

*Conversational Italian
for Travelers*

Just the Verbs

2nd Edition

Kathryn Occhipinti



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How to Use This Book

Conversational Italian for Travelers: Just the Verbs is a companion book to the Conversational Italian for Travelers textbook. Just the Verbs contains the complete verb section of each of the three units of the textbook — “Transportation,” “City Life,” and “Hotels and Restaurants” — condensed into one smaller book, to enable Italian students to focus on Italian verbs.

The format of each chapter is easy to follow, with detailed explanations of how to conjugate Italian verbs in the present tense (including familiar commands and reflexive verbs), the recent past tenses (“passato prossimo” and “imperfetto”), the future tense, and the conditional tense. Special sections discuss the irregular verbs for each tense and include information on pronunciation and spelling irregularities. All example verb conjugations are presented in easy to read, color-coded tables to aid memorization.

But Just the Verbs provides even more than verb conjugation tables and explanations! Like the textbook from which it is derived, Just the Verbs focuses on the conversational use of Italian verbs, with emphasis on adjective-verb agreement and how to speak about the recent past in simple and complex sentences. These details are included in the verb sections themselves, as well as in additional excerpts from the “Grammar,” “Common Expressions,” and “Numbers” sections of the Conversational Italian for Travelers textbook, which are also reprinted in this book.

In this second edition of Just the Verbs, material from the “Conversational Italian!” blog series, “Italian Phases We Use EVERY Day!”® is reprinted in the Appendix. This section provides details on how to conjugate select verbs in the “passato prossimo” and expands on how to use Italian reflexive verbs in different situations. Use the example sentences from these blogs in every day Italian conversations!

Just the Verbs is a complete text in its own right, and will provide a firm basis for beginning students of Italian and an invaluable reference book for Italian students of all levels. However, for an overview of beginning and intermediate Italian, the Conversational Italian for Travelers textbook is recommended. This book is unique in that it teaches Italian in a gradual, understandable way, using important travel phrases and common expressions spoken by Italians today. Conversational Italian for Travelers focuses on the vocabulary and grammar adults will most often encounter while traveling, while at the same time teaching the formal rules of the Italian language.

Listen to and repeat Italian verb conjugations and phrases in the Conversational Italian for Travelers Audio Dialogue Practice Book, now available on your favorite streaming platform. Get started today learning “all the Italian you need to enjoy your trip to Italy” with the Conversational Italian for Travelers books! —*Kathryn Occhipinti*

