

So you really want to learn

LATIN PREP

BOOK 1
New Edition

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I should like to express my very special thanks to Nicholas Oulton for his courteous, shrewd and ruthless editing of this work; if it fulfils its aim, as I hope it does, this is chiefly due to him.

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I should like to thank Bill Inge and the pupils of Ashfold School for bringing to our attention a number of typographical errors in the first edition of this book.

I need hardly say that all mistakes and infelicities that remain are entirely my own work.

Author's preface

The first aim of this book is to introduce beginners to the 1st year Latin CE syllabus. I have adhered pretty faithfully to the vocabulary and usages required by this syllabus and that is partly my excuse for the rather unconventional style of some of my stories. In this context I must beg tolerance from my stricter readers for not being able to use the alarming verb *inquam* – not in the syllabus! – when direct speech is involved, as it so frequently has to be. Instead, I have permitted myself to use a host of other verbs such as *dīcō*, *clāmō*, *rogō*, *respondeō* etc and have found, to my surprise and relief, that at least some of these verbs are used over and over again by Ovid to present direct speech. So I take refuge in claiming that my little stories, though not cast in any particular metre, are essentially poetic and are therefore entitled to poetic licence (it's a good try anyway!)

This new edition differs from the first edition in two material ways. Firstly, the font size has been increased to make the text easier on the eye. Secondly, a number of exercises have been added where it was felt that further practice was required. To enable schools to use both editions alongside each other without too much inconvenience, the exercise numbers from the first edition have been retained. The following new exercises have been added or expanded: 1.7; 1.10; 2.9; 2.10; 2.14; 2.15; 3.1; 3.7; 5.5; 5.6 and 7.6. The result of these changes is that while the page numbering differs significantly between the two editions, the exercise numbering remains the same.

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Introduction

Why Latin?

You have probably heard people say that Latin is useful because it helps us with our English. The reason for this is that about half the words you meet in English were used in some form or other by the Romans. The Romans, as I'm sure you know, ruled an empire which spread over much of Europe (as well as Asia Minor and North Africa). Their language, Latin, was spoken throughout this large empire but, over the decades and centuries, it changed. In Italy it gradually evolved into Italian; in Spain it became Spanish; and in Gaul (i.e. France) it became French. And so, when William the Conqueror conquered England in 1066, he brought with him his language (i.e. Norman-French). And it is from this language, Norman-French, that much of our own English language is derived. For example the word "irate" meaning "angry" comes from the Latin word *ira* = anger. The word "spectator" meaning "someone who watches" comes from the Latin word *spectō* = "I watch". The more Latin words you learn, the more you will realise how much of our English language is in fact taken directly (or indirectly) from Julius Caesar and his merry men. And all thanks to the Battle of Hastings!

Latin is difficult, certainly, but not absurdly so. I have tried in this book to supply you with a sound basis for mastering Latin and this process will continue in Books 2 and 3 of this course. You may think that in this book I sometimes approach certain features of Latin a little disrespectfully. I should like to think rather that my approach embodies the kind of familiarity and jocularly which we often display with someone we love. Certainly, I love the Latin language as a language, with all its rules and irregularities: I love everything about it. Indeed I should not hesitate to say that, even if there were no Latin *literature* at all, the language itself is one of the greatest monuments of human creativity and fully justifies the learning of it.



You may have heard people talking airily about Latin being a dead language. We have already pointed out that it is in fact very much alive in the languages derived or partially derived from it. Probably people mean that Latin itself is now simply a written language and is no longer spoken (except on some formal occasions in universities and the like). But this approach is misleading since, in the days when Latin *was* spoken, books were by our standards extremely rare and books were regularly read aloud. Certainly Latin falls beautifully upon the ear and one should take every opportunity to read it aloud. It is utterly a language that should be read aloud, because only in so doing and in doing it well, can you fully appreciate the beauty of which I have spoken. I suggest then that, from the start, you read lots of Latin, even simple words, aloud; and try to relish them. In the course of this book I have occasionally reminded you of this.

Pronunciation

To the Roman ear there was an immensely important difference between a long and a short vowel. To ignore the **quantity** (i.e. the length) of a vowel is rather the same as to play the piano from piano music without worrying too much about “silly little things” such as whether a note is black or white or whether it has a tail or tails or is tail-less (I hope you like this word). Incidentally, a lot more is known about the pronunciation of Latin than you may think.

