoli canali del Cannaregio. Ho mangiato bene, ho camminato tanto, e ho visto Piazza San Marco al tramonto.*
Yes, very much. I particularly liked the small canals in Cannaregio. I ate well, walked a lot, and saw Piazza San Marco at sunset.

TUTOR *E hai preso una gondola?*
And did you take a gondola?

STUDENTE *No, non l'ho presa. È troppo cara. Sono andata in vaporetto.*
No, I didn't take one. It's too expensive. I took the vaporetto instead.

CULTURAL NOTE · CIAO AND THE VENETIAN ROOT

Ciao is the most international Italian word. It comes from the Venetian *s-ciao vostro*, "(I am) your slave" — a humble medieval greeting that softened over centuries into the warm hello/goodbye it is today. The Venetian "s-c" is pronounced as a "s" followed by a soft "ch" — a sound you can still hear in older Venetians who slip into the dialect.

DIALECT COMPARE · VENETO

Standard: *sono andato a casa* · Veneto: *"so' 'ndà casa"* — note the dropped article and elided endings. Northern dialects tend to compress; southern ones tend to add vowels. Listen, don't reproduce, until your standard Italian is solid.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD

"Da impazzire" — "to lose your mind over." Italians say *"Venezia è da impazzire"* meaning "Venice is unreal/incredible." Functions like "mind-blowing." Useful when you're recommending something with enthusiasm.

TUTOR'S CORNER

The trap at A2 is mixing helpers — *"ho andato"* instead of *"sono andato"*. Drill it as a binary: tutor calls a verb, student must say *"avere"* or *"essere"* before producing the form. Once the helper choice is automatic, agreement comes next. For the agreement, run a one-minute story: student tells what they did yesterday in 6 sentences, you flag any participle that didn't agree, and they redo it.

Esercizi

1. Avere o essere? Coniuga: io (andare) _____ a Venezia · noi (mangiare) _____ bene · Anna (alzarsi) _____ presto · loro (tornare) _____ a casa · voi (vedere) _____ il film.
2. Mi piace o mi piacciono? _____ Venezia · _____ i canali · _____ camminare in centro · _____ la cucina veneta.
3. Al passato: Mi piace Venezia → _____. Mi piacciono i canali → _____.
4. Traduci: "We went to Venice last weekend. We arrived on Friday and left on Sunday. We liked the small canals very much."
5. Tell your own one-paragraph travel story in 5 sentences (past tense, mixed helpers).

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 3 · OPEN-ENDED NARRATION

Il mio viaggio in Italia

Student is meeting a new Italian friend. They are asked about a trip they have actually taken (real or imagined). The student narrates in past tense, the tutor asks unscripted follow-ups. The conversation runs five to seven minutes without falling into English.

Beat 1 — opening. Tutor: "Allora, hai mai viaggiato in Italia? Raccontami." Student gives a 30-second overview.

Beat 2 — drilling down. Tutor asks where, when, with whom, by what transport. Student answers each in past tense.

Beat 3 — the highlight. Tutor: "Cosa ti è piaciuto di più? Perché?" Student answers using *mi è piaciuto/a/i/e* correctly.

Beat 4 — the low point. Tutor: "E qualcosa che non ti è piaciuta?" Student responds with one disappointment and explains briefly.

Beat 5 — recommend. Tutor: "Cosa consigli di vedere assolutamente?" Student gives 2-3 recommendations (preview imperative + indirect object).

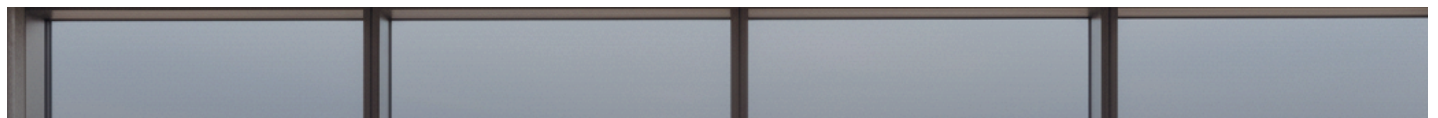
TUTOR BRANCHES

- Student makes a helper-verb mistake. Tutor repeats the sentence correctly — student must self-correct, then continue.
- Tutor asks for a specific detail the student didn't mention: "*e dove avete dormito?*" Student improvises.

TELL YOUR ITALY STORY TO A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 8

1. sono andato/a · abbiamo mangiato · si è alzata · sono tornati/e · avete visto
2. mi piace · mi piacciono · mi piace · mi piace
3. Mi è piaciuta Venezia · Mi sono piaciuti i canali
4. *Siamo andati/e a Venezia il weekend scorso. Siamo arrivati/e venerdì e siamo partiti/e domenica. Ci sono piaciuti molto i piccoli canali.*
5. (open)



CAPITOLO NOVE · MILANO

09 Al Telefono

Business Italian — the formal register, on a phone call with a Milanese supplier

LIVELLO

A2 · BUSINESS ITALIAN
PRIMER

GRAMMATICA

LEI FORMAL · IMPERATIVO
FORMALE · EMAIL
REGISTER

SCENA

TELEFONATA D'AFFARI,
MILANO

ROLE-PLAY TIER

3 · FORMAL UNDER
PRESSURE

Business Italian is not a different language. It is the same Italian, with the formality dial turned to maximum. You stay on *Lei* from the first *pronto* to the final *grazie, a presto*. You avoid slang. You use longer, more deliberate constructions. You replace *ciao* with *buongiorno* in every greeting. Get this register clean and you can operate inside an Italian company — make a phone call, write a follow-up email, sit through a meeting — at A2.

Phone etiquette — the script

ANSWERING THE PHONE

Picking up	<i>Pronto?</i>	"Hello?" — said only when you answer, never when you call.
Identifying yourself when calling	<i>Sono [name].</i>	"This is [name]."
Identifying yourself answering at work	<i>[Company]. [Name], buongiorno.</i>	"[Company]. [Name] speaking, good morning."
Asking for someone	<i>Posso parlare con... ?</i>	"May I speak with...?"
Transferring a call	<i>Le passo... / Glielo passo.</i>	"I'll put you through to..."
"They're not available"	<i>Mi dispiace, è in riunione.</i>	"I'm sorry, they're in a meeting."
Asking to leave a message	<i>Posso lasciare un messaggio?</i>	"May I leave a message?"
Confirming an appointment	<i>Le confermo per martedì alle 15.</i>	"I confirm for Tuesday at 3pm."

Formal imperative – Lei

The formal imperative is built from the present subjunctive (which we'll cover in Book 2). For now: most regular verbs follow this pattern.

LEI-IMPERATIVE FOR THE VERBS YOU NEED MOST

TU-IMPERATIVE (INFORMAL)	LEI-IMPERATIVE (FORMAL)	MEANING
aspetta!	<i>aspetti, per favore</i>	wait, please
scusa!	<i>scusi / mi scusi</i>	excuse me
senti	<i>senta</i>	listen / excuse me (getting attention)
dimmi	<i>mi dica</i>	tell me / how can I help you
vieni	<i>venga</i>	come
va'	<i>vada</i>	go
prendi	<i>prenda</i>	take
siediti	<i>si accomodi</i>	have a seat

DIALOGO · TELEFONATA D'AFFARI

11 a.m. Tuesday. Anna calls a Milanese supplier (Sig. Conti) about a delayed shipment. Stay in Lei throughout.

CENTRALINO *Conti Forniture, buongiorno.*

Conti Supplies, good morning.

ANNA *Buongiorno. Sono Anna Russo della Strommen Inc. Posso parlare con il signor Conti, per favore?*

Good morning. This is Anna Russo from Strommen Inc. May I speak with Mr. Conti, please?

CENTRALINO *Un attimo, glielo passo.*

One moment, I'll put you through.

SIG. CONTI *Conti, pronto.*

Conti, hello.

ANNA *Buongiorno, signor Conti. La chiamo per l'ordine di ieri. Volevo conferma della consegna.*

Good morning, Mr. Conti. I'm calling about yesterday's order. I wanted to confirm the delivery.

SIG. CONTI *Mi dica il numero dell'ordine.*

Tell me the order number.

ANNA *È il 27.498.*

It's 27,498.

SIG. CONTI *Vedo. Purtroppo abbiamo un ritardo di due giorni. Mi scusi tanto. La consegna sarà giovedì invece di martedì.*

I see. Unfortunately we have a two-day delay. My apologies. The delivery will be Thursday instead of Tuesday.

ANNA *Capisco. Mi può confermare per iscritto, via email?*

I understand. Can you confirm in writing, by email?

SIG. CONTI *Certamente. Le mando subito una conferma. Mi dia il Suo indirizzo.*

Of course. I'll send you a confirmation right away. Give me your address.

ANNA *Grazie. La ricontatto se ci sono altri problemi. Buona giornata.*

Thank you. I'll get back to you if there are any other issues. Have a good day.

Business email — the openings and closings that matter

EMAIL REGISTER

Egregio Signor Conti, / Gentile Sig.ra Bianchi,	Dear Mr. Conti, / Dear Ms. Bianchi, — formal opening
Buongiorno, / Buonasera,	Less formal but professional opening
Le scrivo in merito a...	I am writing regarding...
In riferimento a...	With reference to...
Le sarei grato/a se...	I would be grateful if...
Resto a Sua disposizione	I remain at your disposal
Cordiali saluti, / Distinti saluti,	Best regards, / Sincerely,
In attesa di un Suo riscontro	Awaiting your reply

CULTURAL NOTE · THE CAPITAL L IN LEI

In formal written Italian, the pronoun *Lei* (and the possessive *Suo / Sua / Suoi / Sue*) is capitalized when it means "you" formal. "*Le scrivo per ringraziarLa del Suo tempo*" ("I am writing to thank you for your time"). This is a courtesy marker, not optional in business correspondence. In dialogue and casual writing, lowercase is fine; in business email, the capital signals respect.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · MILANO

Real Milanese is dying as a daily-use language. What you will hear is standard Italian with Milanese cadence and a few signature lexical items: "*ciumbia!*" (mild surprise), "*tac*" (filler — "click," "and just like that"). In a business call you will hear none of this — it is for the bar after work.

TUTOR'S CORNER

The hardest jump for an A2 student is dropping *tu* for a full conversation. Practice it as a constraint game: tutor and student have a 5-minute exchange. If either uses a *tu*-form, they lose a point. Set a 3-loss limit. Most students lock in formal register after two rounds.

Esercizi

- Convert to formal (*Lei*): "*aspetta, ascolta, dimmi, scusa, siediti*" → _____, _____, _____, _____, _____
- You answer a business call. What do you say?
- Translate (formal): "Good morning, this is Marco Rossi from Strommen. I'm calling about the delivery. Can you confirm the date in writing?"
- Write a 4-sentence business email opening and closing about a missed delivery.
- List five things you say in *Lei* that you would never say in *tu*.

Una telefonata complicata

The student is calling an Italian supplier about a delayed order. The tutor plays the receptionist, then the manager — who is friendly but vague, gives shifting information, and slips into *tu* at one point to test whether the student stays formal.

Beat 1 — reception. Student introduces themselves, asks for the manager.

Beat 2 — opening with the manager. Student states the reason for the call clearly. Uses "*La chiamo per...*" or "*Le scrivo in merito a...*" (written equivalent if doing via email follow-up).

Beat 3 — the inconsistency. The manager says the order will arrive Thursday. Two minutes later they say it might be next week. Student must request a firm date and confirmation in writing.

Beat 4 — the tu-slip. The manager says "*senti, te lo confermo per email*" — using *tu*. Student must stay formal in response: "*La ringrazio, attendo la conferma.*"

Beat 5 — closing. Student confirms the next steps and ends the call.

TUTOR BRANCHES

- The manager goes on at length about an unrelated topic. Student must politely steer the conversation back.
- The manager asks for the order number in numbers *spoken*. Student must produce 5-digit numbers (e.g., 27.498) cleanly.
- Follow-up email writing: tutor gives 5 minutes to draft a formal 4-sentence email confirming what was just agreed.

WORK WITH A BUSINESS ITALIAN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 9

1. aspetti · ascolti / senta · mi dica · scusi / mi scusi · si accomodi
2. "[Company name]. [Name], buongiorno."
3. Buongiorno, sono Marco Rossi della Strommen. La chiamo per la consegna. Mi può confermare la data per iscritto?
4. (model) Gentile Signor Conti, Le scrivo in merito alla consegna n. 27.498. Purtroppo non è ancora arrivata. Le sarei grato se mi confermasse la nuova data per iscritto. In attesa di un Suo riscontro, cordiali saluti, [name].
5. Examples: mi dica · si accomodi · La chiamo per... · Le sarei grato/a se... · Resto a Sua disposizione



CAPITOLO DIECI · BOLOGNA

10 Dal Medico

Pronto soccorso — the body, the symptoms, and the modal verbs that get you treated

LIVELLO A2 · REAL CONVERSATIONS	GRAMMATICA IL CORPO · MI FA MALE · DOVERE / POTERE / VOLERE	SCENA PRONTO SOCCORSO, OSPEDALE SANT'ORSOLA	ROLE-PLAY TIER 3 · HIGH-STAKES ACCURACY
---	---	--	--

If you only learn one chapter from this book before traveling, learn this one. Knowing how to describe what hurts, in clear Italian, is the difference between a 10-minute and a 3-hour wait at *pronto soccorso*. The vocabulary is small. The constructions are predictable. By the end of the chapter you can name twenty parts of the body and produce two reliable sentences that any Italian doctor will understand.

