

The Vocabcord 200 for Doctors: Italian

The Vocabcord 200 for Doctors is a hand-written list of 200 Italian phrases for doctors and medical staff starting work in an Italian hospital, grouped by the shape of a working day rather than by grammar. Every row carries the phrase, what it means in English, and a note wherever register, a regional variant or a false friend changes what you should say. It is language for the job, and it is not instruction in how to do the job.

Standard Italian as spoken on an Italian hospital ward; ward words noted where they differ from the textbook. Register: Lei with patients and families by default, tu among colleagues; the switch is noted where it happens.

28

ARRIVAL

40

ADMIN

40

THE WORK

92

PEOPLE

CONTENTS: 14 SECTIONS, 200 PHRASES

Getting in: the badge, the changing room, who runs the ward	13	Explaining what happens next	13
The phrases that stop things going wrong	16	Consent, signatures and refusal	12
Taking the handover	15	Talking to the family	13
The ward round	15	On the phone to another ward	13
Taking a history	22	Notes, prescriptions and the discharge letter	12
Examining a patient: what you say out loud	19	The rota, the badge and the forms	12
Pain, and how Italians describe it	13	Giving the handover	12

Getting in: the badge, the changing room, who runs the ward

ARRIVAL · 13 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Buongiorno, sono il nuovo specializzando.	Good morning, I'm the new trainee doctor.	Specializzando is a doctor in training. A qualified staff doctor is uno strutturato, or just say sono un nuovo medico.
Comincio oggi in reparto.	I start on the ward today.	
Dove ritiro il badge?	Where do I pick up my badge?	
A chi mi presento quando arrivo?	Who do I report to when I get in?	
Dov'è lo spogliatoio?	Where's the changing room?	
Mi cambio e arrivo.	I'll get changed and be right there.	
Dove prendo il camice?	Where do I get a white coat?	
Mi serve un armadietto.	I need a locker.	
Dov'è la medicheria?	Where's the treatment room?	La medicheria is the treatment and dressings room. Ask for it by name; English has no one-word equivalent.
Dov'è la stanza dei medici?	Where's the doctors' room?	
Lei è la caposala?	Are you the ward manager?	Il caposala or la caposala runs the ward's practical side: the nurses' rota, supplies, keys, lockers.
Chi è il primario?	Who's the head of department?	
A che ora monto domani?	What time am I on tomorrow?	Montare is to come on shift and smontare is to come off. Ho smontato adesso means the shift just ended.

The phrases that stop things going wrong

ADMIN · 16 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Scusi, non ho capito bene.	Sorry, I didn't quite catch that.	Non ho capito is about the sentence just spoken. Non capisco says you are lost in general.
Me lo può ripetere più piano?	Could you say that again more slowly?	Lei form. Piano is the ward's word for slower. On tu it becomes me lo ripeti più piano.
Aspetti un attimo, per favore.	Wait a moment, please.	
Fermi un attimo.	Hold on, everyone.	Fermi tutti is the full form. It is an adjective, everybody stand still, and it is what stops a room.
Ho bisogno di una mano qui.	I need a hand here.	

The phrases that stop things going wrong

ADMIN · 16 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Mi serve aiuto, adesso.	I need help, now.	
Chiamate qualcuno, per favore.	Someone call for help, please.	
Non sono la persona giusta, le chiamo il medico di reparto.	I'm not the right person, I'll get the ward doctor for you.	Le chiamo here means I will go and fetch one for you.
Non sono sicuro, controllo e le dico.	I'm not sure, I'll check and let you know.	
Preferisco chiedere a un collega.	I'd rather ask a colleague.	
Un attimo che chiedo.	One second, let me go and ask.	
Può scrivermelo qui, per favore?	Could you write it down here for me?	
Come si scrive il cognome?	How do you spell the surname?	
Scusa, puoi ripetere? Non ti ho sentito.	Sorry, say that again? I didn't hear you.	Tu, for colleagues. Non ti ho sentito is I did not hear you; non ti ho capito is I did not understand you.
Sto ancora imparando l'italiano, abbia pazienza.	I'm still learning Italian, please bear with me.	
Me lo dici in due parole?	Can you give me the short version?	

Taking the handover

ARRIVAL · 15 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Mi passi le consegne?	Can you hand over to me?	Tu form. Le consegne is the handover, always plural: passare le consegne to give it, prendere le consegne to take it.
Prendo io le consegne stamattina.	I'm taking the handover this morning.	
Quanti pazienti abbiamo?	How many patients have we got?	
Chi c'è di nuovo?	Who's new?	Literally who is there that is new. It asks about overnight admissions rather than about staff.
Com'è andata la notte?	How was the night?	
Notte tranquilla.	Quiet night.	The answer you will hear most. Notte movimentata is the opposite: a busy one.
Nessuna novità.	Nothing new.	
Il dodici è entrato stanotte.	Twelve came in overnight.	Beds stand in for people all day: il dodici, la signora del quattordici. Entrare is to be admitted.

Taking the handover

ARRIVAL · 15 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
La signora del quattordici ha suonato tutta la notte.	The lady in fourteen was on the buzzer all night.	
Chi è in dimissione oggi?	Who's going home today?	
Cosa è rimasto da fare?	What's left to do?	
Manca qualcosa in cartella?	Is anything missing from the notes?	
Me lo segno.	I'll make a note of that.	
Aspetta, torniamo indietro un attimo.	Hang on, go back a second.	
Chi devo tenere d'occhio?	Who should I keep an eye on?	

The ward round

THE WORK · 15 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Facciamo il giro?	Shall we do the round?	Il giro, or il giro visita. La visita on its own is the examination of one patient.
Da chi cominciamo?	Who do we start with?	
Chi presenta il paziente?	Who's presenting this patient?	
Glielo presento io.	I'll present them.	Glielo presento io to a senior on Lei. To the team on tu it becomes ve lo presento io.
Buongiorno, come va oggi?	Good morning, how are you doing today?	
Ha dormito?	Did you sleep?	
Ha mangiato qualcosa?	Have you eaten anything?	
Le do un'occhiata alla ferita.	Let me take a look at the wound.	
Torno dopo con calma.	I'll come back later when there's more time.	Con calma means unhurried. The ward says it constantly, and to a patient it means without rushing you.
Passiamo al prossimo.	Let's move on to the next one.	
Cosa c'è scritto in cartella?	What does it say in the notes?	
Ha fatto il prelievo stamattina?	Did they take blood this morning?	Il prelievo is the blood draw itself. Gli esami are the results that come from it.
Gli esami sono usciti?	Are the results back?	

The ward round

THE WORK · 15 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Manca ancora la lastra.	The X-ray's still not back.	La lastra is the ward's word for a plain X-ray. La radiografia is what the report calls it.
Ne parliamo dopo, fuori.	We'll talk about it afterwards, outside.	

Taking a history

PEOPLE · 22 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Mi racconti cosa è successo.	Tell me what happened.	
Mi dica.	Go ahead.	Two words that hand over the floor. The same phrase behind a bar counter means what can I get you.
Da quanto tempo?	How long has this been going on?	The answer comes back as da plus a length of time, with no verb: da tre giorni, da stamattina.
Quando è cominciato?	When did it start?	
È cominciato all'improvviso?	Did it come on suddenly?	
È la prima volta?	Is this the first time?	
Le è già successo?	Has it happened to you before?	
Peggiora o migliora?	Is it getting worse or better?	
Mi ha mandato il medico di base.	My GP sent me.	Il medico di base is the GP. L'impegnativa is the referral slip the patient will be holding.
Ha la febbre?	Do you have a temperature?	Febbre covers any raised temperature. Ho un po' di febbre often means they feel hot and have not measured anything.
Prende delle medicine?	Are you on any medication?	
Ha portato le scatole?	Did you bring the boxes with you?	Le scatole are the medicine packets themselves. La lista is a written list of names.
Ha una lista dei farmaci?	Do you have a list of your medicines?	
Prendo una pastiglia per la pressione.	I take a tablet for my blood pressure.	Pastiglia, compressa and pillola all mean tablet in a patient's mouth.
Non prendo niente.	I don't take anything.	
È allergico a qualcosa?	Are you allergic to anything?	
Sono allergico a un antibiotico, ma non ricordo quale.	I'm allergic to an antibiotic, but I can't remember which one.	

