

Italian, Step by Step, Root by Root

An etymology-driven curriculum, built one word at a time

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This edition compiled incrementally — new chapters added as they
are written.

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Preface

This book teaches Italian one word at a time, and it teaches each word by taking it apart — traced back to its root (usually Latin), then forward to the English cousins you already own, so nothing here is a fresh thing to memorise. It is written for someone starting from zero, whose only shared language is English. *grazie* (“thanks”) turns out to be English *grace*; *giorno* (“day”) is the *journ-* of *journal* and *journey*; and *ciao*, the most famous “hello” in the world, once meant “I am your slave.”

Italian is the closest living child of Latin, so its words often wear their roots most plainly of the Romance languages. Where a sister language (Spanish or French, the other daughters of Latin) makes the contrast vivid, the book shows it — every form supplied in full, so no prior knowledge of them is assumed; a reader who happens to know one simply nods along.

How to use this book

Every numbered section is one word, or one small phrase, and takes a few minutes — the length of a queue, an errand, or the walk to the bus. Read them in order the first time through: each section stands on the ones before it, and nothing is used before it has been taught. After that the book becomes reference, and you can open it anywhere.

Say the Italian out loud wherever you can. The prompts under *Your turn* are written to be spoken, and saying a word is most of what makes it stay. The questions under *Before you move on* carry their own answers in brackets: cover them, answer from memory, then look.

Nothing here is gated behind pronunciation. Each lesson names the one or two sounds its own word needs, exactly where they are needed. The whole system is gathered in a reference at the back of the book — somewhere to look things up when you are curious, never a chapter to sit through first.

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Chapter 1

Greetings

Modes: 🗣️ voice (8) ✍️ pen (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 12 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet someone in Italian, recognize the reply, and choose an appropriate response.

Complete IT-C01-practice, the canonical closing checkpoint, and demonstrate the chapter promise: greet someone in Italian, recognize the reply, and choose an appropriate response.

1.1 ciao — “hi,” and the word that means “I am your slave”

The most famous “hello” in the world — and it hides an astonishing history.

Sounds you’ll need

- **ciao** = *CHOW*: **ci** before a vowel is the *ch* of *church*; *-ao* is one gliding syllable.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

ciao began as the Venetian greeting *s-ciào (vostro)* — “[I am your] slave / servant,” a humble “at your service.” That *s-ciào* is Venetian for **schiaivo** (“slave”) ← Medieval Latin **sclavus**. The very same word is English **slave** — and, astonishingly, **Slav**: medieval slaves were so often Slavic captives that the ethnic name *became* the word for “slave” across Europe. So every casual *ciao* is a fossil of “I am your servant.”

Why it's said this way

ciao is **informal**, and works both coming and going (“hi” and “bye”) — for friends, family, peers. To someone you’d show respect, or on a first meeting, you reach for a polite daytime greeting instead. You will build that greeting from two small pieces later in this chapter. Doubled, *ciao ciao*, it’s a breezy “bye-bye.”

Writing — follow the greeting you can see

Keep **ciao** visible. Point to **ci**, the two letters that begin the *ch* sound, then slide your finger through **ao**. Trace the whole word once from **c** to **o**, and say *CHOW*.

This is not a spelling test. Your eye and hand are only following one short greeting whose sound and meaning are still on the page.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ciao” (*CHOW*)
- its buried meaning — “I am your slave/servant”
- the English cousins — *slave*, *Slav*

Before you move on

What did **ciao** literally mean, and what two English words share its root? (“I am your slave”; *slave* and *Slav*, from Latin *sclavus*.)

1.2 ciao — copy one greeting with help

Point to **ciao** and say it once: *CHOW*. The model stays on the page.

Writing — one guided copy

Copy **ciao** once on the line below it. Write **ci**, pause, then add **ao**. Look back at the model whenever you want. Check that the **i** has its dot.

Say the word as you finish. The four letters record the sound you already know; there is nothing to guess and no second word today.

Before you move on

Compare your copy with the model. If one letter differs, repair only that letter. No hiding, no spelling from memory, and no free sentence yet.

1.3 ciao — write it with the model covered

Look at **ciao** once and say it: *CHOW*. Then cover it.

Writing — delayed copy

With the model covered, wait ten seconds, then write **ciao** once from memory.

Ten seconds is not a long time and it is not meant to be. It is long enough that your hand cannot be copying a shape it can still see, and short enough that a word you met a minute ago is still there to be found.

Only after the word is finished, uncover the model. Compare, and repair **one** letter — the first that differs and no others.

Before you move on

If the letter that differed was the **i**, that is the expected miss. Four letters, and one of them is silent: the **i** in *ciao* is not a sound, it is the instruction that makes **c** say *ch* instead of *k*. A hand writing from memory drops the letter it never heard.

1.4 ciao — write it from the sound

Close the book on every page that has **ciao** written on it. Nothing to copy and nothing to uncover this time.

Writing — dictation

Say *CHOW* aloud, or play it, and write what you hear. Once.

This is a different job from the last lesson, even though the word is the same. A delayed copy asks your hand to remember a shape. Dictation asks

it to turn a **sound** into a shape, which is the thing reading and writing are actually for, and the two do not always arrive together.

Before you move on

Uncover the model and compare.

Three sounds, four letters. **ciao** is the clearest possible first lesson in what Italian spelling does: the **i** is written for the **c** to read, not for you to say. Dictation is where that stops being a fact about one word and starts being a habit — when you hear *ch* before *a*, *o* or *u*, an **i** has to go on the page, and nothing in the sound will remind you.

1.5 buono / buon — “good”

One small word meaning “good.” Learn it alone first; later lessons will show how it helps build several greetings.

Sounds you’ll need

- **buono** = *BWOH-no* (the *uo* is a glide). Before a masculine noun it clips to **buon** (*bwon*).

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

buono (“good”) ← Latin **bonus** → English **bonus**, **bonanza**, **bonbon**, and (via French) **bounty**. Spanish, another daughter of Latin, made *bonus* into *bueno*; Italian kept it closer, *buono*.

Grammar Lens: it agrees with the noun

buono changes to match its noun’s gender and number: *buono* (m.), *buona* (f.), *buoni* / *buone* (pl.) — Latin’s legacy across the Romance family. Before a masculine noun it can drop the *-o* to **buon**. For now, just hear and say that small change; the next nouns will give it a job.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “buono”, then clipped “buon”

- English cousins — *bonus*, *bonanza*

Before you move on

What Latin word is **buono** from, and what short form can it take before a masculine noun? (*bonus*; *buon*, with the final *-o* dropped.)

1.6 il / la / lo — “the,” and the gender it carries

Before your first noun: the words for “the.” Italian splits “the” by gender — a habit inherited from Latin.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

il and **lo** (masculine “the”) and **la** (feminine) ← Latin **ille** / **illa** (“that one”), the pointing word worn down to “the.” The same *ille/illa* gave Spanish *el/la* and French *le/la*. English “the” is Germanic and unrelated.

Grammar Lens: gender, and two masculine “the”s

Every Italian noun is **masculine or feminine** — Latin’s three genders (the neuter folding into the masculine) collapsed to two. Learn each noun *with* its article. Italian has **two** masculine articles: **lo** before tricky clusters at the start of a noun, **il** in the ordinary pattern; feminine is always **la**. Your first noun comes next, so you can practise one real pairing then.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il”, “la”, “lo”
- their source — Latin *ille* / *illa*

Before you move on

What Latin word gave **il** / **lo** / **la**, and how many genders does Italian have? (*ille* / *illa*; two — masculine and feminine.)

1.7 **giorno** — “day,” and the road to English *journey*

Your first noun — masculine, and a cousin of *journal* and *journey*.

Sounds you’ll need

- **gi** = the *j* of *jam*; **giorno** = *JOR-no*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

il giorno (masc.) ← Latin **diurnum** (“daytime”), from **dies** (“day”). That detour through *diurnum* is why *giorno* looks nothing like *dies*:

- via *diurnum*: **journal**, **adjourn**, **sojourn**, **journey** (a *day’s* travel);
- via *dies*: **diurnal**, **diary**.

Italian *giorno* and French *jour* are near-twins here; Spanish, taking *dies* directly, got the very different *día*.

Grammar Lens: masculine, plural by vowel-change

giorno is **masculine** (*il giorno*). Plural **i giorni** — Italian marks the plural by changing the final vowel (*-o* → *-i*), not by adding *-s*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il giorno” (masc.), “i giorni” (pl.)
- the cousins — *journal*, *journey*, *diary*

Before you move on

What Latin word gave **giorno**, and what English words share it? (*diurnum* ← *dies*; *journal*, *journey*, *diurnal*, *diary*.) How does Italian form the plural? (Changes the final vowel: *-o* → *-i*.)

1.8 buongiorno — “good day,” assembled

Put the two pieces together into the polite, all-purpose hello.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- buon (“good”) + giorno (“day”).

buongiorno = “good day,” one word.

Why it’s said this way

Where the casual *ciao* says “I’m your servant,” *buongiorno* simply wishes you a good day — and it’s the **safe, respectful** choice with anyone: shopkeepers, strangers, elders. Use it through the day until late afternoon. A later lesson will build the corresponding evening greeting.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “buongiorno” — buon + giorno
- when to use it (respect, daytime) vs *ciao* (friends)

Before you move on

What two words make **buongiorno**, and when do you use it rather than *ciao*? (*buon + giorno*; for respect / strangers / daytime.)

1.9 sera / buonasera — “evening” and “good evening”

The evening swap for *buongiorno*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

la sera (fem.) ← Latin **sera** (“late [hour]”), from **serus**, “late.”
English cousin: the rare *serotine* (a bat of the *late* evening).

buonasera = *buona* + *sera*, “good evening” — *buona* in its **feminine**

form, because *sera* is feminine (contrast the masculine *buon giorno*).

Grammar Lens: feminine agreement

Notice *buona sera* vs. *buon giorno*: the “good” word matches its noun’s gender — feminine *sera* takes *buona*, masculine *giorno* takes *buon*. Same adjective, two coats.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “buonasera” (*buona* + *sera*)
- why it’s *buona* here but *buon* in *buon giorno* (gender)

Before you move on

What Latin word gave **sera**, and why is it *buonasera* but *buon giorno*? (*sera* ← *serus*, “late”; *sera* is feminine so “good” is *buona*.)

1.10 notte / buonanotte — “night,” and the *-ct-* → *-tt-* rule

“Night” — and a sound-rule that decodes dozens of Italian words at once.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

la notte (fem.) ← Latin **noctem** (*noct-*) → English **nocturnal**, **equinox**. Watch just one change today: Latin *-ct-* became Italian **-tt-**, so *noctem* became *notte*. Spanish and French reshaped that same root in their own ways. Later words will let you see whether this pattern repeats; there is no list to memorize now.

buonanotte = *buona* + *notte*, “good night” — the farewell for bed (not an evening hello; use the evening greeting you already learned for that).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “buonanotte”
- the one change you saw — Latin *noctem* → Italian *notte*

Before you move on

What Latin word gave **notte**, and what regular sound-change does it show? (*noctem*; Latin *-ct-* → Italian *-tt-*.) When is *buonanotte* used? (As a bedtime farewell.)

1.11 grazie — “thank you,” from *grace*

“Thanks” — and it literally offers someone *grace*.

Sounds you’ll need

- **grazie** = *GRAH-tsyeh*: **z** in Italian is *ts*; the final *-e* is sounded (so *-zie* is two beats).

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

grazie (“thanks”) ← Latin **gratiae**, plural of **gratia** (“favour, thanks, grace”). It’s the *same* *gratia* behind English **grace**, **gratitude**, **grateful**, **gratis** (“free”), **congratulate**, and **ingratiate**. So *grazie* literally wishes someone **grace**.

Why it’s said this way

Think of **grazie** as offering someone “graces” for what they did. In the next chapter, you will learn the short reply people use after hearing it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “grazie” (*GRAH-tsyeh*)
- the cousins — *grace*, *gratitude*, *gratis*

Before you move on

What Latin word is **grazie** from, and three English cousins? (*gratia*, “grace”; *grace*, *gratitude*, *gratis*.)

1.12 Chapter 1 — the day of greetings

No new words today. Everything below is something you have already met, said once, and can now put in one place.

What you’ve built — the day of greetings

Italian	English
<i>ciao</i>	hi / bye (informal)
<i>buongiorno</i>	good day
<i>buonasera</i>	good evening
<i>buonanotte</i>	good night
<i>grazie</i>	thank you

Every piece from a Latin root:

- **ciao** ← *sclavus* (“slave”; English *slave*, *Slav*)
- **buono** ← *bonus*
- **giorno** ← *diurnum* (English *journal*, *journey*)
- **notte** ← *noctem*, via the *-ct-* → *-tt-* rule (*notte*, not *noche*/*nuit*)
- **grazie** ← *gratia* (“grace”; English *grace*, *gratitude*)

And two Italian habits: adjectives **agree** with the noun’s gender (*buon giorno* m. / *buona sera* f.), and the plural is made by **changing the final vowel** (*giorno* → *giorni*), not adding *-s*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- all five greetings
- greet and thank — “buongiorno!” ... “grazie.”

- the buried story of *ciao* (“I am your slave”)

Before you move on

Say all five greetings. Which one once meant “I am your slave”? (*ciao*.) What sound-rule turns Latin *noctem* into Italian *notte*? (-*ct*- → -*tt*-.)

Next chapter, you will learn how to introduce yourself and how to address someone in a familiar or respectful way. Those new Italian forms can wait for their own small lessons.

Chapter 2

How Are You?

Modes: ⇄ voice (12) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 12 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask an Italian how they are, formally or informally, answer for myself, and hand the question back.

The full Come stai? exchange run both ways — sta and Lei for respect, stai and tu for a friend — answered with sto bene or così così and closed with grazie / prego.

2.1 prego — “you’re welcome,” literally “I pray”

The *grazie* lesson already promised you this word. Someone says **grazie**; you reply **prego**. Hold that one exchange first. Later lessons will add the word’s other jobs one at a time.

Sounds you’ll need

- hard-g-before-o — **prego** = *PREH-go* with a **hard** g. (Italian g is soft only before *e/i*; here the g is followed by *o*, so it stays hard.)

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

prego is “I pray” — the *io* (“I”) form of **pregare**, “to pray, to beg,” from Latin **precārī**. When you answer *grazie* with *prego*, you’re softly saying “*I pray (it was nothing) / please, don’t mention it.*”

That root **prec-** (“pray, entreat”) gives English a surprising family:

- **pray, prayer** — the direct line.

- **precarious** — literally “held by *prayer*,” i.e. depending on someone’s goodwill, therefore unstable.
- **deprecate** (“pray *away*, ward off”) and **imprecation** (“a prayer *against* — a curse”).

For now, keep one complete turn:

Grazie. — **Prego.** — “Thank you. — You’re welcome.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “grazie” ... “prego” — the full exchange
- “prego” then English “pray, precarious” — one family

Before you move on

What verb is *prego* the “I” form of? (*pregare*, “to pray.”) What English word means “held by prayer” and so “unstable”? (*Precarious*.) What do you answer after **grazie**? (**Prego.**) Next, add one more use without losing this one.

2.2 prego — “please, go ahead”

Answer **grazie** first: **prego**. Keep that meaning. Now picture a doorway and add one nearby use.

You’ll want to know — One more job

When you let someone pass or offer a seat, **prego** means “**please, go ahead**” / “**after you**.” The polite invitation still grows from *pregare*, “to pray or entreat.”

You hold the door. **Prego.** — “After you.”

Do not add another meaning yet. The same sound now owns two situations: after **grazie**, “you’re welcome”; at a doorway, “go ahead.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Grazie. — Prego.”
- “Prego” while yielding a doorway

Before you move on

At a doorway, what does **prego** mean? (**Please, go ahead / after you.**) After **grazie**? (**You’re welcome.**) Keep both; the next lesson adds only one more.

2.3 prego — “here you are”

At a doorway, **prego** invites a person forward. Move the same invitation into your hand.

You’ll want to know — One more job

When you hand something to someone, **prego** means “**here you are.**” The object can be a cup, a ticket, or anything already requested.

You pass over the cup. **Prego.** — “Here you are.”

The meanings stay tied to visible situations: thanks, doorway, offered object. You do not have to guess between them without context.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Prego” while yielding a doorway
- “Prego” while handing over an imaginary cup

Before you move on

You hand someone a cup. What does **prego** mean? (**Here you are.**) At a doorway? (**Go ahead.**) After thanks? (**You’re welcome.**)

2.4 Prego? — “sorry, come again?”

You know **prego** after thanks, at a doorway, and with an offered object. The last common use changes the voice, not the spelling.

You’ll want to know — One more job

If you did not hear, lift your voice into a question:

Prego? — “Sorry? Come again?”

The rising question sound separates this repair from a flat **prego** while handing something over. Listen to the situation and the voice together.

Your turn

- *Say it:* flat “Prego” — here you are
- *Ask:* rising “Prego?” — come again?

Before you move on

You did not catch a sentence. What do you ask? (**Prego?**) What marks the listening-repair use? (**Question intonation and the situation.**)

2.5 come — “how,” the third *quomodo* cousin

To ask *how are you?* you need “how.” In Italian it’s **come** — and if you’ve seen the Spanish or French tracks, you already know its family.

Sounds you’ll need

- **soft-c** — **come** = *KOH-meh*. Here *c* is before *o*, so it’s a **hard k** (Italian *c* only softens to *ch* before *e/i*). Final *-e* is sounded: *KOH-meh*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

come = “how / like / as.” Root: Latin **quōmodo**, “in what manner” — two words (*quō* “in what way” + *modo* “manner”) fused and worn

down. It is the **same source** as:

- Spanish **cómo** (“how”)
- French **comment** (“how”)
- and, doubling as “like/as,” it matches Spanish **como** and French **comme**.

So one Latin *quōmodo* became the “how” word in all three Romance sisters. The *modo* piece (“manner, measure”) also lives in English **mode**, **model**, **moderate** — all about the *way* something is done. Note Italian *come* covers **both** jobs at once, and the written accent tells them apart only by context, not spelling: *Come stai?* (“**H**ow are you?”) vs *bianco come la neve* (“white **a**s snow”).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “come” — *KOH-meh*
- come / cómo / comment — the three *quomodo* siblings
- English *mode*, *model* share the *modo* piece

Before you move on

What Latin word gives *come*, and which Spanish and French words are its siblings? (*quōmodo* → *cómo*, *comment*.) What two jobs does *come* do? (“How?” and “like/as.”) Next: the verb it pairs with — **stare**.

2.6 stare — “to be,” the standing kind (Spanish’s *estar*, undressed)

Like Spanish, Italian has **two** verbs for “to be” — **essere** (identity) and **stare** (state). “How are you?” runs on **stare**. Spanish’s *estar* is this very verb, with a front *e* added on.

Sounds you'll need

- **st-clean** — Italian, unlike Spanish, is happy to start a word with *st-*: no propping *e*. **stare** = *STAH-reh*, clean *st*, final *-e* sounded.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

stare comes straight from Latin **stāre**, “to stand.” Spanish grew the same verb into **estar** (with a propping *e-*); Italian kept it bare as **stare**. Same Latin root, same job: the *temporary state* be-verb — how you *stand* right now.

That **stā-** root stands behind a wall of English words: **stay**, **stand**, **state**, **status**, **stable**, **station**, **stance**, **e-state**, **con-stant**, **circum-stance**. So *Come stai?* is, at the root, “**how do you stand?**” — the very same picture as Spanish *¿Cómo estás?*

Grammar Lens: essere vs stare, and the two forms you need

verb	from	job
essere	Latin <i>esse</i>	identity — <i>sono Marco</i> , “I am Marco”
stare	Latin <i>stāre</i>	state / how you are — <i>sto bene</i> , “I’m well”

For this chapter, just two forms of *stare*:

- **stai** — “you are” (informal, *tu*)
- **sta** — “you are” (formal, *Lei*) / “he/she is”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “stare” — *STAH-reh*, clean *st*
- “stai” ... “sta” — the two forms you’ll ask with
- Italian *stare* = Spanish *estar*, same Latin *stāre* “to stand”

Before you move on

What Latin verb is *stare*, and which Spanish verb is its twin? (“To stand,” *stāre* — Spanish *estar*.) Which Italian be-verb is for how you feel — *essere* or *stare*? (*stare*.) Next: ask it — **Come stai?**

2.7 Come stai? — “how are you?”

Both pieces are ready: **come** (“how”) and **stare** / **stai** (“to be,” from *stand*). Assemble Italian’s everyday question for a friend.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Come stai? = “How are you?” (informal) literally: “**How do you stand?**”

- **come** = “how”
- **stai** = “you are / stand,” the *tu* form of *stare*

The subject **tu** (“you”) is already carried by **stai**, so Italian normally leaves it unspoken. Say **Come stai?**, not *Come tu stai?*, unless you need to stress “you.” This is the same pro-drop habit you will use in later verb lessons.

An everyday answer reuses the same verb:

Come stai? — Sto bene, grazie. “How are you? — I’m well, thanks.”

Sto means “I am / stand.” The pair **stai** / **sto** lets the ending do the pronoun’s work: “you” in *-ai*, “I” in *-o*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Come stai?” — informal, for a friend
- “Sto bene, grazie.”
- the two-part exchange — “Come stai? — Sto bene.”

Twice through: “Come stai? — Sto bene, grazie.”

Before you move on

Come stai? literally asks what? (“How do you **stand**?”) Which word means “how”? (**Come**.) Which form answers “I am”? (**Sto**.) Give the whole exchange: **Come stai? — Sto bene, grazie.** Next: formal speech and the “go” version.

2.8 Come sta? — the formal question

You can ask a friend **Come stai?** Change one ending when you speak to a stranger or elder.

Grammar Lens: stai and sta

Come sta? = “How are you?” (formal)

Italian uses **Lei** — literally “she,” often capitalized — as a polite “you.” Its verb therefore uses the third-person form **sta**, not informal **stai**:

listener	question
a friend (<i>tu</i>)	Come stai?
a stranger or elder (<i>Lei</i>)	Come sta?

The politeness pattern has cousins in Spanish *usted* and German *Sie*, but you only need one Italian contrast here: **stai** for a friend, **sta** for formal respect.

An answer can return the formal pronoun:

Bene, grazie. E Lei? — “Well, thank you. And you?”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- to a friend — “Come stai?”
- to a stranger — “Come sta?”
- “Bene, grazie. E Lei?”

Twice through: “Stai — friend. Sta — formal.”

Before you move on

Which ending marks a friend? (**-i: stai.**) Which form is formal? (**Sta.**) What polite pronoun can follow *e*, “and”? (**Lei.**) Next: keep the meaning but switch the picture from “stand” to “go.”

2.9 Come va? — “how is it going?”

Come stai? pictures wellbeing as standing. Italian also has the same “going” picture as English.

Come va? = “How’s it going?”

Va comes from **andare**, “to go.” Unlike *stai* / *sta*, this question does not force you to choose an informal or formal ending, so it is useful in either setting.

Grammar Lens: standing and going

- **Come stai?** — “How do you **stand**?”
- **Come va?** — “How does it **go**?”

Spanish also uses the “stand” picture in *¿cómo estás?*; French and German use a “go” picture. Italian keeps **both**, which makes it a bridge between them. The comparison is only a memory aid: in Italian, simply connect **stai** with *stare* and **va** with *andare*. You will learn all six forms of *andare* much later. For now, **va** is one ready-made piece inside this question.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the standing question — “Come stai?”
- the going question — “Come va?”
- “Come va? — Bene, grazie.”

Twice through: “Come stai? — Come va?”

Before you move on

Which question uses “stand”? (**Come stai?**) Which uses “go”? (**Come va?**) What infinitive owns **va**? (**Andare.**) Must *Come va?* choose between *tu* and *Lei*? (**No.**) Next: answer with the original Italian “so-so.”

2.10 *così così* — the original “so-so”

English “so-so” is a **loan translation of the Italian** *così così*. Someone asks *Come stai?*; you’re middling; you wobble a hand and say *così così* — “thus and thus,” this way and that.

Sounds you’ll need

- **soft-c** — **così** = *koh-ZEE*: the *c* is before *o* (hard *k*), and the single *s* between vowels is **voiced**, a *z* sound: *koh-ZEE*. Stress the end (that’s what the accent on *ì* marks).

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

così = “thus, so, in this way,” from Latin **(ec)cum sīc**, “(behold) so.” Doubled — *così così* — it means “**so** and **so**,” neither up nor down: a verbal shrug.

The core piece **sīc** (“thus, so”) is one you already write in English:

- **sic** — the [*sic*] you put after a quoted mistake means “**thus** it was written.”
- It’s also the Latin behind Spanish/French/Italian **sì** / **si** / **sì** (“yes” — “it is *so*”), and the *-si* inside French **ain-si** (“thus”).

So *così così* is literally “**so, so**” — and English simply borrowed the shrug whole.

Grammar Lens: your answer ladder for *Come stai?*

answer	sense
Bene, grazie	well, thanks
Così così	so-so

The cross-track shrug set, now five deep: Italian **così così** (“so, so”), French **comme ci comme ça** (“like this, like that”), Spanish **más o menos** (“more or less”), German **es geht** (“it goes”).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “così così” — *koh-ZEE koh-ZEE*, with a hand-wobble
- answer “Come stai?” two ways — “Bene” / “Così così”
- “sic” in English — “thus” — the same *sīc*

Before you move on

What does *così così* literally mean? (“Thus, thus / so, so.”) What Latin word for “so” is inside it, and where do you still write it in English? (*sīc* → [*sic*].) English “so-so” came from — which language? (Italian *così così*.) Next: put the exchange together.

2.11 non c’è male — “not bad”

You can answer **Come stai?** with **bene** or **così così**. Add one more answer, on its own step.

You’ll want to know — The formula

Non c’è male. — “Not bad.”

Learn the four sounds as one useful answer for now. The pieces behind it — negation and the **c’è** construction — belong to later lessons. You do not need their rules to answer honestly today.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Come stai? — Così così.”
- “Come stai? — Non c’è male.”

Before you move on

Give the new “not bad” answer. (**Non c’è male.**) Must you explain each word yet? (**No. It is an unanalyzed pre-A1 formula for now.**)

2.12 Practice — “Come stai?”, start to finish

No new words. This chapter’s atoms — *prego, come, stare, come stai?, così così* — assemble into a real exchange, formal and informal. It picks up from the Chapter 1 greetings.

The exchange

Formal (a stranger, an elder — *Lei*):

— Buongiorno. **Come sta?** — **Bene, grazie.** E *Lei*? — **Così così.** — [after a small favour] — **Grazie!** — **Prego.**

Informal (a friend — *tu*):

— Ciao! **Come stai?** — **Sto bene, e tu?** — Non c’è male.

The glue is **e Lei? / e tu?** — “and you?” (*e* = “and,” Latin *et*) — the Italian twin of Spanish *¿y usted?* and French *et toi?*.

What you’ve built this chapter

- **prego** — you’re welcome (← *pregare*, “to pray”; English *precarious*).
- **come** — how (← *quōmodo*; sibling of *cómo* / *comment*).
- **stare** — “to be” from *stand* (= Spanish *estar*); vs *essere* (identity).
- **Come stai? / sta? / va?** — informal, formal, and the “how’s it going?” form (*va* ← *andare*, “to go”).
- **così così** — so-so (English “so-so” borrowed it whole).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the full *formal* exchange, both voices
- the same *informally* — *sta* → *stai*, *Lei* → *tu*
- all three questions — Come stai? / Come sta? / Come va?

Twice through: “Come stai? — Sto bene, grazie, e tu?” until it’s reflex.

Before you move on

Which verb carries *Come stai?*, and what does it literally ask? (*stare*, “to stand” — “how do you stand?”) What does *prego* answer, and from what root? (*grazie*; ← *pregare*, “to pray.”) Italian can ask “how are you” two ways — which verbs? (*stare*, stand; *andare* → *va*, go.) Next chapter: **introducing yourself** — *mi chiamo*, *come ti chiami*.

Chapter 3

Introducing Yourself

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can give my name in Italian, ask for someone else's, and say that it is a pleasure.

A whole first meeting: ciao, mi chiamo ..., Come ti chiami? in the informal and Come si chiama? in the formal, and piacere to close it.

3.1 io — “I,” the pronoun Italian loves to leave out

Before you introduce yourself, meet **io** — “I.” It’s a small word with a famous English cousin, and a surprising habit: Italian usually **drops it**.

Sounds you’ll need

- **io-glide** — **io** = *EE-oh*, two quick vowels gliding together, stress the first: *EE-oh*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

io = “I,” worn down from Latin **ego** — which English borrowed *whole*:

- **ego** — literally Latin “I” (your sense of self).
- **egoist**, **egotist**, **egocentric** — all built on that “I.”
- Its Romance siblings: Spanish **yo**, Portuguese **eu**, French **je** — every one a child of *ego*.

Grammar Lens: the dropped subject (pro-drop)

Here's the Italian habit worth learning now: **the verb ending already tells you who's speaking, so the pronoun is usually left out.** *Sto bene* ("I'm well") needs no *io* — the *-o* of *sto* is "I." You add **io** only for **emphasis** or **contrast**:

Io sto bene — e tu? — "I'm fine — and you?"

Spanish (*yo*) and Portuguese (*eu*) do exactly the same. English can't: it must say "I" every time. So learning Italian means learning to *trust the verb ending* and let the pronoun go.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- "io" — *EE-oh*
- "io" then English "ego, egoist" — the same Latin "I"
- "Sto bene" with no *io* — the ending carries the "I"

Before you move on

What Latin word is *io* from, and what English words share it? (*Ego* — ego, egoist.) Why does Italian usually drop *io*? (The verb ending already says who.) When do you keep it? (For emphasis/contrast.) Next: use it to introduce yourself — **mi chiamo**.

3.2 mi chiamo — "I call myself"

Like Spanish and French, Italian doesn't say "my name is." It says **"I call myself"** — **mi chiamo**. Same reflexive trick, same *clāmāre* root as Spanish *me llamo*.

Sounds you'll need

- **ch-hard-k** — Italian **ch** is a **hard k** (the opposite of English!): so **chiamo** = *KYAH-moh*, not "chee-." (Italian softens *c* to *ch*-sound only before *e/i*; the *h* in *chiamo* is there precisely to

keep it hard.)

- **mi chiamo** = *mee KYAH-moh*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

mi chiamo = **mi** (“myself”) + **chiamo** (“I call”) → “**I call myself.**”

Then the name: *Mi chiamo Marco* — “I call myself Marco.”

The verb is **chiamarsi** (“to call oneself”), from Latin **clāmāre**, “*to cry out, to call.*” That root shouts through English:

- **claim, exclaim, proclaim, acclaim, clamor** — all “calling out.”
- Its Romance siblings all name people the same way: Spanish **llamarse** (*me llamo*), Portuguese **chamar-se** (*me chamo*) — the *cl-* softening to *ll-* (Spanish) or *ch-* (Italian/Portuguese). One Latin “call,” three naming verbs.

Grammar Lens: the reflexive, and the dropping of *io*

chiamo alone is “I call [someone else]”; **mi chiamo** is “I call **myself**” — **reflexive**, the action looping back on you. The pronoun changes with the person: **mi** chiamo (I) → **ti** chiami (you) → **si** chiama (he/she/formal). And notice: no *io* — the *-o* ending already says “I.” (You met that pro-drop last lesson.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “mi chiamo” — *mee KYAH-moh*, hard *k* in *chiamo*
- “Mi chiamo ...” with your own name
- “chiamo” then English “claim, exclaim, clamor” — the *clāmāre* family

Before you move on

What does *mi chiamo* literally mean? (“I call myself.”) What Latin verb is *chiamarsi* from, and its English cousins? (*clāmāre* — claim,

exclaim, clamor.) How is Italian *ch* pronounced? (A hard *k*.) Next: ask it back — **Come ti chiami?**

3.3 Come ti chiami? — “what’s your name?”

You have both pieces: **come** (“how,” from your how-are-you chapter) and **chiamarsi** (“to call oneself”). Like Spanish and French, Italian asks the name with “**how**”, not “what”: *how do you call yourself?*

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Come ti chiami? = “What’s your name?” (informal)
literally: “**How do you call yourself?**”

- **come** = “how” (← *quōmodo*; you met it in *Come stai?*).
- **ti** = “yourself” (the reflexive, matching *mi* → *ti*).
- **chiami** = “you call” (the *tu* form of *chiamarsi*).

Two registers — the same *tu* / *Lei* split you learned in Chapter 2:

register	question
informal (<i>tu</i>)	Come ti chiami?
formal (<i>Lei</i>)	Come si chiama?

Only the reflexive pronoun and the ending move: *ti chiami* → *si chiama* — the identical pattern to *mi chiamo* → *si chiama*. The whole exchange:

— Come ti chiami? — Mi chiamo Marco. E tu?

Note Italian asks the name with *come* (“how”), exactly like Spanish *¿cómo se llama?* and French *comment vous appelez-vous?* — the name is a matter of *how* you’re called, not *what* you are.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Come ti chiami?” — informal, for a peer

- “Come si chiama?” — formal, for a stranger (Lei)
- the whole swap — “Come ti chiami? — Mi chiamo ... E tu?”

Before you move on

What does *Come ti chiami?* literally ask? (“How do you call yourself?”) What changes for the formal *Lei* version? (*ti chiami* → *si chiama*.) Which “how” word is it built on? (*come* ← *quōmodo*.) Next: the reply when you meet — **piacere**.

3.4 piacere — “pleased to meet you,” i.e. “a pleasure”

Names exchanged, you close the introduction with one warm word: **piacere** — literally “*a pleasure*.” It’s the twin of a word you’d say in Portuguese, and it’s pure Latin *please*.

Sounds you’ll need

- **soft-c** — **piacere** = *pya-CHEH-reh*: here *c* is before *e*, so it’s soft (*ch*), and the *ia* glides: *pya-CHE-re*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

piacere = “a pleasure” (and, as a verb, “to please”), from Latin **placēre**, “*to please, to be pleasing*.” Said on meeting someone, it’s short for “[it’s] a pleasure [to meet you].”

That **placēre** root is thoroughly at home in English:

- **please, pleasure, pleasant** — the direct line.
- **complacent** (“pleased *with* oneself”), **complaisant**, **placid** (pleased → calm).

And across the family, “pleased to meet you” is built from the *same* idea nearly everywhere:

- Portuguese **prazer** (← *placēre* too — its twin).
- French **enchanté** (a different image — “enchanted”).

- Spanish **mucho gusto** (“much pleasure,” but from *gustus*, “taste” — a different Latin root).

Grammar Lens: a one-word courtesy

Piacere stands alone — you just say it, with a small nod, as you shake hands. For a touch more you can say *piacere di conoscerti* (“pleasure to know you”).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “piacere” — *pya-CHEH-reh*
- “piacere” then English “please, pleasure, placid” — the *placēre* root
- Italian *piacere* and Portuguese *prazer* — twins from *placēre*

Before you move on

What does *piacere* literally mean, and from what? (“A pleasure,” ← *placēre* “to please.”) Its English cousins? (Please, pleasure, placid, complacent.) Which Portuguese word is its twin? (*Prazer*.) Next: put the whole introduction together.

3.5 Practice — introducing yourself in Italian

No new words. *io, mi chiamo, come ti chiami, piacere* now assemble into a real first meeting — run it formally and informally until the register swap is automatic. This slots between your greetings (Ch. 1–2) and farewells (Ch. 4).

The exchange

Informal (a peer):

— Ciao! **Come ti chiami?** — **Mi chiamo** Marco. E tu? —
Giulia. **Piacere!** — Piacere!

Formal (a stranger — *Lei*):

— Buongiorno. **Come si chiama?** — Mi chiamo Marco Rossi.
 E Lei? — Rossi. **Piacere.**

What you've built this chapter

- **io** — “I” (← *ego*), usually **dropped** — the verb ending carries it.
- **mi chiamo** — “I call myself” (*chiamarsi* ← *clāmāre*, “call out”; kin of Spanish *me llamo*, Portuguese *me chamo*).
- **Come ti chiami?** / **Come si chiama?** — “how do you call yourself?”, informal / formal.
- **piacere** — “a pleasure” (← *placēre*; twin of Portuguese *prazer*).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the full informal meeting, both voices
- the same formally — *ti chiami* → *si chiama*, *tu* → *Lei*
- chain it all — greet, name, ask, how-are-you, goodbye: “Ciao! Mi chiamo ... Come ti chiami? ... Come stai? ... A domani!”

Twice through: Run a whole first meeting start to finish.

Before you move on

Why does Italian usually drop *io*? (The verb ending says who.)
 What does *mi chiamo* literally mean, and its root? (“I call myself”; *clāmāre*.) What does *piacere* mean? (“A pleasure.”) Italian now
 runs greet → introduce → how-are-you → goodbye, end to end.

Chapter 4

Farewells

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can close an Italian conversation and pick the goodbye that matches when I will next see the person.

Open with ciao, ask Come stai?, then choose the exit — a più tardi within the hour, a domani for tomorrow, a presto for soon, arrivederci for until-we-meet-again.

4.1 arrivederci — “goodbye,” i.e. “until we meet again”

You can open a conversation in Italian and ask how someone is. Now, close it. The standard goodbye is **arrivederci** — and, like its French and German cousins, it doesn’t say “goodbye” at all. It says “**until we see each other again.**”

Sounds you’ll need

- **arrivederci** = *ar-ree-veh-**DER**-chee*: a tapped double *r*, and the final *-ci* is soft (*chee*, Italian *c* before *i*). Stress the *-der-*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Break it into four pieces you can almost read straight off:

- **a** = “to / until” (Latin *ad*).
- **ri-** = “again” (Latin *re-* — as in English *re-do*, *re-view*).

- **vedere** = “to see” (Latin *vidēre* → English **video**, **vision**, **evident**, **provide**).
- **-ci** = “us / each other.”

Glued: *a-(ri)-vedere-ci* → “**to our seeing-one-another-again.**” You don’t say farewell; you promise the next meeting.

The whole family says the same thing

This “until re-seeing” idea is shared right across the languages you’re learning — a lovely thing to notice:

language	goodbye	literally
Italian	<i>arrivederci</i>	“to our re-seeing”
French	<i>au revoir</i>	“to the re-seeing” (<i>re</i> + <i>voir</i> , see)
German	<i>auf Wiedersehen</i>	“on again-seeing” (<i>wieder</i> + <i>sehen</i>)

Three languages, one gesture: part by pointing at the reunion, not the parting. (Italian keeps a heavier, final “to God” goodbye too — **addio**, *a Dio* — the exact twin of Spanish *adiós*; but for everyday partings it’s *arrivederci*.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “arrivederci” — *ar-ree-veh-DER-chee*
- arrivederci / au revoir / auf Wiedersehen — all “until we see again”
- “vedere” then English “video, vision” — the *see* root

Before you move on

What does *arrivederci* literally promise? (“Until we see each other again.”) What French and German goodbyes share that exact idea? (*au revoir*, *auf Wiedersehen*.) Which heavier Italian goodbye means “to God,” like Spanish *adiós*? (*addio*.) Next: “see you tomorrow” — **a domani**.

4.2 a domani — “see you tomorrow”

The “until re-seeing” pattern gives you a whole family of good-byes: just name **when**. First: **a domani**, “to tomorrow.”

Sounds you’ll need

- **a domani** = *ah doh-MAH-nee*: clean open vowels, stress the *-ma-*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **a** = “to / until” (the same *a* from *arrivederci*).
- **domani** = “tomorrow,” from Latin **dē māne**, “*from the morning*.”

That word **māne** (“morning”) is quietly shared across the Romance family, and you may have already met its Spanish child:

- Italian **domani** (“tomorrow”) ← *dē māne*.
- Spanish **mañana** ← (*hōra*) *māneāna* — which means **both** “morning” *and* “tomorrow,” because tomorrow *is* “the coming morning.”

So *a domani* literally says “**until the morning [to come]**.” You part by pointing at daybreak.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “a domani” — *ah doh-MAH-nee*
- Italian *domani* and Spanish *mañana* — both from *māne*, “morning”

Before you move on

What does *domani* come from, and what does it literally mean? (*Dē māne* — “from the morning.”) Which Spanish word shares that *māne* root? (*Mañana* — morning *and* tomorrow.) Next: “see you soon” — **a presto**.

4.3 a presto — “see you soon”

Same frame, new “when”: **a presto**, “to soon.” And *presto* is a word English already borrowed whole — from stage magic and music.

Sounds you’ll need

- **a presto** = *ah PREH-stoh*: clean *st*, crisp open *e*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **a** = “to / until.”
- **presto** = “soon, quickly,” from Latin **praestō**, “*at hand, ready, present*” (*prae-* “before” + *stō/stāre* “stand” — literally “standing before you,” ready to hand).

English took **presto** straight from Italian:

- in **music**, *presto* means “fast.”
- in stage magic, “*presto!*” means “quick — and there it is!”
- it shares that *stō* (“stand”) root with *stare* from your how-are-you chapter, and with English **station**, **stable**, **status**.

So *a presto* is “**until [it is] soon / at hand**” — see you before long.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “a presto” — *ah PREH-stoh*
- “presto” as music (“fast”) and magic (“presto!”) — same word

Before you move on

What does *presto* mean, and where has English borrowed it? (“Soon / quickly” — in music and magic.) What “stand” root does it share with *stare*? (Latin *stō/stāre*.) Next: “see you later” — **a più tardi**.

4.4 a più tardi — “see you later”

The last “when” in the set: **a più tardi**, “to later” — literally “to *more late*.” Two small words, both alive in English.

Sounds you’ll need

- **piu-glide** — **più** = *pyoo*, one gliding syllable (the accent marks the stress).
- **a più tardi** = *ah pyoo TAR-dee*, tapped *r*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **a** = “to / until.”
- **più** = “more,” from Latin **plūs** — the very word English took for **plus**, and the root of **plural**, **surplus**.
- **tardi** = “late,” from Latin **tardus**, “*slow, late*” → English **tardy**, **re-tard** (“to slow down”), **tardy** slip.

Together, *più tardi* = “**more late**” = “later.” So *a più tardi* is “until [it’s] more-late” — see you later on. (Italian builds “later” as *more late*, just as English does with the comparative *-er*.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “a più tardi” — *ah pyoo TAR-dee*
- “più” ~ English *plus*; “tardi” ~ English *tardy* — both borrowed
- the four goodbyes — *arrivederci* / *a domani* / *a presto* / *a più tardi*

Before you move on

What do *più* and *tardi* mean, and their English cousins? (*Più* = “more” ~ *plus*; *tardi* = “late” ~ *tardy*.) So *a più tardi* literally says? (“To more-late” → see you later.) Next: put the farewells together.

4.5 Practice — saying goodbye in Italian

No new words. You can now open a conversation, ask how someone is, and **close** it. Run the goodbyes until the right one comes automatically.

You'll want to know: the closings

Neutral / polite (anyone):

— È stato un piacere. **Arrivederci!** — **Arrivederci!**

With a “when” — pick the promise that fits:

— **A domani!** (see you tomorrow) — **A presto!** (see you soon)

— **A più tardi!** (see you later — same day)

Casual (a friend): the *ciao* you learned in Chapter 1 doubles as “bye”

— **Ciao, a presto!**

What you've built this chapter

- **arrivederci** — goodbye (“until we re-see each other”; the *au revoir* / *auf Wiedersehen* family). Heavier, final variant: **addio** (“to God,” twin of *adiós*).
- **a domani** — see you tomorrow (*domani* ← *dē māne*, “morning”; kin of Spanish *mañana*).
- **a presto** — see you soon (*presto* ← *praestō*, “at hand” — the English music/magic word).
- **a più tardi** — see you later (*più* ~ plus, *tardi* ~ tardy).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- greet, ask, and close — “Ciao! Come stai? ... A domani!”
- choose the right goodbye — leaving till tomorrow / in an hour / for good

- arrivederci / au revoir / auf Wiedersehen — the “re-seeing” trio

Twice through: Open and close a whole tiny exchange without stopping.

Before you move on

Which goodbye means “until we see each other again”? (*Arrivederci.*) Which says “to the morning”? (*A domani.*) Which Italian goodbye matches Spanish *adiós* — “to God”? (*Addio.*) You can now run an Italian conversation start to finish.

Chapter 5

The First Verbs

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 👁️ eyes (1) 🖐️ Hands-free start: first 2 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can build my own Italian sentences with -are verbs and drop the subject pronoun the way Italians do.

Conjugate parlare, abitare and lavorare across io, tu and lui with no pronoun spoken, then answer for yourself what you speak, where you live and where you work.

5.1 parlare — “to speak,” the model -are verb

Until now you’ve assembled fixed phrases. **parlare** (“to speak”) is your first real **verb** and the model for Italian’s largest **-are** family. Learn this pattern and you drive thousands.

Sounds you’ll need

- **r-tap** — a single tapped *r*: **parlare** = *par-LA-reh*.
- **vowel-a-open** — clean open *ah* vowels.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

parlare comes from Late Latin **parabolāre**, “to tell parables, to discourse” — from **parabola**, “a comparison, a speech” (Greek *parabolē*). So to *speak* is, at root, to *tell parables*. The English family:

- **parable**, **parole** (a word of honour), **palaver**, **parley**, **parliament** (a *talking-place*).

And a lovely cross-link: **Italian *parlare* and French *parler* are the same word** — both from *parabolāre*. **Spanish went a different way**: its “to speak,” *hablar*, is from *fabulārī* (“to chat,” ← *fābula* → fable). So Italy and France “tell parables”; Spain “tells fables.”

Grammar Lens: the -are present tense (and pro-drop)

Drop **-are** to get *parl-*, then add the endings:

person	ending	<i>parlare</i> →
(io)	-o	parlo (I speak)
(tu)	-i	parli (you speak)
(lui/lei)	-a	parla (he/she speaks)
(noi)	-iamo	parliamo
(voi)	-ate	parlate
(loro)	-ano	parlano

Like Spanish (*hablo/hablas*), **Italian drops the subject pronoun** — *parlo* already says “I,” so you don’t need *io*. This closes a neat circle you’ve been building:

- **Drop the pronoun:** Spanish (*hablo*), Italian (*parlo*) — endings are distinct.
- **Keep the pronoun:** French (*je parle* — endings silent), German (*ich wohne* — grammar needs a subject).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “parlare” — *par-LA-reh*
- “parlo, parli, parla” — no *io* needed
- *parlare* / *parler* (same *parabolāre*) vs Spanish *hablar* (*fabulārī*)

Before you move on

What Latin word gives *parlare*, and which French verb is its twin? (*parabolāre* — French *parler*.) Which Romance “speak” verb is from a *different* root, and which? (Spanish *hablar* ← *fabulārī*.) Does

Italian keep or drop *io*, and why? (Drops it — the endings are distinct.) Next: **abitare**, “to live.”

5.2 abitare — “to live,” about *having a place*

A second **-are** verb — snap it into the endings you just learned. **abitare** (“to live, to dwell”) lets you say *where* you live — and it’s the twin of French *habiter*.

Sounds you’ll need

- **abitare** = *a-bee-TA-reh* (Italian dropped the Latin *h*-, but the spelling and sense stayed). Clean open vowels, tapped *r*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

abitare comes from Latin **habitāre**, “to dwell, to keep having [a place]” — the **frequentative** of **habēre**, “to have.” To *dwell* is to *keep having* your place. The English family:

- **habitat** — where a creature dwells; **inhabit**, **inhabitant**, **habitation**.
- via *habēre* (“have”): **habit** (what you keep having), **able**, **ability**.

French kept the *h* in spelling (*habiter*); Italian dropped it (*abitare*) — same Latin verb, same meaning. Now you can answer a *dove* (“where”) question:

Abito a Roma. — “I live in Rome.” (No *io* — pro-drop.)

Grammar Lens: same -are template

| (io) abito · (tu) abiti · (lui/lei) abita | (-o / -i / -a) |
| abitiamo · abitate · abitano | |

Identical to *parlare* — nothing new. That’s the whole point of a regular pattern.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “abitare” — *a-bee-TA-reh*
- “abito, abiti, abita” — same endings as *parlo/parli/parla*
- “Abito a Roma”; and “abitare” ↔ English *habitat*

Before you move on

What Latin verb is *abitare* from, and what does it literally involve? (*habitāre* — “keep having a place,” ← *habēre*, “to have.”) English cousins? (Habitat, inhabit.) Say “I live in Rome.” (*Abito a Roma.*) Next: **lavorare**, “to work.”

5.3 **lavorare** — “to work,” the honest kind

A third **-are** verb — and a satisfying twist. Where Spanish and French built their word for “work” out of **torture**, **Italian took a different road entirely**: *lavorare*, from plain Latin “to labour.”

Sounds you’ll need

- **lavorare** = *la-vo-RA-reh*: clean vowels, tapped *r*. (The *v* is a real *v*, unlike Spanish.)

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

lavorare comes from Latin **labōrāre**, “to labour, to work, to strive” — from **labor**, “toil, effort.” No torture device here; just honest labour. The English family is large and dignified:

- **labor** / **labour**, **laborious**, **laboratory** (a *working*-place).
- **elaborate** (“worked *out*”), **collaborate** (“labour *together*”).

Here’s the cross-language payoff — the same idea, **two very different roots**:

language	“to work”	from	literal picture
Italian	<i>laborare</i>	<i>labōrāre</i>	labour, effort
Spanish	<i>trabajar</i>	<i>tripalium</i>	a torture rack
French	<i>travailler</i>	<i>tripalium</i>	a torture rack

Spain and France remember work as *torture* (→ *travail/travel*); Italy remembers it as *labour*. A single glance at three verbs, and you see two Roman attitudes to a day’s work.

Grammar Lens: same -are template

| (io) lavoro · (tu) lavori · (lui/lei) lavora | (-o / -i / -a) |

Lavoro a Milano. — “I work in Milan.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “laborare” — *la-vo-RA-reh*
- “lavoro, lavori, lavora”
- Italian *laborare* (labour) vs Spanish *trabajar* / French *travailler* (torture)

Before you move on

What Latin word is *laborare* from, and its English cousins? (*labōrāre* — labor, laboratory, elaborate.) How does its root differ from Spanish *trabajar* and French *travailler*? (Those are from *tripalium*, “torture”; Italian is from *labor*, “toil.”) Say “I work in Milan.” (*Lavoro a Milano.*) Next: your first sentence — **Parlo italiano.**

5.4 Parlo italiano — your first real sentence

The moment it pays off: you take a **verb** you conjugated and a **noun**, and build a sentence no one handed you — *Parlo italiano*, “I speak Italian.” (Italian *parlo* covers both “I speak” and “I am speaking.”)

You'll want to know: italiano

italiano = “Italian,” from **Italia** — the ancient name of the peninsula itself. Its own origin is delightfully humble: many scholars trace *Italia* to Oscan **víteliú**, “*land of calves / young cattle*” (kin to Latin *vitulus*, “calf,” and perhaps English *veal*). So *Italia* may literally have meant “**Calf-land**.” Say it *ee-ta-LYA-no*.

You'll want to know: the assembled sentence

Snap two things you own together:

Parlo (I speak, from *parlare*) + **italiano** (Italian) = **Parlo italiano**.

A complete, grammatical Italian sentence. Notice what's *not* there:

- **No *io***. Italian drops it (like Spanish *hablo español*) — the *-o* of *parlo* already says “I”. *Io parlo italiano* is fine for emphasis only.
- **No article** on the language: *parlo italiano*.

This closes the **pronoun-rule circle** you've watched across five languages:

	pronoun	why
Spanish / Italian	dropped	<i>hablo/parlo</i> : distinct endings
French <i>je parle</i>	kept	endings are silent
German <i>ich lerne</i>	kept	grammar needs an overt subject

Swap the pieces: **Abito a Roma.** · **Lavoro a Milano.** · **Parli italiano?**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Parlo italiano” — *PAR-lo ee-ta-LYA-no*
- drop the *io* — Italian doesn't need it (like Spanish, unlike French)
- “italiano” ← *Italia*, maybe “calf-land” — a humble, formerly name

Before you move on

Where does *italiano* come from, and what might *Italia* have meant? (*Italia*; perhaps “land of calves.”) In *Parlo italiano*, why no *io* and no article? (The *-o* ending is “I”; languages take no article.) Which two of the five languages *drop* the pronoun? (Spanish and Italian.) Next: practice.

5.5 Practice — making sentences with -are verbs

For the first time you’re **building** Italian sentences from a pattern, not reciting phrases. Drill the three verbs until the endings are automatic — and remember, Italian drops the *io*.

Grammar Lens: conjugate on command

Run each through *io / tu / lui-lei* (pronoun dropped in speech):

- **parlare**: parlo · parli · parla
- **abitare**: abito · abiti · abita
- **lavorare**: lavoro · lavori · lavora

Same endings every time (**-o / -i / -a**), and no pronoun needed.

Grammar Lens: say something real

— **Parli** italiano? — Sì, **parlo** un po’. E tu? — Anch’io.
Dove abiti? — **Abito** a Roma, e **lavoro** a Milano. —
 Grazie! — Prego.

What you’ve built this chapter

- **the regular -are present tense** — drop *-are*, add *-o/-i/-a/-iamo/-ate/-ano*; the pronoun is **dropped** (like Spanish).
- **parlare** (← *parabolāre* → parable; = French *parler*, vs Spanish *hablar*), **abitare** (← *habitāre* → habitat; twin of *habiter*), **lavorare** (← *labōrāre* → labor/laboratory — the “labour” road, not Spanish/French “torture”).

- **Parlo italiano** — first self-assembled sentence (*italiano* ← *Italia*, perhaps “calf-land”).
- **The pronoun circle across 5 languages:** ES *hablo* + IT *parlo* **drop**; FR *je parle* (silent endings) + DE *ich lerne* (grammar) **keep**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- conjugate all three verbs, io/tu/lui — no pronoun spoken
- answer about yourself — what you speak, where you live, where you work
- chain it — “Ciao! Parlo italiano. Parli italiano? ... Arrivederci!”

Twice through: “Parli italiano? — Sì, parlo un po’.”

Before you move on

What are the three singular *-are* endings? (*-o* / *-i* / *-a*.) Give the “I” forms of the three verbs. (*Parlo, abito, lavoro*.) Which languages drop the subject pronoun, and which keep it, and why? (Drop: ES/IT — distinct endings; keep: FR — silent endings, DE — grammar.) Italian now moves in real sentences.

Chapter 6

Numbers One to Ten

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

***By the end of this chapter:** I can count from one to ten in Italian and hear the old numbers still sitting inside settembre and dicembre.*

Count uno to dieci, pair sette, otto, nove and dieci with settembre, ottobre, novembre and dicembre, and hear Latin's -ct- flattened into the doubled -tt- of otto.

6.1 uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque — counting to five

Of all the Romance sisters, **Italian kept the numbers closest to Latin** — it stayed in Italy, next to Rome, and wore the words down the least. Beside each you'll see the Spanish and French cousins for contrast.

Sounds you'll need

- double-tt — **quattro**: hold the double *t* audibly, *KWAT-tro* (Italian really doubles its consonants).
- c-before-i — **cinque** = *CHEEN-kweh*: *c* before *i/e* is a “ch” sound, but the *-que* stays a hard *kw*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian	← Latin	Spanish / French	English cousins
uno (1)	<i>ūnus</i>	<i>uno / un</i>	unit, union, unique (and <i>a/an, one</i>)
due (2)	<i>duo</i>	<i>dos / deux</i>	duo, dual, duet, double
tre (3)	<i>trēs</i>	<i>tres / trois</i>	trio, triple, triangle
quattro (4)	<i>quattuor</i>	<i>cuatro / quatre</i>	quart, quarter, quatrain
cinque (5)	<i>quīnque</i>	<i>cinco / cinq</i>	quintet, quintessence

Notice **cinque** — Italian kept Latin *quīnque* almost whole (-*que* and all), while Spanish softened it to *cinco* and French clipped it to *cinq*. And **quattro** is why a musical foursome is a *quartet* and four singers make a *quattro*-anything. Italian is the sister who changed her Latin the least.

Grammar Lens: uno → un / uno / una

uno is also “a/an,” and it flexes by gender and the following sound: **un** (before most masc. nouns), **uno** (before tricky masc. clusters like *s+consonant* or *z-*), **una** (fem.). *un caffè* “a/one coffee,” *una birra* “a/one beer.” The others (*due, tre...*) don’t change.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque” — count up
- each with its English cousin — “due/duo, tre/trio, quattro/quart, cinque/quintet”
- “un caffè, una birra” — *uno* → un/una before a noun

Before you move on

Give 1–5 in Italian. (*Uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque.*) Which Italian number kept Latin *quīnque* most intact, versus Spanish and French? (*cinque*, vs *cinco* / *cing.*) What does *un/una* mean besides “one”? (“A/an.”) Next: **6–10**, and the months hidden inside them.

6.2 sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci — and the calendar’s secret

The rest of the count hides a calendar fact: **settembre–dicembre are Latin for 7, 8, 9, 10**. Italian even keeps the old Latin double consonants that show it.

Sounds you’ll need

- double-**tt** — **sette** = *SET-teh*, **otto** = *OT-toh*: lean on the doubled *t*, a giveaway that Latin’s *-pt-* and *-ct-* both collapsed into *-tt-*.
- **c-before-i** — **dieci** = *DYE-chee* (the *c* before *i* → “ch”).

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian	← Latin	Spanish twin	English cousins
sei (6)	<i>sex</i>	<i>seis</i>	sextet , sextant
sette (7)	<i>septem</i>	<i>siete</i>	settembre (the 7 th month!), septet
otto (8)	<i>octō</i>	<i>ocho</i>	ottobre (8 th), octave , octopus
nove (9)	<i>novem</i>	<i>nueve</i>	novembre (9 th), novena
dieci (10)	<i>decem</i>	<i>diez</i>	dicembre (10 th), decimal , decade

Watch the doubled consonants do historical work: Latin *septem* had a *-pt-* that Italian smoothed to *-tt-* → **sette**; Latin *octō* had a *-ct-* that likewise became *-tt-* → **otto**. Italian didn't drop those clusters (as French did in *huit*) — it **assimilated** them into twins. So *otto* and *ottobre* still show the 8 side by side.

Grammar Lens: why the months are “off by two”

Settembre means “7th,” but it's the **9th** month. The old **Roman year began in March**, so *September* really was the seventh; later *luglio* and *agosto* (July and August, for Julius and Augustus) pushed the counting months down two slots. The Latin numbers stuck to the labels. Every *dicembre*, you say Roman “**ten**” — just as in Spanish *diciembre* and French *décembre*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci” — finish the count
- “sette/settembre, otto/ottobre, nove/novembre, dieci/dicembre”

- “ $octō \rightarrow otto$ ” — the *-ct-* becoming a doubled *-tt-*

Before you move on

Give 6–10 in Italian. (*Sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci.*) What happened to Latin’s *-ct-* in $octō \rightarrow otto$? (It assimilated to a doubled *-tt-*.) Why is *dicembre* Latin for “ten”? (The Roman year began in March.) Next chapter builds on this toward time and days.

Chapter 7

Days of the Week

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ↔ Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name all seven Italian days and say why sabato and domenica broke away from the planets.

Run lunedì to venerdì with the planet inside each, then sabato from the Sabbath and domenica as the Lord's day, matched against Spanish sábado and domingo.

7.1 lunedì to venerdì — the planet-week, Italian-style

Italy sat at the centre of the Roman world, so its weekday names are the **planet-week** almost undisturbed — the same map of the sky French uses. The tell is the little accented **-dì** at the end of each.

Sounds you'll need

- **final-stress-i** — the **-dì** carries a **written accent** and the **stress**: *lu-ne-DÌ*, *mar-te-DÌ*. That accent marks “day” (*diēs*) and where your voice lands.
- **c-before-i** — **mercoledì** = *mer-co-le-DÌ* (hard *c* here, before *o*).

Grammar Lens: [planet] + *dì*

dì is Latin **diēs**, “day” — the same *-di* you’d hear in French *lundi*. Before it sits a **planet-god**:

Italian	← Latin	planet	Spanish twin	French twin
lunedì	<i>lūnae diēs</i>	Moon	<i>lunes</i>	<i>lundi</i>
martedì	<i>Martis diēs</i>	Mars	<i>martes</i>	<i>mardi</i>
mercoledì	<i>Mercuri diēs</i>	Mercury	<i>miércoles</i>	<i>mercredi</i>
giovedì	<i>Jovis diēs</i>	Jupiter (<i>Giove</i>)	<i>jueves</i>	<i>jeudi</i>
venerdì	<i>Veneris diēs</i>	Venus (<i>Venere</i>)	<i>viernes</i>	<i>vendredi</i>

Line up the three sisters — *lunedì* / *lunes* / *lundi* — and you’re looking at one Roman word, *lūnae diēs*, worn three ways. Italian and French keep the day-word at the **end** (*lune-dì*, *lun-di*); Spanish clipped it off entirely (*lunes*). And *giovedì* wears **Giove**, the Italian name of Jupiter — the same king-god English honours as Thor in *Thursday*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*lunedì*, *martedì*, *mercoledì*, *giovedì*, *venerdì*” — mind the final stress
- the three-sister line — “*lunedì* / *lunes* / *lundi*”, “*martedì* / *martes* / *mardi*”
- “*-dì* = *diēs* = day” — the accented tail

Before you move on

What is the accented *-dì*, and from what Latin word? (“Day,” ← *diēs*.) Which planet is *giovedì*? (Jupiter — *Giove*.) How do Italian/French treat the day-word versus Spanish? (IT/FR keep it at the end, *-dì/-di*; Spanish dropped it, *lunes*.) Next: the **weekend** — *sabato* and *domenica*.

7.2 sabato and domenica — the religious weekend

The five weekdays were planets; the two weekend days are **faith**. Here the accented *-dì* disappears, because these names never came from *diēs* + a god — they came from the Sabbath and the Lord.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian	← Latin	meaning	Spanish twin
sabato	<i>Sabbatum</i> ← Hebrew <i>shabbāt</i>	the “ Sabbath ,” the day of rest	<i>sábado</i>
domenica	(<i>diēs</i>) <i>Dominica</i> ← <i>Dominus</i>	“the Lord’s day”	<i>domingo</i>

- **sabato** is the **Sabbath** — Latin *Sabbatum* straight from Hebrew *shabbāt*, “to cease, to rest.” Where English kept the planet (**Saturday** = Saturn), Italian, Spanish, and French all took the Jewish rest-day instead (*sabato* / *sábado* / *samedi*).
- **domenica** is “the **Lord’s** day,” *diēs Dominica*, from *Dominus* “lord, master” (→ English *dominion*, *dominate*, *dame*, *don*). Christianity renamed the old “Sun’s day”: English still says **Sunday**, but Italian and Spanish point to the Lord (*domenica* / *domingo*). Note *domenica* is **feminine** (*la domenica*) — *diēs* went feminine here.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the full week — “lunedì ... venerdì, sabato, domenica”
- “sabato = Sabbath, domenica = the Lord’s day” — faith, not planets
- the sisters — “sabato / sábado”, “domenica / domingo”

Before you move on

Give all seven Italian days. (*Lunedì ... domenica.*) Where does *sabato* come from? (The **Sabbath**, *Sabbatum* ← Hebrew *shabbāt*.) What does *domenica* mean, and its Spanish twin? (“The **Lord’s** day”; *domingo*.) Next chapter builds on this toward telling the time.

Chapter 8

Telling Time

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) 👁️ eyes (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can tell the time in Italian and use mezzogiorno and mezzanotte for the two hours that need no number.

Say è mezzogiorno and è mezzanotte, break each into mezzo or mezza plus giorno or notte, and explain why the half changes gender between them.

8.1 ora — the hour, told with “le”

Italian’s word for “hour” is **ora**, straight from Latin **hōra** (which Rome took from Greek *hōrā*, “a time of day”). Telling the time in Italian has one neat twist: you use the **feminine article** and let *ore* (“hours”) stay implied.

Sounds you’ll need

- open-o — **ora** = *OH-ra*, open *o*, single tapped *r*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

ora ← Latin **hōra** ← Greek **hōrā**. It’s the closest of the sisters to the Latin: French wore it to *heure*, but Italian barely touched it — *hōra* → *ora* (Italian dropped the silent Latin *h*- in spelling, too). Same word as English *hour*, and as German’s borrowed *Uhr*.

Grammar Lens: “è l’una” but “sono le due”

Here’s the twist. Italian tells the time with the **feminine article** (because *ora/ore* is feminine), and the verb agrees with the number:

È l’una. — “It is one o’clock.” (singular: *è* “it is” + *l’una* = “the one [hour]”) **Sono le due.** — “It is two o’clock.” (plural: *sono* “they are” + *le due* = “the two [hours]”) **Sono le dieci.** — “It is ten o’clock.”

Literally “**they are** the two [hours]” — Italian counts the hours as feminine things and drops the word *ore* entirely; the article **le** carries it. Only **one o’clock** is singular (*è l’una*); from two on, it’s *sono le ...*

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ora” — *OH-ra*
- “è l’una ... sono le due, sono le tre, sono le quattro”
- “ora / heure / Uhr / hour” — all Latin *hōra*

Before you move on

What word is *ora* from, and its sisters? (Latin *hōra* ← Greek *hōrā*; French *heure*, German *Uhr*, English *hour*.) Why “*sono le due*” but “*è l’una*”? (Plural hours take *sono le ...*; one o’clock is singular *è l’una*.) What word does the *le* stand in for? (*ore*, “hours” — feminine.) Next: **mezzogiorno** and **mezzanotte** — noon and midnight.

8.2 mezzogiorno and mezzanotte — Italy’s noon and midnight

The two unnumbered hours. **mezzogiorno** (noon) and **mezzanotte** (midnight) are, like their French cousins, the **middle** of the day and the night — built from *mezzo* “half/middle” plus *giorno* “day” and *notte* “night.”

Sounds you'll need

- double-**zz** — **mezzo** = *MED-dzo*, the doubled *zz* a hard “ts/dz” — lean on it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

The front piece is **mezzo/mezza**, “half, middle,” from Latin **medius** (cousin of English *medium*, *mid*, and of French *mi-* in *midi*):

Italian	=	← Latin	literally
mezzogiorno	<i>mezzo</i> + <i>giorno</i>	<i>medius</i> + <i>diurnum</i>	“ mid-day ” (noon)
mezzanotte	<i>mezza</i> + <i>notte</i>	<i>media</i> + <i>noctem</i>	“ mid-night ” (midnight)

- **mezzogiorno** = “mid-day.” *giorno* (“day”) is from Latin *diurnum* (“of the day”) — the same root as English *journal* and *journey* (a day’s travel). So noon is “the middle of the day-span.”
- **mezzanotte** = “mid-night.” *notte* (“night”) ← *noctem*, twin of English *night* and French *nuit*. *mezza* is the **feminine** “half” (agreeing with the feminine *notte*), where *mezzo* is masculine (with *giorno*) — the article system you just met, again.

To use them, they *are* the hour:

È mezzogiorno. — “It is noon.” **È mezzanotte.** — “It is midnight.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “mezzogiorno” (noon), “mezzanotte” (midnight)
- break them — “mezzo (middle) + giorno (day)”, “mezza + notte (night)”
- “È mezzogiorno. È mezzanotte.” — singular *è*, no number

Before you move on

What do *mezzogiorno* and *mezzanotte* literally mean? (“Mid-day” and “mid-night.”) What is *mezzo/mezza* from, and its French cousin? (Latin *medius*; French *mi-* in *midi/minuit*.) Why *mezzanotte* but *mezzogiorno*? (*mezza* is feminine for *notte*, *mezzo* masculine for *giorno*.) Next chapter builds on this toward months and family.

Chapter 9

Months and Seasons

Modes: ⇐ voice (1) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the Italian months and seasons and say what primavera literally promises.

Give la primavera, l'estate, l'autunno, l'inverno, read primavera as prima vera, the first green, and trace stagione back to statiō, a standing of the year.

9.1 i mesi — Rome's own months

Sitting next to Rome, Italian kept the month names **closest to Latin** of all the sisters — the same procession of gods and Caesars, barely worn. And two things you know pay off: *marzo* is the war-god of *martedì*, and *settembre–dicembre* are the Latin numbers 7–10.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian	← Latin	who / what	Spanish twin
gennaio	<i>Januarius</i>	Janus , god of beginnings	<i>enero</i>
febbraio	<i>Februarius</i>	the <i>Februa</i> purification	<i>febrero</i>
marzo	<i>Martius</i>	Mars — the god of martedì!	<i>marzo</i>
aprile	<i>Aprilis</i>	<i>aperire</i> “to open”	<i>abril</i>
maggio	<i>Maius</i>	Maia , growth-goddess	<i>mayo</i>
giugno	<i>Junius</i>	Juno , queen of gods	<i>junio</i>
luglio	<i>Julius</i>	Julius Caesar	<i>julio</i>
agosto	<i>Augustus</i>	emperor Augustus	<i>agosto</i>
settembre	<i>september</i>	“ 7th ” (<i>septem</i>)	<i>septiembre</i>
ottobre	<i>october</i>	“ 8th ” (<i>octo</i>)	<i>octubre</i>
novembre	<i>november</i>	“ 9th ” (<i>novem</i>)	<i>noviembre</i>
dicembre	<i>december</i>	“ 10th ” (<i>decem</i>)	<i>diciembre</i>

The Italian tells: *gennaio* kept the *-aio* of *Januarius*, and *settembre/ottobre* keep the doubled/assimilated look (*ottobre*, like *otto*). And two payoffs land:

- **marzo = Mars = martedì.** The month and Tuesday honour the *same* war-god — *Martius* and *Martedì*. One unlocks the other.
- **settembre...dicembre = 7...10.** Still the Latin numbers, because the Roman year began in **March**; then *luglio* (Julius) and *agosto* (Augustus) were inserted and shifted the count.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the twelve — “gennaio, febbraio, marzo ... novembre, dicembre”

- “marzo / martedì — both Mars”
- “settembre = 7, dicembre = 10”

Before you move on

Which god links *marzo* and *martedì*? (**Mars**.) Why is *dicembre* Latin for “ten”? (The Roman year began in March.) Which two months honour real **people**? (*Luglio* — Julius; *agosto* — Augustus.) Next: the **stagioni**, the seasons.

9.2 le stagioni — the four seasons

The word for “season,” **stagione**, is itself a small lesson: it’s Latin **statiō**, a “standing” — a fixed *station* of the year (cousin of English *station*, *stage*). And the loveliest of the four, **primavera**, means the “**first green**.”

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian	← Latin	literally
la primavera (spring)	<i>prīma vēra</i>	“ first spring / first green ” (<i>prima</i> “first” + <i>vera</i> ← <i>ver</i> “spring”)
l’estate (summer)	<i>aestas / aestātem</i>	“the heat, the hot season”
l’autunno (autumn)	<i>autumnus</i>	“autumn” (twin of English <i>autumn</i>)
l’inverno (winter)	<i>hibernum</i>	“the wintry season” (cousin of <i>hibernate</i>)

- **primavera** = *prima* + *vera*: the “first spring.” Latin *vēr* was the word for spring; Italian (and Spanish, and Portuguese) built “prima-vera,” the year’s *first* season — the same idea French once had in *primevère*.
- **estate** ← *aestas*, “heat.” **autunno** ← *autumnus*, the same word English borrowed. **inverno** ← *hibernum* “wintry” — English **hibernate** is “to spend the *inverno*.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la primavera, l’estate, l’autunno, l’inverno”
- “primavera = prima + vera (first green)”; “inverno ~ hibernate”
- “stagione ← statio — a ‘standing’ of the year, like station”

Before you move on

Name the four Italian seasons. (*Primavera, estate, autunno, inverno.*) What does *primavera* literally mean? (“**First spring / first green.**”) What Latin word is *stagione* from, and its English cousin? (*Statio* “a standing”; *station.*) Next chapter builds on this toward family and food.

Chapter 10

Family

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my parents and my siblings in Italian and spot the little-ending Italian bolted onto *frater* and *soror*.

*Say **il padre**, **la madre**, **il fratello**, **la sorella**, then rebuild **fratello** from **frāter** plus the diminutive **-ello** and reach English **fraternal** and **sorority** from the same roots.*

10.1 *il padre*, *la madre* — closest to Latin

Italian, as ever, stays nearest to Rome. Its **padre** (“father”) and **madre** (“mother”) barely moved from Latin **pater** and **māter** — Latin just softened the *-t-* to *-d-*. If you know the Latin, you nearly know the Italian.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **il padre** (“father”) ← Latin **pater** (*-t- → -d-*).
- **la madre** (“mother”) ← Latin **māter** (*-t- → -d-*).

Articles: *il* padre (masculine), *la* madre (feminine).

English already borrowed one of these whole: a **padre** is what English (and Spanish-influenced) speakers call a priest or military chaplain — *padre* itself, untouched.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian “parents” is **i genitori** — not from *parens* but from Latin **genitor**, “the **begetter**,” from *gignere* “to beget/bring forth.” That root *gen-* “give birth to” is everywhere in English: **genital**, **progenitor**, **genesis**, **generate**, **genus**, **gene**. So *i genitori* are literally “the begetters.” (Beware the **false friend**: Italian *parenti* means **relatives** in general, *not* “parents”!)

The Latin-through-English adjectives still come from *pater/māter*: **paternal** and **maternal** — the same roots as French *père/mère* and, by Grimm’s law, English *father/mother*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il padre, la madre” — soft *-d-* where Latin had *-t-*
- “i genitori = the parents; *genitor* = begetter → genesis, gene”
- the false-friend warning — “*parenti* = relatives, NOT parents”

Before you move on

Give “father” and “mother” with articles. (**il padre, la madre**.) What single sound did Latin *pater/māter* soften to? (The *-t-* became **-d-**.) What does **genitori** literally mean, and name an English cousin. (“The **begetters**”; genesis/gene/progenitor.) What does the false friend *parenti* mean? (**Relatives**, not parents.) Next: **fratello** and **sorella**.

10.2 il fratello, la sorella — brother and sister, with a little-ending

Here Italian does something charming. Where French kept *frère* and *sœur* bare, Italian rebuilt “brother” and “sister” with its beloved **diminutive** endings — literally “**little brother**” and “**little sister**” — and those forms became the everyday words.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **il fratello** (“brother”) ← Latin **frāter** + the diminutive **-ellus** → *fraterellus* → *fratello*, once “little brother.”
- **la sorella** (“sister”) ← Latin **soror** + the diminutive **-ella** → *sorella*, once “little sister.”

The root still shows: **frat-** and **soror-**, the same roots English turns into **fraternal**, **fraternity**, **friar** and **sorority**, **sororal**. Italian just wrapped them in the affectionate *-ello/-ella* that also gives *fratello*’s cousins across the language (*-ello* on *poverello* “poor little one,” *-ella* on countless names).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- all four — “il padre, la madre, il fratello, la sorella”
- the build — “*frater* + *-ello* → *fratello*, ‘little brother’”
- “*fratello* → *fraternal*; *sorella* → *sorority*”

Before you move on

Give “brother” and “sister” with articles. (**il fratello, la sorella.**) What did Italian **add** to Latin *frāter/soror* to make them? (A **diminutive** ending, *-ello / -ella* — “little brother/sister.”) Name an English cousin of each root. (*frat-* → *fraternal/friar*; *soror-* → *sorority*.) Next chapter: sentences about the family.

Chapter 11

Bread, Water, and Wine

Modes: 🔄 voice (2) 🔄 Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name bread, water and wine in Italian and show how acqua kept the whole of Latin’s aqua.

Say il pane, l’acqua and il vino, hold the doubled -cq- of acqua against French’s worn-down eau, and follow pane out to the companion who shares it.

11.1 il pane — bread, and its companions

il pane (“bread”) — and, true to form, Italian keeps it **closest to Latin**: *pānis* → *pane*, barely touched. Its root carries the same warm story as the French *pain*: a **companion** is one you **share bread** with.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **il pane** (“bread”) ← Latin **pānis** — masculine, *il* pane; the plural is *i pani*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **companion / company** ← *com-* (“with”) + *pānis* — “one you break bread with.”
- **pantry, pannier** (a bread-basket).
- And a purely Italian gem: **companatico** — the word for

“**whatever you eat with bread**” (cheese, salami, anything on it). The bread is the given; the *companatico* is what joins it — the same *com-* + *pānis* idea, alive in one Italian word.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il pane” — open *e*; plural “i pani”
- “pane → companion, companatico” — bread and what joins it

Before you move on

Give “bread” with its article. (**il pane**.) What Latin word, and how much did Italian change it? (*pānis* — barely: *pānis* → *pane*.) What does *companatico* mean, and how does it use the bread-root? (“What you eat **with** bread” — *com-* “with” + *pānis*.) Next: **l’acqua** and **il vino**.

11.2 l’acqua, il vino — water and wine, close to the source

The Italian table’s two drinks — and a neat contrast with French. Where French dissolved Latin *aqua* into a bare **eau** (“oh”), Italian kept it almost **whole**: **acqua**, with the *aqua* still ringing in it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **l’acqua** (“water”) ← Latin **aqua**. Italian barely moved it — it even **doubles** the sound with **-cq-** (*AH-kwa*), holding onto the hard *qu* that French threw away. Set them side by side: Latin *aqua* → Italian **acqua** (kept) vs French **eau** (worn to a vowel). English borrowed the same loud original for **aquatic**, **aquarium**, **aqueduct**. Takes *l’* before the vowel.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

- **il vino** (“wine”) ← Latin **vīnum** — clean and close, like everything Italian. The same word travelled into English as **wine**, and gives **vine, vinegar, vintage, vineyard, vinyl**. Masculine: *il* vino.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “l’acqua, il vino” — *acqua* with the doubled *-cq-*
- the contrast — “Latin *aqua* → Italian **acqua** (kept), French **eau** (worn away)”
- “acqua ↔ aquarium; vino → wine, vinegar”

Before you move on

Give “water” and “wine” with articles. (**l’acqua, il vino**.) How does Italian *acqua* differ from French *eau*, from the same *aqua*? (Italian **kept** it — even doubling *-cq-*; French wore it to a single vowel.) Name an English cousin of each. (*acqua* → aquatic/aquarium; *vino* → wine/vinegar.) Next chapter: asking for these at a table.

Chapter 12

Numbers Eleven to Twenty

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ⇌ Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count from eleven to twenty in Italian and hear the ten jump to the front at diciassette.

Run undici to venti, listen for the turn from se-dici to dici-assette where the ten moves to the front, and place Italian's break at 17 beside Portuguese's at 16.

12.1 undici → sedici — the ten you can still see

True to form, Italian keeps the teens **closest to Latin** — so close that the word for “ten” is still sitting in plain sight inside each one. Where French wore *decem* down to a bare **-ze**, Italian kept **-dici**.

Grammar Lens: six fusions

	Italian	← Latin	build
11	undici	<i>ūndecim</i>	un + dici
12	dodici	<i>duodecim</i>	do + dici
13	treddici	<i>trēdecim</i>	tre + dici
14	quattordici	<i>quattuordecim</i>	quattor + dici
15	quindici	<i>quīndecim</i>	quin + dici
16	sedici	<i>sēdecim</i>	se + dici

Every one is **digit** + **-dici**, and **-dici** is Latin **decem**, “ten” — the same ten you say as **dieci** (10). Compare the sisters and Italian's

clarity jumps out:

- Latin *sēdecim* → Italian **sedici** (ten still audible) · French **seize** (ten worn to a -ze) · Portuguese **dezesesseis** (rebuilt from scratch).

The digits are your Chapter 6 numbers barely changed: *tre*→*tre*-, *quattro*→ *quattor*-, *cinque*→*quin*-, *sei*→*se*-.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “undici, dodici, tredici, quattordici, quindici, sedici”
- the ten inside — “-dici = *decem* = **dieci**”
- the three-sister line — “sedici / seize / dezesseis, one Latin word”

Before you move on

Count 11 to 16 in Italian. (*Undici, dodici, tredici, quattordici, quindici, sedici.*) What is the **-dici** in every one? (Latin **decem**, “ten” — the same as *dieci*.) Which order are they built in — digit first or ten first? (**Digit first**: *tre*-dici = “three-ten”.) Next: at **17**, Italian flips *both* its strategy **and** its direction.

12.2 diciassette → venti — the count turns around

Watch the language change direction. Through **sedici** (16), Italian put the **digit first** and the ten last. At **17**, it turns the whole thing around and puts the **ten first** — and it keeps the *-dici* right there so you can see it happen.

Grammar Lens: the reversal

	Italian	build	order
16	sedici	<i>se + dici</i>	six-ten
17	diciassette	<i>dici + (a) + sette</i>	ten-and-seven
18	diciotto	<i>dici + otto</i>	ten-eight
19	diciannove	<i>dici + (an) + nove</i>	ten-nine
20	venti	$\leftarrow \text{vīgintī}$	—

Same building blocks — *dici* (“ten”) and your Chapter 6 digits — but from 17 the **ten leads**. The little linking sounds (*diciAssette*, *diciANnove*) are just Italian smoothing the joint, the doubling it loves.

What you’ve built: three different breaks

This “give up fusing, go transparent” seam happens in every Romance sister, but **not at the same place**:

language	fuses up to	goes transparent at
Portuguese	<i>quinze</i> (15)	16 — <i>dezesseis</i>
French	<i>seize</i> (16)	17 — <i>dix-sept</i>
Italian	<i>sedici</i> (16)	17 — <i>diciassette</i>

Three languages, one inherited Latin system, three different breaking points. (And German, you may recall, never breaks at all.)

venti (20) $\leftarrow \text{vīgintī}$, the same root as French *vingt* and English **vigesimal**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- 16→20 — “sedici, diciassette, diciotto, diciannove, venti”
- the turn — “*se*-dici (six-ten) → *dici*-assette (ten-seven)”
- the whole run, undici to venti

Before you move on

What changes between *sedici* and *diciassette*? (The **order** — the **ten moves to the front**; digit-first becomes ten-first.) Where do the three Romance sisters break? (**Portuguese at 16, French and Italian at 17.**) What Latin word gives *venti*? (*vīgintī* — like French *vingt*, English *vigesimal*.) Next chapter: numbers in use.

Chapter 13

Colours

Modes: 🗨 voice (2) 🗨 Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name black, white, red and blue in Italian and say which of them Italian borrowed rather than inherited.

Say nero, bianco, rosso and blu, add azzurro for gli Azzurri, and sort the four: nero and rosso inherited, bianco and blu Germanic loans, azzurro out of Arabic lāzaward.

13.1 nero, bianco — one Roman, one Lombard

Italy’s two most basic colours came from **two different peoples**. One is Rome’s own word. The other arrived with the Germanic tribes who settled the peninsula after Rome fell.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

nero (“black”) ← Latin **niger**. Straight inheritance, barely changed: *niger* → *nigrum* → *nero*. The same *niger* gives English *denigrate*, “to blacken.”

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin’s white was **albus**. Italian doesn’t use it. Instead: **bianco**, from Germanic **blank** — “**shining, gleaming**” — most likely carried in by the **Lombards**, the Germanic people who ruled northern Italy for two centuries and left their name on **Lombardia**.

The same word became French *blanc* and Portuguese *branco*.

Germanic lending **into** Romance is the reverse of the usual direction, and here the loan won so completely that Latin's own word was pushed out of the colour slot altogether.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

word	meaning	the white inside
alba	dawn	the sky turning white
albume	egg white	the white part
Albania , <i>Alpi</i>	(place names)	“the white ones”
<i>album</i> (Eng.)	album	a blank white tablet

Latin's white is still here — just doing other jobs.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “nero, bianco”
- “il vino bianco, il vino rosso” — Ch.11's wine, coloured
- “il pane bianco” — Ch.11's bread
- “l'alba” — and hear Latin's forgotten white

Before you move on

Which colour is Rome's own? (**Nero** ← *niger*.) Where does **bianco** come from? (**Germanic blank**, “shining” — likely via the **Lombards**.) Why is that surprising? (Latin normally lends **to** Germanic, not the reverse.) Where did *albus* survive? (In **alba**, “dawn,” and **albume** — no longer a colour.) Next: **rosso** and **blu**, and one more traveller.

13.2 rosso, blu — and the blue Italy plays in

One very old word, one more Germanic loan — and a third blue that came all the way from Persia by way of Arabic.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

rosso ← Latin *russus* (“red”), from PIE *h₁rewd^h*-. That root is one of the oldest colour words we can reconstruct:

language	word
Italian	rosso
French	rouge (← <i>rubeus</i>)
English	red , <i>rust</i> , <i>ruby</i>
German	rot

Rosso and *red* are **cousins**, not borrowings — separated for millennia. Note the **double s**: hold it. *Roso* and *rosso* are different words.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

blu ← Germanic *blāo*, exactly like French *bleu*. Chapter pattern confirmed: **bianco** and **blu**, Italian’s white and blue, are both **Germanic imports**.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Italian has a second blue, and it’s the famous one: **azzurro**, from Arabic *lāzaward* (“lapis lazuli”), itself from Persian *lāžward*. The initial *l*- was swallowed — heard as an article and dropped — leaving *azur/azzurro*. The same journey gave Spanish and Portuguese **azul**, French **azur**, and English **azure**.

Italy’s national teams are **gli Azzurri**, “the blue ones” — named, at the end of a very long chain, after a **blue stone mined in Afghanistan**.

What you’ve built: the colour paths

Italian	source
nero	Latin <i>niger</i>
bianco	Germanic <i>blank</i>
rosso	Latin <i>russus</i> (ancient PIE root)
blu	Germanic <i>blāo</i>
azzurro	Arabic <i>lāzaward</i>

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “rosso, blu, azzurro”
- “il vino rosso” — Chapter 11’s wine
- the cousins — “rosso · red · rot · rouge”
- “gli Azzurri” — and think of the stone

Before you move on

Is *rosso* related to English *red* by borrowing or descent? (**Descent** — PIE *h₁rewd^h-*.) Which two Italian colours are Germanic loans? (**Bianco** and **blu**.) Where does **azzurro** come from? (**Arabic** *lāzaward*, “lapis lazuli” — via Persian; the *l-* was lost as if it were an article.) What are Italy’s teams called? (**Gli Azzurri**.) Next chapter: attaching these colours to the nouns you know.

Chapter 14

Having and Telling Your Age

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) 👁️ eyes (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask an Italian’s age and give my own, saying that I have my years rather than that I am them.

Ask Quanti anni hai?, answer Ho venti anni with the doubled nn held, and hear hanno and anno come out identical because avere’s h is silent.

14.1 avere — “to have”

Italian’s workhorse verb — and the home of the language’s **only silent letter**, which is there for a reason worth knowing.

You’ll want to know: the forms

ho	abbiamo
hai	avete
ha	hanno

Look at which forms carry an **h**: *ho, hai, ha, hanno*. And which don’t: *abbiamo, avete*.

Grammar Lens: why silent h survives

Italian threw the Latin **h** away almost completely — it is never pronounced, and *uomo* (← *homō*) and *erba* (← *herba*) simply dropped it.

But in *avere* it stayed, because without it these words would collide:

with h	without h	meaning
ho — I have	o	“or”
hai — you have	ai	“to the”
ha — he/she has	a	“to”
hanno — they have	anno	“year”

Four minimal pairs, all extremely common. The **h** is silent, does nothing to the sound, and is kept **only so your eye can tell the words apart**. Spelling doing a job pronunciation can't — hold onto *hanno* vs *anno*; it comes back in the next lesson.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

avere ← Latin *habēre*, the same source as French *avoir*. English took it as a whole family: **habit** (what you have regularly), **inhabit**, **exhibit** (“hold out”), **prohibit** (“hold back”).

Note *abbiamo* — the **bb** is the old *habē-* resurfacing in the *noi* form, while *ho* wore down to a single vowel.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ho, hai, ha, abbiamo, avete, hanno”
- “Ho un fratello” (“I have a brother”) — Ch. 10's family
- the pair — “**hanno** they have · **anno** a year”
- “Abbiamo pane e vino” — Ch. 11's food

Before you move on

Give the six forms. (*Ho, hai, ha, abbiamo, avete, hanno.*) Which carry an **h**? (*Ho, hai, ha, hanno.*) Is it pronounced? (**No** — never.) Then why is it there? (To keep them apart from **o, ai, a, anno** in **writing**.) What root is *avere* from? (Latin *habēre* → *habit/inhabit/exhibit*.) Next: *anno* takes centre stage.

14.2 ho venti anni — having your years

Italian states age with **avere**, not *essere*. And the silent **h** from last lesson stops being trivia here — it becomes the difference between two real sentences.

You'll want to know: the phrase

Quanti anni hai? — “How many years do you **have**?” **Ho venti anni.** — “I **have** twenty years.”

Essere is wrong here. *Sono venti anni* does not mean “I am twenty.”

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

anno (“year”) ← Latin *annus* → English **annual**, **anniversary**, **annals**, *per annum*. Chapter 9’s months and seasons came from the same calendar vocabulary.

Note the **double n**: *a-nno*, held. Italian’s double consonants are real length, not decoration.

Grammar Lens: h earns its keep

Now put the last lesson to work:

sentence	meaning
Hanno venti anni.	“ They have twenty years.”
anno	“ year ”

Hanno and *anno* sound **exactly the same**. Only the silent **h** tells them apart — and in a sentence about years, both words show up at once. That is precisely why Italian kept a letter it never pronounces.

Grammar Lens: who has and who is

language	
Italian	<i>ho venti anni</i> — have
French	<i>j’ai vingt ans</i> — have
Spanish	<i>tengo veinte años</i> — have
Portuguese	<i>tenho vinte anos</i> — have
German	<i>ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt</i> — be
English	<i>I am twenty</i> — be

Romance has its years; Germanic is its years.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Quanti anni hai?”
- “Ho venti anni” — hold the **nn**
- your own age, using Ch. 12’s numbers
- the pair aloud — “**hanno** ... **anno**” — identical sound

Before you move on

Which verb does Italian use for age? (***Avere***, never *essere*.) What does *ho venti anni* literally say? (“I **have** twenty years.”) Where does *anno* come from? (Latin ***annus*** → *annual/anniversary*.) What separates *hanno* from *anno*? (**Only the silent h** — they sound identical.) Which two languages say “I **am**” instead? (**German and English.**)

Chapter 15

Two Italian Pasts

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say what I did in Italian with the everyday passato prossimo, and recognise the passato remoto when it turns up.

Put ha parlato beside parlò, line parlò up with Spanish habló and Portuguese falou, and place the remoto as ordinary speech in Palermo but literary in Milan.

15.1 ho parlato — the past built from “have”

Italy’s everyday past tense, and you already own both halves: **avere** from last chapter, and Chapter 5’s verbs.

Grammar Lens: the compound-past recipe

avere (conjugated) + **past participle**

infinitive	ends in	participle
parlare	-are	parlato
lavorare	-are	lavorato
credere	-ere	creduto
dormire	-ire	dormito

ho parlato	I spoke / I have spoken
hai parlato	you spoke
ha parlato	he/she spoke
abbiamo parlato	we spoke
hanno parlato	they spoke

The silent **h** from last chapter is doing its job again: *ho parlato* on the page can't be misread as *o parlato* ("or spoken").

Note **parlato** keeps the *-t-* that French wore away: Italian *parlato*, French *parlé*, both from Latin *-ātum*. Italian is the more conservative sister — the same pattern as Chapter 11's *acqua* against French *eau*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin could say:

habeō litterās scriptās — "I have letters **written**."

Not a past tense: *avere* in its plain sense of **possessing**, with *scriptās* as an **adjective** agreeing with *litterās*. Over centuries "I possess a written thing" slid into simply "**I wrote**" — a possessive construction **hardened into a tense**.

The fossil survives. When the object comes **before** the verb, the participle still agrees with it, exactly as an adjective would:

Le ho viste. — "I saw them [f. pl.]."

That *-e* is a Latin adjective ending, still agreeing after two thousand years.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- "ho parlato, hai parlato, ha parlato, abbiamo parlato, hanno parlato"
- the conservative *-t-* — "parlato · French parlé"
- "Ho lavorato" ("I worked") — Ch. 5's verb
- the old meaning — "I **have** a thing **spoken**"

Before you move on

What two pieces make the *passato prossimo*? (**Avere** + the **past participle**.) What is *parlare*'s participle? (**Parlato** ← *-ātum*.) What did *ho parlato* originally mean? (“I **have** [a thing] **spoken**” — a **possessive**.) Why can the participle agree? (It was an **adjective** describing the object.) Next: the other Italian past, and where it still lives.

15.2 parlò — the past that depends where you are

Italian's other past tense. Whether it sounds normal or bookish depends on **which part of Italy you are standing in** — one of the clearest cases anywhere of geography deciding grammar.

You'll want to know: the remote past

	passato remoto	passato prossimo
he spoke	parlò	ha parlato
they spoke	parlarono	hanno parlato
I spoke	parlai	ho parlato

Note the final stress: *parlò*, with the accent written. Compare Chapter 12's numbers — Italian marks a stressed final vowel the same way.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

parlò ← Vulgar Latin ***parabolāvit**, the plain Latin perfect, handed straight down. Which makes it the **same tense** as:

language	“he spoke”
Italian	<i>parlò</i>
Spanish	<i>habló</i>
Portuguese	<i>falou</i>
French	<i>il parla</i>

One Latin ancestor, four descendants — and four different fates in daily life.

Why it's said this way

This is what makes Italian interesting here:

region	everyday past
Sicily, much of the south	passato remoto — <i>parlò</i> is normal speech
Tuscany	both, with a distinction of distance in time
North	passato prossimo almost always; <i>parlò</i> feels literary

So the “correct” answer changes as you travel. In the north the *passato remoto* has retreated to books, exactly as French’s *passé simple* and German’s *Präteritum* did. In the south it never left.

What you’ve built: three retreats and two holdouts

language	simple past	status in speech
French	<i>passé simple</i>	gone — books only
German	<i>Präteritum</i>	
Italian	<i>passato remoto</i>	retreating , especially in the south
Spanish	<i>habló</i>	
		split by region
		alive (though Spain is drifting toward <i>he hablado</i>)
Portuguese	<i>falou</i>	alive

Three languages let a “have” compound push the inherited past out of conversation; Italian is the one caught **mid-process**, with the old tense still holding half the country.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the pair — “*parlò* ... **ha** parlato”
- the sisters — “*parlò* · *habló* · *falou* · *il parla*”
- the geography — “in **Palermo** ordinary; in **Milano** literary”

Before you move on

What is the ancestor of *parlò*? (***parabolāvit.**) What decides whether it sounds normal or bookish? (**Where in Italy you are** — everyday in the south, literary in the north.) Which languages kept this tense fully alive? (**Spanish** and **Portuguese.**) Which lost it entirely from speech? (**French.**) Next chapter: the verbs that take *essere* instead of *avere*.

Chapter 16

Being, Going, and the Past with Essere

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 👁️ eyes (2) 🖐️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say in Italian where I went, using essere as the auxiliary and making the participle agree with me.

Say sono stato and sono andato, switch to sono andata as a woman, run andato, andata, andati, andate, and set the whole set against avere's unchanging ho parlato.

16.1 essere — “to be”

You have known one Italian “to be” since Chapter 2: **stare**, from Latin *stāre*, “to stand.” Now meet **essere**, from Latin *esse*, “to be.”

You’ll want to know: the six forms

io sono	noi siamo
tu sei	voi siete
lui/lei è	loro sono

Italian normally drops the subject pronoun because the ending identifies the person: **Sono italiano** means “I am Italian.” One collision needs care: **io sono** and **loro sono** are identical. Keep *loro* when context would not make “they” clear.

Grammar Lens: one accent and two words

È with the grave accent is the verb “is.” Plain e is “and”:

- Marco è italiano. — Marco **is** Italian.
- Marco e Anna. — Marco **and** Anna.

The two words sound different enough in careful speech, but the accent makes the contrast unmistakable on the page. Never drop it from the verb.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin	picture	Italian
<i>esse</i>	being or identity	essere
<i>stāre</i>	standing or state	stare

Italian kept both verbs. The next micro-lesson shows the surprising place where their histories overlap.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “sono, sei, è, siamo, siete, sono”
- “Marco è italiano” — then “Marco e Anna”
- “essere — be; stare — stand/state”

Twice through: “Sono, sei, è — siamo, siete, sono.”

Before you move on

Give the six forms of *essere*. (**Sono, sei, è, siamo, siete, sono.**) What does the accent distinguish? (È, “is,” from e, “and.”) Which older verbs became *essere* and *stare*? (Latin *esse* and *stāre*.) Next: why both verbs share **stato**.

16.2 *essere* → *stato* — a borrowed piece

Italian kept both Latin “be” verbs as **essere** and **stare**. Now look at the piece they unexpectedly share.

Grammar Lens: one participle for two verbs

verb	past participle
stare	stato
essere	stato

Essere’s own participle did not survive. Latin *esse* never supplied a useful one, so Italian filled the empty slot with *stare*’s **stato**. A verb assembled from historically different roots is **suppletive**, like English *go* / *went*.

That shared piece creates a real ambiguity:

sono stato = “I have been” or “I have stayed”

Only the surrounding sentence tells you which verb is meant.

What you’ve built: three Romance solutions

The same Latin material took a different shape in each sister language:

language	result
Spanish	<i>ser</i> and <i>estar</i> : two verbs kept fully separate
French	<i>être</i> : one verb with old <i>stāre</i> pieces inside its forms
Italian	<i>essere</i> and <i>stare</i> : two verbs that share stato

Italian sits between the other two: less separated than Spanish, less fused than French. You do not need either sister language to use Italian; the comparison simply makes the borrowed piece visible.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*stare* → *stato*”

- “essere → stato”
- “sono stato — I have been / I have stayed”

Twice through: “Two verbs, one **stato**.”

Before you move on

What is *essere*’s participle? (**Stato**, borrowed from *stare*.) What can *sono stato* mean? (“I have **been**” or “I have **stayed**.”) Which language keeps the two verbs fully separate? (**Spanish**.) Which fuses them most? (**French**.) Next: the two-stem verb **andare**, “to go.”

16.3 andare — “to go,” on two stems

Chapter 2 gave you **Come va?**, “How’s it going?” The **va** inside it belongs to **andare**, “to go.” Learn the whole verb before using it to build the past.

You’ll want to know: the forms

io vado	noi andiamo
tu vai	voi andate
lui/lei va	loro vanno

Past participle: **andato**.

The table has a visible seam:

stem	forms	history
vad- / va-	vado, vai, va, vanno	Latin <i>vādere</i> , “to stride”
and-	andare, andiamo, andate, andato	origin disputed; perhaps <i>ambitāre</i>

Notice that **vanno** belongs with **vado**, not with *andiamo*. The split is not “singular versus plural.” It is two old verbs patched into one modern paradigm — another case of **suppletion**, like *essere* borrowing *stare*’s **stato**.

Spanish shows the same kind of seam in *voy* beside *andar*. The comparison is a memory aid; the Italian forms above are the only ones you need here.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “vado, vai, va”
- “andiamo, andate, vanno”
- the infinitive and participle — “andare, andato”
- the Chapter 2 callback — “Come va?”

Twice through: “Vado, vai, va — andiamo, andate, vanno.”

Before you move on

Give the six present forms. (**Vado, vai, va, andiamo, andate, vanno.**) Which plural form belongs to the *vad-* side? (**Vanno.**) What is the participle? (**Andato.**) Which familiar question already used *va*? (**Come va?**) Next: combine **essere** + **andato** and make the ending agree.

16.4 sono andato — the past built on essere

Chapter 15 built the past with *avere*: **ho parlato**. You now know the other auxiliary, **essere**, plus the participles **stato** and **andato**. Combine them, then watch the participle’s ending change.

You’ll want to know: start with stato

sono stato	I have been / stayed
sei stato	you have been / stayed
è stato	he has been / stayed
siamo stati	we have been / stayed

The plural **stati** is the first clue: with *essere*, the participle describes the subject and therefore agrees with it.

Grammar Lens: motion, change, and agreement

Many verbs of motion or change of state take **essere**: *andare* (go), *venire* (come), *arrivare* (arrive), *partire* (leave), *nascere* (be born), *morire* (die), *diventare* (become), plus *essere* and *stare*.

Use the four adjective endings you already know:

subject	sentence
Marco	Marco è andato .
Anna	Anna è andata .
the boys	I ragazzi sono andati .
the girls	Le ragazze sono andate .

A woman therefore says **sono andata**, not *sono andato*. The ending agrees with the **subject**, in gender and number: *-o*, *-a*, *-i*, *-e*.

Why it's said this way

The participle began as an adjective: **Anna è andata** was “Anna is gone-away,” with *andata* describing Anna just as *stanca* (“tired”) would. French keeps the same agreement (*elle est allée*); German uses a similar auxiliary split but no agreement (*sie ist gegangen*). The systems developed alongside one another, but only the Romance sisters preserve this adjective fossil visibly.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “sono stato, sei stato, siamo stati”
- “sono andato” — then, as a woman, “sono andata”
- “andato, andata, andati, andate”
- the contrast — “ho parlato; sono andato”

Before you move on

Which auxiliary do many motion and change verbs take? (**Essere**.) What does the participle agree with? (**The subject**.) Give all four endings. (*-o*, *-a*, *-i*, *-e*.) How does a woman say “I went”? (**Sono andata**.) Why does agreement survive? (The participle began as an

adjective.)

Chapter 17

Head and Hand

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

***By the end of this chapter:** I can name the head and the hand in Italian and get la mano right despite its -o ending.*

Say la testa and la mano, pluralise to le mani, and explain the feminine article on an -o word through Latin's lost fourth declension.

17.1 la testa — “the head”

French tells this word's story too. What is worth seeing here is how much **less** Italian did to it.

You'll want to know: the word

la testa — the head. Feminine.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin **testa** meant an **earthenware pot**, a shell, a shard. Roman soldiers' slang used it for the skull, and **across Gaul and Italy** the joke outlived the proper word *caput*. (Only there — Iberia kept *caput*, which is why Portuguese and Spanish still say *cabeça* and *cabeza*.) Put the two descendants side by side:

Latin	<i>testa</i>
Italian	<i>testa</i> — almost unchanged
French	<i>tête</i> — <i>s</i> lost, vowels collapsed

This is the conservative-sister pattern this book keeps meeting. Chapter 11 had *acqua* against *eau*; Chapter 15 had *parlato* keeping the Latin *-t-* that *parlé* wore away. Italian holds its shape; French erodes. Say them one after the other: *testa* ... *tête*. Same word, ten centuries apart.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

French gave *caput* away almost entirely, keeping it only in *chef* and *chapitre*. Italian kept it as a **live, common word**:

il capo — the head (of an organisation), the boss, the chief.

So Italian has **both**: *testa* for the thing on your shoulders, *capo* for the person in charge. English borrowed the second one straight out of Italian — a *capo* in a crime family is exactly this word.

Also from *caput*: **capitale**, **capitolo** (chapter), and **capitano**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la testa”
- “ho mal di testa” — “I have a headache”
- the erosion — “**testa** ... **tête**”
- the pair — “la **testa** on your shoulders, il **capo** in charge”

Before you move on

Say “the head.” (*La testa* — feminine.) What did *testa* mean in Latin? (An **earthenware pot** — soldiers’ slang for the skull.) How does Italian compare with French here? (Italian kept it **almost unchanged** — the spelling is identical, the vowel opened; French

wore it down to *tête* — the conservative-sister pattern again, like *acqua/eau*.) What did Italian do with *caput*? (Kept it as ***il capo***, “boss, chief” — a live everyday word, where French kept it only outside the head-slot.) Next: the hand.

17.2 la mano — “the hand”

Italian nouns *tend* to announce their gender: **-o** is usually masculine, **-a** usually feminine. (Chapter 1 deliberately didn’t give you that as a rule — it told you to learn each noun **with its article**, and this word is a good demonstration of why.)

You’ll want to know: the word

la mano — the hand. **Feminine**, ending in **-o**. Plural: **le mani** — feminine, ending in **-i**.

Both halves are irregular. A masculine *-o* noun would pluralise in *-i* (*libro* → *libri*); a feminine noun usually ends *-a* and pluralises in *-e* (*casa* → *case*). *Mano* takes the feminine article and the masculine-looking endings.

