

Italian For Gringos Lesson 2 Courtesy Essentials 2026 10 04

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

Devon: And I'm Devon. This is lesson two: courtesy essentials. The please and thank you phrases that make Italians treat you like a friend instead of a tourist.

Maya: Last lesson we learned buongiorno, buonasera, ciao, arrivederci, mi chiamo, come stai, and piacere. Today's five words stack right on top of those.

Devon: Hit me with the first one, Maya.

Maya: Per favore. That means please. Respelled: pehr fah-VOH-reh. Three syllables, stress on VOH. Use it for every request, always.

Devon: Pehr fah-VOH-reh. Next: the thank you.

Maya: Grazie. Means thank you. Respelled: GRAHT-see-eh. Careful with the z in Italian it has a little buzz, like ts. So it's GRAHT-see-eh, not grassy. Say it with a smile and eye contact, Italians notice.

Devon: GRAHT-see-eh. And when someone thanks you, what do you say back?

Maya: Prego. It means you're welcome. Respelled: PREH-goh. Two syllables, done. Prego is also what a shopkeeper says to invite you in, and what a waiter says when they hand you something. One word, many jobs.

Devon: PREH-goh. Okay, now the one I need when I bump into someone on a crowded Venice bridge.

Maya: Scusi. Means excuse me. Respelled: SKOO-zee. Short, punchy. If you want to be extra polite, say mi scusi: mee SKOO-zee. That means excuse me, literally excuse me, the formal version. Use mi scusi with strangers and older folks.

Devon: SKOO-zee for the crowd, mee SKOO-zee for the nonna. Last one?

Maya: Permesso. It means excuse me, let me squeeze by. Respelled: pehr-MEHS-soh. Say it when you're edging past someone on a crowded bus or through a busy market.

Permesso, permesso, with a smile, and the crowd parts like the sea.

Devon: Permesso. Time for our demo. Maya, you're the waiter at a trattoria in Rome, and I'm the gringo at the table.

Maya: Buonasera.

Devon: Buonasera. Per favore, un caffè.

Maya: Prego. Ecco il caffè.

Devon: Grazie!

Maya: Prego.

Devon: And then I knock over my water glass reaching for the bread. Scusi! Mi scusi!

Maya: And the whole restaurant loves you because you apologized in Italian. Cultural note time: Italians are generous with grazie and prego, way more than Americans are with thanks. A cashier hands you your change, you say grazie. They say prego. It's a little dance, and skipping your step looks cold. Join the dance.

Devon: Recap drill. Three phrases. Maya, fire away.

with the secret weapon of Italian pronunciation double consonants.

Devon: Arrivederci! And remember: grazie, prego, repeat all day.