

## Accent and Intonation

### → 1 The accent

Most Italian words are stressed on the second-from-last syllable. Some words, however, are stressed on the third-from-last or fourth-from-last syllable. Lastly, some words are stressed on the last syllable. In this case, the final vowel has a written accent mark.

libro, conosco, interessante  
 medico, abito, vengono, facile  
 telefonano, abitano  
 città, caffè, novità

- Accent on the second-to-last syllable
- Accent on the third-to-last syllable
- Accent on the fourth-from-last syllable
- Accent on the last syllable

*Attention:* In Italian, the accent is only marked in a few cases. The underlined vowel in the examples above is only there to facilitate the pronunciation. Moreover, when we have two identical monosyllabic words, one has a written accent mark, the other does not: *sì* (adverb) - *sì* (pronoun), *là* (adverb) - *la* (feminine article).

### Intonation

A question and a statement often have the same word order. What changes is the intonation, i.e. the tone of the voice (see melodic curve).

|                                                       | melodic curve of the sentence | type of sentence                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Mauro abita in Svizzera.                              |                               | statement                                              |
| Mauro, abita in Svizzera?<br>Abita in Svizzera Mauro? |                               | question without a pronoun<br>or interrogative pronoun |
| Dove abita Mauro?                                     |                               | question with a pronoun<br>or interrogative pronoun    |

## The noun

### → 2 The gender of nouns

In Italian, the noun is either masculine or feminine and ends in a vowel, with the exception of a few foreign words.

| masculine     | feminine |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| il libro      | la casa  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Nouns ending in <b>-o</b> are usually masculine.</li> <li>■ Nouns ending in <b>-a</b> are usually feminine.</li> <li>■ Nouns ending in <b>-e</b> are either masculine or feminine.</li> <li>■ There are very few nouns ending in a consonant and they are usually masculine.</li> </ul> |
| il ristorante | la notte |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| il tennis     |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

*In Italian, there are also:*

feminine nouns ending in **-o**: *l'auto, la foto, la radio*;

feminine nouns ending in a consonant: *l'e-mail, la star, la pole position*;

masculine nouns ending in **-a**: *il cinema, il problema, il turista*.

### → 3 Names of professions

Some names of professions have different endings for the feminine or masculine gender. Some others instead, have the same ending for both genders.

| <i>masculine</i> | <i>feminine</i>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| l'impiegato      | l'impiegata       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most masculine names of professions ending in <b>-o</b> and <b>-e</b> will end in <b>-a</b> in the feminine form.</li> <li>■ Some masculine names in <b>-e</b> end in <b>-essa</b> in the feminine.</li> <li>■ Masculine nouns ending in <b>-tore</b> will end in <b>-trice</b> in the feminine.</li> <li>■ Masculine nouns ending in <b>-ista</b>, <b>-ante</b>, and <b>-ese</b> do not usually change in the feminine.</li> </ul> |
| l'infermiere     | l'infermiera      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| lo studente      | la studentessa    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| il dottore       | la dottoressa     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| il programmatore | la programmatrice |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| il tassista      | la tassista       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| l'insegnante     | l'insegnante      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| il cliente       | la cliente        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| il francese      | la francese       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

*Attention:*

- For the professions **medico**, **ingegnere** and **architetto**, there is only the masculine form, used to refer to women as well:  
*Maria fa il medico.*  
*La signora Brunetti è un buon ingegnere.*  
*Mia moglie è architetto.*
- When the nouns **ingegnere**, **dottore** and **professore** are followed by the name of a person, they lose the last vowel (from **-re** to **-r**):  
*L'ingegner Gambini abita a Firenze.*  
*Le presento il dottor Franchi.*  
*Di dov'è il professor Pancheri?*
- The noun **signore**, when followed by the name of a person, also loses the last vowel (from **-re** to **-r**). The noun **signora** instead, is often used alone:  
*Buongiorno, signor Fabiani.*  
*But: Mi dica, signora!*

### → 4 Singular and Plural

| <i>singular</i> | <i>plural</i> |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|---------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| il libro        | i libri       | o ⇌ i | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Nouns ending in <b>-o</b> or in <b>-e</b> usually form the plural in <b>-i</b>.</li> <li>■ Nouns ending in <b>-a</b> usually end in <b>-e</b> in the plural.</li> <li>■ Nouns ending in a consonant or with a written accent mark on the final vowel do not change in the plural.</li> </ul> |
| il ristorante   | i ristoranti  | e ⇌ i |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| la notte        | le notti      |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| la casa         | le case       | a ⇌ e |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| il bar          | i bar         |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| la città        | le città      |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Some nouns are almost always used in the singular form or the plural form.

