

## Before you start

### Orthography

Latin was written (orthography) as it sounded. Therefore, the spelling of Latin changed with natural variations of pronunciation that occurred over time and place. So, for example, Cicero would have written *equos* for “the horse,” while Caesar Augustus would have written *ecus*; we find this same word in our Latin texts as *equus* because editors of Latin texts generally adopt the spelling of the first century AD, when variations in orthography had leveled out. We still find variation in the treatment of the semi-vowels *u/v* and *i/j*, however (on these semi-vowels, see below under pronunciation).

### Latin Pronunciation

Latin was spoken through many countries over many hundreds of years. When you think how much pronunciation varies in different regions of our own country during our own time, the very thought of how to “correctly” pronounce Latin becomes daunting. We actually know quite a bit about how upper-class educated Romans living in Rome during a relatively short time span spoke Latin because Roman writers themselves have given us various hints. This pronunciation is called the “Restored Pronunciation.” Even though the Restored Pronunciation may be the way Horace recited his *Odes*, for example, or Vergil his *Aeneid*, we should not feel constrained to try to duplicate it. In our own language, English, we don’t feel we need to research how Shakespeare might have spoken in order to read *Hamlet*. Elizabethan actors might be amazed at our renditions, but we aren’t talking to them. Our goal is to be faithful to the principles of the language and to be understood by others. But—you may object that we can’t really appreciate the beauty of a Latin poem unless we hear it as the Romans did. If that were true, we would need more than sounds to appreciate Latin literature—we would need the full spectrum of cultural values that comprise aesthetic appreciation.

The other traditional method of pronunciation is called the “Ecclesiastical Pronunciation.” If you listen to Latin liturgical hymns, you will hear the subtle differences: *caelum* (sky, heaven), for example, is pronounced “kai-lum” in the restored pronunciation but “che-lum” in the ecclesiastical pronunciation. Ecclesiastical Latin retains the mellifluous beauty of Italian. An audio recording of Caps. I–XXXI of *Familia Romana* is available from Hackett Publishing Co. in the Restored Pronunciation; an audio recording of the whole of *Familia Romana* is available from the same publisher in Ecclesiastical Pronunciation.

So, how to pronounce Latin? If we are faithful to a few principles, we can read with confidence and feeling, and understand and be understood by others. In order to utter Latin well, we must understand the quantities of vowels and syllables, know where to put the accent and how to enunciate. Thus, while the guide below will suggest pronunciations that mirror some of the things we

know about ancient pronunciation, if you pay attention to quantities, accent, and enunciation, you will be understood whether you pronounce *c* hard (i.e., like “k”) as the Romans did or soft, as Ecclesiastical Latin.

But first, let’s look at the alphabet.

## The Alphabet

The Latin alphabet can be most simply divided into vowels and consonants. That broad division has subdivisions as well. The Latin alphabet has twenty-three letters; it lacks the English *w*; *y* and *z* were Greek imports, as were *ch*, *ph*, *th*.

### Vowels

- Latin has both single vowels and diphthongs (two vowels that form one sound).
- Vowels can be either “long” or “short.” A long vowel is pronounced for twice the length of time. Compare the “a” in “father” and the first vowel in “aha.” We hold the “a” sound twice as long in “father.” Long vowels in this book are marked by a bar over the vowel called a “macron” (i.e., *ā*, *ē*, *ī*, *ō*, *ū*). The Latin vowels are:
  - a
    - ▷ short: *a* as the first *a* in “aha”: *amat*
    - ▷ long: *ā* as in “father”: *ālā*, *pānis*
  - e
    - ▷ short: *e* as in “let”: *et*, *bene*
    - ▷ long: *ē* as in “prey”: *mē*
  - i
    - ▷ short: *i* as in “fit”: *in*, *nimis*<sup>1</sup>
    - ▷ long: *ī* as *ee* in “feet”: *hīc*, *liberī*
  - o
    - ▷ short: *o* as in “hot”: *post*, *modo*
    - ▷ long: *ō* as in bone: *pōnō*
  - u
    - ▷ short: *u* as in “full”: *num*, *sumus*
    - ▷ long: *ū* as in “fool”: *ūna*, *tū*
  - *y* (represents the Greek *upsilon*)
    - ▷ short: *y* as French *u* in “lune”: *Syria*
    - ▷ long: *ȳ* as French *u* in “pur”: *Lȳdia*

1. The sound as in *fit*, *hit* does not occur in the modern Romance languages, suggesting that short *i* had more of an *ee* sound, but held for a shorter time.

