

## Chapter 2: First Declension

Chapter 2 covers the following: the term declension, the three basic qualities of Latin nouns, that is, case, number and gender, basic sentence structure, subject, verb, direct object and so on, the six cases of Latin nouns and the uses of those cases, the formation of the different cases in Latin, and the way adjectives agree with nouns. At the end of this lesson we'll review the vocabulary you should memorize in this chapter.

Declension. As with conjugation, the term declension has two meanings in Latin. It means, first, the process of joining a case ending onto a noun base. Second, it is a term used to refer to one of the five categories of nouns distinguished by the sound ending the noun base: /a/, /ō/ or /ū/, a consonant or /ī/, /ū/, /ē/. First, let's look at the three basic characteristics of every Latin noun: case, number and gender. All Latin nouns and adjectives have these three grammatical qualities. First, case: how the noun functions in a sentence, that is, is it the subject, the direct object, the object of a preposition or any of many other uses? Second, number: singular or plural. And third, gender: masculine, feminine or neuter. Every noun in Latin will have one case, one number and one gender, and only one of each of these qualities. In other words, a noun in a sentence cannot be both singular and plural, or masculine and feminine. Whenever asked — and I will ask — you should be able to give the correct answer for all three qualities.

Number is so simple there's no need to discuss that. It refers to a noun that is either singular — there's only one of them — or plural — there's more than one of them. And that, thank Jupiter, is as close as Latin will ever get to math.

Gender, however, is more complicated in Latin than it is in English. Every Latin noun has a particular gender, but it's not predictable which gender any noun belongs to. So gender must be memorized for each noun. Take heart, however, there are some patterns for predicting what gender a noun belongs to in Latin. Masculine things — man, boy, general — tend to be masculine in gender. Feminine things — woman, girl, mother — tend to be feminine. We will note any patterns if they exist to help you memorize the gender of particular nouns and for the moment it's not a problem because all the nouns you encounter in Chapter 2 are feminine in gender. This applies to the adjectives you'll encounter as well. But in Chapter 3 we'll meet masculine-gender nouns and in Chapter 4, neuter. The sad truth is, you'll have to memorize the gender of every Latin noun you learn.

Now let's look at some basic sentence structure as it applies to Latin grammar, and let's start with this useful but rather stupid-sounding example grammar sentence: “The grandmother of my girlfriend gave her daughter a coin from her purse, your majesty.” “Grandmother” is the subject of the sentence. “Of my girlfriend” shows possession. “Gave” is the verb. “Her daughter,” which could also be expressed as “to her daughter,” is the indirect object. “A coin” is the direct object. “From her purse” is a prepositional phrase consisting of “from” plus its object “purse.” And finally, “your majesty” is a direct address.

In Latin, these functions are not represented as they are in English, by where these words are placed in the sentence, but by the form they take, called their case. In the first instance, the subject will be nominative so the word “grandmother” would be nominative if this were a Latin

sentence. The next phrase, “of my girlfriend,” which shows possession would be in the genitive case. We’ll skip the verb, “gave,” since we’re looking at cases and verbs don’t take cases. The next noun, “her daughter” or “to her daughter,” the indirect object, would be in the dative case if this were Latin. “A coin,” the direct object, would be in the accusative case. “Purse,” the object of a preposition, would be in the ablative case. And “your majesty,” the person being directly addressed, would be in the vocative case.

Now let’s look at each of these cases individually, first how they function and then how they’re formed in Latin. To begin with...

The nominative case. Its primary function is to indicate which noun or nouns serves or serve as the subject of the sentence. The subject of the sentence is the noun or nouns which perform the action of the verb. A sentence can have more than one subject, for instance, “Caesar and his army attacked Gaul.” In that case, “Caesar” and the “army” are both the subject of the sentence. The nominative case is used for subjects primarily, but it has other uses such as the predicate of the sentence. We’ll look at predicates later.

