

Getting started with Italian 3



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Introduction

Introduction

Whatever your reasons for learning Italian, this two-week course gives you a chance to start a new exciting learning experience or to continue learning in Italian. You will have the opportunity to learn how to talk about travel times and ask about arrival and departure times. You will also find out about trains in Italy and learn vocabulary for talking about different types of trains.

Each week comprises 3–4 hours of interactive activities, explanations, exercises and tips about language learning. It's a good idea to keep notes either in a notebook or on your preferred digital device. Each week you'll be encouraged to revise your notes and to add new vocabulary to your language notebook and decide how best you can memorise and practise key phrases and vocabulary. There is also a weekly quiz for you to practise what you've been learning.

It's also a very good idea to involve your family and friends; let them know you've decided to start learning Italian and maybe they can help you or leave you in peace when you need to study.

Buon lavoro!

Open Centre for Languages and Cultures

This course has been developed from extracts of [LXI003 - Beginners Italian 3: *stai andando bene!*](#). The Open University have launched a dedicated learning centre called [The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures](#). OpenLearn is supporting this project and is providing extracted units of all courses on The Open Centre in our dedicated [Language and Cultures Hub](#).

The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures is the exciting new home for non-accredited language and intercultural communication short courses. You can study a wide range of language and language related subjects with us anywhere in the world, in any time zone, whatever your motivation – leisure, professional development or academic.

It's the one stop shop for engaging with languages, professional communication and intercultural dialogue.

Our short courses allow us to be agile and responsive to the needs of learners who want to be part of a global society. We offer non-accredited short courses in a range of subjects including modern languages, and languages for business and the workplace. We are also leading the way in developing short courses for academic research methods and pre-sessional English with IELTS, which will be available for registration in due course.

The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures is an international leader in online language learning and intercultural communications, built on our pioneering pedagogy and research.

What makes the Open Centre different?

- The OU is the leader in online learning and teaching with a heritage of more than 50 years helping student achieve their learning ambitions.
- The short courses are underpinned by academic rigour and designed by native speakers experienced in producing engaging materials for online learning of languages and cultures.
- The graduating nature of the courses means that learners can build up their language and skills over time.
- Learners will also gain a better understanding of the culture(s) associated with the language(s) they study enabling the development of intercultural communication skills.
- Learners can mix and match the short courses and study more than one course at a time.

Once this course is complete you will be directed to OpenLearn's hub for language content where you will be able to build on your newly found language skills.

Now that you're fully prepared, it's time to start on [Week 1](#).

Week 1: Talking about arrival and departure times

Introduction



In Week 1 you are going to learn and practise how to make enquiries about travel times using the 12-hour and the 24-hour clock. This will involve using numbers as well as practising your speaking and listening skills. Before you start, you might want to revise Italian numbers.

When telling the time, the pronunciation of numbers is very important if you want to be correctly understood, so you might want to say the numbers out loud as you revise them. You will also have a chance to practise pronunciation in some of the activities that follow. Finally, you will also have the opportunity to learn about the Tuscan Archipelago and about ferry services in Italy.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course
[LXI003 - Beginners Italian 3: stai andando bene!](#)

1 Revising the 12-hour clock

You'll start by revising how to say the time so that you can understand the information you are about to be given.

Activity 1

Look at the clocks below and say the time out loud using the 12-hour clock. To check your answers, listen to the audio track. Use the transcript as well if necessary.

Guardate gli orologi qui sotto e dite l'ora ad alta voce.



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2 Revising the 24-hour clock

Practise the 24-hour clock by using it to rewrite the following times, in Italian. Follow the example.

Riscrivete le frasi qui sotto adoperando il sistema orario a 24 ore.

Esempio

Sono le sei di sera. → Sono le diciotto.

Activity 2

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3 At Piombino's tourist office

You are on the west coast of Italy, in Piombino, Tuscany, and have gone to the tourist information office to find out the times of ferries to the islands. While you are queuing at the tourist information office, you overhear some customers asking about departure and arrival times for various ferries (*traghetti*).

Activity 3



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Listen to the audio track and fill in the table with the missing times.

Ascoltate l'audio e inserite gli orari di partenza o arrivo nella tabella.

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4 Asking about arrival and departure times

To ask what time a train, bus, plane or boat leaves or arrives, and to understand the reply, you will need to know the verbs *arrivare* ('to arrive') and *partire* ('to leave', as in 'to depart', 'to set on a journey'). The present tense of both verbs is regular.

– *A che ora **arriva** il traghetto?*

– What time does the ferry arrive?

– *Il traghetto **arriva** a mezzanotte.*

– The ferry arrives at midnight.

– *A che ora **parte** l'aereo?*

– What time does the plane leave?

– *L'aereo **parte** la sera tardi.*

– The plane leaves late in the evening.

Remember the combined forms of *a* ('at') and the definite article which are used in telling the time.

*La barca parte **all'**una in punto.*

– The boat leaves at one o'clock on the dot.

*La nave per Olbia parte **alle** quattordici.*

– The ship for *Olbia* leaves at 14:00.

For regular departures, you may hear *ogni* ('every') being used.

*La barca fa il giro dell'isola **ogni** mattina.*

– The boat does a tour around the island every morning.

*Il pullman per Firenze parte **ogni** due ore.*

– The bus for Florence leaves every two hours.

Ogni does not change form, whether used with a singular or plural noun, or with a masculine or feminine noun.

5 Visiting the Tuscan Archipelago

You are at Portoferraio on Elba, the main island in the Tuscan Archipelago. You would like to take a boat trip around the island and visit some of the other islands in the archipelago. Write answers, in Italian, to the following questions, using the information in the leaflet below.

Scrivete le risposte alle domande usando informazioni nel testo.

Activity 4


Giro dell'isola d'Elba
Mattino
Partenza: 10:30
Ritorno: 13:30
Pomeriggio
Partenza: 15:40
Ritorno: 18:45

Isola del Giglio
Partenza: 10:00
Arrivo all'Isola del Giglio: 12:00
Ritorno: 18:15

Isola di Capraia
Partenza: 9:30
Arrivo all'Isola di Capraia: 11:15
Ritorno: 18:30

Isola di Pianosa
Partenza: 9:15
Arrivo all'Isola di Pianosa: 11:00
Ritorno: 18:45

Escursioni Elba Mare
(con partenza da Portoferraio)



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6 The Tuscan Archipelago

The Tuscan Archipelago is off the coast of Tuscany and is a popular holiday destination for both Italian and foreign tourists. There are seven islands in the archipelago: Elba, Giglio, Giannutri, Capraia, Pianosa, Montecristo and Gorgona.

The largest one is Elba (224 km²), which boasts beautiful beaches, medieval villages and one of the largest marine parks in Europe. It was also Napoleon's home during his first exile from May 1814 to February 1815 (his two residences are a main tourist attraction).

The island of Giglio is much smaller (24 km²) and offers not only beautiful panoramic views but also two picturesque small towns: Giglio Porto (on the coast) and Giglio Castello (inland).

Capraia is popular among snorkellers and scuba divers, who explore the seabed in search of its underwater archaeological remains.

Pianosa can only be visited with an organised guided tour because it was the seat of a maximum-security prison for terrorists and mafia criminals between 1968 and 2011, when it was closed down for good.



Vista panoramica dell' Isola d'Elba



Villa San Martino, casa di Napoleone.



Isola del Giglio, Giglio Castello.

7 Visiting the Tuscan Archipelago (continued)

Now write the questions you would ask to find out information for the trips to Capraia and Pianosa. Follow the example.

Adesso scrivete le domande per chiedere informazioni sui viaggi per Capraia e Pianosa.

Esempio:

Parte alle nove e trenta di mattina.

Answer: A che ora parte la barca per l'isola di Capraia / per Capraia?

Activity 5

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8 Speaking practice

You'll now practise asking about departure and arrival times.

Activity 6

Listen to the audio track and record yourself asking questions following the prompts. Then listen to the model answer. Follow the example.

Ascoltate l'audio e fate le domande. Seguite l'esempio.

Esempio

You hear: Ask what time the ferry to Capri departs.

You say: *A che ora parte il traghetto per Capri?*

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2.

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4.

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9 Italian ferry and hydrofoil service

Italy has a total of almost 8,500 km of coastline, including the mainland and numerous islands around the country. The main links between islands and mainland are by ferries and hydrofoils. The main Italian ports of embarkation for the large islands of Sicilia and Sardegna are (from North to South) Genova, Livorno, Civitavecchia, Napoli and Villa San Giovanni (on the tip of the boot, opposite Sicily).

The network of ferry services is well developed. Large ferries (*navi*) service the islands of Sardegna and Sicilia, while smaller islands are served by small ferries (*traghetti*) and hydrofoils (*aliscafi*). Ferries and hydrofoils also operate between towns on the northern lakes of Como, Garda and Maggiore.

Ticket prices are usually reasonable but vary according to the time of year and are most expensive during the summer. Some services operate during the summer only and some journeys are very long. For example, the Genova–Palermo boat takes 23 hours and provides sleeping facilities in the form of reclining seats (*poltrone*), couchettes (*cuccette*) and cabins (*cabine*). On the other hand, ferries leave from Villa San Giovanni (on the mainland) for Messina (in Sicilia) every 15 minutes during peak hours and the service operates 24 hours per day.

Ferries also operate like a bus service on the lakes, carrying passengers (and often cars) from one side to the other and calling at lake islands. The car ferry service is usually convenient, as some of the northern lakes are long and narrow, and driving around them takes hours.



Traghetto per la Sardegna.



Aliscafo in alto mare.

10 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week quiz.

[Week 1 quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link), then return here when you have done it.

11 Summary of Week 1

It is useful to keep notes on the main points to remember, which could be grammar rules, vocabulary or expressions. The way in which you choose to keep this record of your learning is up to you: a simple paper notebook, an electronic document, mind maps or any means which suits you. It is important that you add to it regularly so that all key learning points are together in one place and easily accessible for reference and revision. Many learners also find that writing notes helps them to understand grammar points and to memorise vocabulary and expressions. Adding an example of your own to each rule, term and expression will help you fix them in your memory.

Whether you keep your notes on paper or digitally, it's important to get organised, so here is an idea that may help, based on your Week 1 studies.

Week 1 Reflection

What would you write into each box, if anything? Would you add more boxes?

Pronunciation

Provide your answer...

Culture

Provide your answer...

Language

Provide your answer...

You can now go to [Week 2](#).

Week 2: Enquiring about train times

Introduction



This week, you will find out about the Italian rail network and learn vocabulary for talking about different types of train. You will also learn how to ask about the availability of trains to certain destinations and to use *c'è* ('there is') and *ci sono* ('there are').

1 The Italian rail network



Linee dei Treni ad Alta Velocità (TAV)

Travelling by train can be a cheap and convenient means of getting around in Italy, although to travel from Brennero in the far north-east to Reggio Calabria at the southern tip of Italy would take at least 15 hours and involve three changes of train.

The Italian rail network, previously known as *Ferrovie dello Stato (FS)*, is now known as *Trenitalia*. Still state-owned, it is heavily subsidised, which keeps ticket prices low. As in other European countries, it is now possible to buy most tickets online. In 2012, the privately owned *Italo* began services between 30 stations in main cities using 300 km/h high speed trains.

The *Treni ad Alta Velocità* (TAV), or fast through-trains, link several major cities in both the north and south. At the other end of the spectrum, many parts of the country are still heavily dependent on the *treni regionali* (regional trains), which are slow and stop frequently. Somewhere in between are the *treni nazionali* (national trains), which link major towns throughout Italy.

The rail network is very much a product of the country's geography. Central and southern Italy are divided along most of their length by the natural barrier of the Appenines, meaning that east–west rail links are few and far between. In the Po Valley in the north of Italy, however, east–west rail links are good, with a fast train network extending from Genoa in the west to Trieste in the east.

There are still areas of the country where stations are either non-existent or far from the town they are named after (for example, in rural Tuscany or the hill towns of the south and Sicily). In some cities, a bus service links the station to the town centre. To take just one example, the popular tourist destination of Assisi has a station in the nearby town of Santa Maria degli Angeli from which travellers can reach Assisi's historical town centre by bus. In contrast, many regional airports, such as Pisa and Rome Fiumicino, have their own train station with frequent shuttle services to the main train station.

In recent decades, there has been heavy investment in the high-speed rail network and this is set to expand further, despite ongoing protests (*anti-TAV*) against its expansion in the north of Italy. The map above shows the current high-speed network and its planned expansion.

2 Italian trains

You'll now expand on your reading of Italian.



Activity 1

Read the following text. Then, below it, tick the statements that are true.

Leggete il testo e decidete quali delle frasi seguenti è corretta.

I treni in Italia

In Italia alcuni treni viaggiano solo all'interno delle regioni e altri viaggiano su tutto il territorio nazionale.

I treni regionali si fermano in quasi tutte le stazioni e collegano i piccoli centri. Hanno solo la seconda classe e costano poco ma viaggiano lentamente, a circa 100 km orari. Però c'è anche un regionale veloce, economico ma meno frequente. Su molti treni si può portare la bicicletta pagando il supplemento bici.