In the singular only: *la gente*, *il coraggio*, *il pepe* and others.

In the plural only: *i pantaloni*, *le ferie*, *i soldi*, *gli spinaci* and others.

## Peculiarities in the formation of the plural

| <i>singular</i> | <i>plural</i> |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| il problema     | i problemi    | a ⇌ i     | ■ Masculine nouns ending in <b>-a</b> end in <b>-i</b> in the plural.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| il negozio      | i negozi      | io ⇌ i    | ■ Nouns that end in <b>-io</b> in the singular (atone <b>i</b> ) end in <b>-i</b> in the plural.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| lo zio          | gli zii       | io ⇌ ii   | ■ Nouns that end in <b>-io</b> in the singular (tonic <b>i</b> ), end in <b>-ii</b> in the plural.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| il tedesco      | i tedeschi    | co ⇌ chi  | ■ With nouns ending in <b>-co</b> , <b>-go</b> , <b>-ca</b> and <b>-ga</b> , you insert an <b>h</b> in the plural to preserve the [k] or the [g] sounds.                                                                                                                                |
| l'albergo       | gli alberghi  | go ⇌ ghi  | ■ Masculine nouns ending in <b>-co</b> , end in <b>-ci</b> in the plural if they have an accent on the third-from-last syllable. <i>l'amico</i> - <i>gli amici</i> is an exception.                                                                                                     |
| l'amica         | le amiche     | ca ⇌ che  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| la bottega      | le botteghe   | ga ⇌ ghe  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| il medico       | i medici      | co ⇌ ci   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| l'arancia       | le arance     | cia ⇌ ce  | ■ Nouns ending in <b>-cia/-gia</b> end in <b>-ce/-ge</b> in the plural when there is a consonant before the letters <b>c</b> and <b>g</b> . They end in <b>-cie/-gie</b> when there is a vowel before the letters <b>c</b> and <b>g</b> or when the <b>i</b> has a written accent mark. |
| la spiaggia     | le spiagge    | gia ⇌ ge  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| la camicia      | le camicie    | cia ⇌ cie |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| la farmacia     | le farmacie   | cja ⇌ cje |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Some nouns have an irregular form in the plural: *la moglie* - *le mogli*, *l'uomo* - *gli uomini*.

## The article

## → 5 Definite and indefinite articles

|                                                                          | <i>Indefinite article</i> | <i>Definite article</i> |                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>masculine</i>                                                         |                           | <i>singular</i>         | <i>plural</i>       |
| before a word beginning with a consonant                                 | <b>un</b> libro           | <b>il</b> libro         | <b>i</b> libri      |
| before a word beginning with a vowel                                     | <b>un</b> amico           | <b>l'</b> amico         | <b>gli</b> amici    |
| before a word beginning with <b>s</b> + consonant                        | <b>uno</b> studente       | <b>lo</b> studente      | <b>gli</b> studenti |
| before a word beginning with <b>z</b> , <b>gn</b> , <b>y</b> , <b>ps</b> | <b>uno</b> zio            | <b>lo</b> zio           | <b>gli</b> zii      |
| <i>feminine</i>                                                          |                           |                         |                     |
| before a word beginning with a consonant                                 | <b>una</b> casa           | <b>la</b> casa          | <b>le</b> case      |
| before a word beginning with a vowel                                     | <b>un'</b> amica          | <b>l'</b> amica         | <b>le</b> amiche    |

■ Nouns with the beginning sound **gn**, **y** and **ps**: *gli gnocchi*, *lo yoga*, *lo psicologo*.

## → 6 Use of the definite article

Le presento **la** signora Rossi.  
**Il** signor Gambini oggi non viene.  
**Il** dottor Rivelli è di Torino.  
*But:* Buongiorno, signor Rossi.

In Italian, we use the definite article with:  
 ■ **signore/signora** + name of person;  
 ■ professional title + name of person (see also *Point 3 - Names of professions*). When we talk directly to someone, we do not use the article;