

Stage 1 – Latin Word Order

Latin word order is much more flexible than English word order. Since Latin is an inflected language (words change form depending on their function in the sentence – like he/him she/her) word order is not as important as it is in English.

For instance:

English - The boy sees the dog.

Latin – *puer canem videt. or puer videt canem. or canem puer videt. or canem videt puer. or videt puer canem. or videt canem puer.*

As you can see, the English sentence can only be written one way and keep the original meaning; however, the same sentence can be written in 6 different ways in Latin and not change the original meaning.

But, although Latin word order can be very flexible, typical Latin word order generally follows the pattern Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). English word order is Subject-Verb-Object (SVO).

For instance:

S V O
English - The boy sees the dog.

S O V
Latin – *puer canem videt.*

The one normal exception to this rule in Latin is when the verb “to be” (*sum, esse, fui, futurum*) is used. The sentences will mirror English word order (SVO).

For instance:

S V (O)
English – The cook is in the kitchen.

S V (O)
Latin – *coquus est in culina.*

Stage 2 – Cases: Nominative and Accusative

As I mentioned above, Latin is an inflected language. That means that nouns change their endings (this is called “declining”) depending on the function in the sentence. English does this with pronouns (I/me, they/them), but not with nouns.

Nominative: The nominative case is used for the **subject** of the sentence – that is, the person or thing performing the action.

For instance:

coquus est in culina.

Metella in horto sedet.

The nominative case is also used for predicate nouns and adjectives (those that come after the verb in English) when the verb is some form of the verb “to be” (*est, sunt, etc.*).

For instance:

Grumio est **coquus**.

Metella est **mater**.

Accusative: The accusative case is used for the direct object of sentences – that is, the person or thing receiving that action of the verb.

For instance:

*Grumio **cenam** coquit.*

*Metella **Clementem** videt.*

Remember that word order is flexible in Latin, so the subject will not always come first, and the direct object will not always be last.

To correctly decline (change the ending of) nouns, a pattern must be followed. Look at the dictionary entry for “slave” below.

servus, -i, m. – slave

The first part (*servus*) is the nominative singular form of the noun. The second part (*-i*) is the genitive singular form. The genitive singular form is unique for each declension; therefore, this form is given so that you can tell which declension the noun belongs to. It also gives the base or root form of the noun. The third part (*m.*) tells you the grammatical gender of the noun, and the fourth part is the English definition.

The nouns in the 1st and 2nd declension are very regular, so the genitive singular form usually will just be the genitive singular ending. Therefore, going from one case to another is usually as simple as exchanging one ending for another. However, not all nouns are as simple, so if we are going to decline a noun, it is best to begin with the genitive singular form. Look at the dictionary entry below.

mater, matris, f. – mother

You will notice that the nominative singular form contains an “e” between the “t” and “r” (*mater*). However, in the genitive singular form, that “e” drops out (*matris*). It is quite common for a Latin noun to slightly change its spelling in this way; however, the nominative spelling is the only one that is different. Of the ten possible forms for a noun, the nominative is the only case that will have a different spelling.

For instance:

<i>mater</i>	<i>matres</i>
<i>matris</i>	<i>matrum</i>
<i>matri</i>	<i>matribus</i>
<i>matrem</i>	<i>matres</i>
<i>matre</i>	<i>matribus</i>

Notice that only the nominative form has the “e” between the “t” and “r.” The pattern holds for all nouns, therefore it is best, when declining a noun, to begin with the genitive singular form, remove the genitive singular ending and then add the appropriate ending.

Stage 3 – Declensions

You may have noticed that while nouns may all be in the same case (e.g. *Metella, servus, Clemens*), they don’t all share the same endings. This is because nouns belong to different declensions.

Declensions: Declensions are groupings of nouns that have share the same endings. There are a total of 5 declensions. Refer to the declension charts to see what endings each declension uses.

Please note that nouns belong to only one declension. Nouns will not change declensions, they will only change cases.

Stage 4 – Personal Endings for Verbs

Much like nouns will change their endings depending on their function in the sentence, verbs will also change their endings. Verbs change their endings depending on the person (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) and number (singular or plural) of the subject of the sentence. Latin has a unique ending for all 6 forms; English only does it for one.

