

Section C

ITALIAN NAMES

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Section C, Part I

SURNAME IDENTIFICATION AND GENDER

GIVEN NAMES

The sex of an individual in a birth, christening, or marriage entry can usually be determined by the first given name. The surname, however, will be of no help in determining gender.

GENDER ASSIGNED TO NOUNS

Common nouns. All nouns in Italian are classified as feminine or masculine, even though the English equivalents may seem no more masculine than feminine. For example, the Italian word *libro* (book) is masculine and the word *casa* (house) is feminine. **The Rule:** Most nouns ending with **o** are masculine. Most nouns ending in **a** are feminine.

Proper names. The rule applies with given names as well. The names *Adriano*, *Agostino*, *Bartolomeo*, *Eugenio*, and *Eugenio* are clearly masculine because they end with **o**. If parents wanted to give these names to a daughter they would change the ending letter to **a**: *Adriana*, *Agostina*, *Bartolomea*, *Eugenia*. Similarly, a name does not end with either **a** or **o** can be used for a child of the opposite sex by substituting the letter **a** or **o** at the end of the word: *Giovanni*—*Giovanna*.

VARIATIONS IN ASSIGNED GENDER

Greek names. Occasionally you will find a word that doesn't fit the **a-o** rule. Thee Greek masculine names *Nicola*, *Andrea*, for example, end with the letter **a**. For this reason, you should look for other words to help you determine gender so that you will not be misled when you come across names that do not correspond with the regular pattern.

Nouns ending in "E." A noun which ends with **e** may be either masculine or feminine. The name *Natale* is feminine but the name *Emanuele* is masculine. Because there are no clues in the name itself, each time you determine the sex of an individual whose name ends with **e**, you want to add the name to a list of "exceptions to the rule" and begin to commit it to memory.

Given Name Identification and Gender

Name origin. One method of determining the gender of a name is to ascertain its origin. *Daniele*, (Daniel) was an old testament prophet. This name is therefore masculine. *Iside* is derived from Isis, the Egyptian goddess. It is feminine. Other examples include *Matilde* (feminine) and *Cesare* (masculine).

Nouns ending in "I" or "T." Names which end with i or t are usually masculine. Examples: *Giovanni, Luigi, Tancredi, Giosafat, Iafet*.

Female names with accented vowel endings. A few feminine nouns in Italian end with an accented vowel. Examples: *Virtù* (virtue), *Castità* (chastity), and *Verità*.

Male names ending in "IO." Another small group of masculine Italian names end with the letters io. Examples: *Mario, Aurelio, Ambrosio, Apollonio, Gervasio*.

RELIGIOUS NAMES

Names referring to Mary. Adoration of the Virgin Mary influenced many to name their children after her or after one of her qualities. Feminine name such as *Concetta, Assunta, Annunziata, Addolorata, Immacolata, Incarnata, and Purificata* are diminutives of the following popular names for female infants:

<i>Concezione</i>	conception
<i>Assunzione</i>	ascension
<i>Annunziazione</i>	annunciation
<i>Addolorazione</i>	pain
<i>Immacolazione</i>	immaculate
<i>Incarnazione</i>	incarnation
<i>Purificazione</i>	purification

Maria (Mary) is frequently used as a second given name for males. Examples: *Mateo Maria Boiardo, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Giovan Maria Cecchi*.

Biblical names. In addition to *Maria*, there are many popular Italian names taken from the Bible, especially from the new Testament. Examples:

<i>Elizabetta</i>	Elizabeth
<i>Gesù</i>	Jesus
<i>Giovanni</i>	John
<i>Giuseppi</i>	Joseph
<i>Mateo</i>	Matthew
<i>Paulo</i>	Paul
<i>Pietro</i>	Peter

Given Name Identification and Gender

Names of saints. The Catholic Church has honored many individuals from the Bible and from among outstanding church members by canonization (a procedure by which a person is declared to be a "saint.") Many parents named their children after saints. Often the saint's name chosen for a child coincides with the name of the patron saint of a town, city, parish, or section of a city. In Genoa, for example, the name *Battista* is popular. *Bernardo* is a popular name in Teramo. Other popular given names honoring saints:

Females	Males
<i>Agata</i>	<i>Cristoforo</i>
<i>Cecilia</i>	<i>Francesco</i>
<i>Teresa</i>	<i>Girolamo</i>

