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***Italian For Dummies®*, 2nd Edition**

**by Teresa Picarazzi, Francesca
Romana Onofri, and Karen
Möller**



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Italian For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

Published by

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

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Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2011932102

ISBN: 978-1-118-00465-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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After her university studies in linguistics and Spanish and English language and literature, **Francesca Romana Onofri** lived several years abroad to better her understanding of the cultures and languages of different countries. In Spain and Ireland she worked as an Italian and Spanish teacher, as well as a translator and interpreter at cultural events. In Germany she was responsible for communication and special events in a museum of modern art, but even then she never gave up on her passion for languages: She was an Italian coach and teacher at the Opera Studio of the Cologne Opera House, and did translations — especially in the art field. Back in Italy, Francesca has edited several Berlitz Italian books and is working as a translator of art books, as well as a cultural events organizer and educator.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to my parents, Mary and Domenico.

—Teresa Picarazzi

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my husband Giancarlo and daughter Emilia for their patience and support while I was working on this book, and my students, present and past, for their curiosity and love for all things Italian. I would also like to thank the people at Wiley for making this book come true: acquisitions editor Michael Lewis for contacting me; project editor Susan Hobbs for carefully guiding me step by step through the process, and technical editors Alicia Vitti and Christiana Thielmann for making me look at some aspects of Italian language and culture through a different lens.

—Teresa Picarazzi

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Italian For Dummies[®], 2nd Edition

Visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/Italian to view this book's cheat sheet.

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Introduction

As society becomes more global, knowing how to say at least a few words in other languages opens doors to communication. Carrying on a brief conversation in an immersion situation can enrich your experience. You may be planning a trip to Italy for business or pleasure. You may have friends and neighbors who speak other languages, or you may want to get in touch with your heritage by learning a little bit of the language that is spoken today in the place your ancestors came from.

Whatever your reason for wanting to learn some Italian, *Italian For Dummies* can help. Two experts at helping readers develop knowledge — Berlitz, experts in teaching foreign languages; and John Wiley & Sons, Inc., publishers of the best-selling *For Dummies* series — have teamed up to produce a book that gives you basic Italian language skills. We're not promising fluency here, but basic communicative competency that will allow you to be understood. If you need to greet someone, purchase a ticket, or order off a menu in Italian, you need look no further than *Italian For Dummies*.

About This Book

This is not a class that you have to drag yourself to twice a week for a specified period of time. You can use *Italian For Dummies* however you want to, whether your goal is to learn some words and phrases to help you get around when you visit Italy, or you just want to be able to say “Hello, how are you?” to your Italian-speaking neighbor. Go through this book at your own pace, reading as much or as little at a time as you like. You don't have to trudge through the chapters in order, either; just read the sections that interest you.

Note: If you've never taken Italian before, you may want to read the chapters in Part I before you tackle the later chapters.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we've set up a few conventions:

- ✓ Italian terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciations are set in normal type with stressed syllables in *italics*. English translations are also set in italics.
- ✓ Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order of six persons: “I,” “you” (singular, informal), “he/she/it/you” (formal), “we,” “you” (plural/informal), and “they/you” (plural, formal) form. Pronunciations follow in the second column. Following is an example using **parlare** (*pahr-lah-reh*) (*to speak*). The translations in the third column have all three forms, but for the sake of space, I only give you the first:

<i>Conjugation</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Translation</i>
io parlo	<i>ee-oh pahr-loh</i>	<i>I speak, I do speak, I am speaking</i>
tu parli	<i>tooh pahr-lee</i>	<i>You (informal) speak</i>
lei/lui/lei parla	<i>lehy/looh-ee/lehy pahr-lah</i>	<i>She/he/you (formal) speak</i>
noi parliamo	<i>noi pahr-lee-ah-moh</i>	<i>We speak</i>
voi parlate	<i>voi parl-lah-teh</i>	<i>You (plural informal) speak</i>
loro parlano	<i>loh-roh pahr-lah-noh</i>	<i>They/you (plural formal) speak</i>

Language learning is a peculiar beast, so this book includes a few elements that other *For Dummies* books do not. Following are the new elements you'll find:

- ✓ **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** The best way to learn a language is to see and hear how it's used in conversation, so we include dialogues throughout the book under the heading "Talkin' the Talk." Listen to and repeat these dialogues as often as you like. In both the CD and the text, they will help you approximate authentic pronunciation.
- ✓ **Words to Know blackboards:** Identifying key words and phrases is also important in language learning, so we collect the important words in a chapter (or section within a chapter) in a chalkboard, with the heading "Words to Know."
- ✓ **Fun & Games activities:** You can use the Fun & Games activities to reinforce some chapter concepts you've learned. These word games are fun ways to gauge your progress.

Also note that because each language has its own ways of expressing ideas, the English translations that we provide for the Italian terms may not be exactly literal. We want you to

know the gist of what's being said. For example, the phrase **Mi dica** (mee *dee*-kah) can be translated literally as the formal imperative "Tell me," but the phrase really means "(How) Can I help you?"

Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, we had to make some assumptions about who you are and what you want from a book called *Italian For Dummies*. These are the assumptions we made:

- ✓ You know no Italian — or if you took it back in school, you don't remember much.
- ✓ You're not looking for a book that will make you fluent in Italian; you just want to know some words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in Italian.
- ✓ You don't want to have to memorize long lists of vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- ✓ You want to have fun and learn a little bit of Italian at the same time.

