Chapter 3:   The Exercises window.

3.1

Doing an inflection exercise.

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Doing a translation exercise.

3.3

The Exercise Log and the Not Learned List.

3.1   The Exercises window   :   doing an inflection exercise.

Pull down the File menu and choose Exercises (or press âŒ˜E on your keyboard).   The Exercises window will open.   Let's study this a little.

In the top left-hand corner you'll see 'Word:'.   It's followed by a word that the program has chosen at random from the entire module.   If you want to test yourself on words of every kind, you can carry straight on.   If you want to limit the exercise to words of a particular type, you have to tell the program what group of words you want to practise.

The pop-up menus.

Halfway down on the right-hand side of the window there's a pop-up menu called 'Group'.   It probably says 'Whole Database'.   Use this pop-up menu to choose the group of words you want to practise.   In this example you should choose the group you set up in the last chapter, the one you called 'practising' or something like that.   If you are using an unregistered copy, choose one of the groups we've provided, like 'easy words'.   If you prefer, you can press the button called 'List' and click on the group you want in the miniature window that appears.   You may have to use the pop-menu at the top of the miniature window before you can see the group you want.

If you'd rather not have to type accented letters at this stage, we suggest you avoid the 'medium words' and 'difficult words' groups we've provided.   There are some suggestions about typing accents at the end of section 3.1.

In the Exercise window, there's another pop-up menu called 'T/M';   it says 'Singular and plural forms'.   You don't need to bother with this - it doesn't have any function in this module.

In the top right-hand corner, there's a pop-up menu called 'Practise'.   It gives you a choice among five types of exercises:
• inflection
• translation F->E
• translation E->F
• voice-> inflection
• voice -> transl. F->E

This tutorial deals with the first three types.   'Italian Nouns 1.1' doesn't contain any pre-recorded sound, and this tutorial doesn't deal with voice exercises.   The program has provision for you to record your own sound if you want to, and there's some information about this is the 'Read Me' for the parent program.

For your first exercise, please choose 'inflection'.

You'll notice six empty panels down the left-hand side of the window, with six check-boxes beside them.   Only the two top boxes are checked.   Leave them like that.   The extra panels are for practising translations.   Two panels are enough for the singular and plural.

Using the definite article.

One last decision to make, and then you'll be ready.   There's a checkbox called 'Ignore Optional Auxiliary?'.   This means: Do you want to practise just the singular and plural forms of the words, without bothering about the definite article?   Or do you want to practise the definite articles at the same time?   (The definite articles are those seven awkward little words la, l', il, lo, le, i, and gli.)   You'll have to make up your mind about that.   If you don't want to practise the articles, check the box.   If you want to practise the articles, uncheck the box.

NOTE: If you've decided to practise the articles, please note that l' should be typed with no space between it and the word.   The other articles should be typed with one space between the article and the word.

Starting an inflection exercise.

You'll notice that the word near the top left-hand corner of the Exercises window has probably changed.   It's now a word chosen from the group you specified.   If it isn't, perhaps you forgot to choose the group.   Once you've chosen it, and the program has presented you with a word from that group, you're ready to start practising and testing yourself.

Click in the top panel, or press the tab key on your keyboard.   The insertion point will start winking in the top panel.   Type the singular form of the word in the panel, either with or without the definite article according to what you decided before.   This is pretty easy, because the singular form that you have to type is the word displayed at the top of the window, so you can just read it and type it into the panel.   When you've typed it, press your tab key or click in the second panel, and the insertion point will move to the second panel.

Type the plural form of the word in the second panel, with or without the definite article according to what you decided about this.

Pressing the Big Button.

Now click the big button near the bottom called 'Check My Answer'.   Alternatively you can press the Return key on your keyboard.   This means the key, near the right-hand end of the A-Z part of your keyboard, that you use for making new paragraphs.   This key is generally labelled 'return', but on some keyboards it isn't labelled.   The Enter key on your numeric keypad will also operate this button.   If pressing the Return or Enter key doesn't work, you may need to change a preference setting: pull down the DB menu and choose Preferences.   In the Preferences window, check the checkbox called 'Check Answer Button Default?' and click OK.

When you have clicked or otherwise operated the Check My Answer button, if you've made the correct entries the top half of the screen will show '2 Right, 0 Wrong', and the cartoon face will have a smile on it.   The button near the bottom will now say 'Next Word'.   You can click the 'Next Word' button (or press the Return key on your keyboard) and the program will offer you a another word.