Grammar Lens: five declensions

Italian inherited a system with **five declensions** — five families of endings — and flattened it to **three** productive classes: *-o/-i* (*libro/libri*), *-a/-e* (*casa/case*), and *-e/-i* (*notte/notti*, which Chapter 1 already gave you). *Manus* belonged to the Latin **fourth**, whose nouns ended in *-us* but could be **feminine**:

Latin		Italian
<i>manus</i> (4th decl., fem.)	→	<i>la mano</i>
<i>manūs</i> (plural)	→	<i>le mani</i>

When Italian dropped the fourth declension, *mano* was left with its old gender and an ending that now looks like it belongs to a different class. The word didn’t change; **the system around it did**.

That is the general lesson, and it recurs constantly: an “irregular” word is usually a **regular word from a system that no longer exists**. (A few others survive the same way: *la radio*, *la foto*, *l’auto* — though those are short for *radiofonia*, *fotografia*, *automobile*, which is a

different reason for the same look.)

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin *manus* is inside many English words:

- *manual* and *manuscript*
- *manufacture* (“made by hand”)
- *maintain* (“hold in the hand”)

English took **manage** specifically from Italian *maneggiare*, which meant to **handle a horse**. Every modern manager is, etymologically, working in a riding school.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la mano, le mani”
- the breach — “**la** mano, feminine, ending in **-o**”
- the reason — “fourth declension, *manus*, feminine”
- “manage ← **maneggiare** — to handle a horse”

Before you move on

Say “the hand” and “the hands.” (*La mano / le mani*.) What rule does it break? (The **tendency** that *-o* is masculine — *mano* is feminine.) Why? (Latin *manus* was **fourth declension**, whose nouns ended *-us* but could be feminine; Italian dropped that declension and left the word stranded.) What is the general lesson? (An **irregular** word is usually a **regular word from a lost system**.) Which English word came from Italian here, and what did it mean? (**Manage**, from *maneggiare*, to **handle a horse**.) Next: the rest of the body.

Chapter 18

Four Verbs of the Mind

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say in Italian that I think, understand, read and write, put a verb into each of the language's three families including the -isc- group, and build the past of reading and writing.

The chapter's last lesson closes the set: penso, capisco, leggo and scrivo run in one breath, one verb from each of Italian's three families, and the participles letto and scritto are rebuilt from lectum and scriptum by the same -ct- to -tt- law that made sette and otto.

18.1 pensare — “to think,” which began as “to weigh”

You already drive one Italian verb family: drop **-are**, add **-o** / **-i** / **-a**, and leave the pronoun unsaid — *parlo, lavoro*. This word costs you nothing new in grammar, and it buys a whole shelf of English.

Sounds you'll need

- **s-voiceless** — the *s* after *n* hisses, never buzzes: **pensare** = *pen-SA-reh*, not *pen-ZA-reh*.
- **r-tap** — one tapped *r*, the same tap as in *parlare*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

pensare comes from Latin **pēnsāre**, “to weigh out carefully” — itself from **pendere**, “to hang, to weigh.” Roman thinking was done on a balance: you *weighed* a matter. English inherited both the scales and the thought:

- **pensive** — weighing something over.
- **ponder** — from *ponderāre*, “to weigh,” off the same root through *pondus*, “a weight.”
- **pension, compensate, expense, dispense** — all money *weighed out*, back when coin was measured rather than counted.
- **pendant, pending, suspend** — the hanging half of *pendere*.

Italian did something quietly remarkable with this one verb: it inherited it **twice**. *Pēnsāre* came down through ordinary speech, worn smooth, as **pesare**, “to weigh” — and it was later lifted a second time straight off the Latin page, unworn, as **pensare**, “to think.” One Latin verb, two Italian words, two meanings. *Parlare* had no such double; it arrived once, from *parabolāre*.

Grammar Lens: the same three endings

Nothing new to learn — put *pensare* beside a verb you have:

person	<i>parlare</i>	<i>pensare</i>
(io)	parlo	penso
(tu)	parli	pensi
(lui/lei)	parla	pensa

To say what you are thinking *about*, Italian uses **a**, the same little word that carries *abito a Roma*:

Penso a Roma. — I’m thinking about Rome.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “pensare” — *pen-SA-reh*, hissing *s*

- “penso, pensi, pensa” — no pronoun spoken
- the trio — “parlo, lavoro, penso”
- “Penso a Roma.”
- “pensare” then English “pensive, pension, compensate”

Before you move on

What did *pēnsāre* mean? (**To weigh out** — from *pendere*, “to hang, to weigh.”) Name two English cousins. (*Pensive, pension, compensate, expense, ponder.*) Which two Italian words came from that one Latin verb, and how do they differ? (*Pesare*, “to weigh,” worn down through speech; *pensare*, “to think,” taken later off the page.) Give the three singular forms. (*Penso, pensi, pensa.*) And which Latin verb gave *parlare*? (*Parabolāre.*)

18.2 capire — “to understand,” which began as “to grab”

Every verb you have so far ends in **-are**. This one ends in **-ire** and grows an extra syllable in the middle — a family Italian has and Spanish does not.

You’ll want to know: the word

capire — to understand. **Capisco.** — I understand. (*ka-PEE-sko*) **Capisci?** — Do you understand? (*ka-PEE-shee*)

The second one is a question the way *Parli italiano?* was: nothing is added, the voice simply rises at the end.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

capire is built on Latin **capere**, “to take hold of, to seize.” An Italian who understands you has **caught** what you said — the picture English draws with *I grasp it*, using a different verb for the same grabbing. *Capere* is one of the busiest roots English owns: **capture, captive, capable, capacity; accept** (*ad-* toward + take), **receive** and **recipe** (*re-* back + take — a recipe is “take these things”), **except** (“taken

out”); **occupy, participate, anticipate.**

Careful — a look-alike that is not a relative.

Chapter 17 gave you **il capo**, “the boss,” from *caput*, “head.” *Caput* and *capere* are **two separate Latin words**.
Il capo is a head; *capire* is a hand closing on something.

Grammar Lens: the -isc- family

Drop **-ire** to get *cap-*. A large group of *-ire* verbs push **-isc-** in front of the ending, but only where the stress falls on it:

person	<i>capire</i> →
(io)	capisco
(tu)	capisci
(lui/lei)	capisce
(noi)	capiamo — no <i>-isc-</i>
(voi)	capite — no <i>-isc-</i>
(loro)	capiscono

That infix is a fossil. Latin had verbs in **-ēscere** meaning “to begin to.” Italian lost the meaning, kept the syllable, and spread it over a whole class. **French did the same:** *finir* → *je finis, nous finissons*, where *-iss-* is this very *-isc-*. **Spanish did not** — its *-ir* verbs have no such infix.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Capisco.” then “Capisci?” — voice up at the end
- “capisco, capisci, capisce” then “capiamo, capite” — the infix drops out
- “Capisco l’italiano.”
- the pair that is not a pair — “il **capo** ← *caput*; **capire** ← *capere*”
- “capire” then English “capture, capable, receive”

Before you move on

Say “I understand.” (*Capisco*.) What did *capere* mean? (**To take hold of** — understanding as grasping.) Which two forms drop the *-isc-*, and where does that syllable come from? (*Capiamo* and *capite*; Latin *-ēscere*, “to begin to,” the meaning gone and the sound kept.) Is *capire* related to *il capo*? (**No** — *capo* is from *caput*, “head.”)

18.3 leggere — “to read,” which began as gathering

Italian has exactly **three** verb families, sorted by how the infinitive ends: **-are**, **-ire**, and this one, **-ere**. With this word you have met all three, and the *-ere* family carries a sound trap in its own name.

Sounds you’ll need

Italian *g* is **soft** before *e* and *i*, **hard** before *a*, *o* and *u* — and the spelling never warns you, because the letter does not change.

- **soft-g** — **leggere** = *LEDGE-eh-reh*. The *gg* before *e* is the *g* of English *judge*.
- **hard-g** — **leggo** = *LEG-go*. Before *o*, the same *gg* is the *g* of *go*.

This is the identical rule you met with *c* in **piacere** (*pya-CHEH-reh*, soft before *e*). One letter, two jobs, decided entirely by the vowel that follows it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

leggere comes from Latin **legere**, whose first meaning was “to gather, to pick up” — you gather olives, you gather firewood. From gathering came *picking out*, and from picking out came *picking the letters off a page*. That last step is the whole of “reading.”

The gathering family is enormous in English:

- **legible**, **lecture**, **legend** (“things to be read”), **lesson**.
- **elect** (“pick out”), **select**, **collect**, **neglect** (“not to pick up”),

elegant (originally “choosy”), **intelligent** (*inter-* + *legere* — one who **picks between** things).

And Latin *legere* has a Greek cousin, **legein**, “to speak,” which handed English every **-logy** and the word **dialogue**.

Grammar Lens: the -ere family, and where the stress lands

Drop **-ere**, add **-o** / **-i** / **-e**. Note that third form: the *-are* family ended in *-a* there, and this one ends in *-e*.

person	<i>capire</i>	<i>leggere</i>
(io)	capisco	leggo
(tu)	capisci	leggi
(lui/lei)	capisce	legge

One more thing your ear needs. *Parlare* and *capire* stress the last syllable but one — *par-LA-re*, *ca-PI-re*. Most *-ere* infinitives pull the stress **back onto the stem**: **LEG-ge-re**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “leggere” — *LEDGE-eh-reh*, stress on the front
- the flip — “leggere” (soft) then “leggo” (hard)
- “leggo, leggi, legge”
- the three families — “parlo, capisco, leggo”
- “leggere” then English “legible, lecture, legend, elect”

Before you move on

What did *legere* first mean? (**To gather** — then to pick out, then to read.) Name three English cousins. (*Legible, lecture, legend, elect, collect, intelligent.*) Why is the *gg* soft in *leggere* and hard in *leggo*? (The **following vowel** decides — soft before *e* and *i*, hard before *o*; the same rule as *c* in *piacere*.) Give the three singular forms. (*Leggo, leggi, legge.*) And where is the stress in the infinitive? (On the **stem** — **LEG-ge-re**.)

18.4 *scrivere* — “to write,” which began as “to scratch”

Reading was gathering. Writing, in Latin, was **cutting** — and the verb is an *-ere* verb, so its present tense costs you nothing new. What it does buy you is a past tense, because this is where two old Latin endings resurface.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

scrivere comes from Latin **scribere**, “to scratch, to incise.” Before ink there was a stylus and a wax tablet, and writing was a cutting job. English took the root wholesale:

- **scribe, script, scripture, scribble.**
- **describe** (“write down”), **prescribe** (“write before”), **subscribe** (“write underneath” — which is what signing was), **postscript.**

Now weld it to a word you already own. Latin *manus*, “hand,” gave you **la mano** — and the same *manus* sits in **manuscript** and in its Italian twin **manoscritto**: hand-written. That second half, *scritto*, is this verb.

Grammar Lens: the present, and two participles worth keeping

The present is the *-ere* pattern you already have: **scrivo, scrivi, scrivo.**

The past is where it gets interesting. Chapter 15 gave you the recipe: *ho* plus a participle, as in **ho parlato**. Regular *-are* verbs make that participle in *-ato*. These two do not:

verb	participle	with <i>ho</i>
leggere	letto	ho letto — I read
scrivere	scritto	ho scritto — I wrote

They look irregular and are nothing of the kind. Latin’s participles were *lectum* and *scriptum*, and Italian applies to them the same sound-law that turned *septem* into **sette** and *octō* into **otto**: a consonant cluster with *-ct-* or *-pt-* collapses into a **doubled -tt-**. *Lectum* → **letto**. *Scriptum* → **scritto**. The rule you learned counting to ten is the rule that builds these.

What you've built this chapter

- **All three verb families**, one from each: **-are** (*penso*), **-ire** with the infix (*capisco*), **-ere** (*leggo*, *scrivo*).
- **Four minds' worth of Latin, and every one of them physical first**: *pēnsāre* to weigh, *capere* to seize, *legere* to gather, *scrībere* to scratch. Italian did not invent abstract words for thinking; it wore concrete ones smooth.
- **Two look-alikes kept apart**: *capire* ← *capere* (seize), *il capo* ← *caput* (head).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the four, in one run — “penso, capisco, leggo, scrivo”
- “ho parlato, ho letto, ho scritto”
- the sound-law — “*lectum* → letto, *scriptum* → scritto”
- “manoscritto” — *mano* plus *scritto*, written by hand

Twice through: “Penso, capisco, leggo, scrivo.”

Before you move on

What did *scrībere* mean? (**To scratch, to incise** — stylus on wax.) Give the two participles and use them. (*Letto* and *scritto* — *ho letto*, *ho scritto*.) Why do both end in doubled *-tt*? (Latin *lectum* and *scriptum*; *-ct-* and *-pt-* collapse to *-tt-*, exactly as in *sette* and *otto*.) Name the physical act behind each of this chapter's four verbs. (Weighing, seizing, gathering, scratching.)

Chapter 19

Taking, Asking, Helping — and Mi Piace

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say in Italian that I take, ask and help, and build a sentence with piacere the way Italian actually builds it — with the thing liked as the subject and me as the one it happens to.

The chapter's last lesson turns the set around: prendo, chiedo and aiuto in one run, then mi piace il vino read as the wine pleasing me, so the verb agrees with the thing and goes plural for le stagioni — and Chapter 3's one-word courtesy piacere is revealed as this verb's dictionary form.

19.1 prendere — “to take,” and the other Latin verb for grabbing

Chapter 18 closed with all three verb families in one breath — *penso, capisco, leggo, scrivo* — and with the point that each of those roots named a physical act before it named a mental one. Here is the fourth *-ere* verb, the one an Italian table asks of you, and its root closes that idea.

You'll want to know: the word

prendere — to take, to pick up, to catch.

Italian also uses it where English switches to *have*: what you take at a table is what you have. Every noun here is one you already own:

Prendo il pane. — I’ll have the bread. **Prendo l’acqua.** — I’ll have the water. **Prendo il vino.** — I’ll have the wine.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

prendere comes from Latin **prehendere**, “to lay hold of, to seize.” English is full of it:

- **apprehend** (seize a person, or seize a meaning), **comprehend** (“seize together”), **reprehensible** (“to be caught out”).
- **prehensile** — of a tail that grips.
- **prison** — from *prehēnsiō*, “a seizing”; **prey**, **prize** (“a thing taken”), and **surprise**, which is being *taken from above*.

Here is the pairing worth carrying away. Latin had **two** everyday verbs for seizing: *capere* and *prehendere*. Italian built **understanding** on the first — *capire*, catching what was said — and **taking** on the second. Two Latin hands, and only one of them is about objects.

Grammar Lens: the -ere present, and a participle that goes its own way

Nothing new in the present: **prendo, prendi, prende**.
The past participle is **preso**, and it does not double a *t*:

Ho preso il pane. — I took the bread.

A different Latin cluster, doing a different thing. *Scrībere* was “to scratch” and its *scriptum* was the scratched thing; that *-pt-*, like the *-ct-* of *lectum*, collapses into **-tt-**. *Prehēnsum* had **-ns-**, and Italian drops the *n* for a plain **-s-**: *preso*. Two clusters, two outcomes, both regular.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “prendo, prendi, prende”

- “Prendo il pane. Prendo l’acqua. Prendo il vino.”
- “Ho preso il pane.” then “Ho scritto.” — two clusters
- the two hands — “*capere* → *capire*; *prehendere* → *prendere*”
- the four physical roots — “weigh, seize, gather, scratch”

Before you move on

Ask for the wine. (*Prendo il vino.*) What did *prehendere* mean, and name two English cousins. (**To seize**; *apprehend*, *prehensile*, *prison*, *surprise*.) Which Latin seizing-verb gave *capire*, and which gave *prendere*? (*Capere*; *prehendere*.) Give the participle. (*Preso.*) Why is it not *pretto*, when *scribere*’s participle is *scritto*? (Its cluster was **-ns-**, not the *-pt-* of *scriptum*.)

19.2 chiedere — “to ask,” from a Latin verb meaning “to hunt for”

A third *-ere* verb, so the endings are free. This one comes with a spelling rule you have already met once, and a partner verb that looks like a blunt English one and is nothing of the kind.

Sounds you’ll need

- **hard-ch** — **chiedere** = *KYEH-deh-reh*. Italian **ch** is always a hard *k*, never the *ch* of English *church*.

You met this in **mi chiamo** (*mee KYA-mo*). The job of that *h* is to keep the *c* hard in front of *e* and *i*, which would otherwise soften it. Italian spells the hardness in; English spells the softness in.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

chiedere comes from Latin **quaerere**, “*to seek, to look for, to hunt after*.” Asking a question is going looking for an answer, and English kept the hunt everywhere:

- **query, question, quest** — the plain seeking words.
- **request, require, acquire, inquire, inquest.**

- **conquer** (“seek thoroughly”), and **exquisite**, something *sought out*.

The Italian shape is a long way from *quaerere*, and the road is worth hearing: Latin *qu-* before a stressed *e* went to **chi-**. Now use it on something you can already name:

Chiedo l’ora. — I ask the time.

Grammar Lens: the present, and the second verb for asking

The present is the *-ere* pattern: **chiedo, chiedi, chiede**.

Italian has a second verb here, **domandare** — a plain *-are* verb: *domando, domandi, domanda*. Both mean “to ask”. *Chiedere* is the everyday one and leans toward asking **for** a thing; *domandare* leans toward asking a **question**, and sounds a shade more formal.

Careful — a false friend. *Domandare* is **not** English *demand*. It is from Latin **dēmandāre**: *dē-* plus **mandāre**, “to put into someone’s hand” — and *mandāre* is *manus*, the hand you met as **la mano**, plus *dare*, “to give”. English hardened that word into an order; Italian left it meaning simply “to ask”. Same root, more English: **mandate, command**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “chiedere” — *KYEH-deh-reh*, hard *k*
- the pair — “mi chiamo ... chiedere”, the same hard *ch*
- “chiedo, chiedi, chiede”
- “Chiedo l’ora.”
- “chiedere” then English “query, quest, require, exquisite”

Before you move on

How is Italian *ch* pronounced, and where have you seen it before? (Hard *k* — *mi chiamo*.) What did *quaerere* mean? (**To seek** — asking as hunting for an answer.) Name three English cousins. (*Query, question, quest, require, acquire, exquisite*.) What is Italian's other verb for asking, and what does it **not** mean? (*Domandare* — **not** to demand; it is *dē* plus *mandāre*, “to put in the hand”.) Which word you already know is buried in *mandāre*? (*Manus* — **la mano**.)

19.3 aiutare — “to help,” and the word you shout

After three *-ere* verbs and the *-isc-* class that gave you *capisco*, back to the easy family: this one ends in **-are** and behaves exactly like *parlare*. What is unusual about it is the pile of vowels at the front, and the consonant Italian wore clean out of the middle.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

aiutare comes from Late Latin **adiūtāre**, a strengthened form of **adiuvāre**: **ad-**, “toward,” plus **iuvāre**, “to help, to gladden.” To help was to move toward someone with something good.

English took it through French and kept the *d*:

- **aid** — the direct descendant.
- **aide**, and **aide-de-camp**, “camp-helper.”
- **adjutant** — an officer who assists; **adjuvant**, in medicine, something that helps a treatment along.

The three sisters split on that *d*, and this is the clearest sound-contrast in the chapter:

language	“to help”	the Latin <i>d</i>
French	<i>aider</i>	kept, plainly
Spanish	<i>ayudar</i>	kept, softened around
Italian	<i>aiutare</i>	gone entirely

Italian's habit of dropping a *d* between vowels ran here to completion: *ad-iu-* became simply *ai-*. This is one of the places where Italian, usually the sister that keeps most, kept least.

Grammar Lens: the -are endings, and the shout

Drop *-are*, add the endings you have had since Chapter 5: **aiuto**, **aiuti**, **aiuta** — the run *parlo*, *penso*, *aiuto*, with *penso* keeping its hissing *s*.

Say the *io* form slowly. Italian gives every written vowel its own moment: *a-i-U-to*, four sounds, stress on the *u*. Nothing is swallowed the way English would swallow it.

And there is a bonus in that form. Italian's noun for “help” is also **aiuto**, identical in spelling and sound to “I help” — so the cry heard in an Italian street, “**Aiuto!**”, is the same shape as the verb you have just conjugated.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “aiutare” — *ah-yoo-TA-reh*
- “aiuto, aiuti, aiuta” — four vowels in the first one
- the shout — “Aiuto!”
- the *-are* run — “parlo, penso, aiuto”, hissing the *s* of *penso*
- the three sisters — “*aider*, *ayudar*, **aiutare**” — the *d* fading out
- “aiutare” then English “aid, aide-de-camp, adjutant”

Before you move on

What two Latin pieces make *adiūtāre*? (*Ad-*, “toward,” plus *iuvāre*, “to help.”) Name two English cousins. (*Aid*, *aide*, *adjutant*, *adjuvant*.) Which of the three sisters lost the *d*, and which kept it? (Italian lost it; French *aider* and Spanish *ayudar* kept it.) Give the three singular forms. (*Aiuto*, *aiuti*, *aiuta*.) Which of your *-are* verbs began as “to weigh”? (*Pensare*.) And what do you shout in the street? (**Aiuto!**)

19.4 mi piace — the verb that runs backwards

Chapter 3 closed an introduction with **piacere**, “a pleasure,” from *placēre*. That courtesy is this verb’s **dictionary form**. Here it goes to work — backwards.

You’ll want to know: the word

mi piace — I like it. Word for word: *to me it is pleasing*. **Mi piace il vino.** — I like the wine. (*mee PYA-cheh*)

The *c* is soft before *e*, as in *piacere*. And notice what is missing: any word for “I”.

Grammar Lens: the thing you like is the subject

English makes the **liker** the subject: *I* like the wine. Italian has no such sentence — the wine does the pleasing. So **il vino** is the **subject**, hence *piace*, the ending you learned on *legge*; **mi** merely names who it pleases. The verb agrees with the **thing**, not with you:

what you mean	Italian
I like the wine	Mi piace il vino
I like the seasons	Mi piacciono le stagioni
I like reading	Mi piace leggere

One thing takes *piace*, many take **piacciono**, an infinitive counts as one — and in that third row *leggere*, the gathering verb, keeps its soft *gg*. To change *who* is pleased, change the word in front: **mi** (to me), **ti** (to you) — *Ti piace il vino?*

That *mi* is an old friend: **mi chiamo** is “I call *myself*”, **mi piace** “it pleases *me*”. One word, two jobs, neither “I”.

Careful. *Io piaccio il vino* does not exist. *Io piaccio* is real Italian — “**I** am pleasing” — but not what you wanted.

The shape is not unique to Italian. **Spanish:** *me gusta el vino*, on *gustāre*, “to taste.” **French,** on this very *placēre*: *le vin me plaît*.

What you've built this chapter

- **prendere** ← *prehendere*, “seize” → apprehend, prison; at a table, *I'll have*.
- **chiedere** ← *quaerere*, “seek” → query, quest; hard *ch*; **domandare** is not *demand*.
- **aiutare** ← *adiūtāre* → aid, adjutant; the *d* dropped out.
- **The thread:** all four reach — for a thing, an answer, a person — and *piacere* reaches back, from the thing to you. Hence the inversion. Chapter 18's *capire* reached too: *capere* meant to seize.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Mi piace il vino.” then “Mi piacciono le stagioni.”
- “Mi piace leggere.” and “Ti piace il vino?”
- “prendo, chiedo, aiuto”, then “mi chiamo ... mi piace”

Before you move on

In *mi piace il vino*, what is the subject? (**Il vino** — hence *piace*.) Say you like the seasons, and why the verb moved. (*Mi piacciono le stagioni* — many things.) Which Chapter 3 word is this verb's dictionary form? (*Piacere* ← *placēre*.) Name the roots under the chapter's other three verbs, and under *capire*. (*Prehendere*, *quaerere*, *adiūtāre*; *capere*.)

Chapter 20

Carrying, Buying, Waiting, Meeting

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say in Italian that I carry or bring something, buy it, wait for someone and meet them, run all four through the -are endings without a pronoun, and put them into the past with *avere* rather than *essere*.

The chapter's last lesson runs porto, compro, aspetto and incontro in one breath, then settles Chapter 16's open question by putting incontrare into the past: ho incontrato Marco and ho incontrato Anna, one unmoved participle, because only essere makes it agree — and it names the weld the other three share, a plain Latin verb behind com-, ad- and in-.

20.1 portare — “to carry,” and what an Italian does with a coat

Chapter 19 closed on a verb that ran backwards — **mi piace il vino**, where the wine does the pleasing and you are only the one it happens to. Here is a plain one: the -are endings of *aiuto*, *aiuti*, *aiuta*, doing a job English splits three ways.

You'll want to know: the word

portare — to carry, to bring, to take along.

Porto il pane. — I bring the bread. **Porto l’acqua.** — I bring the water. **Porto il vino.** — I bring the wine.

Hold it against *prendere*, which was **seizing** — what you reach out and pick up. *Portare* is what happens next: the thing travels with you.

A second job catches learners out. This same verb also means **to wear**. Clothes are things you carry on your person, so *porto* covers a coat as readily as a loaf.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

portare comes from Latin **portāre**, “to carry.” English is stacked with it:

- **portable**; **porter**, who carries your bags; **portfolio**, from Italian *portafoglio*, a leaf-carrier.
- **transport** (“carry across”), **export** (“carry out”), **import** (“carry in”), **report** (“carry back”), **support**, **deport**.
- **sport** — nobody sees this one coming. Old French **desporter** meant “to carry away”: the mind, from serious matters. English wore *disport* down to **sport**.

Two cautions. The harbour **port** is a different Latin word, *portus*. And Latin *manus*, which gave you **la mano**, sits in the phrase *a mano*, “by hand”: the hand is what does the carrying.

Grammar Lens: the endings, and a participle that behaves

Drop *-are*, add the usual: **porto, porti, porta**.

Chapter 15 gave you *ho* plus a participle; Chapters 18 and 19 handed you three that would not sit still. This one behaves:

verb	participle	with <i>ho</i>
portare	portato	ho portato — I brought
scrivere	<i>scritto</i>	<i>ho scritto</i> — I wrote
prendere	<i>preso</i>	<i>ho preso</i> — I took

Every regular *-are* participle ends in **-ato**. *Scritto* doubled its *t* because *scriptum* had a cluster to resolve; *preso* lost an *n* because *prehensum* had one to lose. *Portāre* had neither.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “porto, porti, porta”
- “Porto il pane. Porto l’acqua. Porto il vino.”
- the pair — “Ho portato il pane.” then “Ho preso il pane.”
- “portare” then English “transport, export, import, porter”

Before you move on

Bring the wine. (*Porto il vino.*) What did *portāre* mean, and name three English cousins. (**To carry**; *transport, export, import, porter.*) Which English word for games is this verb in disguise? (*Sport*, from *desporter*, “to carry away”.) Give the participle, and say why it is not doubled like *scritto*. (*Portato*; *portāre* had no cluster to collapse.) What else does *portare* mean? (**To wear.**)

20.2 comprare — “to buy,” and the false trail to “compare”

A second *-are* verb, so the endings cost you nothing. What is new is the root, which sends nearly every English speaker down the wrong road on sight.

You’ll want to know: the word

comprare — to buy.

Compro il pane. — I buy the bread. **Compro l’acqua.** — I buy the water. **Compro il vino.** — I buy the wine.

Italian keeps a longer form too, **comperare**. That is the older shape; speech squeezed the middle *e* out. Both are real, and the short one is what you hear.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

comprare comes from Latin **comparāre**, and the verb underneath it is **parāre**, “to make ready, to procure.” Put **com-**, “together,” in front and buying is **procuring**: bringing the thing and the price into one place. English took *parāre* over and over:

- **prepare** (*prae-*, “beforehand”), **repair** (*re-*, “back into readiness”), **separate** (*sē-*, “apart”).
- **apparatus** and **apparel** — things made ready, for a machine and for a body.
- **emperor** and **empire**, through *imperāre*, which is *in-* plus this same *parāre*.
- Italian’s own **parare**, “to ward off,” borrowed as **parry** and standing in **parasol** and **parachute**.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

English **compare** looks like a free gift here. It is not: the resemblance is exact and the connection is nil. Latin had **two** verbs spelled *comparāre*, built on unrelated words:

Latin verb	built on	where it went
<i>comparāre</i> (procure)	<i>parāre</i> , “make ready”	Italian comprare , to buy
<i>comparāre</i> (match)	<i>pār</i> , “equal”	English compare

The second is the *pār* of **par**, **parity**, **peer**, **pair** and **umpire**: setting two things side by side as equals. Buying is procuring, not weighing up. **Spanish** *comprar* and **Portuguese** *comprar* took the procuring-verb Italian took; **French** abandoned it and buys with *acheter*.

Grammar Lens: run them together

Chapter 5’s exercise still works, with more to chew on. Take each *-are* verb through *io* / *tu* / *lui-lei*:

- **parlare**: parlo · parli · parla
- **portare**: porto · porti · porta

- **comprare:** compro · compri · compra

Same three endings, **-o** / **-i** / **-a**, and the pronoun stays dropped. The past is regular: **ho comprato il pane**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “compro, compri, compra”
- “Compro il pane. Compro il vino.”
- the run — “parlo, porto, compro”
- “comprare” then English “prepare, repair, separate, apparatus”
- the warning — “*comprare* is procuring, **not** comparing”

Before you move on

Buy the bread. (*Compro il pane.*) Which Latin verb is inside *comprare*? (*Parāre* — **to make ready, to procure.**) Name three English cousins. (*Prepare, repair, separate, apparatus, emperor.*) Why is English *compare* **not** a relative? (Different Latin verb, same spelling, built on *pār*, “equal”.) And which verb from the last lesson meant “to carry”? (*Portare.*)

20.3 **aspettare** — “to wait,” which began as “to watch”

A third *-are* verb. Its endings are free, its root is one of the most productive in English, and the doubled *tt* in the middle is the work of a sound-law you learned while counting to ten.

You’ll want to know: the word

aspettare — to wait, to wait **for**.

Aspetto. — I’m waiting. **Aspetto Anna.** — I’m waiting for Anna. **Aspetto Marco.** — I’m waiting for Marco.

Notice what the Italian is missing: any word meaning **for**. English cannot “wait somebody.” Italian takes the person straight, as *porto il pane* takes the bread.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

aspettare comes from Latin **spectāre**, “to watch, to gaze at”, with **ad-**, “toward,” welded on the front: to watch **toward** something. Waiting is watching for a thing to arrive, and the root runs through English:

- **spectator, spectacle, spectacles, spectrum.**
- **inspect** (“look into”), **respect** (“look back at”), **prospect** (“look forward”), **suspect** (“look from underneath”), **aspect.**
- **species** and **specimen**, from the plain verb *specere*, “to look.”

Classical Latin’s own word for waiting was **expectāre** — *ex-* plus that same verb, “to watch out for” — and English took **that** one and made it **expect**. So *wait* and *expect* are one Latin verb wearing two prefixes, and Italian’s single *aspettare* stands on the ground of both.

Grammar Lens: the doubled t, and the word that narrows the meaning

Present: **aspetto, aspetti, aspetta**. Past: **ho aspettato**, regular. First that *tt*. Latin *spectāre* carries *-ct-*, and you know what Italian does with *-ct-*: *octō* became **otto**, *lectum* **letto**, *scriptum* **scritto**. The same law gives **aspettare**.

Second, the narrowing. Put **mi** in front and the verb stops meaning *wait* and starts meaning *expect*:

Italian	English
Aspetto.	I’m waiting.
Mi aspetto.	I expect.

That **mi** is a word you have met working elsewhere. In **mi chiamo** it turned the verb back on you — “I call *myself*.” In **mi piace** it named the person a thing is pleasing *to*. Here it turns outward watching into inward reckoning.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “aspetto, aspetti, aspetta”
- “Aspetto Anna.” — no word for *for*
- the pair — “Aspetto.” then “Mi aspetto.”
- the three uses of *mi* — “mi chiamo, mi piace, mi aspetto”
- the law — “*octō* → otto, *scriptum* → scritto, *spectāre* → aspettare”

Before you move on

Say you are waiting for Anna. (*Aspetto Anna* — nothing for “for”.) What did *spectāre* mean, and name three English cousins. (**To watch**; *spectator*, *inspect*, *respect*, *prospect*, *species*.) Which prefix gave English *expect*, and which gave Italian *aspettare*? (*Ex-* and *ad-*.) Why the doubled *tt*, and what does **mi aspetto** mean? (*-ct-* collapses to *-tt-*, as in *otto*; **I expect**.)

20.4 incontrare — “to meet,” which is literally “to come against”

The chapter’s last *-are* verb. Its root is a preposition, its past settles a question Chapter 16 left open, and Italian keeps a second meeting-verb that shows its meaning only in the past.

You’ll want to know: the word

incontrare — to meet, to run into. **incontro**, **incontri**, **incontra**.

Incontro Marco. — I meet Marco. **Incontro Anna.** — I meet Anna.

It has a partner English cannot keep apart from it, **conoscere**. *Incontrare* is the **event**, two people in one place; *conoscere* is the **acquaintance**, knowing a person.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

incontrare ← Late Latin **incontrā**: **in-** plus **contrā**, “against, opposite.” To meet somebody is to come *against* them — not a fight, a facing. English borrowed it through French as **encounter**; bare *contrā* gave **contrary**, **contrast**, **counter**.

The best of the family is **country**: Vulgar Latin named a region (*terra*) *contrāta*, “the land lying opposite” — what is in front of you when you turn from the town.

conoscere is a different house: Latin **cognōscere**, *co-* plus *gnōscere*, “to come to know” → **cognition**, **recognize**, **incognito**, **notice**.

Grammar Lens: which past, and the one that means “met”

Chapter 16 split the past in two. Motion and change take **essere**, and the participle agrees: *Marco è andato*, *Anna è andata*, *sono stato*. All else takes **avere**, and nothing agrees.

Ho incontrato Marco. — I met Marco. **Ho incontrato Anna.** — I met Anna.

Two people, one unmoved **incontrato** — because after *essere* the participle began as an adjective describing the subject, and after *avere* it describes nobody.

Now the hidden verb. Put **conoscere** in the past and its job changes:

Ho conosciuto Marco. — I met Marco — for the first time.

What you’ve built this chapter

- **portare** ← *portāre*, “carry” → transport, export, porter, *sport*; it also means to **wear**, and *portato* is the regular participle.
- **comprare** ← *comparāre* on *parāre*, “procure” → prepare, repair, apparatus — and **not** the *comparāre* behind English *compare*.
- **aspettare** ← *ad-* + *spectāre*, “watch toward” → spectator, inspect, prospect; *ex-* on that verb gave *expect*, and **mi aspetto** says it.
- **incontrare** ← *in-* + *contrā*, “against” → encounter, contrary,

country.

- **The thread:** four verbs, one set of *-are* endings — *porto*, *compro*, *aspetto*, *incontro* — and three of them weld a small word onto a plain Latin verb: *com-*, *ad-*, *in-*. Italian inherited the welds without the seams.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “Incontro Marco. Ho incontrato Anna.”
- the contrast — “Anna è andata” beside “Ho incontrato Anna”
- the first meeting — “Ho conosciuto Marco.”
- the chapter — “porto, compro, aspetto, incontro”

Before you move on

Meet Marco. (*Incontro Marco*.) What two pieces make *incontrā*, and which English word for a place is *contrā* in disguise? (*In-* plus *contrā*; *country*.) Why *ho incontrato Anna* and not *sono incontrata*? (Not motion, so *avere*.) Name the roots under the chapter’s other three verbs. (*Portāre*, *parāre*, *spectāre*.)

Chapter 21

Two Ways to Play, and Two Verbs That Bend

Modes: 🗣️ voice (3) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can tell apart the two Italian verbs English calls play — giocare for a game, suonare for an instrument — say that I obtain something and that I answer someone, and explain the silent h of giochi and the doubled tt of ottenere.

The chapter's last lesson gathers gioco, suono, ottengo and rispondo, then reads risposto against preso: prehēnsūm lost its n and gave preso, so respōnsum ought to have given risposo, and instead the verb joins the small -sto band with chiedere's chiesto — Chapter 17's rule that an irregular form is a regular one from a system you can no longer see.

21.1 giocare and suonare — the two verbs English calls “play”

English has one word for playing a game and playing an instrument. Italian has two unrelated ones, and picking the wrong one is the most recognisable mistake an English speaker makes.

You'll want to know: two words, not one

giocare — to play a game, a sport, a match. **suonare** — to play an instrument; also, to ring or to sound.

The line is what you are doing, not the English word:

what you are doing	Italian
playing a game	giocare
playing an instrument	suonare
a bell ringing	suona

Chapter 19 gave you the frame — *mi piace* plus a dictionary form, as in *mi piace leggere*:

Mi piace giocare. — I like playing. **Mi piace suonare.** — I like playing music.

A grammatical tell too: *giocare* wants **a** before the game's name, while *suonare* takes the instrument bare.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Two roots, never near each other.

giocare ← Latin **iocārī**, “to jest,” from **iocus**, *a joke*. English took *iocus* as **joke**, and through French as **jeopardy** — *jeu parti*, “a divided game.” Italian still calls a game **il gioco**.

suonare ← Latin **sonāre**, “to sound,” from **sonus**, *a noise*. That is English **sound** itself, plus **sonata** (from Italian: a thing *sounded*, against a *cantata*, a thing sung), **resonate**, **unison**, **dissonant**. And **counterpoint** — Italian *contrappunto*, note against note — carries the *contrā* of the last lesson's *incontrare* into music.

The split is no rule to memorise: two unrelated Latin words, covered in English by a single native verb.

Grammar Lens: the h that keeps a c hard

Both are ordinary *-are* verbs — until the *tu* form of the first one.

gioco, giochi, gioca · suono, suoni, suona

Gioco is *JO-ko*: the **g** is soft before *i*, the **c** hard before *o*. Now change the ending to *-i*: written *gioci*, that *c* would soften to *JO-chee*. Italian will not let a consonant shift because an ending did, so it spells in an **h**: **giochi**, *JO-kee*.

You have met that letter doing opposite work:

where	what the h does
<i>chiedere, mi chiamo, giochi</i> <i>hanno</i> against <i>anno</i>	keeps a c hard before <i>e</i> and <i>i</i> separates two identical sounds in writing
The second row is Chapter 14: hanno venti anni , where <i>hanno</i> (“they have”) and <i>anno</i> (“year,” ← <i>annus</i> , the <i>annus</i> of <i>annual</i>) sound identical and only the silent <i>h</i> tells them apart.	

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “gioco, giochi, gioca” · “suono, suoni, suona”
- “Mi piace giocare.” then “Mi piace suonare.”
- the hard-c family — “chiedere, mi chiamo, giochi”

Before you move on

Which verb plays a match, and which an instrument? (*Giocare*; *suonare*.) Give each root and an English cousin. (*Iocus* → *joke*, *jeopardy*; *sonus* → *sound*, *sonata*.) Say you like playing music. (*Mi piace suonare*.) Give the *tu* form of *giocare* and the letter’s two jobs. (*Giochi* — the *h* holds the *c* hard, as in *chiedere*; in *hanno* it separates the word from *anno*.)

21.2 **ottenere** — “to get,” and a b that flattened into a t

The last lesson was about **doing** — playing a game, playing an instrument. This one is about **having**. English *get* means almost anything; Italian has nothing of the sort, and for the sense that matters, **coming to have** a thing, the verb is this one.

You’ll want to know: the word

ottenere — to get, to obtain, to come to have.

Line it up with what you have. *Prendere* **seizes** a thing, *portare* **carries** it. *Ottenere* **obtains** it: it was not lying there for the taking.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

ottenere comes from Latin **obtinēre**: **ob-**, “toward, up against,” plus **tenēre**, “to hold.” To obtain is to get a hold on something:

- **obtain** — the compound borrowed whole.
- **tenacious**, **tenant** and **tenure** (a holding), **tenet** (“he holds”), **tenor**.
- **contain**, **retain**, **maintain** — which Chapter 17 gave you as “hold in the hand.”

English stacked prefixes on *tenēre* exactly as it stacked them on the last chapter’s *portāre*: one Latin verb, a rack of prefixes.

Tenēre also explains Chapter 14, where Italian counted years with *avere*: **Ho venti anni**. **Spanish** says *tengo veinte años*, **Portuguese** *tenho vinte anos*, and both verbs are this same *tenēre*. Where Italian **has** its years, Spain and Portugal **hold** theirs — and English and German simply **are** twenty.

Grammar Lens: bt lands on tt, and a stem that bends

Obtinēre has a **b** and a **t** side by side, and Italian will not say them that way. It does to *-bt-* what it did to *-ct-* and *-pt-*: the first consonant flattens into the second.

Latin	Italian
<i>octō</i>	otto
<i>scriptum</i>	scritto
<i>obtinēre</i>	ottenere

The forms bend under stress: **ottengo**, **ottieni**, **ottiene**. A **g** surfaces in the *io* form; the stem’s *e* breaks into *ie* in the other two. Where *giocare* spelled in an **h** to hold a consonant still, this verb lets the vowel move instead. The past is ordinary — **ottenuto**, regular the way *portato* was, so **ho ottenuto**. That *-ngo* is the shape Spanish shows in *tengo*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ottengo, ottieni, ottiene” then “Ho ottenuto.”
- the three — “prendo, porto, ottengo”
- the clusters — “*octō* → otto, *scriptum* → scritto, *obtinēre* → *ottenere*”
- the years — “Ho venti anni” beside Spanish “tengo veinte años”

Before you move on

What two pieces make *obtinēre*, and name three English cousins? (*Ob-* plus *tenēre*; *obtain*, *tenacious*, *tenant*, *maintain*.) Why *ottenere* and not *obtenere*? (*-bt-* flattens to *-tt-*, as *-ct-* did in *otto*.) Give the singular forms and the participle, and the Chapter 20 participle it behaves like. (*Ottengo*, *ottieni*, *ottiene*; *ottenuto*, like *portato*.) Which Latin verb do Spanish *tengo* and Portuguese *tenho* come from? (*Tenēre*.)

21.3 *respondere* — “to answer,” which is “to pledge back”

Back to the *-ere* family: the present costs nothing new. Chapter 19 taught you to ask; this is the other half, and its root is about a promise, not speech.

You’ll want to know: the word

respondere — to answer. On the *-ere* pattern of *leggo* and *chiedo*: **rispondo**, **rispondi**, **risponde**.

One catch, mirroring one you own. *Aspettare* takes its object bare where English needs a preposition — *aspetto Anna*, “I wait **for** Anna.” *Rispondere* demands an **a** where English wants none:

Rispondo a Marco. — I answer Marco.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

rispondere ← Latin **respondēre**: **re-**, “back,” plus **spondēre**, “to pledge solemnly.” An answer was a pledge given in return, and the English family is unexpectedly personal:

- **respond**, **response**, **responsible**; **correspond**, “pledge together”; **despond**.
- **sponsor** ← *spōnsor*, who pledges for you.
- **spouse** ← *spōnsus*, *spōnsa*, “the promised one,” and **espouse**.

Chiedere, with its hard *ch*, came from *quaerere*, “to seek.” The asking-verb is a **hunt**; the answering-verb a **promise**.

Grammar Lens: the participle, and which past a story uses

The participle is **risposto** — **ho risposto**, “I answered.” Latin’s was *respōnsum*, with the same *-ns-* as *prehēnsum*, and *prehēnsum* gave you **preso**: the *n* dropped, a plain *-s-* left. So this should be *risposo*. It is not. **Risposto** joins a small *-ere* band ending in **-sto**, with *chiedere*’s **chiesto** — Chapter 17’s principle over *la mano*: an “irregular” form is a regular one from a system you can no longer see.

Chapter 15’s other past, the **passato remoto** — *parlò*, *parlarono* — is the one a story uses, because answering is what people do in stories. In Sicily and the south it is ordinary speech; in the north it retreated into books, as French shelved its *passé simple*.

What you’ve built this chapter

- **giocare** ← *iocus*, “a jest” → joke, jeopardy — a game. **suonare** ← *sonus*, “a noise” → sound, sonata, unison — an instrument. English merged them; Italian never did.
- **ottenere** ← *ob-* + *tenēre*, “hold toward” → obtain, tenant, retain, with *-bt-* landing where *-ct-* and *-pt-* did, and a bending stem: *ottengo*, *ottieni*, *ottiene*.
- **rispondere** ← *re-* + *spondēre*, “pledge back” → respond, sponsor, spouse.
- **The thread**: Chapter 19 ended on verbs that **reach**, and on

piacere, which reaches back from the thing to you. This chapter closes it: *ottenere* is the reach that lands, *rispondere* the return journey, *giocare* a reach for nothing at all.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “rispondo, rispondi, risponde”
- “Aspetto Anna”, then “Rispondo a Marco”
- “Ho risposto.” beside “Ho chiesto.”
- “gioco, suono, ottengo, rispondo”

Before you move on

Answer Marco. (*Rispondo a Marco.*) What did *spondere* mean, and name three English cousins. (**To pledge**; *respond*, *sponsor*, *spouse*.) Give the participle and say why it is not *risposo*. (*Risposto* — the *-sto* band with *chiesto*, not the *-so* of *preso*.) Which Latin verbs sit under *chiedere* and *ottenere*, and where is the *passato remoto* everyday speech? (*Quaerere*; *tenere*; **the south**.)

Chapter 22

Coffee, Tea, Milk, and Sugar

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask for coffee, tea, milk and sugar in Italian, and tell which of the four were borrowed and which was inherited.

The chapter's last lesson gathers il caffè, il tè, il latte and lo zucchero, meets lo on a real noun for the first time since Chapter 1 stated the rule, and sorts all four by history: caffè from Turkish, tè from Chinese, zucchero from Arabic by a different road than caffè, and latte alone never borrowed at all.

22.1 il caffè — coffee, and the word half of Europe borrowed together

Chapter 11 gave you the table's bread and wine. Here is the fourth thing you would ask for at an Italian bar, and its history runs east, not to Rome.

You'll want to know: the word

il caffè — coffee. Masculine.

Prendo il caffè. — I'll have the coffee. **Mi piace il caffè.** — I like coffee.

Order plainly at an Italian bar and what arrives by default is a small, strong shot — what English speakers call “espresso.” Italian needs no separate word for it: that shot **is** what “coffee” defaults to.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

caffè ← Ottoman Turkish **kahve** ← Arabic **qahwa**. Venice's merchants brought the drink and the word together in the 1600s, and from Italian — or in step with it — the word spread across the continent almost unchanged: English **coffee**, French **café**, German **Kaffee**, Spanish **café**. Say *italiano* enough times and you already knew Italian could carry a foreign word whole (Chapter 5's *italiano* itself, from Oscan, was no different) — this one simply came from further east.

Grammar Lens: a plural that refuses to change

Regular nouns change in the plural: *il pane* would become *i pani* if it had one. **Caffè** does not. Italian never pluralises a noun stressed on its own final, accented syllable — **il caffè**, **i caffè**, identical. You met the same written accent, for the same reason, on *così* in Chapter 2.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il caffè”
- “Prendo il caffè.” then “Mi piace il caffè.”
- “i caffè” — unchanged in the plural
- “caffè” then English “coffee, café, Kaffee” — one word, four languages

Before you move on

Order a coffee. (*Prendo il caffè*.) Which language gave Italian *caffè*, and which language gave that language the word? (**Turkish** *kahve*, from **Arabic** *qahwa*.) What happens to *caffè* in the plural, and why? (**Nothing** — nouns stressed on a final accented syllable don't change.) Name two other European languages with nearly the same word. (*Café*, *Kaffee*, among others.)

22.2 il tè — tea, and the map hiding inside its name

A second drink, and a second word with a long trip behind it — this one didn't come from Arabic at all. It came from China, by sea.

You'll want to know: the word

il tè — tea. Masculine, and — like *caffè* — unchanged in the plural: **il tè, i tè**.

Prendo il tè. — I'll have the tea.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

tè ← Hokkien Chinese **tê**, the word spoken in the port of Amoy (Xiamen), where Dutch traders loaded it onto ships bound for Europe as **thee**. Italian, English **tea**, French **thé** and German **Tee** all sailed in on that same cargo.

Mandarin and Cantonese say the same word differently: **chá**. That form travelled overland along the Silk Road, and every language on that road inherited it instead — Persian **chāy**, Russian **chai**, Hindi **chai**, Arabic **shāy**. One plant, two pronunciations, and the boundary between “tea-languages” and “chai-languages” on a modern map is a fossil of a sixteenth-century shipping route.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il tè”
- “Prendo il tè.”
- “tè” then English “tea, thé, Tee” — the sea route
- the contrast — “tè” against “chai” — one word, two roads

Before you move on

Order a tea. (*Prendo il tè*.) Which Chinese dialect gave Italian *tè*, and by which route did it travel? (**Hokkien** *tê*, **by sea**, via Dutch.) Which languages instead say some form of *chai*, and how did they get it? (Persian, Russian, Hindi, Arabic — **overland**, from Mandarin/Cantonese *chá*.) What does *tè* do in the plural? (**Nothing** — same rule as *caffè*.)

22.3 il latte — milk, the drink that never left home

Caffè travelled from Arabic through Turkish. *Tè* travelled from Chinese by sea. This drink went nowhere at all — it has said the same thing in this family since before there was an Italy.

You'll want to know: the word

il latte — milk. Masculine, doubled *-tt-* held clearly: *LAHT-teh*.

Prendo il latte. — I'll have the milk.

Ordinary plural rules apply here — *latte* is the mass-noun kind of word you rarely pluralise, unlike *caffè* and *tè*'s stressed-vowel exception.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

latte ← Latin **lac**, genitive **lactis**. English took the genitive stem straight into science: **lactic**, **lactate**, **lactose**, **lactation**. It even hides in a vegetable: **lettuce** ← Latin **lactuca**, “the milky plant,” named for the white sap that beads on a cut stem. Set the three drinks side by side: *caffè* came from Arabic, *tè* from Chinese, *latte* from nowhere further than Rome's own Latin. Not every word on an Italian table travelled — some simply stayed.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il latte” — hold the doubled *tt*

- “Prendo il latte.”
- “latte” then English “lactic, lactose” — and, unexpectedly, “lettuce”
- the three drinks — “caffè, tè, latte” — Arabic, Chinese, Latin

Before you move on

Order milk. (*Prendo il latte.*) What Latin word gave Italian *latte*, and name an English cousin. (*Lac, lactis* → *lactic/lactose*.) Which common English vegetable name hides the same root? (**Lettuce**, from *lactuca*, “the milky plant.”) Of *caffè, tè* and *latte*, which one never left Latin? (*Latte.*)

22.4 lo zucchero — sugar, and a rule Chapter 1 only promised

The last word for the table, **lo zucchero** — *bianco*, Chapter 13’s white — and the first noun in this whole track to actually need the article Chapter 1 only described.

You’ll want to know: the word

lo zucchero — sugar. Masculine, and **lo**, not *il*.

Lo zucchero è bianco. — The sugar is white.

Chapter 1 told you Italian keeps a second masculine “the,” **lo**, for “tricky clusters” — and gave you only invented examples, *lo studente, lo zio*. Here is the rule meeting a real word: *zucchero* starts with **z**, one of the sounds *lo* exists for.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

zucchero ← Arabic **sukkar**, itself from Persian **shakar**, from Sanskrit **śarkarā**, “gravel, grit” — sugar crystals looked like fine gravel to everyone who first met them refined. English **sugar** carries the same Arabic word, but by a different road: through Old French **sucre**, not through Turkish like *caffè*. Two words in this chapter, both ultimately Arabic, arrived in Italian by two separate routes at two different centuries.

Grammar Lens: *lo*, finally on a real word

Lo appears before **z**, before **s** plus another consonant, before **gn**, **ps**, **x** and **y**, and before **i** plus a vowel. *Il* covers everything else. Nothing here is new — Chapter 1 stated exactly this — but *zucchero* is the first noun in this track where you actually have to reach for **lo** instead of *il*, rather than take the rule on faith.

What you’ve built this chapter

- **caffè** ← Turkish *kahve* ← Arabic *qahwa* — borrowed, sixteenth century, through Venice, and still invariable in the plural: *i caffè*.
- **tè** ← Chinese *tê* — borrowed, by sea, through Dutch.
- **zucchero** ← Arabic *sukkar* — borrowed, through Old French’s cousin *sucre*.
- **latte** ← Latin *lac* — never borrowed at all.
- **The thread:** three loanwords and one inherited word, side by side on the same table. A word’s history has nothing to do with how ordinary it feels to say.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “lo zucchero” — *lo*, not *il*
- “Lo zucchero è bianco.”
- the four — “il caffè, il tè, il latte, lo zucchero”
- “zucchero” then English “sugar” — same Arabic word, different road

Before you move on

Give “sugar” with its article. (**Lo zucchero**.) Why *lo* and not *il*? (It starts with **z**, one of Chapter 1’s *lo*-triggers.) Trace *zucchero* back three languages. (Arabic *sukkar* ← Persian *shakar* ← Sanskrit *śarkarā*.) Which English word came by a different road from the same Arabic source? (**Sugar**, through Old French *sucre*.) Of the four words this chapter taught, which one was never borrowed?

(*Latte.*)

Chapter 23

Friends, Family, and a Name

Modes:  voice (3)  eyes (1)  Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can introduce a friend, name a family as a whole, ask for someone's name with the word itself, and say 'person' the way Italian always does.

The chapter's last lesson gathers l'amico/l'amica, la famiglia, il nome and la persona, closing on the one noun taught so far whose grammatical gender never tracks the sex of whoever it names.

23.1 l'amico, l'amica — friend, from loving

Chapter 22 left you at the table with *il caffè, il tè, il latte* and *lo zuccherò* — and its **lo**, remember, was for a cluster like *z-*. Chapter 10 gave you your family. Introducing someone rarely stops there — you also name the people you've chosen, not just the people you were born to.

You'll want to know: the word

l'amico — friend (male). **l'amica** — friend (female).

Both take **l'**, the elided form — you already met it on *l'acqua* — because both start with a vowel. The gender still exists, it just doesn't show on the article here; it shows the moment another word has to agree with it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

amico/amica ← Latin **amicus/amica**, built directly on **amāre**, “to love.” English kept the whole family: **amiable**, **amicable**, **amity**. And its opposite is hiding in plain sight — English **enemy** ← Latin **inimicus**, literally *in-* (“not”) + *amicus*: an enemy is, word for word, a **not-friend**.

Grammar Lens: when *lo/la* becomes *l’*

Chapter 1 gave you *il/la/lo*. Both singular articles before a vowel — masculine **lo** and feminine **la** alike — shorten to **l’**, dropping their own vowel into the next one:

article	before a consonant	before a vowel
masculine	il amico (<i>wrong</i>) / lo amico (<i>wrong</i>)	l’amico
feminine	la amica (<i>wrong</i>)	l’amica

L’acqua (Chapter 11) was your first example; *l’amico* and *l’amica* are the second and third, and the first place you can see the SAME elided form covering two different genders side by side.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “l’amico, l’amica”
- the elision — “lo + amico → l’amico”, “la + amica → l’amica”
- “amico” then English “amiable, amicable” — and “enemy”, the opposite

Before you move on

Give “friend” for a man and for a woman. (*L’amico, l’amica*.) Which Latin verb sits under both, and name two English cousins. (*Amāre*, “to love” → *amiable, amicable*.) Which English word is built from the same root with a “not” in front? (**Enemy**, ← *inimicus*.) Why do both words take *l’* instead of *lo* or *la*? (Both start with a **vowel** — the article elides.)

23.2 la famiglia — the word for the whole group

Chapter 10 named the individuals — *padre, madre, fratello, sorella*. Here is the word for all of them together, and unlike last lesson's friend, this one never crossed a border.

You'll want to know: the word

la famiglia — the family. Feminine, regular **-a**.

Said plainly, of any family — yours, someone else's, a stranger's on the street: **la famiglia**.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

famiglia ← Latin **familia**. Its oldest sense was broader than “blood relatives”: a Roman *familia* was the whole household under one head, including servants — from **famulus**, “servant, slave.” The word narrowed over the centuries to the sense you'd give it today. English took it with barely a letter changed: **family**, **familiar** (originally “belonging to the household”), **familial**.

Set it beside last lesson's *amico*: *amico* came from **loving** someone; *famiglia* came from **serving** in the same house. Two very different starting points landed on two words for people close to you.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la famiglia”
- “famiglia” then English “family, familiar, familial”
- the pair — “amico ← loving”, “famiglia ← serving”

Before you move on

Give “the family.” (**La famiglia**.) What did a Latin *familia* originally include, beyond blood relatives? (**Servants** — the whole household.) Which word is *familia* built on, and what did it mean? (*Famulus*, “servant.”) Of this chapter's two words, which comes from **loving** someone and which from **serving** in the same house?

(*Amico* ← loving; *famiglia* ← serving.)

23.3 il nome — the word Chapter 3 talked around

Mi chiamo..., *Come ti chiami?* — Chapter 3 taught you to exchange names without ever once saying the word “name.” Here it is, on its own.

You’ll want to know: the word

il nome — the name. Masculine.

Il nome è italiano. — The name is Italian.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

nome ← Latin **nomen**, genitive **nominis**. The English family from this one root is enormous: **noun** (grammar’s word for a naming-word), **nominate** (“to name for a role”), **nominal**, **pronoun** (“standing in for a noun”), **synonym** and **anonymous** (Greek-flavoured cousins, *syn-* “together” and *an-* “without,” both riding on the same ancient root as *nomen*), and **renown** — “re-named,” made famous enough to be named again and again.

Why it’s said this way

Mi chiamo Marco does not mean “my name is Marco” word for word — it means “**I call myself** Marco.” *Come ti chiami?* is “**how do you call yourself?**” Italian’s everyday way of exchanging names uses the verb *chiamarsi*, “to call oneself,” from beginning to end, and *nome* never has to appear. It surfaces instead on forms, in third-person talk about someone, and now, in your own vocabulary.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il nome”

- “Il nome è italiano.”
- “nome” then English “noun, nominate, pronoun, anonymous, renown”
- “famiglia” then English “family, familiar” — last lesson’s inherited word
- the contrast — “mi chiamo” (I call myself) beside “il nome” (the name)

Before you move on

Give “the name.” (**Il nome.**) What does *mi chiamo Marco* literally say, word for word? (“**I call myself** Marco” — not “my name is.”) Name three English cousins of Latin *nomen*. (*Noun, nominate, pronoun, anonymous, renown* — any three.) Which verb carries the whole *Come ti chiami?* exchange, and does it ever use *nome*? (*Chiamarsi*, “to call oneself” — **no.**)

23.4 la persona — the word that outranks its own referent’s sex

One more word for talking about people in general — *l’amico* (elided, Chapter 23’s own rule), *la famiglia*, *il nome* (the word *mi chiamo* always talked around), and now the broadest of all — and it breaks the gender rule you’ve trusted since Chapter 1 in a way none of the others do.

You’ll want to know: the word

la persona — the person. Feminine — **always**, whoever is meant.

Even when the person being described is a man, Italian still says *la persona*. The article and the ending agree with the WORD’s own gender, which is fixed; they say nothing about the sex of whoever the word points at. You’ve half-met this before: Chapter 17’s *la mano* is feminine by an accident of Latin declension, not because hands are somehow female. *Persona* is a different kind of exception — a word for a person that simply never changes its own gender to match its referent.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

persona was a Latin word for a **theatrical mask** — the kind worn on a Roman stage. Its origin past that point is genuinely disputed: an old story claims it comes from *per-* (“through”) plus *sonāre* (“to sound”), a mask built to project an actor’s voice. Most modern scholars now treat that as folk etymology and favour an Etruscan word, *phersu*, borrowed into Latin before it ever meant “a human being.” From mask to role to the person underneath the role: English kept the whole arc — **person, personal, personnel, impersonate** (“to put on someone else’s mask”), and **parson**, an English clergyman’s title from the same word by a well-worn sound-shift.

Grammar Lens: the word outranks the world

Every noun you’ve tagged with gender so far — *il padre, la madre, il fratello, la sorella* — has tracked something real: fathers are grammatically masculine because they are actually male. *Persona* does not. It is grammatically feminine **by category**, full stop, the way a ship is sometimes called “she” in English regardless of anything real about ships. Grammatical gender and the sex of a living referent are two different systems that usually agree and occasionally, as here, simply don’t.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la persona” — always feminine
- “persona” then English “person, personal, personnel, parson”
- “nome” then its Latin root “nomen” once more
- the four together — “l’amico, la famiglia, il nome, la persona”

Before you move on

Give “the person.” (**La persona.**) What did Latin *persona* originally mean, and what is its further origin? (A **theatrical mask**; disputed — likely **Etruscan** *phersu*, not the old *per-* + *sonāre* story.) Name three English cousins. (*Person, personal,*

personnel, *parson*, *impersonate* — any three.) Why is *la persona* always feminine, even describing a man? (Grammatical gender is a fixed **category** of the word, not a report on the referent's sex.)

Chapter 24

Heart, Eyes, Ears, and Mouth

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my heart, eyes, ears and mouth in Italian, and trace the sound-law that built two of them.

The chapter's last lesson gathers il cuore, l'occhio, l'orecchio and la bocca, the set Chapter 17's la mano lesson promised, and closes on bocca's history as slang for 'cheek' that replaced Latin's real word for mouth.

24.1 il cuore — the heart, and a promise Chapter 17 made

Chapter 23 closed on *la persona* — always feminine, however general. Chapter 17 closed with “next: the rest of the body,” after *la testa* and *la mano*. Here it begins — asking how someone is can reach past *bene* and *così così* into the body itself.

You'll want to know: the word

il cuore — the heart. Masculine.

Unlike *la mano*, this one is **not** an exception: *cuore* ends in **-e**, and Chapter 17 already told you *-e* nouns can be either gender — you simply learn each one with its article. *La notte* was feminine *-e*; *il cuore* is masculine *-e*. Both regular, in their own way.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

cuore ← Latin **cor**, genitive **cordis**. The English family is large and mostly hidden: **cordial** (warm, “from the heart”), **courage** (via Old French *corage*, “heart” as the seat of nerve), **accord** and **concord** (“hearts together”), **discord** (“hearts apart”), and **record** — *re-* plus *cor*, “to call back to the heart,” because before writing, you kept things **by heart**.

La mano’s lesson ended by pointing forward to “the rest of the body.” This chapter and the next are that promise, paid: heart, eyes, ears and mouth here, nose, stomach and throat after. None of them repeats *mano*’s trick of an irregular gender — that was Latin’s lost fourth declension doing something unique to *manus* — but each has its own root worth digging up.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il cuore”
- “cuore” then English “cordial, courage, accord, record”
- the contrast — “il cuore” (masc. -e) beside “la notte” (fem. -e)

Before you move on

Give “the heart.” (**Il cuore.**) What Latin word is inside it, and name three English cousins. (*Cor, cordis* → *cordial, courage, accord, discord, record* — any three.) Why isn’t *cuore* an exception the way *mano* was? (**-e** nouns can be either gender; *cuore* is a regular masculine example, *notte* a regular feminine one.) What did Chapter 17 promise that this chapter starts paying off? (**The rest of the body.**)

24.2 l’occhio — the eye, worn down from three syllables to one

After the heart, the eye — and a word that changed shape more violently on its way from Latin than almost anything else in this

book. Every *persona* has one, whatever *il nome* on their door says.

You'll want to know: the word

l'occhio — the eye. Masculine, elided **l'** before its own vowel — the same move you learned on *l'amico*.

Said *OHK-kyoh*: a hard **c**, then a fast **y**-glide into *o*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

occhio ← Latin **oculus**, three clean syllables: *OH-ku-lus*. Italian's own sound laws crushed it: the unstressed middle vowel dropped (*oculus* → *oc'lus*), and the leftover cluster **-c'l-** regularly hardens into **-cchi-** — a general Italian sound law, not a one-word accident. What arrived is one syllable where Latin had three. English, working from the untouched original, kept **ocular**, **oculist**, **binoculars** (“two-eyed” instruments), and **monocle** (“one eye”).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “l'occhio” — *OHK-kyoh*
- the collapse — “oculus → oc'lus → occhio”
- “occhio” then English “ocular, oculist, binoculars, monocle”
- the pair so far — “il cuore, l'occhio” — the body-word set Chapter 17 promised

Before you move on

Give “the eye.” (**L'occhio**.) What Latin word did it come from, and how many syllables did that word have? (*Oculus* — **three**.) What sound-change turned the middle cluster into **-cchi-**? (The unstressed vowel dropped, leaving **-c'l-**, which hardened to **-cchi-**.) Name three English cousins. (*Ocular, oculist, binoculars, monocle* — any three.) Why is *la persona* always feminine, and does Italian's everyday name-exchange ever use *il nome*? (Grammatical gender is a fixed

category, independent of the referent's sex; and no — *chiamarsi* carries the whole exchange.)

24.3 l'orecchio — the ear, and a “little ear” that grew up

Last lesson's collapse — three Latin syllables crushed into one — was not a one-time accident. Here it is again, on the very next body part in the set Chapter 17 promised.

You'll want to know: the word

l'orecchio — the ear. Masculine, elided l'.

Said *oh-REHK-kyoh* — the same hard-**c**-plus-glide shape as *occhio*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

orecchio ← Latin **auricula**, literally “**little ear**” — a diminutive of **auris**, “ear.” *Auricula* lost its unstressed vowel the same way *oculus* did, and the same **-c'l-** → **-cchi-** law finished the job: one regular sound-change, applied to two different body-part words, and both times a longer Latin word became a shorter Italian one. English kept *auris* and *auricula* nearly whole in its own vocabulary: **aural** (“of the ear”) and **auricle** (an ear-shaped part of the heart or the outer ear itself) — so, unusually, this lesson's English cousins name a piece of *last* lesson's word.

Grammar Lens: one law, twice

Latin	dropped a vowel	Italian
<i>oculus</i>	<i>oc'lus</i>	occhio
<i>auricula</i>	<i>auric'la</i>	orecchio

Once you can name the pattern — an unstressed vowel falls out, the leftover **-c(u)l-** hardens into **-cchi-** — you can predict how other words of this shape landed, even ones this book never teaches directly. (One more example, just to hear it work: Latin *genuculum*, “little knee,” gives Italian *ginocchio*.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “l’orecchio” — *oh-REHK-kyoh*
- “orecchio” then English “aural, auricle”
- the pair — “occhio, orecchio” — one sound-law, twice

Before you move on

Give “the ear.” (**L’orecchio**.) What Latin word did it come from, and what did that word literally mean? (*Auricula*, “**little ear**,” from *auris*.) What sound-law built both *occhio* and *orecchio*? (An unstressed vowel drops, and the leftover **-c(u)l-** hardens to **-cchi-**.) Name an English cousin of *auris*. (*Aural* or *auricle*.)

24.4 la bocca — the mouth, a word that used to mean “cheek”

Heart, eyes, ears — the last two built by the same *-c’l- → -cchi-* law — and now the mouth, which closes this chapter with the strangest history of the four: the word you’re about to learn is not even the Latin word for “mouth.”

You’ll want to know: the word

la bocca — the mouth. Feminine, doubled **-cc-**: *BOHK-ka*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Classical Latin’s real word for “mouth” was **os**, genitive **oris** — you already have its cousin in English **oral**, **oration**, **oracle**. But everyday spoken Latin reached instead for **bucca**, a slang word that actually meant “**cheek**,” puffed out and vivid, the way English might say “gob” or “kisser” for “mouth.” The slang won: *bucca* became the ordinary word for “mouth” across nearly the whole Romance family — Italian **bocca**, Spanish **boca**, Portuguese **boca**, French **bouche** — while *os/oris* survived only in learned English borrowings, never as an everyday Romance word for the body part itself. French *bouche* gave English

two rarer cousins: **debouch** (troops “mouthing out” of a narrow pass into open ground) and **embouchure** (where a musician’s mouth meets an instrument).

What you’ve built this chapter

Il cuore, l’occhio, l’orecchio, la bocca — heart, eyes, ears, mouth, the set Chapter 17 promised when *la mano*’s lesson signed off. Ask *Come stai?* (Chapter 2), answer *bene* or *così così*, and now you can point to more than your hand while you do it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la bocca” — *BOHK-ka*
- “bocca” then English “debouch, embouchure” — both via French *bouche*
- the four — “il cuore, l’occhio, l’orecchio, la bocca”

Before you move on

Give “the mouth.” (**La bocca.**) What was Latin’s actual word for “mouth,” and what did *bucca* originally mean? (*Os/oris*; *bucca* meant **cheek**.) Name two rare English cousins that came through French *bouche*. (*Debouch, embouchure*.) Which four body words has this chapter now taught, in order? (*Cuore, occhio, orecchio, bocca.*)

Chapter 25

Nose, Stomach, and Throat

Modes: 🗣️ voice (3) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my nose, stomach and throat in Italian, closing the body-word set Chapter 17 opened.

*The chapter's last lesson gathers *il naso*, *lo stomaco* and *la gola*, closing the seven-word body set begun in Chapter 24, and lays out the five different kinds of word-history behind those seven words in one place.*

25.1 *il naso* — the nose, and a flower named after it

Three body words left. This one has a straightforward Latin root and a genuinely surprising English cousin waiting at the end of it.

You'll want to know: the word

il naso — the nose. Masculine.

Said *NAH-zoh*: the single **s** sits between two vowels, which Italian voices — the same sound as the **s** in English *rose*, not the one in *sink*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

naso ← Latin **nasus**. English kept it directly in **nasal**, and built one word by welding it to Old English: **nostril**, “nose” plus *thyr*l, “hole”

— a nose-hole. The real surprise is a garden flower: **nasturtium** ← *nasus* plus *torquēre*, “to twist” — literally a **nose-twister**, for the sharp, peppery smell that makes a nose wrinkle.

Grammar Lens: when a single *s* sounds like *z*

Italian’s traps list already warned you that **z** can be *ts* or *dz*. **S** has its own split: a single **s** between two vowels is usually **voiced**, like English *z* — *naso*, *così* (Chapter 2). A **doubled ss** stays voiceless, the plain *s* of English *sink*. One letter, two sounds, and position is what decides.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “il naso” — *NAH-zoh*, voiced *s*
- “naso” then English “nasal, nostril, nasturtium”
- the voiced-*s* pair — “naso, così”

Before you move on

Give “the nose.” (**Il naso**.) What garden flower hides *nasus* plus a Latin verb for “to twist,” and what does it literally mean? (**Nasturtium** — “nose-twister.”) What English word welds *nasus* to an Old English word for “hole”? (**Nostril**.) How does a single *s* between two vowels sound in Italian? (**Voiced**, like English *z* — as in *naso* or *così*.)

25.2 lo stomaco — the stomach, on loan from Greek

Every body word so far went straight back to Latin, and the last one taught you that a single *s* between vowels is voiced. This one takes a detour through Greek instead — and needs Chapter 22’s other article again.

You'll want to know: the word

lo stomaco — the stomach. Masculine, and **lo**, not *il* — it starts with **s** plus a consonant, exactly the cluster Chapter 22's *lo zucchero* trained you to expect *lo* before.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

stomaco ← Latin **stomachus** ← Greek **stómakhos**, “throat, gullet, stomach,” itself built on **stóma**, “mouth.” Latin borrowed the Greek medical vocabulary wholesale in antiquity, long before Italian existed, so *stomaco* only *feels* as native as *cuore* or *naso* — underneath, it travelled through one more language than they did. English took the same word by the same route: **stomach**, spelled almost as Latin left it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “lo stomaco” — *lo*, not *il*
- “stomaco” then English “stomach” — nearly the same word
- the *lo* pair — “lo zucchero, lo stomaco”

Before you move on

Give “the stomach.” (**Lo stomaco.**) Why *lo* and not *il*? (It starts with **s** plus a consonant.) Which language did *stomaco* pass through before it reached Latin? (**Greek** — *stómakhos*, from *stóma*, “mouth.”) Is *stomaco*'s root older or younger, inside Latin, than *naso*'s? (**Younger** — borrowed from Greek, where *nasus* was native Latin all along.)

25.3 la gola — the throat, closing the body

The last body word, and the piece that connects the mouth to the stomach — heart, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, stomach, and now the throat between them.

You'll want to know: the word

la gola — the throat. Feminine, regular **-a**.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

gola ← Latin **gula**, “throat.” English kept it almost whole in **gullet**, by way of Old French. A tempting further step: Latin also had a verb **gluttire**, “to gulp down,” the direct ancestor of English **glutton**. Several dictionaries propose that *gluttire* and *gula* ultimately share the same ancient root for swallowing — plausible, and worth knowing, but treated here as **proposed**, not settled, exactly as this book flagged *persona*’s Etruscan origin as the leading guess rather than a certainty.

What you’ve built this chapter

Two chapters, seven words: **cuore, occhio, orecchio, bocca, naso, stomaco, gola** — heart, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, stomach, throat. Three came straight from Latin roots (*cuore, naso, gola*); two collapsed under the same Italian sound-law (*occhio, orecchio*); one is slang that outlived the “proper” word it replaced (*bocca*); one detoured through Greek before it ever reached Latin (*stomaco*). Seven words, five different kinds of history, all landing on one *Come stai?*

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “la gola”
- “gola” then English “gullet” — and, cautiously, “glutton”
- the full seven — “cuore, occhio, orecchio, bocca, naso, stomaco, gola”

Before you move on

Give “the throat.” (**La gola**.) What Latin word gave Italian *gola*, and its clear English cousin? (*Gula* → **gullet**.) Which English word is *proposed*, not certain, to share the same root? (**Glutton**, from *gluttire*.) Name the seven body words this pair of chapters taught, in order. (*Cuore, occhio, orecchio, bocca, naso, stomaco, gola*.)

Chapter 26

Primo, Secondo, Terzo

Modes:  voice (5)  Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say first to fifth in Italian with the right ending, read the two courses on an Italian menu, and ask for a quarter of an hour.

The fifth ordinal said against the four before it, and the sound split that makes cinque and quinto refuse to rhyme.

26.1 primo — first, and a word this book already used

A new kind of counting starts here, so the recalls come first, at the four growing distances this book measures.

- *Recall:* say *la gola* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *il caffè* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *abitare* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall:* say *ciao* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall:* say *buono / buon* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

primo (masculine) · **prima** (feminine) — **first**. **il primo giorno** — the first day. **la prima volta** — the first time.

Uno, due, tre answer **how many**. This word answers **which one in the line**, and Italian keeps a second series for that job. It behaves as any describing word does and changes its ending with what it counts.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

This book has used *primo* once, and hidden it. The seasons lesson glossed **primavera** as “the **first** green” — *prima vera*, the first spring — and the word behind that gloss was never given. Now it is.

One thing to know before you use it. **Il primo piano** is not the ground floor. Italian calls the ground floor **il pianterreno**, “the earth floor”, and starts counting at the top of the first flight of stairs — so *il primo piano* is what an American calls the second floor. A lift panel in Rome begins **T**, then **1**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *primo, prima*
- *il primo giorno* — the first day
- *primavera* — the first spring

Before you move on

Say “the first time.” (**La prima volta.**) Which word in this book was already built on *primo*? (***Primavera*** — the first spring.) And which floor is *il primo piano*? (**The one above the ground floor**, which Italian calls *il pianterreno*.)

26.2 secondo — the one that follows, and half a menu

Recalls before the second ordinal, at the four measured distances.

- *Recall*: say *primo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *il tè* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *lavorare* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *il / la / lo* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall*: say *giorno* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

secondo (masculine) · **seconda** (feminine) — **second**. **il secondo giorno** — the second day. **la seconda volta** — the second time.

There is no *due* in it. It comes from Latin *sequi*, “to follow”, so second place is named for what it does — the place that **comes after** — and not for the count it sits at. English **second**, **sequel**, **sequence** and **consequence** are the same root.

Why it's said this way

An Italian menu is written with these two words used as nouns, and once you have them you can read one:

course	what arrives
l'antipasto	before the meal
il primo	pasta, rice or soup
il secondo	meat or fish
il dolce	the sweet

Il primo and *il secondo* are not “starter” and “main”. They are literally **the first** and **the second**, and an Italian ordering both is ordering two courses, not a starter and an entrée. Two ordinals, and half a meal is legible.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *secondo, seconda*
- *la seconda volta* — the second time
- the menu — *antipasto, primo, secondo, dolce*

Before you move on

What verb is *secondo* built on? (*Sequī*, to follow.) What are *il primo* and *il secondo* on a menu? (**The first and second courses** — pasta, then meat.) And say “the second day.” (**Il secondo giorno.**)

26.3 terzo — where the number starts to show through

Recalls first, then the third ordinal — the first with a number visible inside it.

- *Recall: say secondo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall: say il latte* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall: say the fifth chapter’s own recombining* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall: say lunedì, martedì, mercoledì* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say buongiorno* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall: say buonasera* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You’ll want to know: The word

terzo (masculine) · **terza** (feminine) — **third. il terzo piano** — the third floor. **la terza volta** — the third time.

Say *tre* and then *terzo*. Two ordinals have gone past with no number in them at all; this is the first where you can hear one. The *z* is **ts** — *TER-tso*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Un terzo also means “**a third**”, the fraction, and that is the same word used as a noun. Italian names its small fractions with the ordinals:

fraction	Italian
a third	un terzo
a quarter	un quarto
a fifth	un quinto

So the words this chapter is teaching do a second job you will meet in a recipe or on a bill. English does exactly the same thing with *a third* and *a quarter*, and for the same reason: the ordinal already names a position in a division.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *terzo, terza* — *TER-tso*
- the join — *tre* → *terzo*
- *un terzo* — a third

Before you move on

Which number is inside *terzo*? (**Tre**.) How is the *z* said? (**Ts** — *TER-tso*.) And what does *un terzo* mean besides “the third one”? (**A third** — the fraction.)

26.4 quarto — the fourth, and a quarter of an hour

Recalls first, then the fourth — and the phrase that makes these words immediately useful.

- *Recall*: say *terzo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *lo zucchero* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back

- *Recall: say sabato e domenica* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall: say l'ora* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say buonanotte* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall: say grazie* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

quarto (masculine) · **quarta** (feminine) — **fourth**. **il quarto piano** — the fourth floor. **la quarta volta** — the fourth time.

Quattro is four and *quarto* is four with the ordinal ending, the double *t* squeezed out. Two in a row now behave the same way.

You'll want to know: a quarter of an hour

un quarto d'ora — a quarter of an hour, fifteen minutes. **tre quarti d'ora** — three quarters of an hour.

The clock chapter gave you **l'ora**. This is what Italian does with it, and it is the single most useful thing in the chapter: *fra un quarto d'ora*, “in a quarter of an hour”, is how somebody tells you to wait a bit.

It also gives you **le sei e un quarto** — a quarter past six — where the ordinal is doing the work an English speaker expects from “quarter”. Same idea, and the word you need for it is one you now have.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *quarto, quarta*
- *un quarto d'ora* — a quarter of an hour
- *le sei e un quarto* — a quarter past six

Before you move on

Say “a quarter of an hour.” (**Un quarto d’ora.**) What number is inside *quarto*? (**Quattro.**) And how would you say “a quarter past six”? (**Le sei e un quarto.**)

26.5 quinto — the fifth, and a sound the cardinal lost

Recalls first, then the fifth — and a pair that does not rhyme when it ought to.

- *Recall*: say *quarto* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *l’amico e l’amica* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la gola* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *mezzogiorno e mezzanotte* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *i mesi* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *prego* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall*: say *prego, go ahead* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You’ll want to know: The word

quinto (masculine) · **quinta** (feminine) — **fifth**. **il quinto piano** — the fifth floor. **la quinta volta** — the fifth time.

Sounds you’ll need

Say them together: **cinque, quinto**. They are the same Latin root and they do not sound alike, and the difference is worth a minute. Latin had *quīnque* and *quīntus*, both beginning **kw-**. Then the first one was pulled forward by the *i* that followed and softened all the way to **ch-** — which is why *cinque* opens like English *chin*. The ordinal was

not pulled, and it still opens **kw-**: *KWIN-to*.
 So this pair is a sound change caught halfway through: one word moved and its twin did not. Listen for the same split in *dieci* against *decimo*, five lessons ahead — the cardinal softened, the ordinal did not.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *quinto, quinta* — *KWIN-to*
- the pair — *cinque* soft, *quinto* hard
- *la quinta volta* — the fifth time

Before you move on

Why do *cinque* and *quinto* not rhyme? (**The cardinal softened its opening to *ch-* and the ordinal kept *kw-*.**) Say the fifth floor. (**Il quinto piano.**) And which pair five lessons ahead does the same thing? (*Dieci* against *decimo*.)

Chapter 27

Sesto al Decimo

Modes:  voice (4)  eyes (1)  Hands-free start: none of the 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count in order all the way to tenth in Italian, and say how ottavo and nono each break the shape in a different way.

The tenth ordinal closes the inherited list, and the dieci/decimo split repeats the one cinque and quinto showed five lessons earlier.

27.1 sesto — the sixth, and a letter that disappeared

Recalls open the chapter, at the four measured distances.

- *Recall:* say *quinto* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *primo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *la famiglia* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall:* say *il padre e la madre* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *il pane* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall:* say *prego, here you are* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall:* say *Prego?* — *come again* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

sesto (masculine) · **sesta** (feminine) — **sixth**. **il sesto piano**
— the sixth floor. **la sesta volta** — the sixth time.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin had *sex* and *sextus*, both with an **x** — which is a **ks** sound written with one letter. Italian does not keep *x* in inherited words. The cluster came apart and simplified, and both words lost it: *sex* became **sei**, and *sextus* became **sesto**.

You can see the same disappearance in every Italian word that had one. It is why Italian spelling looks so much plainer than Latin's, and why a Latin word with an *x* is usually recognisable in Italian with an *s* or a doubled consonant in its place.

English kept the **x** because it borrowed from books rather than inheriting from speech: **sextet**, **sextant**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sesto, sesta*
- the join — *sei* → *sesto*, both from an *x* that went
- *la sesta volta* — the sixth time

Before you move on

What letter did Latin *sextus* have that *sesto* has not? (**X** — a *ks* sound.) What happened to the same letter in *sex*? (**It went too** — *sei*.) And say “the sixth floor.” (**Il sesto piano**.)

27.2 settimo — the seventh, and the seventh heaven

Recalls first, then the seventh.

- *Recall*: say *sesto* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays

- *Recall: say secondo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall: say il nome* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say undici a sedici* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall: say diciassette a venti* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say come* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall: say stare* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

settimo (masculine) · **settima** (feminine) — **seventh**. **il settimo piano** — the seventh floor. **la settima volta** — the seventh time.

The double **tt** stays and you must hold it — *SET-ti-mo*, with the stress right at the front. A single *t* would make a different word's shape.

You'll want to know: al settimo cielo

essere al settimo cielo — to be in seventh heaven, delighted.

The phrase is old and it is astronomy. Mediaeval writers counted the heavens outward from the earth — Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and then **Saturn, the seventh** — and above them the fixed stars. The seventh was the highest a planet reached, so being at it meant being as high as you could get.

English has the same idiom and the same count. Italian says it with the ordinal you have this minute learned, which is a reasonable place to notice that these words are not only for floors.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *settimo, settima* — *SET-ti-mo*, hold the *tt*

- the join — *sette* → *settimo*
- *essere al settimo cielo*

Before you move on

Where is the stress in *settimo*? (**On the first syllable.**) What is the seventh heaven, counted out? (**Saturn** — the outermost planet in the mediaeval count.) And say “the seventh time.” (**La settima volta.**)

27.3 ottavo — the ending that breaks step

Recalls first, then the eighth — the one that does not do what the last four did.

- *Recall*: say *settimo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *terzo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la persona* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *nero e bianco* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *rosso e blu* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *Come stai?* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall*: say *Come sta?* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You’ll want to know: The word

ottavo (masculine) · **ottava** (feminine) — **eighth**. **l’ottavo piano** — the eighth floor. **l’ottava volta** — the eighth time.

Otto is eight. By now you would expect *otto* with the ending the last four took, and it is not that: this one ends in **-avo**, and it is the only one of the ten that does.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin *octāvus* already had the odd **-āvus**, and Italian inherited the oddity rather than tidying it away — which is what usually happens to a word that is used too often to be regularised.

L’ottava in music is the **eighth** note: *do re mi fa sol la si* and then *do* again, where the names come round. The interval is named for the count that closes it, and Italian named the notes too — *do, re, mi* are the opening syllables of a mediaeval hymn, set down by an Italian monk.

So the word for a musical octave and the word for the eighth floor are the same word, and the music is the one that explains the name.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ottavo, ottava*
- the odd ending — **-avo**, not the ending the last four took
- *l’ottava* — the eighth note, where the names begin again

Before you move on

What ending does *ottavo* take, and how many of the ten take it? (**-avo**, and **only this one**.) What is an octave, counted out? (**The eighth note**, where the names start again.) And say “the eighth floor.” (**L’ottavo piano**.)

27.4 nono — the ninth, squeezed shut

Recalls first, then the ninth — the one that gets shorter.

- *Recall*: say *ottavo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *quarto* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il cuore* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance

- *Recall*: say *avere* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *ho parlato* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *Come va?* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall*: say *così così* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

nono (masculine) · **nona** (feminine) — **ninth**. **il nono piano** — the ninth floor. **la nona volta** — the ninth time.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Nove is nine. Every ordinal so far has been at least as long as its cardinal; this one is **shorter**. Latin had *novēnus* and squeezed it shut into *nōnus*, and Italian inherited the squeezed form.

Two ordinals running have now bent the shape in two different directions — *ottavo* by taking an odd ending, *nono* by losing sound. That is what a series of inherited words looks like from inside: not a rule with exceptions, but ten words that each survived a slightly different accident.

And the feminine stands on its own in Italian. **La Nona** — no noun after it — means Beethoven's ninth symphony, the way English says *the Ninth*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nono, nona*
- the squeeze — *nove* → *nono*, shorter than its number
- *la Nona* — the Ninth

Before you move on

Is *nono* longer or shorter than *nove*? (**Shorter** — it was squeezed shut.) Which two ordinals bend the shape, and how differently? (**Ottavo** takes an odd ending; **nono** loses sound.) And what is *la Nona*? (**The Ninth** — the symphony.)

27.5 decimo — the tenth, and the split heard again

Recalls first, then the tenth, which closes the memorized ten.

- *Recall*: say *nono* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *quinto* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *l'occhio* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *parlò* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *essere* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *non c'è male* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more
- *Recall*: say *the second chapter's own recombining* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

You'll want to know: The word

decimo (masculine) · **decima** (feminine) — **tenth**. **il decimo piano** — the tenth floor. **la decima volta** — the tenth time.

Stress at the front: *DE-chi-mo*, three syllables.

What you've built: the split, and the end of the list

The *quinto* lesson promised this pair, and here it is. **Dieci** has a soft **ch**-sound in the middle; **decimo** has the same letter and it is soft too — *DE-chi-mo* — but the vowel went the other way: the cardinal broke its *e* into **ie** and the ordinal did not. One more word that moved while

its twin stood still.

La decima was the **tithe**, the tenth of a harvest owed to the church, and Italian still uses the feminine that way.

That is the ten. *Primo* to *decimo* — ten separate words, each inherited whole from Latin, each with its own small accident. There is no rule that generates them, and you have now met all of them. The next lesson is the good news: from eleven upward Italian stopped inheriting and started building, and one ending does the rest of the number line.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *decimo*, *decima* — *DE-chi-mo*
- the pair — *dieci* broke its vowel, *decimo* did not
- all ten in order, *primo* to *decimo*

Before you move on

How is *decimo* said? (**DE-chi-mo**, stress at the front.) What did *dieci* do to its vowel that *decimo* did not? (**Broke it into ie.**) And how many separate inherited words are there from first to tenth? (**Ten** — no rule generates them.)

Chapter 28

Undicesimo, Prima e Dopo

Modes:  voice (4)  Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can build any ordinal above ten with -esimo, put two things in order with prima and dopo, and lay out the courses of a meal in sequence.

The ordinals and prima/dopo used on the same four things, so the difference between naming a place and naming a relation is worked rather than stated.

28.1 undicesimo — where Italian stops inheriting and starts building

Recalls first, and then the ending that ends the memorizing.

- *Recall:* say *decimo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *sesto* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *l'orecchio* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall:* say *essere e stato* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *andare* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall:* say *io* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

- *Recall*: say *mi chiamo* — **R4**, a second word from the same distance

Grammar Lens: take the number, drop its last vowel, add -esimo

undici → **undicesimo** — eleventh. **venti** → **ventesimo** — twentieth. **cento** → **centesimo** — hundredth.

Ten inherited words stopped at *decimo*. Above ten, Italian built something instead: take the cardinal you already know, take its final vowel off, and put **-ésimo** on the end. That is all of it, and it runs to infinity.

Say the three above out loud and hear the number still sitting inside each one. *Undicesimo* is *undici* wearing a suffix; nothing has to be memorized separately.

One word keeps its vowel, and it is *tre*: *ventitré* gives **ventitreesimo**, with the *e* still there. Drop it and the number would vanish from the word.

What you've built: two systems, one number line

So Italian numbers order in two different ways and the seam is at ten:

range	how it is made
first to tenth	ten inherited words , each its own accident
eleventh upward	cardinal minus final vowel, plus -esimo

That is worth knowing as a shape, not only as a fact. The commonest ten words in a language are the ones that survive irregular, because they are said too often to be tidied; everything past them gets built by rule, because a rule is what you reach for when the word is rare. You will meet the same seam in the verbs.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *undici* → *undicesimo*
- *venti* → *ventesimo*

- *ventitré* → *ventitreesimo* — the one that keeps its vowel

Before you move on

How is an ordinal above ten made? (**Cardinal, final vowel off, -esimo on.**) Say the twentieth. (**Ventesimo.**) And which number keeps its final vowel? (**Tre** — *ventitreesimo*.)

28.2 *prima* — before, which is first in disguise

Recalls open the chapter's last stretch, at the four measured distances.

- *Recall*: say *undicesimo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *settimo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la bocca* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *sono andato* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la testa* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *Come ti chiami?* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

prima — before, earlier, first (of all). **prima di mangiare** — before eating. **Vengo prima.** — I'll come earlier. **prima o poi** — sooner or later.

Before a noun or a verb it takes **di**: *prima di cena*, “before dinner”.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

You have seen this word already, and not as an adverb. **Prima** is the feminine of **primo**.

Latin froze it in an old case form — *prīmā*, “**at the first**”, where “the

first time” was understood and never said — and the frozen phrase became a plain word meaning “before”. So Italian’s ordinary word for *before* is, underneath, the ordinal for *first*.

Which is a reasonable thing for a language to do: putting one thing before another IS putting it first. English does the same trick from the other direction, using *first* as an adverb — “first, we eat” — and never noticing.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *prima* — before, earlier
- *prima di cena* — before dinner
- *prima* and *prima volta* — the same word

Before you move on

What is *prima*, taken apart? (**The feminine of *primo***, frozen in an old case meaning “at the first”.) What does it take before a noun? (***Di*** — *prima di cena*.) And say “sooner or later.” (***Prima o poi***.)

28.3 dopo — after, and the pair completed

Recalls first, then the word that finishes the pair.

- *Recall*: say *prima* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *ottavo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il naso* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *la mano* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *pensare* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall*: say *piacere* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

dopo — after, afterwards, later. **dopo cena** — after dinner.

A dopo! — See you later. **dopodomani** — the day after tomorrow.

Unlike *prima* it takes no *di* before a noun: *dopo cena*, not *dopo di cena*. (Before a pronoun it does: *dopo di me*.)

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Dopo is two Latin words stuck together: *dē* + *post*, “from after”.

Latin had *post* on its own; late Latin propped it up with *dē*, the pair fused, and Italian inherited the weld as a single word.

The *post* inside it is the one English keeps in **postpone** (“to place after”), **post mortem**, **posterity** and **post-war** — and in *a.m.* and *p.m.*, where **p.m.** is *post merīdiem*, “after midday”.

With *prima* and *dopo* you can now put two things in order without counting them at all: *prima il primo, dopo il secondo* — first the pasta, then the meat.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *dopo* — after, afterwards
- *dopo cena* — after dinner
- *A dopo!* — see you later

Before you move on

What two Latin words is *dopo* made of? (*Dē* + *post*.) Which everyday abbreviation carries the same *post*? (**p.m.** — *post merīdiem*.) And what can you do with *prima* and *dopo* that the ordinals do not do for you? (**Put two things in order** without counting them.)

28.4 Putting a meal in order — *primo, secondo, prima, dopo*

Recalls first, and then the chapter's work: everything in one place.

- *Recall: say dopo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall: say nono* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall: say lo stomaco* — **R2**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say capire* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall: say leggere* — **R3**, a second word from the same distance
- *Recall: say the third chapter's own recombining* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the three chapters, on one table

You have ten ordinals, an ending that makes the rest, and *prima* and *dopo*. That is enough to put things in sequence, and the easiest place to do it is a table.

- **Prima l'antipasto.** — The antipasto first.
- **Poi il primo.** — Then the first course.
- **Dopo il primo, il secondo.** — After the first, the second.
- **Alla fine, il dolce.** — At the end, the sweet.

Two ways of saying the same order, and they do different work. The **ordinals** name each thing's place — *il primo* is the first, whatever comes near it. **Prima** and **dopo** name a relation between two things — *dopo il primo* is true of anything that follows it.

So: *Il caffè viene dopo il dolce* — the coffee comes after the sweet — and *fra un quarto d'ora*, in a quarter of an hour, is how long you might wait for it. Say the courses in order, then say them again with *prima* and *dopo*, and you have used both systems on the same four things.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the courses — *l'antipasto, il primo, il secondo, il dolce*
- the relation — *dopo il primo, il secondo*
- *il caffè viene dopo il dolce*

Before you move on

Name the four courses in order. (**L'antipasto, il primo, il secondo, il dolce.**) What do *prima* and *dopo* do that the ordinals do not? (**Name a relation between two things**, not each thing's place.) And when does the coffee come? (***Dopo il dolce.***)

Chapter 29

Yes and No

Modes:  voice (5)  Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say yes and no, take or turn down what is offered, agree, and ask somebody to confirm what I have just said.

The chapter's last lesson gives vero its second job — the tag hung on the end of a statement to ask the other person to confirm it — and gathers the four answering moves the chapter opened: sì, no, sì grazie / no grazie, and d'accordo.

29.1 sì — yes, and where a language gets one

A new chapter, so the recalls come first, at the four growing distances this book measures.

- *Recall:* say *prima il primo, dopo il secondo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *decimo / decima* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *scrivere* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *prendere* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *arrivederci* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

sì — yes.

It has been in front of you since the first *-are* verbs. That chapter's dialogue ran — *Parli italiano?* — ***Si***, *parlo un po'*. The word was said, and it was never given a line of its own, because the lesson was about the *-are* endings. Here it is on its own.

The accent is not decoration. It is written **sì**, with a grave accent, to keep it apart from **si**, an unstressed little word with several other jobs — one of which you have already met inside *così così*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Classical Latin had **no word for yes**. Asked *Venīsne?* — “Are you coming?” — a Roman answered by repeating the verb: *veniō*, “I am coming.” Every Romance language had to build a *yes* out of something else, and each one chose differently. French took *hoc ille* → *oui*. Italian, Spanish and Catalan took **sīc**, “so, thus” — the answer meaning *that is how it is*.

You already own that *sīc*. The wellbeing chapter gave you **così così**, “so-so”, and *così* is *eccu(m) sīc*, “behold, thus”. **Si** and *così* are the same Latin word, one of them worn down to a single syllable.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sì*
- *Parli italiano?* — *Si*.
- *sì* and *così* — one Latin word, two Italian ones

Before you move on

How do you say yes? (**Si**.) Which Latin word is it? (**Sīc**, “so, thus”.) Which word already in this book is built on the same *sīc*? (**Così**, in *così così*.)

29.2 no — the other half of the answer

Two recalls from this chapter and this book's four measured distances.

- *Recall*: say *sì* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *undicesimo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *chiedere* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *aiutare* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *a domani* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

no — **no**.

Sì and **no** are the pair. One of them answers a question by agreeing with it; the other answers by rejecting it, and it can stand entirely alone:

— **Parli italiano?** — **No**.

That is a complete Italian turn. Nothing else is required of you.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

No is Latin **nōn**. So is the word in the next lesson. Italian took a single Latin negator and split it by stress into two words that no longer look interchangeable:

no	stressed, stands alone	— <i>Parli italiano?</i> — No .
non	unstressed, leans on a verb	(<i>next lesson</i>)

English does the same thing without noticing: *no* and *not* are also one old word pulled apart. Say **no** on its own, and never in front of a verb.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *no*
- — *Parli italiano?* — *No.*
- *sì ... no* — the pair

Before you move on

How do you say no? (**No.**) Which Latin word is behind it? (***Nōn.***) And where may *no* not stand? (**In front of a verb** — it answers on its own.)

29.3 *sì, grazie* — *no, grazie*

Two words you were given days apart now do one job together.

- *Recall:* say *no* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *prima* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *mi piace* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *portare* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *a presto* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: accepting and declining

Somebody holds out a coffee. In Italian you need two words, and you have had one of them since the very first chapter.

Sì, grazie. — Yes, please. (*taking it*) **No, grazie.** — No, thank you. (*turning it down*)

Note what Italian does **not** say. English says “yes, *please*” when it accepts and “no, *thank you*” when it declines: two different words. Italian uses **grazie** for both. The *sì* or the *no* carries the whole decision, and *grazie* only softens it.

This is why *grazie* alone is risky at an Italian table. Offered a second helping, a bare **grazie** with a small backward tilt of the head is heard as a refusal. If you want it, say **sì, grazie**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Sì, grazie.*
- *No, grazie.*
- — *Un caffè?* — *Sì, grazie.*

Before you move on

Somebody offers you a coffee and you want it — what do you say? (**Sì, grazie.**) And if you do not? (**No, grazie.**) Which word is the same in both? (**Grazie** — Italian does not swap it for a *please*.)

29.4 d'accordo — agreed

Two chapters' worth of distance before a word about agreeing.

- *Recall*: say *sì, grazie* / *no, grazie* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *dopo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *comprare* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *aspettare* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *a più tardi* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The phrase

D'accordo. — Agreed. All right. Okay.

It is the whole answer. Somebody proposes something and you accept the proposal rather than the object:

— **A domani?** — **D'accordo.**

You can also put a person in front of it with *essere*, which the *essere* lesson gave you:

Sono d'accordo. — I agree.

The apostrophe is the *di* you already meet inside *piacere di conoscerti*, with its vowel knocked out before another vowel — the same elision as *l'acqua* and *l'amico*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Accordo is Latin **ad** + **cor**, **cordis** — “heart.” To reach an *accordo* is literally to bring two hearts to the same place.

You were taught *cordis* in the body-words chapter without being told this. **Il cuore**, the heart, is that same *cor*. So is English **accord**, **record** (to bring back to the heart, which is where the Romans thought memory lived), **concord**, **discord** and **courage**.

And an *accordo* in music is a chord: notes that agree.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *d'accordo*
- *Sono d'accordo.*
- — *A domani?* — *D'accordo.*

Before you move on

How do you say “agreed”? (**D'accordo.**) Which body word from the body-words chapter is hiding inside it? (**Cuore** — Latin *cor*, *cordis*.) And what is the apostrophe standing in for? (**Di**, with its

vowel dropped before a vowel.)

29.5 vero — true, and the question you hang on the end

The last word of the chapter, and five retrievals before it.

- *Recall*: say *d'accordo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *prima il primo, dopo il secondo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *incontrare* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *giocare, suonare* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say (*practice*) — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

vero (masculine) · **vera** (feminine) — **true**.

It behaves as any describing word does and changes its ending with what it describes, exactly as *primo* / *prima* did.

Grammar lens: the turn it does at the end of a sentence

Italian has no separate machinery for the little question English tacks on the end — *isn't it?* *doesn't he?* *aren't you?* Italian says one word for all of them:

Parli italiano, vero? — You speak Italian, don't you?

Marco abita a Roma, vero? — Marco lives in Rome, doesn't he?

It asks the other person to confirm what you said a moment ago, and the answer it expects is **sì**. Its opposite number is **no?**, which is blunter and expects the same **sì**: *Parli italiano, no?*

English speakers find this restful. *Vero?* keeps one shape for every sentence.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vero, vera*
- *Parli italiano, vero?*
- *Marco abita a Roma, vero?*

Before you move on

What does *vero* mean on its own? (**True.**) What does it do at the end of a sentence? (**It asks the other person to confirm** — English *isn't it, doesn't he, aren't you.*) Which answer does it expect? (***Si.***)

Chapter 30

Not

Modes:  voice (5)  Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can turn any sentence in this book over with non, say that I do not understand, use né ... né and neanche, and say that something is or is not there.

The chapter's last lesson takes non c'è male apart, twenty-eight chapters after Chapter 2 handed it over whole and said its negation and its c'è would come back on their own ramps. Both have.

30.1 non — the word that turns a sentence over

A new chapter, and the word it opens with has been quietly present since the wellbeing chapter.

- *Recall:* say *vero?* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *sì* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *ottenere* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *rispondere* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *parlare* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the rule, in one line

non goes **immediately before the verb**. That is the whole rule.

Everything you have been taught to say can now be said the other way round:

you had	you now also have
<i>Parlo italiano.</i>	Non <i>parlo italiano.</i> — I don't speak Italian.
<i>Prendo il caffè.</i>	Non <i>prendo il caffè.</i> — I'm not having the coffee.
<i>Abito a Roma.</i>	Non <i>abito a Roma.</i>
<i>Ho venti anni.</i>	Non <i>ho venti anni.</i>
<i>Sono d'accordo.</i>	Non <i>sono d'accordo.</i> — I don't agree.

That last one matters. Until this line, this book could agree — *d'accordo*, one lesson ago — and could not disagree with anything at all.

Italian does **not** need a helper verb the way English does. English has to borrow *do* (*I speak* → *I **do** not speak*). Italian puts one small word in front of the verb it already had, and stops.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Non is Latin **nōn** — the same Latin word as the *no* of the last lesson but one. Stressed, it became **no** and learned to stand alone. Unstressed, it became **non** and learned to lean on a verb. Neither can do the other's job.

The *non c'è male* lesson gave it to you as a single frozen lump and said, in as many words, that its negation and its *c'è* would come back later on their own ramps. This is the first half of that promise. The second half is four lessons away.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *non*
- *Non parlo italiano.*
- *Non prendo il caffè.*

- *Non sono d'accordo.*

Before you move on

Where does *non* go? (**Immediately before the verb.**) Say “I don’t agree.” (***Non sono d'accordo.***) Which Latin word is behind both *no* and *non*? (***Nōn*** — one word split by stress.) And which frozen phrase from the wellbeing chapter has been carrying *non* all along? (***Non c'è male.***)

30.2 non capisco — saying you have not followed

One lesson back, one chapter back, and two long throws.

- *Recall*: say *non* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *no* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il caffè* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il tè* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *abitare* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: the two things to say when you are lost

Capisco. — I understand. **Non capisco.** — I don’t understand.

Both halves were already in the building. The *capire* lesson taught the verb and gave **capisco** first in its paradigm. The last lesson gave you **non**. Nothing new is being learnt here except the fact that you may now put them together — and that this is the single most useful sentence a beginner owns.

The *prego?* lesson taught you the rising **Prego?** that asks somebody to say it again. Use the two in order:

Non capisco. Prego? — I don’t understand. Say it again?

Prego? asks for a repeat. *Non capisco* tells the other person that repeating it the same way will not help, so they will slow down or choose different words. An Italian speaker who hears only *Prego?* will likely say the same sentence again, at the same speed.

A slower and gentler version, for when you have caught some of it:

Non capisco bene. — I don't quite understand.

Bene is the wellbeing chapter's, doing new work.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Capisco.*
- *Non capisco.*
- *Non capisco. Prego?*
- *Non capisco bene.*

Before you move on

Say “I don't understand.” (***Non capisco.***) Which chapter gave you *capisco*? (**The *capire* lesson.**) Why say *non capisco* rather than only *prego*? (***Prego?* asks for a repeat; *non capisco* asks for a different sentence.**)

30.3 né ... né — neither one nor the other

Three lessons of this chapter behind you already.

- *Recall*: say *non capisco* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *sì, grazie / no, grazie* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il latte* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *lo zucchero* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *lavorare* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the pair, and the doubled negative

né ... né — neither ... nor.

Non prendo né caffè né tè. — I'll have neither coffee nor tea.

