

REVIEW OF ITALIAN TRANSCRIPTION RULES

Consonants

[r]	Intervocalic <i>r</i> within the word or phrase: <i>amore</i> [a'more]	[r]	Spelling <i>r</i> in all other positions: <i>rose</i> ['rɔze] <i>aprile</i> [a'prile]
[s]	Spelling <i>s</i> / <i>s</i> + voiceless consonant: <i>speranza</i> [spe'rantsa] Intervocalic <i>s</i> with prefix <i>ri-</i> : <i>risuonare</i> [riswo'nare] Intervocalic <i>s</i> with prefixes <i>tra-</i> and <i>pre-</i> (see page 24) Intervocalic <i>s</i> with pronoun <i>-si</i> : <i>dicesi</i> ['ditʃesi] Intervocalic <i>s</i> in compound words: <i>stasera</i> [sta'sera]	[z]	Spelling <i>s</i> + voiced consonant: <i>sventura</i> [zven'tura] All other intervocalic single <i>s</i> : <i>tesoro</i> [te'zɔro] <i>mese</i> ['meze] <i>Note: Intervocalic pronunciation of "s" is [s] in numerous Italian words. Intervocalic [z] is a lyric rule, an elegant manner of pronunciation for singing.</i>
[dz]	Dictionary required for spelling <i>z</i> : <i>mezzo</i> ['meddzo]	[ts]	Dictionary required for spelling <i>z</i> : <i>danza</i> ['dantsa]
[ɲ]	Spelling <i>gn</i> : <i>signore</i> [si'ɲore]	[ŋ]	<i>n</i> when followed by [g] or [k] sounds: <i>pianga</i> ['pjaŋga]
[k]	<i>c</i> + back vowel or consonant: <i>core</i> ['kɔre] <i>perché</i> [per'ke]	[g]	<i>g</i> + back vowel or consonant: <i>lago</i> ['lago] <i>grato</i> ['grato]
[tʃ]	<i>c</i> + front vowel: <i>pace</i> [patʃe] <i>cielo</i> [tʃelo] (<i>i</i> is silent)	[dʒ]	<i>g</i> + front vowel: <i>gente</i> ['dʒente] <i>giorno</i> ['dʒorno] (<i>i</i> is silent)
[ʃ]	<i>sc</i> + front vowel: <i>esce</i> [eʃʃe] <i>sciarpa</i> [ʃʃarpa] (<i>i</i> is silent)	[sk]	<i>sc</i> + back vowel or consonant: <i>scherzo</i> [ʃskertso] (<i>h</i> is silent)
[ʎ]	Spelling <i>gli</i> : <i>foglio</i> [fɔʎlo] (<i>i</i> is silent)	[ʎ]	Spelling <i>gli</i> + consonant or final: <i>toglioni</i> [tɔʎli] <i>gli</i> [ʎli]
[h]	Spelling <i>h</i> is silent (there is no [h] sound in Italian)	[ʔ]	There is no glottal stop in Italian

Consonants that are doubled in spelling are also doubled in transcription. The symbols [ʃ] [ɲ] [ʎ] are always doubled in transcription.

Vowels

[i]	Single <i>i</i> : <i>primi</i> ['primi] <i>divino</i> [di'vino] Spelling <i>ì</i> (always): <i>finì</i> [fi'ni]	[j]	Spelling <i>i</i> + vowel (<i>i</i> becomes [j]): <i>lieto</i> ['lieto] (Except when stressed or in hiatus: <i>Lucia</i> [lu'tʃi:a])
[u]	Single <i>u</i> : <i>luce</i> [lutʃe] <i>futuro</i> [fu'turo] Spelling <i>ù</i> (always): <i>virtù</i> [vir'tu]	[w]	<i>u</i> + vowel (<i>u</i> becomes [w]): <i>uomo</i> ['wɔmo] <i>suora</i> ['swɔra] (Except in hiatus: <i>usuale</i> [uzu'ale]) <i>qu</i> is [kw] <i>gu</i> is [gw]
[e]	Dictionary required for <i>e</i> , <i>è</i> , <i>é</i> of stressed syllables closed Spelling <i>e</i> of unstressed syllables: <i>vivere</i> ['vivere]	[ɛ]	Dictionary required for <i>e</i> , <i>è</i> , <i>é</i> of stressed syllables open
[o]	Dictionary required for <i>o</i> , <i>ò</i> , <i>ó</i> of stressed syllables closed Spelling <i>o</i> of unstressed syllables: <i>giocondo</i> [dʒo'kondo]	[ɔ]	Dictionary required for <i>o</i> , <i>ò</i> , <i>ó</i> of stressed syllables open Final <i>ò</i> is always open [ɔ]: <i>adorerò</i> [adore'rɔ]
[a]	Spelling <i>a</i> , <i>à</i> : <i>farfalla</i> [far'falla] <i>carità</i> [kari'ta]	[ɑ]	All <i>a</i> spellings are bright [ɑ]
[ʔ]	Dictionary required to determine primary stressed syllable	[.]	Dictionary required to determine secondary stressed syllable

Grave and acute marks indicate stressed syllable in polysyllabic words. They are not an indication for the open or closed quality of *e* and *o*.