I treni nazionali (Intercity e Frecciabianca) collegano città grandi e medie su tutto il territorio nazionale, hanno prima e seconda classe e viaggiano tra i 150 e 200 km orari.

Ci sono anche i Treni ad Alta Velocità (TAV). Le linee TAV coprono 1.342 km del territorio e collegano alcune delle principali città, in particolare: Roma e Firenze nel Centro; Napoli e Salerno nel Sud; Bologna, Milano e Torino nel Nord. Altre linee sono in parte in costruzione, in parte in progettazione. I Treni ad Alta Velocità viaggiano tra i 250 e i 300 km orari e sono di due tipi: Frecciarossa e Frecciargento.

I Frecciarossa viaggiano a 300 km orari e si fermano solo nelle città principali. Hanno la carrozza ristorante e quattro classi (standard, premium, business ed executive). Tra Roma e Milano c'è un Frecciarossa ogni ora, dalle 6 di mattina alle 7 di sera.

I Frecciargento viaggiano a 250 km orari, collegano principalmente Roma con le città del Sud (come Bari) e le città del Nord-Est (come Venezia), ma si fermano in alcune stazioni intermedie. Hanno due classi (prima e seconda) e una carrozza bar. Tra Roma e Venezia c'è un Frecciargento ogni ora, dalle 6 del mattino alle 7 di sera.

Vocabolario

alcuni, alcune (some when used with plural nouns)

si fermano (from *fermarsi*) they stop

collegano (from *collegare*) they connect

costano (from *costare*) they cost

in parte partly

a 250 km orari at 250 km per hour

si può portare one can take

dalle 6 del mattino from 6 o'clock in the morning

- ☐ I treni regionali hanno la prima classe.
- ☐ I treni regionali fermano nelle piccole città.
- ☐ I treni regionali sono sempre molto veloci.
- ☐ I Treni ad Alta velocità vanno solo nelle grandi città.
- ☐ I Frecciarossa viaggiano spesso tra Roma e Milano.
- ☐ Molte persone prendono un Frecciarossa alle 8 di sera.
- ☐ Gli Intercity hanno la classe premium.
- ☐ I Frecciarossa hanno la classe business.
- ☐ I Frecciargento si fermano nelle piccole città.
- ☐ I Frecciargento hanno il bar.

Answer

The correct answers are:

I treni regionali fermano nelle piccole città.

I Treni ad Alta velocità vanno solo nelle grandi città.

I Frecciarossa viaggiano spesso tra Roma e Milano.

I Frecciarossa hanno la classe business.

I Frecciargento hanno il bar.

Look at the text again and find the equivalent in Italian for the following expressions.

Guardate di nuovo il testo e trovate l'equivalente italiano delle seguenti espressioni.

large and medium-sized cities

some of the main cities

other lines are partly being built, partly at the planning stage

stations in between

restaurant carriage

Match each of the items above to an item below.

città grandi e medie

alcune delle principali città

altre linee sono in parte in costruzione, in parte in progettazione

le stazioni intermedie

la carrozza ristorante

3 Checking availability of trains

You'll now use your listening skills.



Activity 2

Listen to the audio track and tick the cities that are mentioned by the speakers.

Ascoltate l'audio e indicate quali città vengono menzionate.

Vocabolario

stamattina this morning

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- ☐ Genova
- ☐ Milano
- ☐ Trieste
- ☐ Napoli
- ☐ Roma
- ☐ L'Aquila
- ☐ Trento

- ☐ Firenze
- ☐ Ancona
- ☐ Aosta
- ☐ Catanzaro
- ☐ Bologna
- ☐ Perugia
- ☐ Bari
- ☐ Campobasso
- ☐ Cagliari
- ☐ Venezia
- ☐ Potenza
- ☐ Torino
- ☐ Palermo

Answer

The correct answers are:

Trieste, Napoli, Firenze, Bologna, Bari, Venezia.

Now listen to the audio track again and write in Italian the information given by the person at the railway information office. Check your answers against the transcript.
Riascoltate l'audio e scrivete in italiano le informazioni fornite dall'impiegato. Usate la trascrizione per controllare le risposte.

Provide your answer...

4 Talking about the availability of something



To talk about the availability of something (such as trains or buses or planes), you can use *c'è* or its plural form *ci sono*.

C'è un treno per Napoli?

Is there a train for Naples?

Ci sono posti liberi?

Are there any free seats?

C'è un Frecciarossa alle 19:45.

There's a Frecciarossa train at 19:45.

There is no difference in word order between a statement – for example, *C'è un treno* – and a question – *C'è un treno?* To make a sentence sound like a question, you simply need to alter your intonation by raising your voice at the end.

