

English Grammar for Students of Italian

***The Study Guide
For Those Learning Italian***

Third Edition

***Sergio Adorni
Karen Primorac***

ITALIAN

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*The Study Guide
for Those Learning Italian*

Third edition

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English Grammar for Students of French
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TO THE STUDENT

English Grammar for Students of Italian explains the grammatical terms and concepts that you will encounter in your Italian textbook and relates them to English grammar. With straightforward explanations and numerous examples, this handbook offers a bridge between English and Italian, indicating similarities and differences. Once you have understood the terms and concepts in your own language, it will be easier for you to understand your textbook.

Since *English Grammar for Students of Italian* can be keyed to any elementary textbook, many instructors assign a specific section as preparation for the study of a given grammatical topic in your Italian textbook. If you use this manual on your own, you can consult the table of contents and index to locate the topic you are about to study. Read the relevant pages carefully, making sure that you understand the explanations and the examples. Do the Reviews provided online and compare your answers with the Answer Key (www.oliviahill.com).

STUDY GUIDE

Before doing an assignment — Read the sections in *English Grammar for Students of Italian* that cover the topics you are going to study and the explanations in your textbook.

Homework — Take notes as you study your textbook. Highlighting is not sufficient. The more often you write down and use vocabulary and rules, the easier it will be for you to remember them. Complete exercises and activities over several short periods of time rather than in one long session.

Written exercises — As you write Italian words or sentences, say them out loud. Each time you write, read, say, or listen to a word, it reinforces it in your memory.

In class — Take notes. You will know what the teacher considers important and it will reinforce what you are studying.

Objective — You have learned something successfully once you are able to take a blank sheet of paper and write a short sentence in Italian using the correct form of the Italian words without reference to a textbook or dictionary. The study tips below will help you with this learning process.

TIPS FOR LEARNING VOCABULARY

One aspect of language learning is remembering a number of foreign words.

To learn vocabulary — Flashcards are a good, handy tool for learning new words and their meaning. You can carry flashcards with you, group them as you wish, and add information as you advance. Creating your own flashcards is an important first step in learning vocabulary.

1. Write the Italian word or expression on one side of an index card and its English equivalent on the other side.
2. On the Italian side of the card add a short sentence using the word or expression. It will be easier for you to recall a word in context. To make sure that your sentence is grammatically accurate, copy an example from your textbook. For review purposes, write down the chapter and page number of your textbook where the word is introduced.
3. On the Italian side include any irregularities and whatever information is relevant to the word in question.

How to use the cards — Regardless of the side of the card you're working on, always say the Italian word out loud.

1. Look at the Italian side first. Going from Italian to English is easier than going from English to Italian because it only requires your recognizing the Italian word. Read the Italian word(s) out loud, giving the English equivalent; then, check your answer on the English side.
2. When you go easily from Italian to English, turn the cards to the English side. Going from English to Italian is harder than going from Italian to English because you have to pull the word and its spelling out of your memory. Say the Italian equivalent out loud as you write it down on a separate sheet of paper; then check the spelling with the card. Some students prefer closing their eyes and visualizing the Italian word and its spelling.
3. As you progress, put aside the cards you know and concentrate on the ones you still don't know.

How to remember words — Below are suggestions to help you associate an Italian word with an English word with a similar meaning. This is the first step and it will put the Italian word in your short-term memory. Use and practice, the next step, will put the words in your long-term memory.

1. There are many words, called **COGNATES**, that have the same meaning and approximately the same spelling in English as in Italian. These words are easy to recognize in Italian, but you will have to concentrate on the differences in spelling and pronunciation.

<i>important</i>	importante
<i>problem</i>	problema
<i>visit</i>	visitare

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2. Try to associate the Italian word with an English word that has a related meaning.

la luna	<i>the moon</i>	lunar
preoccupato	<i>worried</i>	preoccupation
l'ascensore	<i>the elevator</i>	ascend

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3. If the Italian word has no similarities to English, rely on any association, or "hook," that is meaningful to you. Here are some suggestions:

- Group words by topics or personal associations – You can group words according to topics such as food, clothing, activities you do for fun, sports, school, home, or things you carry in your backpack, etc.
- Associate the word with an image – If you have trouble remembering a particular word, you might want to create a "bizarre image" in your mind using English words with similar sounds with which to associate it.

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caro = *expensive*
 You're giving me an *expensive* car 'Oh, boy!'
 con = *with*
 "He is a **con** man *with* charm."

4. To reinforce the Italian word and its spelling, use it in a short sentence.

TIPS FOR LEARNING WORD FORMS

Another aspect of language learning is remembering the various forms a word can take; for example, another form of *book* is *books* and *do* can take the form of *does* and *did*. As a general rule, the first part of the word indicates its meaning and the second part indicates its form. (See also "Memorizing conjugations," p. 40.)

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In bocca al lupo!