If you've made a wrong entry, the top half of the screen will show '1 Right, 1 Wrong' or '0 Right, 2 Wrong', and the cartoon face will change to a 'Stop' sign.   Your wrong entry will be displayed in red.   If you have a black-and-white monitor you'll still be able to see the wrong entry, because it's in letters that are bigger and chunkier than before, like bold letters.   You can have another go.   Click in the panel that contain the wrong entry, correct the mistake, and click the big button which now says 'Re-Check Answer' (or press the Return key on your keyboard).   If you got it right the second time, your score of Right/Wrong answers won't change, but your correct answer will be displayed in normal-sized black letters.

The 'Show Correct Answer' button is greyed-out until your first attempt has been marked.   After you've attempted a word, and had your answer marked, you can ask for help.   Click on the button called 'Show Correct Answer' (or press âŒ˜J on your keyboard).   Clicking this button produces a miniature window showing the correct singular and plural forms of the word, with the definite articles.   You can use this to help you correct your answer before pressing the 'Re-Check Answer' button.   You can move the Correct Answer miniature window if it's in the way, or dismiss it by clicking its close box.

Using the Browse window while you are doing an exercise.

If your screen's large enough, and if you want to, you can keep the Browse window open while you are doing an exercise.   If you are using a registered copy, you can also get the Browse window to scroll automatically to the word you've just attempted, and display the correct forms of the word, the translation, and the comments.   The Browse window scrolls to the word after you have had your answer marked and have clicked the 'Show Correct Answer' button.   If the little 'Correct Answer' window obscures your view you can move it to a better position.

If the Browse window is open, but doesn't scroll automatically when you click the 'Show Correct Answer' button, you may need to change a preference setting.   Pull down the DB menu and choose Preferences.   In the Preferences window, check the checkbox called 'Position List with Keys?' and click OK.

It takes a second or two for the Browse window to scroll to the word you've attempted.   This will slow down your exercises a bit.   If you don't want this feature, close the Browse window, or uncheck the option in the Preferences window.

If you are using an unregistered copy you can't have the Browse window scrolling automatically, but you can click on the Browse window to activate it, then choose the group you're practising on, and click on the word that's been presented in the exercise.   The Browse window will display the details of the word.

You can practise the singular forms of the definite article.

If you are using a registered copy, you can practise the singular forms of the definite article (la, l', il, lo) even if you don't know the plural forms of the nouns.   To do this, uncheck the second box down on the left-hand side of the window (leave the top box checked), and uncheck the box called 'Ignore Optional Auxiliary?'.   In the pop-up menu called 'Group', you may like to choose 'Whole Database'.   Then click in the top panel (or press the tab key), type the appropriate form of the definite article for the word that is presented, plus the word itself, and click Check My Answer (or press the Return key).

This feature can also be used for practising the gender of words that end in -e.   For instance, you could create a group of words ending in -e (balcone, bicchiere, chiave, classe, dolce, fame, etc) and then type 'il' or 'la'   or 'lo' plus the word itself.   If you are using an unregistered copy you can't really do this, because you can only make a group using words starting with 'a', which doesn't give you much chance to use different singular forms of the article.

Random choice of words.

The program chooses words at random from the group you've chosen to practise on (or from the entire module if you haven't specified a group).   Murphy's Law would dictate that the same word could sometimes be presented six times running, or not at all.   Therefore, when a word has been presented for the first time during an exercise session, the program temporarily removes that word and won't choose it again until the other words in the group have been presented.

Singular-only and plural-only nouns.

Some words have only a singular form (e.g. 'uva', grapes) or only a plural form (e.g. 'occhiali', spectacles).   If the program presents you with 'uva', you should type 'uva' or 'l'uva' in the first panel, and leave the second panel blank.   You will score 2 points for this answer.   If it presents 'occhiali', you should leave the first panel blank and type 'occhiali' or 'gli occhiali' in the second panel.

There are also some words that do have both forms, but one of the forms is seldom used. The module contains duplicate entries for some words like that.   One of them is 'il soldo, i soldi'.   'Soldo' is an obsolete kind of coin, and nowadays the word is not often used.   The plural form 'soldi' is very common and is the ordinary word for 'money'.   To cater for translation exercises, and to help with 'Finding' words, the module contains two separate entries for this word.   If you are doing an inflection exercise, and the program presents you

with 'soldo', you can type 'soldo' or 'il soldo' in the first panel, and 'soldi' or 'i soldi' in the second panel, and you will score two points.   If the program presents you with 'soldi', you should leave the first panel blank and type 'soldi' or 'i soldi' in the second panel.

If the word has been included in the module with only a singular form, or only a plural form, the program regards the other form as non-existent.   If you type the other form in an inflection exercise it will be marked Wrong.   If you disagree with the way a word has been treated, you can change the entry.   You'll find information about making changes in chapters 4-6.

The score counter.

The score counter keeps track of the number of your correct and incorrect answers.   You can reset the counter to zero.   If you make lots of mistakes and want to 'wipe the slate clean' and start over, click the 'Reset' button at the right-hand side of the Exercises window.

When you have finished using the Exercises window, you can get rid of it by clicking the close box in the top left-hand corner.   If you want to return to the Browse window, click on the Browse window if it's visible, or pull down File Menu and choose Browse.

Typing accented letters.

When you type Italian words, you'll need to use grave accents on the last letter of words such as città, caffè, and others like them.   If you haven't needed to type grave accents before, look for the 'grave key' on your keyboard.   The lower-case symbol is a grave accent (`) and the upper-case symbol is a wiggly line called a tilde (~).   This key is usually in the top left-hand area of the keyboard, but sometimes it's in some other position.   To type a letter with a grave accent over it, for example è, press the Option key, hold it down, press the grave key, let go the Option and grave keys, and type the letter 'e'.   Your Macintosh desk accessory called Key Caps will help you locate the key and practise using it.   Once you get used to it, this is the fastest method of doing accented letters.

An alternative method of producing grave accents is to use the extension PopChar.   It's currently available from <http://www.unisoft.co.at/e/products/popchar.html>.   You'll be doing your answers in Geneva 9.   PopChar presents a small screen showing accented letters and other special characters;   you can point at the character you want and it will be inserted in your answer when you release the mouse-button.

3.2   The Exercises window   :   doing a translation exercise.

If you'd like to do a translation exercise, you can switch to this without closing the Exercises window.   If you've already closed the window, reopen it by pulling down the File menu and choosing Exercises.   Go to the pop-up menu at the top-right corner of the window, and choose either 'translation F->E' or 'translation E->F'.

'Translation F->E' means 'foreign-to-English'.   This presents you with an Italian word, and for your answer you have to type at least one of the English words or phrases that are already in the module for that word.

'Translation E->F' means 'English-to-foreign'.   This presents you with an English word, and for your answer you have to type at least one of the Italian words that are already in the module for that English word.

When you choose 'translation', you should find that all six checkboxes at the left automatically become checked.   If they don't, you can check them yourself.   You only need to give one answer, but the six panels allow you to give up to six answers (if you know them and if they are in the module) for the word that's presented.

Choosing translation E->F (English to Foreign) may be followed by a few seconds' delay while the program organises access to the English words.   The amount of delay depends on the size of the group you have chosen, and on the speed of your machine.

If you've closed and reopened the Exercise window, you'll have to choose the group again in the Group pop-up menu.

You don't have to do anything about the Ignore Optional Auxiliary? checkbox.   You can't practise the definite article in translation exercises.   If you are doing an English-to-Italian translation exercise and you include an Italian definite article in your answer, the program will ignore it if you have checked the 'Ignore Optional Auxiliary?' checkbox.   Provided the word itself is correct, the program will mark your answer 'Right'.   If you have unchecked the box and include a definite article in your answer, the answer will be marked Wrong.   If you are doing an Italian-to-English translation exercise and you include an English article, the article will be ignored if you have checked the box, or the answer will be marked Wrong if you have unchecked the box.

There are a very few exceptions, where the English translation that's provided starts with an English article (e.g. 'altrettanto', the same; 'vigilia', the day before; 'stampa', the Press;   you can identify such entries by using the Find box in the Browse window to Find English 'words' starting with 'the ', 'a ', and 'an').

In a translation exercise, the word that the program presents you with will be chosen at random from the group you have specified, e.g.   'easy words'.   For example, if the group you've specified includes the word 'capo', there are several translations for this word;   one of them is 'top'.   Therefore, if you are doing an English-to-Foreign translation exercise, the program is quite likely to present 'top' to you and you have to type the Italian word for this. But - and here's the fun part - you don't have to give the answer 'capo'.   If you happen to know the word 'cima', and if it's in the module, you can type that instead.   'Cima' also means top (although the meaning is not quite the same as capo), and the program will mark it Right.   If you know both 'capo' and 'cima' you can type one of them in the first panel and the other in the second panel, and you will score two points for that answer.   In the same way, if the program asks you to give the Italian for dance, you can type 'ballo' or 'danza' (or both of them) and they will be marked Right.   You can type up to six answers;   if they are all correct you'll score six points.

