

Session A3: Introduction to Latin Nouns

1. Noun entries – Chapter 3, LFCA

When a Latin noun is listed in a dictionary it provides three pieces of information: The nominative singular, the genitive singular, and the gender. The first form, called nominative (from Latin *nōmen*, name) is the means used to list, or name, words in a dictionary. The second form, the genitive (from Latin *genus*, origin, kind or family), is used to find the stem of the noun and to determine the **declension**, or noun family to which it belongs. To find the stem of a noun, simply look at the genitive singular form and remove the ending **-ae**. The final abbreviation is a reference to the noun's gender, since it is not always evident by the noun's endings.

Example: fēmina, fēminae, f. woman
stem = fēmin/ae

2. Declensions – Chapters 3 – 10, LFCA

Just as verbs are divided up into families or groups called conjugations, so also nouns are divided up into groups that share similar characteristics and behavior patterns. A **declension** is a group of nouns that share a common set of inflected endings, which we call case endings (more on case later). The genitive reveals the declension or family of nouns from which a word originates. Just as the infinitive is different for each conjugation, the genitive singular is unique to each declension.

1st declension	mēnsa, mēnsae
2nd declension	lūdus, lūdī ager, agrī dōnum, dōnī
3rd declension	vōx, vōcis nūbēs, nūbis corpus, corporis
4th declension	adventus, adventūs cornū, cornūs
5th declension	fidēs, fideī

Practice:

1. Regularly ask students to identify the declension of a noun as well as its stem. Always ask “how do you know?”

2. Always ask that students write out the full genitive form instead of merely abbreviating the ending. Note how the stem sometimes differs between the nominative and genitive.

3. Characteristics of Latin Nouns – Chapter 3 & 4, LFCA

All Latin nouns have three characteristics: case, number, and gender.

Gender is a grammatical category used to define nouns. There are three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. In English the gender of a noun is determined by its sex. In Latin, however, the gender assigned a noun does not necessarily match the gender of the object it describes. Nouns describing a female person (e.g. girl, woman, queen, Helen) are generally feminine. Nouns describing a male person (e.g. boy, man, king, sailor) are generally masculine. However, if an object has neither gender (e.g. table, tree, town) it may be classified in any of the three genders. Therefore the best way to learn the gender of a Latin noun is simply to memorize it.

Most nouns of the first declension will be feminine in gender. Most nouns of the second declension will be masculine or neuter. Each of these declensions, however, have exceptions. Those first declension nouns that are masculine are easily identified because they refer specifically to men, or what would have clearly been a man's office in ancient Rome. The most common masculine words of the first declension can be remembered by the acronym **PAIN**.

Poeta (poet) **A**gricola (farmer) **I**ncola (settler) **N**auta
(sailor)

Caveat magister: In the beginning, students will try to associate gender with the noun's declension or nominative ending. While this may seem to work in the beginning, it will certainly prove an unreliable method. Require students to memorize gender from the beginning!

Number simply indicates whether a noun is singular (one) or plural (more than one).

nauta = sailor nautae = sailors
fēmina = woman fēminae = women

Notice how English can be inconsistent with the way it pluralizes a noun. Latin, on the other hand, is extremely consistent.

Practice:

1. Practice transferring nouns from singular to plural.

2. Make this an oral exercise. Call out a singular noun and ask for a plural response.

Case is the form of a noun, pronoun, or its modifier that reveals its job, or how it functions, in a sentence. In Latin, there are five main cases. Here is a list of these cases and some of the jobs they represent. (See the acrostic on p. 16 in chapter 4 of Primer A.)

Case	Job
Nominative	Subject (SN) Predicate Nominative (PrN)
Genitive	Possession (PNA)
Dative	Indirect Object (I.O.)
Accusative	Direct Object (D.O.) Object Preposition (O.P.)
Ablative	Object Preposition (O.P.)

4. Declining & Translating Latin Nouns

To **decline** a noun is to list a noun with all of the case endings that belong to its declension. Before you decline a noun, however, you must first identify its stem and the declension to which it belongs. I highly recommend that you often incorporate the English translation with part or all of the declining exercise. Even if students do not yet understand how to incorporate a particular case in a sentence, it is highly beneficial for them to begin making the connection between the Latin form and English meaning early on.

Stem: _____

CASE	singular	plural
Nominative	puella	puellae*
Genitive	puellae	puellarum
Dative	puellae	puellis
Accusative	puellam	puellas
Ablative	puella	puellis

* translate:

Nota Bene: Students love to add their endings in color! This fun addition also helps with memorization.

Practice:

1. Declining Practice
2. Memory W.S. - Ch. 7 & Ch. 9 (number practice)
3. Parsing Practice

5. 1st & 2nd Declension Adjectives – Chapters 11 – 13, LFCA

Adjectives answer one of three questions: **What kind? Which one? How many?**

(See chart and examples in chapter 11, Primer A.) In English an adjective generally appears immediately before the noun that it modifies.

The **good farmer** ploughs a **long ditch** around the **wide field**.

Agricola bonus fossam circa agrum latum longam arat.

In English it is quite apparent to us that “good” is describing the farmer and not the ditch or the field because of its position in the sentence. In Latin adjectives generally follow the nouns they modify. However, because Latin holds word order loosely you cannot always depend on an adjective’s appearing immediately after its noun. In many cases an adjective may appear before the noun it modifies in order to create emphasis. On other occasions it may not appear next to its noun at all, but on the other side of the sentence. This arrangement can be a very effective syntactical tool as in the sentence above where the long ditch (*fossam longam*) actually does surround the wide field (*agrum latum*) in the words of the sentence itself. It is therefore dependent upon the inflected endings of the adjectives to reveal which nouns they modify.

An adjective must agree with the noun it modifies in case, number, and gender. Adjectives are therefore quite like the chameleon. They are able to take on any ending of the 1st or 2nd declension in order to obtain the appropriate gender for their noun. This is why all three nominative forms are listed as the dictionary entry for an adjective. In order to find the stem of an adjective look to the feminine form that always appears as the second entry. The masculine nominative sometimes varies, but the feminine will always reveal the true stem.

bonus, bon/a, bonum

pulcher, pulchr/a, pulchrum

Case	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nom.	bon us	bon ī	bon a	bon ae	bon um	bon a
Gen.	bon ī	bon ōru m	bon ae	bon āru m	bon ī	bon ōru m
Dat.	bon ō	bon īs	bon ae	bon īs	bon ō	bon īs
Acc.	bon um	bon ōs	bon am	bon ās	bon um	bon a
Abl.	bon ō	bon īs	bon ā	bon īs	bon ō	bon īs

Caveat magister: Although an adjective must agree with the noun it modifies in case, number, and gender, it may not always match that adjective in the appearance of its ending. This is particularly true of the PAIN nouns discussed in chapter four. Even though they have an ending that is typically feminine, they are masculine and only a masculine adjective can modify them as illustrated in the previous sentence with *agricola bonus*, the good farmer.

Practice:

1. Declining Practice
2. Agreeable Adjectives

**PLEASE PROOF THE DECLINING WORKSHEET, PARSING PRACTICE CH. 8,
AND AGREEABLE ADJECTIVES CH. 11 ON HARD COPY.**