

Latin Story Vocabulary and Grammar Essentials!

This briefing identifies things that you really have to know in order to translate the Latin stories confidently.

1 Basic words

1.1 General

Apart from general vocabulary, to make consistent headway you need to know these fluently:

1.2 sum/es/est

- The conjugation of **sum/es/est** – *I am* etc (see Briefing 3):
Present tense (page 2) Future tense (page 2) Imperfect tense (page 3) Past Perfect (page 3)

1.3 Pronouns

- All the following pronouns singular and plural, all genders– see Briefing 2
 - **is, ea, id** (*he/she/it*), particularly **eius** (*his/her/its*) and **eī** (to him/her/it) – page 1
 - **sē** (*himself/herself, itself, themselves*, referring to main subject of sentence) – page 1
 - the other personal pronouns **ego** (*I*), **tū** (*you sing*), **nōs** (*we*), **vōs** (*you pl*) – page 1
 - the possessives **meus** (*my*), **tuus** (*your sing*), **suus** (*his own*), **noster** (*our*), **vester** (*your pl*) p2
 - the ‘pointing pronouns’ **hic, haec, hoc** (*this*) – page 1, **ille, illa, illud** (*that*) – page 2
 - the relative pronoun as a conjunction **quī, quae, quod** (*who, whom, whose* etc) page 2
 - the interrogative pronoun as a conjunction **quis, quae, quid** (*who?, which?*) page 2
 - the indefinite pronoun **quīdam** (*a certain ...*) page 3

1.4 Conjunctions

- The following conjunctions
 - **et, atque** *and* and **-que** as a ‘tack-on’ meaning *and*, as **puer puellaque** *the boy and the girl*.
et ... et ... is used to express *both ... and ...*
 - **aut or . aut ... aut ...** is used to express *either ... or ...*
 - **tum, deinde** *then*
 - **quod** *because* with verb in the indicative
 - **ut** *in order that* with verb in the subjunctive or **ut** *as or when* with verb in the indicative
 - **cum, quandō** *when* with verb in the subjunctive
 - **ubi** *where / whereby*, or *when* with verb in the subjunctive

1.5 Prepositions

- The following prepositions
 - **ā, ab** + ablative – *by* or *from*
 - **ad** + accusative – *to* or *towards*
 - **cum** + ablative – *with*
 - **dē** + ablative – *down from, with regard to*
 - **ē, ex** + ablative – *out of*
 - **in** + accusative – *into* or *onto*, **in** + ablative – *in* or *on*
 - **inter** + accusative – *between, among*
 - **prope** + accusative – *near*

1.6 Special verbs

As well as **sum**, you need to know these special verbs:

- Derived verbs from **sum, es, est**: **absūm** *I am absent*, **adsum** *I am present*, **praesum** *I am in charge*
- **eō, ire, ī, itum** – *I go* with derived verbs: **abeō** – *I go away*, **adeō** – *I approach* (**adeō** is also an adverb meaning *thus far*), **pereō** – *I perish*, **redeō** – *I return*
- **possum, posse, potuī** – *I can, I am able to* (irregular, similar to **sum, es, est**)_
- **volō, velle, voluī** – *I want (to)*; **nōlō, nōlle, nolūī** – *I don’t want (to)*;
- **dō, dāre, dedī, datum** – *I give* with derived verbs: **reddō** – *I give back*, **addō** – *I add*
- **ferō, ferre, tulī, lātum** – *I bear, carry*
- **stō, stāre, stefī, statum** – *I stand*

and also these basic verbs:

1.7 Basic verbs

- **audiō -īre** (4th conj reg) *I hear*
- **cadō, cadere, cecidī, cāsum** (3rd conj irreg) *I fall* with derived verbs: **occidō, -ere, occidī, occāsum** – *I kill*

