

# LATIN GRAMMAR STUDY GUIDE

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version 1.1 of this work

Each part of speech is followed by its definition; in *italics* is listed what to memorize about each word in the Latin vocabulary; then are listed the variable characteristics to identify in order to translate correctly.

**NOUN:** person, place, thing or idea (*nominative singular; genitive singular; and gender*)  
*case:* nominative, genitive, dative, accusative or ablative [vocative, locative]  
*number:* singular or plural; *gender:* masculine, feminine or neuter

**PRONOUN:** takes the place of a noun or nouns (*each type has its own declension*)  
*type:* personal, reflexive, relative, interrogative, indefinite or negative  
*case:* nominative, genitive, dative, accusative or ablative  
*number:* singular or plural; *gender:* masculine, feminine or neuter

**ADJECTIVE:** modifies a noun or pronoun (*either 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> declension*)  
*case:* nominative, genitive, dative, accusative or ablative [vocative]  
*number:* singular or plural; *gender:* masculine, feminine or neuter  
*degree:* positive, comparative or superlative

**VERB:** expresses action or state of being (*FOUR PRINCIPAL PARTS: 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, present, active indicative; present, active infinitive; 1<sup>st</sup> person, singular, perfect, active indicative; and perfect, passive participle*)

## finite forms

*person:* first, second or third; *number:* singular or plural  
*tense:* present, imperfect or future (*imperfect* tenses); perfect, pluperfect or future perfect (*perfect* tenses)  
*voice:* active or passive [reflexive]; *mood:* indicative, subjunctive or imperative

## infinite forms

### verbal nouns:

infinitive

*tense:* present, perfect or future; *voice:* active or passive

gerund (*2<sup>nd</sup> declension*)

*case:* genitive, dative, accusative or ablative; *number:* singular; *gender:* neuter

supine (*4<sup>th</sup> declension*)

*case:* accusative or ablative; *number:* singular; *gender:* masculine

### verbal adjective:

participle

*tense & voice:* present active, perfect passive, future active or future passive (*aka gerundive*)

*case:* nominative, genitive, dative, accusative or ablative [vocative]

*number:* singular or plural; *gender:* masculine, feminine or neuter

**ADVERB:** modifies a verb, adjective or another adverb (∅)

*degree:* positive, comparative or superlative

**PREPOSITION:** expresses relative position or direction, etc. *case required* (ablative or accusative)

**CONJUNCTION:** connects words or groups of words (∅)

**INTERJECTION:** expresses surprise or emotion (∅)

## SYNTAX

Latin sentences tend, but are not required, to follow the following pattern:

Subject (Modifier) + Indirect Object (Modifier) + Direct Object (Modifier) + (Modifier) Verb

*Note:* a modifier can be a word or group of words (phrase or clause)

*Words* represent objects, actions, characteristics, etc. *Grammar* describes the relations between words. Generally, grammar uses two methods: *analysis* changes the word order (*syntax*), and *inflection* changes the forms of the words themselves, usually by adding *suffixes*. English grammar is primarily *analytical*, although it retains some inflections; Latin grammar is primarily *inflected*, although there are syntactic conventions as well.

A Latin **noun** has *declension*, or a set of case endings. Latin has five regular declensions, or groups of nouns which share particular sets of case endings. These declensions are numbered in order of their members, from most to least. The *nominative singular*, *genitive singular* and *gender* are listed for each noun in the dictionary. The nominative singular may not be apparent from the other forms. The genitive singular identifies the declension: 1. *-ae*; 2. *-ī*; 3. *-is*; 4. *-ūs*; and 5. *-ē*.

*Case* shows the grammatical function of a noun in a clause or phrase. Cases other than the nominative are called *oblique*. The oblique cases are built on the *stem* of the noun, which may be obtained by dropping the *genitive singular* ending. The stem may not be apparent in the nominative singular, as for example in *tempus, temporis* (stem = *tempor-*; Latin *r* changes to *s* between vowels, a process called *rotacism*).

*Nominative*: shows a subject

*Genitive*: generally shows possession; it can be called the *adjective* case, because it causes a noun to modify another noun

*Dative*: generally shows an indirect object, expressed in English by the prepositions *to* or *for*.

*Accusative*: shows a direct object; it also shows the object of certain prepositions.

*Ablative*: is the most complex case. As Latin evolved from its ancestral forms, certain case functions *coalesced*, and the original case forms disappeared. Thus the ablative unites three originally distinct cases: the true *ablative* (from), the *instrumental* (by or with) and the *locative* (where or when). The ablative also shows the object of many prepositions; the ablative without a preposition may often be translated by one of the English prepositions *from, by, with, in* or *at*.

Two other cases remain only in certain forms and uses:

*Vocative*: used for direct address; its forms are identical with the nominative, except the 2<sup>nd</sup> declension singular *-e*.

*Locative*: shows place where; it occurs only in some singular place names of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> declensions, and with a small group of other nouns indicating time, place or circumstance. For the most part, its function has been assumed by the ablative.

*Number* is *singular* (one) or *plural* (more than one).

*Gender* in Latin is usually arbitrary, and so must be memorized for each noun.

Latin **adjectives** belong either to the first (*feminine*) and second (*masculine or neuter*) declensions, or to the third declension. Third declension adjectives are further distinguished as having one (*masculine/feminine/neuter*), two (*masculine/feminine, or neuter*) or three (*masculine, feminine or neuter*) different endings to identify gender.

Latin adjectives and **adverbs** have *degree*: positive, comparative (Eng. *-er, -lier, more*) or superlative (Eng. *-est, liest, most*)

A Latin **verb** has *conjugation*, or set of personal endings. Latin has four regular conjugations, which are distinguished by the *stem vowel* at the end of the present stem: 1. *-ā-*; 2. *-ē-*; 3. *-e-*; and 4. *-ī-*. The *root* is the present stem minus the stem vowel.

Latin verb forms are *finite* (able to be used as the main verb in an independent clause) or *infinite* (including verbal nouns and adjectives). The four principle parts provide the following information about a verb:

*first*: helps identify a verb as regular or irregular; may not be apparent from other forms

*second*: provides the present stem (minus *-re*)

*third*: provides the perfect stem (minus *-ī*)

*fourth*: provides the supine stem (minus *-um* or *-us*)

All forms of a Latin verb are built on one of the three *stems*:

*present* stem: present, imperfect and future (the *imperfect*) tenses; present infinitive; gerund;  
present active and future passive (also called *gerundive*) participles

*perfect* stem: perfect, pluperfect and future perfect (the *perfect*) active tenses; perfect active infinitive

*supine* stem: supine; perfect passive and future active participles

English verbs also have *aspect*: *positive* (I say), *progressive* (I am saying) and *emphatic* (I do say);

Latin verbs may be translated with any of these three aspects, where applicable.

The majority of prepositions take the *ablative* case; the most common are these: *ā, ab, dē, cum, ex, ē,* and *prō, prae, sine*. Some prepositions take the *accusative* case, often expressing motion. Several can take either case, for example:

*in* + ablative = in or on; *in* + accusative = into