Introduction

Praelūdium: How Does This Thing Work?

People learn in a variety of ways. These ways encompass more than the learning styles familiar to teachers (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, and combinations thereof) and the somewhat dubious hemisphericity theory (left-brain, right-brain). An important third dimension of learning is the spectrum of *holistic* and *analytical* learning. This is especially relevant to the learning of languages.

This text is very much in the analytical bucket. It breaks down the Latin language into bite-size chunks of subject matter. As the text progresses, it knits those chunks together to create a big-picture view of the language.

Each **volūmen** (unit, or literally *scroll*) in this text consists of twelve **lectiōnēs** (lessons) and a **praelūdium** (prelude or introduction) like this one. The last lesson in each volume is a comprehensive review of the previous eleven. The learning of the language, by necessity, is cumulative, with each lesson encompassing vocabulary and concepts from previous volumes; the review lessons, however, focus primarily on vocabulary and concepts from the current volume.

Vocabulary

Each **lectiō** introduces about a dozen vocabulary words (or a few more), plus related words where appropriate. By *related* words, we mean those with the same roots and root meanings. For example:

- The active **līber** means *free*, as in not a captive or a slave.

- The related verb **līberāre** means *to free, set free,* or *liberate*.

- The related noun **lībertās** means *freedom* or *liberty*.

- The adjective is also used as a noun, especially in the plural: **līberī**, which usually refers to children—*id est*, members of the household who are (technically, at least) neither masters nor slaves, *the free ones*.

After the vocabulary list, you will find a section of Vocabulary Notes, which contains a closer look at the origins, functions, peculiarities, or historical significance of some of the words.

Grammar and Syntax

Then we move on to one or two grammatical sections—*exemplī grātiā*, how adjectives modify nouns and add endings to agree with the *case*, *number*, and *gender* of whatever nouns they modify. (See the section on adjectives in Part D of this introductory volume.

Exercises

Lectiōnēs conclude with some exercises, usually involving translations of short sentences from Latin to English or *vice versā*. Each lesson provides just enough exercises to get the grammatical points across and put the vocabulary to use. We try not to "drill and kill" with more repetition than is truly necessary.

Students may challenge themselves by taking the exercises and improvising on them, making slight modifications, like the basic chord progression in a jazz arrangement.

The review lessons also contain some exercises, as well as the answer keys for the exercises in the lessons within each volume.

Personal Essays

Between each volume, you will find rambling discourses on a variety of topics. Each of these essays connects in some way to the Latin language, ancient Roman civilization, and the connections between ancient Rome and the modern world. They combine observations and conclusions based on history, current events, and personal experiences.

The essays are written from a decidedly leftist perspective.

Readers of this text are perfectly welcome to skip the essays entirely. Some people may find them the most interesting part of the book.

Consider this: Occasionally, over the years, I have run into former students of mine, or they find me online and begin communications. Nearly all of them have said that they don't remember much of the Latin from their high school years, but they certainly do remember their Latin teacher. It's difficult for me to grasp that I could be more interesting than the Latin language, or all the cool stories that have been kept alive for over 2,000 years, but somehow I left a deep impression on their minds. Part of that may have been that I was the first

A. Why Latin?

Unlike some other ancient languages such as Sanskrit, literally nobody has spoken Latin as a native language for more than a millennium. Outside of the Vatican City, there are few people in the world who can speak it as a second or third language. Learning to speak Latin could make you the star at a party with an above-average nerdiness quotient, especially if you encounter somebody else there who can converse in it.

Speaking Latin fluently is absolutely **not the goal** here. The main goals are

1. to build your English vocabulary, and
2. to make it easier to learn the Romantic languages that evolved from Latin, including French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish.

The Treasures and Pleasures of Latin Literature

An auxiliary goal, if you discover that you have a passion for the language, is the ability to read ancient Roman or more recent Roman Catholic writings in the original language. Certainly, you can derive great pleasure from reading translations of the poetry of Ovid (Publius Ovidius Nāsō), for example. But there are many different English translations because there are so many ways certain words and phrases can be translated. If you can read the original text—or, more accurately, what the Medieval monastic transcribers determined to be the original—you can choose (or even create) the translation that works best for you!

Those College Aptitude Tests

Bulking up one's English vocabulary with a dose of Latin is an excellent strategy for secondary school students preparing to take their college entrance exams, as well as anyone who aspires to a career in law, medicine, or any of the sciences. Future physicians and research scientists would also benefit from learning the Greek root words relevant to their disciplines.

Humanities Majors Need Latin Too

Even if you just plan to major in literature, however, Latin can help you in reading and understanding the writings of centuries past. European poets, novelists, and essayists of the 18th and 19th centuries were mostly well-educated men and women, and being well-educated included being immersed in Latin; this immersion comes through in their writings—not only in their choice of words, but also in the structure of their sentences, which could be quite different from the way people speak in real life. The language is intentionally artificial because, as American novelist Charles Bukowski said, fiction is meant to be an *improvement* on real life.

Those studying the history of Europe in depth might also want to add some Latin to their scholarly tool chests. When a major historical figures like Martin Luther, for example, wrote anything important, they might write it in Latin (even though Luther was a big advocate of getting Bibles printed in "modern" languages for the masses to read more easily). The Magna Charta (Latin for *the Great Charter*) was written in—you guessed it—Latin, not the not-yet-standardized English of the 13th century.

Inflection Also Happens in Modern Languages

Beyond strengthening one's vocabulary, a bit of Latin can go a long way toward learning non-Romantic languages from Europe and elsewhere. As we shall explore later in this introduction, Latin is an *inflected* language. This means not only that verbs have *conjugations* that follow certain rules (most of the time), but that nouns, pronouns, and adjectives have *declensions*.

In Latin, a noun doesn't have just one singular and one plural form as in English, French, Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish; it can take any of several forms depending on its role in a sentence. In the sample sentence below, each noun plays a different role:

Hey Publius, the emperor's son is showing my daughter his palace on the mountain.

Hey [direct address], the [possessor]'s [subject] is showing my [indirect object] his [direct object] on the [place where].

Each of the six roles would appear in a different *case* in Latin. The endings attached to the nouns indicate their cases, and the cases indicate the nouns' functions (or at least provide clues).

German, Hungarian, Finnish, and the various Slavic languages are just a few modern examples of languages that attach various endings to their nouns and adjectives. Romanian is the only major Romantic language with vestiges of declension passed down from its linguistic ancestor.

Lastly, Why Not?

There are worse hobbies one could take up than learning a semi-extinct language. You don't have to be a language nerd to plow through this text, but it couldn't hurt. There are bound to be a few dozen folks out there thinking, "The world is coming to an end, the people in charge of it aren't doing anything to stop it—in fact, they're hastening it—so I may as well learn some Latin."

If that is the case, let us hope that this do-it-yourself Latin course will keep you entertained while you wait for the Apocalypse.

B. The Evolution of Latin

Languages evolve constantly. Some evolve faster than others. A language may undergo rapid changes over a period before settling into relative stasis. In more recent times, globalization and the spread of English as the language of commerce have sped up the process dramatically.

Consider the differences between the English of Geoffrey Chaucer's time (14th century C.E.), William Shakespeare's (16th and 17th), Jane Austen's (19th), and P. Diddy's (21st). English-speakers might be able to read Chaucer's English with the help of footnotes; would Chaucer comprehend hip-hop English, whether by listening or reading the lyric sheet?

Before Chaucer, the Germanic tongue known as English had already been absorbing elements of Romantic and Celtic languages for nearly a millennium, growing and changing along the way. Even from a late Medieval perspective, the Old English in the epic poem *Beowulf* would be barely recognizable as English. (I would *love* to see someone try to rap in Anglo-Saxon.)

Classical Latin also evolved. In its infancy, it was a regional variant of Proto-Italic, which itself was a regional variant of Indo-European. It took on vocabulary and syntax from neighboring languages such as Oscan and Umbrian, from the tongue of the colonizing Etruscans, and from the Greeks and Carthaginians whose lands the Romans conquered. Educated Romans learned to read and speak Attic Greek (the dialect spoken around Athens), usually from enslaved Greeks who worked as tutors; Roman society appropriated directly from Greek hundreds of words that Latin lacked (*e.g.*, **philosophia**), transcribing them into the Roman alphabet.

Variations across Space and Time

Within Classical Latin itself there were variations, just as we find in English: The vernacular of the streets and markets, depicted in the comic plays of Titus Maccius <u>Plautus</u> in the 3rd century B.C.E., differs radically from the refined oratory of Marcus Tullius <u>Cicerō</u> or the carefully constructed poetry of Publius <u>Vergil</u>ius Mārō. Tribes in the far-flung colonies likely lent their own flavors to Latin, just as the spoken English of the Americas, India, and Anglophone African nations differs from that of the home country. Literary Latin contains many examples of archaic spellings and inflections, inspired by writings from centuries earlier that scholars transcribed and kept alive.

Despite centuries of change, language authorities kept the "official" Latin language from evolving beyond their control. The rules of written Latin remained much the same until the fall of the Empire and beyond.

After the Roman Empire went out of business, regional "vulgar" variants of Latin evolved into the Romantic family of languages. (The word *vulgar* comes from the Latin word **vulgus**, meaning *the common people*; its origins have nothing to do with lacking good manners.) This process of vulgarization began before 476 C.E., because people in the colonies felt less compelled to converse in formal Latin than their cousins back in Rome. Today, the five most widely spoken vulgar Romance languages are French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish; also in that family are Catalan, Galician, Brazilian Portuguese, and the various regional languages of Italy.

Latin survived beyond 476 mainly as the common language of the dominant institution of Medieval Europe, the Roman Church. Clerics and ecclesiastical scholars from Scandinavia to Ethiopia could converse and correspond in the language of the old Empire.

In the millennium following the collapse of the Empire, Latin itself continued to evolve, although much more slowly than its descendant languages. Spellings, pronunciations, and rules of syntax underwent some subtle alterations over the centuries, culminating in the "Church Latin" familiar to anyone who has sung or officiated a Latin Mass.

If Julius Caesar had an opportunity to travel through time and visit Renaissance Europe, he would have been able to converse with the clerics and Church officials. He might have to adjust to the Italian-style pronunciation of vowels and certain consonants, similar to the adjustments Shakespeare would need to make if he were to visit 21st-century England.

C. Pronunciation: Basics

This collection of lessons uses the Classical pronunciation of Latin—or, more accurately, what linguists theorize Latin sounded like in the Late Republic and Early Empire periods. The actual pronunciation of Latin as spoken in ancient Rome is not known with complete certainty. Centuries of linguistic detective work has produced a general theory of the pronunciations of individual letters and combinations of letters (e.g., diphthongs). Fortunately for students of Latin, pronunciation of each letter in the alphabet is remarkably consistent in ancient Latin.

The Classical Roman alphabet consisted of 20 letters: **ABCDEFGHILMNOPQRSTVX**. Ancient Romans, having not yet invented lowercase letters, wrote (or carved) in all capital letters. However, we will include lowercase letters in this text because they make reading easier.

- The letters **I** and **V** did double duty as both consonants and vowels. As the language evolved, consonantal **I** became **J**, and vocalic **V** became **U**.
- The letter **K** was archaic, a remnant of Etruscan, and quite rare.
- The letters **Y** and **Z** were used for words borrowed from Greek upsilon and zeta, respectively, to transcribe foreign words.
- The letter **W** did not come along until much later; even today, most European languages ignore it, change it to a **V**, or use it grudgingly.

We will begin our exploration of pronunciation with vowels and combinations thereof.

