

Dictionary skills

Using a dictionary is a skill you can improve with practice and by following some basic guidelines. This section gives you a detailed explanation of how to use the dictionary to ensure you get the most out of it.

The answers to the questions in this section are on page 12.

Make sure you look on the right side of the dictionary

The Italian – English side comes first: you look there to find the meaning of an Italian word. The second part is English – Italian. That’s what you need for translating into Italian. At the side of every page, you will see a tab with either **Italian – English** or **English – Italian**. The **Italian – English** side has a blue tab, the **English – Italian** side has a black tab, so you can see immediately if you’ve got the side you want.

- 1 Which side of the dictionary would you need to look up to translate **‘la strada’**?

Finding the word you want

When you are looking for a word, for example **nuovo**, look at the first letter – **n** – and find the **N** section in the Italian – English side. Look at page 175. At the top of the page, you’ll find the words **numeroso** → **nylon**. These are the first and last words on that page.

- 2 Which comes first – **‘filo’** or **‘fila’**?
- 3 Does **‘nuovo’** come before or after **‘nuotare’**?
- 4 Does **‘dopo’** come before or after **‘doppia’**?

To help you expand your vocabulary, we have also suggested possible alternatives in the **WORD POWER** feature for the most common adjectives in English – try looking up **big** on page 331 and learning some of the words you could use instead.

Make sure you look at the right entry

An entry is made up of a **word**, its translations and, often, example phrases to show you how to use the translations. If there is more than one entry for the same word, then there is a note to tell you so. Look at the following example entries:

flat ADJECTIVE

▷ see also **flat** NOUN

piatto (FEM piatta)

□ a flat surface una superficie piatta

■ **flat shoes** scarpe basse

■ **I've got a flat tyre.** Ho una gomma a terra.

flat NOUN

▷ see also **flat** ADJECTIVE

l'appartamento

- 5 Which of the two entries above will help you translate the phrase 'My car has a flat tyre'? Look for the two clues which are there to help you:

- > an example similar to what you want to say
- > the word ADJECTIVE



Look out for information notes which have this symbol on the left-hand side. They will give you guidance on grammatical points, and tell you about differences between Italian and British life.

Choosing the right translation

The main translation of a word is shown on a new line and is underlined to make it stand out from the rest of the entry. If there is more than one main translation for a word, each one is numbered.

Often you will see a white square □ followed by a phrase in **light blue**. This shows you how the translation can be used. It also helps you choose the translation you want depending on the context.

- 6 Use the dictionary to translate 'The exam is hard'.

Words often have more than one meaning and more than one translation: if you don't *get* to the station on time, you don't arrive on

time, but if you say ‘I don’t *get it*’, you mean you don’t understand. When you are translating from English, be careful to choose the Italian word that has the particular meaning you want. The dictionary offers you a lot of help with this. Look at the following entry:

- pool** NOUN
▷ see also **pool** VERB
- 1 la pozza
□ a pool of blood **una pozza di sangue**
 - 2 lo stagno (*pond*)
 - 3 la piscina (*swimming bath*)
 - 4 il biliardo
□ Let’s play pool. **Giochiamo a biliardo.**
■ **the pools** **il totocalcio**
■ **to do the pools** **giocare la schedina**

A **pool** can be a ‘pool of blood’, a pond or a swimming pool; **pool** can also be a game. Underlining highlights all the main translations, the numbers tell you that there is more than one possible translation and the words in brackets in *italics* after the translations help you choose the translation you want.

7 How would you translate ‘I like playing pool’?

Never take the first translation you see without looking at the others. Always look to see if there is more than one translation underlined.

Phrases in bold type preceded by a blue or black square ■/■ are phrases which are particularly common or important. Sometimes these phrases have a completely different translation from the main translation; sometimes the translation is the same. For example:

- | | |
|---|--|
| la bomba FEM NOUN
<u>bomb</u>
□ È scoppiata una bomba alla stazione.
A bomb went off at the station.
■ bomba ad orologeria time bomb
■ bomba a mano hand grenade | to fulfil VERB
<u>realizzare</u>
□ He fulfilled his dream. Ha realizzato il suo sogno.
■ to fulfil a promise mantenere una promessa |
|---|--|

When you look up a word, make sure you look beyond the main translations to see if the entry includes any **bold phrases**.

8 In a job advert you read that applicants ‘**devono fare una visita medica**’. What must they do?

Look up **'visita'** and find the answer as quickly as possible by skimming down the **bold phrases**.

