

# Italian Pronunciation: Overview

- **Vowels:** stable, pure sounds.
- **C/G rules:** soft before *e, i*, hard with *h*.
- **Special groups:** *gli*, *gn*, *sc(e/i)*, *z*, *s*.
- **Stress & doubles:** penultimate stress, long consonants matter.

**i** Italian spelling is highly phonetic. Master these rules and you can read almost anything.

## Vowels (pure and stable)

- **a** [a] as in *pasta* [pasta]
- **e** [e] closed / [ɛ] open: *pera* [pe:ra], *caffè* [kafɛ]
- **i** [i] as in *vino* ['vino]
- **o** [o] closed / [ɔ] open: *porta* [pɔrta], *però* [perɔ]
- **u** [u] as in *luna* [luna]

**i** Only **e** and **o** vary between closed [e,o] and open [ɛ,ɔ].

## C/G before E/I (role of H)

### C

- **ca, co, cu** → [k]: *casa* [ka:za], *cosa* [kɔza]
- **ce, ci** → [tʃ]: *cena* [tʃe:na], *cinema* [tʃinema]
- **che, chi** → [k]: *che* [ke], *chi* [ki]

### G

- **ga, go, gu** → [g]: *gatto* [gat:ɔ], *gola* [gɔla]
- **ge, gi** → [dʒ]: *gelato* [dʒelato], *gioco* [dʒɔko]
- **ghe, ghi** → [g]: *ghetto* [getto], *ghiaccio* [gjattʃo]

# Special groups

- **gli**  $\approx [\lambda]$  before vowel: *gli* [ $\lambda i$ ], *famiglia* [fa'mi $\lambda$ a]
- **gn** = [ɲ]: *gnocchi* ['ɲɔkki], *bagno* [baɲo]
- **sc** + **e/i** = [ʃ]: *scena* [ʃeːna], *scimmia* [ʃimːa]
- **sca/sco/scu** = [sk]: *scala* [skala], *scuola* [skwɔla]
- **z** = [ts] or [dz]: *pizza* [pittsa], *zucchero* [dzukkero]
- **s** = [s] or [z] (often [z] between vowels): *casa* [kaːza]

# Stress & Double consonants

- Stress is usually penultimate: *tavolo* [ta'vɔlo]
- Final accent marks last-syllable stress: *città* [tʃitta], *caffè* [kaffɛ]
- Doubles are held longer and can change meaning: *pala* [pala] vs *palla* [palla]

 Clap or tap on the stressed syllable to feel the rhythm.

Mark stress and spot special sounds:

- ① **gelato** [dʒelato], **gioco** [dʒoko], **ghiaccio** [gjattʃo]
- ② **cena** [tʃe:na], **che** [ke], **cinema** [tʃinema]
- ③ **famiglia** [fa'miʎa], **gnocchi** ['ɲokki], **bagno** [baɲo]
- ④ **scena** [ʃe:na], **scuola** [skwɔla]
- ⑤ **città** [tʃitta], **caffè** [kaffe]
- ⑥ **casa** [ka:za] vs **cassa** [kassa]

- Vowels: **e** [e]/[ɛ], **o** [o]/[ɔ]; others stable [a,i,u].
- **ce/ci** [tʃ]; **ge/gi** [dʒ]; **che/chi** [k]; **ghe/ghi** [g].
- **sc** + **e/i** [ʃ]; **sca/sco/scu** [sk].
- **gli** [ʎ]; **gn** [ɲ].
- **z** [ts]/[dz]; **s** [s]/[z].
- Stress: penultimate by default; final accent marks last syllable.

# Why it matters

- **Music:** Italian is central in opera and vocal training.
- **Tech:** Grapheme–phoneme rules in TTS and ASR.
- **Learning:** Clear pronunciation boosts reading speed and confidence.

**i Not on the exam, but useful in real-world contexts.**