Non ho né fratelli né sorelle. — I have neither brothers nor sisters.

Read that first Italian sentence again and count the negatives. There are **three**: *non*, and *né*, and *né*. English allows only one and calls a second one an error. Italian requires them all, and a sentence with *né* and no *non* is does not work in Italian:

Wrong: *Prendo né caffè né tè.* **Right:** **Non** prendo **né** caffè **né** tè.

This is why *né* comes after *non* in this book rather than before it. Without *non* there is nothing for it to stand beside.

The accent is doing the same job it did on *sì*: it separates **né** from **ne**, a different unstressed word.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *né ... né*
- *Non prendo né caffè né tè.*
- *Non ho né fratelli né sorelle.*

Before you move on

How does Italian say “neither ... nor”? (**Né ... né.**) How many negatives does *Non prendo né caffè né tè* contain? (**Three** — and Italian wants all three.) What happens if you drop the *non*? (**The sentence is wrong** — *né* cannot stand without it.)

30.4 anche — me too, and me neither

The fourth word of the chapter, and the one that finally explains a line you heard among the first *-are* verbs.

- *Recall*: say *né ... né* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *d'accordo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *l'amico, l'amica* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la famiglia* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *Parlo italiano* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

anche — also, too, as well.

It goes in front of whatever it adds:

Prendo il caffè. Prendo anche il latte. — I'm having coffee. I'm also having milk. **Anche Marco abita a Roma.** — Marco lives in Rome too.

And on its own, agreeing with somebody:

— **Parlo un po' d'italiano.** — **Anch'io.** — Me too.

You have heard **anch'io** already. It is in the *parlo un po'* dialogue, said once and never explained, because that chapter was busy with verb endings. It is *anche* + *io*, with the vowel elided — the same elision as *l'acqua* and *d'accordo*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

neanche — neither, not ... either, not even.

It is **né** + **anche**, welded into one word, and you were given the first half one lesson ago. Because it carries a *né*, it keeps the *non* rule with it:

Non prendo neanche il tè. — I'm not having tea either.

Standing alone, answering somebody, the *non* has nowhere to sit and drops away:

— **Non capisco.** — **Neanch'io.** — Me neither.

So the pair to learn is **anch'io** / **neanch'io** — *me too* and *me neither* — which between them answer most of what anybody says to you.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *anche*
- *Anch'io.*
- *neanche*
- *Neanch'io.*
- *Non prendo neanche il tè.*

Before you move on

What does *anche* mean? (**Also, too.**) Which two words is *neanche* made of? (**Né + anche.**) Say “me too” and “me neither”. (**Anch'io — neanch'io.**) Where in this book had you already heard *anch'io*? (**In the *parlo un po'* dialogue**, where it was never glossed.)

30.5 c'è, ci sono — there is, there are

The chapter closes by taking apart a phrase you were given twenty-eight chapters ago.

- *Recall*: say *anche* / *neanche* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *vero?* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il nome* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la persona* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance

- *Recall: say (practice)* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the two forms

c'è — **there is** (one thing) **ci sono** — **there are** (more than one)

C'è un caffè. — There is a coffee. **Ci sono due amici.** — There are two friends.

The verb is *essere*, which its own lesson gave you: **è** is its third person singular and **sono** its third person plural. All that is new is the little **ci** in front, and the apostrophe when *ci* meets *è*.

Italian chooses between them by counting what follows, exactly as English does with *is* and *are*. What Italian does **not** do is what English does with *there*: English uses the same word for the place (*over there*) and for the construction (*there is*). Italian keeps them apart — the place words are the next chapter's.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

The wellbeing chapter taught you **non c'è male** as a single unbroken lump, and its lesson said outright that the negation and the *c'è* inside it belonged to later lessons. Both have now arrived, so the lump comes apart:

non — not (*four lessons ago*) **c'è** — there is (*this lesson*)
male — badly, ill (*the wellbeing chapter*)

Non c'è male is, word for word, “**there isn't any bad.**” It is not a special idiom for “not bad”; it is an ordinary Italian sentence that you were handed early because you needed an answer before you could build one. You can now build it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *c'è*
- *ci sono*

- *C'è un caffè.*
- *Ci sono due amici.*
- *Non c'è male.*

Before you move on

How do you say “there is”? (*C'è.*) And “there are”? (*Ci sono.*)
Take *non c'è male* apart. (*Non + c'è + male* — “there isn’t any bad”.) Which lesson promised you this? (The *non c'è male* lesson.)

Chapter 31

Che

Modes:  voice (5)  Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can join two clauses with *che*, say what I think, ask who and what, and exclaim.

The chapter's last lesson spends what the book already owns: che from four lessons back and buono from Chapter 1, which had spent twenty-nine chapters welded to a time of day and was never once said about anything.

31.1 che — the word that joins two sentences into one

A new chapter, and its first word is the one Italian uses most.

- *Recall:* say *c'è / ci sono* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *non* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *il cuore* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *l'occhio* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: one word, joining

che — that, which, who, whom.

So far every Italian sentence in this book has been a single clause. **Che** staples two of them together, and it does not care what kind of thing it points back at:

l'amico che parla italiano — the friend **who** speaks Italian
il caffè che prendo — the coffee **that** I'm having **la persona**
che aspetto — the person **whom** I'm waiting for

English picks a different word each time — *who* for people, *that* or *which* for things, *whom* when it is the object. Italian uses **che** for all of them, never changes it, and never leaves it out. English can say *the coffee I'm having*; Italian cannot drop the *che*.

One thing worth noticing in those three examples: *che* is the **subject** of *parla* in the first and the **object** of *prendo* in the second and third. The word is the same either way. You do not have to decide which it is.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Che is what is left of Latin **quid** and **quem** after they fell together. Latin distinguished them by case; Italian gave that up and kept one invariable word.

The spelling has been explained to you twice already without *che* itself appearing. The **piacere** lesson taught that *c* goes soft before *e* and *i*. The **mi chiamo** lesson then said that the *h* in *chi* “is there precisely to keep it hard.” That is exactly what the *h* is doing here: **che** is *keh*, not *cheh*, because the *h* blocks the softening. You have had that explanation since your third chapter, and this is the word it was for.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *che*
- *l'amico che parla italiano*
- *il caffè che prendo*
- *la persona che aspetto*

Before you move on

Which English words does *che* cover? (*Who, whom, that, which* — all of them.) Does it change? (**No** — never.) Why is it said *keh*? (**The *h* keeps the *c* hard before *e*** — the *mi chiamo* rule.)

31.2 penso che — having an opinion out loud

One lesson back, and the word that unlocks this one.

- *Recall*: say *che* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *non capisco* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *l'orecchio* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la bocca* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the opinion frame

The *pensare* lesson gave you the verb “to think” and its *io* form **penso**. It gave you no way to say what you think. Here it is:

Penso che ... — I think that ...

Penso che Marco parla italiano. — I think Marco speaks Italian. **Penso che il caffè è buono.** — I think the coffee is good. **Non penso che è vero.** — I don't think it's true.

The **che** is the same invariable word as one lesson ago, doing its other job: there it hooked a clause onto a noun, and here it hooks a whole clause onto a verb. Italian will not let you leave it out. English drops it freely — *I think he speaks Italian* — and Italian never does.

A note for later, said now so it is not a surprise. Careful written Italian puts the verb after *penso che* into a different set of endings called the *congiuntivo*: *penso che Marco **parli** italiano*. Spoken Italian uses the plain present constantly, and everything above is ordinary speech. You will be understood. The *congiuntivo* is a whole chapter of its own and it is not this one.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Penso che ...*
- *Penso che il caffè è buono.*
- *Non penso che è vero.*

Before you move on

Say “I think that Marco speaks Italian.” (*Penso che Marco parla italiano.*) May you drop the *che*, as English drops *that*? (No.) Which chapter gave you *penso*? (The *pensare* lesson.)

31.3 chi — who?

Three lessons of the chapter behind you.

- *Recall*: say *penso che* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *né ... né* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *il naso* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *lo stomaco* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *lunedì, martedì, mercoledì, giovedì, venerdì* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: The word

chi? — who?

Chi è? · **Chi parla italiano?** · **Chi aspetta?**

Until this line, this book could ask **how** somebody was, **what** they were called and **how many** years they had, and it could not ask **who** anybody was. **Chi è?** is also what an Italian says through a closed door.

Keep *chi* and *che* apart by their jobs: **chi** asks about people and only about people. **Che** joins clauses, and — next lesson — asks about things.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Chi is Latin **quī**, “who”. The **chiedere** lesson taught you the sound change that produced it: Latin *qu-* before a stressed front vowel went to Italian **chi-**. That lesson used it on *quaerere* → *chiedere*. It works the same way here.

So the *ch* is hard for the same reason it is hard in *che* and in *mī chiamo*, and the word is *kee*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *chi?*
- *Chi è?*
- *Chi parla italiano?*

Before you move on

How do you ask “who?” (**Chi.**) Which lesson already taught you the *qu-* → *chi-* change? (**The chiedere lesson.**)

31.4 che cosa — what?

The fourth of the chapter’s five, with a long throw back to the weekdays.

- *Recall*: say *chi* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *anche* / *neanche* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *la gola* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *primo* / *prima* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *sabato*, *domenica* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: three ways to ask the same question

che cosa? — what?

Italian will let you say it three ways, and all three are ordinary:

Che cosa prendi · Cosa prendi · Che prendi

Che cosa is the full form, *cosa* is commonest in the north, *che* in the centre and south. Learn *che cosa* and you will be understood everywhere.

Che cosa è? — what is it, set against **Chi è?**, who is it.

And the third member of the question set now comes unwelded. The age lesson gave you **Quanti anni hai?** as one lump; the **quanti** in it is a word, **quanto**, “how much, how many”, agreeing with what it counts — *quanti anni*, *quante persone*. It is not glued to ages.

So: **chi** for people, **che cosa** for things, **quanto** for amounts.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Cosa is Latin **causa** — “a legal case, a matter at issue.” Roman lawyers used it constantly for *the matter in hand*, and it drifted from *the matter* to *any matter* to, at last, *thing*.

Every western Romance language took that road: Italian *cosa*, Spanish *cosa*, French *chose*, Portuguese *coisa* — all of them a Roman courtroom word. The same *causa* came into English unworn, through law, as **cause**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *che cosa*
- *Che cosa prendi*
- *quanti anni, quante persone*

Before you move on

Give the word for “what”. (***Che cosa.***) Name the Latin word behind *cosa*. (***Causa***, a court case.) And gloss the *quanti* of *quanti anni*. (**How much, how many.**)

31.5 Che buono! — the exclamation

The chapter’s last lesson, and it introduces no new word at all.

- *Recall*: say *che cosa* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *c’è / ci sono* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *secondo / seconda* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *terzo / terza* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *ora* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: **che**, for the third time

Put **che** in front of a describing word and it stops joining and starts exclaiming:

Che buono! — How good!

and with a noun instead:

Che caffè! — What a coffee!

There is no verb, and none is wanted. It is the whole utterance.

This lesson introduces no new word. *Che* was three lessons ago; **buono** has been yours since the first chapter. What that chapter never did was let you say *buono* about anything: it lived inside **buongiorno**, **buonasera** and **buonanotte**, welded to a time of day.

You can also put a noun after it: **Che caffè!** — what a coffee!

Grammar lens: an adjective after essere

The exclamation is the loud way. Here is the quiet one, and it is the ordinary Italian sentence pattern this book has gone its whole length without using:

subject + essere + describing word

Il caffè è buono. · Il vino è rosso. · L'acqua è buona.

Every piece of that was separately taught and never joined: *essere*, *buono*, the four colours, and the drinks. Until this line, *il caffè è nero* was unsayable although both halves had been on the page for a hundred lessons.

The describing word agrees with what it describes, exactly as *primo* / *prima* did: **il caffè è buono, l'acqua è buona, i caffè sono buoni.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Che buono!*
- *Il caffè è buono.*
- *Il vino è rosso.*
- *Che caffè!*

Before you move on

How do you say “how good!”? (***Che buono!***) Which two words is it made of, and when did you get them? (***Che, three lessons ago; buono, the first chapter.***) Say “the coffee is good” as a plain sentence. (***Il caffè è buono.***)

Chapter 32

But, Or, Why

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can set one statement against another, offer a choice, ask why and answer because, say when, and say what something is for.

The chapter's last lesson gives the infinitive its first job in a sentence. Since Chapter 5 it has been this book's dictionary form and nothing else; per plus the plain infinitive puts it to work and introduces no new word.

32.1 ma — setting one thing against another

A new chapter. Five retrievals, then the word.

- *Recall:* say *Che buono!* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *che* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *quarto / quarta* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *quinto / quinta* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *mezzogiorno, mezzanotte* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

ma — but.

Parlo italiano, ma non capisco bene. Prendo il caffè, ma non prendo lo zucchero. Sono d'accordo, ma ... — I agree, but ...

It sits between two statements and marks the second as pulling against the first. That is all it does, and it never changes.

This book could already put two statements side by side with **e**, “and” — the written-accent lesson had to gloss it in order to contrast it with *è* — and it had no way at all to set one statement against another. The whole of arguing, qualifying and hedging starts here.

Beginning an answer with a bare **Ma ...** is extremely common in speech and lands somewhere near English *well ...* — a soft objection before you make it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin had **two** words for “more”: **plūs** and **magis**. Italian kept both and gave them different lives.

Plūs became **più**, which you have owned since the farewells chapter, inside **a più tardi**, “until more late” — later.

Magis became **ma**. A word meaning *more* became a word meaning *but*, by way of *rather*: *not this, more this*.

Every western Romance language did the same and split differently. Spanish has *más* for “more” and *pero* for “but”, keeping *mas* only in old writing. French has *plus* and **mais** — that *mais* is *magis* too, the same word as Italian *ma*. Meanwhile Latin’s own word for “but”, **sed**, which Cicero could not write a page without, was kept by none of them.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ma*
- *Prendo il caffè, ma non prendo lo zucchero.*
- *Sono d'accordo, ma ...*

Before you move on

How do you say “but”? (*Ma*.) Which Latin word is it? (*Magis*, “more”.) Which word in this book comes from the OTHER Latin word for more? (*Più*, in *a più tardi* — Latin *plūs*.)

32.2 o — or

One lesson back, and four longer throws.

- *Recall*: say *ma* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *penso che* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *sesto* / *sesta* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *settimo* / *settima* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *i mesi* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: The word

o — or.

One letter, and with it the commonest question an Italian bar asks:

Caffè o tè? · Acqua o vino? · Prima o dopo?

It also lays out alternatives, which is how Italian asks about a preference far more often than with a verb for *prefer*:

Prendi il caffè o il tè? — Will you have the coffee or the tea?

Every noun there came from the drinks lessons. The only missing piece was the single letter between them.

Before a word beginning with *o*, Italian often writes **od**, exactly as *a* becomes *ad*. You will meet it in print and never have to produce it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

O is Latin **aut**, and Latin was fussier than Italian is. It had **aut** for the exclusive or — *this one or that one, not both* — and **vel** for the inclusive one. Italian kept only *aut*, which is why an Italian *o* is as ambiguous as an English *or*.

What survives of the difference is **oppure**, “or else”, built on *o* + *pure*. *Aut* also went into English whole, in *aut Caesar aut nihil* — Caesar or nothing.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *o*
- *Caffè o tè?*
- *Acqua o vino?*
- *Prendi il caffè o il tè?*

Before you move on

How do you say “or”? (**O**.) Which Latin word is it? (**Aut**.) What did Latin have that Italian lost? (**Vel**, the inclusive or — *oppure* is what is left of the difference.)

32.3 perché — why, and because

The chapter’s middle lesson, and the one that closes a hole this book has had from its first page.

- *Recall*: say *o* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *chi* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *ottavo / ottava* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *nono / nona* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *le stagioni* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: one word, both jobs

perché — **why?** (*asking*) and **because** (*answering*).

The same word, spelled the same way, does both:

— **Perché non prendi il caffè?** — Why aren't you having the coffee? — **Perché non mi piace.** — Because I don't like it.

That exchange is the point of the lesson: question and answer open with the identical word, and an Italian hears no oddity in it. Spanish splits them — *¿por qué?* asking, *porque* answering — and Italian asks you to remember nothing.

This book has spent its whole length explaining **why** Italian words are shaped as they are, and until this line it had no way to let you say *because*.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Perché is **per** + **ché**. *Per* is “for, through” — the same *per* that is in English *per cent*, “for each hundred.” *Ché* is the **che** of the last chapter, wearing an accent because it now carries the stress at the end of the word.

So *perché* is literally “**for what**” — which is how a question about a reason becomes a statement of one. English does the same with another preposition: *what for?*

The accent is acute (é) rather than grave (è), and it is compulsory: the stress falls at the end, *per-KEH*, and Italian marks a final-stressed vowel in writing, as it does on *caffè* and *lunedì*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *perché*
- *Perché non prendi il caffè?*
- *Perché non mi piace.*

Before you move on

How do you ask “why?” (*Perché*.) How do you say “because”? (*Perché* — the same word.) What is it made of? (*Per* + *ché*, “for what”.)

32.4 *quando* — when

One lesson back, and the far end of the book.

- *Recall*: say *perché* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *che cosa* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *decimo* / *decima* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *undicesimo* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *il padre, la madre* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: The word

quando — when.

Like *perché*, it does two jobs with one shape. It asks:

Quando lavori? — When do you work? **Quando prendi il caffè?**

and it joins, putting two events at the same moment:

Quando lavoro, prendo un caffè. — When I work, I have a coffee. **Quando non capisco, non rispondo.** — When I don’t understand, I don’t answer.

The joining half is the one that changes what you can build. Every sentence in this book so far has described a single situation. *Quando* stacks two of them and says they belong together in time.

Italian will let the *quando* clause go either first or second — *prendo un caffè quando lavoro* is equally good — and when it goes first a comma follows it.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Quando is Latin **quandō**, and that is the whole story. The long *ō* shortened, and nothing else happened to it in two thousand years. That is rarer than it sounds. Almost every word in this book has been reshaped on its way from Latin: *quaerere* became *chiedere*, *causa* became *cosa*, *nōn* split into *no* and *non*, *magis* became *ma*, *oculum* became *occhio*. *Quandō* stayed almost unchanged. Spanish *cuando*, Portuguese *quando* and Romanian *când* kept it too. Note the *qu-* here does **not** become *chi-*. That change happened before a stressed *e* — *quaerere* → *chiedere*, *quī* → *chi* — and *quando*’s vowel is an *a*, so the *qu* stayed *qu*, said *kw*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *quando*
- *Quando lavori?*
- *Quando lavoro, prendo un caffè.*

Before you move on

How do you say “when”? (**Quando.**) Both as a question and as a joiner? (**Yes** — one word.) Why did the *qu-* not become *chi-* here? (**That change needed a stressed *e*; *quando* has an *a*.**)

32.5 per + infinitive — saying what something is for

The chapter closes with a pattern rather than a word.

- *Recall*: say *quando* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *Che buono!* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *prima* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back

- *Recall*: say *dopo* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall*: say *il fratello, la sorella* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the pattern

per + the infinitive — in order to, to, for -ing.

Sono a Roma per lavorare. — I'm in Rome to work. **Prendo un caffè per aspettare.** — I'll have a coffee while I wait. **Aspetto per capire.** — I'm waiting in order to understand.

This lesson introduces no new word. *Per* arrived one lesson ago inside *perché* — “for what” — and every infinitive in those examples was taught between Chapters 5 and 20: *lavorare, aspettare, capire*.

What is new is the **infinitive doing a job**. Since the first *-are* verbs the infinitive has been this book's dictionary form — the name you look a verb up under, *parlare, abitare, leggere, capire* — and it has never appeared inside a sentence. Here it does.

Italian asks less of you here than English does. English needs *to* before some verbs, *for* plus *-ing* after nouns, and *in order to* when it is being careful. Italian uses **per** and the plain infinitive for all of them, and the infinitive does not change for who is doing it:

Marco è a Roma per lavorare. — Marco is in Rome to work.

Same *per lavorare*, whoever the person is.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *per lavorare*
- *Sono a Roma per lavorare.*
- *Aspetto per capire.*

Before you move on

How do you say “in order to”? (***Per* plus the infinitive.**) Does the infinitive change with the person? (**No** — *per lavorare*, always.)
Where had you already met *per*? (**Inside *perché***, one lesson ago.)

Chapter 33

This and That

Modes:  voice (4)  eyes (1)  Hands-free start: none of the 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can point at a thing near me and a thing away from me, put a demonstrative in front of a noun, introduce a third person, and say here and there.

The chapter's last lesson closes the pointing set and shows that ille — the Latin far-pointer — has now done three jobs in this book: the article of Chapter 1, the quello of two lessons back, and lì.

33.1 questo — this one, here

A new chapter, opening a column this book has left entirely empty.

- *Recall:* say *per + infinito* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *ma* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *prima il primo, dopo il secondo* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *sì* — **R3**, durable again, a second word from that distance
- *Recall:* say *il pane* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: The word

questo (masculine) · **questa** (feminine) — **this**. plural:
questi · **queste** — **these**.

Questo è buono. — This is good. **Questa è la mia amica.** —
This is my friend. (*the possessive is the next chapter's*) **Prendo**
questo. — I'll have this one.

Nothing in the previous thirty-two chapters could point at anything. You could name a coffee, and you could not indicate *that* coffee rather than another.

It changes its ending like any describing word, and it can either stand alone — *prendo questo* — or go in front of a noun, which is the next lesson.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Latin's pointing words were **hic** (this, near me), **iste** (that, near you) and **ille** (that, over there). Spoken Latin found them too small to hear and reinforced them with **eccum**, “behold, look” — the same gesture-word that is inside *ecce homo*.

Eccu(m) istum → **questo**. Literally: *look, that one of yours*.

You have met that reinforcing *eccu-* twice already without being told.

Così is *eccu(m) sic*, “behold, thus.” And the article **il, la, lo** is what is left of **ille** — the third of those three Latin pointers, worn down until it stopped pointing at all and became “the”. The next lesson takes *ille* back the other way.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *questo, questa*
- *Questo è buono.*
- *Prendo questo.*

Before you move on

How do you say “this”? (*Questo*, or *questa*.) Which Latin words is it made of? (*Eccu(m) istum* — “behold, that of yours”.) Which

word already in this book carries the same *eccu*-? (*Così*.)

33.2 quello — that one, over there

One lesson back, and this chapter is already half built.

- *Recall*: say *questo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *o* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *no* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *l'acqua, il vino* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the pair, and it is only a pair

quello (masculine) · **quella** (feminine) — **that**. plural: **quelli**
· **quelle** — **those**.

Questo è buono, quello non è buono. — This one's good, that one isn't. **Prendo quello.** — I'll have that one.

Italian points two ways, not three. *Questo* is near the speaker; *quello* is everything else — near you, or far from both of us. Spanish keeps all three of Latin's — *este, ese, aquel* — and a learner arriving from Spanish has one distinction to forget rather than one to learn.

That is the whole system. There is no third word.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Quello is **eccu(m) illum** — “behold, that one over there.”

Illum is **ille**, and you have owned *ille* since the first chapter of this book. It is what **il**, **la** and **lo** are made of: the Latin far-pointer, used so often to mean *the one already mentioned* that it stopped pointing and became the definite article.

So Italian took one Latin word down two roads. Unstressed and worn to a stump, it became **il** — a word that points at nothing. Reinforced with *eccum* and kept strong, it became **quello** — a word that points hard.

Before a noun, *quello* takes exactly the shapes the article takes, for

exactly the same reason: **quel giorno** (*il giorno*), **quello zucchero** (*lo zucchero*), **quell'amico** (*l'amico*), **quella sera** (*la sera*). If you know the article rule you already know this one.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *quello, quella*
- *Questo è buono, quello non è buono.*
- *quel giorno, quello zucchero, quell'amico*

Before you move on

How many ways does Italian point? (**Two** — *questo* and *quello*.)
Which Latin word is *quello* built on? (**Ille**.) And which word from the first chapter is built on the same *ille*? (**The article *il, la, lo***.)

33.3 questo caffè — where the pointing word goes, and what it evicts

The chapter's middle lesson, and it introduces no new word.

- *Recall*: say *quello* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *perché* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *sì, grazie / no, grazie* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *undici — sedici* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: in front, and instead of the article

questo caffè — this coffee · **quella persona** — that person

Two rules, and the second is the one to watch.

One: it goes in front. Italian's ordinary describing words go *after* the noun — *un vino rosso*, a red wine — but *questo* and *quello* go before it, always, exactly as English does.

Two: it replaces the article. From its first chapter this book has told you to store every noun with its article — *il caffè*, *la persona*, *lo zucchero*. When a demonstrative arrives, the article goes:

Right: *questo caffè · quella persona* **Wrong:** *questo il caffè ·
il questo caffè · quella la persona*

Italian will not carry two of these at once. English does the same without comment — you cannot say *the this coffee* — so the rule costs an English speaker nothing to obey and is worth stating because it is the only place in this book where a taught article has to be taken back out.

This lesson introduces no new word. *Questo* and *quello* are two and one lessons back; *caffè*, *persona* and *zucchero* are Chapters 22 and 23.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *questo caffè*
- *quella persona*
- *quello zucchero*
- *questa amica*

Before you move on

Where does *questo* go? (**In front of the noun.**) What happens to the article? (**It goes** — *questo caffè*, never *questo il caffè*.) Which describing words go AFTER the noun instead? (**The ordinary ones** — *un vino rosso*.)

33.4 Questo è Marco — introducing somebody

Four in, and this one puts three chapters together.

- *Recall*: say *questo caffè* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *quando* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *d'accordo* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *diciassette* — *venti* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the introduction

Questo è Marco. — This is Marco. **Questa è Giulia.** — This is Giulia.

Questo for a man, **questa** for a woman. The word agrees with the person being introduced, not with you and not with the person you are speaking to.

The *mi chiamo* chapter taught you the whole of introducing **yourself** — *mi chiamo, come ti chiami, piacere* — and left the third person out entirely, because a third-person introduction needs a pointing word and there was none. There is now.

The full exchange, using only what this book has given you:

— **Questo è Marco.** — **Piacere.** — **Piacere.**

You can add what the person is to you, once the possessives arrive. For now, the plain noun does it:

Questo è l'amico di Giulia. — This is Giulia's friend.

And note what Italian does not do. English says *this is my friend Marco* and can also say *meet Marco*. Italian has no imperative in this book yet, so *questo è* is the introduction, and it is the ordinary one — an Italian would say it too.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Questo è Marco.*
- *Questa è Giulia.*
- *Questo è l'amico di Giulia.*

Before you move on

How do you introduce a man? (*Questo è ...*) And a woman? (*Questa è ...*) Which chapter taught you to introduce yourself and could not teach this? (The *mi chiamo* chapter — it had no word for *this*.)

33.5 qui, lì — here and there

The chapter closes where it began, with pointing.

- *Recall*: say *Questo è Marco* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *per + infinito* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *vero?* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *nero, bianco* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the pair

qui — here · lì — there

Il caffè è qui. — The coffee is here. **Marco è lì.** — Marco is there. **Sono qui.** — I'm here.

Two ways, matching the two ways of pointing:

pointing at a thing	pointing at a place
questo — this, near me	qui — here
quello — that, away	lì — there

Italian also has **qua** and **là**, which mean the same and are used equally often; *qui/lì* are slightly more precise and *qua/là* slightly vaguer, and no Italian will notice which you pick.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

This is the third lesson in a row built on the same two Latin words. **Qui** is **eccu(m) hīc** — “behold, here.” That *hīc* is Latin’s

near-pointer, the one Italian did **not** keep for things; it survives only in the place word.

Lì is **illīc** — “there”, and *illīc* is *ille* again, the same far-pointer that gave you **quello** one lesson ago and **il, la, lo** on the first page.

So: *ille* became the article, and *quello*, and now **lì**. One Latin word, three Italian jobs, and this book has now taught all three.

The accent on **lì** is doing the work it did on *sì* and *né*: it keeps the word apart from **li**, an unstressed word with another job.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *qui, lì*
- *Il caffè è qui.*
- *Marco è lì.*
- *qua, là*

Before you move on

Say “here” and “there”. (**Qui** — **lì**.) Which Latin word is *lì* built on? (**Ille**, through *illīc*.) Name the three Italian jobs *ille* has done in this book. (**The article *il/la/lo*, the far demonstrative *quello*, and *lì*.**)

Chapter 34

Mine and Yours

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) 👁 eyes (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say whose something is, keep the article Italian keeps and drop it where Italian drops it, address somebody as *signore* or *signora*, and put a pronoun after a preposition.

The chapter's last lesson gives the stressed pronouns somewhere to stand. No preposition in this book had ever taken a pronoun after it, and per — Chapter 32's — is what makes per me sayable.

34.1 mio, tuo, suo — my, your, his and hers

A new chapter, opening the second column this book has left completely empty.

- *Recall:* say *qui / lì* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *questo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *non* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *rosso, blu* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the three, and their endings

mio — my · **tuo** — your (*to one person, informally*) · **suo** — his, her, its

They are describing words, and they take the four endings every describing word takes, agreeing with **the thing owned** and never with the owner:

- **my** — mio · mia · miei · mie
- **your** — tuo · tua · tuoi · tue
- **his / her** — suo · sua · suoi · sue

(The masculine plurals *miei*, *tuoi*, *suoi* are the one irregular corner.)

Read the middle sentence of that paragraph again, because it is the thing English speakers get wrong for years. **Suo** does not tell you whether the owner is a man or a woman. It tells you about the thing owned:

la sua amica — his friend, or her friend. The **-a** is *amica*'s.

English chooses *his* or *her* by the owner. Italian chooses *suo* or *sua* by the possession. If you must say whose, Italian adds *di lui* or *di lei* afterwards.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Mio, tuo, suo are Latin **meus, tuus, suus**, barely changed.

Now a correction. The **mi chiamo** lesson gave you that phrase, and its *mi* is **not** a possessive. *Mi chiamo* is not “my name”; it is “**I call myself**” — *mi* is the reflexive *myself*, and *chiamo* is *I call*. It looks like *mio* and is a different word doing a different job.

Which is why, until this line, you could give your name and could not say **my name**. That is the next lesson but one.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *mio, mia, miei, mie*
- *tuo, tua*
- *suo, sua*
- *la sua amica*

Before you move on

Does *suo* agree with the owner or the thing owned? (**The thing owned** — *la sua amica* is his friend or her friend.) What is the *mi* of *mi chiamo*? (**Not a possessive** — the reflexive *myself*.)

34.2 nostro, vostro — ours and yours

One lesson back, and a long throw to the age question.

- *Recall*: say *mio, tuo, suo* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *quello* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *non capisco* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *avere* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the plural owners

nostro — our · **vostro** — your (*to more than one person*)

Same four endings, same rule — they agree with the thing owned:

- **our** — nostro · nostra · nostri · nostre
- **your (to several)** — vostro · vostra · vostri · vostre

No irregular corner here: they behave exactly like *buono* and *primo*.

The set is now complete except for **loro**, “their”, which never changes at all — *il loro amico, la loro amica, i loro amici*. One shape for everything.

You already hold *loro* as a subject pronoun. The **essere** table printed *noi siamo · voi siete · loro sono* and then warned you that *io sono* and *loro sono* are identical, telling you to keep *loro* where the context would not settle it. That is the same word: Italian’s “they” and its “their” are one shape.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Turn back to the very first lesson. **Ciao** was traced there to the Venetian greeting **s-ciào vostro** — “[I am] **your** slave”, a servant’s formula that wore down into the friendliest word in the language. That **vostro** was glossed, in the very first lesson you read, as “**your**”. It was never named as a word you could pick up and use, because at that point you could not use anything. You can now, and you have had it all along: the word for *your* has been sitting inside *ciao* for a hundred and thirty lessons.

Nostro and *vostro* are Latin **noster** and **vester**, and English took the first of them, through French, in **paternoster** — *pater noster*, “our father.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nostro, nostra, nostri, nostre*
- *vostro, vostra*
- *il loro amico*

Before you move on

Say “our” and “your (to several people).” (***Nostro*** — ***vostro***.) Which word of this book has carried *vostro* from its first page? (***Ciao***, from *s-ciào vostro*.) Which possessive never changes? (***Loro***.)

34.3 il mio nome — the article the possessive keeps

The chapter’s middle lesson, and it introduces no new word.

- *Recall*: say *nostro, vostro* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *questo caffè* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back

- *Recall*: say *né ... né* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *ho venti anni* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the article stays

il mio nome — my name · **la mia amica** — my friend · **il tuo caffè** — your coffee

Here is the rule, and it is the one thing about Italian possessives that has to be learnt rather than guessed:

The possessive does not replace the article. It sits between the article and the noun.

That is the opposite of the demonstrative rule you learnt one chapter ago. *Questo* **evicts** the article — *questo caffè*, never *questo il caffè*. *Mio* **keeps** it:

demonstrative
possessive

questo caffè (*no article*)
il mio caffè (*article stays*)

English drops it and so does Spanish — *my name*, *mi nombre* — so both an English speaker and a Spanish speaker will leave it out for a while. Italian wants all three words.

This lesson introduces no new word. *Il*, *la*, *lo* is the first chapter's; *nome* is the people chapter's; *mio* and *tuo* are two lessons back. Until now you could say your name and could not say the words **my name**.

Grammar lens: the exception, one family and no article

There is exactly one place the article goes, and Italians use it constantly:

mio fratello — my brother · **mia sorella** — my sister
mio padre — my father · **mia madre** — my mother

A singular, unmodified family member takes no article. *Il fratello* and *la sorella* are the family chapter's, and so are *il padre* and *la madre*. Put a possessive in front of one of them and the article drops out.

Three conditions, and all three must hold:

1. **singular** — the plural takes it back: **i miei fratelli**
2. **unmodified** — add a describing word and it comes back: **il mio primo fratello**
3. **not loro** — *loro* always keeps it: **il loro fratello**

So: **mio fratello**, but **i miei fratelli**, but **il loro fratello**. It is the one corner of the Italian possessive that has to be memorised, and every Italian child gets it right without being taught, because the family words are said far too often to get wrong.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *il mio nome*
- *la mia amica*
- *mio fratello*
- *i miei fratelli*
- *il loro fratello*

Before you move on

Say “my name.” (***Il mio nome*** — with the article.) Say “my brother.” (***Mio fratello*** — without it.) Name the three conditions for dropping the article. (**Singular, unmodified, and not *loro*.**)

34.4 signore, signora — sir and madam, and speaking to somebody by name

Four in, and this one finishes what the formal address started.

- *Recall*: say *il mio nome* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays

- *Recall*: say *Questo è Marco* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *anche / neanche* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *ho parlato* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the two titles

signore — sir, Mr · **signora** — madam, Mrs · **signorina** — miss

Buongiorno, signora. — Good morning, madam. **Come sta, signore?** — How are you, sir? **Arrivederci, signora.**

This book taught you the formal **Lei** and the whole *come sta / come stai* contrast, and then gave you nothing to put after it. That is an odd shape: a course that teaches formality and not the words formality is normally carried in. Here they are.

