

# Grammatica: Unit 1

## Understanding Latin

### Inflected Language

In English, the function of a noun is determined by its position in the sentence. For example:

Aelia loves Apollonius.  
(subject) (direct object)

Aelia is the **subject**, the actor, because she is first in the sentence. Apollonius is the **direct object**, the receiver of action, because he follows the active verb (loves). When we change the order of the nouns, the meaning changes:

Apollonius loves Aelia.  
(subject) (direct object)

In English, word order determines a noun's function. In Latin, however, the function of a noun is determined by an ending placed on the end of the noun. For example:

Aelia Apollonium amat.  
(subject) (direct object)  
Aelia loves Apollonius.

We can move the words around, and as long as the endings stay the same, the function of the noun remains the same and the meaning of the sentence is unchanged:

Apollonium Aelia amat.  
(direct object) (subject)  
Aelia loves Apollonius.

The *-a* at the end of Aelia, identifies her as the subject, and the *-um* at the end of Apollonium identifies him as the direct object. If we want the sentence to say "Apollonius loves Aelia," we change the endings on the words:

Apollonius Aeliam amat.  
(subject) (direct object)

Latin is an **inflected language**, which means the forms of words change when their role in the sentence changes.

# Nouns

## Cases

The term “**case**” is used to describe the form a noun takes. The form determines what role the noun plays in a sentence. For example, the nominative case is used for the subject and the accusative case is used for the direct object. In this Unit you will learn the six cases of Latin nouns: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, and vocative. Memorize the names and functions of the cases as presented below.

**Nominative**: the subject or nouns that refer to the subject (predicate nominative)  
(**She** is a **sister**.)

**Genitive**: a noun that indicates possession (Eng. “s” or “of”)  
(The **sister’s** letter is long.)

**Dative**: the object indirectly affected by an action (Eng. “to” or “for”)  
(The sister offers a letter **to her brother**.)

**Accusative**: the direct object of an action or the object of certain prepositions  
(The sister holds **the letter**.)

**Ablative**: the object of most **prepositions**  
(The girl leaves **with her sister**.)

**Vocative**: the person directly addressed.  
(**Girl**, bring the letter to me.)

The order in which these cases are placed is the same order used to present the different forms of the noun. Suffice it to say that you should familiarize yourself with the order of the cases as presented above. Let’s look at a sentence in English and identify the cases of the nouns:

Mother, Aelia tells me the story of the city with her brother.

Mother (vocative): This is the person that the speaker is addressing.

Aelia (nominative): This is the subject of the sentence. She performs the action.

the city (genitive): This word indicates possession—the story ‘belongs’ to the city.

story (accusative): This word is the direct object of the verb. It receives the action.

brother (ablative): This word is the object of the preposition “with.”

Latin nouns have both singular and plural forms for each case, though this sentence uses only singular nouns. In Latin, each case is identified by the ending of the word. The tail tells the tale.

## Declensions: Gender, Identification, and Stems

For nouns, Latin has five different patterns of case endings called [declensions](#). In this Unit, you will learn three of the five declensions.

**Gender:** In Latin, nouns have three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. In some cases, the gender is obvious (e.g. *mater* (mother) is feminine and *pater* (father) is masculine). For most nouns, however, the gender is not obvious and must be memorized. Gender is essentially a grammatical category that has nothing to do with sexual gender.

**Identification:** When you learn a new Latin word, you must memorize four details: the nominative case, the genitive case, the gender, and the definition.

puella, puellae f.  
(nominative, genitive gender)

The **genitive** case identifies the noun's declension. For example, in the above vocabulary entry, the genitive ending in "-ae" tells us that this is a first declension noun. Do not use the nominative case to identify the declension; the nominative is part of the vocabulary entry in the Verba precisely because it can be irregular.

**Stems:** Use the genitive form to find the stem of a noun. The stem is the genitive form minus the declension ending. For example, *puellae* is the genitive form. When the ending (-ae) is removed, the stem (*puell*) remains.