- **capiō, capere, cēpī, captum** (3.5 conj irreg) *I take* with derived verbs: **accipiō** – *I accept, receive*
- **debeō -ēre** (2nd conj reg) *I owe, must, should*
- **dīcō, dīcere, dīxī, dictum** (3rd conj irreg) *I say* with derived verbs: **ēdicō** – *I proclaim*
- **dūcō, dūcere, dūxī, ductum** (3rd conj irreg) *I lead* with derived verbs: **redūcō** – *I lead back*
- **faciō, facere, fēcī, factum** (3.5 conj irreg) *I make* with derived verbs:
- **gerō, gerere, gessī, gestum** (3rd conj irreg) *I perform, do, wear*
- **habeō -ēre** (2nd conj reg) *I have*
- **inquit** *he said*, **inquiunt** *they said* (just these two forms are used)
- **legō, legere, lēgī, lēctum** (3rd conj irreg) *I read, collect* with derived verbs: **colligō** – *I collect, assemble*
- **mittō, mittere, mīsī, missum** (3rd conj irreg) *I send* with derived verbs: **āmittō** – *I lose*, **dimittō** *I abandon, promittō* – *I promise*
- **petō, petere, petivī, petitum** (3rd conj irreg) *I ask for, seek* with derived verbs: **competō** – *I meet, agree*
- **ponō, ponere, posuī, positum** (3rd conj irreg) *I place* with derived verbs: **imponō** – *I impose, inflict*
- **rapiō, rapere, rapuī, raptum** (3.5 conj irreg) *I seize, carry off*
- **veniō, venīre, vēnī, ventum** (4th conj irreg) *I come* with derived verbs: **adveniō** – *I arrive, ~*
conveniō *I gather, come together*, **inveniō** *I find, invent, come upon*
- **videō, vidēre, vīdī, vīsum** (2nd conj irreg) *I see*

and also verbs common in the Roman and human world (most are related to English words):

1.8 Common verbs

- **aedificō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I build*
- **amō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I love*
- **appropinquō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I approach*
- **clamō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I proclaim, shout*
- **cognōscō, cognōscere, cognōvī, cognitum** (3rd conj irreg) *I learn, understand*
- **exspectō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I await*
- **fugiō, fugere, fūgī, fugitum** (3rd conj irreg) *I flee* **effugiō** – *I escape*
- **habitō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I live in, inhabit*
- **imperō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I command*
- **iubeō, iubēre, iussī, iussum** (2nd conj irreg) *I command, order*
- **labōrō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I work*
- **nuntiō -āre** (1st conj reg) (1st conj reg) *I announce*
- **pugnō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I fight* with derived verbs: **oppugnō** *I attack*
- **persuādeō, persuādere, persuāsī, persuāsūm** (2nd conj irreg) *I persuade* (with object in dative)
- **quaerō, quaerere, quaesīvī, quaesītum** (3rd conj irreg) *I search for*
- **sciō -īre** (4th conj reg) *I know*
- **scribō, scribere, scrīpsī, scrīptum** *I write*
- **servō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I serve, save*
- **spectō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I watch*
- **timeō -ēre** (2nd conj reg) *I fear*
- **vendō, vendere, vendidī, venditum** (3rd conj irreg) *I sell*
- **vincō, vincere, vīcī, victum** (3rd conj irreg) *I conquer*
- **vocō -āre** (1st conj reg) *I call*

CLUE

EDIFICE
 AMIABLE
 APPROACH
 PROCLAIM
 RECOGNISE
 EXPECT
 FUGITIVE
 INHABIT
 IMPERATIVE

 LABOUR
 ANNOUNCE
 PUGNACIOUS
 ENQUIRE
 SCIENCE
 SCRIBE
 CONSERVE
 INSPECT
 TIMID
 VENDING
 CONVINCING
 VOCAL

1.9 Deponent verbs

Latin very commonly uses verbs that are unusual in not having an active form – just the passive. Unlike ordinary verbs in the Passive voice, some are transitive and have Objects. You will encounter many. Here are three:

- **conor, conārī, conātus sum** (1st conj reg Deponent) *I try*
- **gradior, gradī, gressus sum** (3.5 conj irreg Deponent) *I walk* – also **ingredior** *I enter* **egredior** *I come out*
- **loquor, loquī, locūtus sum** (3rd conj irreg Deponent) *I say, talk*
- **sequor, sequī, secūtus sum** (3rd conj irreg Deponent) *I follow*

1.10 Nouns – see Briefing 1

- **1st decl nouns** (usually fem)
 - **ancilla** – slave girl
 - **dea** – goddess
 - **epistula** – letter
 - **fēmina** – woman
 - **filia** – daughter
 - **nauta** – sailor (masc)
 - **puella** – girl
 - **regīna** – queen
 - **terra** – ground, country
 - **via** – road, way
 - **villa** – house