Syllabic vowel in vowel clusters within the word

[:]	Final stressed <i>i</i> , <i>u</i> + vowel: <i>tuo</i> [tu:ɔ] <i>armonia</i> [armo'ni:a]	[j w]	The first <i>i</i> , <i>u</i> + vowel within the syllable: <i>grazia</i> ['gratsja]
long	The first <i>a</i> , <i>e</i> , <i>o</i> + vowel within the syllable: <i>Laura</i> ['la:ura]	glide	Spelling <i>i</i> , <i>u</i> + final stressed vowel: <i>può</i> [pwɔ:] <i>più</i> [pjù]

The tonic stress is given by lengthening the vowel of the stressed syllable: *bene* ['be:ne] (length is indicated in falling diphthongs only)

Syllabic vowel in vowel clusters within the phrase

- When the vowels of separate words share one note, a syllabic vowel choice must be made. A vowel is syllabic in the following cases:
- The stressed syllable of a polysyllabic word is syllabic in vowel groups within the phrase: *dolce anima mia* ['doltʃe'a:nima mi:a]
 - The first *a*, *e*, *o* of an unstressed vowel group within the phrase is syllabic: *alma infiammata* ['alma:inf jam'mata]
 - Final unstressed *i* becomes a semiconsonant when followed by an initial vowel word: *begli occhi ardenti* ['beʎʎjɔkkjar'denti]
 - The long vowel of diphthongs or triphthongs within monosyllabic and polysyllabic words is syllabic: *non può andare* [non pwɔ:an'dare]
 - The following monosyllabic words are strong and syllabic in vowel groups within the phrase: *a*, *ah*, *blu*, *che*, *ché*, *chi*, *da*, *dà*, *deh*, *dì*, *do*, *e*, *è*, *ed*, *fa*, *fé*, *fo*, *fra*, *fu*, *già*, *giù*, *ha*, *ho*, *là*, *li*, *ma*, *me*, *né*, *no*, *o*, *oh*, *re*, *sa*, *se*, *sé*, *sì*, *so*, *sta*, *sto*, *su*, *te*, *tè*, *tra*, *tre*, *tu*, *va*, *vo*

Phrasal doubling

Considerations for phrasal doubling must be made within the context of musical preparation

- Initial consonants of *Dio*, *dei*, *dea*, *dee* and *Maria* (*Virgin Mary*) are doubled when preceded by a final vowel: *Ave Maria* [ave *ma'ri:a]
An initial single consonant is doubled when preceded by a stressed vowel or a strong monosyllable: *una beltà divina* [una bel'ta *di'vina]
Consonant blends with *l* and *r* are doubled when preceded by a stressed vowel or strong monosyllable: *la vita è breve* [la 'vita ɛ *breve]

Sources

These rules are based on Evelina Colorni's *Singers' Italian* with transcription finalized by Dr. Corradina Caporello, Professor of Italian Diction at the *Juilliard School of Music*. Recommended pronunciation dictionaries: *Zingarelli*, *Dizionario di ortografia e pronuncia* (dizionario.rai.it) and *Garzanti* (www.garzantilinguistica.it).

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

FRONT VOWELS

IPA	ENGLISH (approximation)	ITALIAN
[i]	greet, evening	vita, ivi, sospiri ['vita]['ivi][sos'pɪri]
[e]	chaos, décor	cheto, entra, mercé ['keto] ['entra] [mer'tʃe]
[ɛ]	heaven, friend	cielo, erba, ahimè [tʃɛlo]['erba][a:i'mɛ]
[a]		mare, alma, città ['mare]['alma][tʃit'ta]

BACK VOWELS

[u]	truth, moon	giusto, umile, virtù ['dʒusto]['umile][vir'tu]
[o]	obey, protect	dolce, ombra, solo ['doltʃe]['ombra]['solo]
[ɔ]	dawn, autumn	core, occhi, però ['kɔre]['ɔkki][pe'ɔ]

SEMICONSONANTS / GLIDES

[j]	yield, view	fiore, chiara, insieme ['fjɔre]['kʃara][in'sjeme]
[w]	willow, sweet	suono, guardia, quale ['swɔno]['gwardʒa]['kwale]

