

SEMINAR 13

TIME EXPRESSIONS

(1) Time Phrases: the Basics

- (i) The *accusative* – without a preposition – is used to express the extent of time for which something happens ('how long'):

Romulus septem et triginta regnavit annos. LIVY
Romulus reigned for thirty-seven years.

- (ii) The *ablative* – without a preposition – is used to express the time when something happens:

Ego Capuam veni eo ipso die. CICERO
I came to Capua on that very day.

- (iii) The *ablative* – again without a preposition – can also be used to express the length of time within which something happens:

Quicquid est, biduo sciemus. CICERO
Whatever it is, we will know in two days.

(2) Time Phrases: Prepositions

A large number of prepositions can be used in some time phrases, and it is useful to be aware of some of the most important (note that this list does not pretend to be comprehensive):

Intra + accusative Literally means 'within' or 'inside'. It is used instead of the ablative of time within which, and emphasises that something happened in less than the time given.

Intra sex menses bellum confectum est.
The war was brought to an end within six months.

Per + accusative Carries the sense of 'throughout', and emphasises the duration.

Sub + accusative Means 'towards': hence *sub noctem* (towards night), *sub vesperum* (towards evening).

Abhinc + accusative Expresses how long ago something happened.

Hoc factum est ferme abhinc biennium.
This was done about two years ago.

[+ ablative] Sometimes – although not very often – *abhinc* is followed by an ablative to convey the same meaning.

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|-------------|-----------------|---|
| <i>De</i> | + ablative | Means 'starting from': hence <i>de tertia vigilia</i> (from the third watch). |
| <i>Ad</i> | + accusative | Means 'until'; hence <i>ad solis occasum</i> (until sunset) |
| <i>Ante</i> | + ablative | Indicates how long before something happened. |
| <i>Post</i> | + ablative | Indicates how long after something happened. |
| | [+ accusative] | <i>Post</i> can also occasionally mean 'within'; hence <i>post hominum memoriam</i> (within human memory). |
| <i>Ex</i> | + ablative | Means 'since', 'ever since' or 'from'; hence <i>ex eo tempore</i> (ever since that time). Note also <i>ex quo</i> (from the time when). |

(3) Age

Age is often expressed using *natus* and an accusative expressing the extent of time: hence, *puer decem annos natus* (a boy ten years old).

(4) Common Adverbs and Time Phrases

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|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| <i>heri</i> | yesterday | <i>pridie</i> | the previous day |
| <i>hodie</i> | today | <i>postero die</i> | the following day |
| <i>cras</i> | tomorrow | <i>postridie</i> | the following day |
| <i>quota hora</i> | at what hour | <i>prima hora</i> | at the first hour |
| <i>prima luce</i> | at dawn | <i>solis ortu</i> | at sunrise |
| <i>mane</i> | in the morning | <i>meridie</i> | at noon |
| <i>multo die</i> | late in the day | <i>noctu</i> | at night |
| <i>solis occasu</i> | at sunset | <i>nocte</i> | at night |
| <i>vesperi</i> | in the evening | | |
| <i>interdiu</i> | by day | <i>quotidie</i> | every day, daily |
| <i>quotannis</i> | every year, annually | | |

Exercises

- (1) Per totam noctem clamores audiebantur.
- (2) Quinto die amicus advenit.
- (3) Octo annos senex in urbe habitabat.
- (4) Secunda hora e lecto surrexi.
- (5) Menses duos et milia passuum innumerabilia altum navigaverunt.
- (6) Pecunia reciperata est multis post annis.