

Introduction to Latin for the Absolute Novice

Course outline

Session I.

We learn how to say hello in Latin (so we can greet each other).

We look at an amusing couplet by the 1st c. Latin (not Roman!) poet Martial, which gives us an idea of how Latin grammar operates.

We learn the first stanza of *Gaudeamus Igitur*, with which we will open our sessions.

We learn how to say good-bye in Latin (so we can take leave of each other until the next time we get together).

Session II.

We answer the question “Could studying grammar be enjoyable?”. In the affirmative, of course! Then we look at how the structure of Latin sentences differs from that of English sentences. We see that it is really handy to know something about English grammar, which we cover a few points of.

We learn the second stanza of *Gaudeamus Igitur*.

Session III.

We look at two types of sentences, first in English and then in Latin: (1) sentences whose verb is ‘is’ or a similar verb; and (2) sentences whose verb shows action. It is at this point that we start going deep into the function of nouns. In fact the focus of the course is on nouns, both function and form. Whereas English nouns don’t change their form much beyond adding –s to form the plural or –‘s/-s’ to form the possessive, Latin nouns have a complexity that can seem almost random when first observed. These forms will be administered in small doses.

We learn the third stanza of *Gaudeamus Igitur*. The song has six or seven stanzas, but three is enough for us.

Session IV.

We will read some text, with illustrations, composed by the instructor to illustrate how the various forms of Latin words correspond to their functions in sentences. A morphology chart of Latin nouns will be supplied for the student to keep at the ready, meaning that memorization of forms is not required. However, students who are planning to continue their study of Latin beyond this course will want to take the time needed to learn the morphology by heart.

Session V.

In this session, we learn something that people think is hard but that really isn’t: indirect speech (also called reported speech) in Latin. The basics are actually quite simple, although you

wouldn't think so, considering that most grammars don't teach this construction until late in the first year of study.

Session VI.

Keeping our morphology chart handy, we move into some simple texts, beginning with *Julia*, a text published in 1928 by Maud Reed, available for free digitally.

Session VII.

Still with our morphology chart, some of which has probably made it into long-term memory storage on its own, we look at the beginning texts of *Principia* by Peckett and Munday. The star of the show is Marcus, and I doubt that the book is used in any school today, owing to the level of violence.

Session VIII.

Quo vadis? What to study next? We consolidate what we've covered so far and find out what opportunities there are for continued self-study in Latin, either in a group or individually.