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**by Antonietta Di Pietro with
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Introduction

If you're reading this introduction, you're likely interested in learning a foreign language. You're surely aware of the importance of knowing how to communicate in every circumstance and situation because world views, ideas, and people travel and meet in a borderless space. Why you're choosing Italian is a question with many possible answers. You may want to refresh your memory of the Italian you learned in school, or perhaps you're preparing for a full immersion into the arts, fashion, and design. Maybe you're studying Italian so you can surprise an Italian friend or to get ready for a business trip to Italy. Or you may simply want to know the "language that sings." Whatever the reason, this book will help you do it.

Italian All-in-One For Dummies isn't a language course. This book deconstructs the Italian language and culture in chapters that complement each other but that you can read in the order you prefer and at your own pace. Rather than a vertical scaffolding of cultural topics, vocabulary, and grammar, *Italian All-in-One For Dummies* is a collection of what you need to successfully communicate in Italian. The accompanying audio tracks will help improve your pronunciation and intonation, and the online resources provide additional references.

About This Book

Italian All-in-One For Dummies presents aspects of the Italian culture and daily life as well as the grammatical framework of the language as it's spoken today. Each section in the book has a theme. You can choose where you want to begin and how you want to proceed. You can skip the sidebars (shaded text boxes) without remorse, or simply leave them for another time. *Italian All-in-One For Dummies* lets you read at the pace and in the order you prefer.

English translations are *italicized* when they accompany Italian words and sentences. The phrases and idiomatic expressions in Books I and II come with pronunciation guidelines. Within the Italian pronunciations, you see *italic* on the stressed syllables in words with two or more syllables. In addition, dialogues built around specific topics and real-life situations will enrich your vocabulary and your speech. Those who can't speak a language unless

they comprehend its syntax and grammar will be satisfied by the thorough clarifications presented in *Italian All-in-One For Dummies*. The appendixes provide quick references to specific grammar points (such as verbs) and translations of important words that appear throughout the book. The audio tracks help you practice your spoken Italian whenever and wherever you like! And because Italian is the “language that sings,” all you have to do is repeat after the audio track and join the chorus!

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you’re reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it’s noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn’t exist. If you’re reading this as an e-book, you’ve got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

Italian All-in-One For Dummies makes the following assumptions about you, dear reader:

- ✓ You’re an Italian student looking for an in-depth, easy-to-use reference.
- ✓ You know very little or no Italian — or if you took Italian back in school, you remember very little of it.
- ✓ Your goal is to expand your knowledge of Italian. You don’t want to be burdened by long-winded explanations of unnecessary grammatical terms, nor do you care to hold a scholarly discussion in Italian about Dante’s *Inferno*. You just want to express yourself in clear and reasonably accurate Italian.
- ✓ You’re enthusiastic about having fun while honing your Italian skills.

If any or all of these statements describe you, then you’re ready to start using this book.

Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information easier to find, the following icons appear in the left-hand margins throughout the book.



This icon highlights tips that can make learning Italian — and using it correctly — easier.



This icon points out interesting information that you shouldn't forget.



This icon highlights potential linguistic, grammatical, and cultural errors to avoid.



Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of these peculiar grammar rules. Because Books III, IV, and V are nearly all grammar, you see this icon only in Books I and II.



If you're looking for information and advice about Italian culture and travel, look for this icon.



This icon marks the Talkin' the Talk dialogues in Books I and II that you can listen to in order to get a better understanding of what Italian sounds like.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the plethora of Italian language information you find in the print book or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the eCheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/italianaio for common idiomatic expressions that use the verbs **fare** (*to do; to make*), **avere** (*to have*), **essere** (*to be*), and **andare** (*to go*); the scoop on using capital letters properly in Italian; and more.

This book comes with 29 audio tracks that allow you to hear many of the Talkin' the Talk dialogues spoken by Italian speakers. If you've purchased the paper or e-book version of *Italian All-in-One For Dummies*, just go to www.dummies.com/go/italianaio to access and download these tracks. (If you don't have Internet access, call 877-762-2974 within the U.S. or 317-572-3993 outside the U.S.)

Where to Go from Here

Before you start reading *Italian All-in-One For Dummies*, answer the question “how much Italian do I know?” If your answer is “not much,” “nothing,” or “just a little,” start with Book I. If you have a foundation of Italian but find that grammar always trips you up, you may want to jump to Book III. To test your understanding of tenses and how to use them properly, Book V is the place for you. You decide your priorities, so go ahead and make your choice — there’s plenty to browse and to select. **Buon divertimento!** (bwohn dee-vehr-tee-mehn-toh!) (*Have fun!*)

Book I

Speaking Italian in Everyday Settings



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Chapter 1

Exploring Pronunciations and Italian You May Already Know

In This Chapter

- ▶ Taking note of the little Italian you know
 - ▶ Becoming familiar with basic Italian pronunciation
 - ▶ Putting the emphasis on the right syllable
-

You probably know that Italian is a Romance language, which means that Italian, just like Spanish, French, Portuguese, and some other languages, is a “child” of Latin. There was a time when Latin was the official language in a large part of Europe because the Romans ruled so much of the area. Before the Romans came, people spoke their own languages, and the mixture of these original tongues with Latin produced many of the languages and dialects still in use today.

If you know one of these Romance languages, you can often understand bits of another one of them. But just as members of the same family can look very similar but have totally different personalities, so it is with these languages. People in different areas speak in very different ways due to historical or social reasons, and even though Italian is the official language, Italy has a rich variety of dialects. Some dialects are so far from Italian that people from different regions can’t understand each other.

Despite the number of different accents and dialects, you’ll be happy to discover that everybody understands the Italian you speak and you understand theirs. (Italians don’t usually speak in their dialect with people outside their region.)

You Already Know Some Italian!

Although Italians are very proud of their language, they have allowed some English words to enter it. They talk, for example, about gadgets, jogging, feeling, and shock; they often use the word *okay*; and since computers have entered their lives, they say **clicare sul mouse** (kleek-kah-reh soohl mouse) (*to click the mouse*). Finally, there's **lo zapping** (loh zap-ping), which means switching TV channels with the remote. These are only a few of the flood of English words that have entered the Italian language.

In the same way, many Italian words are known in English-speaking countries. Can you think of some?

How about . . .

- ✓ **pizza** (peet-tsah)
- ✓ **pasta** (pahs-tah)
- ✓ **spaghetti** (spah-geht-tee)
- ✓ **tortellini** (tohr-tehl-lee-nee)
- ✓ **mozzarella** (moht-tsah-rehl-lah)
- ✓ **espresso** (ehs-prehs-soh)
- ✓ **cappuccino** (kahp-pooh-chee-noh)
- ✓ **panino** (pah-nee-noh) (singular) or **panini** (pah-nee-nee) (plural)
- ✓ **biscotti** (bees-koht-tee) (*cookies* [plural]) or **biscotto** (bees-koht-toh) (singular)
- ✓ **tiramisù** (tee-rah-mee-sooh) (Literally: *pull me up*, a reference to the fact that this sweet is made with Italian espresso)

You may have heard words from areas other than the kitchen, too, such as the following:

- ✓ **amore** (ah-moh-reh): This is the word *love* that so many Italian songs tell about.
- ✓ **avanti** (ah-vahn-tee): You use this word to mean *Come in!* It can also mean *Come on!* or *Get a move on!*
- ✓ **bambino** (bahm-bee-noh): This is a male child. The female equivalent is **bambina** (bahm-bee-nah).
- ✓ **bravo!** (brah-voh!): You can properly say this word only to one man. To a woman, you must say **brava!** (brah-vah!), and to a group of people, you say **bravi!** (brah-vee!) unless the group is composed only of women, in which case you say **brave!** (brah-veh!).

- ✓ **ciao!** (chou!): **Ciao** means *hello* and *goodbye*. **Ciao** comes from the Venetian expression *sciào vostro*, or **schiaivo vostro** (*skyah-voh voh-stroh*) (*[I am] your slave*) in Italian; servants used this phrase in the 18th century when they addressed their lords.
- ✓ **scusi** (*scooh-zee*): This word stands for *excuse me* and *sorry* and is addressed to persons you don't know or to whom you speak formally. You say **scusa** (*scooh-zah*) to people you know and to children.

Getting to the root of cognates

In addition to the words that have crept into the language directly, Italian and English have many cognates. A *cognate* is a word in one language that has the same origin as a word in another one and may sound similar. You can get an immediate picture of what cognates are from the following examples:

- ✓ **aeroporto** (ah-eh-roh-pohr-toh) (*airport*)
- ✓ **attenzione** (aht-tehn-tsyoeh-neh) (*attention*)
- ✓ **comunicazione** (koh-mooh-nee-kah-tsyoeh-neh) (*communication*)
- ✓ **importante** (eem-pohr-tahn-teh) (*important*)
- ✓ **incredibile** (een-kreh-dee-bee-leh) (*incredible*)

You understand much more Italian than you think you do. Italian and English are full of cognates. To demonstrate, read this little story with some Italian words and see how easy it is for you to understand.

It seems **impossibile** (eem-pohs-see-bee-leh) to him that he is now at the **aeroporto** (ah-eh-roh-pohr-toh) in Rome. He always wanted to come to this **città** (cheet-tah). When he goes out on the street, he first calls a **taxi** (tah-ksee). He opens his bag to see whether he has the **medicina** (meh-dee-chee-nah) that the **dottore** (doh-toh-reh) gave him. Going through this **terribile traffico** (tehr-ree-bee-leh *trahf*-fee-koh), he passes a **cat-tedrale** (kaht-teh-drah-leh), some **sculture** (skoohl-toooh-reh), and many **palazzi** (pah-laht-tsee). He knows that this is going to be a **fantastico** (fahn-tahs-tee-koh) journey.

Picking up popular expressions

Every language has expressions that you use so often that they almost become routine. For example, when you give something to somebody and he or she says, "Thank you," you automatically reply, "You're welcome." This type of popular expression is an inseparable part of every language. When you know these expressions and how to use them, you're on the way to really speaking Italian.

Italian slang

Dialects and other deviations from “standard” Italian are also used in different social contexts. You may hear words such as **zecche** (dzehk-keh) (*young Italians politically engaged on the left side and dressed in a “trashy” manner*), **rimastini** (ree-mah-stee-nee) (*meaning leftovers, the term is used to jestingly refer to chain-smokers, or what’s left of them!*), **pariolini** (pah-ryoh-lee-nee) (*young people from the upper middle class, politically*

engaged on the zecche’s opposite side), and **truzzi** (trooht-tzsee) (*youth who listen to dance, techno, and house music*). You may also hear **bella** (beh-lah) instead of **ciao** (chou) (*hi*), **tajo** (tah-lyoh) (*fun*), **tanato** (tah-nah-toh) (*caught; discovered*), or **evaporato** (eh-vah-poh-rah-toh) (*disappeared*). Don’t bother to memorize these words; they’ll be outdated by the time you’ve managed to pronounce them.

The following are some of the most common popular expressions in Italian:

- ✓ **Accidenti!** (ahch-chee-dehn-tee!) (*Wow!*) (*Darn it!*)
- ✓ **Andiamo!** (ahn-dyah-moh!) (*Let’s go!*)
- ✓ **Che c’è?** (keh cheh?) (*What’s up?*)
- ✓ **D’accordo? D’accordo!** (dahk-kohr-doh? dahk-kohr-doh!) (*Agreed? Agreed!*)
- ✓ **E chi se ne importa?** (eh kee seh neh eem-pohr-tah?) (*Who cares?*)
- ✓ **È lo stesso.** (eh loh stehs-soh.) (*It’s all the same.*) (*It doesn’t matter.*)
- ✓ **Fantastico!** (fahn-tahs-tee-koh!) (*Fantastic!*)
- ✓ **Non fa niente.** (nohn fah nee-ehn-teh.) (*Don’t worry about it.*) (*It doesn’t matter.*) You say **Non fa niente** when someone apologizes to you for something.
- ✓ **Non c’è di che.** (nohn cheh dee keh.) (*You’re welcome.*)
- ✓ **Permesso?** (pehr-mehs-soh?) (*May I pass/come in?*) Italians use this expression every time they cross a threshold entering a house or when passing through a crowd.
- ✓ **Stupendo!** (stooh-pehn-doh!) (*Wonderful!*) (*Fabulous!*)
- ✓ **Va bene!** (vah beh-neh!) (*Okay!*)

Mouthing Off: Basic Pronunciation

Italian provides many opportunities for your tongue to do acrobatics. This is really fun, because the language offers you some new sounds. This section includes some basic pronunciation hints that are important both for surfing through this book and for good articulation when you speak Italian.



Next to the Italian words throughout this book you find the pronunciation in parentheses. The following sections help you figure out how to read these pronunciations — that is, how to pronounce the Italian words. In the pronunciations, the syllables are separated with a hyphen, like this: **casa** (*kah-zah*) (*house*). Furthermore, the stressed syllable appears in italics, which means that you put the stress of the word on the italicized syllable. (See the section “Stressing Syllables Properly,” later in this chapter, for more information about stresses.) If you master the correct pronunciation in this chapter, starting with the alphabet, you may even forego the pronunciation spelling provided, and read like a real Italian.

Starting with the alphabet

What better way is there to start speaking a language than to familiarize yourself with its **alfabeto** (ahl-fah-beh-toh) (*alphabet*)? Table 1-1 shows you all the letters as well as how each one sounds. Knowing how to pronounce the Italian alphabet is essential to pronouncing all the new words you learn. Note that the Italian alphabet has only 21 letters: Missing are *j*, *k*, *w*, *x*, and *y* (which have crept into some Italian words now used in Italy).



Listen to the alphabet on Track 1 as many times as you need to in order to get down the right sounds. In the long run, this will help you be understood when you communicate in Italian.

Table 1-1 The Italian Alphabet

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
a	ah	b	bee
c	chee	d	dee
e	eh	f	ehf-feh
g	jee	h	ahk-kah
i	ee	j	ee loohn-gah

(continued)

Table 1-1 (continued)

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
k	<i>kahp-pah</i>	l	<i>ehl-leh</i>
m	<i>ehm-meh</i>	n	<i>ehn-neh</i>
o	<i>oh</i>	p	<i>pee</i>
q	<i>kooh</i>	r	<i>ehr-reh</i>
s	<i>ehs-seh</i>	t	<i>tee</i>
u	<i>ooh</i>	v	<i>veeh</i>
w	<i>dohp-pyah vooh</i>	x	<i>eeks</i>
y	<i>eep-see-lohn</i>	z	<i>dzeh-tah</i>

Vowels

When it comes to vowels, the sounds aren't that new, but the connection between the written letter and the actual pronunciation isn't quite the same as it is in English.

Italian has five written vowels: **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, and **u**. The following sections tell you how to pronounce each of them.

The vowel “a”

In Italian, the letter **a** has just one pronunciation. Think of the sound of the *a* in the English word *father*. The Italian **a** sounds just like that.

To prevent you from falling back to the other *a* sounds found in English, the Italian **a** appears as (ah) in this book, as shown earlier in **casa** (*kah-sah*) (*house*). Here are some other examples:

- ✓ **albero** (*ahl-beh-roh*) (*tree*)
- ✓ **marmellata** (*mahr-mehl-lah-tah*) (*jam*)
- ✓ **sale** (*sah-leh*) (*salt*)

The vowel “e”

To pronounce the **e**, try to think of the sound in the word *day*, which comes very close to the Italian **e**. In this book, you see the **e** sound as (eh). For example: