Everyday short forms Litterae

You use Latin every day: e.g., etc., a.m. and P.S. are all short forms of Latin. Each card shows the short form, the Latin, what the Latin says word for word and how English uses it.

e.g. exemplī grātiā
for the sake of an example
for example: what follows is a sample, and the list could go on

i.e. id est
that is
in other words: says exactly which one, or says it again more clearly

etc. et cētera
and the other things
and so on. et already means and, so never and etc.

vs. versus
turned towards
against. In Latin it meant facing; old law Latin gave it against. UK law reports write just v.

a.m. ante merīdiem
before midday
the morning hours. merīdiēs, midday, comes from medius diēs, the middle of the day

p.m. post merīdiem
after midday
the afternoon and evening

P.S. post scrīptum
written after
a line added under a letter or an email. A second one is a P.P.S.

N.B. notā bene
note well
pay attention to this bit

cf. cōnfer
compare!
compare with: points you to something similar in a book or a note

et al. et aliī
and others
after the first name in a long list of authors. al. also covers aliae, women, and alia, things

viz. vidēlicet
one may see
namely. The z is an old scribes' sign for the ending -et

ca. circā
around
with dates and numbers: ca. 1500. Also written c.

ibid. ibīdem
in the same place
in footnotes: the same book as the note before

Q.E.D. quod erat dēmōnstrandum
which was to be shown
at the end of a maths proof, or when you've just proved your point

lb lībra
a pair of scales, a pound
pounds in weight. The £ sign is a fancy L for lībra too

No. numerō
by number
No. 1, number one: the o is the last letter of numerō

& et
and
the ampersand is et squeezed into one shape

PhD philosophiae doctor
teacher of philosophy
the top university degree, in any subject: doctor meant teacher

The classic mix-up: e.g. or i.e.?

e.g. exemplī grātiā, for example. What follows is a sample, and there could be more.

Bring fruit, e.g. apples or pears.

i.e. id est, that is. What follows is the exact thing, or the same thing in other words.

Bring the fruit I like, i.e. pears.

A memory trick, not the Latin: e.g. is **example given**, i.e. is **in essence**. If you could add or something like that, you want e.g.

Dots and commas: Many British style guides drop the dots: eg, ie, etc. American style keeps them and adds a comma after: e.g., like this. Both are fine; just pick one and stick to it.

Work, school and law Labor et lēx

The lines over some vowels: they're macrons, marking a long vowel. Dictionaries print them, but in English you write the phrase without them: prō bonō is pro bono.

At work, at school and in everyday talk

ad hoc
to this
made for one job only: an ad hoc team

per sē
by itself
in itself: money isn't bad per se

vice versā
with the places turned
the other way round

status quō
the state in which
the way things are now. Short for in statū quō, in the state in which

dē factō
from the fact
in reality, whatever the rules say

dē iūre
from the law
officially, by law: the opposite of de facto

prō fōrmā
for form's sake
done as a formality; a pro forma invoice comes before the real one

per annum
by the year
a year: interest of 3% per annum

per capita
by heads
for each person

ex officiō
from the office
because of your job: the head is a member ex officio

prō ratā
by the fixed share
in proportion: part-time staff get holidays pro rata

modus operandī
way of working
how someone always does it, MO for short

magnum opus
great work
someone's best or biggest work

terra firma
solid ground
dry land, after a boat or a bumpy flight

ad nauseam
to seasickness
on and on, until everyone is sick of it

alma māter
nourishing mother
your old school or university, which fed your mind like a mum

curriculum vītae
the course of life
your CV. A curriculum alone was a race course; now a course of study

alumnus
a foster child, a pupil
a former student. Plurals and the women's form on page 5

magnā cum laude
with great praise
a high honour on a degree, mostly in the US

summā cum laude
with the highest praise
the very top honour

Law, courts and arguing

habeās corpus
you should have the body
a court order to bring a person who is held before a judge, who checks it's lawful

bonā fidē
in good faith
genuine, real: a bona fide expert

prō bonō
for the good
work done free by lawyers and other professionals

quid prō quō
something for something
a favour for a favour

persōna nōn grāta
a person not welcome
someone who is no longer welcome somewhere

sub iūdice
under a judge
still before the court, so the media must be careful what they say

caveat emptor
let the buyer beware
check before you buy: the risk is yours

affīdāvit
he or she has sworn
a written statement, sworn to be true

in absentiā
in absence
while not there: a degree awarded in absentia

ad hominem
to the person
attacking the person instead of what they said

nōn sequitur
it does not follow
a remark that has nothing to do with what came before

ā priōrī
from what comes before
known by reasoning alone, before any evidence

sine quā nōn
without which not
something you can't do without

Doctors' Latin: the Latin of hospitals, prescriptions and the human body has its own Kitsumi sheet, Latin for medicine.