OTHER POPULAR NAMES

Names of famous Italians. Italian history is also full of notable characters whose names have been given to male children through the years. Examples: *Antonio, Adriano, Agostino, Vittorio, Emanuele, Amadeo, Umberto, Elena, Margherita, Yolanda, Mafalda, Garibaldi, Dante, Michelangel.*

Popular Roman names. Many old Roman names have been given to Italian boys: *Faustus, Severus, Calvus, Paulus, Taurinus, Probus, Victor.* But the *-us* ending is changed to *-o* in modern Italian. Roman numerals are also used as given names: *Primo, Secondo, Quinto, Sesto, Settimo, Ottavio, Decio.*

Latin names. In the provinces of Lazio and Umbria, many old Latin names are popular. Examples: *Ascanio, Catullo, Cesare, Livio, Tarquinio, Virgilio.*

Geographic variations. Because of the cultural differences between Northern and Southern Italy, many names have a different form. Examples:

South	North
<i>Peppe</i>	<i>Beppo</i>
<i>Nicola</i>	<i>Niccolo</i>
<i>Angelo</i>	<i>Agnolo</i>
<i>Gabriele</i>	<i>Gabriello</i>
<i>Raffaele</i>	<i>Raffaello</i>

Given Name Identification and Gender

OTHER WORDS DENOTING GENDER

ARTICLES

When the name is not clearly masculine or feminine, articles (words like **a** or **the**) can clarify the gender of the noun they describe. The **masculine** equivalent of **the** is *il*; the **feminine** equivalent is *la*. When you see the terms *la città* (city) and *il paese* (country), the articles *la* and *il*, make it clear that the first is feminine and the second is masculine. The **masculine** equivalent of **a**, **an**, or **one** is *un* or *uno*; the feminine equivalent is *un'* or *una*.

	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	FEMININE	FEMININE	TRANSLATION
	BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE S AND, SOMETIMES, Z	BEFORE VOWEL	BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE VOWEL	
SINGULAR	<i>il</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>l'</i>	the
PLURAL	<i>i</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>le</i>	
SINGULAR	<i>un</i>	<i>uno</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>una</i>	<i>un'</i>	a, an, one

OTHER "NOUN MARKERS"

Four other words that show gender and are quite similar to articles are the Italian equivalents of **this**, **that**, **these**, and **those**.

	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	FEMININE	FEMININE	TRANSLATION
	BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE S (SOMETIMES Z)	BEFORE VOWEL	BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE VOWEL	
SINGULAR	<i>quel</i>	<i>quello</i>	<i>quell'</i>	<i>quella</i>	<i>quell'</i>	that
PLURAL	<i>quei</i>	<i>quegli</i>	<i>quegli</i>	<i>quelle</i>	<i>quelle</i>	those
SINGULAR	<i>questo</i>	<i>questo</i>	<i>quest' *</i>	<i>questa</i>	<i>quest' **</i>	this
PLURAL	<i>questi</i>	<i>questi</i>	<i>questi</i>	<i>queste</i>	<i>queste</i>	these

* Sometimes *questo*.

** Sometimes *questa*.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The Italian words in the above chart are much like their English equivalents. They can be used like articles to describe nouns ("*These* babies were christened") or the words can stand alone as pronouns ("*These* were not christened"). When used as demonstrative pronouns these words continue to help you establish the gender of an individual.

	MASCULINE	FEMININE	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	FEMININE	TRANSLATION
SINGULAR	<i>quello</i>	<i>quella</i>	<i>quegli *</i>	<i>colui</i>	<i>colei</i>	that one
PLURAL	<i>quei</i>	<i>quegli</i>		<i>coloro</i>	<i>coloro</i>	those
SINGULAR	<i>questo</i>	<i>questa</i>	<i>questi **</i>	<i>costui</i>	<i>costei</i>	this one
PLURAL	<i>questi</i>	<i>queste</i>		<i>costoro</i>	<i>costoro</i>	these

* Also means "the former."

** Also means "the latter."

Given Name Identification and Gender

PRONOUNS

When **personal pronouns** (words like **he** and **she**) are used as subjects and objects in a sentence, they also show gender.

	SUBJECT	DIRECT OBJECT	INDIRECT OBJECT	OBJECT OF PREPOSITION
MASCULINE	<i>egli, lui</i> (he)	<i>lo</i> (him or it)	<i>gli</i> (to him)	<i>lui</i> (him)
FEMININE	<i>lei, essa</i> (she)	<i>la</i> (her or it)	<i>le</i> (to her)	<i>lei, essa</i> (her)
MASCULINE	<i>essi</i> (they)	<i>li</i> (them)	<i>loro</i> (to them)	<i>essi</i> (them)
FEMININE	<i>esse</i> (they)	<i>le</i> (them)	<i>loro</i> (to them)	<i>esse</i> (them)

ARTICLES IN COMBINATION WITH PREPOSITIONS

Often articles (words like **the**) are combined with other words such as prepositions (words like **from**). These combinations also show gender.