The body

IL CORPO UMANO

la testa	head
il viso / la faccia	face
gli occhi · l'occhio	eyes · eye
il naso · le orecchie	nose · ears
la bocca · i denti · la lingua	mouth · teeth · tongue
il collo	neck
la spalla · le spalle	shoulder · shoulders
il braccio · le braccia	arm · arms (irregular plural)
la mano · le mani	hand · hands (feminine despite ending in -o)
il dito · le dita	finger · fingers (irregular plural)
il petto · la schiena	chest · back
la pancia / lo stomaco	belly / stomach
la gamba · il ginocchio · il piede	leg · knee · foot
il cuore · i polmoni · il fegato	heart · lungs · liver

"Mi fa male" — it hurts me

The single most useful sentence for the doctor's office. Literally "it does bad to me." The verb agrees with the body part. The pronoun is the indirect object pronoun (mi, ti, gli, le, ci, vi, gli).

THE MI FA MALE FORMULA

singular body part	mi fa male + il/la...	Mi fa male la testa. My head hurts.
plural body part	mi fanno male + i/le...	Mi fanno male le gambe.
"I have a headache"	ho mal di + body part	Ho mal di testa. Ho mal di gola. Ho mal di stomaco.
"I'm not feeling well"	non mi sento bene	Non mi sento bene. I don't feel well.
"I have a fever"	ho la febbre / la febbre alta	Ho la febbre a 38. I have a fever of 38°C.

Dovere, potere, volere — modal verbs

THE THREE MODALS TOGETHER (PRESENT)

PRONOUN	DOVERE · MUST / HAVE TO	POTERE · CAN / BE ABLE	VOLERE · WANT
io	<i>devo</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>voglio</i>
tu	<i>devi</i>	<i>puoi</i>	<i>vuoi</i>
lui/lei	<i>deve</i>	<i>può</i>	<i>vuole</i>
noi	<i>dobbiamo</i>	<i>possiamo</i>	<i>vogliamo</i>
voi	<i>dovete</i>	<i>potete</i>	<i>volete</i>
loro	<i>devono</i>	<i>possono</i>	<i>vogliono</i>

All three are followed by an infinitive: *devo andare dal medico, posso aspettare, voglio sapere.*

DIALOGO · AL PRONTO SOCCORSO

Ospedale Sant'Orsola, Bologna. 11 a.m. The student went out running and twisted an ankle.

INFERMIERA *Mi dica, come sta?*

Tell me, how are you feeling?

STUDENTE *Mi sono fatto male alla caviglia. Sono caduto correndo.*

I hurt my ankle. I fell while running.

INFERMIERA *Le fa molto male?*

Does it hurt a lot?

STUDENTE *Sì, abbastanza. Non posso camminare bene.*

Yes, fairly. I can't walk well.

INFERMIERA *Si accomodi. Il medico La vede tra venti minuti circa. Ha la tessera sanitaria?*

Have a seat. The doctor will see you in about 20 minutes. Do you have your health card?

STUDENTE *No, sono americano. Ho l'assicurazione di viaggio.*

No, I'm American. I have travel insurance.

[AFTER THE VISIT]

MEDICO *Allora, è una distorsione, non una frattura. Deve riposare per dieci giorni. Le prescrivo un antinfiammatorio. Tre volte al giorno, dopo i pasti.*

So, it's a sprain, not a fracture. You need to rest for 10 days. I'll prescribe an anti-inflammatory. Three times a day, after meals.

CULTURAL NOTE · PRONTO SOCCORSO

Italian public health (Sistema Sanitario Nazionale) is universal and largely free at point of care, including for tourists with valid travel insurance or EU residents with the European Health Insurance Card. At a *pronto soccorso* (ER), patients are triaged by color code (*codice bianco* = lowest urgency through *codice rosso* = highest). Bring a passport and your insurance card. You will see signs in English at major hospitals.

DIALECT COMPARE · "I'M NOT FEELING WELL"

Standard: *non mi sento bene* · Romanesco: *"sto na schifezza"* ("I'm a mess" — informal, with friends) · Napoletano: *"nun me senta buon"* · Siciliano: *"nun mi sentu bonu"*. At the doctor's, stay on standard.

TUTOR'S CORNER

This is the chapter where reflexive past tense returns: *"mi sono fatto male"*. The structure is sufficiently weird (reflexive + essere helper + agreement) that students stall on it. Drill three forms only — *mi sono fatto/a male alla... / al... / alle...* — for the most common body parts. Once those flow, the rest follows.

Esercizi

1. Coniuga: *dovere* — io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, loro _____.
2. Coniuga: *potere* — io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, loro _____.
3. Traduci: "I have a headache and a sore throat. I have a fever of 38°C. I can't sleep. I want to see a doctor."
4. Tell the nurse: you twisted your ankle this morning while running, it hurts a lot, you can't walk well.
5. The doctor prescribes a medicine, three times a day, after meals, for 10 days. Repeat the instructions back in Italian.

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 3 · HIGH-STAKES ACCURACY

Pronto soccorso

Student arrives at pronto soccorso. They draw a scenario card from the tutor: (a) sprained ankle, (b) high fever and sore throat, (c) chest pain from too much coffee and stress, (d) cut hand from cooking. The conversation proceeds with reception, a nurse, and a doctor.

Beat 1 — reception. State the problem in one clear sentence. Provide name, age, country. Stay in *Lei*.

Beat 2 — triage with nurse. Describe symptoms with specifics: where, how long, how bad on a scale of 1-10, whether you took anything for it.

Beat 3 — doctor's exam. Answer follow-up questions. Use past tense for what happened, present for what hurts now.

Beat 4 — prescription. The doctor gives instructions. Student must repeat them back in Italian to confirm understanding: dose, frequency, with or without food, duration.

TUTOR BRANCHES

- The doctor uses medical Italian the student doesn't know (*distorsione, infiammazione, antinfiammatorio*). Student must ask *"può ripetere in parole più semplici?"*
- The nurse misunderstands which body part. Student must point and clarify.

PRACTICE HIGH-STAKES ITALIAN WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 10

1. devo · devi · deve · dobbiamo · devono
2. posso · puoi · può · possiamo · possono
3. *Ho mal di testa e mal di gola. Ho la febbre a 38. Non riesco a dormire. Voglio vedere un medico.*
4. *Mi sono fatto/a male alla caviglia stamattina mentre correvo. Mi fa molto male. Non posso camminare bene.*
5. *Allora, prendo il medicinale tre volte al giorno, dopo i pasti, per dieci giorni. Giusto?*



11

Opinioni e Preferenze

Aperitivo with friends — the verbs that let you have an opinion in Italian

LIVELLO

A2 · REAL CONVERSATIONS

GRAMMATICA

COMPARATIVI ·
SUPERLATIVI · PIACERE /
PREFERIRE

SCENA

APERITIVO, NAVIGLI,
MILANO

ROLE-PLAY TIER

4 · OPEN — DEFEND A
POSITION

Italians love to argue about food, football, music, and which region's cuisine is best. The arguments are short, friendly, theatrical, and follow patterns. To take part, you need three things: the comparative (this is better than that), the superlative (this is the best), and a handful of opinion phrases that let you push back without sounding hostile.

