

Italian For Gringos Lesson 1 Greetings Introductions 2026 10 04

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Maya: Ciao, and welcome to Italian for Gringos! I'm Maya.

Devon: And I'm Devon. Lesson one, and we're starting with the single most useful thing in all of Italian: greetings and introductions.

Maya: Why start here? Because in Italy, greeting someone properly is not optional small talk. It's the whole ballgame. Walk into a shop without a greeting and you've already committed a faux pas.

Devon: Rule number one: when you enter any shop, restaurant, or hotel lobby, greet the person behind the counter first. Always. Okay, Maya, teach us the big one.

Maya: Here it is: buongiorno. It means good morning, or good day. You use it until about five in the afternoon. The respelling for you is bwon-JOR-no. Say it with a soft bounce on the JOR.

Devon: Bwon-JOR-no. That feels fancy already. What about the evening?

Maya: In the evening you switch to buonasera, good evening. Respelled: bwo-NAH-SEH-rah. Four syllables, and every vowel gets its moment.

Devon: So buongiorno before dinner, buonasera after. What about the casual one everyone knows?

Maya: Ciao. Just chow, like you're about to eat. One syllable, friendly, used for hello and goodbye. But careful: ciao is informal. Use it with friends, your tour guide, and the gelato guy on day three. Not with the hotel manager on arrival.

Devon: Got it. Ciao for friends, buongiorno and buonasera for everyone else. Now, how do I say goodbye properly?

Maya: Arrivederci. It means goodbye, and it literally suggests you'll see them again. Respelled: ah-ree-veh-DEHR-chee. The big stress lands on DEHR.

Devon: Ah-ree-veh-DEHR-chee. I love how it rolls. Now, introducing yourself.

Maya: Mi chiamo. That means my name is. Literally, I call myself. Respelled: mee kee-AH-moh. So: mi chiamo Devon. Your turn, Devon.

Devon: Mi chiamo Devon. Easy. And then the other person will probably say: piacere. That means pleased to meet you. Respelled: pyah-CHEH-reh. The pia part rhymes with yeah.

Maya: Pyah-CHEH-reh. Beautiful. And the question you'll hear a hundred times a day: come stai. It means how are you. Respelled: KOH-meh STY. Just like the English words come and sty.

Devon: And the answer? Bene. Means good or well. Respelled: BEH-neh. Short and sweet. So: come stai? Bene!

Maya: Perfect. Demo time. Devon, you're the hotel receptionist in Florence. I'm the tired American tourist.

Devon: Buonasera.

Maya: Buonasera. Mi chiamo Maya.

Devon: Time for our recap drill. Three phrases, Maya fires, I answer. Go.

Maya: How do you say good morning in Italian?

Devon: Buongiorno. Bwon-JOR-no.

Maya: How do you introduce yourself?

Devon: Mi chiamo Devon. Mee kee-AH-moh Devon.

Maya: And the formal way to say goodbye?

Devon: Arrivederci. Ah-ree-veh-DEHR-chee.

Maya: Fantastico! You've got greetings, introductions, and the golden rule of Italian politeness. Next lesson: courtesy essentials please, thank you, excuse me, and the magic word Italians use everywhere.

Devon: Arrivederci for now. And remember: buongiorno gets you everywhere!