

PHRASAL DOUBLING EXPLANATION

The phenomenon of **phrasal doubling or raddoppiamento fonosintattico** occurs in the Italian language chiefly as a homage to its Latin roots, or as the kids say nowadays, “we got the receipts.” As Latin morphed into Italian, we see both that spelling changes AND that there’s a lasting effect on pronunciation. Many of the double consonants that we see spelled out are the evolution/ assimilation of consonant clusters from Latin:

octo /kt/ → otto
saxum /ks/ → sasso
somno /mn/ → sonno

There are four consonants that auto-double – **sc, gn, gl, z/zz either voiced (dz) or unvoiced (ts)**. These are ‘receipts’ from Latin:

lasciare /ʃ:ʃ/ is from Latin laxare /ks/
regno /ɲ:ɲ/ <L regnum /ɲ/
figlio /ʎ:ʎ/ <L filius /l/
azione /t:ts/ <L actus /kt/
olezzo /d:dz/ <L olidus /d/

The same influence from Latin is what causes the phenomenon of phrasal doubling – where there were more consonant sounds between words in Latin, the Italians preserved this effect by doubling the initial consonant after certain words, falling into the groups of

WORDS THAT CAUSE DOUBLING AFTER

- strong/tonic one-syllable words or one-syllable words with a written accent (examples: a, che, chi, tu, sé)
- polysyllabic words with stress on the final syllable (examples: beltà, perché, caffè, saprò, cantò, Città del Capo)
- five ‘piano’ words (come, contra, qualche, d/ove, sopra/sovra)

WORDS THAT CAUSE DOUBLING BEFORE

- Religious names preceded by vowel (Dio: /od:dio/, /miod:dio/; dei, dee, dea)
- Certain fixed names (Maria, etc.)
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Often these phrasal doublings are spelled out, especially in the Italian we are accustomed to seeing in libretti:

a presto → appresto, a bastanza → abbastanza
da vero → davvero, da che → dacché
è vero → evero
chi sa → chissà
lo saprò → (saprò lo) → saprollo (future tense)
mi mancò → (mancò mi) → mancommi (passato remoto)