Comparativi — più / meno / così

COMPARATIVE FORMS

TO COMPARE	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
more X than Y	più ... di / che	Roma è più grande di Bologna.
less X than Y	meno ... di / che	La pizza romana è meno spessa della napoletana.
as X as Y	(così) ... come / tanto ... quanto	Milano è tanto cara quanto Roma.

Use "di" before nouns and pronouns: *più alto di Marco*. **Use "che"** before adjectives, infinitives, prepositional phrases, and when comparing two of the same category in a single sentence: *più caro che buono, più in Italia che in Francia*.

IRREGULAR COMPARATIVES – MEMORIZE

ADJECTIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
buono (good)	<i>migliore</i>	<i>il migliore / ottimo</i>
cattivo (bad)	<i>peggiore</i>	<i>il peggiore / pessimo</i>
grande (big)	<i>maggiore / più grande</i>	<i>il maggiore / il più grande</i>
piccolo (small)	<i>minore / più piccolo</i>	<i>il minore / il più piccolo</i>

Superlativo assoluto – the -issimo ending

To say something is "very, very X," drop the final vowel and add *-issimo/a/i/e*. *buono* → *buonissimo*. *bello* → *bellissimo*. *caro* → *carissimo*. *stanco* → *stanchissimo*. This is constant in spoken Italian.

Opinion phrases

HOW TO HAVE AN OPINION IN ITALIAN

<i>secondo me / secondo te</i>	in my opinion / in your opinion
<i>a mio parere / dal mio punto di vista</i>	in my view / from my point of view
<i>penso che / credo che</i>	I think that / I believe that (subjunctive in next book; for now use indicative)
<i>sono d'accordo / non sono d'accordo</i>	I agree / I disagree
<i>hai ragione / hai torto</i>	you're right / you're wrong
<i>dipende</i>	it depends
<i>forse / probabilmente / sicuramente</i>	maybe / probably / for sure
<i>preferisco / piuttosto</i>	I prefer / rather

DIALOGO · APERITIVO SUI NAVIGLI

Friday evening, Navigli, Milano. Three friends — Anna, Marco, Sofia — argue about the best pizza.

MARCO *Secondo me la pizza napoletana è la migliore. Punto.*

In my opinion Neapolitan pizza is the best. Period.

ANNA *Non sono d'accordo. La napoletana è troppo molle. Preferisco la romana, più croccante.*

I disagree. Neapolitan is too soft. I prefer Roman, crunchier.

MARCO *Croccante? Una pizza non deve essere croccante, deve essere morbida! È pane!*

Crunchy? A pizza shouldn't be crunchy, it should be soft! It's bread!

SOFIA *Calmi, calmi. Dipende. La napoletana è buonissima a Napoli, ma fuori... non sempre. La romana viaggia meglio.*

Calm down. It depends. Neapolitan is amazing in Naples, but outside... not always. The Roman one travels better.

MARCO *Hai ragione su Napoli. Ma a parità di condizioni, la napoletana vince.*

You're right about Naples. But all things equal, the Neapolitan wins.

ANNA *Forse. Ma a me piace la romana e basta.*

Maybe. But I like Roman and that's that.

CULTURAL NOTE · DISAGREEING IN ITALIAN

Italians disagree fast, loudly, and without offense — provided the topic is opinion, not personal. *"Non sono d'accordo"*, *"hai torto"*, *"ma dai!"* ("come on!") are normal in a friendly argument. The volume is not anger. What matters is not winning the argument; it is enjoying the back-and-forth. Concede a small point (*"hai ragione su X, ma..."*) and you become a better debate partner, not a weaker one.

DIALECT COMPARE · "I DON'T AGREE!"

Standard: *non sono d'accordo* · Romanesco: *"ma daje, no eh?"* · Neapolitano: *"e che dici?"* ("but what are you saying?") · Siciliano: *"ma chi rici?"* (same idea). All four are friendly disagreement, not hostility.

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD

"Boh" — a uniquely Italian filler meaning "I don't know / who knows / no idea." Said with a shrug. *"Boh, dipende"* = "I don't know, it depends." Use sparingly with strangers; use freely with friends. The complementary *"mah"* means "well, I'm skeptical."

TUTOR'S CORNER

This is the first chapter where the student should be encouraged to *push back*. Pick a topic the student has a real opinion on — best food, best city, best film genre — and disagree on purpose. They will reach for English under pressure. Bring them back to Italian with the comparative and the opinion phrases. Five forced rounds in one lesson and they have a real conversational skill.

Esercizi

1. Comparativi: forma la frase. (a) Roma + Bologna (più grande): _____. (b) Milano + Firenze (più cara): _____. (c) la pizza + la pasta (più buona, parità): _____.
2. Trasforma con -issimo: *buono* → _____, *bello* → _____, *caro* → _____, *stanco* → _____.
3. Esprimi un'opinione: in your view, which is better — Italian or French food? Write three sentences using *secondo me*, *preferisco*, *dipende*.
4. Translate: "I agree on the pizza, but you're wrong about the wine. In my opinion, Tuscan wine is much better than Sicilian."
5. Write your own 4-sentence opinion paragraph about your favorite Italian city. Use one comparative and one -issimo.

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 4 · OPEN · DEFEND A POSITION

L'aperitivo argument

Student and tutor are old friends at aperitivo. The tutor draws a topic card: best Italian city, best food, best Italian film, where in Italy to retire, north vs south. The student must take a position and defend it for at least three minutes. The tutor pushes back. No English. If the student stalls, the tutor offers a single Italian word, not a translation.

Beat 1 — opening claim. Student: "*Secondo me la città più bella d'Italia è [X], perché...*"

Beat 2 — tutor disagrees. "*Ma no, dai. [Y] è molto meglio, perché...*"

Beat 3 — student counter. Concede one point, push back on another. "*Hai ragione su [Z], però...*"

Beat 4 — tutor escalates. Strong opinion language: "*ma dai!*", "*non scherzare!*" Student must stay in the argument.

Beat 5 — synthesis. Both arrive at "*dipende*" and clink glasses.

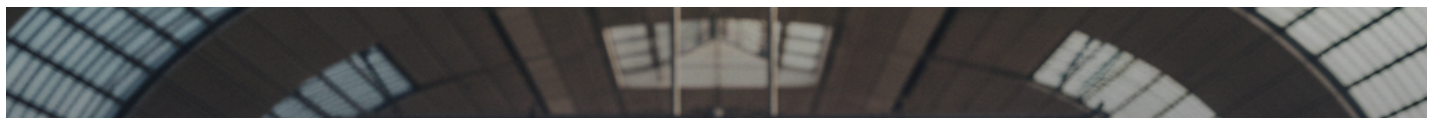
TUTOR BRANCHES

- Tutor uses a regional comparative ("*a Bologna si mangia meglio che a Firenze*"). Student must respond with their own comparative.
- Tutor concedes a point — does the student double down or concede back? Both are valid; the student should make the choice deliberately.

ARGUE WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 11

1. (a) Roma è più grande di Bologna. (b) Milano è più cara di Firenze. (c) La pizza è (tanto) buona quanto la pasta.
2. buonissimo · bellissimo · carissimo · stanchissimo
3. (open)
4. *Sono d'accordo sulla pizza, ma hai torto sul vino. Secondo me, il vino toscano è molto migliore del siciliano.*
5. (open)



12

Pianificare il Futuro

Planning a trip together — and a taste of what comes next, in Book Two

LIVELLO

A2 → B1 BRIDGE

GRAMMATICA

ANDARE A + INF · FUTURO
SEMPLICE

SCENA

PIANIFICAZIONE, STAZIONE
TERMINI, ROMA

ROLE-PLAY TIER

4 · COLLABORATIVE
PLANNING WITH
DISAGREEMENT

For the near future, Italian (like English) uses a present construction: "*vado a Roma domani*" ("I'm going to Rome tomorrow"). For longer-range or more deliberate futures, Italian has its own simple future tense — *il futuro semplice* — that introduces a different sound (the unfamiliar -ò, -ai, -à, -emo, -ete, -anno endings) and a slightly more decided tone. You will use it less than the present, but you must recognize it everywhere.

Near future — "andare a + infinitive" and the present

THE EVERYDAY NEAR FUTURE

I'm going to study tomorrow.	<i>Domani studio. / Domani vado a studiare.</i>
We're going to leave Friday.	<i>Partiamo venerdì.</i>
Are you going to come?	<i>Vieni?</i>

In conversation, the simple present + a time word handles 80% of near-future statements. Italians say "*domani parto*" the way English speakers say "tomorrow I'm leaving."

Futuro semplice — the future you will read in headlines and travel signs

PARLARE · SCRIVERE · PARTIRE · IN FUTURO SEMPLICE

PRONOUN	-ARE → -ERÒ	-ERE → -ERÒ	-IRE → -IRÒ
io	<i>parlerò</i>	<i>scriverò</i>	<i>partirò</i>
tu	<i>parlerai</i>	<i>scriverai</i>	<i>partirai</i>
lui/lei	<i>parlerà</i>	<i>scriverà</i>	<i>partirà</i>
noi	<i>parleremo</i>	<i>scriveremo</i>	<i>partiremo</i>
voi	<i>parlerete</i>	<i>scriverete</i>	<i>partirete</i>
loro	<i>parleranno</i>	<i>scriveranno</i>	<i>partiranno</i>

Note that -are verbs change the stem vowel: *parlare* → *parlerò*. Essential irregular futures to memorize: *essere* → *sarò*; *avere* → *avrò*; *andare* → *andrò*; *venire* → *verrò*; *fare* → *farò*; *dare* → *darò*; *vedere* → *vedrò*; *potere* → *potrò*; *dovere* → *dovrò*; *volere* → *vorrò*.

Planning vocabulary

PIANIFICARE UN VIAGGIO

prenotare / la prenotazione to book / the reservation

l'andata / il ritorno outbound / return

il biglietto / i biglietti ticket / tickets

la coincidenza connection (train, bus)

il binario platform

in anticipo / in ritardo / in orario early / late / on time

organizzare to organize, to plan

decidere to decide

proporre to propose, suggest

DIALOGO · UN VIAGGIO INSIEME

Anna and Marco, in a café in Trastevere, planning a long weekend together. They cannot agree on where to go.

- ANNA** *Allora, per il weekend lungo, dove andiamo? Io vorrei Napoli.*
So, for the long weekend, where are we going? I'd like Naples.
- MARCO** *Napoli è bella, ma fa già un po' caldo. Preferirei la montagna. Andremo in Trentino?*
Naples is nice, but it's already a bit warm. I'd prefer the mountains. Shall we go to Trentino?
- ANNA** *Trentino in primavera, sì, ma a fine maggio fa ancora fresco la sera.*
Trentino in spring, yes, but at the end of May it's still cool in the evening.
- MARCO** *Compromesso: Cinque Terre. Mare ma non caldo, cammineremo, mangeremo bene.*
Compromise: Cinque Terre. Sea but not hot, we'll walk, we'll eat well.
- ANNA** *Va bene. Allora prenoto io il treno per venerdì sera. Tu cerchi un albergo a Monterosso?*
OK. So I'll book the train for Friday evening. You look for a hotel in Monterosso?
- MARCO** *Perfetto. Quanto pensi di spendere?*
Perfect. How much are you thinking of spending?
- ANNA** *Sotto i 200 euro a testa, possibilmente.*
Under 200 euro per person, ideally.

CULTURAL NOTE · THE PROPOSAL-AND-COUNTER RHYTHM

Italian planning conversations sound like Italian arguments: lots of proposals, lots of counter-proposals, and a compromise that arrives faster than the volume would suggest. The structure: someone proposes ("*andiamo a X*"), someone counter-proposes ("*o forse meglio Y*"), they iterate, they land. Stay in it. Don't take the back-and-forth personally — that's how the plan gets made.

DIALECT COMPARE · "WHAT SHALL WE DO?"

Standard: *che facciamo?* · Romanesco: "*ched'è che famo?*" (truncated, fast) · Napoletano: "*che facimm'?*" · Siciliano: "*chi facemu?*".

SLANG SPOTLIGHT · STANDARD

"*Tanto vale*" — "it's just as well" / "might as well." Used when settling on a choice: "*tanto vale prenotare adesso*" ("might as well book now"). A small phrase that signals you have decided.

TUTOR'S CORNER

For the future tense, drill recognition before production. Show 10 sentences mixing present and future; the student identifies which are future and translates. Then flip — they convert 10 present-tense sentences into the simple future. Most students arrive at B1 having seen the future tense but not used it. The recognition drill closes that gap quickly.

What's next: in Book Two we step into B1 — the subjunctive, the conditional, indirect speech. The first chapter is a philosophical conversation with a friend over wine: "*Penso che la vita sia...*", "*Se potessi cambiare una cosa...*". The grammar is harder; the conversations are deeper. Welcome to the next room.

Esercizi

1. Futuro semplice: io / parlare → _____; tu / partire → _____; noi / andare → _____; loro / venire → _____; lei / essere → _____.
2. Coniuga *avere* al futuro: io _____, tu _____, lei _____, noi _____, voi _____, loro _____.
3. Traduci: "Tomorrow we will leave at 7. We'll take the train to Florence, then we'll have lunch and we'll visit the Uffizi."
4. Propose a weekend trip in 3 sentences. Counter-propose in 3 sentences. Land on a compromise in 2 sentences.
5. List five things you will do in Italy next year, in the future tense.