Getting Started 12

The Italian Alphabet 12

The Italian Sound Combinations 13

General Pronunciation and Stress for Italian Words..... 15

Unit 1 – Transportation 17

Chapter 1 – At the Airport..... 18

Grammar Point 18

Studying Italian Verbs and Italian Subject Pronouns 18

The Many Forms of “You” in Italian – Singular Forms 20

The Many Forms of “You” in Italian – Plural Forms 21

Writing “I” in Italian 22

Present Tense..... 23

First Conjugation – Regular **–are** Verbs 23

Direct Reflexive Verbs and Their Pronouns 24

First Conjugation – More Regular **–are** Verbs 26

First Conjugation – Irregular **–are** Verbs 28

Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 1..... 29

Chapter 2 – At Customs in Italy 31

Present Tense..... 31

Irregular **–are** Verb **Andare** 31

Common Expressions..... 32

Come va?..... 32

Present Tense..... 33

Irregular and Auxiliary Verb **Essere** 33

Grammar Point 34

Writing “Is” in Italian and Italian Accents 34

Grammar Note..... 34

Quanto - Asking How Much/How Many 34

Grammar Note..... 35

Describing Where You Are From..... 35

Common Expressions..... 36

Dove and **Ecco** 36

Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 2..... 37

Chapter 3 – Taking a Taxi..... 39

Present Tense..... 39

Irregular and Auxiliary Verb **Avere** 39

Expressions that Use **Avere** 39

Grammar Point 41

Choosing **Essere** or **Avere**..... 41

Avere and **Essere** + **di** + Infinitive 42

Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 3..... 43

Chapter 4 – At the Train Station.....	45
Present Tense	45
First Conjugation Verbs that End in -care/-gare	45
Table for Verbs that End in -care/-gare	46
Irregular Verb Volere	47
Grammar Point	48
Expressing a Need with Volere and Desiderare	48
Common Expressions.....	49
Voglio Bene	49
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 4.....	50
Chapter 5 – On the Train to Milan.....	51
Present Tense	51
First Conjugation Verbs that End in -ciare/-giare	51
First Conjugation Verbs that End in -iare	52
Present Tense	53
Second Conjugation – Regular -ere Verbs	53
Second Conjugation – More Regular -ere Verbs	54
Second Conjugation Verbs that End in -cere	55
Second Conjugation Verbs Sapere and Conoscere	56
Grammar Point	57
When to Use Sapere vs. Conoscere	57
Common Expressions.....	59
Sapere and Conoscere	59
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 5.....	60
Chapter 6 – Driving with Pietro	61
Present Tense	61
Second Conjugation Verbs that End in -cere/-gere	61
Irregular Verbs Bere, Scegliere, Spegner, Tenere and Togliere	62
Irregular Verb Stare	63
Present Tense	65
Present Progressive Tense.....	65
Grammar Point	68
To Be / To Live Revisited – Essere and Stare; Abitare and Vivere	68
C'è and Ci sono vs. Ecco	68
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 6.....	70

Unit 2 – City Life73

Chapter 7 – A Family Reunion	74
Present Tense.....	74
Third Conjugation – Regular -ire Verbs.....	74
Third Conjugation – Regular -ire Verbs with the -isc Ending.....	75
More Third Conjugation Regular -ire Verbs	76

More Third Conjugation Regular -ire -isc Verbs.....	76
Third Conjugation Irregular Verbs Dire, Morire, Salire, Uscire, Venire	78
Grammar Point	78
Verbs Credere, Pensare and Sperare + Prepositions	78
Verbs that Take di + Infinitive	79
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 7	80
Chapter 8 – Getting Ready	81
Present Tense.....	81
Direct Reflexive Verbs.....	81
Irregular Verb Sedersi	83
Important Phrases	84
Getting Ready with Reflexive Verbs	84
Present Tense.....	86
Verbs that Have Both Reflexive and Non-Reflexive Forms.....	86
Reciprocal Reflexive Verbs.....	88
Grammar Point	90
Infinitive Reflexive Verbs and Reflexive Pronouns.....	90
Using Si to Make Impersonal Statements	90
Common Expressions.....	91
Trovare	91
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 8	92
Chapter 9 – It’s a Party	95
Present Tense.....	95
Familiar Imperative Verbs	95
Irregular Verb Dare	97
Familiar Imperative Irregular Verbs	98
Grammar Point	100
Familiar Imperative Verbs in a Negative Statement.....	100
Idiomatic Expressions — Polite to Familiar	101
Dare del tu/Dare del Lei	101
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 9	102
Chapter 10 – Shopping in Milan	105
Grammar Point.....	105
Verbs that Take a + Infinitive.....	105
Present Tense	106
Irregular Verb Fare	106
Common Expressions	107
Fare	107
Commands Using Fare	110
Grammar Note	111
The Weather	111
Present Tense	112

Reflexive and Indirect Object Pronouns for Reference to Clothing and the Body.....	112
Irregular Verb Piacere	114
Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 10.....	116
Chapter 11 – At the Coffee Shop	119
Present Tense	119
Modal Verbs Dovere, Potere and Volere	119
Grammar Point.....	121
How to Use Modal Verbs	121
Modal Verbs that Modify Reflexive Verbs.....	122
Important Phrases.....	123
Basic Communication with Può	123
Buying a Ticket and Taking the Train – Vorrei, Voglio, Devo	124
Asking for Assistance – Using Polite Verbs Può and Sa	125
Finding One’s Way/Directions	128
Common Expressions	130
Potere	130
Dovere and Volere	131
Past Tense	132
Passato Prossimo with Avere	132
Irregular Past Participles	135
Regular Past Participles with Dovere, Potere and Volere	137
Passato Prossimo with Modal Verbs.....	137
Important Phrases.....	138
Making/Checking/Changing a Reservation.....	138
Verb Tables for Chapter 11	140
Chapter 12 – Phone Conversations	143
Past Tense	143
Passato Prossimo with Essere	143
Verbs that Take Essere in the Passato Prossimo	146
Grammar Point.....	148
Reflexive Verbs and Piacere with the Passato Prossimo	148
Modal Verbs with Essere and Passato Prossimo	149
Past Tense.....	150
Passato Prossimo - Avere and Essere Past Participles.....	150
Grammar Point.....	151
Single Negative with the Passato Prossimo	151
Double Negative with the Passato Prossimo	151
Grammar Note.....	152
Direct Object Pronouns and the Passato Prossimo	152
Ne and the Passato Prossimo	153
Direct Object Pronouns with Reflexive Verbs	154
Verb Tables for Chapter 12.....	156

Unit 3 – At the Hotel and Restaurant 159

Chapter 13 – Arriving at the Hotel 160

Past Tense.....	160
Imperfetto	160
Imperfetto Irregular Verbs – Bere, Dire, Fare	163
Imperfetto – Avere and Essere	164
Imperfetto – Piacere	165
Grammar Note.....	166
Expressions of Time in the Past Tense.....	166
Common Expressions.....	167
Fa and Expressions of Time in the Past Tense.....	167
Grammar Point.....	168
Imperfetto vs. Passato Prossimo	168
Common Expressions.....	170
“How old are you?”	170
Numbers	171
Telling Time in the Present and Past Tense.....	171
Verb Tables for Chapter 13.....	172

Chapter 14 – On the Beach at Last 173

Grammar Note.....	173
The Weather.....	173
Past Tense.....	175
Imperfetto with Dovere, Potere, Volere	175
Grammar Point.....	176
Imperfetto vs. Passato Prossimo – Final Summary.....	176
Verb Tables for Chapter 14.....	178

Chapter 15 – Sightseeing..... 181

Future Tense	181
Avere and Essere	183
Future Tense – Verbs with Irregular Stems.....	184
Verbs that Drop the Stem Vowel.....	184
Verbs that Do Not Change the Letter “a” in the Stem.....	184
Verbs that Have a Double “R”	185
Grammar Point	185
Use of Two Verbs in the Same Sentence with the Future Tense	185
Grammar Note.....	186
Expressions of Future Time	186
Numbers.....	188
Talking About Events in Future and Past Tense	188
Verb Tables for Chapter 15.....	190

Chapter 16 – Ordering at the Restaurant..... 193

Present Tense	193
Piacere and the Disjunctive Pronouns	193
Piacere in a Reflexive Situation	196
Future Tense	197
Verbs with Endings of -care, -gare	197
Verbs with Endings of -ciare, -giare	198
Verb Tables for Chapter 16	199
Chapter 17 – Dinner at the Restaurant	202
Conditional Tense	202
Grammar Point	203
Conditional Tense Pronunciation	203
Conditional Tense	204
Avere and Essere	204
Conditional Tense – Verbs with Irregular Stems	205
Verbs that Drop the Stem Vowel	205
Verbs that Do Not Change the Letter “a” in the Stem	206
Verbs with a Double “R”	207
Introduction to the Subjunctive Mood	208
Conditional Tense	209
Modal Verbs Dovere, Potere and Volere	209
Present Tense vs. Conditional Tense	210
The Meaning of Dovere, Potere , and Volere	210
Important Phrases	211
Speaking with the Waiter	211
Verb Tables for Chapter 17	213
Chapter 18 – A Happy Birthday Surprise	216
Conditional Tense	216
Verbs with Endings of -care, -gare	216
Verbs with Endings of -ciare, -giare	217
Conditional Past Tense	218
Dovere, Potere , and Volere	218
Present Conditional Tense – Piacere	219
Past Conditional Tense – Piacere	220
Present Tense – Dispiacere	221
Present and Past Conditional Tenses – Dispiacere	222
Important Phrases	223
Verb Tables for Chapter 18	224
Appendices	227
Appendix 1	228

A Note About the Changing Italian Subject Pronouns.....	228
Appendix 2.....	229
A Note About the Changing Italian Subject Pronouns.....	229
The Different Forms of "They" in Italian.....	229
Appendix 3.....	230
An Italian Holiday Party Conversation.....	230
Appendix 4.....	232
Passato Prossimo with Verbs of Motion	232
Avere vs. Essere	232
Passato Prossimo: Avere vs. Essere... Camminare and Sports	234
Passato Prossimo: Avere and Essere... Corriere	235
Passato Prossimo: Avere and Essere... Passare	236
Passato Prossimo: Avere and Essere... Salire and Scendere	237
Appendix 5.....	238
Impersonal Statements and Reflexive Verbs of Motion	238
How to Describe Inanimate Movement with Italian Reflexive Verbs.....	242
How to Describe Nature and Life with Italian Reflexive Verbs.....	244
Index	246

The Italian Alphabet

The Italian alphabet has only 21 letters but there are names in Italian for all of the Latin letters, including those traditionally described as foreign to Italian. The letters that are foreign to Italian are listed in parentheses and are included together with the Italian alphabet given below. The written form of each letter's name in Italian and the phonetic pronunciation are listed in separate columns.

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Italian Name</u>	<u>Phonetic Pronunciation</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Italian Name</u>	<u>Phonetic Pronunciation</u>
a	a	ah	u	u	oo
b	bi	bee	v	vu/vi	voo/vee
c	ci	chee	(w)	doppia vu	doh-pee-ah voo
d	di	dee	(x)	ics	eeks
e	é	eh	(y)	ipsilon	eep-see-lohn
f	èffe	ehf-feh		i greca	ee greh-ka
g	gi	jee	z	zèta	zeh-tah
h	acca	ah-kah			
i	i	ee			
(j)	i lunga	ee loon-gah			
(k)	càppa	kahp-pah			
l	èlle	ehl-leh			
m	èmme	ehm-meh			
n	ènne	ehn-neh			
o	ò	oh			
p	pi	pee			
q	cu	koo			
r	èrre	ehr-reh			
s	èsse	es-seh			
t	ti	tee			

The Italian Sound Combinations

Here is the Italian alphabet again, with an example word in Italian to represent how each written letter should sound, as well as an example of an English word that has an equivalent sound. If the sounds are identical in Italian and English, no explanation is given. Multiple examples are given for a letter if the pronunciation can vary. Italian is one of the most phonetic (and beautiful) languages spoken, and a little time spent learning how to pronounce the letter combinations will make learning the language much easier!

<u>Letters(s)</u>	<u>Italian Pronunciation</u>	<u>English Pronunciation Equivalent</u>	
a	cane	father	ah sound
b	bene	bell	
ca/co/cu	casa	cat	hard c sound
ci	ciao	cheese	soft ch with long ee sound
ce	cena	cheddar	soft ch with short e sound
chi	chi	key	hard c with long ee sound
che	che	kennel	hard c with sort e sound
d	dado	dad	
e	era	bet	eh sound
e	vedi	bait	ay sound
f	farfalla	fan	
ga/go/gu	gusto	good	hard g sound
gi	giro	jeer	soft j with long ee sound
ge	gettare	jet	soft j with short e sound
gli	figlio	million	"gli" is a unique Italian sound similar to the "lli" in million, pronounced like mil-lyee-on*
gn	signora	onion	sounds like the "ni" in onion
h	--	--	h is not pronounced in Italian
i	vita	meet	long ee sound
l	luna	love	
m	mamma	mother	
n	non	no	

The Italian Sound Combinations (cont'd)

<u>Letters(s)</u>	<u>Italian Pronunciation</u>	<u>English Pronunciation Equivalent</u>	
o	sole	soap	oh sound
o	modo	law	aw sound
p	pasta	pasta	
qu	quanto	quest	qu together makes the kw sound
r	Roma	---	r is always trilled in Italian
s	rosa	nose	soft s
ss	rossa	toss	hard s
schi	schiaivo	skeet	s + chi makes hard skey sound
sche	schema	skill	s + che makes hard skeh sound
sci	sciare	shield	soft sh sound with long ee sound
sce	scemo	shed	soft sh sound with short e sound
t	tu	to	
u	uva	boot	oo sound
v	vincere	vine	
z	zero	zero	soft z
zz	pizza	pizza	hard z, like tz sound

*To form the sound that corresponds to the letter combination "gli" in Italian, raise the back part of your tongue to the palate and roll your tongue forward to form the guttural "gl" sound that is a part of this combination. Finish with the tip of your tongue down to form the "yee" sound. By listening, you will note the word **gli (the)** stresses the guttural sound but when the letters **gli** are placed in the middle of a word, such as with **figlio (son)**, the "yee" part of the **gli** sound is stressed.

General Pronunciation and Stress for Italian Words

The Italian language is a phonetic language, which means that each letter in an Italian word needs to be pronounced to create the final sound. If two vowels are written next to each other, both are pronounced but the sound is often a combined sound (referred to as a diphthong). There are many pronunciation rules, but the easiest thing to remember is just to pronounce what you see! Listening to Italian will also be invaluable. Italian dialogues for each chapter of the Conversational Italian for Travelers books are available as the audiobook Caterina Travels to Italy and on www.learntravelitalian.com in an interactive format. Listen to the dialogue that corresponds to the chapter you are working on in this book to check your pronunciation. Then go back and click on each phrase; listen, repeat, and listen again as needed.

