How Latin sounds Sonī Latīnī

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Latin is read the way it's written: every letter is said, and c and g are always hard. This sheet uses the classical sound, as Romans spoke in Caesar's time. There is no j or w.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a e i o u	short and quick: a in cup, e in bed, i in sit, o in hot, u in put	**pater / et** father / and
ā, ē	ā is the a in father; ē is the ay in day, held steady	**māter / mē** mother / me
ī, ō, ū	ī is the ee in see; ō is the oh in go; ū is the oo in food	**vīta / Rōma / tū** life / Rome / you
c	always k, as in cat, even before e and i	**Caesar / centum** KYE-sar / a hundred
g	always hard, as in go, even before e and i	**genus / gelidus** kind / icy cold
v	the w in wine; Romans carved V for both u and v	**vīnum / vēnī** wine / I came
i + vowel	at the start of a word, the y in yes	**iam / Iūlius** now, already / Julius
ae	the eye in eye	**caelum / puellae** sky / girls
au	the ow in cow	**aurum / nauta** gold / sailor
oe	the oy in boy	**poena** penalty (English pain comes from it)
ch, ph, th	Greek words: k, p, t with a puff of air; most people say k, f, t	**philosophia / theātrum** philosophy / theatre
s, r, x	s is always the s in sun, never z; r is rolled; x is ks	**rosa / rēx** rose / king
qu, gu	qu is kw; after n, gu is gw	**aqua / lingua** water / tongue, language
double letters	hold them longer: an-nus, pu-el-la	**annus / terra** year / earth, land
stress	never on the last syllable; see the rule below	**amīcus / fēmina** a-MEE-koos / FAY-mi-na

c · g · v

always k, always hard, and v said w

Cicerō KI-ke-roh · **Caesar** KYE-sar · **vēnī** WAY-nee

ā ē ī ō ū

the line on top makes a vowel long

Rōma ROH-ma · **vīta** WEE-ta · **nātūra** naa-TOO-ra

Why dictionaries mark long vowels: the line, called a macron, means hold the vowel about twice as long. Romans rarely wrote it, but it changes the meaning and the stress, so dictionaries and courses print it: liber is a book, līber means free; malum is a bad thing, mālum is an apple.

Where the stress goes: two syllables, stress the first: RŌ-ma. Longer words look at the one before last. If it's long, with a long vowel, ae or au, or two consonants after it, stress it: a-MĪ-cus, pu-EL-la. If it's short, go one further back: FĒ-mi-na.

Church Latin sounds different: in choirs and in Italy you'll hear Latin said the Italian way: c before e and i is ch, g is j, v is v and ae is like the e in bed. Cicerō becomes CHEE-che-ro. Both are fine; this sheet keeps to the classical sound.

How words work Grammatica

No word for a or the: puella is a girl, the girl, or just girl. Instead the ending shows what job a word does, so Latin can put words in almost any order. The verb often comes last.

Puella canem videt.
the girl sees the dog

Canem puella videt.
the girl sees the dog: -m marks who is seen

Puellam canis videt.
the dog sees the girl

Endings do the job: puella, girl

The girl's job	One girl	More girls
who does it	puella	puellae
of, whose	puellae	puellārum
to, for	puellae	puellīs
who it's done to	puellam	puellās
by, with, from	puellā	puellīs

Learn two forms first: the who does it form and the of form, puella, puellae. Reading brings the rest. Other nouns have their own set of endings, which is why every dictionary gives the of form.

Every noun is masculine, feminine or neuter

masculine

many end in -us, and the of form in -ī

amīcus, amīcī, friend
annus, annī, year
pater, patris, father

feminine

most end in -a, and the of form in -ae

puella, puellae, girl
aqua, aquae, water
nox, noctis, night

neuter

many end in -um, and the plural in -a

vīnum, vīnī, wine
tempus, temporis, time
mare, maris, sea

Mostly, not always: nauta, sailor, ends in -a but is masculine, and domus, house, ends in -us but is feminine. On the next pages each noun wears its gender colour, so you don't have to guess.

No single word for yes or no

Vīsne aquam?
do you want water?