If these statements apply to you, you've found the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided by topic into parts, and then into chapters. The following sections tell you what types of information you

can find in each part.

Part I: Getting Started

This part lets you get your feet wet by giving you some Italian basics: how to pronounce your ABCs, numbers, words, and so on. We even boost your confidence by reintroducing you to some Italian words that you probably already know. Finally, we outline the basics of Italian grammar that you may need to know when you work through later chapters in the book.

Part II: Italian in Action

In this part, you begin learning and using Italian. Instead of focusing on grammar points as many language textbooks do, this part focuses on everyday situations, such as shopping, dining, going out, asking for directions, and being home.

Part III: Italian on the Go

This part gives you the tools you need to take your Italian on the road, whether it's planning a trip or excursion, navigating public transportation, finding a room, or handling an emergency.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

If you're looking for small, easily digestible pieces of information about Italian, this part is for you. Here, you can find ten ways to learn Italian quickly, ten useful Italian expressions to know, ten things never to say in Italian, and more.

Part V: Appendixes

This part of the book includes important information that you can use for reference. We include verb tables, which show you how to conjugate regular and irregular verbs. We also provide a listing of the tracks that appear on the audio CD that comes with this book so that you can find out where in the book those dialogues are and follow along. We give you a mini-dictionary in both Italian-to-English and English-to-Italian formats. If you encounter an Italian word that you don't understand, or you need to say something in Italian, you can look it up here. You can also find the answers to the Fun and Games sections here.

Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information easier for you to find, we've placed the following icons in the left-hand margins throughout the book:



This icon highlights tips that can make learning Italian easier.



To ensure that you don't forget important information, this icon serves as a reminder, like a string tied around your finger.



Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of

these weird grammar rules.



If you're looking for information and advice about culture and travel, look for these icons.



The audio CD that comes with this book gives you the opportunity to listen to real Italian speakers so that you can get a better understanding of what Italian sounds like. This icon marks the Talkin' the Talk dialogues that you can find on the CD. This is a great way to practice your own speaking.

Where to Go from Here

Learning a language is all about jumping in and giving it a try (no matter how bad your pronunciation is at first). So make the leap! Start at the beginning, pick a chapter that interests you, or pop the CD into your stereo or computer and listen to a few dialogues. Skip over the parts that distract you and take you away from Italian (such as the pronunciation spellings and translations after you've been through them once): The more you think in Italian, the more natural it will come to you. Before long, you'll be able to respond, "Sì!" when people ask, "Parla italiano?"

Part I

Getting Started

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"I insisted they learn some Italian. I couldn't stand the idea of standing in front of the Trevi Fountain and hearing, 'gosh', 'wow', and 'far out.'"

In this part . . .

Ciao! See? You already understand some Italian, although you may think we're saying good-bye before we even say hello. The truth is that ciao mean both "hello" and "goodbye."

These first four chapters introduce you to the basics of the Italian language: Chapter 1 gets you going with pronunciation, Chapter 2 helps you with basic Italian grammar. You learn how

to say “hello” and “goodbye” as well as how to introduce yourself and others in Chapter 3. And you learn how to tell time, put dates in your calendar, and ask for phone numbers in Chapter 4. So Andiamo! (ah-de-ah-moh) (Let’s go!)

Chapter 1

Saying It Like It Is

In This Chapter

- ▶ Taking note of the little Italian you know
 - ▶ Looking at popular expressions and cognates
 - ▶ Learning basic Italian pronunciation
 - ▶ Using gestures
-

You probably know that Italian is a Romance language, which means that Italian, just like Spanish, French, Portuguese, and some other languages, is a “child” of Latin. There was a time when Latin was the official language in a large part of Europe because the Romans ruled so much of the area. Before the Romans came, people spoke their own languages, and the mixture of these original tongues with Latin produced many of the languages and dialects still in use today.

If you know one of these Romance languages you can often understand bits of another one of them. But just as members of the same family can look very similar but have totally different personalities, so it is with these languages. People in different areas speak in very different ways due to historical or social reasons, and even though Italian is the official language, Italy has a rich variety of dialects. Some dialects are so far from Italian that people from different regions cannot understand each other.

Despite the number of different accents and dialects, you will be happy to discover that everybody understands the Italian you

speak and you understand theirs. (Italians don't usually speak in their dialect with people outside their region.)

You Already Know Some Italian!

Although Italians are very proud of their language, they have allowed some English words to enter it. They talk, for example, about gadgets, jogging, feeling and shock; they often use the word okay; and since computers have entered their lives, they say “**clickare sul mouse**” (kleek-*kah*-reh soohl mouse) (to click the mouse). Finally, there's **lo zapping** (loh *zap*-ping), which means switching TV channels with the remote. These are only a few of the flood of English words that have entered the Italian language.

In the same way, many Italian words are known in English-speaking countries. Can you think of some?

How about . . .

- ✓ **pizza** (*peet*-tsah)
- ✓ **pasta** (*pahs*-tah)
- ✓ **spaghetti** (*spah-geht*-tee)
- ✓ **tortellini** (*tohr-tehl-lee*-nee)
- ✓ **mozzarella** (*moht-tsah-rehl*-lah)
- ✓ **espresso** (*ehs-prehs*-soh)
- ✓ **cappuccino** (*kahp-pooh-chee*-noh)