Sayings and mottos Dicta

Two thousand years old and still on T-shirts: most of these come from Roman poets and writers. A few are later: Latin stayed the language of books and science long after Rome.

carpe diem
pick the day
make the most of today. The poet Horace meant pick it like ripe fruit

vēnī, vīdī, vīcī
I came, I saw, I conquered
Julius Caesar, 47 BC, after a very quick victory. Now: done, easily

ālea iacta est
the die is cast
there's no going back. Caesar at the river Rubicon, as the historian Suetonius tells it

tempus fugit
time flees
time flies. Shortened from a line by the poet Virgil

mementō morī
remember to die
remember that life is short. Old paintings show it with a skull

in vīnō vēritās
in wine, truth
people say what they really think after a drink or two

cōgitō, ergō sum
I think, so I am
the philosopher Descartes. He first wrote it in French, in 1637; the Latin came in a later book, in 1644

errāre hūmānum est
to err is human
everyone makes mistakes. An old saying, not one Roman's line

citius, altius, fortius
faster, higher, stronger
the Olympic motto. In 2021 it gained a fourth word, commūniter, together

per aspera ad astra
through hardships to the stars
a favourite motto of schools and clubs

semper fidēlis
always faithful
the motto of the city of Exeter and of the US Marines, semper fi for short

festīnā lentē
hurry slowly
more haste, less speed

mēns sāna in corpore sānō
a healthy mind in a healthy body
the poet Juvenal; now the motto of many sports clubs

dum spīrō, spērō
while I breathe, I hope
never give up

fortēs fortūna adiuvat
fortune helps the brave
a Roman proverb: who dares wins

nīl dēspērandum
nothing to be despaired of
never despair. The poet Horace again

omnia vincit amor
love conquers all
the poet Virgil

sapere audē
dare to be wise
think for yourself. Horace wrote it; the philosopher Kant made it famous in 1784

ars grātiā artis
art for the sake of art
the motto under MGM's roaring lion

cavē canem
beware of the dog
written under a dog in a doorway mosaic in Pompeii

Lorem ipsum is chopped-up Cicero: the dummy text in every design comes from his book on good and evil, 45 BC. It starts in the middle of dolōrem ipsum, pain itself, so lorem isn't a word at all.

Words English took whole Verba

Not changed a bit: these are Latin words, spelled the way Romans spelled them, that English swallowed whole. The orange line is what they meant in Rome, and some are a surprise.

agenda
things to be done
a list for a meeting. One thing to be done is an agendum

data
things given
facts and numbers. One is a datum; the data is and the data are are both fine now

media
the middle things
plural of medium, something in the middle that carries a message

alibi alibī
elsewhere
proof you were somewhere else; in everyday English, any excuse

bonus
good
something good on top. bonus is Latin for good

campus
a field, an open plain
university grounds; first said of a college at Princeton in the 1770s

census cēnsus
a count, a valuation
Romans counted people and what they owned; now a count of everyone

exit
he or she goes out
a stage direction in old plays. When several leave: exeunt

extra extrā
outside, beyond
English got extra as a short form of extraordinary, from extrā ōrdinem, outside the usual order

focus
a fireplace, a hearth
the hearth was the centre of the home; Kepler used it for the point where light meets

item
likewise, also
old lists began each line with item, also; the word became the thing on the list

memorandum
a thing to be remembered
memo for short

minimum
the smallest
the least you can do

maximum
the biggest
the most you can do

stimulus
a goad, a pointed stick for cattle
anything that gets something moving

virus vīrus
poison, slime
Latin never used it in the plural, so it's viruses. virī means men

video videō
I see
a whole sentence in one word

audio audiō
I hear
the partner of video

veto vetō
I forbid
the power to block a decision

deficit dēficit
it is lacking
how much is missing when more goes out than comes in

quorum quōrum
of whom
the smallest number of members needed for a meeting's decisions to count

alias aliās
at another time, otherwise
a second or false name

tandem
at last, at length
a joke: at length became a bike for two, one behind the other

omnibus
for everyone
a carriage for everyone, then cut down to bus

arena arēna
sand
Roman shows were held on a floor of sand

camera
a vaulted room
a camera obscūra, a dark room, was the first camera

lens lēns
a lentil
a glass lens has the shape of a lentil

sinister
left, on the left
the left side was thought unlucky, so now it means threatening, evil

circus
a circle, a ring
the Circus Maximus in Rome was a racetrack for chariots

via viā
by the road
by way of: London to Rome via Paris

plus
more
two plus two: two and two more

Two of them are whole sentences: videō is I see and audiō is I hear. Latin puts the person in the verb ending, so one word does the job.

How to say them Quōmodo dīcitur?

