



Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Italian

Information for new students

Welcome to Oxford! We are looking forward to meeting you in October. Here is some advice on how to prepare before the start of your first-year course.

1) Language

Whether you have an A-Level or you start as a beginner, language classes in your first year will give you a firm grasp of grammar, develop your vocabulary and language skills and prepare you for the Language Preliminary Exams at the end of Trinity Term. Teaching in your first year will consist of 4 to 6 hours a week (depending on entry level) comprising grammar and vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, speaking, writing, prose (translation from English into Italian) and translation (from Italian into English). Material will be provided by the Language Tutors, who will also advise you on independent learning and weekly assignments.

Material for classes will be provided by the Language Tutors, who will also advise you on independent learning and weekly assignments. You will need to purchase the following grammar book prior to the start of Michaelmas Term:

Beginners:

- *The Ultimate Italian Review and Practice*, by David Stillman, second edition (McGraw-Hill, 2019).

Post A-Level students:

- *A Reference Grammar of Modern Italian*, by Martin Maiden and Cecilia Robustelli (Routledge, 2007; second edition).

All students should acquire a good bi-lingual dictionary such as *Oxford-Paravia* or *il Ragazzini*. These and others will be available in the Oxford libraries and reputable online dictionaries (please see list below) may also be used.

In addition, other texts you may find useful during the year are:

- *Upgrade Your Italian*, by Clelia Boscolo (Hodder Education, 2005)
- *Modern Italian Grammar Workbook*, by Anna Proudfoot, second edition (Routledge, 2005)
- *Modern Italian Grammar. A Practical Guide*, 3rd edition, by Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo, (Routledge, 2013)

Information for Beginners:

Diagnostic Test:



Prior to the start of the academic year, you are required to take a language test online. You will be sent a link at the beginning of September and you will be required to do the online test between 10th and no later than 20th September 2024. The test will enable us allocate you to the appropriate class and it is therefore important that it reflects your actual knowledge at the time. Please make sure you complete the test, otherwise we'll be unable to assign you to the appropriate group.

Advice on how to prepare:

During the first year you will acquire a sound knowledge of the Italian language with regards to morphology, syntax, spelling and vocabulary and be able to speak, read advanced texts and write using a good range of structures. The language course will start by covering the basics and students are not expected to have prior knowledge. However, in order to benefit the most from the teaching (and not be too daunted by its fast and intense pace) students are strongly advised to prepare in advance and begin studying the following grammatical points over the summer prior to coming to Oxford: Nouns: gender and plural formation; Definite and indefinite articles; Adjectives: gender and plural formation; Verbs: Present indicative of regular and irregular verbs; *Passato prossimo* (regular participle formation); Forms of the *Imperfetto*.

It would be particularly useful to start learning regular (as well as some irregular) verb forms by heart (at this stage *present indicative*, *participio passato* and *imperfetto*), which will allow you to focus more on use and practice and give you an excellent starting point for the whole academic year. You can prepare through self-study on any good grammar text you may already have, or with the recommended *The Ultimate Italian Review and Practice* by David Stillman that you'll be using in class during the year. You can make excellent progress by working on your own, going through the above grammar points, doing some exercises, reading, listening etc. You can practice your Italian grammar and other skills also using online courses, such as the following:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~cmazzoni/3grammatica/grammatica/index.html>

You will find here explanations of the basic structures of Italian grammar, as well as many exercises. Highly recommended.

http://www.iluss.it/schede_gram_free.html

A selection of exercises on grammar points, vocabulary and listening (with the transcript). From beginners to advanced, arranged by levels.

ONLINE DICTIONARIES:

You will always be encouraged to use a good-sized bi-lingual dictionary throughout your years at Oxford, whether you have purchased your own copy or whether you are going to study in your College Library or in the Taylorian Library. Dictionary apps, such as the *Ragazzini* bilingual dictionary, are also an excellent tool and easier to carry around. The following reputable dictionaries are also available online (free):

Bilingual dictionaries:

[Dizionario di Inglese Sansoni](#)
[Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica](#)
[Collins Dictionary](#)

Monolingual dictionaries:

[Dizionario di italiano Sabatini-Coletti](#)
[Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana](#)
[Treccani](#)

Synonyms:

[Dizionario dei Sinonimi e dei Contrari](#)



Reading

During your first year you will be studying four novels, a film, poetry, and reading texts from a variety of sources. You will be expected to develop your skills so that by the third term you can read the primary texts in Italian. You may start reading some Italian short stories with parallel text. There are many available, including the recent *Great Italian Stories. 10 Parallel Texts*, ed. by Jumpha Lahiri (Penguin, 2024).