Making use of phrases in the dictionary

Sometimes when you look up a word you will find not only the word, but the exact phrase you want. For example, you might want to say *'What's the date today?'*. Look up **date** and you will find:

date NOUN

1 **la data**

- my date of birth **la mia data di nascita**
- **What's the date today?** **Quanti ne abbiamo oggi?**

Sometimes you have to adapt what you find in the dictionary. If you want to say *'I bought a CD'* and look up **buy** you will find:

to **buy** VERB

▷ see also **buy** NOUN

comprare

- I've bought her some flowers. **Le ho comprato dei fiori.**

You have to substitute **ho comprato** for the infinitive form **comprare**. You will often have to adapt the infinitive in this way, adding the correct ending for **io, tu, lui** etc and choosing the present, future or past form. For help with this, look at the verb tables. On the **Italian - English** side of the dictionary, you will notice that verbs are followed by a number in square brackets, which correspond to verb tables on pages 22-29 in the middle section of the dictionary.

Comprare is a verb ending in **-are** so it follows the same pattern as verb number [68] **parlare**, which is set out on page 41.

9 How would you say *'I buy a lot of books?'*

Phrases containing nouns and adjectives also need to be adapted. You may need to make the noun plural, or the adjective feminine or plural. Remember that some nouns and adjectives have irregular feminine or plural forms and that this is shown in the entry.

10 How would you say *'The boys are tall?'*

Don't overuse the dictionary

It takes time to look up words so try to avoid using the dictionary unnecessarily, especially in exams. Think carefully about what you want to say and see if you can put it another way, using words you already know. To rephrase things you can:

- > Use a word with a similar meaning. This is particularly easy with adjectives, as there are a lot of words which mean *good*, *bad*, *big* etc and you're sure to know at least one.
- > Use negatives: if the cake you made was a total disaster, you could just say it wasn't very good.
- > Use particular examples instead of general terms. If you are asked to describe the sports facilities in your area, and time is short, don't look up *facilities* – say something like *'In our town there is a swimming pool and a football ground.'*

- 11 **You want to ask 'Have you got any pets?'. How could you avoid using the word 'pet' if you don't know it?**
- 12 **How could you say 'The cathedral is huge' without looking up the word 'huge'?**

You can also often guess the meaning of an Italian word by using others to give you a clue. If you see the sentence *'Paul ascolta la musica'*, you may not know the meaning of the word **ascolta**, but you do know it's a verb because it is something Paul is doing. Therefore it must be something you can do to music: **listen**. So the translation is: *Paul listens to music*.

- 13 **In a description of a holiday centre you see a picture of bikes and read 'Noleggio bici: 10€ al giorno'. You may not know the meaning of 'noleggio', but you can see that you have to pay 10 euros, which gives you a clue to what it could mean. What can you do – ride bikes, borrow bikes or hire bikes?**

Parts of speech

There are two entries for **flat** because this word can be a noun or an adjective. Knowing how to recognize these different types of words helps you choose correctly between entries.

Nouns and pronouns

Nouns often appear with words like *a, the, this, that, my, your* and *his*. They can be singular (abbreviated to SING in the dictionary):

his **dog** *her* **cat** *a* **street**

or plural (abbreviated to PL in the dictionary):

the **facts** *those* **people** *his* **shoes** *our* **holidays**

They can be the subject of a verb:

Vegetables *are good for you*

or the object of a verb:

I play **tennis**

Words like *I, me, you, he, she, him, her* and *they* are pronouns. They can be used instead of nouns. You can refer to a person as *he* or *she* and to a thing as *it*.

I bought my mother a box of chocolates.

14 Which three words are nouns in this sentence?

15 Which of the nouns is plural?

16 Which word is a pronoun?

Italian nouns are either masculine or feminine (abbreviated to MASC and FEM). Masculine nouns are shown by **il, l'** (when followed by a noun beginning with a vowel or **h**), or **lo** (when the noun begins with **z, s**+consonant, **gn, pn, ps, x** or **y**):

il **giorno** *l'***asino** *lo* **zaino**

Feminine nouns are shown by **la** or **l'** (when followed by a noun beginning with a vowel):

la **donna** *l'***ambulanza**

The plural form for **il** is **i**. For **l'** and **lo** it's **gli**. The **-o** ending changes to **-i**:

i giorni *gli asini* *gli zaini*

The plural form for **la** and **l'** is **le**. The **-a** ending changes to **-e**:

le donne *le ambulanze*

If the noun ends in **-e** (it can be either masculine or feminine), the plural ending changes to **-i** in all cases:

il mare *i mari*
la madre *le madri*

Some nouns don't change ending in the plural. This is true of ones ending with an accent (**città**, **caffè**) and foreign words that are in common use (**sport**, **computer**, **euro**). This is shown in the entry:

la città (PL **le città**) FEM NOUN
1 town

sport NOUN
lo sport (PL **gli sport**)

Sometimes, however, the plural form is irregular and this is shown in the entry:

la camicia (PL **le camicie**) FEM NOUN
shirt

shirt NOUN
la camicia (PL **le camicie**)

Italian is written as it is spoken. It is therefore important to keep the same sound when nouns change from singular to plural. This might involve adjusting how the word is spelt. Where a noun ending in **-go** (with a hard 'guh' sound) changes to **-gi** in the plural, an **h** has to be inserted between the **g** and **i** to keep that hard sound. It is the same with **c**. Before **e** and **i**, both **g** and **c** are soft:

il lago *i laghi* *la marca* *le marche*
il parco *i parchi* *la paga* *le paghe*

Where it is necessary to soften **g** or **c**, an **i** is inserted. Compare:

gusto and **giusto**

casa and **ciabatta**

gonna and **giorno**

cura and **ciuffo**

cosa and **cioccolato**

Mangio la pasta tutti i giorni.

- 17 Two words in this sentence are nouns. Which ones?
- 18 Are they singular or plural?
- 19 What is the plural form of 'il cuore'?
- 20 Look in the dictionary to find the plural form of 'il braccio'.

Adjectives

Flat can be an adjective as well as a noun. Adjectives describe nouns: your tyre can be **flat**, you can have a pair of **flat** shoes.

- 21 'Dark' is an adjective in one of these sentences and a noun in the other. Which is which?

I'm not afraid of the dark.

She's got dark hair.

Italian adjectives can be masculine or feminine, singular or plural, depending on the noun they describe:

un ragazzo **alto** (MASC SING)

una ragazza **alta** (FEM SING = replace **-o** of masculine singular with **-a**)

due ragazzi **alti** (MASC PL = replace **-o** of masculine singular with **-i**)

due ragazze **alte** (FEM PL = replace **-a** of feminine singular with **-e**)

The masculine and feminine singular forms of regular adjectives are shown on both sides of the dictionary.

So if you want to find out what sort of houses **le case vecchie** are, look under **vecchio**.

To form the plural of adjectives in Italian, you generally follow the same pattern as for making nouns plural (with the same spelling changes where necessary).

Adjectives that end in **-e** have the plural ending **-i** for both masculine and feminine.

MASC SING	FEM SING	MASC PL	FEM PL
alto	alta	alti	alte
verde	verde	verdi	verdi

Note the spelling changes when **c** or **g** are followed by **-e** or **-i**:

ricco	ricca	ricchi	ricche
lungo	lunga	lunghi	lunghe

This doesn't always happen and exceptions are shown in the entry.

Some adjectives remain the same whether they're masculine, feminine or plural. This is also shown in the dictionary:

rosa (FEM+PL ROSA) ADJECTIVE
 ▷ see also **rosa** NOUN
 pink

pink ADJECTIVE
 rosa (FEM+PL ROSA)

- 22 What is the feminine singular form of 'nero'?
- 23 What is the masculine plural form of 'piccolo'?
- 24 What forms can 'giovane' be?
- 25 What is the masculine plural form of 'sporco'? And the feminine singular?

Verbs

She's going to record the programme for me.

His time in the race was a new world record.

Record in the first sentence is a verb. In the second, it is a noun.

One way to recognize a verb is that it frequently comes with a pronoun such as **I**, **you** or **she**, or with somebody's name. Verbs can relate to the present, the past or the future. They have a number of different forms to show this: **I'm going** (present), **he will go** (future), and **Nicola went by herself** (past). Often verbs appear with **to**: **they promised to go**. This basic form of the verb is called the infinitive.

In this dictionary, verbs are preceded by 'to', so you can identify them at a glance. No matter which of the four previous examples you want

to translate, you should look up 'to **go**', not 'going' or 'went'.
If you want to translate 'I **thought**', look up 'to **think**'.

26 What would you look up to translate the verbs in these phrases?

<i>I went</i>	<i>she's crying</i>	<i>he was lying</i>
<i>I did it</i>	<i>he is out</i>	<i>they've gone</i>

Verbs have different endings, depending on who is 'doing' the verb, I (**io**), we (**noi**), they (**loro**) etc: **io parlo**, **noi parliamo**, **loro parlano** etc. Unlike English, Italian doesn't need to include the subject such as I (**io**), we (**noi**), they (**loro**) etc, because the verb ending is enough to show who is the subject (for example, the ending **-o** for I and **-iamo** for we). Verbs also have different forms for the present, future, past etc. **Parliamo** (*we talk* = present), **abbiamo parlato** (*we talked* = past). **Parlare** is the infinitive and is the form that appears in the dictionary.

Sometimes the verb changes completely between the infinitive form and the **io**, **noi**, **loro** etc form. For example, *I go* is **vado**, but *to go* is **andare**, and **dico** (*I speak*) comes from **dire** (*to speak*).

On pages 30-45 of the middle section of the dictionary, you will find 16 of the most important Italian verbs shown in full. On the **Italian - English** side of the dictionary you will find a number beside all Italian verbs. When you look up that number in the verb tables on pages 22-29 in the middle section, you will be shown the verb forms for that type of verb. This will help you to work out which is the correct verb form you need, whether that verb is regular or irregular.

27 Which verb form does the verb **curare** follow?

Adverbs

An adverb is a word that describes a verb or an adjective:

*Write **soon**.*

*Check your work **carefully**.*

*They arrived **late**.*

*The film was **very** good.*

In the sentence ‘*The pool is open daily*’, **daily** is an adverb describing the adjective **open**. In the phrase ‘*my daily routine*’, **daily** is an adjective describing the noun **routine**. We use the same word in English but to get the right Italian translation, it is important to know if it’s being used as an adjective or an adverb. When you look up **daily** you find:

daily ADJECTIVE

- ▷ see also **daily** ADVERB
- quotidiano (FEM quotidiana)
- It’s part of my daily routine. *Fa parte del mio tran tran quotidiano.*
- a **daily paper** *un quotidiano*

daily ADVERB

- ▷ see also **daily** ADJECTIVE
- ogni giorno
- The pool is open daily from nine until six. *La piscina è aperta ogni giorno dalle nove alle diciotto.*

The examples show you **daily** being used as an adjective and as an adverb and will help you choose the right Italian translation.

Take the sentence ‘*The menu changes daily*’.

- 28** Does ‘*daily*’ go with the noun ‘*menu*’ or the verb ‘*changes*’?
- 29** Is it an adverb or an adjective?
- 30** How would you translate ‘*daily*’ in this sentence?

Prepositions

Prepositions are words like **for**, **with** and **across**, which are followed by nouns or pronouns:

*I’ve got a present **for** David. Come **with** me. He ran **across** the road.*

- 31** In one of these sentences ‘*over*’ is an adjective describing a noun, in the other it is a preposition followed by a noun. Which is which?

The party’s over.

The shop’s just over the road.

Answers

- 1 the Italian side
- 2 **fila**
- 3 **nuovo** comes after **nuotare**
- 4 **dopo** comes before **doppia**
- 5 the first entry (the ADJECTIVE entry)
- 6 **L'esame è difficile.**
- 7 **Mi piace giocare a biliardo.**
- 8 they must have a **medical examination**
- 9 **Compro molti libri.**
- 10 **I ragazzi sono alti.**
- 11 you could ask 'Have you got a cat or a dog?'
- 12 you could say 'very big.'
- 13 you can **hire** bikes
- 14 **mother, box** and **chocolates** are nouns
- 15 **chocolates** is plural
- 16 **I** is a pronoun
- 17 **pasta** and **giorni** are nouns
- 18 **pasta** is singular, **giorni** is plural
- 19 **i cuori**
- 20 **le braccia**
- 21 **dark** in the first sentence is a noun and in the second, it's an adjective
- 22 **nera**
- 23 **piccoli**
- 24 masculine or feminine singular
- 25 the masculine plural form is **sporchi** and the feminine singular form is **sporca**
- 26 to **go**, to **cry**, to **lie**, to **do**, to **be**, to **go**
- 27 **curare** follows the same verb form as **parlare**, number [68]
- 28 **daily** goes with the verb **changes**
- 29 it is an adverb
- 30 **ogni giorno**
- 31 in the first sentence, **over** is an adjective and in the second, it's a preposition