

LEARNING MADE EASY



Italian

WORKBOOK

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write, and speak Italian

Grasp basic grammar
concepts

Get a handle on key
vocabulary terms

Teresa Picarazzi, PhD



Italian Workbook

by Teresa Picarazzi, PhD

**for
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Italian Workbook For Dummies®

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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Beyond this Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[**Part 1: Getting Your Bearings with the Basics**](#)

[**Chapter 1: Greetings! Getting to Know You**](#)

[Deciding between Formal and Informal](#)

[Working with Pronunciation](#)

[Stressing Words Properly](#)

[Using Gender in Italian](#)

[Answers to “Greetings! Getting to Know You” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 2: Embedded Gender and Number: Nouns and Articles

[Distinguishing between Masculine and Feminine Nouns](#)

[Sorting out Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)

[Answers to “Embedded Gender and Number: Nouns and Articles” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 3: Putting Two and Two Together: Numbers, Dates, and Time

[Counting Items with Cardinal Numbers](#)

[Putting Items in Order with Ordinal Numbers](#)

[Managing Your Calendar and Your Time](#)

[Answers to “Putting Two and Two Together: Numbers, Dates, and Times” Practice Questions](#)

Part 2: Verbs as Building Blocks

Chapter 4: Noting to Be or to Have with Essere and Avere

[Meeting the Subject Pronouns](#)

[Working with Essere and Avere](#)

[Answers to “Noting to Be or to Have with Essere and Avere” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 5: Forming the Present

[The Reliable Guys: Regular Verbs](#)

[What’s Happening Right Now: The Present Progressive Tense](#)

[Answers to “Forming the Present” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 6: Going and Coming with Irregular Verbs

[Irregular-are Verbs](#)

[Irregular -ere Verbs:](#)

[Irregular-ire Verbs](#)

[Stressed Pronouns](#)

[Answers to “Going and Coming with Irregular Verbs” Practice Questions](#)

Part 3: Building Beautiful Sentences: Parts of Speech

Chapter 7: Enriching Adjectives and Adverbs

[Making Adjectives Agree](#)

[Putting Adjectives in Their Place](#)

[Forming Adverbs the Italian Way](#)

[Finding a Place for Adverbs in a Sentence](#)

[Answers to “Enriching Adjectives and Adverbs” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 8: Comparisons and Superlatives

[Making Comparisons with the Comparative](#)

[Designating the Best and the Worst: The Superlatives](#)

[Making Irregular Comparisons](#)

[Answers to “Comparisons and Superlatives” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 9: Prepositions, and Then Some

[Getting Familiar with Simple Prepositions](#)

[Contracting Prepositions with Articles and Nouns](#)

[Finding the Exceptions to the Rule](#)

[Answers to “Prepositions, and Then Some” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 10: La Mia Famiglia: Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns

[Possessing with Adjectives](#)

[Using Possessive Pronouns](#)

[Answers to “La Mia Famiglia: Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 11: Asking with Interrogatives; Pointing Out with Demonstratives

[Asking and Answering Questions](#)

[Pointing to Something with Questo and Quello](#)

[Answers to “Asking with Interrogatives; Pointing Out with Demonstratives” Practice Questions](#)

Part 4: More Verb Tenses

Chapter 12: Glancing Back at the Past: The Passato Prossimo

[Turning a Verb into a Past Participle](#)

[Figuring Out Which Auxiliary to Use](#)

[Answers to “Glancing Back at the Past: The Passato Prossimo” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 13: Once Upon a Time: The Imperfect

[Knowing When to Use the Imperfect](#)

[Forming the Imperfect](#)

[Crafting the Imperfect Progressive](#)

[When the Going Gets Tricky: The Imperfect and Passato Prossimo](#)

[Conveying Two Past Actions in Sequence: The Past Perfect](#)

[Answers to “Once Upon a Time: The Imperfect” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 14: Looking Ahead: The Future Tense

[Using the Two Future Forms](#)

[Common Expressions Denoting the Future](#)

[Using the Present to Talk about the Future](#)

[Forming the Simple Future Tense](#)

[Forming the Future Perfect Tense](#)