- **2nd decl nouns in -us or -r (usually masc)**
 - ager – *field*
 - amīcus – *friend*
 - animus – *mind*
 - cibus – *food*
 - deus – *a god*
 - dominus – *master*
 - hortus – *garden*
 - liber – *book/liberī children*
 - nuntius – *message/messenger*
 - puer – *boy*
 - servus – *slave*
 - vir – *man*
- **2nd decl nouns in -um (always neuter)**
 - auxilium – *help*
 - bellum – *war*
 - dōnum – *gift*
 - oppidum – *town*
 - perīculum – *peril*
 - templum – *temple*
 - verbum – *word*
- **3rd decl nouns (various genders – nominative and genitive stems shown; gen plural if in -ium)**
 - animal, animālis (-ium) – *animal (n)*
 - caput, capitis – *head (n)*
 - frāter, frātris – *brother (m)*
 - homō, hominis – *man (m)*
 - leō, leōnis – *lion (m)*
 - mīles, mīlitis – *soldier (m)*
 - mors, mortis – *death (f)*
 - pater, patris – *father (m)*
 - rēx, rēgis – *king (m)*
 - urbs, urbis – *town/city (f)*
- **4th decl nouns in -us (usually masc, but domu is an exception:)**
 - domus – *house or home (fem)*
 - manus – *hand (m)*
- **5th decl nouns (usually fem)**
 - diēs – *day (masc)*
 - rēs – *matter, thing (f)*

1.11 Adjectives – see Briefing 1

- **1st/2nd decl adjectives in -us or -r**
 - bonus – *good*
 - celer – *fast*
 - clārus – *clear, famous*
 - laetus – *happy*
 - paucus – *few*
 - parvus – *small*
 - pulcher – *beautiful*
 - vērū – *true*
 - vīvus – *alive*
- **3rd decl adjectives**
 - crudēlis -is – *cruel*
 - difficilis -is – *difficult*
 - facilis -is – *easy*
 - fortis -is – *brave*
 - ingēns, ingēntis (gen pl -ium) – *huge*
 - iuvenis –is – *young*
 - senex, senis – *old*
 - ūtilis – -is – *useful*

Present participles e.g. amāns *loving* decline like ingēns.

Comparatives and superlatives (e.g. *braver/bravest*) usually use ending -ior (e.g. fortior – 3rd declension) and -issimus (e.g. fortissimus, 1st/2nd declension). But some double the last consonant, e.g. difficillimus.

1.12 Adverbs

Many adverbs come from adjectives with special endings like -e -ius, -o, -ter. Watch for these endings.

Many have no such source, and must be remembered, for example:

- enim – *in fact, e.g.*
- hodiē – *today*
- iam – *now*
- igitur – *therefore*
- mox – *soon*
- igitur – *therefore*
- ita – *thus, therefore*
- numquam – *never*
- ōlim – *once upon a time*
- sic – *thus*
- statim – *at once*
- subitō – *suddenly*
- tamen – *however*
- nam – *for*

2 Conjugation of verbs

You need to recognise 5 tenses: **Present, Future, Imperfect, Past Perfect, Pluperfect**, both **Active and Passive**.

This is helped by knowing verbs' Principle Parts, which define the **Conjugation (1 to 4 and 3.5)**, the **Present Stem**, the **Past Stem**, and the **Supine**. Examples of principle Parts were given above, e.g.

Conjugation	1 st person singular Present Stem, used also for Future and Imperfect tenses; and for Present Participles e.g. amāns – <i>loving</i> capiēns – <i>taking</i>	Present infinitive Used as stem for imperfect subjunctive Passive present infinitives in brackets	1st person sing Past Perfect, used also for Pluperfect, Past Infinitive uses -isse ending e.g. amāvīsse	Supine – used for other participles – see below. Used with past and future participle and for past passive tenses
1	am-ō (regular)	am-āre (am-ārī)	amāv-ī	amāt-um
2	tim-e-ō (regular)	tim-ēre (tim-ērī)	timu-ī	timit-um
3	mitt-ō (irregular)	mitt-ere (mitt-ī)	mīs-ī	miss-um

3.5	capī-ō (irregular)	cap-ere (cap-ī)	cēp-ī	capt-um
4	aud-i-ō (regular)	aud-īre (aud-īrī)	audīv-ī	audīt-um

The **Supine** gives the **Past Participle Passive** – e.g. **amāt-us** *having been loved* and also the **future participle active** **amāt-ūrus** *about to love*. Changing the **-um** ending to **-ion** often gives an English word, e.g. *mission, caption, audition*.

Please be familiar with the **basic verb endings** given in Briefing 3, top of page 2.

