

UNIT TWENTY-TWO

The pronoun **si**

The pronoun **si** is used as an impersonal subject, either in sentences without a specified subject, or in sentences with a passive meaning. In both, it is always put before the verb.

***Si* in sentences where the subject is not specified**

1 **Si** is used as an impersonal subject in sentences where the subject is not specified. It corresponds to the English 'one' or 'you' (as in 'One never knows/You never know what's just round the corner'), or 'they', meaning a number of unspecified people (as in 'They eat kangaroo in Australia'). When **si** is used in this way, the verb is always in the third person singular:

Si esce da questa porta.

You go out by this door.

'Sono stato al mare.' 'Si vede: sei abbronzato!'

'I've been at the seaside.' 'It shows [lit. one sees]: you've got a tan!'

Si paga alla cassa.

You pay/One pays at the till.

C'è stato un incidente e non si passa.

There's been an accident and you can't get through.

All'ostello della gioventù si spende meno.

You spend less in a youth hostel.

Per andare al museo si passa da piazza Garibaldi.

To get to the museum you go through piazza Garibaldi.

As the examples suggest, **si** is often used for rules or general advice.

2 With verbs like **essere**, **diventare**, **sembrare**, etc., followed by a noun or an adjective, **si** requires the noun to be plural (even though the verb is always singular), and the adjective to be masculine plural: