

A Curriculum Guide in Italian
based on the [New York State Syllabus](#)
(printed in the year 2000)

Preface

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened the Education Office at the Italian Consulate General in New York in 1995 to promote the study of the language and culture. One of the teachers' most frequent requests was for basic reference resources for their teaching. The request was expressed primarily by the teacher members of the Italian American Committee on Education (IACE). [IACE is a non-profit organization, which organizes language courses in the tri-State area supported by funding from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the supervision of the Consulate General.] Indeed, the IACE teachers were seeking a common curriculum to develop solid programs of Italian for in-school and after-school courses.

On the initiative of this Office, a group of twelve teachers and administrators was set up at the end of 1997 to develop a curriculum according to the national standards for foreign language learning and the recent frameworks of Connecticut, New Jersey and New York State Department of Education, with the additional contribution of the Italian experience.

The group was coordinated by Joseph Tursi, emeritus professor at SUNY, Stony Brook, who also shaped and refined the material in this curriculum. The members were: Maria Boscia, middle school teacher in Milan, Italy; Domenico Carlucci, teacher for adults at the Italian Educational Center in Jersey City, NJ; Maura Garau, president of CyberItalian.com; Rita Leonardi, teacher at Brien McMahon H.S., Norwalk, CT, and president of the Connecticut Italian Teachers Association; Jennie LoCicero, teacher at William Paka J.H.S., Mastick Beach, NY; Maria Mann, chairperson of Modern Languages Department at Nassau Community College; Rosa Pietanza, principal IA, University Neighborhood H.S., New York; Tina Rella, executive director of IACE; Luisa Reynolds, teacher at Our Lady of Mercy H.S., Syosset, NY; Angelo Sabatelli, assistant principal, Great Neck H.S., Great Neck, NY. Many thanks to all of them for their commitment and collaboration, which they offered gratuitously.

Please know that this curriculum is a work in progress. We invite comments, suggestions and additional information. Submissions should be directed to: Prof. Joseph Tursi, Center for Italian Studies, SUNY at Stony Brook, NY 11794-3358, tel. 516-632-7444, fax 516-632-9612.

We do hope that this curriculum will be helpful for the teaching of our language and culture, and we thank all of those who worked so hard to develop it.

*Maria Vittoria Cifone
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(year 2000)*

Introduction

The primary aim of this curriculum is to provide students with a sound basis for learning to communicate effectively and accurately in Italian as it is spoken and written today. Practice is suggested in all four basic skills — listening, speaking reading, and writing — with many opportunities for student interaction and self-expression in realistic situations. A second aim of this course of study is to introduce students to contemporary Italian life and culture. Teachers are encouraged to use as many of the suggested activities as possible.

This material is only a curriculum, intended to accompany other material — that is published by language textbook companies or material generated by the teachers themselves. Although the syllabus identifies the components of intended learning outcomes, it does not prescribe the specific methodology to be used. The focus is on stressing the skills of functional communication to take place over a period of time. For example, Pre-Checkpoint materials are expected to be covered in grades 1-4; Checkpoint A in grades 5-8; and Checkpoint B, grades 9-12. Since language is learned in a spiral process, from the simple to the more complex, material that has been learned previously is reinforced in an increasingly more demanding manner. The units are the same for all checkpoints, with the exception of the Unit on Services, which is treated only in Checkpoint B. Vocabulary, structure, and language usage become more difficult from checkpoint to checkpoint.

This curriculum is sequential in nature. Students beginning Italian at grade 1 will begin with Pre-Checkpoint. If students are introduced to the study of Italian at grade 6, they will begin with Pre-Checkpoint. The same is true if the study of Italian is begun at grade 9, and so on. Although Pre-Checkpoint is intended for grades 1-4, students may be introduced to Checkpoint A if they have successfully completed Pre-Checkpoint. Students continuing Italian in grade 6, after Pre-Checkpoint, grades 1-6, may well go beyond Checkpoint A. Students beginning language in grade 9 may continue into Checkpoint A and/or B as they proceed from grades 10 through 12.

As stated above, this curriculum is not meant to be an instructional guide, but a description of what students are expected to achieve as a result of instruction. Since the students' ability to communicate is the primary goal, this curriculum serves to detail what students will be able to do with Italian as a result of instruction: WHAT communication activities they will be capable of handling, and HOW WELL they will be able to communicate.

