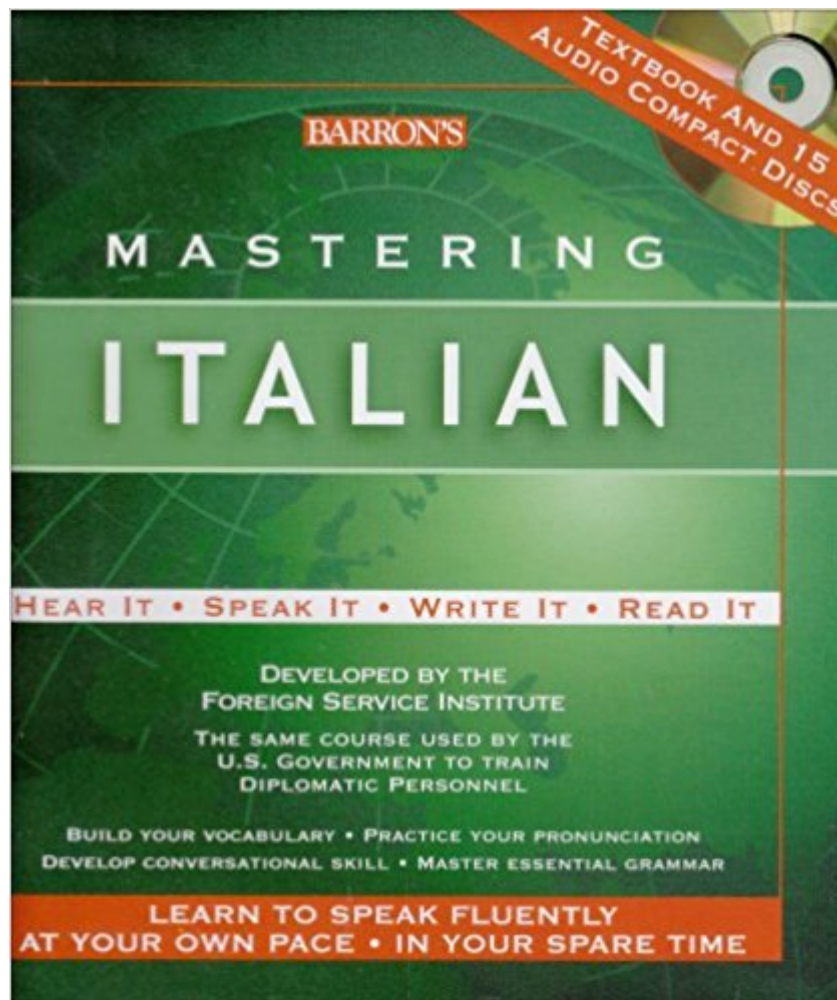




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# Mastering Italian: With 15 Compact Discs (Mastering Series: Level 1 CD Packages)



## Synopsis

These intensive programs are complete language immersion courses, and were created by the federal agency that trains U.S. government personnel in foreign language proficiency. They start with grammar and vocabulary basics, then bring students to proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension. This program contains a grammar textbook plus fifteen compact discs.

## Book Information

Series: Mastering Series: Level 1 CD Packages

Audio CD

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Language: English

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Shipping Weight: 3.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 1.9 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

This product surprised me. Instead of building on one's grammatical usage of the language and vocabulary to do it with, it seems to spend the whole series of 15 CDs on nuances of pronunciation. I've gotten through the first 5 CDs and that is the case, and by the looks of the accompanying book, it seems to be the case until the end. There is obviously some vocabulary to pronounce, but since it is not used in context, it would be hard to retain. Earlier I had done Barron's Mastering Spanish II (I never saw Mastering Spanish I), and it was very good with grammar and vocabulary--just what I would expect, but I can't find any Barron's Mastering Italian II. Yes, I have learned some nuances of inflection that I am glad to know, but it is still weird in my opinion, and not what I am looking for for 100% of the course. If it were interspersed throughout a larger majority of grammar and usage, it would be thorough and fantastic. Taking over the whole course with just pronunciation is totally disappointing. And then not even having an Italian II available, makes it far from "Mastering Italian". It would be excellent if it were advertised and called "Barron's Mastering Italian Pronunciation".

I have Barron's Level 1 & 2 French and Spanish, which I love. I thought the Italian version would be in the same conversational format. It is not. I returned it. My apologies, but this product was not for me.

I can't say that I was completely dissatisfied, as I had been forewarned by other reviewers. I would say this program is most likely useless. The only consolation I have is that I only spent \$10 to acquire it. I will practice some of the drills, but there is definitely no need to have an entire 15 CDs devoted to drills. What made them depart from their true and tried method like the one used in the French program, we may never know, but this one is a total bust! Sad, very sad.

To cut to the chase, of all the many language teaching aids I've used - tapes, CD's, videos - this is the most boring, most confusing, and least effective. That it is also extremely expensive merely adds insult to injury. This set seems based on two propositions, which are almost oxymoronic: that the student has a completely tin ear for languages, and that a welter of technical linguistic symbology will make up for that little problem. It doesn't work. Among other defects there is no interactive capability although the material is obsessed with the most subtle distinctions in pronunciation. The student (with the tin ear) has no way to check how he's sounding. Most purchasers of a language set are hoping to learn how to order a meal, get a room, get around town, maybe shop a little, and show the natives that he cares enough to try their language. This set misses that emphasis almost completely. I have never had the need to ask for a yoke of oxen in any language or country! In place of this set I strongly recommend a CD based program which is interactive, of which several are available. You'll still have money left over for several operas!

The instruction in this course, particularly in the beginning, borders on the awful. It makes learning Italian much harder than it needs to be. The use of phonetic symbols, albeit relatively infrequent, was totally unnecessary. On the plus side there is a lot of audio (15 CDs) and the course is very thorough in teaching pronunciation. Living Language and Pimsleur offer better instruction but far less audio. "Mastering Italian" is also fairly decent as a stand-alone course. Purchase this course only if you are patient and want to slowly be walked through learning Italian. It does get easier the further you progress. After completing this course you'll know more Italian than you would have with other comparably priced courses but may wonder if it would have been more worthwhile to have shelled out the additional money for other courses and not have had to struggle so much. Since

this course had been developed for diplomats it is intended for serious students of the language. Tourists wanting to learn Italian should go with Berlitz or some of the other phrasebook-type audio courses for travelers. The CDs are not suitable for use while driving and are designed to be used simultaneously with the textbook. "Mastering Italian" diverges quite a bit from the usual audio-lingual format found in Barron's "Mastering French," "Mastering German," or "Mastering Korean" series. It has less emphasis on drills and more on the technical aspects of pronunciation (e.g. tongue flaps, intonation patterns, etc). The Pimsleur courses totally ignore these technical aspects yet are far more effective in teaching natural pronunciation. This is an ugly course but it clears the hurdle for three stars because it is very thorough.

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