

**Learn Italian for Beginners** is a playful way to remember basic school vocabulary while exploring how education works in Italy. This guide explains the school structure, common subjects, exams and higher education terms in simple English with useful Italian words you can start using right away.

## Quick overview of levels and ages

- **Nursery / Nido** (0–3 years) — early childcare.
- **Kindergarten / Scuola dell'infanzia** (3–5/6 years) — play-based learning.
- **Primary school / Scuola primaria** (6–10 years) — reading, writing and basic subjects.
- **Lower secondary / Scuola secondaria di primo grado** (11–13 years) — deeper study of core subjects; ends with an exam.
- **Upper secondary / Scuola secondaria di secondo grado** (14–19 years) — various paths; students may leave school at 16.

## What children learn in primary and middle school

In **Scuola primaria** children learn to read and write and receive first lessons in **storia** (history), **geografia** (geography), **matematica** (math), **grammatica italiana** (Italian grammar), **scienze** (science), **musica**, **educazione fisica** (PE), **inglese** and **informatica** (computer studies). **Religione** (religion) is optional.

## Exams to know

- **Esame di terza media** — end of lower secondary: includes an Italian essay, a maths test, an English oral and the INVALSI national test.
- **Esame di Stato** (high school final exam) — at the end of fifth year: typically three written tests and an oral exam. Passing allows entry to university.

## Upper secondary options

Upper secondary schools split into two broad types:

- **Licei** — academic paths aimed at university: **classico**, **scientifico**, **linguistico**, **scienze umane**, **artistico**, and **musicale**.
- **Istituti tecnici e professionali** — practical and technical training for specific

careers like tourism, agriculture, health, technology, or trades. Some offer a three-year qualification.

## Higher education explained

Universities offer a **laurea triennale** (three-year degree) followed by a **laurea magistrale** (two-year master's). Some courses are single-cycle (five or six years) such as law, architecture and medicine. The research doctorate is the **dottorato di ricerca**, the highest academic degree.

### Useful vocabulary for learners

- **Scuola** — school
- **Studente / Studentessa** — student
- **Materia** — subject
- **Compito** — homework
- **Esame** — exam

### Simple practice phrases

- Io frequento la **scuola**. — I attend school.
- Qual è la tua **materia** preferita? — What is your favourite subject?
- Ho l'**esame** domani. — I have an exam tomorrow.

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