The module contains a good many words for which the same form is used in English for both men and women, for example 'adult'.   In Italian there are often separate masculine and feminine forms, for example 'adulto' and 'adulta'.   If the program presents you with the English word 'adult', you can type 'adulto' or 'adulta' (or both of them in separate panels).   If you're using a group that contains both 'adulto' and 'adulta', the English word 'adult' will be presented twice before the program switches to selecting words at random.

You'll probably want to change some of the translations.

The program doesn't use intelligence of a human kind in the way it handles answers to translation exercises.   If it asks you to type the Italian for 'girl', and you give the answer 'bambina', it may mark your answer wrong.   This will happen if the translation provided in the module for 'bambina' is not 'girl', but is 'little girl' or 'small girl' or 'baby girl'.   You may meet a similar problem when translating the other way round.   If the program presents you with an Italian word, it expects you type an English word for it.   In order to have your answer marked 'Right' you have to type a word or phrase that is already stored in the module as a translation for the Italian word concerned.   You may know a correct English word for that Italian word but, if the module doesn't know the word you know, it will mark your answer Wrong.

The first time you do an F->E (Foreign to English) translation exercise, you might like to have the Browse window open at the same time, and cheat a little by making the Browse window display the 'correct' English translation for the Italian word that has been presented in the Exercises window.   Try moving the two windows about so that you can see the upper part of the Browse window, and the whole of the Exercises window, and so that you an activate either window by clicking on it.   Let's say that the Exercises window has presented you with the Italian word 'albergatore', and you want to know what will be accepted as a 'correct' English translation for this word.   In the Browse window, use the Find box to find 'albergatore' (or scroll down to 'albergatore' and click on it).   The 'correct' translations will be displayed near the top of the Browse window.

For 'albergatore' you'll probably find that the translations on offer are: hotelier (male), hotel-keeper (male).   To get your answer marked Right in the Exercises window, you have to type either 'hotelier' or 'hotel-keeper'.   If you like, you can type both 'hotelier' and 'hotel-keeper', but you must type them in separate panels in the Exercises window.   You shouldn't type the stuff that appears in the brackets.

For the answer to be marked Right, it must be exactly the same as one of the translations that are shown in the Browse window for that Italian word, excluding anything that is in brackets.   If the Browse window says 'hotel-keeper', and you put 'hotel keeper' or 'hotelkeeper', the program will mark your answer Wrong.   A partial solution is to try typing variant forms in different panels.

If you want to use the translation exercises on a regular basis, you'll probably feel that you want to change some of the translations to enable the module to recognise the words you want it to recognise, and to avoid being presented with words that you don't want.   In particular, British users may want to delete some American expressions, and American users may want to delete some British expressions and include more American equivalents.   In the Browse window you'll notice that some of the translations have (UK) or (US) added in brackets.   This is intended to help to identify cases where the transatlantic usage is significantly different.   Examples include 'pantaloni = trousers (UK), pants (US)';   and 'subway (UK) = sottopassaggio', 'subway (US) = metropolitana'.

To change the translations, or to add extra words, you'll want to use the Entering Words window.   You'll find information about this in chapter 4.

3.3   The Exercise Log and the Not Learned List.

The program keeps track of your results.   After you've closed the Exercise window, you can

have a look in the Exercise Log.   Pull down the File menu, and choose Exercise Log.   It'll show you how you've done and which words you had trouble with.   If you used the Reset button to zero the score-counter during your exercise session, the Exercise Log will give a separate report for each part of the session.   You may find that it lost track of a word or two each time you used the Reset button - there can be a slight slippage in the word-count when the button is used.

Words that gave you trouble may also appear in the 'Not Learned' group in 'Multiple Groups' in the Browse window.   This allows you, if you want, to do exercises based on the words that caused you problems in previous sessions.   If you want, you can delete words from the Not Learned group: in the Browse window, choose the Not Learned group from the Multiple Groups pop-up menu, click once on the word you want to delete (the word will be highlighted), then press the Backspace/Delete key on your keyboard (not the Delete button in the Browse window).

Happy practising!   Or, as we might say in Italian, Tanti Auguri! (ever so many good wishes).

This is the end of the tutorial.   The manual is continued in Chapter 4, which deals with adding new entries and changing existing entries.   To open Chapter 4, press âŒ˜4 or pull down the Contents menu on the manual's menu bar and choose the next chapter.