

Italian A2

— What to Study

Level: **A2 (Waystage)** • Language: **Italian** • Audience: **Learners**

A2 is where Italian opens up in time. At A1 everything happened now; at A2 you can tell someone what you did at the weekend, describe what your childhood was like and make plans for next month. It is also where object pronouns start to multiply around the verb — small words that make a big difference to how natural you sound.

The Common European Framework describes A2 as being able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance — basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment; to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters; and to describe in simple terms aspects of your background, immediate environment and matters of immediate need.

Grammar to master

The passato prossimo. The everyday past tense: *avere* or *essere* plus a past participle — *Ho mangiato, Sono andata*.

- Regular participles: *-are* → *-ato*, *-ere* → *-uto*, *-ire* → *-ito*
- Common irregular participles: *fatto, detto, visto, preso, messo, scritto, aperto, letto, venuto, stato*
- *essere* with most verbs of movement and change of state — *andare, venire, arrivare, partire, uscire, nascere, morire, restare, diventare* — and with all reflexive verbs
- With *essere*, the participle agrees with the subject: *Maria è partita, Siamo arrivati*

The imperfetto. The past tense for description, background and habit: *Da bambino abitavo a Napoli*. At A2 you need the forms and the basic contrast: the *imperfetto* sets the scene, the *passato prossimo* moves the story — *Mentre leggevo, è squillato il telefono*.

The future. The *futuro semplice* for plans and predictions — *Domani pioverà* — and the main irregular stems: *sarò, avrò, andrò, farò, potrò, verrò*. It is also used for guesses: *Sarà vero?* — I wonder if it's true.

Object pronouns.

- Direct: *mi, ti, lo, la, ci, vi, li, le* — *Lo vedo domani*
- Indirect: *mi, ti, gli, le, ci, vi, gli* — *Le telefono stasera*
- *ne* for quantities: *Ne vorrei due*; *ci* for places: *Ci vado domani*
- In the past, the participle agrees with *lo, la, li, le*: *L'ho vista, Li ho comprati*

More tools.

- Reflexive verbs: *alzarsi, chiamarsi, vestirsi* — *Mi sono alzato presto*
- *stare* plus the gerund for actions in progress: *Sto mangiando*
- Comparatives: *più / meno ... di / che*, and the irregular *migliore* and *meglio*
- The informal imperative, with pronouns attached: *Dimmi, Fallo, Andiamo!*
- The relative pronoun *che*: *il libro che ho letto*
- *da* with the present for something still going on: *Studio italiano da due anni*

Vocabulary areas

Aim for roughly 1,000 to 1,500 active words, still learning each noun with its article.

- Past events: the weekend, holidays, childhood, life stages
- Travel: booking, the station and airport, hotels, delays
- Health: the body, symptoms, the doctor's and the pharmacy
- Shopping: clothes and sizes, returns, comparing prices
- Housing: looking for a flat, rooms and furniture, neighbours
- Work and study: the working day, appointments, simple emails
- Celebrations, invitations and gifts
- Weather and the seasons in more detail
- Directions and describing where things are

What you should be able to do

- Describe what you did last weekend or on your last holiday
- Describe a place or a person from your past using the *imperfetto*
- Make, change and cancel an appointment by phone or email
- Explain a simple health problem to a doctor or pharmacist
- Give a reason with *perché* and a simple opinion with *Secondo me...*
- Compare two things: flats, products, cities, plans
- Buy a train ticket and deal with a simple problem such as a delay
- Write a short informal email or message about everyday matters
- Understand the main point of short, clear announcements and messages

Common difficulties

Avere or essere? Most verbs take *avere*. Verbs of movement and change, and all reflexive verbs, take *essere* — and then the participle agrees. Some verbs switch depending on use: *Ho finito il libro* but *Il film è finito*.

Passato prossimo or imperfetto? Ask whether the action is a completed event that moves the story on, or background: a description, a habit, something in progress.

Da with the present. *Vivo qui da tre anni* means "I have lived here for three years". English uses a perfect tense; Italian uses the present because the situation is still true.

Where the pronoun goes. Before a conjugated verb (*Lo compro*), attached to an infinitive, gerund or informal imperative (*Voglio comprarlo*, *Compralo!*). Practise both positions.

How to know you are ready for B1

You are ready when you can tell a simple story in the past — mixing *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto* mostly correctly — without stopping to build every verb, and when single object pronouns land in the right place without planning. If you still avoid talking about the past, consolidate A2 before moving on.

Next step

Move on to the Italian B1 guide, which adds the conditional and the subjunctive so you can talk about what would, could or should happen.

Written by GongbuLeng. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 descriptors. For the official Italian certification at this level, CILS A2, see the Università per Stranieri di Siena's CILS levels page.