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Latin

2nd Edition

by Clifford A. Hull, MAs, MLS
Steven R. Perkins, MA

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Introduction

Julius Caesar once wrote that all of Gaul was divided into three parts, but when it comes to Latin, you can really find only two groups: those who have some knowledge of the language and those who don't. Whichever group you fall into, this is the book for you. You might want to get a better handle on this language for so many reasons. Perhaps you remember a few Latin words from when you were in school and want to dust off the cobwebs and refresh the knowledge you once had. Then again, you may just want to find out what all the fuss is about and discover for yourself why so many people still read, write, and even speak a language that has been popular for more than 2,000 years.

Sure, you have to know a few rules and master a few tricks, but after you do, Latin is actually pretty easy to figure out, and you're going to have fun doing it! Latin was the language of the Romans, the movers and shakers of the ancient world. These are the folks who built a republic and then an empire that stood for hundreds of years, created (and destroyed) Caesars, and produced the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and Hadrian's Wall. They can also take credit for one of the most lasting man-made concoctions of all time: concrete.

As if that wasn't enough, Latin continues to influence the world through the many languages, such as French, Italian, and Spanish, that come from it. And Latin has had much influence on English, too, given that more than half of all English words are derived from Latin words. (In fact, you use Latin words without even knowing it.) One of the best-kept secrets about Latin is that not only does figuring out Latin help you understand Latin, but it also helps you understand English, too.

Not too shabby for what some people call a dead language!

About This Book

What's great about this book is that it leads you step by step to understand how Latin works. With more than a century of combined teaching experience, we (the authors) give you the information that you need without distracting you with things that you don't. Oh, we offer up plenty of fun facts along the way, but we

also give you a lot of practice exercises to help you become comfortable with your new favorite language.

Each chapter is divided into sections, and each section contains information about some part of understanding Latin, such as

- How to decline Latin nouns and adjectives and how to conjugate Latin verbs
- How to translate a sentence so that it makes sense in English
- How Latin continues to influence English
- All sorts of interesting tidbits about Roman culture

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we set up a few conventions:

- Latin terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out, and their English translations are in *italics.*
- Verb *conjugations* (lists that show you the forms of a verb) appear in two-column tables. The first column contains the singular forms in this order: the *I* form, the *you* (singular) form, and the *he/she/it* form. The second column lists the plural forms: the *we* form, the *you* (plural) form, and the *they* form. Here's an example, using the verb **amo**, **amare**, **amavi**, **amatus** (*to love*):

Singular	Plural
amo	amamus
amas	amatis
amat	amant

Language learning is a peculiar beast, so this book includes a few elements that other *For Dummies* books don't include:

- **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** One of the best (and most fun) ways to really understand a language is to see it in action. The dialogues under the heading "Talkin' the Talk" show you a conversation in Latin, as well as the English translation.
- **Words to Know lists:** You do have to memorize key words and phrases when you get familiar with a language, so we collect important words within the

chapters (or sections) and place them in these lists. Some things to keep in mind about these lists are

- The function of Latin nouns depends on their declension (the term for the grammatical groupings into which Latin nouns are divided and their gender). The nouns in these lists include the first two dictionary forms (which tell you the noun's declension) and the gender. Here's an example: **coquus, coqui,** m: *cook.*

  For more on gender, see Chapter 2.

- Because Latin adjectives have to match the nouns that they modify in case, number, and gender, adjective entries show the masculine, feminine, and neuter forms: **frigidus, frigida, frigidum:** *cold.*

- The translation of a verb depends on its conjugation, so the Words to Know lists include the four dictionary forms of the verb. For example: **paro, parare, paravi, paratus:** *to prepare.*

- **Fun & Games activities:** On top of all these other language-specific sections, we provide fun activities to reinforce what each chapter shows you about Latin. These word games give you a fun way to gauge your progress.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made a few assumptions about you:

- You know no Latin — or if you took Latin a long time ago, you may not remember much of it.
- You don't want to be intimidated or made to feel foolish while you try something new.
- You want to have fun and learn Latin (or refresh your knowledge of it) at the same time.