2) Literature

In the first year, you will be working on two literature papers, each with prescribed works:

➤ **"Modern Italian Narrative and Cinema" (Paper IV):**

Prescribed texts (any edition of the following, in Italian; beginners are allowed to read them in translation, in the first instance, but the examination will be based on the original Italian texts):

- 1) Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*
- 2) Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare*
- 3) Italo Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*
- 4) Igiaba Scego, *La mia casa è dove sono*
- 5) *I cento passi* (film directed by Marco Tullio Giordana).

Students will also be expected to have such knowledge of the literary, intellectual and historical background as is necessary for the understanding of these works.

➤ **"Aspects of Italian Lyric Poetry" (Paper III):**

- 1) *The Italian Sonnet from the Middle Ages to the present*. A selection of sonnets, which will be available from the Faculty office, will be studied as an introduction to poetry in general, and to the exercise of close critical commentary.
- 2a) Giuseppe Ungaretti, selection from *L'allegria*, in *Vita d'un uomo: 106 poesie (1914-1960)*, Mondadori Oscar, Milan: *Eterno, Nasce forse, In galleria, In memoria, Veglia, Il porto sepolto* (NB: this poem is not included in the anthology), *Fratelli, Sono una creatura, I fiumi, Pellegrinaggio, La notte bella, San Martino del Carso, Distacco, Italia, Commiato, Allegria di naufragi, Mattina, Dormire, Un'altra notte, Vanità, Girovago, Sereno, Soldati, Preghiera*.
- 2b) Eugenio Montale, selection from *Ossi di seppia*, Mondadori Oscar, Milan: *In limine, Non chiederci la parola, Meriggiare pallido e assorto, Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato, So l'ora in cui la faccia più impassibile, Gloria del disteso mezzogiorno, Felicità raggiunta si cammina, Il canneto rispunta i suoi cimelli, Forse un mattino andando, La farandola dei fanciulli sul greto, Cigola la carrucola del pozzo*; and all nine poems from the section "Mediterraneo".



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Italian books can be ordered, among others, at any of these bookshops:

B.H. Blackwell Ltd.

51 Broad Street

Oxford OX1 3BQ

Tel. 01865.792792

www.blackwell.co.uk

Grant & Cutler at Foyles

107 Charing Cross Road

London WC2H 0DT

Tel. 020.74403248

www.grantandcutler.com

The European Bookshop

123 Gloucester Road, Kensington

London SW7 4TE

Tel. 020.72401634

www.italianbookshop.co.uk

See also: www.amazon.co.uk

www.unilibro.it

www.inmondadori.it

www.ibs.it

N.B. Before arriving in Oxford you should have read at least prescribed texts 1) & 2) for the "Modern Italian Narrative & Cinema" paper, and the selected poems from Ungaretti's 'L'Allegria' (included in *Vita d'un uomo: 106 poesie*) and Eugenio Montale's *Ossi di seppia*.

THIS SUMMER

Please note that, for your studies at Oxford to be successful, it is **CRUCIAL** that you use every long break that precedes a term to read and take notes on **all** the texts assigned for that coming term. In other words, these intervals are to be considered as **reading periods**.

Why is this? The terms at Oxford are short (eight weeks), and, each week in term, you will only have time to go back to your notes, re-read certain passages of the set texts, think about your essay questions, consult secondary sources, and write your essays. You won't have any time to do the primary reading properly. If you don't complete this reading during the summer, your first term will be a real struggle and you will be very likely to produce unsatisfactory work. Conversely, you will enjoy the seminars and tutorials and make good progress if you are properly organized and prepared.

NOTE TAKING WHILE READING

It is also important to take notes as you read the set texts. You will need these notes when writing your essays and taking your examinations at the end of the year. If you don't know where to begin, one way to proceed is to prepare for yourself a summary for each set text in which you identify and analyse: **1)** the

(political, socio-historical, literary) context in which the text was written; **2)** the overall structure of the text, its plot and/or core images (poetry), **3)** its treatment of time and space if applicable, **4)** characterization if applicable, **5)** several key scenes/passages (four to six) that seem important and that

you should close read meticulously, and **6)** its uses of form, language, and voice. In addition, you should identify and reflect on several key themes/questions (four to six) that seem prominent across the set texts.

PRACTICALITIES

The University of Oxford often uses a vocabulary of its own to refer to its organisation and members.

A helpful glossary of these terms can be found here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/history/oxford-glossary?wssl=1>



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The university term dates can be found here (under “dates of full term”):
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/dates-of-term?wssl=1>

NOTA BENE: “Michaelmas Term” is the first term of the academic year (October to December). “Hilary Term” is the second (January to March). “Trinity Term” is the third (April to June). Every term is made up of eight weeks *and* of an additional week, called “Noughth Week” (0th Week) that precedes these eight weeks. Students are expected to be in College during 0th Week for scheduling meetings and/or collections (i.e. College examinations). If, for example, the official date for the start of term is 8 October, you should be in College the week before the 8th.

[REVISED 24.06.24]