Kindly Dr. Powell's guide to Italian

I. Vowels

*Italian vowels are all clear and strong; there is no schwa or short [I]. E and O can be either closed or open; unfortunately, there are not coherent rules for when each is used.*

A is pronounced “ah” as in the word “father.” [never as “ae” in “cat” or “aw” in “law”]

E [closed] is pronounced as the first part of the dipthong “day,” with the jaw high. Do not complete the American dipthong by closing to the “ee.”

E [open] is pronounced as in the word “fed.”

I is pronounced as an “ee” in “feet.” Never use a short “i” as in “fit.”

O [closed] is pronounced as the European closed “o” (no American analog).

O [open] is pronounced “aw” as in the word “law.”

U is pronounced “oo” as in “school.” Never use a short “U” as in “foot.”

*There are no silent vowels in Italian; pronounce each vowel as it comes. When a word has multiple vowels, move through them quickly and sustain the last one.*

II. Consonants

*Italian consonants are dry and dental. For T and D, the tip of the tongue should touch the back of the top teeth.*

C is hard before “a, o, and “u: similar to the “c” in “cow.”

C is soft before “e and “i; pronounce it like “ch” in “chow.”

CH is pronounced “k”—it normally occurs only before e or i.

G is hard before “a, o, and “u: similar to the “g” in “go.”

G is soft before “e and “i; pronounce it like “dg” in “budge.”

GH is pronounced “g” (hard “g,” silent “h”)—it normally occurs only before e or i.

GLI the “g” is silent; pronounce as the “LLI” in “million”

GL followed by a, e, o, u is pronounced as written (“glowstick”)

GN the “g” is silent; the combination is similar to the sound of the first n in “onion”

GU+vowel pronounce as “gw” + vowel (guarda = [gwar-da])

H is silent.

J = “y” in “yes”

QU is pronounced as “kw” as in “queen.”

R is flipped or rolled—never use an American “arrrr.”

S is voiced [pronounced “z”] in four cases:
- At the beginning of words
- between vowels (“intervocalic”)
- following a voiced consonant and preceding a vowel
- before the suffixes –sal and –sam.

Otherwise, it is unvoiced (sss).

SC is hard before “a, 0, “u; as in the word “scar.”

SC is soft before “e, “i; as in the word “sheep.”

SCH the “h” is silent; pronounce sch as in the word “scar”—it typically occurs before an e or i.

Z is usually pronounced “ts” as in the “tse-tse fly.” It can also be a dz sound, but rules are not consistent.