Taking a history

PEOPLE · 22 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Che io sappia, no.	Not that I know of.	The standard reply to any have you ever question. Literally that I know, in the subjunctive.
È mai stato operato?	Have you ever had an operation?	
Mi hanno operato dieci anni fa.	I had an operation ten years ago.	
Fuma?	Do you smoke?	
Vive da solo?	Do you live alone?	

Examining a patient: what you say out loud

PEOPLE · 19 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Adesso la visito.	I'm going to examine you now.	Visitare is to examine a patient. Going to see a friend is andare a trovare.
Si accomodi.	Take a seat.	Covers sit down, come in and come through. The gesture that goes with it says which.
Si sdrai qui.	Lie down here.	Lei imperative of sdraiarsi. On tu it is sdraiati qui.
Si giri su un fianco.	Roll onto your side.	
Si metta a pancia in su.	Lie on your back.	
Si tiri su la manica.	Roll up your sleeve.	
Si scopra la pancia.	Uncover your belly.	
Si spogli dalla vita in su.	Undress from the waist up.	Spogliarsi is the verb for undressing. Dalla vita in su and dalla vita in giù mark how far.
Respiri profondo.	Take a deep breath.	Profondamente is the strict adverb. On the ward it is respiri profondo, and that is what patients hear.
Trattenga il respiro.	Hold your breath.	
Respiri normalmente.	Breathe normally.	
Dica trentatré.	Say ninety-nine.	Italian chests are listened to on trentatré where English ones use ninety-nine. The number itself carries no meaning.
Tossisca.	Cough.	
Apra la bocca.	Open your mouth.	
Le fa male qui?	Does it hurt here?	

Examining a patient: what you say out loud

PEOPLE · 19 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Mi dica quando le fa male.	Tell me when it hurts.	
Sente qualcosa quando premo?	Do you feel anything when I press?	
Le misuro la pressione.	I'm going to take your blood pressure.	Ho la pressione bassa is a lay complaint about feeling faint or washed out, often with no reading behind it.
Mi faccia vedere dove le fa male.	Show me where it hurts.	

Pain, and how Italians describe it

PEOPLE · 13 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Da uno a dieci, quanto le fa male?	On a scale of one to ten, how bad is the pain?	The scale is the same in Italy. The answer comes back as a bare number, or as un otto.
Un sette, forse otto.	A seven, maybe eight.	
Che tipo di dolore è?	What kind of pain is it?	
Ho una fitta qui.	I've got a stabbing pain here.	Una fitta is short and sharp and comes and goes. A steady ache is un dolore sordo.
È un dolore sordo.	It's a dull ache.	
Mi brucia.	It burns.	
Mi tira.	It pulls.	
Sento un peso qui.	There's a heaviness here.	
Mi sento uno straccio.	I feel wiped out.	Literally I feel like a rag. It means exhausted and unwell at the same time.
Le gira la testa?	Do you feel dizzy?	Girare la testa covers the room spinning, feeling faint and feeling woozy. Worth asking which one they mean.
Ho la cervicale.	My neck's playing up.	A lay complaint rather than a diagnosis: neck and shoulder pain, sometimes with a headache. You will hear it constantly.
Ho un attacco di fegato.	It's my liver again.	An old lay complaint for feeling queasy and heavy after a big meal. It says nothing about the liver.
Mi manca il fiato.	I can't catch my breath.	Also non riesco a prendere fiato. Ho il fiatone is being out of puff after the stairs, and is much lighter.