LIST OF PRONOUNS

	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	FEMININE	FEMININE
SINGULAR	<i>il</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>l'</i>
PLURAL	<i>i</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>le</i>

PREPOSITIONS COMBINED WITH ARTICLES

PREPOSITION		MASCULINE	MASCULINE	MASCULINE	FEMININE	FEMININE	TRANSLATION
		BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE S AND, SOMETIMES, Z	BEFORE VOWEL	BEFORE CONSONANT	BEFORE VOWEL	
<i>a</i>	SG	<i>al</i>	<i>allo</i>	<i>all'</i>	<i>alla</i>	<i>all'</i>	to the
	PL	<i>AL</i>	<i>AGLI</i>	<i>AGLI</i>	<i>ALLE</i>	<i>ALLE</i>	
<i>di</i>	SG	<i>del</i>	<i>dello</i>	<i>dell'</i>	<i>dell</i>	<i>dell'</i>	of the; in the; off the
	PL	<i>del</i>	<i>degli</i>	<i>degli</i>	<i>delle</i>	<i>delle</i>	
<i>con</i>	SG	<i>col</i>	<i>collo</i>	<i>coll'</i>	<i>colla</i>	<i>coll'</i>	with the; by the
	PL	<i>col</i>	<i>cogli</i>	<i>cogli</i>	<i>colle</i>	<i>colle</i>	
<i>da</i>	SG	<i>dal</i>	<i>dallo</i>	<i>dall'</i>	<i>dalla</i>	<i>dall'</i>	to the; at the; on the
	PL	<i>dal</i>	<i>dagli</i>	<i>dagli</i>	<i>dalle</i>	<i>dalle</i>	
<i>in</i>	SG	<i>nel</i>	<i>nello</i>	<i>nell'</i>	<i>nella</i>	<i>nell'</i>	in the; into the; to the; during the
	PL	<i>nel</i>	<i>negli</i>	<i>negli</i>	<i>nelle</i>	<i>nelle</i>	
<i>su</i>	SG	<i>sul</i>	<i>sullo</i>	<i>sull'</i>	<i>sulla</i>	<i>sull'</i>	on the; up the
	PL	<i>sul</i>	<i>sugli</i>	<i>sugli</i>	<i>sulle</i>	<i>sulle</i>	

Given Name Identification and Gender

ADJECTIVES

In some cases, because of unclear handwriting, unusual names, or missing information, you may not be able to determine the gender of an individual. If an adjective (a word like *beautiful*) was used in the record, it will usually follow the noun which it describes. You might, for example, come across the adjective *illigittimo* in an expression like this: *il bambino illigittimo* (the illegitimate baby boy). If you could read the article *il* or the noun *bambino* clearly, you would already know that the individual was male. But if you could not read those words clearly, the letter *o* at the end of the adjective *illigittimo* would confirm the child's sex.

In the case of twins you might find an entry like this: *L'una si chiama Felice e l'altro si chiama Andrea* (the first is called Felice and the other is called Andrea). Because Felice does not end in *a* or *o*, you have to rely on the final *a* in *l'una* to determine that the child is a female. In the name of the second twin Andrea, the final *a* might lead you to suppose that the name is feminine, but the masculine term *l'altro* makes it clear that Andrea is a boy.

VERBS

In Italian, even the verbs (words like *go*) can establish gender. For example, the common phrase *è comparso* (was presented) is obviously referring to the presentation of a male because the verb ends with the letter *o*. Common phrases containing verbs that show gender:

<i>lo stesso e nato</i>	masculine	the same was born
<i>la stessa e nata</i>	feminine	
<i>nato nello caso</i>	masculine	born in the house of
<i>nata nella casa di</i>	feminine	
<i>è comparso</i>	masculine	was presented
<i>è comparsa</i>	feminine	

TRANSCRIPTION PROBLEMS

Occasionally a scribe carelessly wrote something like *figlio legitima*, *figlio* being masculine and *legitima* being feminine. If you can't determine the child's sex by the first given name, this phrase won't help you. You will have to rely upon the clues suggested above.