The genitive case. The primary function of the genitive case is to show possession, that is, that one noun is owned or in the possession of another noun, for instance, “the man’s house.” The possessive “man’s” would be in the genitive case in Latin. This can also be expressed as “the house of the man.” Note that English has two ways of expressing possession: “of,” or -s’/-’s. ’S is used to express the singular possessive in English, as in “the student’s assignment.” S’ is used to express the plural possessive, as in “the students’ assignments.” Though pronounced the same way, s’ refers to more than one student.

The dative case. The primary function of the dative case is to indicate which noun is or nouns are the indirect object of the sentence, that is, who or what benefits from the action of the verb. To have the dative case at all in a sentence requires a special type of verb, one whose meaning includes the possibility of benefit, such as, “buy,” “build,” “tell,” “lend,” “sell,” “show,” “give.” As in: “Buy me a diamond,” “Build me a castle,” “Tell me you love me,” “Lend me your fortune,” and “Sell me the space to show you the love I can give you.”

English has two ways of indicating an indirect object. It can use the prepositions “to” or “for,” as in, “I gave this to you,” “I did a favor for you.” Or a word can be put in a special place in the sentence, between the verb and the direct object, such as, “I gave you this,” “I did you a favor.” Note that English has more than one *to*. There is the dative *to*, “I sold a house *to* you,” and also the directional *to*, “I went *to* your house.” And, of course, both these *to*’s are different from the *too* which is spelled with two *o*’s and means “also.” And all three of these are different from the *two* that means an amount (1+1), and the *to* which indicates that a verb is in the infinitive form. Consider this sentence: “I said *to* him *to* go *to* *two* other stores, *too*.” I think we can all agree that English has way more than two *too* many *to*’s.

The accusative case. The primary function of the accusative case is to indicate which noun serves or nouns serve as the direct object of the sentence. The direct object receives the action of the verb. The accusative case is also used to indicate the object of certain prepositions like *ad* or *inter*. We’ll learn more about these prepositions later. Here are some examples of direct objects

receiving the action of the verb. “The boy drove the chariot.” What did the boy drive? The chariot. “Chariot” receives the action of the verb “drive” and is the direct object of the sentence. “The Roman army attacked Gaul.” What did the Roman army attack? Gaul. “Gaul” receives the action of the verb “attack.” “The Senate praised the general for his bravery.” “General” is the direct object because it receives the action of “praising.” “Duty calls us all to greater deeds.” “Us” is the direct object of “call” because it receives its action.

You should note that there can be two or more direct objects in a sentence, often when that sentence contains multiple verbs, such as “You will have no problem with English grammar if you study Latin.” There are two direct objects in this sentence. The first is “problem,” the object of “you will have.” The second is “Latin,” the direct object of “study,” the second verb in this sentence, the one inside the if-clause. “Why do people make mistakes and think that no one will notice them?” There are again two direct objects in this sentence, each attached to one of its two verbs: “make” which has as its direct object “mistakes” and “notice” which has as its direct object “them.” “Let us give the homeless better food and shelter.” Here there are two direct objects but only one verb. “Give” is that verb. “Food” and “shelter” are its two direct objects. “Homeless” is not the direct object but the indirect object here because it is not receiving the action but the benefit of the giving. In Latin it would be in the dative case.

The ablative case. The primary function of the ablative case, at least for now, is to indicate which noun or nouns serve as the object of certain prepositions. By prepositions we mean words like “by, with, from,” but the use of the ablative in Latin is far more pervasive than that. It is in many ways the catch-all case. It can show: means, the instrument with which something was done; manner, the way in which something was done; time, the time at which something was done; separation, that two things are apart from each other; all these and many other uses besides. Wheelock is right to call the ablative case adverbial inasmuch as it usually specifies how something happens, for instance, “with speed” or “in good time” or “by you.” We’ll spend several lessons later in the term learning different uses for the ablative but until then we’ll use the ablative only to serve as the objects of certain prepositions. And finally ...