## First Declension

You can identify a [First Declension](#) noun by the genitive ending *-ae*. The gender of many first declension nouns is feminine.

The first declension uses the following endings:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<b>-a</b>	<b>-ae</b>
Genitive	<b>-ae</b>	<b>-arum</b>
Dative	<b>-ae</b>	<b>-is</b>
Accusative	<b>-am</b>	<b>-as</b>
Ablative	<b>-ā</b>	<b>-is</b>

Notice that the vocative case is not given. This is because it will be the same as the nominative with one exception, the second declension masculine. See below.

To decline a noun in the first declension, take the stem (found by dropping the ending from the genitive form) and add the endings above to it:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	puella	puellae
Genitive	puellae	puellarum
Dative	puellae	puellis
Accusative	puellam	puellas
Ablative	puellā	puellis

Notice the long mark (macron) of the “ā” in the ablative singular of the first declension. This mark will help you distinguish between the nominative and the ablative forms.

Not all first declension nouns are feminine. There is a group of first declension nouns that are masculine. Some common examples include: *poeta* (poet), *agricola* (farmer), *incola* (inhabitant), and *nauta* (sailor). First declension masculine nouns are commonly names (*Seneca*, *Sulla*, *Agrippa*).

## Second Declension

The gender of second declension nouns is either masculine or neuter. They are identified by the genitive ending *-i*. [Masculine Second Declension](#) nouns use the following endings:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	-us/-er*	-i
Genitive	-i	-orum
Dative	-o	-is
Accusative	-um	-os
Ablative	-o	-is

\*Some second declension nouns will have *-er* in the nominative, like *puer, pueri* m. (boy). The stem is still found by dropping the *-i* from the genitive.

Note that the vocative case is the same as the nominative case with the exception of second declension masculine singular nouns, which have the vocative ending *-e*. For example, when I see Marcus, I greet him by saying "*Salve, Marce.*" However, when a second declension noun stem ends in *-i*, the vocative ending *-e* is dropped. For example, to greet Apollonius, one would say "*Salve, Apolloni.*"

When declining a noun in the second declension we take the stem (found by dropping the ending from the genitive form) and add the endings above to it:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<b>filius</b>	<b>fili</b>
Genitive	<b>fili</b>	<b>filiorum</b>
Dative	<b>filio</b>	<b>filiis</b>
Accusative	<b>filium</b>	<b>filiis</b>
Ablative	<b>filio</b>	<b>filiis</b>

**Neuter Second Declension** nouns are similar to the masculine nouns; only the nominative and accusative cases differ. They decline as follows:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<b>-um</b>	<b>-a</b>
Genitive	-i	-orum
Dative	-o	-is
Accusative	<b>-um</b>	<b>-a</b>
Ablative	-o	-is

To decline a neuter second declension noun, take the stem (found by dropping the ending from the genitive form) and add the endings above to it:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	caelum	caela
Genitive	caeli	caelorum
Dative	caelo	caelis
Accusative	caelum	caela
Ablative	caelo	caelis

You may have noticed that the nominative and accusative endings are *always* the same: *-um* and *-um* in the singular, and *-a* and *-a* in the plural. All neuter nouns, regardless of declension, will have the same ending in the nominative and accusative.

## Third Declension

The [Third Declension](#) is home to nouns of all three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Masculine and feminine nouns share the same endings, whereas neuter nouns differ only slightly. Third declension nouns are identified by the genitive ending *-is*. The endings for third declension masculine and feminine nouns are as follows:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	--	-es
Genitive	-is	-um
Dative	-i	-ibus
Accusative	-em	-es
Ablative	-e	-ibus

Notice the lack of ending for the nominative singular. In the third declension, there is such a variety of nominative forms, that it is necessary to memorize the nominative form of each individual word.