Vowels and Diphthongs

Vowel	*Ancient Pronunciation*	*As In…*
a	f**a**ll	**ca**put (*head*)
ā	f**a**ll (lengthened)	n**ā**sus (*nose*)
e	f**e**ll	p**e**ctus (*chest*)
ē	f**ai**l (lengthened)	p**ē**s (*foot*)
i	f**i**ll	d**i**gitus (*finger, toe*)
ī	f**ee**l (lengthened)	t**ī**bia (*shinbone; flute*)
o	f**o**llow	**o**s (*bone*)
ō	f**oa**l (lengthened)	**ō**s (*mouth*)
u	f**u**ll	**u**merus (*shoulder*)
ū	f**oo**l (lengthened)—*never* like f**ue**l	gen**ū** (*knee*) (GHE-noo)
y	M**ü**nchen	C**y**clōps (*Cyclops*)
ae	f**i**le	maxill**ae** (*jaws*)
au	f**ou**l	**au**ris (*ear*)
oe	f**oi**l	pr**oe**lium (*battle*)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Classical Latin is one of those languages that, at least officially, has no silent letters. Pronounce everything. In Ecclesiastical Latin, centuries ago, it was decided that Latin should be pronounced much like Italian, and that **h** should not be pronounced at all. Furthermore, Latin has no schwa sounds: Every vowel always gets its full value.

The Long & Short of Vowels: Latin has the same vowels familiar to English speakers, but in short and long forms. In ancient Latin, the long vowels take longer to pronounce than the short ones and even sound a bit different, as in modern languages such as Czech, Hungarian, and Japanese. Medieval Latin does not distinguish between short and long vowels, pronouncing them similarly to modern Italian.

Actual written Latin does not contain macrons to show the length of a vowel. This is just a feature of modern Latin textbooks to get students accustomed to pronouncing the long vowels longer than (and slightly different from) the short vowels. So how do we know about long and short vowels? The rules for the structure of verse in Greek and Latin poetry is based on the length of syllables. Every syllable contains at least one vowel; a syllable is long when it meets one of these criteria:

- it contains a long vowel
- it contains a diphthong (two vowels that together make a single sound)
- it contains a short vowel followed by two or more consonants

A long or short vowel can make a difference in the meaning of a word or the function of a noun in a sentence. The most dramatic example of this distinction is the following pair of words:

- **occidō** = *I fall/I die*
- **occīdō** = *I cut down/I kill*

The length of a vowel may affect which syllable in a word is accented. In the example above, **occīdō** is pronounced *ok-KEE-doh*, while **occidō** is pronounced *OK-ki-doh*. (See the Accentuation section below.)

Diphthongs: The table above includes the three main *diphthongs* native to Latin: **ae, au,** and **oe**. There are four additional, less common diphthongs: **ai**, **ei**, **eu**, and **ui**. As with the letter **y**, the diphthongs are mostly used for transcriptions from other languages. These diphthongs are pronounced as the first vowel gliding into the second: e.g., **ai** = **a** + **i**. Whether a diphthong is native to Latin or adopted from another language, it is considered long.

i As a Consonant

Combination	Ancient	As In…
ia or **iā**	**ya**rn	**iaculum** (*javelin*)
ie or **iē**	**ye**ll or **Ya**le	**iēcur** (*liver*)
io or **iō**	**yo**ke	**iōcum** (*joke*)
iu or **iū**	**Yu**le	**iūgum** (*yoke*)

At the end of a word, the **i** and the vowel that follows it usually occupy separate syllables: **vic-tō-ri-a, se-ri-ēs,** etc.

Accentuation

Latin words longer than one syllable have their accents *only* in the second to last (penultimate) or third to last (antepenultimate) syllables. If the word has two syllables, accent the penultimate (i.e., first) syllable. For words of three or more syllables, if the penult is long (per the rules cited previously), it gets the accent; if short, the antepenult is accented.

The word **puella** in the table above has three syllables. Since the **e** precedes two consonants, its syllable is considered long, and thus it is accented.

One noteworthy quirk is that word fragments such as **-ne** and **-que** at the end of a word lengthen the preceding syllable, thus making that (penultimate) syllable accented.

Consonants

As stated earlier, consonants in ancient Latin are remarkably consistent and predictable; ecclesiastical Latin has a few notable exceptions, following rules from modern Italian. Wherever a consonant's pronunciation differs appreciably from the English equivalent, it is noted in the table below.

For the most part, **k** and **z** are used for foreign words or proper names. The letter **k** was part of the Roman alphabet in its early stages, but gradually evolved out of use, replaced by **c**.

The letter **q**, without exception, is accompanied by a **u** (written as a **v** in ancient Latin). Latin **qu** is pronounced like *kw*, as in modern Italian, but unlike in French or Spanish.

Lastly, a bit of trivia: **x** is the only consonant that never appears at the beginning of a Latin word. Greek is the language that gives us *xenophobia* and *xylophone*.

Consonant	*Ancient Pronunciation*
c	always hard like a **k**
g	always hard, as in **g**irl
qu	always as in **qu**een; **q** is never seen without an accompanying **u**
r	flapped, as in most modern European languages
rr	did Romans roll their **rr** as in modern Spanish? possibly
s	always voiceless, as in **s**alad
v (**u**)	always like a *w*
x	always like a *ks*, as in ta**x**; never like a *gz*, as in e**x**act
z (rare)	possibly like a *dz*, as in a**dz**e

Digraphs: Sometimes the letter **h** will appear as part of a digraph, usually for words and names borrowed from Greek. The digraphs **ch**, **ph**, and **th** are just aspirated versions of **c**, **p**, and **t**—*i.e.,* with a little extra breath behind them. Don't be tempted to **ch**uck your **ph**one into the **th**istles!

<u>Doubles:</u> Lastly, let's address what happens with double consonants, as in the words **bellum** (*war*), **gemma** (*gem*), and **vacca** (*cow*). As one would in Italian, lean into these doubles and take a little longer to pronounce them. As with any other pair of consecutive consonants, they make the syllable long.