The vocative case, the only use of which is to show direct address, in other words, the noun that is being called or directly spoken to, such as “Marcus!” when I’m talking directly to my friend Marcus or “You there!” or, in prayers, “O great Jupiter!” In several respects the vocative is the easiest case to learn in Latin. It has only one use, and its form is almost always identical to the nominative. And because nominatives and vocatives are almost always the same, rarely is the vocative listed in declensional systems, making it just one less thing you have to memorize. Hooray for the vocative!

So let’s review now the cases in Latin and how they function in the sentence. The nominative most often represents the subject, the doer of the verb action in a sentence, such as “he” in “He goes.” The genitive case shows possession. English does the same with the preposition “of” or “s’ or ‘s, as in “the army’s equipment,” meaning “the equipment the army possesses”; or “the soldiers’ equipment” — s’ meaning it’s plural — which could also be represented with the preposition “of,” as in “the equipment of the soldiers.” The dative is used to indicate the indirect object of a sentence and is best represented by the English prepositions “to” or “for,” as in “he gives a gift to us,” or special placement in the sentence between the verb and the direct object,

“he gives us a gift.” The accusative most often represents the direct object, the receiver of the action of the verb, for example, “She saved her husband.” “Husband” is the direct object of the sentence because it is receiving the action of the verb “saved.” As we noted above, for our purposes right now, the ablative will serve as the object of certain prepositions, although it has many other uses in Latin and we’ll cover those later in the class. Right now all you need to know is that the Latin ablative is best represented by the English prepositions “by,” “with” and “from.” Finally the vocative, the easiest of the cases in Latin, is used to show that a noun is being directly addressed, as in, “O teacher, are those all the cases there are in Latin?” And the answer is “No, but it’s all you need to know for now.”

One of the greatest challenges for English speakers in learning Latin is the difference between the way Latin represents grammar and the way English does. In English to show that a word is functioning as the subject, for instance, we put it in a special place in the sentence. So, for example, we say, “The boy loves the girl.” We know that it is the boy loving the girl, not the girl loving the boy, because “the boy” precedes the verb and “the girl” follows it. Because of this word placement, it means that “the boy” is the subject of the sentence, the doer of the verb action, and “the girl” is the direct object, the receiver of the verb action. Reversing their placement in the sentence reverses the sense: “The girl loves the boy.”

But in Latin none of this is true. Word placement does not show grammar. The Romans instead used endings attached to the end of a noun to show the way it functioned in a sentence. That means they could put a noun anywhere in a sentence and still know that it functioned as the subject or direct object because the ending itself told them how the word was being used grammatically. In other words, you could take the word “boy,” put it in the nominative case and because it was in that form the Romans would know it was the subject of the sentence, that is, it was the boy who loved the girl, not the girl who loved the boy. It didn’t matter where the word “boy” came in the sentence. That makes it absolutely essential to know how a noun declines and the uses of the various cases because only by doing that can you figure out the basic grammar of any Latin sentence.

Now let’s look at one set of those declensional endings, the first declension. The first declension is a group of nouns which decline the same way, with endings that for the most part are based on the letter *a*. And just so you know, first declension is the first of five declensions, but you are responsible only for the first declension in this lesson.

In first declension the nominative singular is represented by a short letter *-a*. The genitive singular is represented by the diphthong spelled *-ae* and pronounced /ī/. The dative singular uses the same form. The accusative singular uses *-am*. The ablative singular uses a long *ā* — I’ll talk about that in a second — and the vocative a short *-a*. Those are the singular endings of the first declension. Now back to the long *-ā* of the ablative. Do you remember what we said in the introduction to Chapter 1, that the Romans could hear the difference between a long vowel and a short vowel, not because they sounded different, but because a long vowel was held for a longer period of time? Therefore, the short *-a* of the nominative and vocative singular sounded different to the Romans from the long *ā* of the ablative singular.

