

AN INTRODUCTION TO LATIN

REASONS FOR STUDYING LATIN

Most folks have the impression that the study of Latin is a waste of time because such knowledge usually fails to make money for the student. However, if education is to be measured by usefulness in the job market, then the study of mathematics and science needs to be called into question as well because the vast majority of students will never use algebra, geometry, chemistry, or physics in their daily lives. A little bit of arithmetic and logic will help most everyone to avoid being short-changed at the cash register. Granted, Latin will not put much money in the student's pockets. But neither will a course in world history. The point is education is not about preparing a student to get a "good job"—if any such thing exists. Education is about leading a student from darkness (Latin *e + ducere*) towards light. This light in the spiritual realm is God's word, and in the physical realm, this light is clear, logical, thinking. To accomplish this task of creating an independent thinker, Latin becomes invaluable for the following reasons:

Latin is a beautiful language. Latin offers an example of a language that is balanced and ordered. Latin poetry and prose have a unique refinement, which offers a reason why Latin was the language of scholars even during the time of Sir Thomas More, who wrote his *Utopia* in Latin.

Learning Latin will provide a wealth of material for the student to read. The mark of the educated individual is one who reads. Thus, the primary justification for learning any ancient or modern language is to read the literature of those who spoke and wrote in the language. The ancient Romans and Medieval writers have written much about virtue and wisdom, and their works remain timeless. Indeed, literature written in Latin gives excellent examples of moral understanding and virtue. Of course, like our Bible, the literature gives opposite examples as well. The positive examples help students to strive for good, while the examples of evil should raise their sense of injustice.

Learning Latin is the best way to build an English vocabulary. Over 50% of the English language is derived from Latin. Several studies have proven that those students who learn Latin will do better on ACT and SAT.

Learning Latin teaches the student grammar better than an English curriculum. Consider for a moment who were the best authors and poets up until the 20th century? Almost all without exception were students of Latin. When they attended "grammar school," the language studied was not English, but Latin. Teach only English grammar, and the student learns only grammar in English. Teach Latin, and the student learns Latin and English grammar together.

Learning to translate into and from Latin provides excellent mental exercises. The Latin language is precise and ordered. The diligent student will acquire good habits of mind, which include a good memory, attention to detail, and orderliness.

Other benefits include learning about Roman history and how it affects the student today, as well as increasing the student's cultural literacy found in the Latin traditions of Rome, Christianity, and music. Indeed, Latin has many benefits, but most importantly, the student will develop a self-discipline, an attention to detail, and especially, a delayed satisfaction. The diligent student will come to know the satisfaction of taking on a challenging task and accomplishing it well.

ABOUT TRANSLATING

Some courses in Latin use macrons over some vowels. A macron is a short line above a vowel. This convention in current Latin texts was not used by the Romans nor by medieval writers. This use of the macron is of rather recent invention, which was to aid students to recognize the “long” vowels from the “short” ones. Since you will be using “ecclesiastical Latin,” the use of the macron becomes unnecessary because each vowel has only one sound.

One area of confusion in translating is the use of the formal form of the second person in English. The English language, like Spanish, has two forms of the second person: familiar and formal. However, today we seldom use the familiar form, even though the use of the form was quite popular at the turn of the 17th century during the time of Shakespeare. You will translate using the familiar form in order to avoid confusion about whether the word is singular or plural. Also, the practice with using the familiar form will help students with their studies in Shakespeare, Renaissance poetry, and the Authorized Bible, which uses the familiar form of the second person exclusively.

	Singular			Plural		
2nd Person Pronoun	subjective	objective	possessive	subjective	objective	possessive
familiar form	thou	thee	thy	ye	you	your
formal form	you	you	your	you	you	your

Notice that there is no way to differentiate between the singular or plural in the formal form without having to resort to cumbersome notes like “you (plural),” “you (sing.),” or “you all” for plural. Also notice that the singular forms of the familiar begin with “t,” and the plural forms begin with “y,” making it easy to remember these forms of the second person.

PRONUNCIATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL LATIN

Contrary to popular belief, Latin is not a dead language. The Roman Catholic Church used Latin up into the 1960s and the Latin Rite Church still uses it. In addition to this, Latin has several descendents such as Spanish, Italian, and French. And as mentioned before, over 50% of the English language owes its existence to Latin. Indeed, some words come directly from Latin like *labor* and *doctor*.

Obviously, from the time of the Caesars to the 1960s, Latin had undergone a change in the way it was spoken. This revelation should not surprise anyone. All languages change over time, English included. For the most part, the way Latin was spoken in the grammar schools of old was with the use of “ecclesiastical” or “Christian” Latin. However, during the 1800s, a desire to resurrect the original way the Romans spoke began in the European and American schools. Of course, such a project is silly because no one can be sure exactly how the ancient Romans spoke. After all, those were the days before the invention of voice recordings. Therefore, you will be speaking the ecclesiastical pronunciation of Latin because using the classical pronunciation is artificial.

VOWELS (always pronounced the same—no exceptions)

A	ah	as in father	ambulat
E	eh	as in bet	fessa
I	ee	as in machine	filia
O	oh	as in order	mox
U	oo	as in boot	fabula
Y	ee	as in machine	intrat

DIPHTHONGS

AE	eh	as in bet	laeta
OE	eh	as in bet	foedus

DOUBLE VOWELS

AI	ah-ee	pronounce both vowels	ait
AU	ah-oo	pronounce both vowels	nauta
EI	eh-ee	pronounce both vowels	Dei
EU	eh-oo	pronounce both vowels	meus
AA	ah-ah	pronounce both vowels	
EE	eh-eh	pronounce both vowels	
II	ee-ee	pronounce both vowels	fili
OO	oh-oh	pronounce both vowels	
UU	oo-oo	pronounce both vowels	equus

DOUBLE VOWELS FOLLOWED BY Q

QUA	kwoo-ah		qua
QUE	kwoo-eh		quem
QUI	kwoo-ee		quid
QUO	kwoo-oh		quoniam

CONSONANTS

B	b	as in bat	bonus
C	k	as in cut before consonants; before A, O, U; or at the end of a word	sacra colonus huic
	ch	as in church before E, I, Y, AE, OE	caelum
CC	tch	as in catch before E, I, Y, AE, OE	ecce (et-che)
	k	as in cut before A, O, U	peccata
CH	k	as in cut	Christus
D	d	as in down	donum
F	f	as in feet	filia
G	g	as in gold before consonants; except before n; before A, O, U	gloria rogat
	j	as in gem before E, I, Y, AE, OE	regina
GN	ny	as in canyon	magnus
H	k	as in key ; always silent except for	mihi (mee-kee) & nihil (nee-keel)

I	y	as in yet	lesus
K	k	as in key	
L	l	as in light	liber
M	m	as in moon	magister
N	n	as in night	narrat
P	p	as in pain	parat
PH	f	as in phone	philosophia
R	r	slightly rolled	redeo
S	s	as in sing ; never Z as in rose	semper
SC	sk	as in scale before A, O, U	obscura
	sh	as in shine before E, I, Y, AE, OE	descendit
SCH	sk	as in school	schola
T	t	as in time (see exception with I below)	timeo porta narrat
TH	t	as in thyme	
TI	tsee	as in tse-tse fly before a vowel and preceded by any letter except S, T, X	gratia gigantis
	tee	as in tea before a vowel and preceded by S, T, X	modestia
V	v	as in vine	virii
X	gz	as in exam after E; at the beginning of a word; followed by a vowel	exeo uxor
	ks	as in tax followed by a consonant; at the end of a word	lux
Z	dz	as in seeds	