ROLE-PLAY · TIER 4 · COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Organizziamo il weekend

Student and tutor are planning a long weekend in Italy together. The tutor has a preference (mountains); the student has a different one (the sea). They have €400 each, 3 days, and must agree on a destination, transport, lodging, and one specific activity. The conversation must last seven minutes in Italian, with at least four uses of the future tense.

Beat 1 — opening proposal. Each side states their preference and a reason.

Beat 2 — counter and compromise. One proposes a middle option; the other accepts or counter-proposes again.

Beat 3 — logistics. Train or car? Departure time? Who books what? Use future tense for the "who will do what" decisions.

Beat 4 — the specific activity. Propose one specific thing to do on Day 2 (a hike, a museum, a restaurant). Decide.

Beat 5 — budget check. Run through estimated costs. Resolve any over-budget items.

TUTOR BRANCHES

- Tutor pushes hard for a more expensive hotel. Student must hold the budget.
- The train Anna wanted is sold out. Student improvises an alternative.
- End on the future tense: each side says one sentence about what they will do *after* the trip.

PLAN YOUR REAL ITALY TRIP WITH A STROMMEN TUTOR →

ANSWER KEY · CHAPTER 12

1. parlerò · partirai · andremo · verranno · sarà
2. avrò · avrai · avrà · avremo · avrete · avranno
3. *Domani partiremo alle sette. Prenderemo il treno per Firenze, poi pranzteremo e visiteremo gli Uffizi.*
4. (open)
5. (open)

CILS A2 • Mock exam

The Certificazione di Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS), issued by the Università per Stranieri di Siena, is the most widely recognized A1–C2 certification for Italian as a foreign language. The A2 level is the natural goal for a student who finishes this book. This appendix is a half-length mock exam in the official format, with marking guidance for tutors.

Part 1 – Ascolto • Listening comprehension (10 minutes)

Your tutor will read the following dialogue aloud once at normal speed, then a second time slowly. Then answer the questions.

AUDIO SCRIPT • ALLA STAZIONE DI ROMA TERMINI

VOCE *Il treno regionale per Napoli, delle dieci e quaranta, partirà dal binario undici. È in ritardo di dieci minuti.*

The regional train for Naples, at 10:40, will depart from platform 11. It's running ten minutes late.

MARCO *Scusa Anna, hai sentito? Dobbiamo andare al binario undici, non al sette.*

ANNA *E parte alle dieci e cinquanta, allora. Abbiamo ancora venti minuti. Andiamo a prendere un caffè?*

MARCO *Tanto vale, sì. Ma facciamo veloci.*

1. A che ora parte il treno per Napoli? _____
2. Da quale binario? _____
3. Quanti minuti di ritardo? _____
4. Cosa decidono di fare nei venti minuti? _____

Part 2 – Comprensione • Reading comprehension (15 minutes)

Lucia ha trent'anni e abita a Bologna. Lavora in una piccola libreria del centro. Ogni mattina si sveglia alle sette, fa colazione a casa con un caffè e una fetta di pane, poi va al lavoro in bicicletta. La libreria apre alle nove e mezzo. Lucia lavora fino all'una, pranza con una collega, e ricomincia alle tre del pomeriggio. La sera, quando torna a casa, le piace cucinare. Il fine settimana esce con gli amici: aperitivo, cinema, qualche volta una gita fuori città.

1. Dove abita Lucia? _____
2. Che lavoro fa? _____
3. Come va al lavoro? _____
4. A che ora apre la libreria? _____
5. Cosa le piace fare la sera a casa? _____
6. Cosa fa il fine settimana? Scrivi due cose. _____

Part 3 – Strutture • Grammar (10 minutes)

1. Completa con il passato prossimo: Ieri io _____ (mangiare) in trattoria con i miei amici.

2. Ieri Anna _____ (andare) a Roma per il weekend.
3. Inserisci la preposizione: Vado _____ Italia per due settimane.
4. Inserisci il possessivo "my": _____ sorella si chiama Sofia.
5. Completa con dovere/potere/volere: _____ (io, dovere) studiare di più, ma non _____ (volere).
6. Trasforma in futuro: "Domani vado a Roma." → _____

Part 4 – Produzione scritta · Writing (20 minutes)

Choose **one** of the following. Write 80-100 words in Italian.

- A. Scrivi una mail a un amico italiano per raccontare la tua giornata di ieri. Cosa hai fatto la mattina, il pomeriggio, la sera.
- B. Scrivi una mail formale a un albergo per prenotare una camera doppia dal 15 al 18 giugno. Chiedi il prezzo e se la colazione è inclusa.

Part 5 – Produzione orale · Speaking (8 minutes with examiner)

The tutor plays the examiner. Three sections, each 2-3 minutes:

1. **Presentazione** — "Mi parli di Lei. Da dove viene? Cosa fa? Cosa Le piace fare?"
2. **Compito** — "Mi racconti un viaggio recente." (Use past tense throughout.)
3. **Interazione** — Role-play card: "Lei è in un ristorante. Ordini un pasto completo, chiedi informazioni sul vino, paghi."

MARKING RUBRIC · FOR THE TUTOR

Listening	/8
Reading	/12
Grammar	/12 (2 per item)
Writing	/15 — score on: task completion (5), grammar (5), vocabulary (5)
Speaking	/15 — fluency (5), grammar (5), pronunciation (5)
Total	/62 · A2 pass mark ≈ 65%

PREPARE FOR YOUR REAL CILS A2 EXAM →

Dialetti • Five regional varieties at a glance

A reference table you can return to throughout your studies. Each entry: what the variety is, what to listen for, and a handful of signature phrases. The aim is recognition, not production — a beginner should not try to speak any of these. Knowing what is being said back to you is the first step.

SUD • SICILIA

Siciliano

Older than modern Italian; spoken across Sicily with city-level variation (Palermo, Catania, Messina, Trapani each sound different). Heavy lexical influence from Arabic, Greek, Norman French, Spanish, and Catalan. Vowels often shift: standard *o* → Sicilian *u*; standard *e* → Sicilian *i*.

SICILIAN	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>bedda / beddu</i>	<i>bella / bello</i>	beautiful (f. / m.)
<i>picciotto / picciotta</i>	<i>ragazzo / ragazza</i>	young man / young woman
<i>talìa!</i>	<i>guarda!</i>	look!
<i>trasi</i>	<i>entra</i>	come in
<i>munnu</i>	<i>mondo</i>	world
<i>cchiù</i>	<i>più</i>	more
<i>amuninni!</i>	<i>andiamo!</i>	let's go!