Two right ways: the classical way is how Romans spoke: c always k, v said w, ae like eye. English also has its own old way of saying Latin, used in law, science and everyday talk. In an English sentence, the English way is fine.

Phrase	Classical Latin	The way English says it
vēnī, vīdī, vīcī	WAY-nee WEE-dee WEE-kee	VAY-nee VEE-dee VEE-chee, the Italian way
carpe diem	KAR-peh DI-em	KAR-pay DEE-em
et cētera	et KAY-te-ra	et SET-er-uh
vice versā	WI-keh WER-saa	VYE-suh VER-suh
curriculum vītae	koor-RI-koo-loom WEE-tye	kuh-RIK-yuh-lum VEE-tye
bonā fidē	BO-naa FI-day	BOH-nuh FYE-dee
habeās corpus	HA-be-aas KOR-poos	HAY-bee-us KOR-pus
per sē	per SAY	per SAY: that's why people write per say
cōgitō, ergō sum	KOH-gi-toh ER-goh SOOM	KOG-i-toh ER-goh SUM
vīrus	WEE-roos	VYE-rus
data	DA-ta	DAY-tuh or DAH-tuh

Plurals that trip people up

One	More	
alumnus	alumnī	one man; also a mixed group
alumna	alumnae	one woman; a group of women
datum	data	as one thing, data is fine in English too
medium	media	TV, papers and the internet
memorandum	memoranda	memos is fine too
curriculum	curricula	curriculums is fine too
stimulus	stimulī	always stimuli
fungus	fungī	funguses is rare
cactus	cactī	cactuses is fine too
formula	formulae	formulas in everyday English
criterion	criteria	Greek, not Latin: one criterion
phenomenon	phenomena	Greek too: one phenomenon
octopus	octopuses	Greek again, so octopi is fake Latin
virus	viruses	Latin had no plural for it

Fun flip: alumni and alumnae

In Latin, -ī is said ee and -ae is said eye. Many Americans say them the other way round: alumni as uh-LUM-nye, alumnae as uh-LUM-nee. Both ways get you understood.

Don't

~~per say~~ **per sē**
sē is Latin for itself; it only sounds like say

~~for all intensive purposes~~ **for all intents and purposes**
plain English, no Latin in it at all

~~and etc.~~ **etc.**
et already means and

~~ect.~~ **etc.**
et comes first: et cētera

~~et. al.~~ **et al.**
et is a whole word, so no dot; al. is short, so it gets one

~~an alumni~~ **an alumnus, an alumna**
alumni is more than one

~~12 a.m. for midday~~ **12 noon**
merīdiēs is midday itself, so strictly 12 is neither a.m. nor p.m.

Practice Exercitātiō

How: 1 to 12, pick the Latin that fits the gap. 13 to 20, pick what the Latin says word for word. Say each answer out loud, then check the small print at the bottom.

Which one fits the gap?

1	Bring something to drink, _____ juice or water.	e.g. · i.e. · viz.
2	The meeting is on the last Friday of the month, _____ the 28th.	e.g. · etc. · i.e.
3	We packed tents, torches, stoves _____	et al. · etc. · cf.
4	The lawyer took the case _____, without charging a penny.	bonā fidē · prō bonō · dē factō
5	Nobody planned it: we set up an _____ group to fix the leak.	ad hoc · per sē · status quō
6	Cats chase dogs, and _____.	ad nauseam · per annum · vice versā
7	She isn't the boss on paper, but she's the _____ leader.	dē factō · dē iūre · ex officiō
8	He played the same song _____ until we left.	ad hominem · ad nauseam · ad hoc
9	The job pays £30,000 _____.	per capita · prō ratā · per annum
10	Don't insult him, answer his point: that's an _____ attack.	ad hominem · ā priōrī · nōn sequitur
11	Meet me at 7 _____, before work.	p.m. · a.m. · P.S.
12	Smith _____ (2020) found the same thing.	et al. · ibid. · etc.

What does the Latin say, word for word?

13	alibī	an excuse · elsewhere · a lie
14	vīrus	poison, slime · a tiny thing · sickness
15	videō	a picture · a film · I see
16	quid prō quō	something for something · who for whom · what for what
17	sinister	dark · left, on the left · secret
18	lēns	a window · a lentil · an eye
19	omnibus	for everyone · a big wagon · on the road
20	carpe diem	enjoy the night · seize the year · pick the day

Answers: **1** e.g. · **2** i.e. · **3** etc. · **4** prō bonō · **5** ad hoc · **6** vice versā · **7** dē factō · **8** ad nauseam · **9** per annum · **10** ad hominem · **11** a.m. · **12** et al. · **13** elsewhere · **14** poison, slime · **15** I see · **16** something for something · **17** left, on the left · **18** a lentil · **19** for everyone · **20** pick the day

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