Given Name Identification and Gender

TERMS DENOTING RELATIONSHIP AND GENDER

Sometimes there will be other terms that will help you determine the sex of the children, married couples, or relatives mentioned in a record. The following list contains words you will frequently see in civil and parish registers. It is provided to help you establish the identity and sex of participants in a ceremony and to help you determine which names to exclude from your extraction.

Italian Word	Translation
<i>abiatico</i>	grandson
<i>ava materna</i>	maternal grandmother
<i>ava paterna</i>	paternal grandmother
<i>avo materno</i>	maternal grandfather
<i>avo paterno</i>	paternal grandfather
<i>bacelliere</i>	bachelor
<i>bambina</i>	female child
<i>bambino</i>	male child
<i>bambolo</i>	little boy
<i>bastarda</i>	bastard female child
<i>bastardo</i>	bastard male child
<i>bimba</i>	female baby
<i>bimbo</i>	male baby
<i>binata</i>	twin female
<i>binato</i>	twin male
<i>bisarcavala</i>	great, great, grandmother
<i>bisarcavalo</i>	great, grant, grandfather
<i>bisava</i>	great grandmother
<i>bisavo</i>	great grandfather
<i>bisavala</i>	great grandmother
<i>bisavolo</i>	great grandfather
<i>biscugina</i>	female second cousin
<i>biscugino</i>	male second cousin
<i>bisnonna</i>	great grandmother
<i>bisnonno</i>	great grandfather
<i>celibe</i>	unmarried man
<i>cognato</i>	brother in law
<i>cognata</i>	sister in law
<i>comparina</i>	goddaughter
<i>comparino</i>	godson or godchild
<i>defunta</i>	deceased female
<i>defunto</i>	deceased male
<i>esposata</i>	female foundling child
<i>esposato</i>	male foundling child
<i>fanciulla</i>	young girl
<i>fanciullo</i>	young boy
<i>fantolino</i>	male baby, child
<i>femina</i>	woman

Given Name Identification and Gender

Italian Word	Translation
<i>fidanzata</i>	fiancée
<i>fidanzato</i>	fiancé
<i>figlia</i>	daughter
<i>figlio</i>	son
<i>figlioccia</i>	goddaughter
<i>figlioccio</i>	godson
<i>fratello</i>	brother
<i>fratello di late</i>	foster brother
<i>fratello germano</i>	full brother
<i>fratello maggiore</i>	older brother
<i>fratello minore</i>	younger brother
<i>fratellastro</i>	half brother, step brother
<i>fratello uterino</i>	half brother
<i>gemella</i>	female twin
<i>gemello</i>	male twin
<i>genero</i>	son in law
<i>germano</i>	brother
<i>madre</i>	mother
<i>madrigna</i>	stepmother
<i>madrina</i>	godmother
<i>maritata</i>	married woman
<i>maritato</i>	married man, married couple
<i>marito</i>	husband
<i>matrigna</i>	step mother
<i>moglie</i>	wife
<i>nonna</i>	grandmother
<i>nonno</i>	grandfather
<i>nuora</i>	daughter in law
<i>padre</i>	father
<i>patrigno</i>	godfather
<i>padrino</i>	godfather
<i>pimogenito</i>	first-born son
<i>prozia</i>	great aunt
<i>prozio</i>	great uncle
<i>pupa</i>	baby girl
<i>pupo</i>	baby boy
<i>santola</i>	godmother
<i>santolo</i>	godfather
<i>secondogenito</i>	second-born son
<i>sirocchia</i>	sister
<i>scapolo</i>	bachelor
<i>sorella</i>	sister
<i>sorellastra</i>	step sister
<i>sorella di late</i>	foster sister
<i>sorella maggiore</i>	older sister
<i>sorella minore</i>	younger sister
<i>sorrela uterina</i>	half sister
<i>sposa</i>	wife

Given Name Identification and Gender

Italian Word	Translation
<i>sposo</i>	husband
<i>suocera</i>	mother in law
<i>suocero</i>	father in law
<i>terzavola</i>	great, great grandmother
<i>terzavolo</i>	great, great grandfather
<i>ultimogenito</i>	last-born son
<i>vedova</i>	widow
<i>vedovo</i>	widower
<i>zia</i>	aunt
<i>zio</i>	uncle

GENERIC MASCULINE DEFAULT

In Romance languages such as Italian, the masculine gender is "dominant." When a group is composed of all males, the words referring to group will be masculine. Words referring to a group of females will reflect feminine gender. But words referring to a mixed group of males and females will be masculine. An example of this is the term *i sposi*, a masculine plural meaning "the married couples."