[SICILIAN TUTORS →](#)

SUD • CAMPANIA

Napoletano

The most internationally recognized southern Italian variety, partly because of its musical heritage (Neapolitan song) and partly because of its diaspora. Most distinctive feature: the use of *tenere* for "to have/possess" where standard uses *avere*. Vowels at the end of words often reduce to schwa-like sounds.

NEAPOLITAN	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>tengo famma</i>	<i>ho fame</i>	I'm hungry
<i>guaglione / guaglio'</i>	<i>ragazzo</i>	guy / boy (also vocative)
<i>jammo / jamme</i>	<i>andiamo</i>	let's go
<i>uè!</i>	<i>ehi!</i>	hey!

NEAPOLITAN	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>'na cosa</i>	<i>una cosa</i>	a thing (article reduction)
<i>mappina</i>	<i>straccio (da cucina)</i>	dish cloth — and a friendly insult

[NEAPOLITAN TUTORS →](#)

CENTRO · LAZIO

Romanesco

The variety of Italian spoken in Rome and its hinterland. Direct, fast, often dropping final syllables, with a wry tone that filtered into national cinema and stand-up. Less a separate language than a strongly marked accent — most Romans switch into standard Italian without effort.

ROMANESCO	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>daje!</i>	<i>dai! / forza!</i>	c'mon! / let's go!
<i>aó!</i>	<i>ehi!</i>	hey! (only with people you know)
<i>annàmo</i>	<i>andiamo</i>	let's go
<i>'sta / 'sto</i>	<i>questa / questo</i>	this (clipped form)
<i>'na pizza, 'n caffè</i>	<i>una pizza, un caffè</i>	articles get squeezed
<i>che te lo dico a fa'?</i>	<i>che te lo dico a fare?</i>	what's the point of telling you?

[ROMANESCO TUTORS →](#)

NORD · LOMBARDIA

Milanese (meneghino)

Historically a Gallo-Italic language, related to Piedmontese and Lombard varieties more broadly. Today Milanese as a daily-use language is fading — most Milanese speak standard Italian with a distinctive cadence and a few lexical survivals. The literary tradition (Carlo Porta, Delio Tessa) keeps it alive culturally.

MILANESE	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>salùt</i>	<i>ciao / salve</i>	hi
<i>ciumbia!</i>	<i>caspita!</i>	wow! (mild surprise)
<i>tac</i>	— (<i>filler</i>)	"click" / "and just like that"
<i>domà</i>	<i>soltanto</i>	only
<i>'ndémm!</i>	<i>andiamo</i>	let's go (rare today)

CENTRO · TOSCANA

Toscano · the basis of standard Italian

Standard Italian is built on 14th-century Florentine. Modern Tuscan therefore sounds *more standard* than the standard — except for one signature feature: the *gorgia toscana*, where the hard c between vowels softens to a Spanish-style "h." *la casa* → *la hasa*. Listen for it; it is the most famous regional accent in Italy.

TUSCAN	STANDARD	ENGLISH
<i>la hasa</i>	<i>la casa</i>	the house (gorgia)
<i>hoha hola</i>	<i>Coca-Cola</i>	(gorgia, beloved Tuscan joke)
<i>ganzo</i>	<i>figo / forte</i>	cool, great
<i>pane sciocco</i>	<i>pane senza sale</i>	unsalted Tuscan bread
<i>una cosa pazzesca</i>	<i>(idem)</i>	an amazing thing

Verb tables

Quick reference for the present and the past (passato prossimo) of the most common A1-A2 verbs.

The regular pattern · all three families · present

PRONOUN	PARLARE	SCRIVERE	PARTIRE	CAPIRE (-ISC)
io	<i>parlo</i>	<i>scrivo</i>	<i>parto</i>	<i>capisco</i>
tu	<i>parli</i>	<i>scrivi</i>	<i>parti</i>	<i>capisci</i>
lui/lei	<i>parla</i>	<i>scrive</i>	<i>parte</i>	<i>capisce</i>
noi	<i>parliamo</i>	<i>scriviamo</i>	<i>partiamo</i>	<i>capiamo</i>
voi	<i>parlate</i>	<i>scrivete</i>	<i>partite</i>	<i>capite</i>
loro	<i>parlano</i>	<i>scrivono</i>	<i>partono</i>	<i>capiscono</i>

Top 12 irregular verbs · present

VERB	IO	TU	LUI/LEI	NOI	VOI	LORO
essere	<i>sono</i>	<i>sei</i>	<i>è</i>	<i>siamo</i>	<i>siete</i>	<i>sono</i>
avere	<i>ho</i>	<i>hai</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>abbiamo</i>	<i>avete</i>	<i>hanno</i>
andare	<i>vado</i>	<i>vai</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>andiamo</i>	<i>andate</i>	<i>vanno</i>
venire	<i>vengo</i>	<i>vieni</i>	<i>viene</i>	<i>veniamo</i>	<i>venite</i>	<i>vengono</i>
fare	<i>faccio</i>	<i>fai</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>facciamo</i>	<i>fate</i>	<i>fanno</i>
dire	<i>dico</i>	<i>dici</i>	<i>dice</i>	<i>diciamo</i>	<i>dite</i>	<i>dicono</i>
stare	<i>sto</i>	<i>stai</i>	<i>sta</i>	<i>stiamo</i>	<i>state</i>	<i>stanno</i>
uscire	<i>esco</i>	<i>esci</i>	<i>esce</i>	<i>usciamo</i>	<i>uscite</i>	<i>escono</i>
dovere	<i>devo</i>	<i>devi</i>	<i>deve</i>	<i>dobbiamo</i>	<i>dovete</i>	<i>devono</i>
potere	<i>posso</i>	<i>puoi</i>	<i>può</i>	<i>possiamo</i>	<i>potete</i>	<i>possono</i>
volere	<i>voglio</i>	<i>vuoi</i>	<i>vuole</i>	<i>vogliamo</i>	<i>volete</i>	<i>vogliono</i>
sapere	<i>so</i>	<i>sai</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>sappiamo</i>	<i>sapete</i>	<i>sanno</i>

Critical past participles

INFINITIVE	PAST PARTICIPLE	HELPER
essere	<i>stato/a/i/e</i>	essere
avere	<i>avuto</i>	avere
fare	<i>fatto</i>	avere
dire	<i>detto</i>	avere
leggere	<i>letto</i>	avere
scrivere	<i>scritto</i>	avere
prendere	<i>preso</i>	avere
bere	<i>bevuto</i>	avere
vedere	<i>visto / veduto</i>	avere
aprire / chiudere	<i>aperto / chiuso</i>	avere
mettere / offrire	<i>messo / offerto</i>	avere
venire	<i>venuto/a/i/e</i>	essere
andare / partire / arrivare	<i>andato/a · partito/a · arrivato/a</i>	essere
nascere / morire	<i>nato/a · morto/a</i>	essere
rimanere	<i>rimasto/a</i>	essere

