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2nd Edition

# Latin

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confused Latin words

**Clifford A. Hull, MAs, MLS**  
Linguae Latinae Magister

**Steven R. Perkins, MA**  
Linguae Latinae Magister



# Latin

2nd Edition

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

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## **Latin For Dummies®**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2022933289

ISBN: 978-1-119-87479-9 (pbk); 978-1-119-87480-5 (ebk); 978-1-119-87481-2 (ebk)

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# Introduction

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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*):

<b><i>Singular Plural</i></b>	
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:



**TIP**

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



**REMEMBER**

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



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

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



GRAMMATICALLY  
SPEAKING

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.



CULTURAL  
WISDOM

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](http://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.

## **Part 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"

# Chapter 1

## You Already Know a Little Latin

---

### IN THIS CHAPTER

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

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**

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