Latin Vowel Quantity (macrons/macra)

Pronunciation

Macrons (long vowel marks) are a guide for pronunciation, indicating the difference between long and short vowels. Different languages express this difference in different ways. English sometimes uses a final "magic e:" man vs. mane; kit vs. kite, e.g. Greek has different letters for long e (η "eta") vs. short e (ϵ "epsilon") and long o (ω "omega") and short o (o "omicron"). Including the macrons is also like including the accidentals (sharps and flats) in music or using training wheels on a bicycle.

Accent

Accent in Latin is determined by the quantity of the next to last syllable. Vowel length affects this.

Distinguishing Vowels

Some words or forms of words in Latin are differentiated only by vowel length: os ("bone") vs. ōs ("mouth"), puella (nominative case) vs. puellā (ablative case).

Poetry

Classical Latin poetry is based on patterns of syllable quantity (not rhyme schemes or patterns of stress accents). Vowel quantity is a part of this.

General Rules I. Final -ī, final -ō, and final -ū are regularly long (always for words of more than two syllables). A. final long -ī: nouns/adjectives amīcī (2nd decl. gen. s.; nom. pl) sorōrī (3rd decl. dat. s.) omnī (3rd decl. -i stem abl. s.) verbs audī (imperative) fēcī (1st. s. perfect) amāvistī (2nd s. perfect) B. final long -ō vocō: 1st person singular verbs ending lēgātō: 2nd decl. dat./abl. singular homō, multitūdō: 3rd. decl. nom. sing.

C.final long -ū

manū: 4th decl. abl. sing.

II. a long vowel shortens before:

A. final -r, -m, -t

dūcō (present active) but **dūcor** (present passive)

amor (nom. s.) but amoris, etc. (3rd decl. masc./fem. nouns in -or)

> amabam (imperfect) amāmus

amās amātis

(3rd plural. see B next) ama<u>t</u>

B. before -nt(-) anywhere in a word

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amant (amā-)
amantur (passive)
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c. before another yowel
       timeo (time-)
       audies (audī-)
N.B. The vowel stem on 1st (-\bar{a}-), 2nd (-\bar{e}-) and 4th (-\bar{i}-)
conjugation verbs is long except where it shortens by these
rules.
III. Note these pairs
   verb: dūcō (long "ū") vs. nouns: dux, ducis (short)
   verb regō (short "e") vs. noun: rēx, rēgis (long)
IV. Note:
   Nominative plural: -ī, -ēs, (-ūs, -ēs)
       *except neuter short -a
   Genitive plural: long -ārum, -ōrum, (-ērum)
   Accusative Plural -ās, -ōs, - ēs, -ūs, -ēs
       *except: neuter short -a
   Ablative singular: long -ā, -ō, (3rd declension -i stem) -ī, (-ū,
-ē)
       *except: 3rd declension consonant stem short -e
   Dative/Ablative plural:
       -īs (long)
       -ibus (short)
   Verbs: 2nd person plural active: short -tis
By Part of Speech: Verbs
1. The vowel before the imperfect -bā- suffix is always long.
The "a" in the "bā" suffix is long except where it shortens (II
above).
   vocā-ba-m
   habē-bā-s
   regē-ba-t
   capiē-bā-mus
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audiē-bā-tis
   ferē-ba-nt
2. the vowel before a "v" perfect is long.
   amāvī
   amāvistī
   laudāvērunt.
   audīvī
3."a" and "e" as a regular vowel before a personal verb
ending are usually long;
\hbox{``i''} before a personal verb ending is more often \hbox{short}
(because usually added by Linguistic Rules #12)
except for 4th conjugation verbs (which are long (-ī" stem).
   1st conjugation:
      vocās
      vocēs (present subjunctive)
      vocārēs (imperfect subjunctive)
   2nd conjugation:
      habēs
      habeās (subjunctive)("e" shortens: II above)
   3rd conjugation
      regēs (future)
      regās (subjunctive)
      regis (present indicative)
   imperfect of sum: erās
   imperfect: vocābās
   pluperfect active: vocāverās
   future of sum: eris
   future: vocābis
   future perfect vocāveris
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N.B. this does not apply to exceptional forms or the stem vowel of "sum":

3rd conjugations 1st sing. future active:

dūcam (short "a;" "-ē" in other forms)

3rd conjugation 2nd sing. present passive indicative

dūceris (short"e;" "i" in other forms) (See <u>Linguistic</u> Rules #11)

"sum:" esse, es, est, estis, eram, erō, etc. (all with short "e")

By Part of Speech: Nouns/Adjectives

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Dative singular (not a diphthong): long
   (final -o) -ō
   (final -i) -ī, -uī, -eī

Ablative Singular: long -ā, -ō, (3rd declension -i stem) -ī, -ū, -ē
   *except: 3rd declension consonant stem -e

Nominative Plural: -ī, -ēs, -ūs, -ēs
   *except: neuter -a

Genitive Plural: 2 syllable ending: long -ārum, -ōrum, -ērum

Dative/Ablative plural:
   -īs (long)
   -ibus (short)

Accusative plural: -ās, -ōs, -ēs, -ūs, -ēs
   *except: neuter -a
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By Vowel

Long	Short
(cf. Verbs 3 above)	
a	
Ablative: puellā	Nominative singular: 1st declension: puella
	plural (neuter)
genitive plural 1st decl: puellārum	2nd: bella
	3rd: nomina
acc. pl. 1st decl.: puellās	
present (imperfective) stem:	
1st conjugation verbs: vocā	
imperfect: -bā-	
e	
present (imperfective) stem:	3rd decl. abl. sing.
2nd conjugation verbs: vidē	frātre
future of 3rd/4th conj. verbs:	
dūcēs	3rd (-iō) conj. sing.
audiēs	imperative: cape
capēris (vs. present caperis)(See Verbs 3 note)	
3rd plural perfect ending: -ērunt	3rd plural pluperfect ending: -erant
perfeect stem of some verbs:	
vēnī	
fēcī cēpī	
adverbs formed from 1st/2nd decl. adjectives: miserē	
5th decl. abl. sing.: rē	
noun stem "rēg-" <i>king</i> vs. verb "reg-" <i>rule</i>	
i	
NOTE: Final -ī is long	
1st person sing. perfect ending: audīvī	3rd decl. gen. sing.: urbis
2nd person sing. perfect ending: audīvistī	
2nd person plural passive ending: mittiminī	

present	(imperfective)	stem
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4th conjugation verbs: audī-

2nd decl. gen. sing/nom. pl.: amīcī

3rd decl. dat. sing./i-stem abl. sing.: marī

1st/2nd decl. dat/abl. pl.:

agricolīs

nāvīs

vīs, vīr- force (vs. vir, virī man)



NOTE: final -o is usually long

3rd decl. m/f. stem: sorōr
3rd decl. nt. stems: corpor-

2nd decl. gen. pl.: lēgātōrum2nd decl. acc. pl.: lēgātōs

u

NOTE: Final -u is regularly long for words of more than two syllables

4th abl. sing.: manū

4th decl. gen. s.; nom/acc pl.: manūs

verb stem "dūc-" lead vs. noun stem "duc-"