For instance:

English

I have	We have
you have	you all have
he/she has	they have

Notice that only the 3rd person singular form changes in English. Now look at the same verb in Latin.

Latin

<i>habeo</i>	<i>habemus</i>
<i>habes</i>	<i>habetis</i>
<i>habet</i>	<i>habent</i>

Notice that each form in Latin has a unique ending.

To change the endings of verbs, we must follow some rules. Look at the dictionary entry for the verb “to have” below.

video, vidēre, vīdi, visum – to see

The 1st principle part of the verb (*video*) is the 1st person, singular, present, indicative, active form of the verb. (Don’t worry, these terms will make sense eventually; focus on the first 3 terms for now.) This form is translated as “I see.”

The 2nd principle part (*vidēre*) is the present, active infinitive form of the verb. This form is translated as “to see” and is also used to tell us what conjugation the verb belongs to. Just like nouns belong to declensions based upon their endings, verbs belong to declensions based upon their infinitives. There are 4 conjugations plus irregular verbs. The conjugations are as follows:

1 st Conjugation infinitives end with –āre .	Example: <i>amāre</i>	
2 nd Conjugation infinitives end with –ēre .	Example: <i>vīdēre</i>	*Note the long mark above the first “e”
3 rd Conjugation infinitives end with –ere .	Example: <i>mittere</i>	*Note the difference from the 2 nd conjugation.
4 th Conjugation infinitives end with –īre .	Example: <i>audīre</i>	

The 3rd principle part (*vīdi*) is the 1st person, singular, perfect, indicative, active form. This is translated as “I saw,” “I have seen,” or “I did see.” This form will be important in Stage 6.

The 4th principle part (*visum*) is the perfect passive participle. This is translated as “having been seen.” This form will be important in Stage 21.

To conjugate verbs in the present tense we need to start with the infinitive (*vidēre*) and remove the “re”. This gives us the present base (*vidē-*). To this base we add our present tense personal verb endings: -o, -s, -t, -mus, -tis, -nt.

For instance:

<i>video</i>	<i>videmus</i>
<i>vides</i>	<i>videtis</i>
<i>videt</i>	<i>vident</i>

However, while this is a general rule, there are some exceptions for each conjugation.

1st Conjugation – The basic rule applies (infinitive minus “re” plus personal endings), but when we add the “-o” for the 1st person singular, the “a” will drop out. The “a” will be present in all other forms.

amo amamus
amas amatis
amat amant

2nd Conjugation – The basic rule applies, and there are no exceptions.

video videmus
vides videtis
videt vident

3rd Conjugation – The basic rule applies, technically, but there are slight changes in every form. The “e” drops out in the 1st person singular (similar to 1st conjugation). The “e” changes to an “i” in the 2nd and 3rd person singular, and the 1st and 2nd person plural. The “e” changes to a “u” in the 3rd person plural.

mitto mittimus
mittis mittitis
mittit mittunt

4th Conjugation – The basic rule applies, but in the 3rd person plural, we add a “u” before the “nt.”

audio audimus
audis auditis
audit audiunt

While irregular verbs will end with the same endings as regular verbs (o, s, t, mus, tis, nt) their formation must be learned separately.

Stage 5 – Nominative Plural

Just as nouns will change their endings to go from case to case, nouns will also change their endings when going from singular to plural. This is similar to English nouns adding an “s” (usually) to a noun to form the plural.

For instance:

English – The slave is in the street. The cooks are preparing dinner.
Latin – *servus est in via. coqui cenam parant.*

Notice that the Latin verb changes its ending to reflect the plural subject.

Stage 6 – Past Tense: Imperfect and Perfect

In Latin, there are 6 different tenses. Until now, we have dealt with just the present tense, which describes the action as it is happening. Now we are being introduced to 2 new tenses: the imperfect tense and perfect tense.

Imperfect Tense – The imperfect tense is used to describe a continuous or repeated action in the past, and it is usually translated as “was verbing.” The imperfect tense is recognized in Latin by a “ba” before the personal endings.

