

# Latin For Beginners

## Nomenclature

Latin, quite naturally, uses the Latin alphabet, i. e. the capital letters A through Z, thereby excluding certain exceptions. Unlike classical Roman Latin that was based on 21 characters only, the humanistic form employed at a later date included the character range X through Z, but never contained the letters J, U, or W.

Much like lower case letters, Latin does not use any punctuation marks. Texts that contain such marks had them inserted later for better readability and convenience for the modern reader.

The Romans did not use any diacritical marks. Acute accents, overbars, and circumflex accents (hats) are sometimes used to indicate pronunciation and emphasis in edited texts.

## Pronunciation

Distinction between the Roman form and the humanistic form that was taught in the late middle ages.

### Classical/Roman Pronunciation

ae	<i>ai</i>
oe	<i>oi</i>
c	<i>k</i>

### Humanistic Pronunciation

ae	<i>æ</i>
oe	<i>ø</i>
c	<i>ts</i>

## Sentence Structure

The indicative form of a sentence usually (not always) is as follows:

*subject – object (if any) – predicate*

## Word Syntax

Latin does not use articles. The genus (gender) of an object is indicated by its suffix (ending). This also applies to the person and number of an object, as well as to its tense and overall grammatical form.

## Cases

While the Roman Latin language used to have eight grammatical cases, modern Latin, as we know it today, combines the three original ablative cases, and technically treats them as one. This yields six distinctive grammatical cases:

1. Nominative
2. Genetive
3. Dative
4. Accusative
5. Vocative
6. Ablative

### Nominative

Indicates the subject that dominates the denoted action:

*Autumnus pulchrum est.* – Autumn/fall is beautiful.

### Genetive

Indicates a possession, or property of ownership:

*Filia et filius dominae.* – The daughter and the son of the mistress.

### Dative

Indicates the indirect object that is affected by an action:

*Dominus servo imperat.* – The master orders the slave.

### Accusative

Indicates to whom an action applies:

*Puella fabulam poetae amat.* – The girl likes the story of the poet.

### Vocative

Indicates the referred object of an exclamation:

*Salve amice!* – Greetings, friend!

### Ablative

#### Ablativus separationis – Ablative of Separation

Indicates the separation of one object from another:

*Morbo vacare.* – Not to suffer from illness (to be free of illness).

#### Ablativus instrumentalis – Ablative of Means

Indicates the means that is used to perform an action:

*Piratae incolas armis terrent.* – The pirates threaten the inhabitants with weapons.

#### Locative – Ablative of Place and/or Time

Indicates when something happens, or an attributed place where an action takes place:

*Anno venti asperi.* – In the year of the great storm.