DIACRITICAL MARKS

[ː] (long vowel)	day, shadow [deɪ]['ʃædoːʊ]	mio, bei, lauro [miːo][beɪi]['laːuro]
[ˈ] (stressed syllable)	believe, prevail [bɪ'lɪv] [pɪrɪ'veɪl]	semplice, libertà ['semplitʃe][liber'ta]

HIATUS (adjacent vowel sounds that occupy consecutive syllables)

ENGLISH (approximation)

ITALIAN

noel, create, triumph

leone, fluire, paese, vialetto, realtà

[no'eɪl] [kri'e:ɪt] [ˈtɹɪ:ɪ-əmf]

[le'one] [flu'ire] [pa'eze] [vi-a'letto] [re-al'ta]

RISING DIPHTHONG (two vowel sounds in the same syllable with a longer duration of the second vowel - a glide rapidly introduces the following vowel)

music, view, dwell

lieta, piano, chiusa, quando, uomini

[ˈmjuzɪk] [vju] [dweɪl]

[ˈljeta] [ˈpjano] [ˈkjuza] [ˈkwando] [ˈwɔmini]

FALLING DIPHTHONG (two vowel sounds in the same syllable with a longer duration of the first vowel - length is more deliberate in Italian)

eyes, ray, note

io, sei, coi, tuo, mai, aura, neutro

[?ɑ:ɪz][ɛ:ɪ][no:ʊt]

[i:ɔ][sɛ:i][ko:i][tu:ɔ][ma:i][ˈa:ura][ˈnɛ:utro]

When accented within the phrase, final stressed falling diphthongs of select words may be set in separate syllables: *io* ['i-o] *coi* ['ko-i] *tuo* ['tu-o] *miei* ['mje-i] *tuoi* ['twɔ-i]

TRIPHTHONG (three vowel sounds within the same syllable)

fire, power, cure

miei, tuoi, quiete, guai, quei, aiuola

[fɑ:ɪə][pa:ʊə] [kjʊ:ə]

[mje:i][twɔ:i][ˈkwjete][gwai][kwe:i][a'jwɔla]

LONG MONOPHTHONG ("the tonic stress in Italian words is given by lengthening the stressed vowel. This helps the singers not to punch stressed syllables as one would do in English."¹)

IPA

ITALIAN

[i:]

dito, ira, primo, fine

[ˈdi:to][ˈi:ra][ˈpri:mo][ˈfi:ne]

[e:] [ɛ:]

vero, neve, tema, bene

[ˈve:ro][ˈne:ve][ˈtɛ:ma][ˈbɛ:ne]

[u:]

lumi, oscuro, duca, muro

[ˈlu:mi][osˈku:ro][ˈdu:ka][ˈmu:ro]

[o:] [ɔ:]

dono, voto, sposa, coro

[ˈdo:no][ˈvo:to][ˈspɔ:za][ˈkɔ:ro]

[a:]

mano, spada, prato, capo

[ˈma:no][ˈspa:da][ˈpra:to][ˈka:po]

Note: The following text provides phonetic indications for vowel length in falling diphthongs only

¹ Dr. Corradina Caporello, e-mail instructions to author, May 29, 2008

DENTAL CONSONANTS (the following are alveolar in English)

IPA	ENGLISH (approximation)	ITALIAN
[d]	dream, delight	dì, onde, addio [di]['onde][ad'di:ɔ]
[n]	noon, linen	nome, fontana, donna [nome][fon'tana][dɔnna]
[t]	trust, teach	tanto, istante, detto [tanto][is'tante][dɛtto]
[l]	life, blissful	luna, velo, stelle [luna]['velo]['stɛlle]
[ʀ]	thread, throne	amore, puro, sperare [a'more]['puro][spe'rare]
[r]		ardor, rose, terra [ar'dor]['rɔze]['tɛrra]

PLOSIVE CONSONANTS (Qualities that differ from English examples: articulation in Italian is unaspirated - examples of plosive *d* and *t* are listed above)

[b]	bright, beauty	barca, nubi, labbra [barka][nubi][labbra]
[g]	grace, garden	grave, vago, agguato [grave][vago][ag'gwato]
[p]	peace, pleasant	pietà, aprile, coppa [pje'ta][a'prile][kɔppa]
[k]	candle, quick	caldo, sacra, staccato [kaldo][sakra][stak'kato]

PREPALATAL CONSONANTS (There are no English equivalents)

[ɲ]		ognora, degno, sogni [ɔɲ'ɲora][deɲno][soɲni]
[ʎ]		voglia, gigli, figlio [voʎʎa][dʒiʎʎi][fiʎʎo]

Other sounds familiar to English and Italian: [ʃ] *sheep*, [tʃ] *chair*, [dʒ] *judge*, [ŋ] *sing*