To describe the WHAT component of communication, several elements must be considered: the topics and situations in which communications occur, and the functions or purposes that communications serve.

The HOW WELL component of communication is addressed by the proficiencies in this curriculum that reflect the level of linguistic and cultural competence expected of students at the three stated checkpoints. These proficiency statements are listed by skill areas and include consideration of students' overall ability to communicate, complexity of language used, linguistic accuracy, and cultural awareness.

Professor Joseph A. Tursi, Emeritus

Organization of the Curriculum

This curriculum consists of fifteen basic Units, or components of communication, as follows:

1. Personal Identification
2. House and Home
3. Services
4. Family Life
5. Community/Neighborhood
6. Physical Environment
7. Meal Taking/Food/Drink
8. Health and Welfare
9. Education
10. Earning a Living
11. Leisure
12. Public and Private Services
13. Shopping
14. Travel
15. Current Events

(Please note that although this curriculum is patterned after the New York State Syllabus: Modern Languages for Communication it also conforms quite well to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century published by ACTFL in 1999 in cooperation with several language organizations. Teachers using this curriculum are strongly urged to read and implement into their everyday classroom activities, information found in the section titled Standards for Learning Italian. Copies of the Standards may be obtained by writing to ACTFL, 6 Executive Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701-6801, (914) 963-8830, fax: (914) 963-1275. It is also highly recommended that the following two resources also be read: New Jersey World Languages Curriculum Framework and A Guide to K-12 Program Development in World Languages published by the State of Connecticut. The New Jersey materials may be obtained by writing to: Ms. Janis Jensen, World Languages Coordinator, New Jersey Dept. of Education, P. O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625. The Connecticut materials may be obtained by writing to: Ms. Mary Ann Hansen, Consultant in World Languages, Connecticut State Board of Education, P. O. Box 2219,

Hartford, CT 06145-2219. Tel: (809) 566-3873.)

Each general unit: Personal Identification, House and Home, etc., contains the following sections in each of the three levels: Pre-Checkpoint, Checkpoint A, and Checkpoint B (please note, the unit on Services is treated only in Checkpoint B):

FUNCTIONS indicate the purpose of communication. In any given communicative situation, the person is attempting to perform a certain function; for example, asking for help, giving advice, or warning someone. The functions listed in this curriculum are general in nature and broad enough to include many more specific functions of communication.

SITUATIONS indicate how the students can perform communicatively through the four basic skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. These are not general settings. They are prescribed situations for the purpose of communication. They are exemplified by expressions, interpreting, and negotiating meaning between two or more persons or between one person and an oral and/or written text.

TOPICS are based upon the communicative needs of the students. Units and topics are listed in no predetermined order since their use depends upon the learners' needs. The students are not expected to acquire comprehensive knowledge of these topics; they should be able to engage in communicative activities about them.

PROFICIENCIES are the basic outcomes at the end of each unit. Proficiency is specified at three checkpoints in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES are activities that teachers may wish to implement, depending on time and priorities. They are not an exhaustive listing, but rather activities that have been successfully used by experienced teachers. Teachers may wish to add to these or select randomly from the list provided. Teachers are encouraged to implement activities that provide substantial communicative settings for their students.

CULTURAL COMPONENTS are suggested cultural topics that teachers may wish to incorporate in their lessons. Teachers are strongly urged to include cultural activities as much as possible since culture is an integral part of communication. The list may be expanded depending on teacher and student needs and priorities. Teachers are also encouraged to invite colleagues from art, music, history departments to address students about Italy's contribution to those fields.

SELECTED EXPRESSIONS/VOCABULARY are provided for possible inclusion in teaching

the general topic. They may be expanded as teachers deem necessary.

PROVERBS/RHYMES have been selected to provide teachers with additional cultural information. Not all units provide this section. Proverbs proceed from the simple to the complex, depending upon the level of instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use others that seem suitable for their students.

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION

FUNCTIONS IN WHICH COMMUNICATION TAKES PLACE

Functions in this curriculum denote the purpose for communication and are broadly based and may be applied to any given topic or communicative situation. For example, in any of the following situations, one may wish to ask for help, give advice, issue a warning, or try to convince someone to follow a certain course of action:

Socializing: greeting, leave-taking, introducing, thanking, apologizing

Providing and obtaining information about: facts, events, needs, opinions, attitudes, feelings

Expressing personal feelings about: facts, events, opinions, attitudes

Getting others to adopt a course of action by: suggesting, requesting, directing, advising, warning, convincing, praising

These activities may be used for present, past, or future events at any of the three checkpoints.

