

Via Facilis

Sample from Introduction: English as an Inflected Language

Latin poses one major challenge to the beginning student: it is an inflected language. The word “inflected” means “changed, altered”. An inflected language changes or alters the form of its nouns, adjectives, and verbs, depending upon their grammatical function in a sentence. The alteration generally occurs at the end of the word. Some inflected languages, Latin among them, alter all three of these parts of speech. In Modern English, meanwhile, the inflections have virtually disappeared: its nouns and verbs change only slightly, and its adjectives (except for demonstratives) not at all. **This, then, is the difficulty: we approach Latin, a language of many alterations/inflections, from the point of view of English, a language of (seemingly) very few.** As such, we must develop a strong, working sense of how English verbs, nouns, and adjectives change – and how they don't. We need to reorient ourselves from treating English just as our native tongue to English as an Inflected Language. This requires that we actively and persistently challenge ourselves to understand the mechanics by which English conveys meaning. Once we begin to understand those mechanics, and the integral (if limited) role that inflection plays therein, we will be better equipped to comprehend Latin's more extensive system of change.

The Latin Alphabet - Pronunciation

A a - short **a** as in **caught**; **ā** as in **aaah**

B b - as in **bat**

C c – as in **cat** or **captain** (never as the c in **city**)

D d – as in **doom**

E e – short **e** as in **jet, bet**; long **ē** as in **great, eight, ate**

F f – as in **far**

G g – as in **god** (never like **g** in **giant**)

H h – as in **high**

I i – short **i** as in **hit, fit**; long **ī** as in **feet, meet, seat**

K k – as in **kitty**

L l – as in **lemon**

M m – as in **mitt**

N n – as in **none**

O o – short **o** in **hot, dot**; long **ō** in **goat, boat, wrote**

P p – as in **part**

Q q – as in **quest**

R r – as in **ring**

S s – as in **sting**

T t – as in **tail**

U u – short **u** as in **cut**, **but**, **gut**; long **ū** as in **dude**, **lude**, **rude**

V v – as **w** in **wish**, never **v** in **vest**

X x – like **ks** in **nicks**

Y y – combination of **u** of **gut** and **ī** of **feet**

Z z - as in **zest**

Macrons and Diphthongs

All Latin vowels are either short or long. In this text, long vowels will always have macrons (macron = long mark). In Latin, macrons appear **only over vowels**.

<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>
a	ā
e	ē
i	ī
o	ō
u	ū

A diphthong is formed when two separate SHORT vowels combine to make up one new sound. There are many in English. In Latin, there are very few.

ae – ay as in "**aye**"
ai – ay as in "**aye**"
au – ow as in "**cow**"
oe – oy as in "**boy**"

The Latin Consonant i

I i can function as a consonant when the letter directly following it is a vowel. It is pronounced like the **y** in **yard** or **yell**. In many Latin texts, when **i** is a consonant, it is written as **j**.

The Latin Consonant v

The letter **v** is always pronounced as a **w** in Classical Latin.

Greek "k", "y", "z", "ch", "ph", "th", "eu"

The letters "k", "y", "z", "ch", "ph", "th" and diphthong "eu" are direct borrowings from Greek and appear exclusively in Greek derivatives in Latin. "e" and "u" can appear together in Latin, but they usually act as two separate sounds. "y" is always a vowel in Latin, and can be long or short. . . .