

## Italian

### INTRODUCTION

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This guide is for researchers who do not speak Italian but must write to Italy or parts of Switzerland to request genealogical records. It includes a list of sentences you could use in a letter requesting genealogical records and the Italian translation for each of these sentences.

The best sources of genealogical information in Italy are records of births, marriages, and deaths kept by churches and civil registration offices. The Family History Library has microfilmed copies of these records for many, but not all, localities. Use the Family History Library Catalog to determine what records are available through the Family History Library and family history centers. If records are available from the library, it is usually faster and more productive to search these first. The library's publication *Italy Research Outline* (36113) explains how to research records at the library or at family history centers.

If the records you want are not available through the Family History Library, you can use this guide to help you write to a church or a civil registration office to obtain information. The *Italy Research Outline* can help you decide whether church records or civil registration records will be more helpful to you.

### BEFORE YOU WRITE

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Before you write a letter in Italian to obtain family history information, you should do three things:

- **Determine exactly where your ancestor was born, was married, or died.** Because most genealogical records were kept locally, you will need to know the specific town where your ancestor's records were kept. See the library's publication *Tracing Immigrant Origins* (34111) for help in finding hometowns.
- **Determine your ancestor's religion.** Because most early records were kept by churches or synagogues rather than civil registration offices, you may need to write to the parish church your ancestor belonged to in his or her hometown. If you are not sure what your ancestor's religion was in Europe, determine what religion he or she practiced after immigrating. Usually people did not change religions when they moved from Europe to their new home.

- **Determine where records from your ancestor's hometown are stored.** Records for smaller localities may be stored in repositories in nearby larger villages. You can use a gazetteer to determine which parish or civil jurisdiction serves your ancestor's locality. You may also use the *Italy Research Outline* for help in locating records.

### RESEARCH BY MAIL

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Church records are obtained from parishes, and civil records are obtained from civil registration offices. Both kinds of records may be stored in archives. Genealogical societies may also be able to help you find some of the information you need.

**Parishes.** Most of the earliest church records date from the mid-1500s, and some were kept even earlier. The records may be stored in a local parish or a regional archive. You should request information from the local parish first. In your letter, ask where you can write to request records that are no longer stored locally.

**Civil registration offices.** Civil registration records begin in 1866 in most of Italy and as early as 1809 in some areas. In Switzerland they begin in 1876. They are generally kept at a local civil registration office (*Ufficio dello Stato Civile*), but older records are sometimes deposited in provincial or district archives. These records include birth, marriage, and death records as well as family certificates, known as *stato di famiglia storico* or *stato di famiglia originario* certificates. Write to local offices first. Registrars may be able to tell you where to write to obtain records they no longer have.

**Archives.** If the records you need have been deposited in an archive, you may ask the archivist to recommend a private researcher you can hire. Archivists usually do not have time to search records.

**Genealogical societies.** Genealogical societies usually collect genealogies, periodicals, and some original records from their area and recommend researchers you can hire to search local records.

## How to Address the Envelope

For a **Catholic parish**:

Reverendo Parroco  
(Street address, if known)  
(Postal code followed by the name of the locality, including the province abbreviation)  
ITALY

For a **Protestant parish**:

Reverendo Vicario  
(Street address, if known)  
(Postal code followed by the name of the locality, including the province abbreviation)  
ITALY

For a **civil registration office**:

Egregio Sindaco  
Comune di (name of the locality)  
(Street address, if known)  
(Postal code followed by the name of the locality, including the province abbreviation)  
ITALY

You can find some archive and society addresses in the *Italy Research Outline*, or you can call the Family History Library at 801-240-3433.

## Postal Codes

Every Italian town (*comune*) has a post office. Smaller villages, known as *frazioni*, fall within the jurisdiction of a *comune*. If you cannot locate a postal code for your locality, check a gazetteer to determine the *comune* (see the *Italy Research Outline*). International postal codes can be found on the Internet at:

[www.nonsolocap.it](http://www.nonsolocap.it)  
[www.micronet.it/italian/cap/p.html](http://www.micronet.it/italian/cap/p.html)

A listing of Internet sites that contain postal codes by country can be found at:

[www.grcdi.nl/linkspc.htm](http://www.grcdi.nl/linkspc.htm)

When addressing your letter, write the postal (zip) code *in front* of the name of the town to which you are writing. For help in finding postal codes, use a gazetteer or call the Family History Library at 801-240-3433.