When declining masculine or feminine nouns in the third declension, take the stem (found by dropping the ending from the genitive form) and add the endings above to it:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	amor	<b>amores</b>
Genitive	amoris	<b>amorum</b>
Dative	amori	<b>amoribus</b>
Accusative	amore <b>m</b>	<b>amores</b>
Ablative	amore	<b>amoribus</b>

Like all neuter nouns, [Neuter nouns in the third declension](#) have the same form in the nominative and accusative cases. If the nominative singular form is irregular, the accusative singular form will be irregular as well. The endings for neuter nouns in the third declension are as follows:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	--	-a
Genitive	-is	-um
Dative	-i	-ibus
Accusative	--	-a
Ablative	-e	-ibus

To decline a neuter noun in the third declension, take the stem (found by dropping the ending from the genitive form) and add the endings above to it:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	nomen	nomina
Genitive	nominis	nominum
Dative	nomini	nominibus
Accusative	nomen	nomina
Ablative	nomine	nominibus

## Third Declension I-Stems

Some third declension nouns will add an *-i-* between the stem and the ending. These nouns can be identified from their vocabulary entry in the Verba. If the following descriptions apply to a noun, then the word is an [i-stem](#):

1. For masculine and feminine nouns of the third declension: nominative singular in *-is* or *-es* with the same number of syllables in the nominative and the genitive. Ex. *auris, auris* f. (ear) or *sedes, sedis* f. (seat)
2. For masculine and feminine nouns of the third declension: nominative singular in *-s* or *-x* with a stem ending in two consonants. Ex. *urbs, urbis* f. (city) or *nox, noctis* f. (night)
3. For neuter nouns of the third declension: nominative in *-al*, *-ar*, or *-e*. Ex. *animal, animalis* n. (animal) or *exemplar, exemplaris* n. (example) or *mare, maris* n. (sea)



For masculine and feminine nouns only the genitive plural will change. The endings for masculine and feminine i-stem nouns are as follows:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	--	-es
Genitive	-is	<b>-ium</b>
Dative	-i	-ibus
Accusative	-em	-es
Ablative	-e	-ibus

Third declension i-stems are still declined by taking the stem (by removing the ending from the genitive form) and adding the endings.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	urbs	<b>urbes</b>
Genitive	<b>urbis</b>	<b>urbium</b>
Dative	urbi	<b>urbibus</b>
Accusative	<b>urbem</b>	<b>urbes</b>
Ablative	urbe	<b>urbibus</b>

For neuter nouns, however, the endings for the ablative singular, nominative and accusative plural, as well as the genitive plural change. The endings for neuter i-stem nouns are as follows:

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	--	<b>-ia</b>
Genitive	-is	<b>-ium</b>
Dative	-i	-ibus
Accusative	--	<b>-ia</b>
Ablative	<b>-i</b>	-ibus

Third declension neuter i-stem nouns are still declined by taking the stem (by removing the ending from the genitive form) and adding the endings.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	mare	maria
Genitive	maris	marium
Dative	mari	maribus
Accusative	mare	maria
Ablative	mari	maribus

## Verbs

### Verb Characteristics: Person, Number, Tense, Voice, Mood

Latin verbs have five characteristics:

**PERSON:** This relates to the subject of the verb. Is the subject “I” or “we”? Then it is first person. “You”? Then, second person. “He,” “she,” “it,” “they,” or another noun? Then, third person.

**NUMBER:** How many are the subject? One person/thing as the subject makes the verb singular; two or more, plural.

**TENSE:** When the action took place and whether it is continuous action or completed. Latin has six tenses. Three show action that is continuous: Present, Imperfect, and Future. Three show action that is completed: Perfect, Pluperfect, Future Perfect. Each set of three tenses has one tense for present time (Present, Perfect), one tense for past time (Imperfect, Pluperfect), and one tense for future time (Future, Future Perfect).

**VOICE:** Whether the subject is doing the action (active) or is acted upon (passive).

Aelia writes letters. (active)  
Letters are written by Aelia. (passive)

MOOD: There are three moods in Latin. In this Unit we learn the Indicative and Imperative moods.

The Indicative Mood expresses a fact. (Aelia is from Carthage.)

The Imperative Mood expresses a command. (Listen, Aelia!)