[Answers to “Looking Ahead: The Future Tense” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 15: Commanding and the Imperative

[Choosing the Imperative](#)

[The Imperative Form of Regular Verbs](#)

[The Imperative Form of Irregular Verbs](#)

[Negative Commands](#)

[Adding Pronouns to Commands](#)

[Answers to “Commanding and the Imperative” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 16: Forming and Using Conditional Verbs

[Shaping Verbs into the Present Conditional](#)

[Using the Conditional by Itself](#)

[It’s Over Now! Forming the Past Conditional](#)

[Answers to “Forming and Using Conditional Verbs” Practice Questions](#)

Chapter 17: Everyday Communication with Reflexives

[Directing an Action to a Subject](#)

[Engaging in Reciprocal Actions](#)

[Answers to “Everyday Communication with Reflexives” Practice Questions](#)

Part 5: The Part of Tens

Chapter 18: Ten Practice Dialogues for When You’re Out and About in Italy

[Al Ristorante \(at the Restaurant\)](#)

[Al Bar, Colazione e Aperitivo](#)

[Alla Salumeria \(at the Deli\)](#)

[Al Forno \(to the Bakery\)](#)

[Alla Spiaggia \(at the Beach\)](#)

[Al Negozio di Scarpe \(at the Shoe Store\)](#)

[Al Negozio di Abbigliamento \(at the Clothing Store\)](#)

[Dal Medico \(at the Doctor’s\)](#)

[Alla Farmacia \(to the Pharmacy\)](#)

[Alla Stazione dei Treni \(at the Train Station\)](#)

Chapter 19: Ten Common Word Swaps to Avoid

[Assumere versus Presumere](#)

[Batteria versus Batteria](#)

[Fare Domanda versus Essere Esigente](#)

[Dottore versus Medico](#)

[Educato versus Colto](#)

[Fabbrica versus Stoffa and Fattoria](#)

[Affettare versus Influenzare](#)

[Partita versus Festa](#)

[Incidente versus Accidenti!](#)

[Straniero versus Estraneo](#)

Part 6: Appendixes

Appendix A: English-Italian Dictionary

Appendix B: Italian-English Dictionary

Index

About the Author

Advertisement Page

Connect with Dummies

End User License Agreement

List of Tables

Chapter 1

[Table 1-1 Formal Greetings and Salutations](#)

[Table 1-2 Informal Greetings and Salutations](#)

[Table 1-3 Being Polite](#)

[Table 1-4 Alfabeto \(ahl-fah-beh-toh\)](#)

Chapter 2

[Table 2-1: Regular Singular and Plural Noun Endings](#)

[Table 2-2 Masculine Definite Articles](#)

[Table 2-3 Feminine Definite Articles](#)

[Table 2-4 Masculine Indefinite Articles](#)

[Table 2-5 Feminine Indefinite Articles](#)

Chapter 3

[Table 3-1 Cardinal Numbers with Double and Triple Digits](#)

Chapter 4

[Table 4-1 Subject Pronouns](#)

[Table 4-2 Idiomatic Expressions That Use Avere](#)

Chapter 5

[Table 5-1 Present Tense Endings of -are Verbs](#)

[Table 5-2 Present Tense Endings of -ere Verbs](#)

[Table 5-3 Present Tense Endings of -ire and -ire/isc Verbs](#)

[Table 5-4 Creating Gerunds](#)

Chapter 6

[Table 6-1 Stressed Pronouns](#)

Chapter 7

[Table 7-1 Four-Ending Adjectives](#)

[Table 7-2 Two-Ending Adjectives](#)

[Table 7-3 Common Adjectives \(Color and Origin\)](#)

[Table 7-4 Adjectives with Opposites](#)

[Table 7-5 Variations of Irregular Adjective Endings](#)

Chapter 8

[Table 8-1 Comparatives and Superlatives of Adjectives with Special Forms](#)

[Table 8-2 Comparatives and Superlatives of Adverbs with Special Forms](#)

Chapter 9

[Table 9-1 Prepositions Combined with Articles](#)

Chapter 10

[Table 10-1 Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns](#)

[Table 10-2 Possessive Pronouns](#)

