

Most Common Italian Words and Phrases

**Parla
Italiano?**

Thomas Institute Press



Italiano

The ability to use even a few basic words and phrases in Italian can greatly enhance your travel experience, show respect for the local culture, and often lead to warmer interactions with locals. The Italian language is beautiful and expressive, so using these key phrases will help you navigate everything from a quick espresso at a coffee bar (*un caffè*) to asking for the bill at a restaurant (*il conto*).

Here are the most essential Italian words and phrases, broken down by category, focusing on common situations you'll encounter.

Greetings and Basic Courtesy

Italian	Pronunciation	Meaning
ciao	chow	hi, bye
buongiorno	bon-jor-no	good morning
buonasera	bo-na-se-ra	good evening
scusi	scu-si	excuse me
salve	sal-ve	hi
grazie	gra-tsee-eh	thanks
prego	pray-go	you're welcome
per favore	per-fa-vo-re	please
sì / no	cee / no	yes / no

Asking for Help and Directions

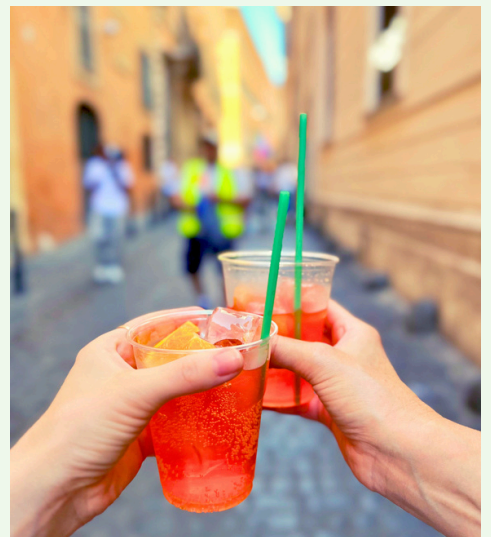
parla inglese?	par-la in-gle-se	Speak English?
non capisco	non ca-pi-sco	I don't understand.
dov'è...?	do-vee	Where is?
destra / sinistra	de-stra / si-ni-stra	right / left
diritto	dee-reet-oh	straight

Eating, Shopping, and Transactions

un caffè	un-kaf-feh	an espresso
il conto	eel-kon-to	the check
quanto costa?	kwan-to co-sta	How much?
posso pagare?	po-so pa-ga-re	Can I pay?
il bagno	eel-ba-nyo	the bathroom

Miscellaneous

piacere	pi-a-che-reh	pleasure
va bene	va beh-neh	okay
andiamo	an-di-ah-mo	let's go
È buonissimo	e bo-nee-see-mo	it's delicious
allora	a-low-ra	so..., well...



Reflection Questions

1. Greetings and Respect (*ciao, buongiorno, buonasera*): You have three main greetings. Why might it be a sign of respect in Rome to use *buongiorno* (good morning/day) or *buonasera* (good evening) with a waiter or shopkeeper instead of the more casual *ciao*?
2. Politeness in Requests (*scusi* and *per favore*): You need to get the attention of a server or ask a stranger to move so you can pass. How does using *scusi* (excuse me) before asking your question, and then *per favore* (Please) within the request, make you a better and more polite tourist?
3. Understanding and Communicating (*si, no, non capisco*): Imagine a situation where someone gives you directions or information very quickly in Italian. In that moment, why is *non capisco* (I don't understand) more useful than just shaking your head and saying *no*?
4. Practical Use (*Quanto costa?* and *il conto, per favore*): Think about buying a small souvenir or eating at a busy cafe. Which phrase is more helpful for ending a transaction—*Quanto costa?* (How much does it cost?) or *il conto, per favore* (the check, please)—and how will you respond with *grazie* and *prego* when the other person helps you?
5. Handling Language Barriers (*Parla inglese?*): After attempting to speak a few Italian words, what is the most respectful way to ask for help in English using the phrase *Parla inglese?* (Do you speak English?)? How does trying to use *grazie* and *per favore* still show effort, even if the conversation continues in English?

To learn more, visit Thomas Institute at www.thomas-institute.com.
Copyright © 2025 by Thomas Institute Press. All rights reserved.



THOMAS INSTITUTE
LEARNING ON LOCATION