Volō.
yes (it means I want)

Nōlō.
no (it means I don't want)

Verbs change with the person: sum, to be, and amō, to love

sum I am	es you are	est he, she, it is	sumus we are	estis you all are	sunt they are
amō I love	amās you love	amat he, she loves	amāmus we love	amātis you all love	amant they love

The ending says who: amō already means I love, so ego, I, is only for weight. To say no, put nōn before the verb: nōn sum, I'm not; nōn amat, she doesn't love. Tū is one person, anyone at all; vōs is two or more.

The first 258 words Prīma verba

How: learn five a day and say them out loud. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Greetings and survival

Salvē
hello *(it means be well)*

Salvēte
hello *(to more than one)*

Avē
hail, hello *(grander)*

Valē
goodbye *(it means be strong, be well)*

Valēte
goodbye *(to more than one)*

Grātiās tibi agō
thank you *(it means I give you thanks)*

Quaesō
please *(it means I ask)*

Amābō tē
please *(it means I'll love you)*

Ignōsce mihi
excuse me, sorry *(it means forgive me)*

Quid agis?
how are you? *(it means what are you doing?)*

Valeō
I'm well *(the answer)*

Quid nōmen tibi est?
what's your name?

Mihi nōmen est ...
my name is ...

Loquerisne Latīnē?
do you speak Latin?

Nōn intellegō
I don't understand

Nesciō
I don't know

Cūrā ut valeās
take care *(it means see that you stay well)*

Prōsit!
cheers! *(it means may it do you good)*

Question words

quis?
who?

quid?
what?

ubi?
where? *(Ubi est? Where is it?)*

unde?
where from? *(Unde es? Where are you from?)*

quō?
where to? *(Quō īs? Where are you going?)*

quandō?
when?

cūr?
why?

quōmodo?
how? *(it means in what way)*

quot?
how many? *(Quot annōs nātus es? How old are you?)*

-ne
stuck on the first word, it asks *(Vīsne? Do you want?)*

Me and you

ego
I *(only for weight: the verb ending already says I)*

tū
you *(one person, anyone)*

is / ea
he / she; id is it

nōs
we

vōs
you all

eī / eae
they *(men / women)*

meus
my *(meus amīcus, mea māter)*

tuus
your, one person *(tuus liber, your book)*

hic / ille
this / that *(hic vir, this man)*

mē / tē
me / you *(Tē amō, I love you)*

Little words

et
and

-que
and, stuck on the end *(terrā marīque, on land and sea)*

sed
but

aut
or

nōn
not

ita
yes; also so, like this

minimē
no, not at all

valdē
very *(valdē bonus, very good)*

paulum
a little

hīc
here *(hic, short, is this)*

ibi
there

cum
with *(cum amīcō, with a friend)*

sine
without

in
in, on; also into

quia
because

fortasse
maybe

Hello and goodbye: salvē, be well, is hello, and valē, be strong, is goodbye. To more than one person, say salvēte and valēte. Romans wrote valē at the end of a letter, the way we write take care.

Please and thanks: quaesō, I ask, and amābō tē, I'll love you, both work as please. Grātiās tibi agō is thank you to one person; to more, grātiās vōbīs agō.