SITUATIONS IN WHICH COMMUNICATION MAY OCCUR

The situations in this curriculum are identified in terms of traditional skill areas of listening comprehension, listening/speaking, reading and writing. They are listed as such for the purpose of relating them to the proficiency levels. These skills are not to be viewed as separate entities because they are not isolated from each other in reality. Instead, they should be integrated with each other to create the setting in which communication takes place.

The communicative situations identify the type of communication, the channels through which communication takes place, the participants, where they are, and why they are together. Communicative situations should be considered in relation to the culture expressed in the context and to the age, ability, and experience of the learner.

As it is impossible to describe all the situations, the following general list is offered to aid

teachers in developing their instructional objectives. It is important to note that not all of these situations are suitable for every checkpoint. Most will be suitable for Checkpoints A and B and to a lesser degree for Pre-Checkpoint.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Situations in which listening comprehension is practiced include the following activities:

Listening to:

Informational bulletins/announcements provided over loudspeakers, radio, and television;

Short presentations of interest to the general public given in person or on television;

Songs, live and recorded;

Feature programs on television, in the movies, and on radio.

LISTENING/SPEAKING

Situations in which listening/speaking skills are practiced are provided through the following activities:

Listening and/or speaking through:

Interaction with providers of common public services (sales personnel, bank tellers, ticket agents, police, hotel personnel, etc.) in face-to-face communications;

Informal conversations with peers and familiar adults;

Interaction with providers of common public services by telephone;

Group conversations with discussions among peers and familiar adults;

Informal verbal reports to individuals and groups of peers and adults.

READING

Situations in which reading skills are practiced are provided through the following activities:

Reading:

Information provided to the general public on signs, billboards and posters, labels, programs, timetables, maps, plans, menus, etc.;

Announcements, advertisements, and short reports in newspapers, magazines, and other publications

Simple business correspondence and pamphlets;

Facts, opinions, feelings, and attitudes in correspondence from acquaintances and friends (peers and adults);

Letters to the editor and feature articles from general interest publications with lexical aids;

Excerpts from poetry and prose for interpretation and cultural appreciation.

WRITING

Situations in which writing skills are practiced are provided through the following activities:

Writing:

Forms to be filled out for the use of common public services;
Informal notes for communications in everyday life situations;
Brief reports describing simple situations and sequence of events;
Personal letters to acquaintances and friends (peers and adults);
Formal letters to agencies, institutions, and businesses on topics of personal needs;
Note taking;
Creative writing.

UNITS/TOPICS

The units and their topics listed on the following pages are universal elements that form the basis for virtually all meaningful conversation in any culture. Students are not expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of the units/topics, and teachers are not expected to teach them as such. Instead, the topics should serve their real purpose as the focal point on which meaningful conversation should take place.

Pre-Checkpoint, Checkpoints A and B denote when the units/topics are expected to be incorporated in the syllabus. The appearance of individual units/topics at more than one checkpoint indicates that language acquisition is cumulative and spiraling in nature. Teachers should be prepared to reintroduce, reinforce, and expand communication on units/topics as the students' proficiency increases. These checkpoints, therefore, are interpreted not as termination points in the instructional process but as indicators that the intended learning outcomes for that checkpoint have been achieved.

UNIT 1. PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION

TOPICS: Biographical Information: age, nationality, address and telephone number, family, occu-

pation, place and date of birth

Physical Characteristics: height, weight, complexion, facial features, body shape, color of hair/eyes

Psychological Characteristics: character, personality, likes and dislikes, tastes and interests

UNIT 2. HOUSE AND HOME

TOPICS: Types of Lodging: house, apartment, rental and owned

Rooms and Other Lodging Components: identification, size/function, furnishings, garden/terrace/balcony, appliances

UNIT 3. SERVICES (Only Checkpoint B)

TOPICS: repairs, public utilities, deliveries

UNIT 4. FAMILY LIFE

TOPICS: family members, activities, roles and responsibilities, relationships

UNIT 5. COMMUNITY/ NEIGHBORHOOD

TOPICS: common activities, local stores/facilities, recreational opportunities, responsibilities/expectations, interaction