For instance:

English

Present: The boy walks down the street.

Imperfect: The boy was walking down the street.

Latin

Present: *puer per viam ambulat.*

Imperfect: *puer per viam **ambulabat.***

The conjugation of verbs in the imperfect tense is considerably easier than the present. For the imperfect tense, we want to begin with the present base (infinitive minus “re”), just like we did with the present tense.

clamo, **clamāre**, clamavi -> **clamāre** -> clama-

To that present base, we add the imperfect marker, “ba,” plus our personal endings, -m, -s, -t, -mus, -tis, -nt.

For instance:

<i>clamabam</i>	<i>clamabamus</i>
<i>clamabas</i>	<i>clamabatis</i>
<i>clamabat</i>	<i>clamabant</i>

The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd conjugations have no exceptions to this rule; it is simply the present base plus the imperfect endings. The 4th conjugation, however, has a minor exception to this rule: before you add the “ba,” we must also add an “e.”

For instance:

<i>audiebam</i>	<i>audiebamus</i>
<i>audiebas</i>	<i>audiebatis</i>
<i>audiebat</i>	<i>audiebant</i>

The irregular verb “to be” (sum, esse, fui) uses a separate form, rather than the “ba.” The chart is as follows:

<i>eram</i>	<i>eramus</i>
<i>eras</i>	<i>eratis</i>
<i>erat</i>	<i>erant</i>

This also applies to any compounds of *sum*.

For instance:

<i>aderam</i>	<i>aderamus</i>
<i>aderas</i>	<i>aderatis</i>
<i>aderat</i>	<i>aderant</i>

Perfect Tense – The perfect tense is used to describe a completed or instantaneous action in the past. The perfect tense can be translated as “verbed,” “have verbed,” or “did verb.” Unlike the imperfect tense, there is not a regular marker for the perfect tense, but it does have its own personal endings chart:

<i>i</i>	<i>imus</i>
<i>isti</i>	<i>istis</i>
<i>it</i>	<i>erunt</i>

Forming the perfect tense is very easy. We start with third principle part of a verb and chop off the “i.” This gives us the perfect base.

For instance:

mitto, mittere, **missi** -> **missi** -> mis-

To that perfect base, we simply add the perfect tense endings.

For instance:

<i>missi</i>	<i>missimus</i>
<i>missisti</i>	<i>missistis</i>
<i>missit</i>	<i>misserunt</i>

This is the only rule for perfect tense. There are no exceptions, and even irregular verbs follow this rule.

For instance:

sum, esse, fui, futurum

<i>fui</i>	<i>fuimus</i>
<i>fuisti</i>	<i>fuistis</i>
<i>fuit</i>	<i>fuierunt</i>

Stage 7 – Suppressed Subject

In English, every sentence must have a subject, either a noun or pronoun, since the verb doesn't always reflect a change of person. However, in Latin, since the verb does always reflect a change of person, a subject is not necessary for every sentence, especially if the subject is the same as the previous sentence.

For instance:

English

Grumio is in the kitchen. He is cooking dinner. *Notice that English uses a **pronoun** to avoid repetition.

Latin

Grumio est in culina. cenam coquit. *Notice that Latin **drops** the subject to avoid repetition.

Stage 8 – Accusative Plural; Superlative

In Stage 8 the book introduces us to the accusative plural. We have dealt with the accusative case since Stage 2 and plurals since Stage 5. The accusative plural follows the same rules of formation as we saw above. Refer to Stage 2 if you need a refresher on declining nouns.

In Stage 8 we also get introduced to the superlative form of adjectives. The superlative form of the adjective is translated as "very," "the most," or "-est." Superlatives are formed by adding "issim" to the base of the adjective, and then adding the appropriate ending. There are two types of adjectives, but both will follow the same rules. Below I will explain how to decline adjectives in general, and then superlatives in particular.

Adjectives will either be 1st/2nd Declension Adjectives or 3rd Declension Adjectives, but not both.