People and time Hominēs et tempus

Family

māter, mātris
mother

pater, patris
father

mamma, -ae
mum *(a child's word)*

frāter, frātris
brother

soror, sorōris
sister

fīlius, -ī
son

fīlia, -ae
daughter

avia, -ae
grandmother

avus, -ī
grandfather

avunculus, -ī
uncle, mum's brother *(English uncle comes from it)*

amita, -ae
aunt, dad's sister *(English aunt comes from it)*

parentēs
parents *(plural)*

līberī
children *(plural)*

familia, -ae
family, household

People

vir, -ī
man; also husband

fēmina, -ae
woman

uxor, uxōris
wife

puer, -ī
boy; also child

puella, -ae
girl

amīcus, -ī
friend *(a woman friend: amica)*

medicus, -ī
doctor

magister, magistrī
teacher *(a woman teacher: magistra)*

homō, hominis
person, human being

Things

liber, librī
book

pecūnia, -ae
money

clāvis, clāvis
key

iānua, -ae
door

fenestra, -ae
window

mēnsa, -ae
table

lectus, -ī
bed

vestīmentum, -ī
piece of clothing

When

hodiē
today

crās
tomorrow

herī
yesterday

nunc
now

posteā
later, afterwards

semper
always

numquam
never

diēs, diēī
day

nox, noctis
night

māne
morning *(it never changes)*

vesper, -ī
evening

tempus, temporis
time

hōra, -ae
hour

mēnsis, mēnsis
month

annus, -ī
year

Seasons and weather

vēr, vēris
spring

aestās, aestātis
summer

autumnus, -ī
autumn

hiems, hiemis
winter

sōl, sōlis
sun

lūna, -ae
moon

pluvia, -ae
rain

Getting around

via, -ae
road, street, way

nāvis, nāvis
ship

equus, -ī
horse

ad sinistram / ad dextram
to the left / to the right

rēctā
straight on

prope / procul
near / far

Numbers, with Roman numerals

1 · I	2 · II	3 · III	4 · IV	5 · V	6 · VI	7 · VII	8 · VIII	9 · IX	10 · X	11 · XI	12 · XII
ūnus	duo	trēs	quattuor	quīnque	sex	septem	octō	novem	decem	ūndecim	duodecim

20 · XX	21 · XXI	30 · XXX	40 · XL	50 · L	100 · C	1,000 · M
vīgintī	vīgintī ūnus	trīgintā	quadrāgintā	quīnquāgintā	centum	mīlle

Counting: ūnus, duo and trēs match the noun: ūnus amīcus, ūna puella, ūnum vīnum. From four to a hundred they never change. Roman numerals add up, VI is 5 + 1, but a smaller one in front takes away: IV is 5 - 1.

The days of the week: Romans named them after the sun, the moon and the planets: diēs Sōlis, the sun's day, is Sunday; diēs Lūnae, the moon's day, is Monday.

Food, places, verbs Ede, bibe, lege

Food and drink

aqua, -ae
water

vīnum, -ī
wine

lac, lactis
milk

cibus, -ī
food

pānis, pānis
bread

cāseus, -ī
cheese

carō, carnis
meat

piscis, piscis
fish

mālum, -ī
apple

ōvum, -ī
egg

mel, mellis
honey

oleum, -ī
oil, olive oil

ūva, -ae
grape

olīva, -ae
olive

garum, -ī
fish sauce, the Roman ketchup

ientāculum, -ī
breakfast

prandium, -ī
lunch

cēna, -ae
dinner, the main meal

Mihi placet ...
I like ... *(it means ... pleases me)*

Ēsuriō
I'm hungry

Sitiō
I'm thirsty

Places

domus, -ūs
house, home *(domī, at home)*

lūdus, -ī
school; also game

taberna, -ae
shop, inn *(English tavern comes from it)*

urbs, urbis
city *(Urbs on its own means Rome)*

oppidum, -ī
town

forum, -ī
town square, market place

thermae
the baths *(plural)*

bibliothēca, -ae
library

hortus, -ī
garden

mare, maris
sea

mōns, montis
mountain

flūmen, flūminis
river

īnsula, -ae
island; also a block of flats

silva, -ae
wood, forest

terra, -ae
earth, land

Rōma, -ae
Rome *(in Rome: Rōmae)*

Italia, -ae
Italy

lingua, -ae
tongue, language *(lingua Latīna, Latin)*

Verbs, in the dictionary form

sum, esse
be

habeō, habēre
have

eō, īre
go

veniō, venīre
come

edō, edere
eat

bibō, bibere
drink

videō, vidēre
see

audiō, audīre
hear, listen

faciō, facere
do, make

dīcō, dīcere
say

loquor, loquī
speak, talk

labōrō, labōrāre
work

dormiō, dormīre
sleep

intellegō, intellegere
understand

emō, emere
buy

legō, legere
read

scrībō, scrībere
write

discō, discere
learn

habitō, habitāre
live *(somewhere)*

exspectō, exspectāre
wait, wait for

amō, amāre
love

volō, velle
want

possum, posse
can, be able

Describing words

bonus / malus
good / bad

magnus / parvus
big / small

calidus / frīgidus
hot / cold

novus / vetus
new / old

cārus / vīlis
dear / cheap

facilis / difficilis
easy / hard

laetus / trīstis
happy / sad

longus / brevis
long / short

pulcher
beautiful

fessus
tired

The dictionary form: Latin lists a verb by two forms: amō, I love, and amāre, to love. The ending of the second shows the pattern: -āre, -ēre, -ere or -īre. Loquor looks odd, but it just means I speak.

