



How to Learn Italian Smarter



Who's Serena?

I am the creator of the blog www.italianpills.com where I help Italian learners find smart and creative ways to transform their ability to learn Italian.

I was born on the most exotic of European islands, Sicily, some 30 years ago. I graduated from two universities (in France and Italy), studied in four countries (Italy, France, Spain, and England).

I have learned and speak eight languages at various levels, and I intend to learn more.

I actively study and re-learn some of those languages with teachers or in group classes in my free time. I believe learning a foreign language is a never ending love story, isn't it?

Over the past decade, I have focused my efforts on adult language education and have worked as an Italian teacher in Spain, England, Slovakia, and Japan.

I now run an entirely online language school from the Eternal City of Rome.

I work mostly online, teaching Italian and creating content, among which are short stories in simple Italian and learning materials for passing official language certifications.

Serena

Introduction

I've been teaching adult language learners Italian for over a decade, and I've come to the conclusion that the biggest obstacle toward fluency is not a bad textbook, a bad teacher, or not living in Italy. Nope.

What really slows down most students' progress toward language fluency or causes some of them to fall behind is their lack of knowledge regarding **how** and **what** to study, simply because they never got the chance to study a foreign language before.

I wrote this PDF to share with you my tried-and-true principles that, when put into practice, have significantly improved both my students' Italian language acquisition and speaking.

How to learn Italian better

1. Learning habits and goal setting
2. Embrace the grammar.
3. Have fun reading and listening in simple Italian.
4. Use it lose it. Don't be shy, speak Italian.
5. Is speaking still hard? Then write.
6. Repeat Repeat Repeat.
7. The art of note-taking.
8. Recommended tools for learning Italian.

What should you study? How?

Your Italian is an enormous puzzle that includes your vocabulary, listening, grammar, speaking, etc. For most learners, prioritizing one skill over another (e.g., speaking over grammar) alone is not sufficient. In order to learn better and become proficient, you'll need to combine all of the language components (grammar, reading, listening, speaking, and writing).



01. Learning habits and goal setting

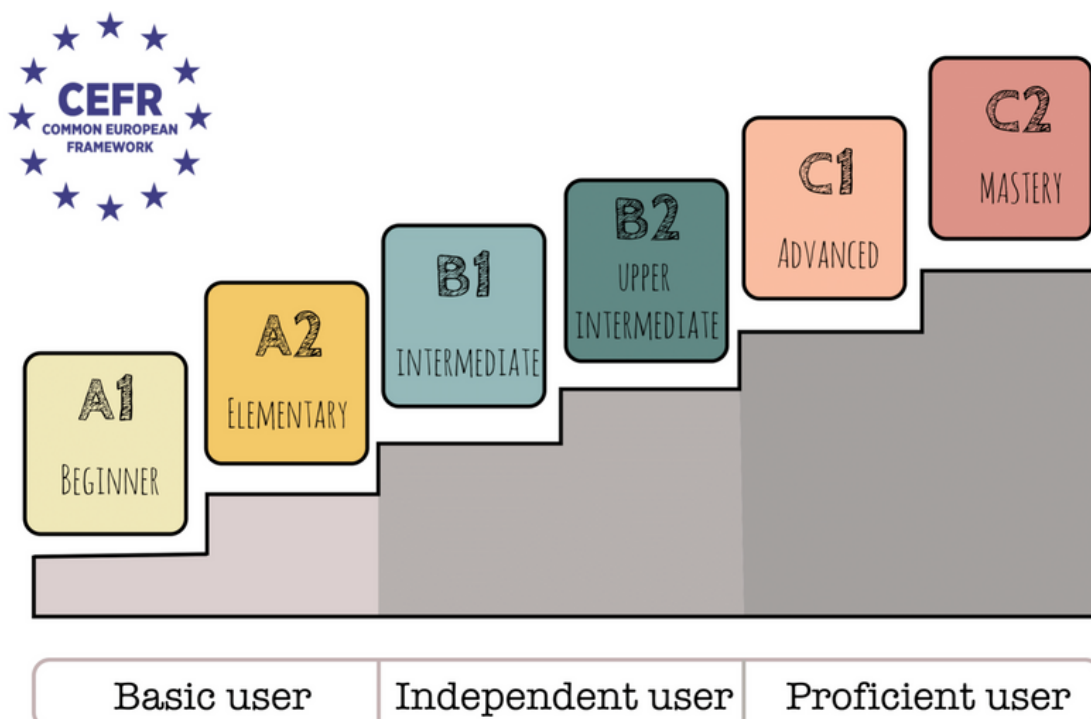
Unfortunately, there isn't a magic pill, but over the years of teaching Italian, I've noticed one pattern that all successful adult language learners share. They organize their study time, establish a goal, and commit to it for a considerable amount of time.