Ecclesiastical Pronunciation

As mentioned previously, the "Church Latin" that developed in the Medieval era did not have vowels with different quantities. All the vowels and diphthongs sound similar to how we pronounce the long vowels of Classical Latin. Pronounce **y** (always an internal vowel) like Classical **ī**; the diphthongs **ae** and **oe**, like the Classical **ē**.

Consonants also get the Italian treatment:

Consonant	*Ancient Pronunciation*
c (before **e, i, y, ae, oe**)	like the *ch* in **ch**estnut
g (before **e, i, y, ae, oe**)	like the *g* in **g**esture
gn	like the *ni* in se**ni**or
h	(silent)
j	like the *y* in **y**arn
s (between two vowels)	like the *s* in ro**s**e
v	like the *v* in **v**ery
z **t** (between any vowel and an **i**)	like the *ts* in pi**ts**

D. Easy Nouns

The table below contains 90 Latin words, all nouns, that are spelled either identically or nearly so to their English equivalents—give or take a letter or two. We have added macrons (long marks) where appropriate. Where the meaning is not quite the same, we have added some notations to that effect. Practice pronouncing them in Latin.

Hints on the evolution of Latin to English, most of which passed through Medieval French following the Norman invasion of the 11th century:

- A final **-ārium** sometimes becomes *-ary*.

- A final **-culum** often becomes *-cle*.

- A final **-ia** or **-ium** often becomes *-y*.

- A final **-iō** often becomes *-ion*.

- A final **-tās** often becomes *-ty* in English.

- A final **-tūdō** often becomes *-tude*.

- Several other words ending in **-a** either drop that last letter or change it to an **e**.

Latin	*Notes*
abacus	
abdōmen	
alumnus/a	Original meaning is *foster child.*
animal	
antīquitās	
apparātus	
appendīx	Basic meaning is *hanging attachment.*
aptitūdō	Basic meaning is *readiness.*
ardor	
arēna	The actual meaning is *dirt*, but it also refers to a building in which gladiatorial games take place.
asparagus	
ātrium	
autumnus	
brevitās	
cēnsor	
cēnsus	Original meaning is *official (state) opinion*; however, counting the population for taxation and other purposes was one of the duties of the Roman **cēnsor**.

Latin	Notes
circus	Usually refers to a racetrack for horses or chariots, such as the Circus Maximus in Rome.
color	
columna	
cultūra	
disciplīna	Refers mostly to areas of study, rather thatn what one must use to concentrate on one's studies.
discipulus	Basic meaning is *student*.
divīnitās	
doctor	Basic meaning is *teacher*; a PhD (**Philosophiae Doctor**) is entitled to teach university students at every level.
doctrīna	
dormītōrium	
error	
fāma	This can also mean *reputation—i.e.,* what people say about you.
famīlia	In Latin, this refers to the entire household, including servants.
fortitūdō	
gladiātor	Basic meaning is *swordsman.*
glōria	
grāvitās	Basic meaning is *heaviness* or *seriousness*.
histōria	
honor	
horror	
interrogātiō	
lābor	
lībertās	
librārium	
magnitudō	
mathēmātica	
matrīmōnium	
medicīna	
memōria	
mīrāculum	
mūsica	
nātūra	

Latin	*Notes*
oceānus	
olīva	
ōmen	
onus	
ōrātiō	Basic meaning is *praying, pleading,* or *beseeching.*
ōrātor	
paenīnsula	
pelvis	
petītiō	Can mean either a petition or a candidacy for public office.
philosophia	
philosophus	
pictūra	Basic meaning is *painting.*
pīrāta	
poēta	
politicus	
praemium	Basic meaning is *reward.*
pulchritūdō	The English equivalent is a synonym for *beauty.*
quaestiō	Literally a "seeking," usually refers to an investigation.
responsum	
scorpiō	
scrība	
scrīptūra	
sculptūra	
senātor	
speciēs	Basic meaning is *appearance.*
spectāculum	
spectātor	
spīna	
stādium	
statua	
stātus	
stomachus	
terror	
theātrum	

Latin	Notes
tōga	
tūnica	
tūtor	Basic meaning is *guardian, protector*.
vehiculum	
vēlōcitās	
victor	
victōria	
volūmen	Basic meaning is *scroll*.

E. Important Facts about Latin

At the general level, there are some important facts about Latin that one should know before attempting to learn it: in particular, that it has no definite or indefinite articles, that it is heavily inflected, and that inflections of words are more important than the order in which they appear. Let's break that down below.

No articles: Latin has no words specifically for *a/an* or *the*. When translating from Latin to English, you may need to supply the appropriate indefinite or definite article to make the sentence sound like English.

Inflection: Latin is an *inflected language*, which means:

- Nouns change form based on their function in a sentence and their number (singular or plural).
- Adjectives change form to agree with the nouns they modify.
- Verbs change form based on their subject, tense, voice, and mood.

The main indicators for inflections of Latin nouns and adjectives are attached to their ends; for verbs, it is a combination of the endings and what immediately precedes those endings. (Most inflected languages that developed in Europe use endings; in other parts of the world, these indicators may appear at the beginning or in the middle of a word.)

Word order is not fixed: Like many other inflected languages, the order in which words appear in a sentence or clause is usually unimportant. It has some conventions that are not followed 100% faithfully, such as the following:

- The main verb of a clause appears at the end of that clause.
- Adjectives appear next to the nouns they modify (describe).
- Adverbs appear immediately before the verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs they modify.
- Some conjunctions appear in the second position within their clauses, not at the beginning.
- Prepositions appear immediately before their objects.

A word or phrase may appear at the beginning of a clause for emphasis.

Pulchra est illa toga!	*That toga is <u>beautiful</u>!*
Caesar magnus imperātor erat.	<u>*Caesar*</u> *was a great general.*

Beyond that, remember one fact of languages: most words have more than one possible translation. A Latin noun, verb, adjective, preposition, or conjunction may have multiple equivalents in English, and *vice versa*. When translating, our goal is to choose the best or most appropriate translation; there is seldom only one correct answer.

Inflection—Nouns

Cases

Nouns in Latin can appear in any of six cases. The cases are such an important part of learning Latin that this text will always capitalize their names. The functions listed in the table below are merely examples; the Ablative has about 18 functions altogether.

Case	Sample Usages
Nominative	Subject: *The <u>noun</u> is good.* Subject complement: *It is a good <u>noun</u>.*
Vocative	Direct Address: *Hey <u>noun</u>, what's happening?*
Genitive	Possessor: *What is the <u>noun's</u> name?* Partitive: *May I have some <u>of your noun</u>?*
Dative	Indirect Object: *I created a new function <u>for the noun</u>.*
Accusative	Direct Object: *I really like the <u>noun</u>.* Place to Which: *I am walking toward the <u>noun</u>.*
Ablative	Place Where: *Are you in the <u>noun</u> right now?* Accompaniment: *I am traveling with the <u>noun</u>.* Means by Which: *I fixed the problem with a <u>noun</u>.*

This is worth exploring through an example right here. Here is the word **pāx** (*peace*) appearing in a variety of cases.

Case	Sample Phrase	Approximate Meaning
Nominative	**<u>Pāx</u> (sit) vōbīscum.**	*(May) peace (be) with you.*
Genitive	**Āra <u>Pācis</u>**	*The Altar of Peace, a sacred marble altar built in the time of Augustus and still visible in Rome.*
Accusative	**Dōnā nōbīs <u>pācem</u>, ō Domine**	*Grant us peace, O Lord.*
Ablative	**Requiescat in <u>pāce</u>.**	*May he/she rest in peace.*

In the third example, **Domine** is a Vocative form of **Dominus**, and **nōbīs** is an indirect object in the Dative case.

Numbers

Nouns in Latin are either singular (one person, place, or thing) or plural (more than one). There are remnants of an older number, dual, but they are seldom used. A noun's form in a sentence reflects a combination of its case and number.

Genders

Each noun in Latin is assigned to at least one of three genders: masculine, feminine, or neuter. Some nouns can be either masculine or feminine; to refer to those, this text posits a gender called *uter* (meaning *either of two*). This includes a few dozen words for occupations held mostly by men in ancient times that terminate in **-a** which is characteristic of the feminine gender—*e.g.*, **poēta** and **pirāta**. In our time of relative gender equity, we know that women can also be poets and pirates!

Declensions

Each noun in Latin belongs to one of five declensions, numbered I through V. A declension is a set of endings, corresponding to case and number, used to *decline* a noun or adjective.

Nouns are not distributed evenly among the five declensions: III has nearly half of all nouns, V has the fewest by far, and IV has considerably fewer than I or II. However, the association between declensions and genders follows a symmetrical pattern:

I	II	III	IV	V
predominantly feminine	masculine and neuter	all three genders (or four if you count uter)	masculine and (a few) neuter	predominantly feminine
some masculine	some feminine (mostly types of trees)		some feminine (mostly types of trees)	very few masculine

The nouns that we have assigned to the uter gender are found mostly in Declensions I and III.

Inflection—Adjectives

Agreement

Adjectives *modify* (describe) nouns. Each adjective must take a form that agrees with its noun in the dimensions of case, number, and gender—e.g., Accusative plural, feminine.

Understood Nouns

Sometimes adjectives appear without a noun. The gender signified by the adjective's ending allows you to assume *people* or *things* as the noun.

- When these adjectives show masculine or feminine endings, *a person* or *people* is understood (i.e., assumed): **multī** = *many people.*
- When these adjectives show neuter endings, *a thing* or *things* is understood: **multa** = *many things*.

Degrees

Most adjectives can appear in any of three degrees: positive, comparative, or superlative.

- Use the comparative degree when comparing any two persons, places, or things; it can also translate as *quite, rather,* or *too*. Comparative forms always use endings from Declension III.
- Use the superlative degree if there are three or more persons, places, or things; it can also translate as *very* or variations thereof. Superlative forms always use endings from Declensions I and II.

Some adjectives lack the comparative and superlative forms, and thus depend on an adverb (like *more* and *most* in English) along with the positive forms.

Degree	Sample Usages
Positive	*She is an <u>adjective</u> poet.*
Comparative	*She is an <u>adjectiver</u>/a <u>more adjective</u> poet than you.* *As a free-verse poet she is <u>quite adjective</u>.*
Superlative	*She is the adjectivest/most adjective poet I have ever known.* *As a free-verse poet she is <u>very adjective</u>.*

Declensions

Each adjective belongs either to Declensions I and II, Declension III, or no declension at all. The declension of an adjective and its noun do not always match:

- **Declension I and II**—These adjectives use Declension I endings when modifying feminine nouns, II for masculine nouns, and II with neuter variations for neuter nouns. This is true irrespective of the declension of the nouns that they modify.
- **Declension III**—These adjectives use mostly the same set of endings for modifying any noun of any gender, with some variations for neuter.
- **Indeclinable**—The form remains unchanged irrespective of case or gender.

Most of the cardinal numbers have no declension, and thus have the same form in all six cases. However, the numbers for *one, two*, and *three* have their own peculiar declensions. When demonstrative and relative pronouns are used as adjectives (see below), they also exhibit special declensional behaviors.

Inflection—Pronouns

Types

Pronouns are divided into different types or categories: personal, reflexive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, and indefinite. Demonstrative pronouns sometimes act as adjectives; relative pronouns sometimes act as interrogative adjectives.

Type	Sample Usages
Personal	*<u>I</u> adore <u>him</u>.* *<u>She</u> will give <u>it</u> to <u>you</u>.*
Reflexive	*He adores <u>himself</u>.*
Demonstrative	*<u>This</u> woman adores <u>that</u> man.*
Relative	*This is the man <u>whom</u> I adore.* *This is the gift <u>that</u> I gave him.*
Interrogative	*<u>Whom</u> do you adore?* *<u>What</u> would you like to buy him?*
Indefinite	*Has <u>anybody</u> told you that you look like <u>somebody</u> I adore?* *<u>Everybody</u> doesn't like <u>something</u>.*

Declensions

The declensions of pronouns are either slightly different from that of nouns or vastly different. Each type of pronoun has commonalities as to how it is declined; most of the divergences are found in the singular forms of the Genitive and Dative cases. This *pronominal* declension shows up in about a dozen adjectives as well: For the most part, those adjectives fall into Declensions I and II, but not in the Genitive and Dative singular.

Inflection—Verbs

Persons and Numbers

Verb forms in Latin can show which person is the subject: 1st (I or we), 2nd (you or y'all), or 3rd (literally anyone or anything else). All verb forms are either singular (one person, place, or thing is the subject) or plural (a group of persons, places, or things is the subject). In any clause, a verb must have the ending that *agrees* with its subject in person and number.

Person	*Singular*	*Plural*
1st	**ego**/*I*	**nōs**/*we*
2nd	**tū**/*you (s.), thou*	**vōs**/*you (pl.), y'all, ye*
3rd	**is, ea, id**/*he, she, it* any other singular subject	**eī, eae, ea**/*they* any other plural subject

NOTE: The pronouns **is/eī, ea/eae,** and **id/ea** are the Nominative singular and plural forms of the third-person pronoun in the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders, respectively.

If the subject is first- or second-person, or if the third-person subject is understood, the pronoun is not required: **Cōgitō, ergo sum** means *I think, therefore I am*, no **ego** required.

Tenses

Nearly all verbs in Latin can appear in any of six tenses. The tenses are divided into two tense systems, each of which is built on a different stem. The middle portion of a verb form reflects its tense; there are a few *defective* verbs that lack one of the systems.

Tense System	*Tense*	*Sample Usages*
Present	**Present**	*I <u>verb</u>, I do <u>verb</u>, I am <u>verb</u>ing*
	Imperfect	*I was <u>verb</u>ing, I used to <u>verb</u>*
	Future	*I shall <u>verb</u>*
Perfect	**Perfect**	*I <u>verb</u>ed, I have <u>verb</u>ed*
	Pluperfect	*I had <u>verb</u>ed*
	Future Perfect	*I shall have <u>verb</u>ed*

Voices

Most Latin verbs can appear in either the active or passive voice. The ending of a verb reflects a combination of person, number, and voice—e.g., 3rd person plural, active.

- Use the active voice when the subject is performing an action.
- Use the passive voice when the subject is being acted upon.

Voice	*Sample Usages*
Active	*I verb, I was verbing, etc.*
Passive	*I am verbed, I was being verbed, etc.*

Verbs that do not show direct action on someone or something generally do not appear in the passive voice. There is also a large set of *deponent* verbs that have passive endings but translate in the active voice.

Moods

Latin verbs can appear in any of three moods: indicative, subjunctive, or imperative. The middle portion of a verb form, the ending, or some combination of the middle and ending reveals the mood.

Mood	*Sample Usages*
Indicative	Statements or questions of fact: *I verb, I was verbing*, etc.
Subjunctive	Statements of possibility or conditionality: *May they verb, so that they might verb, if they had verbed*, etc. Indirect questions: *We asked him which noun had verbed him.*
Imperative	Direct commands: *Verb! Verb, y'all!*

The imperative mood is generally confined to the 2nd person, singular and plural, in the present tense. On rare occasions, you will see 3rd-person and future-tense forms, but generally you can get by with just two forms (compare that to the 72 forms in the indicative mood).

Conjugations

Every *regular* and *deponent* verb in Latin belongs to one of four conjugations. You can tell the conjugation of a verb via its present *imperative* form (*to verb*).

There is also a small set of *irregular* and *defective* verbs that have their own peculiar conjugations that you must memorize. It just so happens, as in several other inflected languages, that some of the most commonly used verbs in Latin are irregular—e.g., *to be, to want*.

Principal Parts

Entries for verbs in a Latin dictionary begin with the principal parts. Most regular and irregular verbs have four principal parts; some have just three. Deponent verbs have no more than three.

There is a small group of defective verbs (that's the grammarians' term, not mine) that lack some parts.

What are these principal parts?

- **First:** the first-person singular present active indicative (*I verb*)
- **Second:** the present infinitive (*to verb*)
- **Third:** the first-person singular perfect active indicative (*I verbed* or *I have verbed*)
- **Fourth:** the supine form, which can be either
  - a perfect passive participle (*having been verbed*) or
  - a future active participle (*about to verb*)

Verbs with no passive voice forms may lack the fourth part entirely or have a future active participle in that position.

The principal parts of any verb are a guide to its conjugation in all three moods (indicative, subjunctive, imperative). The first two parts indicate how to conjugate it in the present system of tenses; the third, the perfect system in the active voice; the fourth, the perfect system in the passive voice.

Infinitives, Participles, Gerunds, and Gerundives

Verbs can also be turned into adjectives or nouns by adding a few letters to their stems. A verb used as an adjective is a participle; a verb used as a noun may be a gerund or a gerundive. These adjectives and nouns have declensions just like the regular kind.

The infinitive forms of a verb can also serve as nouns, including as subjects of sentences, as in *To err is human*.

Verbal	*Sample Usages*
Infinitive	We ought to verb/to be verbed/to have verbed/to have been verbed.
Participle	Don't let verbing dogs lie. There is still a lot of unverbed food here.
Gerund	I came here for the sake of verbing.
Gerundive	I went there for the purpose of verbing some nouns.

Other Parts of Speech

Unlike nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs, these other parts of speech are not inflected in Latin (with very few exceptions, because all rules in Latin seem to have exceptions).

Adverbs

Use adverbs to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Some adverbs are derived from adjectives, with a special adverbial ending, but quite a few are not. Latin adjectives have suffixes like the English *-ly* to turn adjectives into adverbs. The only inflection that happens to adverbs is that they can take comparative and superlative forms.

Prepositions

Prepositions never change their forms. However, the nouns or adjectives that serve as their *objects* will generally take on endings for the Accusative or Ablative case. Some prepositions take Accusative objects, some take Ablative, and some can take either case depending on the meaning they convey.

Conjunctions

Use conjunctions to join two or more words, phrases, or clauses. They range from the familiar *and, but,* and *or* to more complex ones like *nevertheless* and *on the other hand*.

Several of the complex conjunctions conventionally appear in the second position within a clause, or at least never at the very beginning of a clause. Grammarians call these *postpositive* conjunctions.

Interjections

Hurray, Latin has some of these too! Mostly they avoid inflection, but some of them are Ablative forms of nouns (**Hercle!** = *by Hercules!*) or Accusatives of exclamation (**Ō malum!** = *Oh, wickedness!*).

Particles

Latin has some word-parts that can be attached to the ends of words but can never stand on their own. Grammarians call these *word particles* or just *particles*. They may serve as adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, or some other purpose that is difficult to classify.

F. Numeric Adjectives and Roman Numerals

When you learn some modern languages, one of the first skills you learn is how to count in that language. A typical Latin textbook, however, does not introduce counting until about page 200. Why? It's complicated.

1. Numbers are adjectives.

2. Adjectives in Latin are inflected.

3. Numbers are inflected differently from most adjectives.

4. Plus, only *some* numbers are inflected; others never change their forms.

I to XX

Let's ignore all (well, *most*) of that for now and put some numbers in a big table, starting with I through XX. For the first three cardinal numbers (counting), we will show the Nominative (*i.e.* subject) forms in all three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter). For the ordinal adjectives, the forms shown are all Nominative singular; for the cardinals, **ūnus, -a, -um** is strictly singular for obvious reasons, while the rest are plural forms.

Roman Numeral	Cardinal Number	Ordinal Number
I	ūnus, ūna, ūnum	prīmus, -a, -um
II	duo, duae, duo	secundus, -a, -um
III	trēs, trēs, tria	tertius, -a, -um
IV	quattuor	quārtus, -a, -um
V	quīnque	quīntus, -a, -um
VI	sex	sextus, -a, -um
VII	septem	septimus, -a, -um
VIII	octō	octāvus, -a, -um
IX	novem	nōnus, -a, -um
X	decem	decimus, -a, -um
XI	ūndecim	ūndecimus, -a, -um
XII	duodecim	duodecimus, -a, -um
XIII	trēdecim	trēdecimus, -a, -um
XIV	quattuordecim	quattuordecimus, -a, -um
XV	quīndecim	quīndecimus, -a, -um
XVI	sēdecim	sēdecimus, -a, -um
XVII	septendecim	septendecimus, -a, -um
XVIII	duodēvīgintī	duodēvīcesimus, -a, -um
XIX	ūndēvīgintī	ūndēvīcesimus, -a, -um
XX	vīgintī	vīcesimus, -a, -um

NOTE: Regarding Roman numerals, the ancient Romans would not recognize IV, IX, and the other numerals where placing the smaller number before the bigger number means subtraction. That is a more recent invention. The Romans would have written IIII for **quattuor**, VIIII for **novem**, *etc.*

In Roman numerals, think of each **I** as representing a finger, each **V** a whole hand, and each **X** representing two full hands. (Don't worry about **L, C,** and **M** just yet.)

Duodēvigintī means literally *two down from twenty*, and **ūndēvigintī** is *one down from twenty*.

Did you notice how, just as in English, the adjectives for *first, second,* and *third* bear little or no resemblance to *one, two,* and *three*? That is a common phenomenon in the languages of Europe, including some non-Indo-European languages like Hungarian.

Beyond XX

To pronounce XXI in Latin, join the multiple of ten with the digit, in either order, via the conjunction **et**: **ūnus et vigintī** (or **vigntī et ūnus)**, **duo et vigintī**, *etc.* Any part of these compound numbers that can be inflected takes the ending appropriate for the case, number, and gender of whatever is being counted. Numbers ending in VIII and IX are **duo dē** and **ūnus dē** (multiple of X), respectively.

The same applies to ordinal adjectives such as **ūnus et vīcēsimus**, meaning *twenty-first*. They may appear in shortened forms like **ūnetvīcēsimus**. *Twenty-eighth* would be **duodēvīcēsimus**, and other ordinals ending in *-eighth* or *-ninth* follow a similar pattern.

Here are multiples of ten up to C (**centum**). These are also uninflected—*i.e.,* indeclinable.

Roman Numeral	Cardinal Number	Ordinal Number
XXX	**trīgintā**	**trīcēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
XL	**quadrāgintā**	**quadrāgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
L	**quīnquāgintā**	**quīnquāgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
LX	**sexāgintā**	**sexāgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
LXX	**septuāgintā**	**septuāgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
LXXX	**octōgintā**	**octōgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
XC	**nōnāgintā**	**nōnāgēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**
C	**centum**	**centēsimus**, **-a**, **-um**

That is as high as we will count for now. There are words for the multiples of **centum** that you can look up on Wiktionary if you're curious. The word for *one thousand*, **mīlle**, has some quirks that are too complicated to explore in this introduction.

G. Conversational Fundamentals

Because very few people converse in Latin, it is seldom taught as a spoken language. The main objective is to learn how to translate Latin text into the language in which the student operates. Writing out translations *into* Latin helps solidify the student's understanding of the vocabulary and the syntactical processes for putting together sentences.

Below are the Latin equivalents of a few words and phrases that you would find at the beginning of a modern language textbook—tourist Latin, if you will. In the English translations, we use *you* for individual persons, and the pronoun *y'all* (peculiar to the southern United States and the African American diaspora) for groups. After all, this text was written in Texas. Also, the fact that modern English uses the same pronoun for 2nd-person singular and plural is a defect of the language: Until the time of Shakespeare, English still had *thou* for singular and *ye* for plural.

English	*Latin*	*Pronunciation*
hello, greetings (to someone who is not of higher rank than you)	**salvē** (singular) **salvēte** (plural)	SAHL-way sahl-WAY-teh
hail (honorific greetings for those of higher rank, especially officials)	**avē** (singular) **avēte** (plural)	AH-way ah-WAY-teh
farewell	**valē** (singular) **valēte** (plural)	VAH-lay vah-LAY-teh
yes (literally *thus, it is so*)	**sīc** or **ita**	SEEK or EE-tah
no (literally *not* or *very little*)	**nōn** or **minimē**	NOHN or MEE-nee-may
what is your name?	**quid est nōmen tuum?**	QUID EST NOH-men TUH-um
my name is...	**nōmen meum est...**	NOH-men MEH-um EST
the Latin language	**lingua Latīna**	LING-gwa la-TEE-na
in Latin (literally *Latinly, in the Latin manner*)	**Latīnē**	la-TEE-nay
do you speak Latin?	**loquerisne linguam Latīnam?**	loh-queh-REES-neh LING-gwahm la-TEE-nahm
I don't know	**nesciō**	NES-kee-oh
I don't understand	**nōn intellegō**	NOHN een-TEL-leh-goh
what did you say?	**quid dīxistī?**	QUID deek-SIS-tee
what do you/y'all want?	**quid vīs/vultis?**	QUID WEES/WOOL-tees
please (literally *if it pleases you*)	**sī tibi placet** (s.) **sī vōbīs placet** (pl.)	SEE TEE-bee (or WOH-bees) PLAH-ket

English	Latin	Pronunciation
thank you *thank y'all* (literally *I do thanks unto you*)	**grātiās tibi agō** (s.) **grātiās vōbīs agō** (pl.)	GRAH-tee-ahs TEE-bee AH-goh
I love you *I love y'all*	**tē amõ** (s.) **vōs amō** (pl.)	TAY (or WOHS) AH-moh
how old are you/y'all?	**quot annōs habēs/habĕtis?**	KWOHT AHN-nos HAH-bays KWOHT AHN-nos hah-BAY-tiss
how much does it cost?	**quantī constat?**	KWAHN-tee KOHN-staht

H. Months of the Year

The Romans divided the year into twelve months (**mēnsēs)** and gave those months the names that most Western languages use today.

I.	Iānuārius
II.	Februārius
III.	Mārtius
IV.	Aprīlis
V.	Māius
VI.	Iūnius
VII.	Iūlius
VIII.	Augustus
IX.	September
X.	Octōber
XI.	November
XII.	December

<u>Well Worth Noting:</u>

1. These names are actually adjectives! They are most often used substantively—*i.e.*, as nouns.

2. Once upon a time, September through December were the seventh through tenth months, because the ancient calendar began with **Mārtius** (the approximate time of the vernal equinox). Remove the **-ber** suffix, and you are left with the cardinal numbers **septem** (VII) through **decem** (X).

3. The Romans renamed **Quintīlis** and **Sextīlis**, respectively, for the last leader of the Roman Republic (Gaius Iūlius Caesar) and his great-nephew (Gaius Iūlius Caesar Octāviānus Augustus) who became the first leader of the Roman Empire. It has been a very long time indeed since the Western world has named a month after anyone.

We will not delve here into the specifics of how the Roman **calendārium** worked. There are plenty of online resources where you can satisfy your curiosity. However, we will mention that each month had three days of special significance:

- **kalendae** (*kalends*), corresponding to the first of the month

- **nōnae** (*nones*), the ninth day counting back from the ides, so usually the 5th or the 7th in the modern (Gregorian) calendar

- **īdūs** (*ides*), corresponding to the 13th of a most months or the 15th of **Mārtius, Māius, Iūlius,** and **Octōber**.

Perhaps you've heard of the fateful *Ides of March* (**īdūs mārtiae**) on which Gaius Iūlius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C.E.

I. Days of the Week

The pre-Christian Romans had something like a week, and it typically lasted eight days, with some exceptions. To the Romans, the story of the creation of the world in seven days by an omnipotent and invisible God was a quaint provincial tradition. In the third century C.E., when Rome adopted the seven-day Judeo-Christian week, the Church named the days corresponding with the sun, the moon, and the five visible planets. The names for Saturday and Sunday evolved to reflect their importance in the Christian calendar.

English, being a Germanic language, influenced by the Norse as well as the Normans, uses the borrows the Norse names of heavenly bodies based mostly on Nordic mythology.

NOTE: The Latin word for a *day* is **diēs**, which in Italian and French is shortened to **-di**, and in Spanish is shortened to **-es**. The celestial bodies are shown in the Genitive case—*i.e.*, the *of* forms for **Sōl, Lūna, Mārs, Mercūrius, Iuppiter, Venus,** and **Saturnus**.

Later Latin	*Italian*	*French*	*Spanish*	*English*
diēs Sōlis	domenico	dimanche	domingo	*Sunday*
diēs Lūnae	lunedi	lunedi	lunes	*Monday*
diēs Mārtis (Mars)	martedi	mardi	martes	*Tuesday* (Tiw)
diēs Mercūrī	mercoledi	mercredi	miercoles	*Wednesday* (Wodin)
diēs Iōvis (Iuppiter)	giovedi	jeudi	jueves	*Thursday* (Thor)
diēs Veneris (Venus)	venerdi	vendredi	viernes	*Friday* (Freya)
diēs Saturnī	sabato	samedi	sabado	*Saturday*

Various sources agree that the name for Saturday comes directly from the Romans, with no Norse equivalent. Strangely, one would think that Wodin, the father of Thor, would better fit the role of Saturn than of Mercury. Again, look into it if you're still curious. We don't want to get bogged down in comparative polytheology here.

The Romans also celebrated numerous holidays during the year, including **Diēs Invictī Sōlis**, the day of the unconquered sun. This day occurred just after the winter solstice, when days would begin to grow longer and it appeared that the sun was regaining its strength. Under Constantine the Great, the first emperor of Rome to embrace Christianity, Christmas Day replaced it and its companion holiday **Saturnālia**.