How This Book Is Organized

To help you find the information that you want more easily, this book is organized into five parts, each covering a particular topic. Each part contains several chapters relating to that part.

Part 1: Getting Started with Latin

This part gives you the basics that you need to know if you want to understand Latin — how to deal with an inflected language (which Latin is), handling verb conjugations, and figuring out the basic rules of Latin grammar. To boost your confidence, we also introduce you to some Latin that you probably already know.

Part 2: Latin in Action

The Roman world was a fascinating one. In this part, we give you all sorts of info about Roman life and the language that the Romans used relating to those areas. In Part 2, you can find information on the Roman family, the mighty Roman army, Roman entertainment, and more.

Part 3: Latin in the Modern World

Many professions still use Latin today. Obviously, the legal and medical professions use Latin heavily, but many Christian churches also use Latin, as well as sciences such as botany and zoology. Because you run into Latin in so many places, this part gives you the terms that you're most likely to hear. With all these words at your disposal, you can actually translate Latin, so this part also gives you the lowdown on how to make sense of what you read or hear.

Part 4: The Part of Tens

Perfect for the person who wants useful info in digestible chunks, the Part of Tens gives you lists that you might find helpful. In this part, you can find lists of ten (or so) Latin words that give people the most trouble as well as ten "false friends" that could potentially steer you wrong.

Part 5: Appendices

This part of the book includes important information that you can use for reference. We include noun tables, verb tables, and a mini-dictionary so that you can easily look up words that you just can't seem to remember. If you want to grade yourself on the Fun & Games activities, we give you the answer keys, too.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you find information you're interested in or to highlight information that's particularly helpful, we use the following icons:

This icon points out advice, suggestions, and pointers that you can find helpful in your Latin adventure.

This icon appears next to important information that will help you understand key aspects of grammar and Roman culture.

This icon appears beside information that you may find interesting but that you can skip without impairing your understanding of the topic.

Latin, like any language, is full of quirks and exceptions that you need to know to translate the language accurately. This icon draws your attention to fuller discussions about grammar rules that can help you understand why Latin is the way that it is.

This icon highlights cultural tidbits and information relating to Latin and the ancient Romans. Search for this icon if you want to know more about the culture from which the Latin language came.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free, access-anywhere Cheat Sheet containing helpful tips and techniques (as well as some handy tables) for understanding Latin. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to `www.dummies.com`, type **Latin For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the search box, and click the Search button. Then select the Cheat Sheet from the drop-down list of results that appears to open the Cheat Sheet in all its glory.

Where to Go from Here

This book is organized to help you get familiar with one of the most beautiful, longest lasting, and most influential languages in the world. If you want to review a particular point, jump straight to that chapter and dig in. If you have the desire to build your knowledge from the ground up, then start at the beginning. The French theologian and poet Alain de Lille once wrote, **"Mille viae ducunt homines per saecula Romam."** (*"A thousand roads lead people forever to Rome."*) Whatever your need, we hope this book offers you a pleasant path on your journey to this wonderful language.

1 Getting Started with Latin

IN THIS PART . . .

See the links between Latin and English

Master the basics of Latin grammar

Pose questions

Say "Hello" — and "Goodbye"

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Keeping Latin alive
- Recognizing Latin derivatives and loanwords
- Finding out about the Latin alphabet
- Pronouncing Latin in a couple of ways

Chapter 1
You Already Know a Little Latin

Take one look at Latin, and you might say, "That's Greek to me!" You hear stories of demanding schoolmasters and are plagued by images of endless hours of memorization dancing through your head. After all, Latin is not the language of intellectual lightweights. It's the language of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Vergil, Ovid, and St. Augustine. Intellectuals such as Thomas Jefferson and W.E.B. Du Bois, used it. And Leonardo da Vinci used Latin in his notes, even going so far as to write the words backwards so ordinary folks couldn't read them. And in the movie *Tombstone*, Doc Holliday recognizes that his rival is an educated man just because he quotes the language of the Caesars.

"Noli timere!" the Romans would say. *"Have no fear!"* What do you think the children, gladiators, and working-class folks were speaking in those days? They used Latin, and so can you. In fact, you probably already know some Latin. This chapter takes a look at these familiar words and phrases. So relax, and enjoy this little jaunt back to the golden age of Rome.

Latin: Not as Dead as You May Have Hoped

An old rhyme about Latin goes like this: "Latin is a dead, dead language, as dead as it can be. It killed the ancient Romans, and now it's killin' me!" Well, Latin may have seemed deadly to the student who first penned those lines, but the rumors of Latin's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Latin was originally the language of a small group of people living in central Italy around the eighth century BCE. Eventually, those people — the citizens of a town called Rome — spread their culture and influence across the Mediterranean world, making Latin the common language for many nations in antiquity.

Wars, intrigue, and general decline led to the fall of the mighty Roman Empire in 476 CE, but Latin did not die with the last Roman emperor. People continued to write, read, and speak Latin for years. Although its use eventually began to dwindle, university scholars still used it until just about 300 years ago. Latin is dead today only in the sense that no group of people has it as their native language. In other words, no one learns Latin as a first language. Latin continues to influence the world, however, through the many languages derived from it, as well as through the wealth of culture, art, and literature rooted in, as Edgar Allan Poe put it, "the grandeur that was Rome."

Familiarity Breeds Comfort: Latin You Already Know

Have you ever sent someone a *memento?* Have you watched a *video?* Listened to an *audio* cassette? If you understand the italicized words in the preceding sentences, then you're already using Latin. **Memento** is the Latin word for *remember,* **video** is the Latin word for *see,* and **audio** is the word for *hear.* Are you a *homo sapiens?* Not only are you a member of the human race, but the Latin says that you're a wise person, as well. Do you watch sporting events in a *coliseum?* Then you're tipping the hat to ancient Rome's most famous gladiatorial arena — the Colosseum.

Some Latin expressions are so much a part of the English-speaking world that you know what they mean, even when changed. "Veni! Vidi! Visa!" for example, has become a popular slogan that even non-Latinists recognize as "I came! I saw! I shopped!"

English uses many Latin words without any change in spelling or any significant change in meaning. You can read more about these words in Chapter 17, but here are a few to get you started:

- **senator** (*senator*)
- **gladiator** (*gladiator*)
- **consul** (*consul*)

Many other Latin words involve the change of only a few letters:

- **copiosus** (*copious*)
- **defendo** (*defend*)
- **signum** (*sign*)

The following sections take a look at some Latin derivatives and loanwords, proving why Latin is anything but a dead language.

English in a toga: Latin derivatives

Do you recognize this famous quotation?

> I **pledge allegiance** to the flag of the **United States** of **America,** and to the **republic** for which it **stands, one nation,** under God, **indivisible,** with **liberty** and **justice** for all.

That, of course, is the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance.

Or how about this?

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this **continent,** a new **nation, conceived** in **Liberty,** and **dedicated** to the **proposition** that all men are **created equal.**

Many of you know that as the opening of President Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*.

Guess what? If you can read those sentences, then in a way, you have been reading Latin. All the highlighted words are *Latin derivatives* — that is, English words that look like Latin words and have similar meanings.

Many people study Latin because of the influence of Latin on the English vocabulary. More than half of English is derived from Latin, after all. Table 1-1 lists just a few Latin words and the cornucopia (that's **cornu** [*horn*] and **copia** [*supply*]) of English words they provide.

TABLE 1-1 Latin Words and Their Derivatives

Latin	Definition	Derivatives
aequus	*level, fair*	equinox, equal, equivocate, iniquity
augere	*to increase*	augment, auction, author
bene	*well*	beneficiary, benediction, benign, benevolent
capere	*to seize*	precept, capture, captious
dicere	*to say*	diction, indict, edict, dictate
ducere	*to lead*	ductile, induction, reduce, education
magnus	*large*	magnify, magnitude, magnate, magnanimous
pater	*father*	patrimony, patristics, patronize, patrician
rogare	*to ask*	interrogate, arrogance, prerogative, surrogate
scribere	*to write*	inscribe, prescription, nondescript, describe
tenere	*to hold*	tentative, tentacle, attention
videre	*to see*	visual, vision, visor, provide, advise, envy

Many derivatives come from various parts of Latin words.

One word worthy of note is the Latin verb meaning *to bear* or *to carry*. The full dictionary entry for this word is **fero, ferre, tuli, latus.** From this word, English gets "fertile" and "collateral."

The fact that derivatives pick and choose from Latin words also accounts for some of the changes in spelling among related words. The full dictionary entry of the Latin verb meaning *to stick* or *to cling* is **haereo, haerere, haesi, haesus.** From the parts with *r* come words such as "adhere" and "cohere," but from the parts with *s* you find "adhesion" and "cohesion." You can see more about verbs and their dictionary forms in Chapter 2.

You can also find certain patterns in how a word changes from Latin to English. Many Latin words for intangible virtues or qualities end in **–as.** These words appear as English words that end in **–ty:**

Latin Word	English Word
gravitas	*gravity*
humilitas	*humility*
pietas	*piety*
dignitas	*dignity*
paupertas	*poverty*

The Romans made a distinction in types of poverty. They referred to simple *lack of wealth or meager resources* as **paupertas,** but used **egestas** for *absolute destitution.* Here's another interesting tidbit regarding how Latin elements continue to appear: Many Roman army camps, or **castra** eventually turned into towns. Their military origin is preserved in such town names as Lancaster, Manchester, Worcester, and Chester.

In the debit column: Latin loanwords

Derivatives retain their Latin origins in subtle, altered forms. Loanwords wear a gleaming toga and let everyone know that they're Latin words and won't change for anyone. Many areas of study, such as law, medicine, the church, and science, have specialized vocabularies made up of a large percentage of loanwords from Latin. You can explore these areas in more detail in Chapters 11 through 14.

Loanwords are Latin words that have entered the English language with no change in spelling, although sometimes there may be a slight difference in the words' meanings. Table 1-2 lists several common loanwords, together with their original Latin meanings and the current English definitions.

When a Roman ran for office, he wore a special toga that had been whitened to reflect the sun. Called a **toga candida,** this garment let everyone know who the candidates were. In the days before paid political commercials and televised debates, you had to do something to get yourself noticed!

TABLE 1-2

Latin Loanwords

Latin	Latin Meaning	English Meaning
agenda	things to be done	list of things to be done
agent	they will do	person/thing that does something
data	given	information used to make a decision
genius	spirit	person of above-average ability
habitat	s/he lives	place where a plant or animal typically lives
interim	meanwhile	intervening period of time
memento	remember!	gift of remembrance
propaganda	things to be spread	spread of ideas to help or harm
scribe	write!	person who writes for others
tenet	s/he holds	belief held by a particular group
video	I see	a visual recording
virile	masculine	having the nature of a male

A GUESSING GAME

Cover up the last column and see if you can guess the meaning of the Latin verbs that the following English words are derived from:

Derivative	Latin Verb	Latin Definition
amateur	**amare**	*to love*
sedentary	**sedere**	*to sit*
navigate	**navigare**	*to sail*
vivacious	**vivere**	*to live*
exclaim	**clamare**	*to shout*

From A to Z: The Latin Alphabet

One feature makes Latin easier to understand than some other languages: the alphabet. Latin has no strange characters and no funny accent marks. If you know the English alphabet, then you already know the Latin alphabet and then some. Present-day readers can also remember a couple of tricks to help them decipher Latin:

- **Latin uses the same letters as English with a few exceptions:**
  - Latin never uses the letter *W*.
  - Few Latin words use *K;* they use *C* instead.
  - Latin used *I* and *V* as both consonants and vowels until much later, when someone had the bright idea to bend the *I* into a *J* and round the *V* into a *U*.
- **Everything ran together.** That's right. No spaces, no punctuation.