The one rule that catches people. Before a surname, *signore* loses its final -e:

il signor Rossi — Mr Rossi (*not il signore Rossi*) **la signora Rossi** — Mrs Rossi (*signora keeps its -a*)

That is the same shortening you met on the first page, where **buono** becomes **buon** in *buongiorno*. Italian drops a final vowel before another word far more readily than English does.

Signorina is going out of use for the reason *Miss* is, and **signora** is the safe choice for any adult woman.

Grammar lens: speaking to somebody, by name or by title

Put the person you are speaking **to** at the front or the end of what you say, with a comma. Italian calls this the *vocativo*, and it needs no other machinery:

Marco, buongiorno. · **Buongiorno, Marco.** **Signora, come sta?** · **Come sta, signora?**

Nothing in this book had ever done this. Every practice exchange in it opens with a bare greeting and never with a name, so a learner could

greet a stranger and not a friend — which is backwards, since it is the friend whose name you know.

One thing Italian does **not** do here, and English speakers transfer it by mistake: **the article goes**. *Il signor Rossi* is how you talk **about** him; **Signor Rossi**, with no *il*, is how you talk **to** him.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *signore, signora*
- *Buongiorno, signora.*
- *il signor Rossi*
- *Marco, buongiorno.*

Before you move on

Say “good morning, madam.” (*Buongiorno, signora.*) What happens to *signore* before a surname? (**It drops its -e** — *il signor Rossi.*) Which word from the first page shortens the same way? (*Buono* → *buon.*)

34.5 per me — the pronouns that go after a preposition

The chapter’s last lesson, and its longest throw is to the remote past.

- *Recall*: say *signore, signora* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *qui / lì* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *c’è / ci sono* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *parlò* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: a second set of pronouns

after a preposition, Italian uses **me**, **te**, **lui**, **lei**, **noi**, **voi**, **loro**

per me — for me · **per te** — for you · **per lui** — for him
Un caffè per me. Questo è per te. — This is for you.

Look at what changed and what did not. *Io* and *tu* become **me** and **te**; everything else — *lui*, *lei*, *noi*, *voi*, *loro* — is the same word the conjugation tables have been printing all along. Only the first two persons have a second shape.

These are called the **stressed** pronouns, and stress is the honest name for them: they are the ones you can shout, the ones a preposition can lean on, and the ones that stand alone in an answer:

— **Chi prende il caffè?** — **Io.** (*subject: the subject form*) —
Per chi è? — **Per me.** (*after a preposition: the stressed form*)

The one to watch is **a**, the preposition this book has used all along in *a Roma* and *a domani*. Put a person after it and you get **a me**, **a te**.

Grammar lens: a me piace, and where the weight falls

A me piace il caffè. — I like coffee.

Compare the **mi piace** you already have. The meaning is the same; the *a me* version puts the weight on **me**, and it is what an Italian reaches for when contradicting somebody:

— **Non mi piace il caffè.** — **A me piace.** — Well, *I* like it.

The *mi* of *mi piace* is the unstressed shape and cannot be emphasised at all — you cannot say it louder and mean anything by it. *A me* is how Italian shouts a pronoun: not by raising the voice, but by swapping in the other set.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *per me, per te, per lui*

- *Questo è per te.*
- *A me piace il caffè.*

Before you move on

What are the first two stressed pronouns? (***Me*** and ***te.***) Which of the others change? (**None** — *lui, lei, noi, voi, loro* stay.) Say “this is for you.” (***Questo è per te.***)

Chapter 35

Knowing, and How Much

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that I know a fact and that I know a person, say that I do not know, place today and yesterday beside tomorrow, and put something on the scale from molto through abbastanza to un po'.

*The chapter's last lesson completes the quantity scale and gives *Come stai?* — a question from Chapter 2 — its middle answer: *abbastanza bene*.*

35.1 sapere — to know, and to know how

A new chapter. Five retrievals, then a verb this book has gone without.

- *Recall:* say *per me, a te* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *mio, tuo, suo* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *che* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *essere* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the verb, and its irregular first person

sapere — **to know** (*a fact*), and **to know how** (*to do something*)

It is irregular, and the three singular forms are the ones to have:

so	I know
sai	you know
sa	he / she knows

So is the shortest verb form in the language. The plurals are *sappiamo*, *sapete*, *sanno*.

Grammar lens: sapere plus an infinitive

Put an infinitive straight after it and *sapere* stops meaning *know* and starts meaning **can, know how to**:

So parlare italiano. — I can speak Italian. (*I have learnt how*) **Sai leggere?** — Can you read?

No *per* and no *to*: use **sapere** with the plain infinitive. *So parlare* says what *parlo* does not — that you learnt it.

Sapere is Latin **sapere**, “to taste.” A person of good taste became a person of good judgement, and judgement became knowledge — English **savour**, **insipid**, and **homo sapiens**, the tasting animal.

And now the line English does not draw. Italian has a second verb for knowing, and you already have it: the **incontrare** lesson gave you **conoscere** as *incontrare*’s partner, traced it to Latin *cognōscere*, and put it in the past. It was never set against *sapere*, because *sapere* did not exist in this book. Here is the line:

sapere — a **fact**, or how to do something: *so parlare italiano* **conoscere** — a **person** you have met: *conosco Marco*

So Marco is wrong. Spanish draws the same line with *saber* and *conocer*, French with *savoir* and *connaître*. English is the odd one out.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *so, sai, sa*
- *So parlare italiano.*
- *Sai leggere?*
- *Conosco Marco.*

Before you move on

What is the *io* form of *sapere*? (**So**.) What does *sapere* plus an infinitive mean? (**To know how** — *so parlare*.) And which verb takes a person instead? (**Conoscere**, which the *incontrare* lesson already gave you.)

35.2 non so — I don't know

One lesson back, and the verb that made this possible.

- *Recall*: say *sapere* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *nostro, vostro* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *penso che* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *essere* → *stato* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: three things at once

Non so. — I don't know.

This lesson introduces no new word. *Non* is the negation chapter's, *so* is one lesson back, and the rule that *non* goes immediately before the verb does the rest. It is worth its own lesson because those two syllables do three different jobs.

One — plain ignorance. Somebody asks you something you do not know:

— **Chi è?** — **Non so.**

Two — hedging. Put it in front of a question word and it becomes a way of declining to commit:

Non so quando. — I don't know when. **Non so perché.** —
I don't know why. **Non so chi è.** — I don't know who it is.

Every one of those question words is Chapters 31 and 32's, and *non so* is what lets you use them about yourself rather than only to ask.

Three — scepticism. A bare, slow **Non so ...** with the sentence left hanging is how an Italian expresses doubt about the previous statement. It is the politest disagreement in the language, and it is a great deal gentler than *non sono d'accordo*.

The pair to hold together is the pair a beginner needs hourly:

Non capisco. — I didn't follow you. **Non so.** — I followed you, and I have no answer.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *Non so.*
- *Non so quando.*
- *Non so perché.*
- *Non so chi è.*

Before you move on

Say "I don't know." (**Non so.**) Say "I don't know why." (**Non so perché.**) What is the difference between *non so* and *non capisco*? (**Non capisco** means I did not follow; **non so** means I followed and have no answer.)

35.3 oggi, ieri — today and yesterday

Two lessons in, and the throw back reaches the going verb.

- *Recall*: say *non so* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall*: say *il mio nome* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *chi* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *andare* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the set, completed

oggi — today · **ieri** — yesterday · **domani** — tomorrow

You have had **domani** for a long time and only as the second half of a farewell, a **domani** — “until tomorrow.” It was two thirds of a set with the other two thirds missing, so a learner asked when something happened had one word and it pointed forward.

Now the set works, and it works with the two pasts this book already taught:

Oggi lavoro a Roma. — Today I’m working in Rome. **Ieri ho lavorato a Milano.** — Yesterday I worked in Milan. **Domani prendo un caffè.**

Oggi and *ieri* go where any adverb of time goes: at the front for emphasis, or after the verb. Both are invariable — they never change their ending.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Oggi is Latin **hodiē**, and *hodiē* is itself two words squashed together: **hōc diē**, “on this day.” The **diē** in it is *diēs*, “day” — the very word behind **giorno**, which the first chapter traced through *diurnum*. So *oggi* and *giorno* share a root, and *oggi* is literally *this-day*.

Every Romance language did the same and hid the seam differently: Spanish *hoy*, French *aujourd’hui* (which is *au jour d’hui*, “on the day of today”, with *hui* being *hodiē* worn to two letters and then reinforced all over again), Portuguese *hoje*.

Ieri is Latin **herī**, and it is the same word as the first half of English

yesterday — Old English *geostran*, from the same ancient root. The word for yesterday has meant yesterday, with barely a change, for as long as anything can be traced.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *oggi, ieri, domani*
- *Oggi lavoro a Roma.*
- *Ieri ho lavorato a Milano.*

Before you move on

Name the three. (***Oggi, ieri, domani.***) Which of them did this book already have, and where? (***Domani, inside the farewell a domani.***) What is *oggi* made of? (***Hōc diē***, “on this day” — the same *diēs* as *giorno*.)

35.4 molto, poco — a lot and a little

Four in, and this one unfreezes two things you have been carrying.

- *Recall:* say *oggi, ieri* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *signore, signora* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *che cosa* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *sono andato* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You’ll want to know: two jobs each

molto — much, many, a lot, very · **poco** — little, few, not much

Each of them does two jobs, and the jobs behave differently.

In front of a describing word they mean *very* and *not very*, and they do not change:

Il caffè è molto buono. — The coffee is very good. **Il tè è poco buono.** — The tea isn't very good.

In front of a noun they mean *a lot of* and *not much*, and they agree with it like any describing word:

molto caffè · molta acqua · molti amici · molte persone
poco zucchero · poche persone

Before an adjective, frozen; before a noun, agreeing.

Molto has never had a lesson. Where an Italian uses it most is the courtesy **molto piacere**, “much pleasure” — the fuller form of the *piacere* you say while shaking hands, and the first job above, doing its work inside a phrase nobody takes apart.

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

The *parlo un po'* dialogue said **Sì, parlo un po'** — “yes, I speak a little” — and that *un po'* was never glossed. Here is what it is.

Po' is **poco** with its last syllable cut off and an apostrophe left to mark the cut. Not an accent — an **apostrophe**, and it is compulsory, because *un po* without it is not a word.

un po' — a little, a bit **un po' di zucchero** — a little sugar **Parlo un po' d'italiano.**

Un po' is softer than *poco*. **Poco** is faintly negative — *poco zucchero* is less than you wanted — while **un po'** is neutral and friendly, which is why that speaker chose it about their own Italian.

Molto is Latin **multus** (English *multiple*); **poco** is Latin **paucus** (*paucity*).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *molto, poco*

- *Il caffè è molto buono.*
- *molti amici, molte persone*
- *un po' di zucchero*

Before you move on

When does *molto* change its ending? (**Before a noun** — *molti amici*. Before an adjective it is frozen.) What is *un po'*? (**Poco with its tail cut off** — and the mark is an apostrophe, not an accent.) Where had you already heard it? (**The *parlo un po'* dialogue.**)

35.5 abbastanza — enough, and quite

The last lesson of the tranche, and it completes a set of three.

- *Recall:* say *molto, poco* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *per me, a te* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five to fifteen lessons back
- *Recall:* say *Che buono!* — **R3**, durable, twenty to sixty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *la testa* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back or more

You'll want to know: the middle of the scale

abbastanza — enough, and also quite, fairly

It never changes its ending, whatever it stands in front of. That makes it the easiest of the three and the one to reach for when you are unsure:

abbastanza caffè — enough coffee **abbastanza persone** — enough people **Il caffè è abbastanza buono.** — The coffee is quite good.

The three words now make a scale, and it is the scale an A1 conversation runs on:

molto	a lot / very
abbastanza	enough / quite
poco · un po’	not much / a little

And it answers a question you have been able to ask since the wellbeing chapter without being able to answer it in the middle: **Come stai?** — **Abbastanza bene.**

The word, taken apart — and its English cousins

Abbastanza is **a** + **bastanza**, built on the verb **bastare**, “to be enough, to suffice.”

You know its third person singular already, even if you have never seen it in Italian, because English borrowed it whole: **basta!** — “that’s enough!” It is one of a handful of Italian words that travelled into other languages unchanged, alongside *ciao* and *piano*.

So *abbastanza* is, literally, “**to sufficiency**.” And **basta** is the same verb with nothing added: *basta così* — that’s enough like that — which uses *così* one more time.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *abbastanza*
- *abbastanza caffè*
- *Il caffè è abbastanza buono.*
- *Abbastanza bene.*

Before you move on

How do you say “enough”? (**Abbastanza.**) Does it change its ending? (**No** — never.) Which verb is it built on? (**Bastare** — the *basta!* English borrowed.) Answer *Come stai?* from the middle of the scale. (**Abbastanza bene.**)

Chapter 36

Reading — Words, Lines, and a First Passage

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 👁️ eyes (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 2 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can read an Italian word cold, follow a line whose subject lives inside the verb, and hold a whole passage without translating it word by word.

Forty-seven words of Italian with no new word in them, including the one place a reader has to decide whether perché is asking or answering with nothing on the page to say which.

36.1 (reading) — six words off a counter

Every word below you have met. Not one is new.

What is new is that nobody says them first.

Read this

caffè pane acqua libro amico casa

Read down the list once, without stopping.

Again — and notice that on a real sign each of these would arrive with a word in front of it.

Why it's said this way

Italian almost never writes a noun bare. **Il libro, l'acqua, un caffè** — the article is part of how the word arrives.

That is why a list like this one is slightly unusual to an Italian eye, and why a menu is easier to read than it looks: the article in front tells you the gender before you have to remember it.
Six words, and each one is a decision the page will normally make for you.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six words down the list, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None.**)
What would normally stand in front of each one? (**An article** — and it carries the gender.)

36.2 (reading) — six lines, three of them one word

The last lesson gave you words. These are things you would say.
You have said every one of them.

Read this

Ciao! Grazie! Arrivederci! Non so. Che buono! Questo è Marco.

Read down once, without stopping.

Again — and notice the list gets longer as it goes, from one word to three.

Why it's said this way

Non so is two words and a complete sentence. Italian puts the person in the verb, so *so* is already *I know*, and *non* in front of it is the whole negative.

Arrivederci is the longest line here and the easiest to recognise, because length and difficulty are not the same thing on a page. You

meet that word as a shape long before you take it apart.
Six lines, and the shortest one is the one that needs a verb.

Your turn

- *Say it*: the six lines, once, in order, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None**.)
Where is the *I* in **Non so**? (**Inside the verb**.)

36.3 (reading) — the first passage

Six words, then six lines. Now twelve of them together.

Forty-seven words, and not one of them is new.

Read this

Ciao! Il mio nome è Marco. Questo è il mio amico. Lui è molto buono. Oggi ho un caffè. Ho anche il pane. Leggo un libro, ma non capisco. Non so perché. Il libro è abbastanza buono. Qui c'è l'acqua. Domani leggo il libro. Grazie e arrivederci!

Read it once without stopping. Do not translate as you go — let the sentences arrive.

Now read it again, and look at the word **perché**.

Why it's said this way

Perché is both *why* and *because*. Italian does not give you two words for those, so a reader decides which one from where it sits.

Here it sits after **Non so**, so it is *why*. Had it opened a clause after a full sentence, it would have been *because*. You have done a piece of reading with no equivalent in English, and nothing on the page marked it.

Notice also **il mio nome**. Italian keeps the article in front of the

possessive, which Spanish does not, and it is the kind of small difference that only becomes visible when you read rather than translate.

This is the first whole passage the book has asked you to hold at once, and it works because everything in it was paid for.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the passage aloud, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many words in that passage were new? (**None.**)

What tells you whether **perché** is asking or answering? (**Where it sits** — nothing else does.)

Italian pronunciation — a reference

A **reference**, not a chapter — each lesson gives the sounds its word needs; this page gathers them. Italian is gloriously **phonetic**: learn these rules and you can read almost any word aloud correctly.

The traps for an English speaker

- **Every letter is sounded**, and vowels are pure: *a* (ah), *e* (eh), *i* (ee), *o* (oh), *u* (oo) — never the English glide.
- **c** and **g** are soft (*ch*, *j*) before *e/i* (*ciao*, *giorno*), hard (*k*, *g*) before *a/o/u* (*casa*, *gatto*). **ch/gh** force the hard sound (*chi* = “kee”).
- **gli** = the *lli* of *million*; **gn** = the *ny* of *canyon*; **sc** before *e/i* = *sh* (*sciare* = “shee-AH-reh”).
- **z** = *ts* or *dz* (*grazie* = “GRAH-tsyeH”).
- **Double consonants are held longer** and change meaning: *notte* (night) vs. *note* (notes); *nonno* (grandfather) vs. *nono* (ninth).
- **h** is always silent — it exists only to harden *c/g*.

Stress

Most words stress the **second-to-last** syllable (*giOR-no*). When the stress falls on the last syllable it carries a written accent (*città*, *così*, *caffè*).

Italian in the Romance family

Italian, Spanish, and French are all worn-down Latin. Italian stayed closest to the parent: Latin *-ct-* became *-tt-* (*notte*) where Spanish went *-ch-* (*noche*) and French *-it-* (*nuit*); and Italian kept final vowels (*giorno*, *notte*) that French dropped. The lessons draw these contrasts as they arise.

Glossary

This glossary collects every word and phrase taught in the book. Pronunciation appears when it differs from the written form; chapter numbers show where each entry is introduced.

a domani

see you tomorrow (literally “to tomorrow”)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

a più tardi

see you later (literally “to more late”)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

a presto

see you soon (literally “to soon”)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

abbastanza

enough — the middle of the scale, and the basta everybody already knows

Introduced in Chapter 35.

abitare

to live / to dwell (a second -are verb — same pattern)

Introduced in Chapter 5.

aiutare

to help — and the shout an Italian street uses for it

Introduced in Chapter 19.

anche / neanche

too, also — and its negative twin, which is built out of the word you learnt one lesson ago

Introduced in Chapter 30.

andare

to go — one verb built from two historical stems

Introduced in Chapter 16.

arrivederci

goodbye (literally “until we see each other again”)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

aspettare

to wait — and, with one small word in front, to expect

Introduced in Chapter 20.

avere

to have — and Italy's only silent letter, which exists purely to prevent confusion

Introduced in Chapter 14.

buongiorno

good day / good morning

Introduced in Chapter 1.

buono / buon

good (adjective)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

capire

to understand — literally “to take hold of”, and Italian's third conjugation with its own infix

Introduced in Chapter 18.

che

that, which, who — the commonest word in Italian, and one this book has never once used

Introduced in Chapter 31.

Che buono!

how good! — the third job of *che*, and it needs no word you do not already have

Introduced in Chapter 31.

che cosa

what — the question word, and the thing-word that came out of a Roman courtroom

Introduced in Chapter 31.

chi

who — the question this book could not ask

Introduced in Chapter 31.

chiedere

to ask — from Latin “to seek”, with a second verb beside it that is a false friend in English

Introduced in Chapter 19.

ciao

hi / bye (informal)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

come

how / like, as

Introduced in Chapter 2.

Come sta?

formal “how are you?”

Introduced in Chapter 2.

Come stai?

how are you? (informal)

Introduced in Chapter 2.

Come ti chiami?

what's your name? (informal); formal Come si chiama?

Introduced in Chapter 3.

Come va?

how is it going?

Introduced in Chapter 2.

comprare

to buy — from procuring, not from comparing, however much the two look alike

Introduced in Chapter 20.

così così

so-so (literally “thus, thus” — “this way, that way”)

Introduced in Chapter 2.

d'accordo

agreed, all right — the okay this book has never had

Introduced in Chapter 29.

decimo / decima

tenth — the last of the ten memorized words, and the pair that repeats the fifth's split

Introduced in Chapter 27.

diciassette — venti

17–20 — Italian flips the order at 17: the ten jumps to the FRONT

Introduced in Chapter 12.

dopo

after — the other half of the pair, and two Latin words welded into one

Introduced in Chapter 28.

essere

to be — the other Italian “to be”

Introduced in Chapter 16.

giocare, suonare

the two verbs English calls “play” — one for games, one for instruments, and no relation between them

Introduced in Chapter 21.

giorno

day (masculine)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

grazie

thank you

Introduced in Chapter 1.

ho parlato

the passato prossimo — avere plus a participle, the everyday Italian past
Introduced in Chapter 15.

ho venti anni

age — Italian HAS its years, and the last lesson's silent h finally earns its keep
Introduced in Chapter 14.

i mesi

the months — the Roman calendar, barely worn down
Introduced in Chapter 9.

il / la / lo

the (masculine / feminine)
Introduced in Chapter 1.

il caffè

coffee — the pan-European word Italy took from an Ottoman drink
Introduced in Chapter 22.

il cuore

heart — the root behind courage, accord, and record
Introduced in Chapter 24.

il fratello, la sorella

brother and sister — frater/soror plus Italy's favourite little-endings
Introduced in Chapter 10.

il latte

milk — the one drink here Italian never had to borrow
Introduced in Chapter 22.

il naso

nose — twisted by its own name
Introduced in Chapter 25.

il nome

name — the word Chapter 3 never actually needed
Introduced in Chapter 23.

il padre, la madre

father and mother — Italian keeps them closest to Latin pater/mater
Introduced in Chapter 10.

il pane

bread — closest to Latin pānis, and the “companion” who shares it
Introduced in Chapter 11.

il tè

tea — the sea-route word, where “chai” is the overland one
Introduced in Chapter 22.

incontrare

to meet — literally “to come against”, with a second meeting-verb hiding inside a
past tense
Introduced in Chapter 20.

io

I (first-person subject pronoun)

Introduced in Chapter 3.

l'acqua, il vino

water and wine — acqua kept Latin's whole aqua, where French wore it to eau

Introduced in Chapter 11.

l'amico, l'amica

friend (m./f.) — from loving, and the reason “enemy” is its own opposite

Introduced in Chapter 23.

l'occhio

eye — three Latin syllables worn down to one

Introduced in Chapter 24.

l'orecchio

ear — the same sound-law as the eye, one lesson later

Introduced in Chapter 24.

la bocca

mouth — not Latin's real word for it, but the one that won

Introduced in Chapter 24.

la famiglia

family — the one word here Italian never had to borrow

Introduced in Chapter 23.

la gola

throat — and possibly the swallow at the bottom of “glutton”

Introduced in Chapter 25.

la mano

the hand — the noun that breaks Italian's own gender rule

Introduced in Chapter 17.

la persona

person — always feminine, no matter who it is

Introduced in Chapter 23.

la testa

the head — the pot-word, kept in its original shape

Introduced in Chapter 17.

lavorare

to work (a third -are verb — and the “labour” road, not the “torture” one)

Introduced in Chapter 5.

le stagioni

the seasons — and “primavera,” the first green

Introduced in Chapter 9.

leggere

to read — literally “to gather up”, and Italian's third and last verb family

Introduced in Chapter 18.

lo stomaco

stomach — the one body word that stopped in Greece before it reached Rome
Introduced in Chapter 25.

lo zucchero

sugar — Arabic again, but by the French road this time, not the Turkish one
Introduced in Chapter 22.

lunedì, martedì, mercoledì, giovedì, venerdì

the weekdays (Monday–Friday) — the planets, with the day-word at the end
Introduced in Chapter 7.

ma

but — and the second of Latin’s two words for more, which Italian turned into a contrast

Introduced in Chapter 32.

mezzogiorno, mezzanotte

noon and midnight — “mid-day” and “mid-night”

Introduced in Chapter 8.

mi chiamo

my name is (literally “I call myself”)

Introduced in Chapter 3.

mi piace

I like it — built backwards, as “it is pleasing to me”

Introduced in Chapter 19.

mio, tuo, suo

my, your, his/her — a whole column this book has never had, and a mi that was never one of them

Introduced in Chapter 34.

molto, poco

much and little — and the un po’ this book said out loud among the first -are verbs and never glossed

Introduced in Chapter 35.

né ... né

neither ... nor — the negative pair, and it needs the non you learnt two lessons ago

Introduced in Chapter 30.

nero, bianco

black and white — nero straight from Latin, bianco borrowed from the Germanic invaders

Introduced in Chapter 13.

no

no — the standalone refusal, and the stressed half of a Latin word Italian split in two

Introduced in Chapter 29.

non

not — the word this book has carried inside one frozen phrase for twenty-eight chapters and never used
Introduced in Chapter 30.

non c'è male

not bad — a fixed wellbeing answer learned whole for now
Introduced in Chapter 2.

non capisco

I don't understand — the half of the repair kit this book has been missing
Introduced in Chapter 30.

non so

I don't know — two words, both of them already yours, and the most useful sentence after non capisco
Introduced in Chapter 35.

nono / nona

ninth — shorter than its own number
Introduced in Chapter 27.

nostro, vostro

our and your — and one of them has been on page one of this book since the very first lesson
Introduced in Chapter 34.

notte / buonanotte

night / good night
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o

or — one letter, and the whole of offering somebody a choice
Introduced in Chapter 32.

oggi, ieri

today and yesterday — the two thirds of the time set this book was missing, with domani already in hand
Introduced in Chapter 35.

ora

hour / o'clock — telling the time with the feminine article
Introduced in Chapter 8.

ottavo / ottava

eighth — the one that takes a different ending, and the eight notes named after it
Introduced in Chapter 27.

ottenere

to get, to obtain — a holding-verb, and a b that flattened into a t
Introduced in Chapter 21.

parlare

to speak / to talk (your first regular -are verb)
Introduced in Chapter 5.

parlò

the passato remoto — the simple past, alive in the south and in books
Introduced in Chapter 15.

Parlo italiano

“I speak Italian” — your first full sentence (italiano = Italian)
Introduced in Chapter 5.

pensare

to think — literally “to weigh out”, and a fourth verb on the -are pattern
Introduced in Chapter 18.

penso che

I think that — the verb of opinion was taught long ago and nothing was ever
allowed to follow it
Introduced in Chapter 31.

per me, a te

the stressed pronouns — the shapes you must use after a preposition, and
nowhere else
Introduced in Chapter 34.

perché

why, and because — one Italian word doing the two jobs Spanish spends two
words on
Introduced in Chapter 32.

piacere

pleased to meet you (literally “a pleasure”)
Introduced in Chapter 3.

portare

to carry, to bring — and, without warning, to wear
Introduced in Chapter 20.

prego

you’re welcome (and please, go ahead, after you)
Introduced in Chapter 2.

prego — go ahead

please, go ahead, after you — the first extension beyond “you’re welcome”
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here you are — what prego says while handing something over
Introduced in Chapter 2.

Prego? — come again?

sorry, come again? — the listening-repair use of prego
Introduced in Chapter 2.

prendere

to take — and, at a table, to have; Italian’s other verb of seizing
Introduced in Chapter 19.

prima

before — and it is the ordinal you learned first, frozen in an old case
Introduced in Chapter 28.

primo / prima

first — the word this book has used once, inside a gloss, and never taught
Introduced in Chapter 26.

quando

when — asking, and joining two things that happen together
Introduced in Chapter 32.

quarto / quarta

fourth — and the quarter of an hour you will need before you need anything else
Introduced in Chapter 26.

quello

that — the far half of the pair, and the same Latin word as the article you learnt on the first page
Introduced in Chapter 33.

questo

this — the first pointing word this book has ever had
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Questo è Marco

introducing somebody else — the move this book could not make, for want of a word for this
Introduced in Chapter 33.

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here and there — the place pair that matches the pointing pair, made from the same two Latin words
Introduced in Chapter 33.

quinto / quinta

fifth — where the ordinal kept a sound the cardinal lost
Introduced in Chapter 26.

rispondere

to answer — literally “to pledge back”, the other half of Chapter 19’s asking
Introduced in Chapter 21.

rosso, blu

red and blue — an ancient inherited root, a second Germanic loan, and the Arabic blue of the Azzurri
Introduced in Chapter 13.

sabato, domenica

the weekend (Saturday, Sunday) — Sabbath and the Lord’s day
Introduced in Chapter 7.

sapere

to know a fact, and to know how — the verb behind homo sapiens, and it started out meaning to taste
Introduced in Chapter 35.

scrivere

to write — literally “to scratch”, and the chapter’s four minds in one run
Introduced in Chapter 18.

secondo / seconda

second — the verb inside it, and what it names on every Italian menu
Introduced in Chapter 26.

sei, sette, otto, nove, dieci

the numbers 6–10 (and the months hidden in them)
Introduced in Chapter 6.

sera / buonasera

evening / good evening
Introduced in Chapter 1.

sesto / sesta

sixth — the shortest step in the series
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settimo / settima

seventh — and the heaven that is a number
Introduced in Chapter 27.

sì

yes — the word that has been on this book’s page since the first -are verbs
without ever being taught
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taking and turning down what is offered — the two shortest complete answers in
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Introduced in Chapter 34.

sono andato

the passato prossimo built on essere, with the participle agreeing with the subject
Introduced in Chapter 16.

stare

to be (a state — how you’re doing); literally “to stay/stand”
Introduced in Chapter 2.

terzo / terza

third — the first ordinal with its own number audible inside it
Introduced in Chapter 26.

undici — sedici

11–16 — Italian keeps Latin’s fusions so clearly you can still read the “ten” in
them
Introduced in Chapter 12.

uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque

the numbers 1–5

Introduced in Chapter 6.

vero?

true — and, tacked onto the end of a sentence, the tag question Italian asks with

Introduced in Chapter 29.

Review Questions

Try these without looking ahead. Every prompt comes from the same canonical lesson data as its chapter. Answers begin in the next section.

Chapter 3

3.1 *Practice — introducing yourself in Italian*

Why can Italian usually omit *io*?

Chapter 36

36.1 *(reading) — six words off a counter*

Which word is water?

36.2 *(reading) — six lines, three of them one word*

Which line says you do not know?

36.3 *(reading) — the first passage*

In this passage, does *perché* mean why or because?

Answer Key

The first response is the canonical display answer. When a question accepts other authored forms, they appear underneath.

Chapter 3

3.1 *Practice — introducing yourself in Italian*

Answer: the verb ending says who

Also accepted: the verb ending identifies the subject; the verb ending carries the subject

Chapter 36

36.1 (*reading*) — *six words off a counter*

Answer: acqua

Also accepted: l'acqua; water

36.2 (*reading*) — *six lines, three of them one word*

Answer: non so

Also accepted: Non so.; I don't know

36.3 (*reading*) — *the first passage*

Answer: why

Also accepted: perché = why

Index

Look up an English meaning, a dedicated language topic, or a chapter topic. Each linked reference opens the chapter where the material is introduced; the focus labels name only explicitly typed lesson sections.

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11–16 — Italian keeps Latin’s fusions so clearly you can still read the “ten” in them *undici — sedici*

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 12, p. 77

17–20 — Italian flips the order at 17: the ten jumps to the FRONT *diciassette — venti*

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 12, p. 77

A

after — the other half of the pair, and two Latin words welded into one *dopo*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 28, p. 183

age — Italian HAS its years, and the last lesson’s silent h finally earns its keep *ho venti anni*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 14, p. 85

agreed, all right — the okay this book has never had *d’accordo*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 29, p. 191

B

before — and it is the ordinal you learned first, frozen in an old case *prima*

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Being, Going, and the Past with Essere

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 explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 13, p. 81

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Bread, Water, and Wine
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but — and the second of Latin’s two words for more, which Italian turned into a contrast *ma*
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But, Or, Why
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c’è, ci sono — **there is, there are**
 grammar topic; explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 30, p. 199

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ciao — **copy one greeting with help**
 script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

ciao — **write it from the sound**
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explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 21, p. 133

to ask — from Latin “to seek”, with a second verb beside it that is a false friend in English *chiedere*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 19, p. 115

to be (a state — how you’re doing); literally “to stay/stand” *stare*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 13

to be — the other Italian “to be” *essere*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 16, p. 95

to buy — from procuring, not from comparing, however much

the two look alike *comprare*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 20, p. 123

to carry, to bring — and, without warning, to wear *portare*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 20, p. 123

to get, to obtain — a holding-verb, and a b that flattened into a

t *ottenere*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 21, p. 133

to go — one verb built from two historical stems *andare*

Chapter 16, p. 95

to have — and Italy's only silent letter, which exists purely to

prevent confusion *avere*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 14, p. 85

to help — and the shout an Italian street uses for it *aiutare*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 19, p. 115

to know a fact, and to know how — the verb behind *homo*

sapiens, and it started out meaning to taste *sapere*

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 35, p. 245

to live / to dwell (a second -are verb — same pattern) *abitare*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 43

to meet — literally “to come against”, with a second

meeting-verb hiding inside a past tense *incontrare*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 20, p. 123

to read — literally “to gather up”, and Italian's third and last

verb family *leggere*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 18, p. 107

to speak / to talk (your first regular -are verb) *parlare*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 43

to take — and, at a table, to have; Italian's other verb of

seizing *prendere*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 19, p. 115

to think — literally “to weigh out”, and a fourth verb on the

-are pattern *pensare*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 18, p. 107

to understand — literally “to take hold of”, and Italian's third

conjugation with its own infix *capire*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 18, p. 107

to wait — and, with one small word in front, to expect *aspettare*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 20, p. 123

to work (a third -are verb — and the “labour” road, not the

“torture” one) *lavorare*

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 43

to write — literally “to scratch”, and the chapter's four minds in

one run *scrivere*

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 18, p. 107

today and yesterday — the two thirds of the time set this book

was missing, with domani already in hand *oggi, ieri*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 35, p. 245

too, also — and its negative twin, which is built out of the word you learnt one lesson ago *anche / neanche*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 30, p. 199

true — and, tacked onto the end of a sentence, the tag question

Italian asks with *vero?*

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 29, p. 191

Two Italian Past

chapter topic; Chapter 15, p. 89

Two Ways to Play, and Two Verbs That Bend

chapter topic; Chapter 21, p. 133

U

Undicesimo, Prima e Dopo

chapter topic; Chapter 28, p. 183

undicesimo — where Italian stops inheriting and starts building

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 28, p. 183

W

water and wine — acqua kept Latin's whole aqua, where French wore it to eau *l'acqua, il vino*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 11, p. 73

what's your name? (informal); formal Come si chiama? *Come ti chiami?*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 3, p. 27

what — the question word, and the thing-word that came out of a Roman courtroom *che cosa*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 31, p. 209

when — asking, and joining two things that happen

together *quando*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 32, p. 217

who — the question this book could not ask *chi*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 31, p. 209

why, and because — one Italian word doing the two jobs Spanish spends two words on *perché*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 32, p. 217

Y

Yes and No

chapter topic; Chapter 29, p. 191

yes — the word that has been on this book's page since the first

-are verbs without ever being taught *sì*

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 29, p. 191

you're welcome (and please, go ahead, after you) *prego*

explicit focus: pronunciation, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 13