

# To the Student

## Welcome to your Italian language course

*Pronti... Via!* is a program designed to develop your ability to understand Italian and provide you with the skills to express yourself—both in speech and in writing—at the beginning and advanced-beginning level. Learning a foreign language is an extraordinary adventure that will not only improve your chances for success in school and in your career but will also give you the opportunity to learn about different ways of being and thinking: it will truly make a difference in how you see the world and in how the world sees you. Regardless of whether or not you have studied a foreign language before, remember that in order to learn a new language you need an open mind, discipline, and a desire to learn.

This program is supported by a CD-ROM and online material. This means that you will be able to carry out activities, do and check your homework, and study or review some of the lessons through your computer. Your instructor will provide you with the details you need in order to make the most of these features.

## Studying a foreign language in college

Language acquisition is one of the most impressive aspects of human development. The bases for the acquisition of a foreign language are listening and reading. This is why, in your college classroom setting, you will have lots of opportunities to listen and to read, so that you will gradually enable yourself to produce fluent and correct speech and writing. Although you will have the chance to speak Italian from the very first day of class, you will immediately realize that you can understand far more than you can say. This is a natural occurrence in all stages of foreign language learning. Moreover, while you may feel that you learn slowly at first, little by little things will become clearer until, suddenly, your knowledge of Italian will expand very rapidly in all your

language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In addition, you will gradually acquire new notions about Italian culture, which will enhance your overall foreign language experience.

## The methodology

*Pronti... Via!* is based on a methodology known as the Natural Approach as well as on the second-language acquisition theory developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell—two experts in the field of linguistics and specialists in language acquisition pedagogy. As they explain, there are two ways of developing ability in another language: one is called **language acquisition** (the subconscious process colloquially known as “picking up” a language), and the other is called **language learning** (the conscious process of studying and memorizing rules). While language acquisition gives us the ability to understand a foreign language when we hear it, as well as fluency and much of our accuracy in speaking, language learning helps us edit our speech and writing to the highest standards of correctness.


In class, listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities will be used to enhance your grasp of vocabulary and to provide you with opportunities to express yourself in Italian. You will be encouraged to focus on the goal of reaching communicative competence while striving toward grammatical accuracy. You may want to keep in mind that it is almost impossible to acquire near-native competence in one to two years. However, you can expect to be able to communicate clearly in the classroom and with native Italian speakers—albeit with some mistakes. Overall, the more you are able to understand what you read or hear, the more you will be assured that foreign language acquisition is taking place.

### How to use this textbook

It is crucial to understand from the outset how this program differs from texts you may have used or courses you may have taken in the past. The philosophy of *Pronti... Via!* aims to offer an expanded view of language instruction, while developing critical thinking. This objective will be reached through the following means: first, **communication** among your classmates, your instructor, and you; second, **cultural and linguistic awareness**—not only of the target language and culture but also of your own; and third, **connections and comparisons** between and among various academic disciplines.

*Pronti... Via!* has been written with one main objective in mind: to be user-friendly. It is, as you will realize, three books in one: an activity book (white pages), a grammar handbook (green pages, or *Le pagine verdi*) and a mini-dictionary (the yellow pages, or *Le pagine gialle*). This color code will allow you to locate all the information you need, when you need it.

### Classroom activities

Classroom time will be devoted to carrying out as many activities as possible from the white-page sections of each chapter. Most of the *attività* included in the white pages of your textbook are preceded by the symbol . This symbol indicates that in order to complete the tasks according to the instructions, you will have to interact—in Italian—either with a classmate, with the rest of the class, or with your instructor.

### Grammar: *Le pagine verdi*

“The Green Pages” have been created to be your starting point for every self-study session. They will provide you with straightforward explanations of the grammatical terms and concepts that you encounter in *Pronti... Via!* Your greatest responsibility in this course will be to read the assigned pages carefully to make sure you understand both the explanations and the examples. One of the innovative features of the grammar sections in this textbook is the use of extended, contextualized bilingual examples, supported by illustrations whenever possible. Taking time to work on the examples in each grammar section is crucial not only to understand the grammatical concepts better but also to strengthen

your reading skills. A recommended strategy is that you read the Italian version of the example first, making a conscious effort not to glance at the English equivalent. Then you can self-test your reading skills by comparing what you have gathered from the sentences and paragraphs and what the translation says. The exercises that follow the examples will help you process each new grammar point and enable you to proceed constructively with classroom interaction and workbook practice.

### Vocabulary: *Le pagine gialle*

“The Yellow Pages” contain each chapter’s vocabulary. The *pagine gialle* have been designed to give you an exact idea of the thematic focus of each chapter. You will doubtlessly develop your own technique for familiarizing yourself with each word. Here are some pointers that may help you: Work on the *pagine gialle* daily. Read aloud each word in the assigned segments, making sure you pronounce each letter correctly (according to the phonetic rules that you study and practice in class). As you articulate each word or phrase, you will be able to glance at the English equivalent provided. Do not be overwhelmed by the number of words contained in each *pagine gialle* section: you will learn gradually how to manipulate the vocabulary because you will hear the same vocabulary words in context during classroom activities; moreover, you will re-encounter them while completing the workbook exercises. As a result, you will increase your ability to use Italian words to formulate your own thoughts, both orally and in writing.

### Exercises: *Quaderno degli esercizi*

The *Quaderno degli esercizi* (workbook) provides additional practice with vocabulary and structures through a variety of reading, writing, and online listening exercises. Answers to the workbook exercises are also available online. Your instructor will explain how to work on your *Quaderno degli esercizi* in order to fulfill the requirements of your Italian course.

### Laboratory Manual

Your instructor will provide you with specific information about how to use the audio program of *Pronti... Via!*

**Bibliography**

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