Chapter 11

[Table 11-1 Interrogative Adjectives and Pronouns](#)

[Table 11-2 Answering Questions](#)

Chapter 12

[Table 12-1 The Irregular Past Participle of Verbs Ending in -ere](#)

[Table 12-2 Irregular Verbs Ending in -ire](#)

[Table 12-3 Intransitive Verbs in the Passato Prossimo](#)

[Table 12-4 Piacere in the Present and the Passato Prossimo](#)

Chapter 13

[Table 13-1 Endings of the Imperfect](#)

[Table 13-2 Verbs with an Expanded Stem](#)

Chapter 14

[Table 14-1 Common Terms Denoting the Future](#)

[Table 14-2 Endings for Regular and Irregular Verbs in the Future Tense](#)

Chapter 15

[Table 15-1 Informal Imperatives of Regular Verbs](#)

[Table 15-2 Formal Imperatives of Regular Verbs](#)

[Table 15-3 Comparing Affirmative and Negative Commands](#)

[Table 15-4 Reflexive Imperatives](#)

Chapter 16

[Table 16-1 Endings for Regular Verbs in the Present Conditional](#)

Chapter 17

[Table 17-1 Reflexive Pronouns](#)

[Table 17-2 Common Reflexive Verbs](#)

[Table 17-3 Conjugation of Alzarsi \(Get Up\)](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 18

[FIGURE 18-1: A *cappuccino*, an Italian coffee made by using equal parts double e...](#)

[FIGURE 18-2: A table with drinks and snacks.](#)

[FIGURE 18-3: Conversing with a beach service can have you set up and enjoying t...](#)

FIGURE 18-4: Look for this symbol when trying to find a pharmacy.

Introduction

Italian speaks the language of fantastic food, art, design, fashion, cinema, music, and of course, great literature. And it's also the language of great scientists, entrepreneurs, political activists, explorers, and migrants. Italian is spoken by the 60 million inhabitants of Italy and by many people of Italian descent in other countries (about 18 million in the United States alone) around the world.

Derived from Latin, Italian was initially established as the language of literary culture in the 13th century, thanks to the works of many poets and storytellers (the most important one being Dante and his "*Divine Comedy*") who began to shift from writing in Latin to writing in the vernacular. Since the period of Unification (the **Risorgimento**, 1848–1871), one shared language — Italian — has dominated culture.

Perhaps you want to speak to an Italian relative, or you plan to visit Italy and want to be able to converse with the locals while you're there. Or maybe you're taking an Italian class and want some extra help. Whatever has brought you to these pages, this book is here to be your guide through the beautiful Italian language.

About This Book

The language I present in *Italian Workbook For Dummies* is the language of everyday life in today's Italy. You can find it used in newspapers, on TV, in modern novels, in instruction booklets, on the Internet, and so forth. At any given point in time, you can find good ways and bad ways to express yourself, so I give you the correct version of

the language and usage. But don't be surprised if you go to Italy and hear or read something different from what you find in this book. Over time, you'll develop your own sensibility for expressions that are interesting variations on the language, rather than merely mistakes.

Italian Workbook For Dummies is a hands-on reference book for beginners of the language. As such, I start with the basic building blocks, and then build on those. Keep in mind that the book does proceed logically from simpler matters to more complex ones, so unless you have the essentials down first, I suggest progressing chronologically. At the same time, the more you expose yourself to authentic Italian during the process, the greater your results. When children are immersed in language and receive constant input, they pick it up naturally, holistically, and communicatively.

Establish your own communicative goals while you go through this book: The discrete points about the Italian language that I offer in this book can provide you with the tools and contexts to navigate a variety of situations, from basic introductions to seeking help at the pharmacy. Try starting with the ten practice dialogues in [Chapter 18](#), and then back up to the very beginning, giving yourself a road map for arriving at the end.

But first, do a positioning exercise that I always ask my new students to do on the first day of class. Take pen and paper, and a timer (and cover the rest of this page). Set the timer for five minutes. Then, write down as many Italian words that you already know, and whose pronunciation you can already begin to sound out. (Think food! Think music!). Challenge your study buddy if you're working through this book with someone else.

