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Italian citizenship by marriage: the 2026 guide

If you are married to, or in a civil union with, an Italian citizen, you can apply for citizenship after a set period of residence or marriage. This guide explains the timing, the Italian language level, the documents and the points where applications get stuck.

- Updated November 2026
- Free, no sign-up
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The main requirements

Citizenship by marriage is based on article 5 of Law 91/1992. A foreign spouse (or civil-union partner) can apply when these requirements are met:

IF YOU LIVE IN ITALY

2 years

Two years of legal residence in Italy after the marriage.

IF YOU LIVE ABROAD

3 years

Three years from the date of the marriage. If the Italian spouse acquired citizenship after the wedding, the three years run from that date.

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN

Halved

One year (in Italy) or eighteen months (abroad) if children were born to or adopted by the couple.

The marriage must still be valid when the decree is issued, and there must be no convictions for serious crimes or grounds relating to the security of the Republic.

The Italian level: B1

You need a certificate of Italian at **B1 level** (CEFR) from a recognised certifying body, for example the Universities for Foreigners of Perugia and Siena, Roma Tre University or the Società Dante Alighieri. Some categories of people are exempt: check your case before booking an exam.

> PRACTICAL TIP
>
> The B1 certificate is often the slowest step. If you do not have it yet, book the exam before you start gathering the other documents.

The documents you need

- passport and, if you live in Italy, a residence permit or valid ID;
- birth certificate, legalised or apostilled and translated into Italian;
- full marriage certificate (if the wedding took place abroad, transcribed in Italy), with the same apostille and translation rules;
- criminal record certificates from your home country and from every country you lived in after age 14, valid for 6 months from issue, plus the Italian criminal record if you live in Italy;
- B1 Italian language certificate;
- receipt for the €250 contribution and a €16 revenue stamp;
- ID and details of the Italian spouse; if you live in Italy, a residence certificate and family status certificate.

How to apply and how long it takes

The application is filed online through the Ministry of the Interior's ALI portal; for people living abroad, the document check goes through the competent consulate. After submission the law sets a term of **24 months, extendable to 36**. If the application is approved you receive a decree and must take the oath (normally within six months of notification): from the next day you are an Italian citizen.

Where applications get stuck most often

- **Separation, divorce or annulment before the decree:** these can sink the application, so assess them early.
- **Incomplete foreign documents:** missing apostilles, non-compliant translations, expired criminal records.
- **Mismatching names and dates** across documents from different countries.
- **Unrecognised B1:** a certificate from a non-accredited body.

Frequently asked questions

How long after the wedding can I apply? +

How much does it cost to apply? +

How long does the decision take? +

Do I have to live in Italy to apply? +

This guide is an educational summary, not legal advice, based on public information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior and consulates, updated to November 2026. Rules and amounts can change: always check the requirements in force before filing.