Short vowels

Very nearly all vowels in this book are assumed to be short unless marked as long (see below). Occasionally we have marked a vowel as being short, but only if there is a definite and inescapable tendency to pronounce it incorrectly. Where vowels are marked short, we do this with a little sign called a breve (e.g. *ă, ě, ĭ, ȯ, ŭ*).

A short *ă* is pronounced something like “u” in “hut”. E.g. *ad* (= to).

A short *ĕ* is pronounced something like “e” in “neck”. E.g. *sed* (= but).

A short *ĭ* is pronounced something like “i” in “hit”. E.g. *cibus* (= food).

A short *ȯ* is pronounced something like “o” in “lot”. E.g. *novem* (= nine).

A short *ŭ* is pronounced something like “oo” in “hood”. E.g. *cum* (= with).

Long vowels

All vowels that are long are marked with a sign called a macron (e.g. *ā, ē, ī, ō, ū*).

A long *ā* is pronounced something like “ar” in “far”. E.g. *ā* (= from).

A long *ē* is pronounced something like “ai” in “bait”. E.g. *mē* (= me).

A long *ī* is pronounced something like “ee” in “feet”. E.g. *hīc* (= here).

A long *ō* is pronounced something like “oa” in “boar”. E.g. *nōs* (= we).

A long *ū* is pronounced something like “oo” in pool; (*never* the “yu” noise in “fume”.) E.g. *tū* (= you).

Long “ē”s and long “ō”s are a little more complicated than this, really, but if you follow these instructions you might only be a semi-tone wrong, if that! And in some words the Romans could not make up their minds about the letter “i”. Thus in the words *ubi* = “when” and *ibi* = “there”, the final “i” is sometimes treated as short, sometimes as long. Having told you this, we feel no qualms about leaving it unmarked.

A vowel is *always* long before -ns and -nf, even *between* words.

Eg. *īnsula* (= island).

Eg. *īn sacrō locō* (= in a sacred place).

Always give vowels their full (and correct) value when pronouncing words. For example *regere* (= to rule) has three identical short “e” sounds: re-ge-re.

Diphthongs

When two vowels are pronounced as one syllable, they create a diphthong.

AE is pronounced something like “i” in “tie”. E.g. *laetus* (= happy).

AU is pronounced something like “ow” in “cow”. E.g. *nauta* (= sailor).

EI is pronounced something like “ay” in “day”. E.g. *deinde* (= then).

OE is pronounced something like “oy” in “boy”. E.g. *Poenus* (= Carthaginian).

Beware, for example, of the word *poēta* (= poet). In this word the ‘*oe*’ is not a diphthong; the ‘*o*’ and the ‘*e*’ are two separate vowels, giving the word three lovely syllables in all: *po-ē-ta*.

EU is a hard one; luckily, not many Latin words use this, though it does occur in Greek names (e.g. *Theseus*). Try to pronounce a short *e* (as in *pet*) and a short *u* (as in *put*) so close to each other that they produce a single sound. Try this with the word *heu*, which rather appropriately means “*alas!*” Do not make it sound like the name *Hugh*.

Consonants

Most consonants in Latin are pronounced as they are in English. However, look out for the following:

C is always hard, as in “*cat*”. E.g. *Caesar* begins with a hard “*c*” noise, not the soft “*s*” noise that we tend to use in English.

G is always hard, as in “*gun*”. E.g. *rēgīna* (= queen).

Consonantal “i”; the letter “*i*” is generally a vowel, but it can also be used as the English letter “*y*” (in words such as “*you*”). Hence the Latin word *iam* (= now) is pronounced “*yum*”. In the past it was written with a “*j*” (from the German “*j*” which is pronounced like our consonantal “*y*”) and this led to its being pronounced like our letter “*j*” (as in “*jam*”). But this was wrong. (See page 92.)

R is always rolled, using the tip of the tongue (if you are lucky enough to be able to do this). E.g. *portō* (= I carry). Note also that vowels before “*r*” are not automatically lengthened as they tend to be in English. Thus the first “*o*” in the Latin word *portō* is short, and should not be “stretched” as in our English word “*porter*”.

S is always as “*s*” in “*silly*”, never the “*z*” noise in words such as “*busy*”. E.g. *quis?* (= who?).

V is always as the “*w*” in “*water*”. E.g. *veniō* (= I come).

Y exists only in names that come from Greek, and should be pronounced like a French “*u*”. E.g. *Hymettus* (a mountain near Athens).

CH, PH, TH nearly always come from Greek and should not be pronounced as they are in English. They are pronounced as very hard *Cs*, *Ps* and *Ts* respectively (i.e. ignoring the “*h*”). E.g. *Charōn*, *Philippī* and *Thēseus*.

GN is pronounced NGN as in “hangnail”. E.g. magnus (= big) is pronounced “mungnoos”.

Finally, note that when you meet a double consonant in Latin, as in puella (= girl), or terra (= earth), you should linger on the two consonants and try to give each its full value.

The false quantity

As we have said, the length of a vowel is called its quantity. In the old days, if you got a quantity wrong, you had perpetrated a “false quantity”, and were obliged to bow your head in shame and to consider yourself the lowest of the low. Nearly all textbooks and grammars use macrons to mark the long vowels for you, as we do in this book. But the Romans didn’t use these macrons themselves; they just knew. And when you learn a word, you should ideally include mastering its quantities as part of your learning. This is best done by pronouncing each word to yourself aloud as you learn it. For example: Rōmānus (= Roman). Say its three syllables aloud slowly, Rō-mā-nus, making sure that you have two nice long vowels followed by one short one. Now this sort of thing is part of the fun of learning this beautiful language. Indeed false quantities could be most embarrassing. Pity the poor farmer who cried out to his wife “mea uxor est mala sūs” which means – I can hardly bring myself to translate it – “my wife is a bad pig.” (Actually, I believe that pigs are very clean and pleasant animals). History does not record what followed upon his remark, though I am told that the lady was carrying a thick broom at the time. What he had *meant* to say was “meā, uxor, ēst māla sūs” which means “move, wife, the pig is eating the apples!” You just can’t be too careful.

And now... into the deep end!

When you turn the page you are going to be thrown, fully-clothed, into the deep end. But fear not, everything will very soon be explained. It is like one of those films which begin right in the middle of the story, with all sorts of people you don’t know and all sorts of mysterious things happening, and then suddenly you are taken back to the beginning and you start to understand what it is all about. The opening scenes give you a feel for the whole thing, as a sort of “taster”, before you settle down to work out who is who and what is what. So, here we go!



Chapter 1

Salvē!

Welcome! Assuming that you are normal (like me?), you will have skipped the Introduction, but I suggest that you go back to it now, particularly to the bit about pronunciation. You may also like to have a little peep at the vocabulary below. Then read aloud and see if you can make sense of the following:

Sulpicia fēmina est.



egō Sulpicia sum.
fēmina sum.

Aulus agricola est.



egō Aulus sum.
agricola sum.

egō Quīntus sum.
poēta sum.

“Salvē, Sulpicia. ubi est Mārcus?”

“Mārcus hīc est. etiam Cassia hīc est. Cassia puella est.”

“quis est Quīntus?”

“Quīntus poēta est.”

“Cassia, ubi sunt Aulus et Sulpicia?”

“Aulus et Sulpicia hīc sunt.”

Claudia et Cassia puellae sunt. Rōmānae puellae sunt.

“salvē. nōs puellae sumus.”

etiam Laelia puella Rōmāna est.

“salvē. puella Rōmāna sum.”

Gnaeus Rōmānus est. Sextus Rōmānus est.

Gnaeus et Sextus agricolae nōn sunt. nautae sunt.

“salvē. nōs nautae sumus.”



Vocabulary

salvē = greetings, hello

agricola = farmer

fēmina = woman

puella = girl

poēta = poet

nauta = sailor

Rōmānus = Roman

sum = I am

est = (he, she or it) is

sumus = we are

sunt = (they) are

hīc = here

etiam = also, even

quis? = who?

ubi? = where?

et = and

ego = I

tū = you (singular)

nōs = we

vōs = you (plural)

nōn = not

A bit about endings...

You will have noticed (no doubt) that some Latin names end in -a and others end in -us. The ones in -a refer to females (e.g. Claudia, Sulpicia, Cassia and Laelia), the ones in -us (Aulus, Mārcus, Sextus, Gnaeus and Quīntus) to males. In the same way a female Roman was Rōmāna and a male Roman was Rōmānus. This business of Latin words changing their endings is a vital part of the language, so we need to get used to it right from the start.



Mārcus Rōmānus est.



Sulpicia Rōmāna est.

Singular and plural

Nouns in Latin, just as in English, can be either singular or plural. In English we generally (but not always) make a noun plural by adding “s”. In Latin it is rather more complicated than this, but if the noun ends in -a (e.g. agricola or puella), it changes to -ae in the plural.

Singular

puella = the girl

agricola = the farmer

Plural

puellae = the girls

agricolae = the farmers