

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
MODERN LANGUAGES – ITALIAN – Information for new students

This 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 comprehension, Reading comprehension, Essay writing, Prose (Translation from English into Italian) and Translation from Italian into English. By your second term you will be required to read one of the narrative set texts entirely in Italian as there is no translation.

Material 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 books prior to the start of Michaelmas Term (they will be available at Oxford Blackwell's):

Beginners:

- *Nuova Grammatica Pratica della Lingua Italiana*, by Susanna Nocchi (Alma Edizioni, preferably the Edizione Aggiornata latest edition 2022): this will be used at the Italian Pre-sessional and beyond]
- *The Ultimate Italian Review and Practice*, by David Stillman, second edition (McGraw-Hill, 2019): this will prove to be a good introduction but also a useful companion to consolidate and expand your knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in class and independently.

Post A-Level students:

- *Soluzioni: A Practical Grammar of Contemporary Italian*, by Denise De Rome, fourth edition (Routledge, 2015).

Other texts recommended for use later in the year include:

- *Upgrade Your Italian*, by Clelia Boscolo (Hodder Education, 2005)
- *Modern Italian Grammar Workbook*, by Anna Proudfoot, second edition (Routledge, 2005)

For reference (at advanced level):

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

If you are a beginner, you may start reading some *Easy Readers* ([Easy Readers Italian](#) and [Italiano facile](#) at the European Bookshop in London) and work through them with a dictionary; if you studied Italian at a more advanced level you will enjoy reading the set texts in the original and other works of modern Italian literature, such as collections of short stories. We recommend that you always write down the word or phrase you've looked up in your own vocabulary notebook and go over it to consolidate what you have learnt. You should also acquire a good-sized bilingual Dictionary (such as *Oxford-Paravia* or *il Ragazzini*), also available in libraries at Oxford. The following bilingual and monolingual dictionaries are available online:

[Dizionario di italiano Sabatini-Coletti](#)

[Dizionario di Inglese Sansoni](#)

[Dizionario Garzanti Linguistica](#)

[Collins Dictionary](#)

[Dizionario dei Sinonimi e dei Contrari Rizzoli](#)

[Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana Treccani](#)

[Treccani Sinonimi e Contrari](#)

Language Courses: NB: Some schools now offer on line courses.

If you wish to attend a language course (but you don't have to!), you can obtain useful information from the Italian Cultural Institute, 39 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8NX, Web: www.icilondon.esteri.it, tel. 020 7235 1461.

Past students have recommended the following courses in Italy:

- British Institute, Florence: <http://www.britishinstitute.it>
- Scuola Toscana, Florence: <http://www.scuola-toscana.com>
- Istituto italiano, Florence: <http://www.istitutoitaliano.it>
- Università per Stranieri di Siena: http://www.unistrasi.it/1/593/Corsi_di_lingua.htm
- Università per Stranieri, Perugia: <http://www.unistrapg.it>
- Cultura italiana, Bologna: <http://www.culturaitaliana.it/index.html>
- Istituto Venezia, Venice: <http://www.istitutovenezia.com>

N.B. Reading, speaking and/or going to Italy cannot replace (and will be much more rewarding if based on) a **formal grounding in grammar**. The need to work as hard as possible at this task cannot be emphasized enough.

TEST: ALL NEW STUDENTS WILL SIT A LANGUAGE TEST IN ORDER TO BE ASSIGNED TO THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL IN LANGUAGE CLASSES.

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* ["If this is a Man"]
- 2) Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare* ["Family lexicon"]
- 3) Italo Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente* ["The Nonexistent Knight"]
- 4) Igiaba Scego, *La mia casa è dove sono* [Loescher Editore, annotated Italian edition for schools; not available in English translation]
- 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 at a later date, 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, Merigiare 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".

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>

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 "Nought 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.

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