Here's an example of what that would have looked like:

> INTHEEARLYSTAGESOFTHELANGUAGEYOUCANSEETHATLATIN
> WASWRITTENONLYINMAJUSCULEORCAPITALLETTERSANDWIT
> HOUTANYPUNCTUATIONTHEREWASNOMORESPACEBETWEENW
> ORDSTHANTHEREWASBETWEENLETTERSAPPARENTLYTHEROM
> ANSHADNODIFFICULTYWITHTHISSYSTEMBECAUSETHEYCARRI
> EDLATINTOTHEENDSOFTHEIRWORLD

Here it is again with spacing and punctuation:

> In the early stages of the language, you can see that Latin was written only in *majuscule,* or capital, letters and without any punctuation. There was no more space between words than there was between letters. Apparently, the Romans had no difficulty with this system because they carried Latin to the ends of their world.

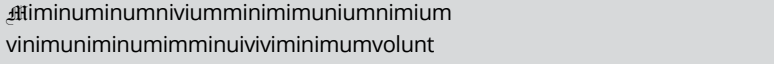
Fortunately, most Latin texts today include modern conventions, such as punctuation and capitalization. Most texts also make a distinction between *V* and *U*, but many still keep *I* as both consonant and vowel.

SOUNDIN' LIKE A ROMAN: PRONUNCIATION

You may hear that Latin is not a spoken language, and it's true that no one learns Latin as a native language anymore. In its heyday, however, everyone in the civilized world — that is, the part of the world the Romans considered civilized because they'd conquered it — spoke Latin. In fact, more people spoke Latin than read or wrote it because most folks were illiterate. An education was available only to families who could afford it.

CAN I HAVE A TRANSCRIBER *AND* A TRANSLATOR, PLEASE?

The earliest editions of a Roman manuscript were often made centuries after the original. These copies, handwritten mostly by monks, not only preserved the texts but also contributed to their legibility because the monks added features, such as punctuation and lowercase letters. Not all the changes in calligraphy, however, made the Latin text easier to read. In the 13th through 15th centuries, the monks used a script in which the quill strokes were the same width as the space between letters. Too many similar letters next to each other often produced a "picket fence" look, like this:



mimi numinum nivium minimi munium nimium vini muniminum imminui viuv minimum volunt

Translated, this sentence says, "The tiny mimes of the snow spirits in no way wish, while they are alive, the tremendous task of [serving] the wine of the defenses to be diminished."

Well, I guess that one, even translated, isn't that much easier to understand. But you get the point.

Fortunately, later Latin grammarians who taught the increasing number of **barbari** (*foreigners*) how to speak the language of the new world power left some pronunciation clues. Latin literature itself also offers hints about pronunciation. In one of his poems, for example, the poet Catullus (84–54 BCE) pokes fun at someone for the way he pronounces certain words. Arrius, the object of the poet's wit, over-aspirates some of his words. That is to say, he puts the "h" sound in front of vowels, perhaps to sound more Greek and, therefore, more refined. Understanding that Catullus is making fun of Arrius, you can reason backward to see that such pronunciation wasn't common — or at least not acceptable — among Romans of that time.

Combining these clues with knowledge of how languages form and change over the years (called *historical linguistics*), scholars have more or less established an agreed-upon pronunciation, which is often referred to as the *Classical pronunciation*. Another system for pronouncing Latin comes from a later period of the language and is sometimes called the *Ecclesiastical pronunciation (also called "Church pronunciation")* because of its use in the Latin Mass and church hymns.