## How to Send Return Postage and Money

When you write to someone in Europe, send an international reply coupon (available at most large post offices) to pay for return postage. When writing to Italy, some people have had more success sending an international bank draft.

**Ruesch International bank drafts.** An easy and inexpensive way to send money from North America to Europe is to telephone Ruesch International Financial Services at 800-424-2923. Ask for an international bank draft for the equivalent of \$15.00 (or another amount) in Italian lire. There is a \$3.00 service charge. Have the check made payable to the organization, the *Ufficio di Stato Civile* (civil registration office), or the *Parrocchia* (parish). Ruesch will give you a transaction number to write on your payment check. Send the payment to:

Ruesch International Financial Services  
700 11th Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001-4507

When they receive your payment, Ruesch will promptly send you a foreign currency draft (check) that you can mail to Europe.

**Writing to a parish.** When writing to a parish, it is also a good idea to send a donation of \$15.00 as a courtesy. Do not send a personal check, which is difficult and expensive to exchange in Europe. Cash is most easily converted to European currency, but sending cash is always risky.

**Writing to other offices or organizations.** Some researchers do not send money when writing to a civil registration office, archive, or genealogical society for the first time. These organizations may prefer to bill you for their services. Some may ask you to make the check payable to their account number. If you want, you may write an institution to determine their fees before making a request. However, this will significantly increase the time it takes to get information.

## Checklist for Mailing a Letter to Europe

- Keep a photocopy of your letter.
- Enclose payment for the return postage.
- Convert funds to foreign currency.
- Mark the envelope *Air Mail*.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

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It may take six months or longer for you to receive a reply to your request for information. The results of writing to parishes or civil registration offices can vary greatly. You may get a great deal of information, or you may get no answer at all. Some pastors and civil registrars are willing to do considerable research. Others will not answer until money is sent or offered. Some may be unable to provide information.

Because some information is not easily obtained by writing directly to a pastor or registrar, you may need to hire a local private researcher. We suggest that you inquire about a competent local researcher when you write.

When you receive a reply, send a note of thanks or acknowledgment. You may wish to do this in a follow-up letter requesting further information. Refer to your earlier letters and their return letters by date. If they have assigned you a reference number, include that number as well.

Use Italian-English dictionaries to help you understand the reply. Sometimes you can hire accredited genealogists or others to translate for you.

If you do not receive an answer, write again and send a copy of your first letter. Do not send more money unless you verify that your first letter did not arrive.

## **HOW TO WRITE A LETTER IN ITALIAN**

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Your letter should include:

- The date (at the top).
- The name and address of the addressee.
- A greeting.
- A brief introduction.
- Biographical information about your relative.
- A short, specific, genealogical request.
- A referral request (see page 5).
- A comment about payment.
- Closing remarks.
- Your signature.
- Your return address (including your country).

Be brief and simple. Do not ask for too much at one time.

The English-to-Italian translations on pages 4–6 of this guide will help you compose your letter. Read the sentences in English and choose those that best express what you want to say. Be sure that your sentences are arranged logically. You may want to write a letter in English first, using the suggested sentences, and then rewrite the letter, using the Italian translations. Make sure you type or neatly print your letter and, when necessary, add any diacritical marks and special characters (such as *é* or *è*) with a pen.

*Do not use this guide as the letter itself.* That might insult the recipient and lessen the chance of a reply.

### **Writing Dates**

Write dates in the European style: day, month, year. Write the month and the year in full. For example, for December 10, 1889, you would write *10 dicembre 1889*, not *12-10-89* or *10-12-1889*.

January	gennaio
February	febbraio
March	marzo
April	aprile
May	maggio
June	giugno
July	luglio
August	agosto
September	settembre
October	ottobre
November	novembre
December	dicembre

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**Greetings**

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|--|--|
| 1. Dear Mayor / To the Civil Registrar | 1. Signor Sindaco / All'Ufficiale dello Stato Civile |
| 2. Dear Pastor,                        | 2. Reverendo Padre,                                  |
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**Introductions**

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|--|--|
| 3. My name is _____. I am researching my ancestors and need information from your records.         | 3. Mi chiamo _____. Sto facendo una ricerca sui miei antenati e ho bisogno delle informazioni dai vostri registri. |
| 4. My ancestors come from ( <i>locality</i> ). I would like to know more about them.               | 4. I miei antenati provennero da _____. Vorrei sapere di più di loro.  |
| 5. The following individual is my ancestor. Below is all the information I have about this person: | 5. L'individuo seguente è il mio antenato. Quanto segue è tutto ciò che so di questa persona:                      |
- 

**Biographical Information**

[Give information about your ancestor using the terms from the following list.]