- Diphthongs, being two vowels together, take twice as long to pronounce as single short vowels and so are considered long. They are:
  - *ae* as *ie* in “die”: *Graecia, laetus, paene*
  - *oe* as *oi* in “boil”: *foedus, poena*
  - *au* as *ou* in “loud”: *aut, nauta*
  - *eu* as *e+u* combined into one syllable (ěhoo): *Eurōpa, heu, heus, neu, seu*. (But the endings *-us, -um, -unt* form separate syllables after *e*: *de|us, me|us, e|um, e|unt, aure|us*.)
  - *ui* in *cui, huic, cuius, huius* as *u+i* combined into one syllable

### Semi-vowels (glides)

Latin has two letters called “glides,” which represent either a vowel or a consonant sound depending on the letters around them. These letters are represented in our book as *i* and *u/v*:

- *i*: The father of our family is Iulius, the same as the English Julius. The “j” and “i” of his name represent the same letter in Latin, which was always represented by *i* by the Romans. Sound: Before a consonant, *i* represents the vowel sound “i” and before a vowel, the consonant sound “y.”
- *u/v*: The word for slave shows you the other glide in Latin. The word for slave is *servus*, in the plural, it’s *servi*. The *v* and *u* are actually the same letter and work the same way as “i” and “j.” In some Latin texts, you will find *servus* written as *seruus*; this text distinguishes *u* and *v*. Sound: Before a consonant, *u* represents the vowel sound “u” and before a vowel, the consonant sound “w.”

### Consonants

Most consonants are the same as, or very similar to, English.

- *b* as in English: *bibit, ab*
- *bs* and *bt* as *ps* and *pt*: *absunt, obtulit, urbs*
- *c* is always hard as in “cat” (= *k*, without aspiration): *canis, centum, circus, nec*
  - ▷ *ch*, as *k* with aspiration: *pulcher*
- *d* as in English: *dē, dedit, ad*
- *f* as in English: *forum, flūmen*
- *g* as in English: “get” (never as in “gem”): *gallus, gemma, agit*
- *gn* as *ngn* in “willingness”: *signum, pugna, magnus*
- *h* as in English (tending to disappear): *hīc, homō, nihil*
- *l* as in English: *lūna, gladius, male, vel*

- *m* as in English: *mē, domus, tam*
  - ▷ In the unstressed endings *-am, -em, -um*, it tended to disappear.
- *n* as in English: *nōn, ūnus*; before *c, g, q* as in “ink”: *incola, longus, quīnque*
- Before *s*, it tended to disappear: *mēnsa, īnsula*
- *p* as in English (without aspiration): *pēs, populus, prope*
- *ph* as English *p* with aspiration: *amphitheātrum* (see above under *ch*)
- *qu* as English *qu* in “quick”: *quis, aqua, equus*
- *r* rolled or trilled: *rēs, ōra, arbor, cūr*
- *s* as in English “gas” (never voiced as in “has”): *sē, rōsa, is*
- *t* as in English (without aspiration): *tē, ita, et*
- *t* is always hard (not like *t* in nation)
- *th* as English *t* with aspiration: *amphitheātrum* (see above under *ch*)
- *v* as English *w*: *vōs, vīvus*
- *x* as in English (= *ks*): *ex, saxum*
- *z* as English *z* in “zone”: *zōna*

Thus, very generally, the sound of Latin consonants can be compared to those of English:

- Like English: *d, f, l, m*, and *n* (initial and medial)<sup>2</sup>, *p, qu, z*
- Like English + variations (see above): *bs, bt, gn*
- Always a hard sound: *c, g, s, t, x*
- Softer than English: *h*, final *m, n*
- Different: *r* (trilled) *v* (like *w*)

Now we return to our guidelines for pronunciation of quantities, accentuation, and enunciation. In Cap. XVIII, your text gives you an excellent lesson in the concepts below, in Latin.

### 1. Syllables:

- a. A word has as many syllables as it has vowels and/or diphthongs:
  - i. *Est, nōn, sunt*
  - ii. *Rō ma, Nī lus, quo que*
  - iii. *Flu vi us, op pi dum, īn su la*
  - iv. *Brun di si um, Hi spā ni a*<sup>3</sup>
- b. Note that in the examples above:
  - i. A consonant goes with the following vowel: *Rō ma*
  - ii. Two consonants are divided: *op pi dum*

2. I.e., beginning a word (initial) and in the middle of a word (medial).

3. If a combination of letters could be used to begin a word (like the *sp* in *hi spa ni a*), those letters are kept together and go with the following vowel.

- c. Some consonants stay together:

~ *ch, ph, th, qu*

~ *l* or *r* preceded by *b, d, g, p, t, c,* and *f*

2. **Vowel quantity:**

- a. A long vowel takes twice the time to pronounce as a short vowel.

3. **Syllable quantity:**

- a. A syllable is either:
- i. open (ends in a vowel)
  - ii. closed (ends in a consonant)
- b. Long/Heavy syllables:
- i. Closed syllables
  - ii. Open syllables with long vowel/diphthong
- c. Short/Light syllables:
- i. Open syllables with a short vowel

4. **Accent:**

- a. The last three syllables of a Latin word determine accent.
- b. These syllables are called:
- i. ultima (for *syllaba ultima*: the last syllable)
  - ii. penult (for *syllaba paene ultima*: almost the last syllable)
  - iii. antepenult (for *ante paene ultimam syllabam*: “before the almost the last”)
- c. The accent, or stress, of a Latin word depends on the length of the second to last, or penultimate, syllable.
- d. The penult (penultimate) syllable is accented when long/heavy (closed or has long vowel or diphthong).
- e. Otherwise, the accent moves to the antepenult.
- f. Examples:

*Róma in Itáliā est. Itália in Európā est. Grécia in Európā est.*

*Itália et Grécia in Európā sunt. Hispānia et Itália et Grécia in Európā sunt.*

5. **Enunciation:** this last principle sounds easy, but most people who feel nervous about saying a word correctly try to say it as fast as possible. Some tips:
- ▷ Speak slowly and say what you see.
  - ▷ Doubled consonants (two consonants in a row) are both pronounced.
  - ▷ Long vowels take twice the time to pronounce as short vowels.

## Parts of Speech with Examples

[The chapter in brackets gives the first introduction of the part of speech.]

**Noun** (substantive) [Cap. I]:

1. names a person, place or thing
2. properties:
  - a. gender: masculine, feminine, or neuter (neither masculine or feminine)
  - b. number: singular or plural
  - c. case: different endings depending on the role of the word in the sentence

*Exempla Latīna:*

*Rōma*  
*fluuius*  
*oppidum*

**Adjective** [Cap. 1]:

1. qualifies a noun
2. sometimes stands on its own as a substantive
3. has (like nouns) gender, number, and case
4. has (unlike nouns) all three genders (can stand in agreement with any noun)
5. matches (agrees) with its noun in gender, number, and case

*Exempla Latīna:*

*magnus (fluuius)*  
*parva (īnsula)*  
*parvum (oppidum)*

**Pronoun** [Cap. II]:

1. points to, or stands for, a noun without naming it, e.g., “he,” “whom,” “they”
2. has (like nouns) gender, number, and case

*Exempla Latīna:*

*quis*            *cuius*  
*quae*           *quid*

**Verb** [Cap. I]:

1. shows action, state of being
2. properties:
  - a. person: 1st (I/we), 2nd (you), 3rd (he, she, it/they)
  - b. number: singular, plural
  - c. tense: time frame of the verb:

- i. present (continuing action in the present)<sup>4</sup>
- ii. imperfect (continuing action in the past)
- iii. future (projected action)
- iv. perfect (completed action)
- v. pluperfect (action completed before another completed action)
- vi. future perfect (action to be completed before a projected action)
- d. voice:
  - i. active (subject is the agent of the verb)
  - ii. passive (subject is the recipient of the action of the verb)
- e. mood: expresses the speaker's attitude to the verb
  - i. indicative (states a fact, asks a question)
  - ii. infinitive (the unbounded, "to" form of the verb)<sup>5</sup>
  - iii. imperative (gives a command)
  - iv. subjunctive (various uses)

*Exempla Latīna:**est, sunt**pulsat* [Cap. III]*cantat* [Cap. III]**Participle** [Cap. XIV]:

1. is a verbal adjective: it shares qualities of *verbs* and *adjectives*
2. like a *verb*, a participle has
  - a. tense (present, past, future)
  - b. voice (active, passive)
3. like an *adjective*, a participle has
  - a. gender
  - b. number
  - c. case

*Exempla Latīna:**dormiēns* (*puer*)*canentem* (*gallum*)*stantem* (*servum*)**Adverb** [Cap. I]:

1. qualifies a
  - a. verb
  - b. adjective
  - c. another adverb

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4. The present shows continuing action in the present (I am walking), simple present (I walk), emphatic present (I do walk).

5. The infinitive, like the supine (not included here), is a verbal noun.

*Exempla Latīna:**bene**nōn**ubi* (interrogative adverb)*num* (interrogative adverb)**Preposition** [Cap. I]:

1. determines the relationship between two nouns

*Exempla Latīna:**in* (*Italiā*)*sine* (*rōsis*) [Cap. V]*cum* (*Aemiliā*) [Cap. V]**Conjunction** [Cap. I]:

1. joins words, phrases, or clauses

*Exempla Latīna:**sed**et***Interjection:** An exclamation for emphasis [Cap. XXII]:*Exemplum Latīnum:**heus!***Syntactic Terms**

[Examples are underlined]

**Subject:** the focus of the sentence. To find the subject, ask “who” with the verb.

Julia is singing. Who is singing? Julia (subject)

*Exempla Latīna:**Rōma in Italiā est.**Iūlia cantat [Cap. III].***Predicate:** the verb and its modifier(s). To find the verb in a sentence, look for the word that denotes an action or state of being.

- *Rōma in Italiā est*: *est* is the verb/predicate (state of being)
- *Iūlia cantat*: *cantat* is the action (action)

**Predicate nominative:** a noun used with a copulative (linking) verb to **restate** the subject.

- *Corsica insula est.*
- *Tūsculum oppidum Rōmānum est.*

**Predicate adjective:** an adjective used with a copulative (linking) verb to **qualify** the subject.

- *Fluvius magnus est.*
- *Oppidum parvum est.*

**Transitive verb:** a verb which is completed by a direct object.



*Exempla Latīna:**Mārcus nōn videt Quīntum* [Cap. III].*Mārcus puellam pulsat* [Cap. III].

**Intransitive verb:** a verb that is not completed by a direct object (which is in the accusative case) or that stands alone (e.g., “I stand,” “I sit”). In both examples below, the dative case completes the verb, which is intransitive.

*Exempla Latīna:**Pater dormit* [Cap. III].*Pater venit* [Cap. III].

**Direct object:** a word in the accusative case that receives the action of the verb.

*Exempla Latīna:**Mārcus nōn videt Quīntum* [Cap. III].*Mārcus puellam pulsat* [Cap. III].

**Indirect object:** a word in the dative case that tells “to or for whom” the action of the verb is performed.

*Exempla Latīna:**Pater filiō suō magnum mālum dat* [Cap. VII].*Dominus servīs mālā et pira dat* [Cap. VII].

*Notā Bene:*<sup>6</sup> Some verbs which are transitive in English are intransitive in Latin.

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6. *Notā Bene* means “note well” or “take note—this is important!”