

Italian B2

— What to Study

Level: **B2 (Vantage)** • Language: **Italian** • Audience: **Learners**

B2 is where you stop working around Italian and start working in it. You can follow a lecture or a meeting, argue a point, read an opinion column and write a structured text that a native speaker would take seriously. It is the level many Italian universities ask of international students, and the one where the formal, written side of the language comes fully into view.

The Common European Framework describes B2 as being able to understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in your field of specialisation; to interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party; and to produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Grammar to master

The congiuntivo in all tenses.

- *Congiuntivo imperfetto and trapassato: Pensavo che fosse vero, Credevo che fossero già partiti*
- The sequence of tenses: the tense of the main verb decides which *congiuntivo* follows
- Concession and condition: *sebbene, nonostante, qualora, purché, a condizione che*

Hypotheses.

- Unreal present: *Se avessi più tempo, studierei di più*
- Unreal past: *Se l'avessi saputo, sarei venuto*
- Mixed forms: *Se fossi partito prima, adesso sarei già a casa*

Reported speech. Tense shifts when the reporting verb is in the past: *Ha detto che era stanco, Mi ha chiesto se sarei venuto, Hanno spiegato che erano già partiti.*

Reading formal and literary Italian.

- The *passato remoto* in written narrative, and producing it when you write a story
- Implicit constructions with the gerund and participle: *Finito il lavoro, siamo usciti; Essendo tardi, abbiamo preso un taxi*
- The passive of obligation with *andare*: *Questo documento va firmato* — "this document must be signed"
- Nominal style in reports and articles

Structuring an argument.

- Connectors for contrast and consequence: *tuttavia, invece, pertanto, di conseguenza, da un lato ... dall'altro*
- Concession and nuance: *è vero che ... ma, pur + gerund — pur essendo stanco*
- Formal letter conventions: *Gentile, Egregio, La ringrazio per..., Distinti saluti*

Vocabulary areas

Aim for a broad passive vocabulary and at least 4,000 words you can use actively, with a clear sense of register.

- Society and politics, the economy, current affairs
- Science, technology and the environment
- The world of work in formal terms: contracts, responsibilities, negotiations
- Education and research
- Culture: literature, film, the arts, criticism
- The language of argument: stating a position, conceding, contrasting, concluding
- Formal correspondence and phrases for presentations and meetings

What you should be able to do

- Follow a lecture, presentation or meeting on a topic in your field
- Argue for a position in a discussion, respond to objections and summarise the other side fairly
- Understand newspaper articles and reports, including opinion pieces
- Write a structured argued text or formal letter with a clear position, advantages and disadvantages
- Write formal emails and letters in the appropriate register
- Give a short presentation and answer questions on it
- Understand most films and TV series in standard Italian
- Explain a complex process or problem clearly

Common difficulties

The sequence of tenses. Choosing between *sia, fosse, sia stato* and *fosse stato* depends on the main verb and on time. Practise transforming the same sentence from present to past until the pattern is familiar.

Register. The gap between spoken Italian and formal written Italian is wide. What sounds natural with friends can sound careless in an email to a professor, and bureaucratic Italian can be hard to read even for natives.

Subtle false friends. *Eventualmente* means if necessary or possibly, not eventually. *Attualmente* means currently. *Una fattoria* is a farm, not a factory, which is *una fabbrica*.

Idioms and fixed expressions. B2 speakers are expected to understand common idioms — *in bocca al lupo*, *costare un occhio della testa* — and to use a few naturally.

How to know you are ready for C1

You are ready when you can take part in a discussion on an unfamiliar abstract topic without falling back on simpler language, when an opinion column no longer needs a dictionary for its structure, and when your formal writing reads as organised Italian rather than translated thought. C1 moves from arguing clearly to arguing precisely: nuance, implication and style.

Written by GongbuLeng. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 descriptors. For the official Italian certification at this level, CILS DUE-B2, see the Università per Stranieri di Siena's CILS levels page.