The Subjunctive Mood expresses a hypothetical idea. (Aelia should speak.)

Notice that three of these characteristics (Person, Number, and Voice) relate to the subject of the verb. In Latin, as in English, verbs are strongly connected with their subjects ([subject-verb agreement](#)) and will change form if their subject changes. Think of the different forms of verbs, in English, that depend on the subject. “I **love**” vs. “She **loves**.”

In Latin, all of these different characteristics are communicated through stems and endings. Once again, the tail tells the tale.

One of the primary differences between verbs in Latin and English is that English uses auxiliary verbs to indicate when, where, and to whom the verb happened, whereas in Latin, the form of the verb changes. For example,

He has loved  
*amavit*

The main verb here is “to love,” however, in English we use the auxiliary “has” to show that the action is completed, whereas in Latin we use a specific form to show completion. Keep this in mind as you learn different verb forms, it may be helpful.

## Principal Parts and Conjugations

Most vocabulary entries for Latin verbs have four words. These are called [principal parts](#), and they MUST be memorized. Fortunately, there are some patterns which can be helpful for memorization (See below.). Let us look at an example to explain the significance of each part.

habeo, habere, habui, habitum - to hold

Principal Part	Form	Uses
habeo	1st person singular present active indicative “I hold”	Helps identify the conjugation and the form given in Latin dictionaries
habere	present active infinitive “to hold”	Provides the stem for the Present System (stem = infinitive minus <i>re</i> )
habui	1st person singular perfect active indicative “I have held”/“I held”	Provides the stem for the Perfect Active System (stem = principal part minus <i>i</i> )
habitum	Perfect Passive Participle “Having been held”	Provides the stem for the Perfect Passive System (add a form of <i>sum</i> , <a href="#">Unit 4</a> )

You must memorize all four principal parts to be able to fully recognize and form a verb. Take the time to learn them now, it will pay off!

Latin verbs are grouped into four conjugations based on how they behave (conjugate) in the present tense.

- 1st conjugation verbs have an infinitive (second principal part) ending in *-are*.
- 2nd conjugation verbs have an infinitive ending in *-ēre*. Notice the long *ē*.
- 3rd conjugation verbs have an infinitive ending in *-ere*. Notice the short *e*.
- 3rd -io conjugation verbs will have an infinitive ending in *-ere*, and the first principal part ending in *-io*.
- 4th conjugation verbs will have an infinitive ending in *-ire*.

Take a moment and look through the Verba and notice what the different conjugations look like. You may notice the following patterns

1st conjugation: -o, -are, -avi, -atum  
 2nd conjugation: -eo, -ēre, -ui, -itum

These are useful in memorizing principal parts, however, NOT ALL VERBS follow this pattern. For example, *do, dare, dedi, datum* is a 1st conjugation verb, but does not follow the pattern, nor does *video, vidēre, vidi, visum*, a 2nd conjugation verb.

## Present Active Indicative

The present tense denotes action that is happening now. For example, “I love the city.”

In Latin, a verb is made up of a stem and an ending. The stem usually shows whether the action is continuous (Present, Imperfect, and Future tenses) or completed (Perfect, Pluperfect, and Future Perfect tenses). The ending shows the voice, person, number, and time when the action happens. The endings for Present Active Indicative verbs are as follows:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	-o (I)	-mus (we)
2nd	-s (you)	-tis (you)
3rd	-t (she/he/it)	-nt (they)

The **Present Active Indicative** is formed by taking the present stem (infinitive minus *-re*) and adding the endings above:

1st Conjugation: amo, **amare**, amavi, amatum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	amo	amamus
2nd	amas	amatis
3rd	amat	amant

- For the first person singular, we would expect *amao*; however, in the first person singular form of the first conjugation, the *-a-* in the stem drops to give us *amo*. (We can also see this from the first principal part. Yet another reason to memorize them!)

2nd Conjugation: habeo, **habere**, habui, habitum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	habeo	habemus
2nd	habes	habetis
3rd	habet	habent

3rd Conjugation: scribo, **scribere**, scripsi, scriptum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	scribo	scribimus
2nd	scribis	scribitis
3rd	scribit	scribunt

- Because the *-e-* at the end of the stem is short, it undergoes [vowel reduction](#), whereby the *-e-* becomes an *-i-*, except when followed by a nasal sound (n/m) as in the third person plural, then it becomes a *-u-*.
- The first person singular also ends in *-o-* as it does in the 1st conjugation.

3rd -io Conjugation: cupio, **cupere**, cupivi, cupitum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	cupio	cupimus
2nd	cupis	cupitis
3rd	cupit	cupiunt

- The 3rd -io Conjugation retains the *-i-* in both the first person singular and the third person plural, much like the 4th conjugation.

4th Conjugation: audio, **audire**, audivi, auditum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	audio	audimus
2nd	audis	auditis
3rd	audit	audiunt

- Instead of having *audint* in the third person plural, an *-u-* is added for euphony (sounding pleasant) to give *audiunt*.

## Perfect Active Indicative

The present tense denotes action that is happening now. For example, “I love the city.” The perfect tense denotes action that is completed. For example, “I have loved the city.” It can also indicate action that happened in the past. For example, “I loved the city.” Which translation, “have loved” or “loved,” to use will depend on the context.

A verb is made up of a stem and an ending. The stem usually shows whether the action is continuous (Present, Imperfect, and Future tenses) or completed (Perfect, Pluperfect, and Future Perfect), and it shows the mood of the verb. The ending shows the voice, person, number, and time when the action happens. The endings for the Perfect Active Indicative are as follows:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	-i (I)	-imus (we)
2nd	-isti (you)	-istis (you)
3rd	-it (she/he/it)	-erunt (they)

You may notice some similarities between these endings and those of the Present Active.

The **Perfect Active Indicative** is formed by taking the perfect stem (3rd principal part minus -i) and adding the endings above:

amo, amare, **amavi**, amatum

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	amavi	amavimus
2nd	amavisti	amavistis
3rd	amavit	amaverunt

## Imperative

The **Imperative** mood indicates a command. There are only two forms, singular and plural. For example,

Write the letter (addressed to one person).

*Scribe litteras.*

Write the letter (addressed to two or more people).

*Scribite litteras.*

The singular form of the imperative is simply the present stem. The plural imperative form adds *-te* to the stem. Third conjugation verbs undergo vowel reduction when the *-te* is added and the short *-e* changes to an *-i*. Ex. *Scribite*

## Infinitive

**The infinitive** form of the verb does not have a person or number. The term “infinitive” comes from the Latin *in* (not) + *finio* (to limit); so an infinitive is “not limited” by person and number. Essentially, it is the basic definition of the verb, “to \_\_\_\_\_.” Ex. *amare* “to love”

The infinitive, however, IS limited by tense and voice. For now, we will discuss the Present Active and Perfect Active infinitives.

The Present Active infinitive is the second principal part, or the present stem + *-re*.

amo, **amare**, amavi, amatum

“to love”

or

amo, **amare**, amavi, amatum

ama + re = amare

“to love”

The Perfect Active infinitive is formed by taking the perfect active stem (3rd principal part minus *-i*) and adding the ending *-isse*. Notice that the perfect infinitive will still include a form of “to have” to show completed action.

amo, amare, **amavi**, amatum

amav + isse = amavisse

“to have loved”



## Sum, Esse, Fui, Futurum and Linking Verbs

The most important word in many languages is “to be.” It is typically the most frequently used and oldest verb, and so it is often irregular. Irregular verbs change stems depending on whether the verb is 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person, singular or plural. The verb “to be” is irregular in English:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	I <b>am</b>	We <b>are</b>
2nd	You <b>are</b>	You <b>are</b>
3rd	She, he, it <b>is</b>	They <b>are</b>

In Latin, the verb “to be” is irregular as well. However, it is only irregular in the Present Active Indicative. The personal endings remain the same, with one exception. For the first person singular the alternate ending *-m* is used instead of *-o*.