UNIT 6. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

TOPICS: Physical Features: big city, small town, village, suburb, country, geography of area
Climate and Weather: seasons, temperature/precipitation/wind, natural catastrophes, flora and fauna, impact on human life
Quality of Environment: opportunities for recreation and entertainment, ecology, economy, aesthetics

UNIT 7. MEAL TAKING/FOOD/DRINK

TOPICS: Types of Food and Drink: everyday family fare, regional and national specialties, fast food, food and drink preparation, special-occasion menus
Mealtime Interaction: regular family meals, eating with friends/relatives, eating out, socializing in public establishments

UNIT 8. HEALTH AND WELFARE

TOPICS: Parts of the Body: identification, care
Illnesses and Accidents: symptoms of illness, medical services/treatment, insurance/social services

UNIT 9. EDUCATION

TOPICS: Secondary School Organization: types of schools, subjects, schedule, school year, pro-grams, content, examinations/grading, diploma, students' organizations
School Life: extracurricular activities, relationships among students, relationships between staff and students, discipline, roles/responsibilities/expectations
Educational System: structure, personnel, society's needs/expectations

UNIT 10. EARNING A LIVING

TOPICS: Types of Employment: commonly known occupations, summer/part time employment, volunteer work
Work Conditions: preparation/training, work roles/responsibilities, remunerations/benefits, relations with colleagues and employer
Major Issues in Employment: job-market situation, new trends in employment, labor/management relations

UNIT 11. LEISURE

TOPICS: Available Leisure Time: after-school, weekends, holidays, vacations
Activities: hobbies/sports/other interests, use of media, organizations and facilities, cultural resources
Special Occasions: religious events, traditions and customs, family occasions

UNIT 12. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SERVICES

TOPICS: Communications: telephone, mail, telegram

Government Agencies: post office, customs, police, embassies and consulates

Finances: banks, currency exchange offices

UNIT 13. SHOPPING

TOPICS: Shopping Facilities and Products: shopping centers, specialty shops, neighborhood
mer-

chants, department stores, markets, mail-order companies

Shopping Patterns: time (opening hours ...), currency, interaction with sales staff,
staples and everyday purchases, modes of payment, weights/measures/sizes

Shoppers' Information: prices, advertisements, consumer publications, labels and
information brochures and directions

UNIT 14. TRAVEL

TOPICS: Transportation: means of transportation, maps, timetables and fares, signs and
instruct-

tions, interaction at ticket counters, advertisements/promotional information, itinerary,
interaction at travel agencies, travel information agencies

Lodging: youth hostels, camping/caravanning, hotels and pensions, private guest
arrangements

Holiday Travel Patterns: destinations, activities

UNIT 15. CURRENT EVENTS

TOPICS: Political, Social, and Economic Aspects: miscellaneous news, political parties,
govern-

ment, political issues, economic issues, general description of society, status of the eco-
nomy, social classes, social programs, social issues

Cultural Aspects: arts (theater/cinema/music), people in the arts, special events,
institutions/ facilities, historical and artistic sites, folklore, trends

Relations between the United States and Italy: opportunities for exchange, influence
of one country on another, cultural links, economic relations, governmental relations,
in-dividual perceptions

PROFICIENCIES

The proficiencies which follow are descriptions of standards of competence in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and culture that are deemed acceptable at each of the three checkpoints. Proficiency refers to the degree of control of the basic elements of the language that the student should be able to demonstrate at each checkpoint.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Pre-Checkpoint

Can understand simple statements and questions and usually the main idea of longer but simple messages and conversations. Often requires repetition for comprehension even when listening to persons who are used to speaking with non-natives.

Checkpoint A

Can comprehend short conversations on simple topics in everyday situations. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetitions and/or circumlocution for understanding. Can understand frequently used tense forms and word order patterns in simple sentences. Has both general and detailed understanding of short, discrete expressions, but has only general understanding of longer conversations and messages within familiar communicative situations. Can sustain comprehension through contextual references in short communications on familiar topics with native speakers who are aware of the non-native status of the listener.

Checkpoint B

Can understand standard speech delivered with some repetition and rewording by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. Can understand the essential points of discussions or presentations on familiar topics. Such factors as tension, pressure, emotional stress, and unfavorable listening conditions as well as vocabulary and complex utterances may influence comprehension. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones and understand inferences.