Returning to the case endings, we did the singular. Let's look at the plural. The nominative plural ending is *-ae*, the genitive plural *-arum*, the dative plural *-is*, the accusative plural *-as*, the ablative plural *-is*, and the vocative plural *-ae*, just like the nominative. Now let's review all the endings together, singular and plural, beginning with the nominative singular: *-a*, *-ae*, *-ae*, *-am*, *-ā* (we'll leave the vocative off); *-ae*, *-arum*, *-is*, *-as*, *-is*. [Repeat] Now, stop this presentation and practice saying these forms until you can say them correctly in under five seconds. And at least once try doing it backwards.

Now let's learn how to form a full Latin noun by taking these endings and attaching them to the end of a noun base. The word I'm going to use is *fama* which means "reputation." Its base is *fam-*. To this base add the endings you just memorized — *-a*, *-ae*, *-ae*, and so on — and you have a full Latin noun. The result is: *fama*, *famae*, *famae*, *famam*, *famā*, vocative *fama*; in the plural, *famae*, *famarum*, *famis*, *famas*, *famis*, and the vocative plural *famae*.

It is actually rather difficult to translate these words into English because the Latin words with their case endings contain grammatical information which English words do not readily include. All the same, it's necessary to translate these words so that the English fully represents what the Latin is saying. After all, when the Romans heard the word *famam*, they not only heard "reputation" but that the word was accusative, meaning that it functioned as the direct object or one of the other uses of that case.

Here's how to do it. *Fama* is translated as "reputation," with (S) after it to indicate that most likely it would function as the subject of the sentence. And here's another important difference between English and Latin: English has two articles, "the" and "a." Latin has no article at all. Therefore, when translating into English it will be necessary often to add "the" or "a" in order to produce good English sense. So the proper translation of *fama* is "reputation" or "a reputation" or "the reputation" — to remind you of this I'm going to use the definite article "the" throughout this exercise — with (S) after it in order to indicate that it most likely would serve as the subject of the sentence.

The genitive singular is translated as "of the reputation" or "the reputation's," although I can't imagine anyone actually saying that. The dative is translated "to/for the reputation." The accusative is translated as "the reputation" with (DO) after it to indicate that the word most likely functions as the direct object of the sentence. The ablative *famā* is best translated as "by/with/from the reputation" but in reality will most often serve as the object of a preposition. The vocative is translated as "O reputation!," saying which is a sign of certifiable insanity. The plural presents no problems whatsoever. Simply pluralize the singular translations. There's no need to go through these.

Finally, let's look at adjectives because nouns often have adjectives attached to them. Adjectives are a part of speech and the function of adjectives is that they modify nouns. "Modify" is the term grammarians use when they mean an adjective "delimits" the meaning of a noun. That is, it indicates which particular noun out of a group is being referred to. We'll explore adjectives more later in the class, but for right now let's just say this much: the real contribution of adjectives to language is that they allow us not to have an overwhelming number of nouns. That is, rather than have to have a separate word that means, for instance, "red car," adjectives allow you to

point out which car you mean, the red one, by attaching the adjective “red” to “car.” If we had to have separate words for “red car,” “green car,” “blue car,” our language would be a giant, boiling, overflowing sea of nouns that no one could sail. So let’s just say a big thank-you to whoever of our human ancestors invented the adjective.

The central thing you need to know about Latin adjectives is that they agree with the nouns they go with in number, gender and case. You’ll hear me say that, and make you say that, many times in this class. So, if you think about it, that means that adjectives have to change their endings the same way that nouns change their endings, if the adjective is to agree with the noun that it goes with. Therefore, just like nouns, adjectives decline. That is, they go through a declensional system identical to the system I just showed you for nouns. Here’s a chart showing a Latin adjective declining in accordance with the noun it goes with. And please note that the adjective comes after the noun, which is typical of Latin — also of modern French — but very different from English where we tend to put the adjective before the noun it goes with. In this case, I’ve attached the adjective *mea*, meaning “my” or “belonging to me,” to the noun *fama* (“reputation”), producing the noun-adjective cluster *fama mea*, meaning “my reputation.”