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 6. a. Given name and surname:            | 6. a. Nome e cognome:           |
| b. Date of birth:                        | b. Data di nascita:             |
| c. Place of birth:                       | c. Luogo di nascita:            |
| d. Father's given name and surname:      | d. Nome e cognome del padre:    |
| e. Mother's given name and surname:      | e. Nome e cognome della madre:  |
| f. Husband's given name and surname:     | f. Nome e cognome del marito:   |
| g. Wife's given name and maiden surname: | g. Nome e cognome della moglie: |
| h. Date of marriage:                     | h. Data di matrimonio:          |
| i. Place of marriage:                    | i. Luogo di matrimonio:         |
| j. Date of death:                        | j. Data di morte:               |
| k. Place of death:                       | k. Luogo di morte:              |
| l. Date of emigration:                   | l. Data d'emigrazione:          |
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**Genealogical Requests**

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| 7. Could you please check your birth registers from ( <i>year</i> ) to ( <i>year</i> ) for the birth or christening record of this person? | 7. Potrebbe cercare l'atto di nascita o battesimo di questa persona nei Suoi registri dal _____ fino al ____?                            |
| 8. Please send me a complete extract of the birth or christening record (1) of this person. (2) of these persons.                          | 8. Vorrei richiedere che mi spedisca l'estratto completo dell'atto di nascita o battesimo di 1) questa persona. 2) queste persone.       |
| 9. Please send me a complete extract of the marriage record (1) of this person. (2) of this person's parents.                              | 9. Vorrei richedere che mi spedisca l'estratto completo dell'atto di matrimonio 1) di questa persona. 2) dei genitori di questa persona. |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>10. I believe that (<i>name of ancestor</i>) died in your locality about (<i>year</i>). I would like a complete extract of the death record.</p> <p>11. I would like to know more about the family of this person. I would be grateful if you would provide the names and birth dates of the brothers and sisters and an extract of the marriage record of the parents.</p> <p>12. I would like to locate any relatives who may live in (<i>town</i>). My ancestor was (<i>name</i>). If you know any relatives of the family, I would be grateful if you would give this letter to them so that they can contact me.</p> <p>13. Please send me a copy of the family information on (<i>husband's name</i>) and (<i>wife's name</i>). They were married (1) (<i>date</i>). (2) approximately (<i>date</i>).</p> <p>14. For my family research I need information from the Jewish records of births, marriages, and deaths from your community. Do you know where such records were created and where they are currently located?</p> <p>15. Would you please inform me if it is possible to obtain photocopies of your records and tell me the cost of such copies.</p> | <p>10. Credo che _____ sia morto/a nel vostro paese circa nel _____. Vorrei l'estratto completo dell'atto di morte.</p> <p>11. Vorrei sapere di più della famiglia di questa persona. Sarei grato/a se poteste fornire i nomi e le date di nascita dei suoi fratelli e sorelle, e anche l'estratto dell'atto di matrimonio dei genitori.</p> <p>12. Vorrei mettermi in contatto i miei parenti che abitano ancora a _____. Il mio antenato si chiamava _____. Se conoscete dei parenti della mia famiglia le sarei grato/a se potrebbe dare loro questa lettera affinché possiamo metterci in contatto.</p> <p>13. Per favore, vorrei richiedere che mi spedisca una copia delle informazioni familiari su _____ e _____. Si sono sposati il 1) _____ 2) circa nel _____.</p> <p>14. Per la ricerca sulla mia famiglia avrei bisogno delle informazioni contenute nei registri Elbraici delle nascite, dei matrimoni, e delle morti del suo comune. Sa dove tali registri sono stati mantenuti, e dove attualmente sono collocati?</p> <p>15. La prego di informarmi se sia possibile ottenere delle fotocopie dei suoi registri e di farmi sapere il costo delle copie.</p> |
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### Referral Requests

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|---|--|
| <p>16. If you do not have the necessary records, could you provide the address of the place where the records can be found?</p> <p>17. If you are unable to do this research for me, could you please recommend a local researcher I could hire for this purpose—someone who speaks some English if possible?</p> | <p>16. Se non ci sono i registri in question, potrebbe fornirmi l'indirizzo dell'archivio dove tali registri possano essere reperiti?</p> <p>17. Qualora non le sia possibile e seguire questa ricerca, potregge raccomandarmi un ricercatore locale che potrei assumere a questo fine - possibilmente qualcuno che parli un pò d'inglese?</p> |
|---|--|

### Payment

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>18. To cover your expenses, I am enclosing a donation to your parish as well as payment for the return postage.</p> <p>19. Please let me know the cost of your help and how I can pay.</p> | <p>18. Per coprire le spese, accludo un contributo alla sua parrocchia ed il pagamento per l'affrancatura di ritorno.</p> <p>19. La prego di farmi sapere il costo del suo aiuto e come posso effettuare il pagamento.</p> |
|---|--|

### Closing Remarks and Return Address

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>20. I thank you in advance for your help.</p> <p>21. Sincerely,</p> <p>22. My address:</p> | <p>20. Vi ringrazio in anticipo per il vostro gentilezza e premura.</p> <p>21. Distinti saluti,</p> <p>22. Il mio indirizzo:</p> |
|---|--|

## Follow-Up

[Use these sentences in follow-up letters as needed.]

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|--|---|
| 23. Thank you for the information you sent on ( <i>date</i> ). It has helped me very much.                                 | 23. Grazie per le informazioni che mi ha mandato il _____. Mi hanno aiutato molto.                              |
| 24. I need further information about one of the individuals you mentioned in your letter: ( <i>name</i> ).                 | 24. Avrei bisogno d'informazioni aggiuntive su uno degli individui a cui ha accennato nella sua lettera: _____. |
| 25. I have already received from you the following information about this person:  | 25. Ho già ricevuto da lei quanto segue su questa persona:  |
| 26. I am enclosing a copy of a letter I sent you on ( <i>date</i> ). Please write and tell me if you can do this research. | 26. Accludo una copia della lettera che le ho mandato il _____. Le sarei grato/a se potrà fare questa ricerca.  |
-

## **EXAMPLE LETTER**

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**Date** 4 novembre 1000

**Addressee** Ufficio dello Stato Civile  
via XXV Settembre  
67010 L'Aquila (AQ)  
Italia

**Greeting** Signoro Sindaco

**Introduction** Mi chiamo Jane Doe e sto facendo una ricerca genealogica sulla mia famiglia. Avevo bisogno delle informazioni contenute nei suoi registri. I miei antenati vennero da Succiano di Beffi, nella provincia di L'Aquila. Vorrei sapere di più di loro. L'individuo seguente è il mio antenato. Quanto segue è tutto ciò che so di lui:

**Biographical Information** Nome e cognome: Pietro Francesco Lapioli  
Data di nascita: 30 gennaio 1852  
Luogo di nascita: Succiano di Beffi  
Nome e cognome del padre: Andrea Lapioli  
Nome e cognome della madre: Maria Antonia Di Luzio  
Nome e cognome della moglie: Aquila Delfina Di Camillis

**Genealogical Request** Vorrei richiedere che mi spedisca l'estratto completo dell'atto di nascita di questa persona.

**Referral Requests** Se non ci sono i registri in questione, potrebbe fornirmi l'indirizzo dell'archivio dove tali registri possano essere reperiti? Qualora non le sia possibile e seguire questa ricerca, potrebbe raccomandarmi un ricercatore locale che potrei assumere a questo fine - possibilmente qualcuno che parli un po' d'inglese?

**Payment** La prego di farmi sapere il costo del certificato e come posso effettuare il pagamento.

**Closing** La ringrazio in anticipo per il sua gentilezza e premura.

**Signature**

**Return Address** Jane Doe  
334 G Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
USA

## COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Family History Library welcomes additions and corrections that will improve future editions of this guide. Please send your suggestions to:

Publications Coordination  
Family History Library  
35 North West Temple  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3400  
USA

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Family and Church History Department  
50 E. North Temple Street, Rm 599  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3400  
USA  
Fax: 1-801-240-2494



ENGLISH



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