Explaining what happens next

PEOPLE · 13 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Adesso le spiego cosa facciamo.	Let me tell you what we're going to do.	
Le facciamo un prelievo.	We're going to take some blood.	Le facciamo is the ward's plural. It stays plural even when one person does the job.
Le facciamo una lastra.	We're going to do an X-ray.	
Deve fare un'ecografia.	You need to have a scan.	L'eco in speech, l'ecografia in writing. La risonanza is short for risonanza magnetica, and la TAC is the CT scan.
Ci vuole un'ora circa.	It'll take about an hour.	
Aspettiamo i risultati.	We're waiting for the results.	
Le spiego in parole semplici.	Let me put it simply.	
Ha capito quello che le ho detto?	Does that make sense so far?	
Ha domande?	Any questions?	
Stia tranquillo, ci metto un minuto.	Don't worry, this'll only take a minute.	Tranquilla to a woman. Stia tranquillo is the everyday reassurance; si calmi lands as an order.
Rimane qui stanotte.	You'll be staying here tonight.	
La teniamo in osservazione.	We're keeping you under observation.	
Se ha bisogno, suoni il campanello.	If you need anything, ring the bell.	Il campanello is the call bell and suonare is the verb. Patients use it back at you: ho suonato.

Consent, signatures and refusal

PEOPLE · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Deve firmare il consenso.	You need to sign the consent form.	Il consenso informato in full. In speech it is just il consenso, and firmare il consenso is the whole action.
Le spiego prima di farle firmare.	I'll explain before I ask you to sign.	
Legga con calma.	Take your time reading it.	
Firmi qui, per favore.	Sign here, please.	
Metta anche la data.	Put the date as well.	
Scriva il nome in stampatello.	Print your name in capitals.	In stampatello, in block capitals. Italian forms ask for it constantly and the word is printed on the box.
Ha capito cosa sta firmando?	Do you understand what you're signing?	

Consent, signatures and refusal

PEOPLE · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Se cambia idea, me lo dica.	If you change your mind, tell me.	
Non voglio firmare.	I don't want to sign.	An answer to recognise fast. Non firmo niente is the blunter version of the same refusal.
Voglio parlare prima con mia figlia.	I want to talk to my daughter first.	
Voglio andare a casa.	I want to go home.	
Chi è il familiare di riferimento?	Who's the next of kin?	Il familiare di riferimento is the named relative the ward deals with. The phrase appears on the form and in speech.

Talking to the family

PEOPLE · 13 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Lei è un familiare?	Are you a relative?	Familiare is the word on the signs and the forms. Parente is any relative, near or distant.
È il figlio?	Are you the son?	
Venga, parliamo un attimo.	Come with me, let's have a word.	
Ci sediamo un momento.	Let's sit down for a moment.	
Le chiedo ancora un po' di pazienza.	I'll have to ask you to be patient a little longer.	The sentence that buys you time when you have nothing to report yet.
Adesso non le so dire.	I can't tell you yet.	The honest I do not know yet, in ward Italian. Literally right now I do not know how to tell you.
Stiamo aspettando gli esami.	We're waiting for the test results.	
Appena so qualcosa la chiamo.	As soon as I know anything I'll call you.	
Preferisco parlarne di persona.	I'd rather talk about it face to face.	
Al telefono non posso dare informazioni.	I can't give information over the phone.	
Il medico parla con i familiari dalle due alle tre.	The doctor speaks to relatives between two and three.	Italian wards keep a fixed hour for family information, so the answer to quando posso parlare col medico is a time.
Dottore, mi dica la verità.	Doctor, tell me the truth.	
Purtroppo non sono buone notizie.	I'm afraid it isn't good news.	

On the phone to another ward

THE WORK · 13 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Pronto, sono il dottor Rossi del reparto di medicina.	Hello, this is Dr Rossi from the medical ward.	Pronto only ever opens a phone call. Italians say sono where English says this is.
Mi passa la radiologia?	Could you put me through to radiology?	Passare is to put through. Il centralino is the switchboard and l'interno is the extension number.
Chi è di guardia stanotte?	Who's on tonight?	Essere di guardia is being on duty in the building. Essere reperibile is being on call from home.
Ti disturbo un attimo?	Have you got a second?	
Ti chiamo per una consulenza.	I'm calling for a consult.	Una consulenza is a specialist opinion. The paper that goes with it is la richiesta di consulenza.
Puoi passare in reparto?	Can you come up to the ward?	
Quando riesci a passare?	When can you get here?	
Ti mando la richiesta adesso.	I'm sending the request over now.	
Adesso non posso, richiamami tra un'ora.	I can't right now, call me back in an hour.	
Sto scendendo.	I'm on my way down.	
Non ti sento bene, prende poco.	I can't hear you, the signal's bad.	
Me lo puoi mandare per iscritto?	Can you put that in writing?	
Ti richiamo tra cinque minuti.	I'll call you back in five minutes.	