If you are unsure of your language goal, I advise using the **CEFR** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) system to help you define it. If your level is beginner (A1), for instance, your learning objective might be to reach the A2 level (elementary); if your level is intermediate (B1), your learning objective might be to reach the B2 level; etc.

It's crucial to plan your approach and make an effort to study independently (or with a teacher) at least once per week (preferably twice). The process of learning a language can be compared with getting in shape physically (in this case, your linguistic brain) and learning a language.

Set a time and day of the week for your tutoring session or self-study session. It will be simpler if, for instance, you study Italian on the same day every week. This will help you develop a reliable learning habit. Try to maintain this new habit for at least a month.

If something becomes ingrained in you, it will come more naturally and require less preparation (which is often a drawback to planning a study session).



01. Learning habits and goal setting

Examples study habits

- I'll enroll in an A1 class at ___ school and study Italian according to the A1 curriculum. My goal is to get to a solid A2 level before the end of the year.
- I'll take one conversational Italian class every Wednesday at 9 am.
- I'll hire a tutor to work toward my B1 level using (name of a textbook).
- For the next six months, I'll hire a tutor to help me work toward Italian citizenship.
- I'll plan my sessions every week at the same time in order to build an ingrained learning habit over time.

2. Embrace the grammar

Does you think that grammar don't matters? OR don't matter grammar? Or mattered not did grammared?

You get the point.

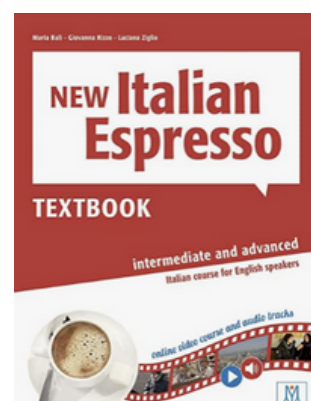
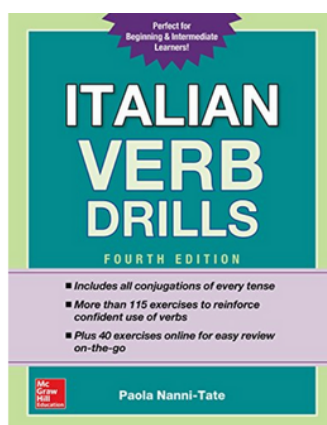
If someone claims that you can learn Italian without textbooks or grammar, that's probably a red flag.

Italian is a highly structured language that adheres to patterns and grammar rules, just like the other Latin languages (with few exceptions).

Being aware of grammar rules, especially the fundamental ones, will make you more understandable when you speak the language.

As I previously stated, grammar serves as the binding agent that joins one sentence component to the next.

You can improve your grammar using one of these textbooks.



Grammar is... the pole you grab to get your thoughts up on their feet and walking.

3. Have fun reading & listening in Italian

Reading, which is often overestimated, is an excellent way to improve your vocabulary and grammar naturally. When reading, you're being exposed to flawless Italian phrases. Reading will help you internalize the proper word order in a sentences or where a prepositions belongs or how to conjugate a verb.


But, what are you going to read if your Italian is not advanced yet?

That's where simplified texts like short stories come in handy.

All my private students one short story month in their study curriculum.

Why?

- **Our brain is not designed to memorize words in isolation. We need to relate a new input (a word, a grammar pattern, a sentence) to an image.**
- **Stories will provide you with visuals to relate to the new words and sentences you encounter while reading.**
- **When you try to use a new word or sentence, remembering the visual provided by story will help you.**
- **You'll absorb naturally the main principles of Italian sentence building (how to connect words and grammar together)**



Reading and listening to simple Italian content is an immersive learning experience that you can recreate wherever you are. You don't have to live in Italy to master this lovely language

Even if you're a beginner learner, the majority of stories have slow audio integrated, which will significantly aid in your efforts to improve your listening abilities.

3. Have fun reading & listening in Italian

Short stories with audio (A1-A2)



Short stories with audio (A2-B1)



Short stories with audio (B1+)



4. Use it or lose it. Don't be shy, speak Italian.

To put it bluntly, the most enjoyable aspect of learning a foreign language is actually using it. There are numerous opportunities available, and you can find a language conversation partner online or hire a private teacher or tutor.