Most Italian words will be stressed on the second to the last syllable, which is easy to remember if the word contains only three syllables — just stress the syllable in the middle of the word. In general, a syllable in Italian is usually made up of a vowel alone or a consonant group with its vowel. For most Italian words, just look for the vowel in the middle of the word and stress this syllable by making your intonation a little higher and more forceful. The word **ragazzo**, for instance, which means **boy**, will place the stress on the **/gaz/** sound.

ragazzo: ra/**GAZ**/zo

There are many exceptions to this rule, however. The first syllable is stressed instead in many cases for words with three syllables, such as **sabato** (**Saturday**), while the second syllable is often stressed in words with four syllables, as in **domenica** (**Sunday**).

sabato: SA/ba/to

domenica: do/**ME**/ni/ca

Remember that a vowel alone can also make up a complete syllable. **Abito** (**I live**) is a verb with three syllables, where the first syllable, the vowel **/a/**, is stressed.

abito: A/bi/to

In the few cases where the last syllable is stressed in an Italian word, the vowel at the end of the word will be given a grave (̀) accent, as in **città** (**city**) or **caffè** (**coffee**). Otherwise, accents are infrequently used in Italian and pronunciation is learned by listening.

For words with double consonants, the first consonant belongs to the syllable before and the second to the syllable after. When speaking, hold the sound of the double consonant a little longer than you would a single consonant. For similar words, this can change the meaning. For example, adding an additional **s** changes the word **casa** (**house**) into **cassa** (**cash register**)!





Unit 1

Transportation



Grammar Point

Studying Italian Verbs and Italian Subject Pronouns

The action words, or verbs, are the heart of every language. One who knows a wide variety of verbs and how to conjugate them quickly has a much easier time expressing his or her own point of view and understanding others.

We learn verb conjugation for our native language — how to change the form of the verb to reflect the speaker — naturally and gradually, simply by listening to the people around us while we are growing up. By the time we are teenagers, we know how to express the present, past, and future tenses to describe both action and time. As adults, the way we use verbs can denote where we are from as much as our accent does! A verb incorrectly conjugated just sounds wrong to our ears in our native language; with a bit of practice conjugating Italian verbs, this will also be the case for those who take up Italian as a second language.

At first, learning how to conjugate Italian verbs may seem complicated to the English speaker, and for good reason. In English, we rely on subject pronouns — I, you, he, she, etc. — to signal who is doing the talking. In Italian, however, the speaker is most often signaled by the verb ending. In the present tense, for instance, a different ending must be learned for each speaker for each form of every verb!

Since Italian verb endings in the present tense are different for each speaker, the subject pronouns are only included for emphasis or clarification in the third person. More often than not, subject pronouns are left out of the sentence in conversational Italian. In cases where the word “it” is the subject, the third person singular verb form is used, but the subject pronoun “it” is always omitted, as it has fallen out of use entirely (see Appendix 1). And, usually if two people are talking about a third, they will know after the conversation has been initiated if “he” or “she” is under discussion when a third person singular verb is used. Add “lui” or “lei” prior to the verb if there is any doubt. In general, though, there is no need to repeat names or even use a subject pronoun in the Italian present tense, even with the third person singular conjugation!

With a little practice (that is with “verb drills,” which are available in the Conversational Italian Audio Dialogue Practice Book, Volumes 1 & 2, available on your favorite streaming platform), this way of speaking will become familiar, and the correct conjugation of the verb without its subject pronoun will be easy to remember and will just “sound right.”

The table below shows the order in which all subject pronouns will be listed when learning each verb form, with the technical names (first, second, third person singular and plural) for each type of conjugation.

At first, when learning how to conjugate a verb, try to focus only on the **io**, **tu**, and **noi** forms, as these forms are used the most in familiar conversation. Luckily, the endings of the **io**, **tu**, and **noi** forms will be the same in the present tense for all three major Italian verb groups!

Italian Subject Pronouns		
io	I	1st person singular
tu	you (familiar)	2nd person singular
Lei/lei/lui	you (polite)/she/he/(it)	3rd person singular
noi	we	1st person plural
voi	you all (familiar)	2nd person plural
Loro*/loro	you all (polite)*/they	3rd person plural

*****"They"** is the main meaning for **loro** in Italy today and **Loro "you all polite"** will not be used for verb tables in this book after this chapter. For a discussion, see page 21 and Appendix 2, "The Different forms of 'They' in Italian."



Gondolas on the Grand Canal, Venice

Grammar Point

The Many Forms of "You" in Italian – Singular Forms

In Italian, when we address someone as "you," different subject pronouns and verb endings are used. As we've seen already from the last section of this chapter, there are four different subject pronouns and present tense verb endings in Italian that all mean "you" — for each verb! How do we know which form to use in any given situation? Prior to studying verb conjugation, we will go through the situations when each form of "you" is used. Also, throughout the text from here on, references to the familiar (fam.) and polite (pol.) forms of an Italian verb may appear for clarity after the English translation.

