Number, gender and cases

In English grammar we are familiar with the concept of *number*, i.e. singular and plural:

> The **boy was** attracted to the <u>girls</u> but <u>they were</u> not attracted to **him**.

Here the words in bold are singular while the words underlined are plural.

We are also familiar with the concept of *gender*, i.e. masculine, feminine, and neuter:

> The girl and the boy love the cat but it feels no affection for them.

Here the girl is 'feminine' and the boy is 'masculine'. While the cat will of course in reality be either male or female, it is here regarded as neither: hence the word 'it'. This is the 'neuter' gender.

Cases

Latin is an inflected language, i.e. the endings of most of its words change depending on their function in a sentence. English is largely uninflected, though some words do change according to their function:

> I looked for my father **whom** I had lost, but I could not find **him**.
> Meanwhile our mother was out looking for **us**.

'Whom', 'him', and 'us' are the *accusative* of 'who', 'he', and 'we'. (You can see how English tends to abolish inflection from the fact that most speakers nowadays would say 'who' and not 'whom' in this sentence.)

Verbs in tenses (see p. 32) are called finite verbs; they have *subjects* and often have *objects*. The subject carries out the action of the verb; the object is on the receiving end of the action of the verb. In the sentence above, 'I' is the subject of the verb 'looked for', 'my father' is its object. 'I' am doing the looking; he is being looked for. Which words are the subjects and the objects in the following sentences?

The gardener mowed the lawn.
The dog obstructed him.
I saw them.

The subject is in the *nominative* case, the object is in the *accusative*. In what cases are: *she, her, whom, he, them*?

Nominative and accusative are the names of just two of the Latin cases in Latin. In Latin there are seven of these cases and they have names which are almost all still used in English grammars (though in English the case we refer to below as the *ablative* tends to be called the 'instrumental' case).••••➤

In Latin the endings of nouns (note that there is no definite article (*the*) or indefinite article (*a* or *an*) in Latin), pronouns, and adjectives vary according to the case they are in.[1] In English this happens only in some pronouns, as in the examples above. The endings by which the cases are marked on most Latin nouns fall into a number of regular patterns. (The word 'case' comes from Latin **cadō** (I fall) and thus the word 'fall' is highly appropriate.) We call these patterns **declensions**. It is customary to recognize five of these. To *decline* is to go through the different cases of a noun, adjective or pronoun, in order.

In Latin, adjectives are in the same number, gender, and case as the nouns to which they refer. (This is called *agreement*.) The endings, however, could well be different, since the adjective may belong to a different declension from its noun.

••••➤ 1 In the vocabulary lists in this Grammar, nouns are given in their nominative and genitive singular, and adjectives are given in their nominative singular, masculine, feminine, and neuter.

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1 | Nominative

The nominative is, as we have seen, the case of the *subject* of the verb:

Quīntus ambulābat.
Quintus was walking.

It is also used of the *complement* of the verb:

Quīntus est *frāter meus.*
Quintus is my brother.

2 | Genitive

The basic meaning of the genitive case is 'of'. It is used mainly in these senses:

- possessive:
    > uīllam *mātris meae* uendidī.
    > I sold my mother's villa (the villa of my mother).
- partitive:
    > fer mihi plūs uīnī.
    > Bring me more wine (literally, more of wine).
- descriptive (this is often called the genitive of quality):
    > fēmina *magnae prūdentiae*
    > a woman of great good sense
- characterizing:
    > *bonī* est rēm pūblicam cōnseruāre.
    > It is characteristic of a good man to look after the state.
- of value:
    > ōrātiō *nūllīus mōmentī*
    > a speech of no importance
- after the verbs of remembering and forgetting (both can also take an accusative)

meminī, meminisse	I remember
oblīuīscor, oblīuīscī, oblītus sum	I forget

- expressing the charge after the verbs:

absoluō, absoluere, absoluī, absolūtum	I acquit
accūsō (1)	I accuse
damnō, condemnō (1)	I condemn

    > *māiestātis* Petrōnium accūsō.
    > I accuse Petronius of treason.
    > *sīcārium illum capitis damnō.*[1] ····➤
    > I condemn that assassin to death.

····➤ 1. In this example 'caput', meaning head or life, is the penalty.

- after the following adjectives:

auidus, auida, auidum	greedy (for)
cōnscius, cōnscia, cōnscium	conscious (of)
cupidus, cupida, cupidum	desirous (of)
expers, expers, expers	without, lacking

memor, memor, memor	mindful (of), remembering
immemor, immemor, immemor	unmindful (of), forgetting
nescius, nescia, nescium	not knowing, ignorant (of)
perītus, perīta, perītum	expert (in), experienced (in)
plēnus, plēna, plēnum····➤	full (of)[2]
studiōsus, studiōsa, studiōsum	eager (for)
similis, similis, simile····➤	like[3]
dissimilis, dissimilis, dissimile	unlike[3]
fīlius *patris* simillimus	a son very like his father

····➤ 2. This adjective can also be used with the ablative.

····➤ 3. A genitive is always correct after these; a dative can also be used.

- in front of the 'postpositions' **causā** and **grātiā**, both meaning 'for the sake of'. Postpositions are prepositions which follow the noun dependent on them.

    ***uestrae salūtis* grātiā**
    for the sake of your safety

3 | Dative

The basic meanings of the dative case are 'to' and 'for'. It goes naturally with verbs of giving (it derives from the Latin word **dō** (I give): **datum** means 'given'). These verbs are regularly followed by a direct object in the accusative and an indirect object in the dative:

librum *fīliae meae* dedī.

I gave a book (direct object) ***to*** my daughter (indirect object)—*or*

I gave my daughter a book.

Other uses of the dative include:

- possessive:

    est *mihi* canis.

    I have a dog (literally, there is to me a dog).

- of advantage or disadvantage:

    rem pūblicam *nōbīs* seruāuit.

    He saved the state for us.

- of separation:
    gladium *mihi* **rapuit.**
    He snatched my sword from me.[1]····➤
- the so-called 'ethic' or 'polite' dative:
    aperī *mihi* **hanc iānuam.**
    Open this door for me, i.e. Please open this door.[2]····➤
- after a large number of verbs (see pp. 11–12).

····➤ 1. This is in fact a dative of disadvantage.
····➤ 2. Compare in Elizabethan English 'Knock me this door'.

| Verbs followed by the dative case

appropinquō (1)	I approach
cōnfīdō, cōnfīdere, cōnfīsus sum	I trust, have confidence in
diffīdō, diffīdere, diffīsus sum	I mistrust
cōnsulō[3], cōnsulere, cōnsuluī, cōnsultum····➤	I take care of, provide for[3]
crēdō, crēdere, crēdidī, crēditum	I believe, trust
faueō, fauēre, fāuī, fautum	I favour, back up
grātulor (1)	I congratulate
ignōscō, ignōscere, ignōuī, ignōtum	I forgive, pardon (like **nōscō**)
immineō, imminēre, —, —	I threaten, overhang
indulgeō, indulgēre, indulsī, indulsum	I am kind to, am lenient to
inuideō, inuidēre, inuīdī, inuīsum	I envy, grudge (like **uideō**)
īrāscor, īrāscī, īrātus sum	I am angry (with)
medeor (2)	I heal
noceō (2)	I hurt
nūbō, nūbere, nūpsī, nūptum	I marry (woman as subject)
obstō, obstāre, obstitī, obstitum	I stand in the way of, withstand, hinder (like **stō**, but note **obstitī**, **obstitum**)
occurrō, occurrere, occurrī, occursum	I run to meet (like **currō**)
succurrō, succurrere, succurrī, succursum	I run to help
parcō, parcere, pepercī, parsum	I spare

····➤ 3. When **cōnsulō** is followed by the accusative, it means *'I consult'*

pāreō (2)	I obey
persuādeō, persuādēre, persuāsī, persuāsum	I persuade
placeō (2)	I please
displiceō (2)	I displease
praecipiō, praecipere, praecēpī, praeceptum	I teach, order (like **capiō**, but note **praeceptum**)
resistō, resistere, restitī, —	I resist
seruiō (4)	I am a slave to, work for
studeō, studēre, studuī, —	I devote myself to, am keen on, study
subueniō, subuenīre, subuēnī, subuentum	I come to the help of (like **ueniō**)

☑ **Note:**

Most of these verbs fall into the categories of

either   helping, favouring, obeying, pleasing, serving

or   ordering, persuading, trusting, sparing, pardoning, envying, being angry.

Note also these verbs followed by the accusative and the dative:

tibi aliquid obiciō, obicere, obiēcī, obiectum.

I throw something in your way.

(I reproach you with something.)

tē exercituī praeficiō.

I put you in charge of the army.

Compounds of **sum** (except for **possum, absum, īnsum**) are followed by the dative:

senātuī adsum.	I am present at the senate.
gemmae dēsunt mihi.	I lack jewels.
hīs rēbus interfuī.	I was involved in these things.
exercituī praesum.	I am in command of the army.
cōnsilium tuum mihi prōdest.	Your advice is useful to me (benefits me).
parentibus superfuī.	I survived my parents.

The predicative dative is frequently used with the verb 'to be', as in the following expressions:

argumentō esse	to be proof
auxiliō esse	to be a means of help
bonō esse	to profit, be advantageous
cordī esse	to be dear
cūrae esse	to be a cause of concern
damnō esse	to hurt, harm
dēdecorī esse	to be a cause of shame
dētrīmentō esse	to be harmful, to cause loss
dolōrī esse	to be a cause of grief
dōnō esse	as a present
exemplō esse	to be an example
exitiō esse	to prove the destruction (of)
honōrī esse	to be an honour
impedīmentō esse	to be a hindrance
lucrō esse	to be profitable
lūdibriō esse	to be an object of ridicule
malō esse	to harm
odiō esse	to be an object of hatred
onerī esse	to be a burden
praesidiō esse	to be a defence, a protection
pudōrī esse	to be a cause of shame
salūtī esse	to prove the salvation (of)
subsidiō esse	to be a help
ūsuī esse	to be of use, benefit

Horatius, quia tam fortis erat, nōn modo suīs *magnō praesidiō* fuit sed etiam reī pūblicae *salūtī.*

Because he was so brave, Horatius proved not only a strong defence to his men but also the salvation of the state.

For the dative of the agent with the gerundive, see p. 111.

4 | Accusative

The accusative is, as we have seen, the case of the *object*:

cauē *canem*!
Beware of the dog!

- It is also used after a large number of prepositions (see pp. 29–30).
- It is used in expressions of time, place, and space (see pp. 71–5).

- Exclamations are in the accusative:

mē miserum!
poor me!

ō tempora! ō mōrēs!
o these times! o these customs! (i.e. what have things come to!)

- The subject of the infinitive is in the accusative:

sapientem eum esse crēdō.
I believe him to be wise.

5 | Ablative

The basic meanings of the ablative case are 'by', 'with', 'from', 'at', 'in' or 'on'. When the meaning is 'by' and it is a living creature that performs the action, Latin uses *ā* or *ab* with the ablative:

rēgīna *ā marītō suō* occīsa est.
The queen was killed by her own husband.

When the action is caused by an inanimate object, Latin uses the ablative without *ā* or *ab*:

canis *lapide* laesus est.
The dog was injured by a stone.

The ablative is also used after a large number of prepositions (see pp. 29–30). It is used in expressions of time, place, and space (see pp. 71–5).

- Note the ablative of description:

puer *longīs capillīs*
a boy with long hair

puella *maximā prūdentiā*
a girl of the greatest good sense

Unlike the genitive of description (see p. 8), it can be used of visible and tangible qualities, as in the first example above. This usage is often called the ablative of quality.

- the ablative of price:

uīllam *magnō pretiō* ēmī.
I bought the villa at a considerable price.

Compare the genitive of value:

hanc uīllam maximī aestimō.
I value this house very highly.

Note the following ablatives of price:

magnō	at a great price
plūrimō	at a very great price
paruō	at a small (low) price
nihilō	for nothing
uīlī	cheaply

● The ablative of comparison. When *quam* (than) is not used, the object of comparison (i.e. the word after 'than' in English) is in the ablative:

sorōre meā sapientior sum.
I am cleverer than my sister.

But note that in classical prose *quam* is the norm for this kind of comparison. The ablative of comparison came to be used as an alternative in the poets particularly.

● The ablative of the measure of difference:

soror mea sorōre tuā *multō* sapientior est.
My sister is much wiser (*literally*, wiser by much) than yours.

● For the ablative absolute construction, see pp. 79–80.

The following verbs are followed by the ablative:

abūtor, abūtī, abūsus sum	I use up, waste, misuse
careō (2)	I am without, lack
egeō (2)	I am without, lack
fruor, fruī, frūctus (or **fruitus**) **sum**	I enjoy
fungor, fungī, fūnctus sum	I perform, discharge (sometimes with acc.)
opus est mihi (**tibi**, etc.)	I (you, etc.) need
gladiō puellae opus est.	
The girl needs a sword.	
potior (4)	I take possession of, possess[1]····➤
uēscor, uēscī, —	I feed on
ūtor, ūtī, ūsus sum	I use

····➤ 1. **potior** can also be followed by the accusative and genitive.

● The ablative is used after the following adjectives:

contentus, contenta, contentum	contented with, satisfied with
dignus, digna, dignum	worthy of
indignus, indigna, indignum	unworthy of

frētus, frēta, frētum	relying on
orbus, orba, orbum	deprived of, bereft of
praeditus, praedita, praeditum	endowed with

6 | Vocative

The vocative is the case by which you address or call to someone:

> **Quīnte, cauē canem!**
> Quintus, beware of the dog!

The vocative is in most instances indistinguishable in form from the nominative in Latin, and we have therefore omitted it from our tables of grammar. We have referred in a note to the kinds of word in which it is different.

7 | Locative

The locative case tells us the place where something is happening:

Rōmae	at Rome
domī	at home
rūrī	in the country
humī	on the ground

See note 8 on p. 18.

| Practice sentences

Translate into English or Latin as appropriate:

1 **Brūtus Cassiusque Caesarem dictātōrem occīdērunt.**
2 **uir magnae auctōritātis—homō nihilī—animō ignāuus, procāx ōre.**
3 **plūs praedae mīlitibus dōnat.**
4 **bēstiae sunt ratiōnis et ōrātiōnis expertēs.** (Cicero, de officiis, 1.51)
5 **cīuis bonī est lēgibus pārēre.**
6 **perfer et obdūrā: multō grauiōra tulistī.** (Ovid, Tristia, 5.11.7)
7 Romulus founded the city (of) Rome.
8 His deeds were a cause of shame to the Greeks.
9 One man is in command of all the Romans.
10 The horse was worth a lot of money but I bought it cheaply.
11 She is much more stupid than her brother.
12 I forgot his words, but my friend remembered them.