1st/2nd Declension Adjectives will use 1st and 2nd declension endings to modify nouns. The declension will change depending on the gender of the noun. 1st/2nd Declension Adjectives use the 1st declension endings when they are modifying feminine nouns, 2nd declension endings when they are modifying masculine nouns, and the 2nd declension neuter endings when they are modifying neuter nouns. They will use these endings regardless of the declension of the noun they are modifying.

The dictionary entry for 1st/2nd Declension Adjectives looks like the example below:

laetus, laeta, laetum or *laetus, -a, -um*.

The first form (*laetus*) is the masculine, nominative, singular form. The second form (*laeta* or *-a*) is the feminine, nominative, singular form. The third form (*laetum* or *-um*) is the neuter, nominative, singular form.

3rd Declension Adjectives will use 3rd declension endings to modify masculine or feminine nouns and 3rd declension neuter endings to modify neuter nouns.

The dictionary entry for 3rd Declension Adjectives will take multiple forms.

<i>ingens, ingentis (gen.)</i>	All three genders have the same nominative, singular form.
<i>tristis, triste</i>	Neuter has a separate nominative, singular form.
<i>acer, acris, acre</i>	All three genders have separate nominative, singular forms.

To decline an adjective so that it agrees with the noun, we need to find the base of the adjective. For 1st/2nd declension adjectives, we go to the feminine form of the adjective (the second form provided), remove the “-a” and add the appropriate ending. Most 1st/2nd declension adjectives follow the regular -us, -a, -um pattern, so there isn’t much difference between forms. However, some 1st/2nd declension adjectives do not follow this pattern. Look at the example below:

pulcher, pulchra, pulchrum

Notice that the “e” drops out of the feminine and neuter forms, but is present in the masculine form. When declining the adjective, that “e” will drop out of everything but the masculine, nominative, singular form.

<u>Masculine</u>		<u>Feminine</u>		<u>Neuter</u>	
<i>pulcher</i>	<i>pulchri</i>	<i>pulchra</i>	<i>pulchrae</i>	<i>pulchrum</i>	<i>pulchra</i>
<i>pulchri</i>	<i>pulchorum</i>	<i>pulchrae</i>	<i>pulchrarum</i>	<i>pulchri</i>	<i>pulchrorum</i>
<i>pulchro</i>	<i>pulchris</i>	<i>pulchrae</i>	<i>pulchris</i>	<i>pulchro</i>	<i>pulchris</i>
<i>pulchrum</i>	<i>pulchros</i>	<i>pulchram</i>	<i>pulchras</i>	<i>pulchrum</i>	<i>pulchra</i>
<i>pulchro</i>	<i>pulchris</i>	<i>pulchrā</i>	<i>pulchris</i>	<i>pulchro</i>	<i>pulchris</i>

The same rule applies to 3rd declension adjectives.

Now that we know how to decline the positive form of adjectives, we can decline the superlative form. To do this, we must first find the base of the adjective.

laetus, laeta, laetum -> ***laeta*** -> *laet*

Once we’ve found the base we add “-issim.”

laetissim-

Finally we add the appropriate 1st/2nd declension ending depending on what case, number, and gender we need.

laetissimus, laetissima, laetissimum, etc.

Not all adjectives follow this pattern, however. When an adjective’s base ends with an “-l” or an “-r,” we double the “-l” or “-r,” add “im,” and then add the 1st/2nd declension endings.

For instance:

facilis, facile -> *facil* -> *facill* -> *facillim* -> *facillimus, facillima, facillimum, etc.*

pulcher, pulchra, pulchrum -> **pulcher* -> *pulcherr* -> *pulcherrimus, pulcherrima, pulcherrimum, etc.*

*Notice that the “e” will stay for the superlative form. This is the case for adjective bases ending in “-r.”

Stage 9 – Dative Case

As mentioned above, nouns in Latin change their endings to reflect their function within a sentence. Thus far we have been using subjects (nominative case) and direct objects (accusative case). In this stage, we will be introduced to the indirect object – the dative case.

The indirect object is a noun that benefits (or suffers) from the action of the main verb.

For instance:

English – The father buys his **son** a gift. The son shows his **mother** the gift.

Latin – *pater filio donum emit. filius matri donum ostendit.*

Notice that “gift” is receiving that action of the verb, which makes it the **direct** object, while “son” and “mother” are benefitting from the action, making them the **indirect** objects.