SPEAKING**Pre-Checkpoint**

Can initiate and respond to simple statements and manage simple face-to-face conversation within the vocabulary, structure, and phonology appropriate to the communicative situations and functions of this level. Can be understood by native speakers used to foreigners attempting to speak their language with some repetitions and circumlocutions.

Checkpoint A

Can initiate and sustain a conversation, but limited vocabulary range necessitates hesitation and circumlocution. Can use the more common verb tense forms but still makes many errors in formation and selection. Can use word order accurately in simple sentences, but still makes errors in more complex patterns. Can sustain coherent structures in short and familiar communicative situations. Can employ selectively basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections. Extended communication is largely a series of short, discrete expressions. Can articulate comprehensibly but has difficulty in producing certain sounds in certain positions or in certain combinations. Speech is usually labored. Has to repeat statements to be understood by the

general public.

Checkpoint B

Can handle most communicative situations with confidence, but may need help with any complication or difficulty. Vocabulary is sufficient to communicate with some circumlocutions. Can handle elementary constructions accurately. Limited control of more complex structures may interfere with communication.

READING

Pre-Checkpoint

Can understand simple connected material for informative or social purposes. Can understand the essential content of short, general, public statements and standardized messages. Can comprehend the main ideas of materials containing simple structure and syntax when relying on visual cues and prior familiarity with the topic.

Understanding is limited to simple language containing only the highest frequency grammatical patterns and vocabulary items. Can guess at cognates and highly contextualized unfamiliar vocabulary. May have to read the material several times in order to achieve understanding.

Checkpoint A

Can understand simple narrative and descriptive authentic materials and edited texts within a familiar context. Has specific comprehension of selected passages in familiar sentence patterns. Can follow essential points as well as some details of expository writing when dealing with areas of special interest and is able to guess meaning from context.

Checkpoint B

Can understand most factual information in nontechnical prose as well as some expository texts on topics related to areas of special interest. Can read excerpts from literature for pleasure. Is able to separate main ideas from lesser ones and thus begin to analyze material that is written for the general public. Is able to use linguistic context and prior knowledge to increase comprehension. Can detect the overall character or intent of the text.

WRITING

Pre-Checkpoint

Can express basic personal needs and compose short messages and paragraphs on very familiar topics based on personal experience. Writing consists mostly of recombinations of

learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Can show acceptable control of basic constructions and can express present, past, and future ideas using content words and time expressions. Although errors in spelling and grammar are frequent, writing can be understood by native speakers used to dealing with foreigners.

Checkpoint A

Can write simple notes, letters, and short reports using elementary vocabulary and commonly encountered structures. Can express present and future ideas accurately, and past ideas comprehensibly. Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Begins to develop sequential relationships. Writing is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners.

Checkpoint B

Can compose unified and organized texts on everyday topics with sufficient vocabulary to express himself/herself simply with some circumlocution. Is able to show good control of the morphology of the language and of the most frequently used syntactic structures, but errors may still occur. Can express complex ideas sequentially using simple language. Writing is comprehensible to a native speaker not used to reading the writing of foreigners.

CULTURE PROFICIENCIES

Pre-Checkpoint

Has knowledge of some aspects of the target language culture and is aware of the existence of cultures other than his/her own. Is able to function in authentic, common, everyday situations but makes frequent cultural errors that impede communication even with native speakers accustomed to dealing with foreigners.

Checkpoint A

Shows understanding of cultures as systems of values that evolve with time and is able to show how certain values are associated with certain behavior patterns in his/her own culture as well as the target language culture. On the basis of previous experience with the target language culture, is able to distinguish some culturally authentic patterns of behavior from idiosyncratic behaviors. Is able to acquire some new cultural patterns from the observation of authentic models. In applying this knowledge, still shows misunderstandings, and miscommunications occur frequently with native speakers not accustomed to foreigners.

Checkpoint B

Shows understanding of most culturally determined behaviors of the target language speakers and begins to demonstrate a general appreciation for their culture. Is generally able to

avoid major misunderstandings in common everyday situations with native speakers not accustomed to foreigners. Is able to use the context to guess at the meaning of some unfamiliar cultural behaviors. Shows some initiative and ease in using culturally appropriate behaviors acquired by observation of authentic models.