Keep in mind that the familiar form is the most common form used in Italian conversation. If you can remember the verb endings for the **io**, **tu**, and **noi** forms, which will be the same for all three Italian verb groups (**-are**, **-ere**, and **-ire**), you are well on your way to speaking Italian! Remember these forms when you speak; recognize the other forms when you are listening.

You familiar (singular) — **Tu** with an **-i** ending for the **-are**, **-ere**, and **-ire** verbs is used for people you know well, which includes both family and friends. In particular, the familiar **tu** form is always used with children. "**Tu parli italiano?**" uses the "familiar you" (fam.) form of the verb **parlare** to ask the question, "**Do you speak Italian?**"

You polite (singular) — **Lei** with an **-a** ending for the **-are** verbs is used for those you have just met or do not know well and to be respectful toward someone older than you. "**Lei parla italiano?**" means, "**Do you speak Italian?**" but asks this question in a more polite way than the example given in the last paragraph. This form of the verb, called the "polite" (pol.) or "formal" form, is important to show respect to others.

The traveler is often a customer and should be prepared to hear the "polite you" form of address; hotel personnel or salespeople in a shop will usually use the polite form of a verb when speaking with their clientele. Travelers will also want to be polite when making requests, and how to be polite when visiting Italy will be emphasized throughout this book.

In written Italian, the subject pronoun **Lei** is capitalized to designate the meaning of "polite you." In spoken Italian, the meaning of **Lei**, which means **polite you**, and **lei**, which means **she**, is, of course, understood from the situation.

Grammar Point

The Many Forms of "You" in Italian – Plural Forms

You familiar/polite (plural) — **Voi** with an **-ate** ending for the **-are** verbs is used when calling a group of people "you." In this book, the "plural you" form will be referred to as the "you all" form, since the use of this subject pronoun is similar to the colloquial phrase used in many southern states of the United States of America. If speaking directly to a group of people you know that includes family and friends, use this form. Tour guides, when addressing "all of you" in the tour group, will also use the **voi** form; in modern Italian, the **voi** form is also the most commonly used "polite you" plural form.

When asking a clerk in a shop, "**Do you have...?**" use this form for the "collective you" that includes all those involved in the store's management. Start your question with, "**Avete...?**" for "**Do you all have...?**" and then ask for a particular item. To ask a group of people if they speak Italian, we can say, "**Voi parlate italiano?**" which means, "**Do you all speak Italian?**"

You polite (historical plural) — **Loro** with an **-ano** ending for **-are** verbs. **Loro** is capitalized to distinguish the "polite plural you" from **loro**, which means **they**. **Loro** as the "polite you plural" is almost never used by Italians today and it gives the language a very stiff feeling when it is occasionally heard in a very formal situation. For instance, **Loro** may be used to address a group of people at a government or company-sponsored event. It is unlikely one will encounter this use if traveling for pleasure. The subject pronoun **Loro** with a capital "**L**" to mean "polite you all" will not be included in the verb conjugation tables after this chapter.

Finally, then, if we want to ask a group of people if they speak Italian in an extremely formal way, we could say, "**Loro parlano italiano?**" to mean, "**Do you all (to a group) speak Italian?**" But in most situations today, "**Loro parlano italiano,**" means, "**They speak Italian.**"

Italian Subject Pronouns – Current Use		
io	I	1st person singular
tu	you (familiar)	2nd person singular
Lei/lei/lui	you (polite)/she/he/(it)	3rd person singular
noi	we	1st person plural
voi	you all (familiar + polite)	2nd person plural
Loro/loro	they	3rd person plural

Grammar Point

Writing "I" in Italian

You may have noticed that the Italian subject pronoun for **I**, which is **io**, is not capitalized in Italian. Instead, Italians capitalize the "polite you" singular, or **Lei** form. This differentiates the "polite you" from she (**lei**), although pronunciation of both words is identical. When addressing a male or female politely in an Italian conversation, it is simply understood that **Lei** refers to the polite form of **you**, rather than the subject's gender.



Tiburtina Railway Station, Rome

Present Tense

First Conjugation – Regular **-are** Verbs

Italian infinitive verbs are categorized into three main groups, and each group follows its own conjugation rules. In contrast, English verbs have just one infinitive form, which is the “to” form. Common English infinitive verbs are “**to live**,” “**to sell**,” and “**to sleep**.” In Italian, an infinitive verb is recognized by its ending: **-are**, **-ere**, and **-ire** for the first, second, and third groups. For instance, we will soon learn the verbs that correspond to the above English examples: **abitare**, **vendere** and **dormire**.

