
Nanni-Tate, Paola. *Practice Makes Perfect: Italian Verb Tenses.*

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. ISBN: 0-07-145138-2.

Italian Verb Tenses is an excellent self-study text designed as a useful companion volume for any Italian course from the introductory level through the advanced level and beyond. The book, which is printed in a workbook format, is divided into sixteen units that cover all the tenses of the indicative and the subjunctive, the progressive, reflexive verbs, the passive voice, verb-based idiomatic expressions, and verbs and expressions followed by prepositions. The final unit offers a general review of the tenses through a series of exercises and is followed by a verb table, a glossary of the verbs presented in the text, and an answer key. An important and much appreciated feature of this text is the section titled *Basic Terminology*, which precedes the content units proper and provides definitions and explanations of grammatical terms such as “infinitive,” “verb stem,” and “subject pronoun,” among others, whose meanings students often forget or lose sight of when they are actually working with verbs in oral and written exercises.

Rather than simply providing a list of verbs conjugated in their various tenses and moods, *Italian Verb Tenses* enables the student to learn tenses in context and to use verbs as a tool in building sentences for conversation and communication purposes. The verb is presented as the catalyst that allows language production to occur. Students not only learn the endings of the tenses, but are also given numerous opportunities for written practice which, when reviewed as part of class work, actually becomes oral practice.

Each unit begins with an explanation of the tense studied and a presentation, through copious examples, of its different uses. Next is a list of the endings related to the six subject pronouns connected to the verb, followed by a list of verbs that follow the same pattern within the group. Variations that may occur within tenses, such as spelling changes in *-are* verbs or the *-isc* verbs of the third group, are treated as part of the general discussion of the unit topic. Once the explanation and examples are complete, a list of verbs that follow the pattern studied is provided. All of the material within each unit is reinforced by many exercises, whose format is varied so that the student not only learns how to fill in the tense of a verb, but also understands its meaning and how a particular verb can be applied in a number of communicative situations. Exercises include fill-ins, translation of complete sentences from English into Italian and Italian into

English, changing sentences from singular to plural, putting sentences in the negative, creating and answering questions, choosing verbs from a word bank to complete a paragraph and finally translating a paragraph from English into Italian and Italian into English. One of the many noteworthy aspects of the exercises is that some of the paragraph translations can actually serve as readings dealing with Italian culture, life in Italy, and current events. For example, one of the translation exercises provides information on Venice, another on the arrival of television in Italy, and another on transportation. Exercises of this nature avoid the stagnant repetition and the less productive attempt of working with verbs in isolated, unrelated sentences. In learning the conjugations and uses of tenses, the student also learns grammatical points that are related to verbs such as the use of question words like “quando,” “dove,” “quanto,” “come,” “chi,” “che;” the use of “ci” and “ci sono;” “da” and expressions of time; modal verbs and the infinitive; the difference between “avere” and “essere;” negative expressions; the difference between “conoscere” and “sapere;” “giocare” and “suonare.”

In writing *Practice Makes Perfect: Italian Verb Tenses*, the author has succeeded in combining a comprehensive workbook and a well-organized reference manual into one user-friendly volume. This is an indispensable text for students of Italian because it provides clear and concise explanations concerning the use of tenses; students actually learn why certain tenses work in specific situations and others do not. At the same time, it is an important teaching tool for instructors who will appreciate how students learn to write correctly and speak fluently after using this guide to master verbs. In short, *Practice Makes Perfect: Italian Verb Tenses* is a “must-have” text for anyone serious about learning or teaching Italian.

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Publisher’s Response

We thank Dr. DeGregorio for her review, and we are pleased that she found *Practice Made Perfect: Italian Verb Tenses* effective not only for written practice but also for speaking. In addition to providing numerous and varied exercises, this text provides grammar explanations and examples that make studying highly educational.

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