Sergio Adorni
 Karen Primorac

WHAT IS A SUBJECT PRONOUN?

A **SUBJECT PRONOUN** is a pronoun used as a subject of a verb (see *What is a Subject?*, p. 28 and *What is a Pronoun?*, p. 29).

He worked while she read.

QUESTION: Who worked? ANSWER: He.

He is the subject of the verb *worked*.

QUESTION: Who read? ANSWER: She.

She is the subject of the verb *read*.

Subject pronouns are classified as follows: the person speaking, the **FIRST PERSON**, the person spoken to, the **SECOND PERSON**, or the person spoken about, the **THIRD PERSON**. These are further divided according to whether one person (singular) or more than one person (plural) is involved. The term "person" in the grammatical sense does not necessarily mean a human being, it can refer to anyone or anything.

Let us compare the subject pronouns of English and Italian.

	ENGLISH	ITALIAN
SINGULAR		
1st person <i>the person speaking</i>	I	io
2nd person <i>the person spoken to</i>	you	tu [familiar] Lei [formal]
3rd person <i>the person or object spoken about</i>	{ he she it	lui lei
PLURAL		
1st person <i>the person speaking plus others</i> <i>John and I speak Italian.</i> we	we	noi
2nd person <i>the persons spoken to</i> <i>Anita and you speak Italian.</i> you	you	voi [familiar] Loro [formal]
3rd person <i>the persons or objects spoken about</i> <i>John and Anita speak Italian.</i> they	they	loro [only persons]

As you can see from the chart, there is not an exact correspondence between English and Italian subject pronouns. Let us look at *it*, *they* and *you*.

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“IT” AND “THEY”

IN ENGLISH

Since a subject pronoun must always be used with every verb form, *it* is used when referring to a thing or an idea, and *they* when referring to more than one thing or idea.

He has a new car. *It* is a Ferrari.

She has many records. *They* are all new.

IN ITALIAN

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The subject pronouns are used far less frequently than in English (see p. 40). Especially *it* and *they* referring to things are almost never used and should not be translated.

John has a new car. **It** is a Ferrari.

It is understood as part of the verb *è*.

Giovanni ha una macchina nuova. **È** una Ferrari.

Maria has many records. **They** are all new.

They is understood as part of the verb **sono**.

Maria ha molti dischi. **Sono** tutti nuovi.

“YOU” — TU, LEI, VOI, LORO

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IN ENGLISH

You is the only pronoun of address. It is used when speaking to anyone, a close friend or a stranger. For instance, *you* is appropriate whether you are addressing the President of the United States or a member of your family.

Do *you* have any questions, Mr. President?

Johnny, *you* must eat your spinach!

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Also, *you* is used whether you are addressing one person or many people. For example, if there are many people standing in a room and you ask: “Are *you* coming with me?” the *you* could be interpreted as an invitation to one person or to more than one.

IN ITALIAN

As you can see from the chart on p. 31, there are two sets of pronouns for *you*. **Tu** and **voi** are called **FAMILIAR YOU** used with close friends, relatives and children and **Lei** and **Loro** are called **FORMAL YOU** used with persons you do not know well.

Each of these has a singular form if you are addressing one person and a plural form if you are addressing more than one.

Familiar "you" → **tu** or **voi**

The familiar forms of *you* are used with members of one's family, friends, children and pets. In general, the familiar *you* is used with persons you call by first name.

1. to address one person (singular) → **tu**

Maria, **tu** vieni con me?

Mary, are you coming with me?

2. to address more than one person (plural) → **voi**

Giovanni e Maria, **voi** venite con me?

John and Mary, are you coming with me?

Formal "you" → **Lei** or **Loro**

The forms of formal *you* are used to address someone you do not know well or to whom you wish to show respect. In general, the formal *you* is used with persons you address with a title: Miss Smith, Mr. Jones, Dr. Anderson.

Lei and **Loro**, are always written with a capital letter.

1. to address one person (singular) → **Lei**

Signor Rossi, **Lei** viene con me?

Mr. Rossi, are you coming with me?

2. to address more than one person (plural) → **Loro**

Signori Rossi, **Loro** vengono con me?

Mr. and Mrs. Rossi, are you coming with me?

Here are the steps to find the appropriate form of *you*:

1. FAMILIAR OR FORMAL — Is the familiar or formal form appropriate?
2. NUMBER — Is one or more persons being addressed?
3. SELECTION — Select the proper form after completing steps 1 and 2.

Let's find the Italian equivalent for *you* in the following sentences.

John, are you coming with me?

1. FAMILIAR OR FORMAL: John → familiar

2. NUMBER: one person → singular

3. SELECTION: **tu**

Giovanni, **tu** vieni con me?

Mario and Gloria, are you coming with me?

1. FAMILIAR OR FORMAL: Mario and Gloria → familiar

2. NUMBER: two persons → plural

3. SELECTION: **voi**

Mario e Gloria, **voi** venite con me?

Mr. President, are you coming with me?

1. FAMILIAR OR FORMAL: Mr. President → formal
2. NUMBER: one person → singular
3. SELECTION: **Lei**

Signor Presidente, **Lei** viene con me?

Mr. and Mrs. Casa, are you coming with me?

1. FAMILIAR OR FORMAL: Mr. and Mrs. Casa → formal
2. NUMBER: two persons → plural
3. SELECTION: **Loro**

Signori Casa, **Loro** vengono con me?

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As you can see, the English question “Are *you* coming with me?” may be expressed in four different ways in Italian and the choice of the appropriate form of *you* has an important social meaning. If you are in doubt regarding the selection of the formal or familiar mode of address, use the formal **Lei**, **Loro**, since the improper use of the familiar **tu**, **voi** would be considered rude.

It is also important to note that the selection of the familiar or formal pronoun will determine the form of the verb to be used (see *What is a Verb Conjugation?*, p. 35).

WHAT IS THE SUBJUNCTIVE?

1 The **SUBJUNCTIVE** is a mood used to express a wish, hope, uncertainty, or other similar attitude toward a fact or an idea. Since it stresses the speaker's feelings about the fact or idea, it expresses a "subjective" point of view.

IN ENGLISH

The subjunctive is only used in very few constructions. Moreover, it is usually difficult to distinguish the forms of the subjunctive from other forms of the verb conjugation.

I *am* in Detroit right now.

10 present indicative of *to be*

I wish I *were* in Rome right now.

subjunctive same as past tense of *to be*

He *reads* a book each week.

present indicative of *to read*

The professor insists that he *read* a book each week.

subjunctive same as dictionary form of *to read*

The subjunctive occurs most commonly in the subordinate clause (see p. 142) of three kinds of sentences.

- 20
- in clauses introduced by *if*, to express conditions contrary-to-fact

if-condition
result clause

┌──────────┴──────────┐
┌──────────┴──────────┐

If I *were* in Europe now, I would buy a villa in Florence.

subjunctive (same as past tense)

- in statements expressing a wish that is not possible

I wish he *were* here with us.

subjunctive (same as past tense)

- 30
- following verbs of asking, demanding, and requesting

I asked that Maria *be* present.

subjunctive (same as dictionary form)

IN ITALIAN

The subjunctive, called the **congiuntivo**, is used very frequently. It has four tenses (**presente**, **passato**, **imperfetto**, **trapassato**) whose forms you must learn.

The use of the **congiuntivo** corresponds to the use of the subjunctive in English only in a few cases.

- in clauses introduced by **se if**, to express conditions contrary-to-fact

Se **fossi** ricco, comprerei una villa a Firenze.

*If I **were** rich, I would buy a villa in Florence.*

- following expressions of wish using **magari if only**

Magari **fosse** qui con noi!

*I wish he **were** here with us!*

- following verbs of command (asking, demanding, etc.)

Esigo che Maria **sia** presente.

*I demand that Maria **be** present.*

As you will see below, when the main clause contains a specific type of verb or expressions, the verb of the subsequent subordinate clause is put in the **congiuntivo**. Note that the English equivalent of the **congiuntivo** is varied and never subjunctive.

- main clause contains a verb of emotion, wish, command, opinion, doubt → **che that** + subjunctive

Temo che Marco non **arrivi** in tempo.

verb of emotion present subjunctive
present indicative

*I am afraid that Marco **will not arrive** on time.*

future

Teresa **vuole che** il marito **cucini**.

verb of wish present subjunctive
present indicative

*Teresa **wants her husband to cook**.*

infinitive

Pensiamo che mamma **abbia** ragione.

verb of opinion present subjunctive
present indicative

*We think that Mother **is** right.*

present indicative

Dubito che **vinciate** la partita.

verb of doubt present subjunctive
present indicative

*I doubt that you **will win** the game.*

future

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- impersonal verbs or expressions of emotion, wish, command, opinion, doubt → **che that** + subjunctive

Sembra che i miei amici **partano** presto per l'Europa.

impersonal verb present subjunctive
present indicative

It seems that my friends are leaving soon for Europe.

present progressive indicative

È possibile che papà **compri** una macchina nuova.

impersonal expression present subjunctive
present indicative

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It is possible that Dad will buy a new car.

future

- certain conjunctions such as **perchè so that, a condizione che provided that**, etc. → subjunctive

Apriamo la finestra **perchè entri** l'aria fresca.

present conjunction present subjunctive
indicative

We are opening the window so (that) fresh air comes in.

present indicative

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Ti do il libro **a condizione che** tu me lo **restituisca** presto.

present indicative conjunction present subjunctive

I will give you the book provided (that) you return it to me soon.

present indicative

Study your textbook carefully for other uses of the subjunctive and its various tenses.

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