After your timer goes off, how did you do? What words do you know already? Bruschetta, spaghetti, biscotti,

pizza — whatever you wrote down is a good start to putting words into conversations and building your proficiency.

The first part of the book is devoted to articles, nouns, and the concept of gender. In [Part 1](#), I also introduce you immediately to numbers, dates and times, and interrogatives (or question words). I devote [Part 2](#) to getting you started with Italian verbs. [Part 3](#) adds onto these basics with adjectives and prepositions. [Part 4](#) goes a bit more deeply into verbs, both to their conjugations and to the way you use them in context. The appendixes provide you with some quick-reference tools to check translations.

Because this is a book for beginners, I don't talk about some tenses that are generally reserved for more intermediate and advanced study, such as the subjunctive mood, the passive voice, and the **passato remoto** (*distant past*) tense.

In each chapter, you have the opportunity to practice what you've just read. You may be asked to come up with one word, craft an entire sentence, or select the best word or phrase to complete a sentence. Test your skills so that you can find that information stored in your mind. The Answer Key at the end of each chapter allows you to check your progress.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book as easy to use as possible, I used certain conventions throughout:

- » I **bold** all the Italian words so that they stand out in the text; English translations are in *italics*.
- » When a practice exercise has more than one correct answer, I provide both the more and the less common answers.
- » I use some technical grammar terms, in context. Every subject matter has its jargon, and you can more easily learn by example than by engaging in wordy explanations. The more you actively engage and practice with the content, the more familiar it becomes — trust me.

Foolish Assumptions

I made the following assumptions about you (my reader) and your Italian when writing this book:

- » You're a novice writer or speaker. You're already aware that even the simplest sentence in Italian requires an understanding of gender and number options, and the ability to make endings agree.
- » You're committed to learning Italian, and you know that it's okay to make mistakes in order to progress. You also know that sometimes, you just have to commit the material to memory.
- » You understand basic concepts of English grammar. I define them, but I expect you to have encountered the terms before and be able to apply them to any language. From a grammatical point of view, Italian and English are often substantively different, but with a few exceptions, the grammarians who systematized the two languages used the same concepts: A verb is a verb in both languages, as is a pronoun, an adjective, and so on.

- » You want to become more precise when using verbs, pronouns, and other parts of speech. Sure, Italians can understand you if you say **volere caffè** (*to want coffee*) instead of **Vorrei un caffè** (*I'd like a coffee*), but the pleasure of speaking a foreign language comes with effective communication and proficiency in it.
- » You might be planning a trip to Italy.
- » You want to know everyday Italian, rather than the language of a special field, such as economics or medicine.

I do hope that you're the reader I had in mind when I was writing this book. It should be challenging, but approachable and rewarding.

Icons Used in This Book

As in all *For Dummies* books, icons tag information that's unique in some way. I used the following icons throughout this book (you can spot them in the left-hand margin):



TIP

This icon highlights advice that can help you use or remember the information at hand; it can also emphasize minor variations in the topic.



REMEMBER

This icon alerts you to grammar rules, special cases, or points about meaning that you should pay particular attention to.



DIFFERENCES This icon highlights points where Italian and English differ in important ways.



PRACTICE You see this icon at the start of each practice exercise.

Beyond this Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance related to embracing Italian that I provide in this book, you can get access to even more help and information online at Dummies.com. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet by going to www.dummies.com and searching for *Italian Workbook For Dummies Cheat Sheet*.

Where to Go from Here

In *Italian Workbook For Dummies*, I think of my readers as highly motivated people who are self-starters and have the patience to work through training exercises as if they were at the gym. Learning a language isn't easy, but you can make it more enjoyable by varying your approach. Because Italian is a living language, grow your listening and speaking proficiency during the process of working through this book. Expose yourself to as much authentic language as is possible, and practice speaking and listening whenever you can!

Work your way through the chapters and test yourself with the practices. Try to immerse yourself in the

situations that the different tenses represent. Then, check out some Italian websites or listen to some Italian podcasts. Sing along to Italian songs and get Italian subtitles to your favorite programs to help increase your proficiency. And let this book be a guide that you can come back to whenever you have a question or forget a conjugation. Time to get started!

Buon lavoro! (*Enjoy! Literally: Have a good experience with this work!*)

Part 1

Getting Your Bearings with the Basics

IN THIS PART ...

Get started with the basics of Italian. Learn greetings and salutations, plus pronunciation and more. It's time to start communicating!

Find out about pronouns and articles. Figure out how to use gender in Italian, and when (and when not) to use definite and indefinite articles.

See how to use numbers in Italian, including cardinals, ordinals, dates, and times.

Chapter 1

Greetings! Getting to Know You

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Speaking formally and informally
 - » Pronouncing and stressing words
 - » Working with gender
-

You've picked up this book because you're interested in learning Italian — **molto bene!** (*great!*) Whatever your reasons — heritage, travel, work, food, Italophilia, love of languages — you're in the right place:

Benvenute/Benvenuti! (*Welcome!*)

What are some essential first steps in getting your feet wet in another language? Communication, making yourself understood, and understanding throughout a variety of social situations, as well as creating a solid foundation on which to build.

This chapter provides you with some Italian basics on using formal and informal conventions. I illustrate the formal and informal with communicative exercises that can help you confidently express — whether you're speaking or writing in Italian — greetings and salutations, and forms of courtesy. This chapter also provides a preliminary consideration of pronunciation and gender, two elements you can't do without.

Deciding between Formal and Informal

The Italian language clearly recognizes and requires two different conventions of address, formal and informal, depending on whom you're addressing and also the situation. When you understand what convention to use, you're better equipped to communicate meaningfully, to convey respect for the person, and to also show regard for cultural differences.

The informal is usually designated with the pronouns **tu/voi** (*you*) and the formal **Lei** (*you*): These pronouns connect concretely to verb forms (see [Chapter 4](#)) and possessive adjectives (see [Chapter 10](#)). In Italian, you generally use the formal address to write or speak to a stranger, teacher, business acquaintance, customer, waitstaff, salesperson, or boss. You usually use the informal address with family members, friends, people your same age or younger, or children.



REMEMBER

Italian is a living language. I can't emphasize enough how important it is for you to practice saying and hearing Italian while you go through this book. Although you need to approach the language holistically and in context, you also need a grasp on the individual parts of the whole, which is where this book comes in.



TIP

When meeting someone for the first time, Italians customarily shake hands. When you see someone whom you haven't seen in a while, or when you stop by your aunt's house, Italians customarily kiss each other on both cheeks, first on one side, then the other.

To put formal and informal conventions to use, the following sections walk you through Italian greetings and phrases.

Formal greetings

Use the following formal phrases when you want to meet and greet a stranger, someone whom you don't know very well, and/or someone to whom you should show respect. Use titles when you know what titles apply, such as **Dottore/Dottoressa** (*Doctor*), or either **Signore** (*Mr.*) or **Signora** (*Mrs.*).

[Table 1-1](#) provides you with some terms generally associated with greetings and salutations. While you go through this table, make a mental note (or even underline and highlight) some of the differences and similarities between [Table 1-1](#) and [Table 1-2](#) (in the next section), which provides the informal phrases.



REMEMBER

You use **buona notte** when you know it's actually bedtime; consider it another way of saying, "*Have a good sleep.*" Start to use **buona sera** in the late afternoon until you go to bed. For example, say it's 10 p.m. and you walk into your hotel. You first greet the concierge by saying, "**Buona sera.**" After you

get your key and are on your way to your room, you can say, “**Buona notte.**”



REMEMBER Cut off the final **e** when using a last name with masculine titles:

- » **Signore** becomes **Signor Tarroni**.
- » **Dottore** becomes **Dottor Costa**.
- » **Professore** becomes **Professor Gambi**.

The title *Ms.* doesn't exist in Italian, so you use either **Signora** (*Miss*) or **Signorina** (*Mrs./Ma'am*).

For female professional titles of doctor and professor, you use **Dottoressa** and **Professoressa**.