In Latin, the indirect object will frequently go between the subject and direct object, while in English the indirect object will go between the verb and the direct object. However, there is another way to translate the indirect object from Latin into English:

For instance:

The father buys his **son** a gift. -> The father buys a gift **for his son**.

The son shows his **mother** the gift. -> The son shows the gift **to his mother**.

The Latin sentence will remain the same, but there is some flexibility in the English translation. You can translate the dative case into English as the **indirect object** or with “**to**” or “**for**.” Context will dictate how best to translate the dative.

The formation of the dative case is no different than it has been for previous noun forms – just add the appropriate dative ending to the base of the noun.

Stage 10 – Comparatives

In Stage 8 we were introduced to the superlative (e.g. tallest) form of adjectives. In Stage 10 we get the comparative form. The comparative of an adjective is usually translated as the –er form (taller, bigger, happier, etc.) of an adjective. (Though “rather,” “quite,” or “too” are also possible translations.) To form the comparative form of the adjective, we want to start with the base. Let’s use *laetus*, -a, -um.

laet-

To form the comparative for masculine and feminine we add –ior.

laetior

All comparatives use 3rd declension endings.

<i>laetior</i>	<i>laetiores</i>
<i>laetioris</i>	<i>laetiorum</i>
<i>laetiori</i>	<i>laetioribus</i>
<i>laetiorem</i>	<i>laetiores</i>
<i>laetiore</i>	<i>laetioribus</i>

To form the comparative for neuter we add –ius to the base.

laetius

Neuters will use the 3rd declension neuter endings.

<i>laetius</i>	<i>laetiora</i>
<i>laetioris</i>	<i>laetiorum</i>
<i>laetiori</i>	<i>laetioribus</i>
<i>laetius</i>	<i>laetiora</i>
<i>laetiore</i>	<i>laetioribus</i>

Frequently the comparative will be followed by *quam* plus the noun being compared.

*Romani sunt fortiores **quam** Graeci.*

The ablative case without *quam* is another possibility, but one we won't see for a while in our book.

*Romani sunt fortiores **Graecis**.*

Stage 11 – Verbs with Dative Objects; Questions

Most verbs in Latin will require a direct object in the accusative case; however, some verbs in Latin will require their direct objects be in the dative case. These verbs are marked in our book with (+dat.).

credo, credere, credidi, creditum (+dat.) – to trust, believe

Translation does not have to reflect the direct object being in the dative case.

Latin: *cives candidato favent.*

English: The citizens support the candidate.

However, you can alter the translation slightly, if you wish.

Latin: *cives candidato favent.*

English: The citizens give support to the candidate.

Just as in any language, Latin uses certain words to ask questions. We have seen some of these words for a while now:

quis – who
quid – what
ubi – where
cur – why

There are three other important words that do not easily correspond to English question words.

num – surely...not?
nonne – surely...?
-ne - ...?

The word *num* indicates a questions that expects a “no” response and is translated by our book as “Surely...not?”

Latin: ***num** Quintus est servus?*

English: **Surely** Quintus is **not** a slave? (No, of course he's not.)

The word *nonne* indicates a question that expects a “yes” response and is usually translated by our book as “Surely...?”

Latin: ***nonne*** *Quintus est fortis?*

English: **Surely** Quintus is brave? (Yes, of course he is.)

The suffix *-ne* is attached to the first word of the sentence and indicates a question that expects a “yes” or “no” response. It translated with a simple question.

Latin: ***estne*** *Quintus in culina?*

English: Is Quintus in the kitchen? (There is no expected answer.)

You may notice now, that *nonne* is just *non* plus the suffix *-ne*. Consider the use of *nonne* above. Here is a more literal translation of the above example:

Latin: ***nonne*** *Quintus est fortis?*

English: **Isn't** Quintus brave? (Yes, of course he is.)

Stage 12 – Past Tense: Imperfect and Perfect Tense

Stage 12 officially introduces the 1st and 2nd person plural forms of verbs in the past tenses. Review Stage 6 for this information.