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	-m (I)	-mus (we)
2nd	-s (you)	tis (you)
3rd	-t (she/he/it)	-nt (they)

To form the Present Active of *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, *futurum* you add these endings to the changeable stem.

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	<b>sum</b>	<b>sumus</b>
2nd	<b>es</b>	<b>estis</b>
3rd	<b>est</b>	<b>sunt</b>

Notice that the stem is set in bold here as it is irregular.

The stem will either be *su-* or *es-*. You may notice that the stem for the second person singular is only *e*. The true form is really *ess*, but over time the second *s* dropped. For more on how *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, *futurum* evolved, see this [video](#).

Please note that when a prefix is added to *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, *futurum* the last consonant of the prefix may change depending on the first letter of the form of *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, *futurum*. For example,

prosum, prodesse, profui, profuturum

notice a *-d-* is added at the end of the prefix for forms that begin with *e-*

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	<b>prosum</b>	<b>prosumus</b>
2nd	<b>prodes</b>	<b>prodestis</b>
3rd	<b>prodest</b>	<b>prosunt</b>

It is important to note that *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, *futurum* is a **linking verb**. This means that it acts as an equal sign. It links a subject to another noun or an adjective. For example,

Aelia is young.

Aelia = young.

Aelia est nova.

(nom.) = (nom.)

The adjective (*nova*) is nominative, singular, feminine, because it describes *Aelia* in the nominative, singular, feminine. You will learn more about adjectives in **Unit 2**. This will work the same way with nouns, however, because nouns cannot change gender, they will only match in case and number (if possible). For example,

Wisdom is love.

Wisdom = love.

Sapientia est amor.

(nom.) = (nom.)

The adjective or noun describing the subject is called a **predicate nominative**.

Other common linking verbs are *fio*, *fieri*, *factum*, “to become” (Unit 4) and *videor*, *videri*, *visum*, “to seem” (Unit 3).

## Poosum, Posse, Potui and Complementary Infinitives

The verb *possum, posse, potui* (to be able) is irregular because it is a combination of the adjective *potis, -e* (powerful, able) and the irregular verb *sum, esse, fui, futurum*. It conjugates similarly to *sum, esse, fui, futurum*.

The verb ***possum, posse, potui*** is formed by adding the prefix *pos-* or *pot-* before the form of *sum, esse, fui, futurum*. If the form of *sum, esse* begins with an *s-*, then *pos-* is used. If it begins with an *e-*, then *pot-* is used. This pattern applies Present, Imperfect and Future tenses (all tenses that show continuous action). For now, we will examine the Present tense:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	<b>possum</b>	<b>possumus</b>
2nd	<b>potes</b>	<b>potestis</b>
3rd	<b>potest</b>	<b>possunt</b>

This verb is usually found with a **complementary infinitive** that completes the meaning of the verb. For example,

You are able to see Aelia.  
(infin) (direct object)

*Potes videre Aeliam.*

Other verbs that take complementary infinitives are *debeo, debere, debui, debitum* "to ought" (Unit 2); *audeo, audere, ausum* "to dare" (Unit 5); *coepi, coepisse, coeptum* "to begin" (Unit 7), and *soleo, solēre, solui, solitum* "to be accustomed" (Unit 9) .

## Eo, Ire, Ii, Itum

The verb **eo, ire, ii, itum** (to go) is irregular in the present tense. Because its original stem (*ei-*) ends in a weak vowel (short *i*), it will change depending upon whether the ending begins with a vowel or a consonant. The present tense endings are as follows:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	-o	-mus
2nd	-s	-tis
3rd	-t	-unt

Notice that in the third person plural the ending is not *-nt*, but *-unt*.

The stem *ei-* will change to *e-* before a vowel and to *i-* before a consonant, then you add the endings above to it:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	eo	īmus
2nd	īs	ītis
3rd	it	eunt

The perfect stem for *eo, ire, ii, itum* is *i-*, but the stem is found as *iv-*, as well.