To create the present tense for the **-are** group of verbs, just drop the **-are** ending of the infinitive verb and add the appropriate ending to the stem that remains. Let’s try this method: start with **abitare** > remove the **-are** ending > to make the stem **abit**. Endings are added to the stem **abit** to reflect the speaker as follows: **o, i, a, iamo, ate, ano**. These endings alone will tell you who is doing the talking, although the subject pronouns are always included in the verb tables in this book for clarity. See the table below for the conjugation of **abitare**.

Abitare – to live			
io	<u>a</u>bito	o	I live*
tu	<u>a</u>biti	i	you (familiar) live
Lei lei/lui	<u>a</u>bita	a	you (polite) live she/he lives
noi	<u>abi</u>tiamo	iamo	we live
voi	<u>abi</u>tate	ate	you all live
loro	<u>abi</u>tano	ano	they live

*Note this simple present tense in Italian can be translated four ways:

io abito is equivalent to the English **I live, I do live, I am living, I am going to live**.

When pronouncing Italian present tense verbs, the stress will fall at the beginning of the verb for the **io**, **tu**, and **lei/lui** forms. This is usually the first syllable but less commonly can be the second syllable. Remember an Italian syllable can consist of a single vowel, as with **abitare**.

For the **noi** and **voi** forms, an additional syllable is created by combining the root with the first vowel of the new ending. The stress will change to the middle of the verb and will be at the second to the last syllable. Finally, for the **loro** form, the stress reverts to its original location on the first or second syllable at the beginning of the verb! The stressed syllables are underlined for our example verbs in the tables of this book

Present Tense

Direct Reflexive Verbs and Their Pronouns

Direct reflexive verbs are recognized by the additional ending of **-si** to the usual **-are**, **-ere**, and **-ire** endings of the Italian infinitive verbs. In the Chapter 1 dialogue from Conversational Italian for Travelers, we encounter the reflexive verb **chiamarsi**. **Chiamarsi** is the infinitive form of the verbs **chiama** and **chiamo** in the dialogue. Reflexive verbs are verbs that are combined with reflexive pronouns (myself, yourself, etc.) to refer back to the subject in the sentence.

The full list of reflexive pronouns:

mi — myself, ti — yourself (fam.), **si — yourself** (pol.), **herself, himself, itself**
ci — ourselves, vi — yourselves (fam.), **si — themselves**

For now, the only reflexive verb we will learn to conjugate is **chiamarsi**, since it is so important for making introductions in conversational Italian. To conjugate all reflexive verbs, both the reflexive pronoun and the verb ending must be changed to agree with the subject pronoun.

To start, let's conjugate **chiamarsi** the way we would any other **-are** verb: Drop the **-arsi** ending from the infinitive verb. Then add the endings for the **-are** verbs to the stem **chiam** to create the different verbs for each speaker. See the table below. The stress will fall on the second syllable for our first three forms and the **loro** form. Notice that without its reflexive pronoun, **chiamare** means "to call."

Chiamare – to call		
io	chiamo	I call*
tu	chiami	you (familiar) call
Lei lei/lui	chiama	you (polite) call she/he calls
noi	chiamiamo	we call
voi	chiamate	you all call
loro	chiamano	they call

*Note this simple present tense in Italian can be translated four ways:

io chiamo is equivalent to the English **I call I do call, I am calling, I am going to call.**

To finish the conjugation, of **chiamarsi**, place the corresponding reflexive pronoun before the verb. Notice from the English translation in the table below that the English reflexive pronoun goes after the verb, so this may take a little getting used to!

Chiamarsi – to be called, as in a name/to name oneself			
io	mi	chiamo	I call myself
tu	ti	chiami	you (familiar) call yourself
Lei/lei/lui	si	chiama	you (polite)name/she/he calls yourself, herself, himself, itself
noi	ci	chiamiamo	we call ourselves
voi	vi	chiamate	you all call yourselves
loro	si	chiamano	they call themselves



Tour Bus by La Scala Opera House, Milan

Present Tense

First Conjugation – More Regular **-are** Verbs

In the table below are some important regular **-are** verbs. Conjugate each infinitive verb. Drop the **-are** ending and add: **o, i, a, iamo, ate, ano** to the stem. Then say the verbs created for each subject pronoun out loud to get used to their pronunciation. Focus on the **I (io), you familiar (tu), and we (noi)** forms.