Table 1-1 Formal Greetings and Salutations

English	Italian
<i>Hello/Good morning</i>	Buon giorno/Buongiorno
<i>Hello</i>	Salve
<i>Good afternoon</i>	Buon pomeriggio
<i>Good evening</i>	Buona sera/Buonasera
<i>Good night</i>	Buona notte/Buonanotte
<i>Miss (young woman)</i>	Signorina
<i>Mrs./Ma'am (older married or unmarried woman)</i>	Signora
<i>Mr./Sir</i>	Signore
<i>My name is ...</i>	Mi chiamo ...
<i>What's your name?</i>	Come si chiama?
<i>How are you?</i>	Come sta?

English	Italian
<i>Where are you from?</i>	Di dov'è?
<i>Sono di ...</i>	I'm from ...
<i>Well.</i>	Bene.
<i>Very well.</i>	Molto bene.
<i>So-so.</i>	Così così.
<i>Fair/pretty well.</i>	Abbastanza bene.
<i>(I'm) not well.</i>	(Sto) male.
<i>Not bad.</i>	Non c'è male.
<i>Thank you, and you?</i>	Grazie, e lei?
<i>Nice to meet you.</i>	Piacere (di conoscerla).
<i>It's a pleasure.</i>	È un piacere.
<i>It's a great pleasure.</i>	Molto piacere.
<i>The pleasure is mine.</i>	Il piacere è mio.
<i>Goodbye.</i>	Arrivederci.
<i>See you later.</i>	A dopo.
<i>See you soon.</i>	A presto.
<i>See you tomorrow.</i>	A domani.
<i>Have a good day.</i>	Buona giornata.
<i>Have a good evening.</i>	Buona serata.

Here are a few more titles in both their masculine and feminine forms:

- » **Avvocato/Avvocata** (*Attorney*)
- » **Giudice** (*Judge*)
- » **Sindaco/Sindaca** (*Mayor*)



DIFFERENCES

The title **Dottore/Dottoressa** can have two meanings in Italian: You can use it for someone who has a university degree (meaning a B.A. or a B.S.), as well as for a medical doctor and a person who has a Ph.D. In the United States, the word *doctor* is reserved for medical doctors and people who have Ph.D.s.

Informal greetings

Use informal phrases when you want to meet and greet a friend, relative, child, people who are younger than you, and (of course) your beloved pet. Notice that you find some overlap between some of the terms in the formal list (see [Table 1-1](#)) and the informal list in [Table 1-2](#).



TIP

A good rule of thumb is that you use the informal when on a first name basis with someone.

Table 1-2 Informal Greetings and Salutations

<i>English</i>	<i>Italian</i>
<i>Hi.</i>	Ciao.
<i>My name is ...</i>	Mi chiamo ...
<i>I'm (meaning My name is ...)</i>	Sono...
<i>What's your name?</i>	Come ti chiami?
<i>How are you?</i>	Come stai?
<i>Thank you, and you?</i>	Grazie, e tu?
<i>Well.</i>	Bene.
<i>Very well.</i>	Molto bene.
<i>So-so.</i>	Così così.

English	Italian
<i>Fair./Pretty well.</i>	Abbastanza bene.
<i>Not well.</i>	Male.
<i>Not bad.</i>	Non c'è male.
<i>Where are you from?</i>	Di dove sei?
<i>I'm from ...</i>	Sono di ...
<i>It's a pleasure (to meet you).</i>	Piacere (di conoscerti).
<i>How nice it is to see you.</i>	Che piacere vederti.
<i>How's it going?</i>	Come va?
<i>What's new?</i>	Che c'è di nuovo?
<i>What's up?/What's wrong?</i>	Che c'è?
<i>Nothing much.</i>	Niente.
<i>See you later.</i>	Ci vediamo.
<i>See you (very) soon.</i>	A presto.
<i>Until next time.</i>	Alla prossima
<i>See you tomorrow.</i>	A domani.
<i>Have a good day.</i>	Buona giornata.
<i>Have a good evening.</i>	Buona serata.
<i>Bye.</i>	Ciao.



REMEMBER. **Prego** not only means *You're welcome*. It also means, *Please, come this way; Please, by all means, you first; or Here you go!*

You're not always spontaneously introducing yourself to someone else. Sometimes, you're introduced. Compare the informal and the formal introductions in the following examples.