Describing words match the noun: bonus amīcus, a good friend; bona puella, a good girl; bonum vīnum, a good wine. They can go before or after the noun.

Famous phrases Verba clāra

Phrases and mottos

carpe diem
seize the day *(it means pick the day, like fruit)*

vēnī, vīdī, vīcī
I came, I saw, I conquered *(Julius Caesar)*

ālea iacta est
the die is cast: no going back *(Caesar again)*

et tū, Brūte?
you too, Brutus? *(Shakespeare's line, not a Roman one)*

in vīnō vēritās
in wine there is truth

tempus fugit
time flies *(it means time runs away)*

cavē canem
beware of the dog *(on a doorway in Pompeii)*

festīnā lentē
hurry slowly: more haste, less speed

mēns sāna in corpore sānō
a healthy mind in a healthy body

cōgitō, ergō sum
I think, so I am *(Descartes)*

errāre hūmānum est
to make mistakes is human

dum spīrō, spērō
while I breathe, I hope

per aspera ad astra
through hard times to the stars

citius, altius, fortius
faster, higher, stronger *(the Olympic motto)*

Reactions

Euge!
well done! great!

Optimē!
excellent! *(it means best)*

Ecce!
look! here it is!

Mehercule!
goodness! *(it means by Hercules)*

Ēheu!
oh dear! alas!

Vae mihi!
poor me! woe is me!

Mīrābile dictū!
amazing to say!

Itane?
really? is that so?

Certē
certainly, sure

Ita vērō
yes indeed

Nūgae!
nonsense! *(it means trifles)*

The big scenes

Tē amō
I love you

Cavē!
watch out! be careful!

Fuge!
run! *(it means flee)*

Festīnā!
hurry up!

Venī hūc!
come here!

Auxilium!
help!

Quid accidit?
what happened?

Nōlī timēre
don't be afraid

Abī!
go away!

Tacē!
quiet! *(to more people: tacēte)*

What to call people

mī amīce
my friend *(calling him)*

mea lūx
my light, darling *(Cicero to his wife)*

domine
sir *(it means master)*

domina
madam *(it means lady of the house)*

amīcī
friends! *(to a group)*

You already speak some Latin: et cētera, and the other things; per centum, for each hundred, which gave per cent; and alibi, somewhere else. Vice versa, a.m. and p.m. are Latin too.

Mehercule and ēheu: Romans said mehercule, by Hercules, the way we say goodness me, and ēheu is a sigh: oh dear. Euge means well done, bravo.

Calling someone: names in -us change to -e: Brūtus, Brūte, as in et tū, Brūte? Names in -ius end in -ī: Iūlius, Iūlī. Meus, my, becomes mī: mī amīce, my friend.

Practice Exercitātiō

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Latin out loud, then slide it down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Questions: stick -ne on the first word, Valēsne? Are you well? Or start with a question word: Ubi habitās? Where do you live?

Saying no: put nōn before the verb: Aquam bibō. Vīnum nōn bibō. I drink water. I don't drink wine.

Like and want: Vīnum mihi placet. I like the wine, word for word the wine pleases me. Volō aquam. I want water.

Read these sentences

1. Salvē, mihi nōmen est Anna.
   Hello, my name is Anna.

2. Ubi habitās? Rōmae habitō.
   Where do you live? I live in Rome.

3. Ignōsce mihi, ubi est taberna?
   Excuse me, where is the shop?

4. Quantī cōnstat pānis?
   How much is the bread?

5. Aquam, quaesō.
   Some water, please.

6. Paulum Latīnē loquor.
   I speak a little Latin.

7. Hodiē sōl lūcet.
   The sun is shining today.

8. Crās Rōmam īmus.
   We're going to Rome tomorrow.

9. Hic cibus optimus est!
   This food is excellent!

10. Nōlī timēre, tempus habēmus.
    Don't worry, we have time.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in subtitles to see what it means.