Notes, prescriptions and the discharge letter

ADMIN · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Devo scrivere in cartella.	I need to write in the notes.	La cartella is the chart. Il diario is the running progress note kept inside it.
Dov'è la cartella del dodici?	Where are the notes for bed twelve?	
Chi ha preso la cartella?	Who's got the chart?	
Firmo la terapia e arrivo.	I'll sign the drug chart and be right with you.	La terapia is both the treatment and the sheet it is written on. Firmare la terapia means the sheet.
Le faccio la ricetta.	I'll write you a prescription.	
Le serve l'impegnativa?	Do you need the request form?	L'impegnativa is the referral slip for tests and specialist appointments. English has no single word for it.

Notes, prescriptions and the discharge letter

ADMIN · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Scrivo la lettera di dimissione.	I'm writing the discharge letter.	
La lettera è pronta, gliela porto io.	The letter's ready, I'll bring it to you.	
Il controllo è tra un mese.	The follow-up is in a month.	Il controllo is the follow-up appointment. Torni a controllo is how it gets said out loud.
Le stampo tutto.	I'll print it all out for you.	
Manca la firma qui.	There's a signature missing here.	
Mi rileggi la lettera di dimissione?	Can you read my discharge letter over for me?	

The rota, the badge and the forms

ADMIN · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Dove trovo il turnario?	Where do I find the rota?	Il turnario is the month's rota. I turni are the individual shifts on it.
Che turno faccio domani?	What shift am I on tomorrow?	
Smonto alle otto.	I'm off at eight.	
Stanotte sono di guardia.	I'm on nights.	
Domani sono reperibile.	I'm on call from home tomorrow.	
Mi copri il turno di sabato?	Can you cover my Saturday?	Tu. Coprire un turno is to cover it, and a straight swap is facciamo cambio.
Facciamo cambio?	Shall we swap?	
Devo chiedere al caposala.	I need to ask the ward manager.	
Non riesco ad accedere al gestionale.	I can't get into the system.	Il gestionale is the hospital's software, whatever the local brand name on the login screen says.
Mi si è bloccato il badge.	My badge has stopped working.	The reflexive mi si è bloccato puts the fault on the badge itself. It is the standard way to report a broken thing.
Che modulo devo compilare?	Which form do I have to fill in?	Compilare is to fill in a form. Riempire is for glasses and boxes.
Questo modulo chi me lo spiega?	Who's going to explain this form to me?	

Giving the handover

THE WORK · 12 PHRASES

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Ti passo le consegne.	Let me hand over to you.	
Partiamo dal primo letto.	Let's start at the first bed.	
In consegna c'è poco.	There's not much to hand over.	In consegna, in the handover. C'è poco is the whole sentence, and it means a quiet shift.
Il quattro è nuovo di stamattina.	Four came in this morning.	Bed numbers stand alone as subjects. The gender follows letto or stanza, so il quattro but la sei.
Resta da fare la lettera del dodici.	Twelve's discharge letter still needs doing.	
Ho lasciato tutto scritto in cartella.	I've written everything up in the notes.	
Questo te lo lascio, non ho fatto in tempo.	I'm leaving you this one, I didn't get to it.	
Se ti serve qualcosa, chiamami.	If you need anything, call me.	
Domande?	Anything you want to ask?	
Tutto chiaro?	All clear?	
Buon turno.	Have a good shift.	Built like buon lavoro, and said to the person taking over from you.
Io ho finito, vado.	I'm done, I'm off.	