abitare	to live	cucinare	to cook food
accettare	to accept	danzare	to dance (perform)
accompagnare	to come along with	decollare	to take off
affittare	to rent	depositare	to check baggage
amare	to love	desiderare	to desire/want/wish for
annullare	to cancel/annul	dichiarare	to declare (customs)
arredare	to furnish/equip	domandare	to ask
arrivare	to arrive	entrare	to enter
ascoltare	to listen	fermare	to stop
aspettare	to wait	firmare	to sign
attraversare	to cross	fotografare	to take a picture
atterrare	to land (a plane)	funzionare	to function/work
aiutare	to help	girare	to turn/tour
ballare	to dance	giurare	to swear/take an oath
buttare	to throw (away)	guadagnare	to earn money
camminare	to walk	guardare	to look at
cantare	to sing	guidare	to drive
cenare	to eat diner	gustare	to savor/enjoy food
chiacchierare	to chat/gossip	illuminare	to light up
chiamare	to call	imparare	to learn
compilare	to fill out (a form)	importare	to be important/matter
comprare	to buy	indossare	to wear/put on
confermare	to confirm (reservation)	informare	to inform/educate
considerare	to consider/evaluate	incontrare	to meet/encounter
controllare	to check/control	insegnare	to teach
convalidare	to validate	mandare	to send
costare	to cost	mostrare	to show/exhibit

nuotare	to swim	scappare	to escape/run away/leave
obliterare	to cancel/validate a ticket	scherzare	to joke
ordinare	to order	scontare	to discount/reduce price
parlare	to talk/speak	scordare	to forget/to untune
passare	to pass through/ spend time/put through	sembrare	to seem/appear/look or feel like
pensare	to think	sognare	to dream
portare	to carry/bring/wear	sorpassare	to overtake/pass on road
pranzare	to eat lunch	sostare	to take a break/stop
prenotare	to make a reservation	sperare	to hope
preparare	to prepare	squillare	to ring (telephone/ doorbell)
presentare	to introduce	suonare	to play music
provare	to try/test/rehearse	svoltare	to turn around/make a turn
raccomandare	to recommend	timbrare	to stamp (ticket)
regalare	to give a gift	tornare	to physically return from somewhere (a person)
restare	to stay/remain	traslocare	to move/change residence
richiamare	to call back	trovare	to find/meet by chance / visit
ricordare	to remember	usare	to use/employ
rinnovare	to renovate	vietare	to forbid/ban/obstruct/ block
riparare	to repair	visitare	to visit (a place)
riposare	to rest	volare	to fly
riscaldare	to reheat/warm up		
riservare	to reserve		
ritornare	to return		

Present Tense

First Conjugation – Irregular **-are** Verbs

The following Italian infinitive verbs end in **-care**, **-gare**, **-ciare**, **-giare**, and **-iare**. These verbs have irregular spelling or pronunciation in some conjugations, to be discussed in later chapters:

abbracciare	to hug/embrace	litigare	to argue/fight
allacciare	to fasten/tie/lace	mangiare	to eat
annoiare	to bore	noleggiare	to rent a car
assaggiare	to taste/nibble	odiare	to hate
baciare	to kiss	pagare	to pay
bloccare	to block	parcheggiare	to park
cambiare	to change	passeggiare	to walk slowly/stroll
cercare	to look for	pescare	to fish
cominciare	to start/begin	pregare	to pray/ask of/beg
consigliare	to give advice	ringraziare	to thank
dimenticare	to forget	sbagliare	to be wrong
festeggiare	to celebrate/party	significare	to mean
giocare	to play game/sport	soffiare	to blow
graziare	to pardon/forgive	spiegare	to explain
imbarcare	to board	studiare	to study
iniziare	to begin/start	tagliare	to cut
inviare	to send	toccare	to touch
lasciare	to leave be/let go	viaggiare	to travel

NOTE: The verb tables at the end of each chapter of this book are for easy reference. (See below.) The verb conjugations presented in the current and prior chapters of each unit are listed. The blank spaces in these tables will be filled in with verb conjugations as they are covered in later chapters.

Present Tense Verb Tables for Chapter 1

Present Tense Endings	-are	-ere	-ire	-ire (isc)
io	o			
tu	i			
Lei/lei/lui	a			
noi	iamo			
voi	ate			
loro	ano			

Irregular/Auxiliary Verbs Present Tense	Essere (to be)	Avere (to have)
io		
tu		
Lei/lei/lui		
noi		
voi		
loro		

Irregular Verbs Present Tense	Andare (to go)	Volere (to want)	Sapere (to know)	Conoscere (to know)
io				
tu				
Lei/lei/lui				
noi				
voi				
loro				



Venice
Residential Canal