5 Grammar practice

You'll now have the opportunity to focus on grammar.

STAZIONE DI TORINO PORTA SUSA			
ORA	BINARIO	DESTINAZIONE	TIPO
07:15	4	VENEZIA SANTA LUCIA	FRECCIABIANCA
07:25	3	NAPOLI CENTRALE	FRECCIAROSSA
07:50	7	ROMA TERMINI	FRECCIAROSSA
08:05	5	MILANO CENTRALE	REGIONALE
08:20	4	PINEROLO	REGIONALE
08:55	3	CHIVASSO	REGIONALE
09:00	5	MILANO CENTRALE	FRECCIAROSSA
09:50	4	ROMA TERMINI	FRECCIAROSSA
10:10	3	PINEROLO	REGIONALE
11:05	6	MILANO CENTRALE	REGIONALE
11:50	2	ROMA TERMINI	FRECCIAROSSA

Electronic departure board, Torino Porta Susa station

Activity 3

At the information office in Turin railway station, passengers are asking for information about trains to a variety of destinations. Look at the electronic departure board above and answer their enquiries, writing down your answer. Use *c'è* and *ci sono* as appropriate.

Usate la tabella elettronica per rispondere alle domande dei passeggeri. Scrivete le vostre risposte qui sotto.

Esempio

Scusi, c'è un treno per Venezia?

→ Sì, c'è un Frecciabianca alle 7:15.

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6 Train timetables



ORA	BINARIO	DESTINAZIONE	TIPO	RITARDO
19:07	4	MI CADORNA	->	7
19:08	3	COMO LAGO	->	3
** 19:10	7	S2 MI VITTORIA		---
19:11	5	S3 SARONNO	->	2
19:11	4	MI CADORNA	->	5
19:14	3	VARESE NORD		---
19:17	5	CANZO ASSO		---
19:17	4	MI CADORNA	->	3
19:20	3	COMO LAGO		---
19:20	6	S3 MI CADORNA	->	10

19:09

EURO DISPLAY S.p.A. (TEL)

Up Taxi Bus Information



Train timetables are available on the Italian railways (*Trenitalia*) website. As in most European cities, Italian railway stations provide live departure and arrival information on digital electronic boards ('*Partenze*' and '*Arrivi*' respectively), showing the scheduled time (*ora*), platform (*binario*), destination (*destinazione*) or station of origin (*provenienza*), type of train (*tipo*) (for example, *Intercity*, *regionale*, etc.) and any delay (*ritardo*). These electronic boards generally only show trains departing or arriving over the next two to three hours.

You will also find large printed timetables on notice boards (one for *Partenze* and one for *Arrivi*) listing all regular train departures and arrivals for a 24-hour period, in chronological order, with information on platform, destination, type of train and stops in between. The sheer number of trains on one poster, however, and the number of people crowded around the same board, can often make it quite difficult to find your train details, especially if you know the destination but don't have information about the departure time. To avoid

this problem, many passengers use the *Trenitalia* app to check train times and progress in real time and to view the latest arrivals and departure information of a particular station.

7 More practice

You'll now listen to people asking about the availability of trains at different times of the day.

Activity 4

Listen to the following audio recording.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Complete the sentences with the appropriate word or expression from the drop-down menu. Then listen again to the dialogues on the audio track to check your answers.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



8 Speaking practice

Next, you'll further explore train times.

Activity 5

You are at the information office in Turin railway station and you want to ask for information about trains to a variety of destinations. Listen to the audio track and ask the questions following the prompts, using *c'è* and *ci sono* as appropriate.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Vocabolario

stasera this evening

9 This week's quiz

Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week quiz.

[Week 2 quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link), then return here when you have done it.

10 Summary of Week 2

This week you have learned about the Italian rail network and the vocabulary for talking about different types of train. You should also be able to ask about the availability of trains to specific destinations and to use *c'è* ('there is') and *ci sono* ('there are').

The expressions *c'è* and *ci sono* are very frequently used. To practise them, look at the timetables of your local trains and practise saying which trains are available in the morning (*la mattina*), in the afternoon (*il pomeriggio*) and in the evening (*la sera*).

You have now reached the end of this course.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [LXI003 *Beginners Italian 3: stai andando bene!*](#).

Next steps

We hope that you'll continue your Italian studies with The Open University on our Beginners Italian courses:

[Beginners Italian 1: primi passi](#)

[Beginners Italian 2: in cammino](#)

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Week 2

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