Commonest are 3rd person singular **-t** and plural **-nt**. In the passive these are **-tur** and **-ntur** and these very often give a very quick check on the **Subject** being singular or plural. **NEVER FORGET THIS VITAL FACT!**

Other quick tips for verb endings – **ESSENTIAL TO KNOW!!**:

- **-ba-** on the **Present** stem indicates **Imperfect** for all conjugations, e.g. **mittēbant**
- Otherwise, **-b-** on 1st and 2nd conjugations indicates **Future**, e.g. **amābit**
- **-it** and **ērunt** on the past stem indicates **Past Perfect** 3rd person sing/plur
- Imperfect of **sum** (e.g. **-eram, -erās, -erat, ... -erant**) on the past stem indicates **Pluperfect Active**
- **eram/erās/erat/erāmus/erātis/erant** following a **past participle** indicates **Pluperfect Passive**
- **Present Infinitive** with **basic verb endings** gives the common **Imperfect Subjunctive** e.g. **amāre-nt**
- **Past Infinitive** with **basic verb endings** gives the **Pluperfect Subjunctive** e.g. **amāvisse-nt**
- **Infinitives with endings, or an odd-looking present tense: suspect a subjunctive!**

3 Declension of nouns and adjectives

Please be familiar with the basic noun and adjective endings at the top of page 2 of Briefing 1.

The most important cases that you **MUST** recognise are:

- **Nominative singular or plural** – used for the **Subject** or to qualify the subject (by adjective or apposition)
- **Accusative singular or plural** – used for the **Object**; also, used with place names to mean ‘to’ e.g. **Romam** means *to Rome*, and the **Accusative** is also taken by many prepositions.
- **Ablative singular or plural** – used to mean ‘by, with or from’, or taken by many prepositions; coming without a preposition may indicate an **Ablative Absolute** construction

3.1 Neuter nouns

There are two critical rules for neuter nouns:

- **Nominative, vocative** and **accusative** for all neuter nouns and agreeing adjectives are **all the same**, both singular and plural
- **Nominative, vocative** and **accusative** for all neuter nouns in the plural end in **-a**

Neuter nouns are seldom the Subject of a verb, so the following masc/fem rules are very useful.

3.2 Nominative

Nominative singular forms in **1st and 2nd declensions** (masc and fem) are **-us** and **-a**. In the plural, they are **-ī** and **-ae**. In the 4th declension, nominative singular is **-us** and plural **-ūs**. In the 5th declension both are **-ēs**.

Nominative singular forms in the **3rd declension** (masc and fem) vary. In the plural, the nominative plural is **-ēs** on the Genitive stem (take off the **-is!**). For example nom sing. **mīles** *soldier* gen sing **mīlit-is** gives nom plur. **mīlitēs**.

3.3 Accusative

Masculine and Feminine Accusative Singular forms in all declensions **always end in -m**. The preceding vowel changes with declension, e.g. **puellam, servum, mīlitem, domum, rem**.

Masculine and Feminine Accusative Plural forms in all declensions **always end in -s**. The preceding vowel changes with declension, e.g. **puellās, servōs, mīlitēs, domūs, rēs**. Note that the endings are **the same** as the nominative for declensions 3, 4 and 5, so you must use context to decide on whether the case is nominative or accusative.

3.4 Ablative (which is much more common than the Dative)

Ablative singular forms **in all declensions (and genders) end in a vowel**. The vowel changes with declension, e.g. **puellā, servō, mīlite, domū, rē**. For **3rd declension adjectives** and **mare** (*sea*), the vowel is **-ī** and not **-e**.

Ablative plural forms in all declensions and genders **always end in -s** and can be **-is** or **-bus**, varying with declension, e.g. **puellis, servīs, mīlitibus, domibus, rēbus**. These endings are also used for the dative plural case.

3.5 Genitive

The Singular rules are less well defined: **puellae, servī, mīlitis, domūs, reī**

Plural genitives always end with **-um**, with zero, one or two preceding letters depending on the declension and stem:

puellārum, servōrum, mīlitum, animālium, domuum, rērum

3.6 Dative

Datives are not common, and are only used as indirect objects meaning *to* or *for* or required by some verbs .

As for the Genitive Singular, rules are less well defined: **puellae, servō, militī, domū, genū, rei**

Plural datives are always the same as ablatives: puellis, servis, militibus, domibus, genibus, rebus

4 General tips

4.1 Constructions

- **Ablative Absolute** construction: an ablative noun (or pronoun) without a preceding preposition and with an agreeing adjective or participle may well be part of an **Ablative Absolute** construction, indicating a previous or existing situation. It can initially be translated starting with the English preposition *with* , for example:

igne urbem consumente
with fire the city (acc = object) consuming

and then rendering a better English translation:

while fire was consuming the city

- **Accusative and infinitive** construction: an accusative noun (or pronoun) following a verb without a preceding preposition and with subsequent infinitive may well be part of an **Accusative and infinitive** construction. This is often translated by '*that* [noun in the accusative] *is/was doing*' [verb used with the infinitive], with other words being taken into account. For example (accusative and infinitive clause in bold):

nonnulli viri dixerunt se hoc facere iussos esse
some men said that they this to do to have been commanded

and then rendering a better English translation:

Some men said that they were ordered to do this

- **ad (the preposition) plus gerundive** expresses a purposes. The gerundive is a verbal adjective that expresses something needing to be done to a noun, and so being **passive** in meaning

ad feras quae agros intraverant necandas
in order for beasts who the fields had entered to be killed

or, as a better English translation

in order to kill beasts who had entered the fields

4.2 Translating the Imperfect tense into English

Although the English use of auxiliary verbs *was* or *used to* are used to define the Imperfect tense, the ordinary English past tense is permissible (and better) when the verb implies an action that is continuing. The question is – was the end of the verb's action clear (use the past tense!) or was it indefinite? If the verb implies a continuing situation, use the English past tense (without auxiliary verb *was* or *used to*) unless the context really needs this translation

Here are some examples:

senex moriebatur – *the old man was dying* but **senex mortuus est** – *the old man died*

Athenis habitabat – *he lived in Athens* - but it could be *he used to live in Athens* if he now doesn't live there.

Alexander exercitum suum per Phrygiam ducibat - *Alexander led his army though Phrygia*

multi credabant Nerōnem facēs iaci iussisse – *many people believed that Nero had ordered firebrands to be thrown.*

5 List of recommended words

ā, ab	faciō, facere, fecī, factum	praesum
abeō	femina	promittō
accipiō	ferō, ferre, tulī, latum	prope
ad	filia	puella
addō	fortis -is	puer
adeō (verb)	frāter, frātris	pugnō -āre
adeō (adverb)	fugiō, fugere, fugī, fugitum	pulcher
adsum	gerō, gerere, gessī, gestum	quaerō, quaerere, quaesivī, quaesitum
adveniō	habēō -ēre	quandō
aedificō -āre	habitō -āre	-que
ager	hic	quī
āmittō	homō, hominis ō	quidam
amō -āre	hortus	quod
ancilla	iam	rapiō, rapere, rapuī, raptum
animal, animālis (-ium)	id	reddō
animus	igitur	redeō
appropinquō -āre	ille	redūcō
atque	imperō -āre	regina
audiō -īre	imponō	rēs
aut	in	rēx, rēgis
auxilium	ingens, ingentis	sciō -īre
bellum	ingredior, ingredi,	scribō, scribere, scripsī, scriptum
bonus	ingressus sum	sē
cadō, cadere, cecidī, cāsum	inquit, inquitur	senex, senis
capiō, capere, cēpī, captum	inter	sequor, sequī, secūtus sum
caput, capitis	inveniō	servus
celer	is	sic
cibus	ita	spectō -āre
clamō -āre	iste	statim
clārus	iubeō, iubere, iussī, iussum	stō, stāre, stefī, stātum
cognōscō, cognōscere, cognōvī, cognitum	iuvenis	subitō
colligō	labōrō -āre	sum
competō	laetus	suus
conor, conārī, conātus sum	legō, legere, lēgī, lectum	tamen -
conveniō	leō, leōnis	templum
crudēlis -is	liber	terra
cum	meus	timeō -ēre
dē	mīles, mīlitis	tu
dea	mittō, mittere, mīsī, missum	tum
debeō -ēre	mors, mortis	tuus
deinde	mox	ubi
deus	nauta	urbs, urbis
dīcō, dīcere, dīxī, dictum	nōlō, nōlle, nolū	ut
diēs	nōs	ūtilis -is
difficilis -is	noster	vendō, vendere, vendidī, venditum
dimittō	numquam	veniō, venīre, vēnī, ventum
dō, dāre, dedī, dātum	nuntiō -āre	verbum
dominus	nuntius	vērus -
domus	occidō, -ere, occidī, occasum	vester
dōnum	olim	via
dūcō, dūcere, duxī, ductum	oppidum	videō, vidēre, vīdī, vīsum
ē, ex	oppugnō	villa
ēdicō	parvus	vincō, vincere, vīcī, victum
effugiō	pater, patris	vīr
ego	paucus	vīvus
enim	pereō	vocō -āre
epistula	periculum	volō, velle, volū
et	persuādeō, persuādēre, persuāsī, persuāsum	vōs
expectō -āre	petō, petere, petivī, petitum	
facilis -is	ponō, ponere, posuī, positum	
	possum, posse, potuī	