In the form *fama mea*, the nominative singular, the word cluster can function as the subject of the sentence, but if you change *fama* to *famae*, making it genitive singular, you must also change *mea* to *meae* in order to make the adjective agree with the noun it goes with in number, gender and case. This will be true for every case, both singular and plural. So let’s say these two words, *fama* and *mea* together, as they go through their declension: *fama mea*, *famae meae*, *famae meae*, *famam meam*, *famā meā* — I’m going to leave the vocative off as usual — and then in the plural: *famae meae*, *famarum mearum*, *famis meis*, *famas meas*, *famis meis*.

The translation of the noun with the adjective is no different from the translation we’ve already studied with the noun. In the nominative singular, *fama mea* is translated as “my reputation” with an (S) after it to indicate that it’s the subject. Please note that English normally doesn’t use “the” when you have an adjective like “my” so in this case we don’t add the article. The rest of the translations follow according to the way that nouns were translated: “of my reputation,” “to/for my reputation,” and so on.

To end this lesson, let’s return to the sentence we started with at the beginning: “The grandmother of my girlfriend gave her daughter a coin from her purse, your majesty,” and review the Latin cases and how they’re used. In this sentence the subject is “grandmother,” “of my girlfriend” shows possession, “gave” is the verb, “her daughter” is the indirect object, “a coin” is the direct object, “from her purse” is a prepositional phrase in which “purse” operates as the object of the preposition “from,” and “your majesty” shows direct address.

If this were a Latin sentence, the word “grandmother” as a subject would have a nominative ending, in this case a short *-ā*. “Of my girlfriend,” which shows possession, would be in the genitive case and would have an *-ae* ending. “Her daughter,” the indirect object, would be in the dative case and also have an *-ae* ending. “A coin,” the direct object, would be in the accusative case and have an *-am* ending. “Purse,” as the object of the preposition “from,” would be in the ablative case and have a long *-ā* ending. And “your majesty,” because it shows direct address, would be in the vocative case and have a short *-ā* ending.

If we make the nouns in this sentence plural so that it reads, “The grandmothers of my girlfriends gave to their daughters coins from their purses, your majesties,” though the cases would not change the endings would become plural so that “grandmothers” would have an *-ae* ending, “of my girlfriends” would have an *-arum* ending, “to their daughters:” - *is*, “coins:” -*as*, “purses:” - *is*, and “your majesties:” -*ae*.

Whew, we’re done! That’s the grammar for this lesson. Now let’s look at the vocabulary.

The first word is *fama, fama*, f., meaning “report, rumor, fame.” It’s a first-declension feminine noun. The abbreviation (1) indicates that the word is first-declension. The abbreviation “f.” indicates that it’s feminine in gender. To get the base of any first-declension noun, go to the genitive singular, which must end *-ae*, drop the *-ae*, and you have the base of the word. In this case, the base for *fama* is *fam-*.

The next word is *fortuna, fortuna*, f., meaning “fortune, luck,” also a first-declension noun. The abbreviation *-ae* is used to indicate that a word is first-declension and regular in its formation. So the base of *fortuna* is *fortun-*.

The next word, *patria, patriae*, f., means “fatherland, native country.” It’s a first-declension feminine noun.

The next word is *pecunia, pecuniae*, f., meaning “money,” also a first-declension feminine noun.

The next word is, *puella, puellae*, f., meaning “girl,” another first-declension feminine noun.

*Vita, vitae*, f., means “life, mode of life” and is also first-declension feminine.

*Forma, formae*, f., means “form, beauty, shape.” It is a first-declension feminine noun. Notice that the Romans thought that things that had visible form also had beauty, in the same way that we use “shapely” to mean “pretty.”

The next word, *ira, irae*, f., means “anger.” It’s a first-declension feminine noun. We get words like “irate” from this. What would you guess “irate” means? If you don’t know, go look it up in a dictionary.

*Philosophia, philosophiae*, f., another first-declension noun, means “philosophy,” and it’s not originally a Latin word but a word that later Romans borrowed from Greek. Apparently the early Romans were too busy conquering the world to have much time for studying philosophy. Another thing to note here is that nouns with bases ending in *-i-* will in some cases produce double *i*’s in their endings. In particular, in the instance of first declension, in the dative and ablative plural, so that the dative and ablative plural of a word like *patria* will be *patriis*, or of *pecunia* will be *pecuniis*, or of *philosophia* will be *philosophiis*. These double *i*-sounds are not diphthongs but two different syllables separated by a *y*-sound which is implied by the juxtaposition of the two *i*’s.

The final noun in this lesson is *poena, poenae, f.*, meaning “penalty, punishment.” It’s another first-declension noun.

Also in this vocabulary are several adjectives. You haven’t yet learned how to decline adjectives fully so this vocabulary list presents these adjectives in their feminine form only. Later we’ll learn how to create the masculine and neuter forms.

The first adjective is *antiqua, antiquae*, meaning “ancient, old”; the next one, *magna, magnae*, meaning “great” or “large”; *mea, meae*, meaning “my, mine, belonging to me”; *multa, multae*, meaning in the singular “much,” in the plural “many”; and *tua, tuae*, meaning “your, yours,” that is, “belonging to you.”

At the end of this vocabulary is a list of short words which belong to categories we haven’t yet fully explored. For the moment just memorize these. We’ll learn more about these words later.

The first is the simple conjunction, *et*, meaning “and.”

*O* means “O!” By the way, you should know that in English “O” means you are addressing someone. “Oh” expresses surprise. While Latin makes no distinction in the spelling of these interjections, you should learn to spell those properly in English.

The next word, *sine*, is a preposition which takes the ablative case, so that if you want to say in Latin “without money,” you say *sine pecuniā* indicating that *pecuniā* is ablative and the object of the preposition *sine*.

And finally *est*. *Est* is the Latin word for “is.” It’s the third person singular of the verb “to be.” We’ll learn the other forms later.

Before signing off, let’s practice a little bit with nouns and verbs to be certain you understand the grammatical principles introduced in this and the previous chapter. First, decline and translate the noun-adjective cluster *vita antiqua* in all its cases and numbers. Pause this presentation briefly while you do the exercise on a sheet of paper and then return to the presentation to check your answers. If you need a hint or two, click to the next slide.

So the base of *vita* is *vit-* and the base of *antiqua* is *antiqu-*. Add to those bases the declensional endings we studied before to produce the full declension of *vita antiqua*. On the next slide is the translation.

Now let’s review verbs. Conjugate and translate the present-tense forms of *voco* in all persons and numbers, including also the imperative and infinitive forms. Just as you did with the noun exercise, pause the presentation, do the exercise on a sheet of paper, and then return to the presentation to check your answers. If necessary, there’s a hint on the next slide.

*Voco* is a first-conjugation verb so use the thematic vowel *-a-* and add the proper endings.

Here is the conjugation of *voco* in the present tense, and here is the translation.



Now let's practice a second-conjugation verb. Conjugate and translate the present tense forms of *video* including the imperative and infinitive forms. Pause this presentation briefly and write down your answers on a sheet of paper. On the next slide is a hint, if necessary.

As a second-conjugation verb, *video* uses the thematic vowel *-e-*, to which the proper endings are added, producing this conjugation and this translation.

That's it. That's the end of this presentation of the grammar in chapter 2. For the next class exercise print out a copy of the worksheet for chapter 2 please.

*Salvete discipuli!*