Glossario A1–A2

A condensed reference of the core A1-A2 vocabulary covered in this book, grouped alphabetically. For a longer learner's dictionary, see Strommen's online glossary tied to your tutor lesson notes.

a — to, at	chiamarsi — to be called, named	genitori — parents
a destra — on the right	chiedere — to ask	giorno — day
a sinistra — on the left	ciao — hi, bye (inf.)	girare — to turn
abitare — to live	città — city	grande — big
accomodarsi — to have a seat	come — how, as	grazie — thank you
acqua — water	comprare — to buy	guardare — to look at, to watch
albergo — hotel	contanti — cash	ieri — yesterday
amico/a — friend	conto — bill, check	il / la / lo / l' / i / le / gli — the
andare — to go	cornetto — Italian croissant	in — in
antipasto — appetizer	cosa — thing; what	italiano/a — Italian
aperitivo — pre-dinner drink	credere — to believe	lavorare — to work
arrivare — to arrive	cugino/a — cousin	lavoro — work, job
arrivederci — goodbye	da — from, at someone's	leggere — to read
ascoltare — to listen	decidere — to decide	Lei — you (formal)
aspettare — to wait	denaro / soldi — money	libro — book
attraversare — to cross	dente / denti — tooth / teeth	lontano — far
avere — to have	di — of, from	macchina — car
bambino/a — child	dipendere — to depend	madre — mother
bar — coffee bar	dolce — dessert; sweet	mangiare — to eat
basta — enough, that's all	dormire — to sleep	mano / mani — hand / hands
bello/a — beautiful	dove — where	marito — husband
bene — well	dovere — to have to	mattina — morning
bere — to drink	dritto — straight	medico — doctor
biglietto — ticket	è — (he/she/it) is	mercato — market
binario — train platform	essere — to be	mese — month
bocca — mouth	etto — 100 grams	mezzo / mezza — half
braccio / braccia — arm / arms	euro — euro	moglie — wife
buongiorno — good morning	famiglia — family	molto — very, a lot
buonasera — good evening	fame — hunger	nonno/a — grandfather / grandmother
buono/a — good	fare — to do, to make	numero — number
caffè — coffee, espresso	febbre — fever	oggi — today
caldo — warm, hot	fermata — stop (bus)	ora — hour, now
camminare — to walk	festa — party, holiday	padre — father
cappuccino — coffee with steamed milk	figlio/a — son / daughter	pagare — to pay
capire — to understand	finire — to finish	pane — bread
carta (di credito) — card (credit)	forse — maybe	parlare — to speak
casa — house, home	fratello / fratelli — brother / siblings	partire — to leave, depart
cena — dinner	freddo — cold	pasta — pasta
centro — downtown, center	gamba / gambe — leg / legs	per favore — please

piacere — to please, to like
piede / piedi — foot / feet
poco — a little
poi — then, after
portare — to bring, carry
potere — to be able to
pranzo — lunch
prendere — to take, to have (food/drink)
prenotare — to book
presto — early, soon
prezzo — price
primo (piatto) — first course
quanto — how much
quartiere — neighborhood
ragazzo/a — young man / young woman
ricordare — to remember
ripetere — to repeat
ristorante — restaurant
salve — hello (neutral)

sapere — to know (a fact)
scrivere — to write
scusi / scusa — excuse me (form. / inf.)
secondo (piatto) — second course
sera — evening
sete — thirst
signora / signore — ma'am / sir
sorella — sister
sotto / sopra — under / on top of
spesa (fare la) — grocery shopping
stanco/a — tired
stare — to be, to stay
stazione — station
strada — street
studente / studentessa — student
stupire — to amaze
subito — right away
tardi — late
tavolo — table

tempo — time, weather
testa — head
tornare — to return, go back
treno — train
trovare — to find
tu — you (informal)
ufficio — office
uscire — to go out
vedere — to see
venire — to come
via — street, way
vicino — near
vino — wine
vivere — to live
volere — to want
vorrei — I would like
weekend / fine settimana — weekend
zia / zio — aunt / uncle
zucchero — sugar

Find your Strommen Italian tutor

Every chapter in this book has at least one "Practice live →" link. They all lead to a Strommen specialty page. The full directory:

Italian — the main starting point

ITALIAN CLASSES & PRIVATE TUTORS

strommeninc.com/languages/italian-classes-los-angeles/

The canonical Strommen Italian page — start here. Private 1:1 lessons online or in Los Angeles, all levels.

GROUP ITALIAN CLASSES

strommeninc.com/italian-classes-los-angeles/#groups

Small-group classes — A1 through B2, with rolling start dates.

Regional dialects

SICILIAN (SICILIANO)

strommeninc.com/siciliano-sicilian-italian-tutors/

Featured in Chapter 4 + Dialect Appendix B. Native tutors from Palermo, Catania, Messina.

NEAPOLITAN (NAPOLETANO)

strommeninc.com/napoletano-tutors/

Featured in Chapter 3 + Dialect Appendix B. Native tutors from Napoli and the surrounding province.

ROMANESCO (ROMAN)

strommeninc.com/romano-tutors/

Featured in Chapters 1, 2 + Dialect Appendix B. Native Roman tutors.

MILANESE (MENEGHINO)

strommeninc.com/milanese-tutors/

Featured in Chapter 6 + Dialect Appendix B. For learners who want the northern register.

TUSCAN

strommeninc.com/tuscan-tutors/

Featured in Chapter 7 + Dialect Appendix B. The basis of standard Italian — with the gorgia.

ITALIAN DIALECT COACH (GENERAL)

strommeninc.com/italian-dialect-coach-tutors/

For learners or actors who want to move between regional varieties under expert guidance.

Business Italian + CILS prep

BUSINESS ITALIAN

strommeninc.com/business-italian-tutors/

Featured in Chapter 9. Formal register, phone calls, business email, meetings.

CILS EXAM PREP (GENERAL)

strommeninc.com/cils-tutors/

All CILS levels — A1 through C2.

CILS A2 PREP

strommeninc.com/cils-a2-tutors/

Matches the level of this textbook. Practice the mock exam in Appendix A with a CILS-experienced tutor.

CILS B2 PREP

strommeninc.com/cils-due-b2-tutors/

After Book Two of this series.

Specialty Italian

ITALIAN FOR ACTORS / DIALECT COACHING

strommeninc.com/italian-dialect-coaching-for-actors-tutors/

On-set coaching, regional accent breakdowns, scene work.

ITALIAN FOR OPERA SINGERS

strommeninc.com/italian-for-opera-singers-tutors/

Pronunciation, libretto reading, dramatic diction.

ITALIAN FOR KIDS

strommeninc.com/italian-for-kids-tutors/

Age-appropriate lessons for children — heritage learners and beginners.

ITALIAN LITERATURE

strommeninc.com/italian-literature-tutors/

From Dante to contemporary fiction — reading with a literary specialist.

— *fine* —

© 2026 Strommen Inc. · Los Angeles · strommeninc.com