Ask your tutor to let you lead the conversation if you're working with one.

Ideas for making the most out of a conversation class:

- Read and retell in your words a chapter from a short story book.
- Read and summarize a dialogue in one of your textbooks.
- Read and provide a summary of a blog post in Italian.

Why is that?

Being an active student of foreign languages myself, I've realized that engaging in simple conversation in a foreign language doesn't really equip me with the skills I need to move on to the next level.

If you want to speak Italian well, or even better, understand what's going on when listening to Italian-native content, I think it's important to be challenged and try to speak about a variety of topics and situations.

To have another language is to possess a second soul.

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5. Is speaking still hard? Then write.

Is it still challenging to put Italian sentences together when speaking? You should think about spending some time writing in Italian.

Why is this beneficial? **Because writing is speaking in slow motion.**

You can take your time when writing to consider what you want to say, choose the best words, and use proper grammar. This exercise will help you progress faster from beginner to intermediate to advanced levels over time.

Simple ideas for writing in Italian

- Summarize in a few written sentences the chapter of short stories.
- Write down a brief summary outlining the main points of an easy article or podcast.
- Keep a Journal in Italian.
- Ask your teacher to set you a writing prompt weekly.

6. Repetition

The majority of the effort you put into your language class won't be successful if you don't do this. Have you ever felt as though you studied without really retaining the information? Or perhaps you have the impression that you learned something, but you still struggle to put it into practice? It's totally normal!

Even though you may have studied something, real learning only occurs when you are repeatedly exposed to that particular piece of knowledge over time.

In order to learn and internalize new vocabulary, a new sound, or a new grammar pattern, it takes time, repetition, and novelty exposure.



Ideas for repetition

- **Actively take notes during class or study sessions, organize them, and review them later (typical mistake: taking notes and forget about them or not revising them at least 10 times)**
- **Listen to the same podcast episode twice or read a short story twice. I am aware that this may seem a little monotonous, but I can assure you that it will pay off in the long run.**
- **With your tutor or a language partner, discuss the reading and listening you have done.**

7. Notes Taking

If you aren't working with *chunks* yet in your Italian classes, you absolutely should!

What are chunks?

Chunks are high-frequency combinations of words, such as verbs and nouns or nouns and adjectives. As I stated at the beginning of this post, **words can't be learned efficiently in isolation**. When speaking, we speak in sentences, and we often use the same combinations. That's why learning chunks or small sentences will go a long way.

Example n.1

If you come across the verb "**controllare= to check out**" when reading a short story or any other Italian content, you shouldn't write down "controllare" on your vocabulary list. Instead, you should write down its most common use, e.g.

- **controllare le email** = to check out your emails
- **controllare il meteo** = to check out the weather forecasts

Example n.2

If you come across the verb "affascinare" (**to fascinate**), you shouldn't write down "fascinate" on your vocabulary list. Instead, you should write it down and learn its use in common, useful sentences, e.g.,

- **Roma mi affascina** = Rome fascinates me

Remember that one of the most efficient ways to fluency is to learn phrases, questions, or useful chunks to use in your Italian conversations.

**Both examples were pulled from my short stories for beginners and lower intermediate Italian learners.*

Helpful Learning Tools

Speaking

Affordable tutor marketplaces



50% OFF your first class, if you sign up with my [link](#)

Free apps for language exchanges



Helpful Learning Tools

Reading and Listening



- Easy readers, short stories (A1, A2, B1, B2) - [link](#)
- Italian Natural Conversations By Olly Richards (A2+, B1, B2) - [link](#)



Conversations

- Italianpod 101 (all levels) - [link](#)
- Lingopie (A2-B1, B2, C1) - [link](#)

Get Fluent while you watch TV
Pick a language, choose from thousands of shows,
sit back, relax & bingewatch your way to fluency.

  [Try it Free](#)

- Italian magazines - [link](#)
- Easy Italian News (A2+, B1, B2, C1) - [link](#)

Helpful Learning Tools

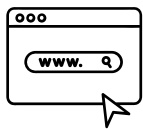
Sentence building and vocabulary

- Youenglish for Italian (B1-B2) - [link](#)
- Speakly (app, all levels) - [link](#)
- Clozemster (app, all levels) - [link](#)



Thank you for reading my booklet. I hope you've learned some easy-to-apply learning strategies and that my suggestions will enable you to learn more effectively and to reach your learning objectives more quickly.

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