How to Latin: A Crash Course

*because the only good language is a dead language*

1. Pronunciation:

* All c’s sound like k’s
* V is a vowel – the alphabet had no u. Or j, k, or w, actually
* ‘Ae’ sounds like the i in ‘ice’
* At the beginning of a syllable, i’s and v’s are consonantal
* In other words, they make ‘y’ and ‘w’ sounds
* All the Latin you’ve ever heard was pronounced in the church’s style, which is completely different

1. Grammar Basics

* No articles. At least there’s one less thing to remember
* Word order is bizarre, with verbs always at the end of a sentence
  + i.e., subject direct object verb
* Other words go practically anywhere. It’s great.

1. Nouns
   * Endings reveal the noun’s role in the sentence and its number (singular/plural)
   * The roles have fancy names:

* Subject --- nominative
* Ownership --- genitive
* Indirect Object --- dative
* Direct Object --- accusative
* Most Prepositions --- ablative
* Nouns are grouped by declension and then gender. The exact endings they take vary by group
  + There are five declensions, but the 4th and 5th are rare
  + There are three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter
* The 1st Declension is (mostly\*) only feminine:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| Nominative | a | ae |
| Genitive | ae | arum |
| Dative | ae | īs |
| Accusative | am | ās |
| Ablative | ā | īs |

\*PAIN words take the same endings but are masculine: Poeta, Agricola, Incola, and Nauta

* Can be sung to the tune of the alphabet song
* More on declensions later if there’s time
* e.g.: puella, puellae

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| Nominative | puella | puellae |
| Genitive | puellae | puellarum |
| Dative | puellae | puellīs |
| Accusative | puellam | puellās |
| Ablative | puellā | puellīs |

1. Verbs
   * One verb can be a complete sentence: its ending tells the person and number of the subject, as well as its tense and whether it’s passive or active
   * The most important/mundane of all verbs: TO BE

* Verbs are usually learned by their four principal parts. For present tense, only the first two matter
* sum esse fui futurus

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | sum | sumus |
| 2nd | es | estis |
| 3rd | est | sunt |

* Verb endings are grouped by conjugation. There are four conjugations, but for present tense they’re very similar (much more alike than noun declensions)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | m, o | mus |
| 2nd | s | tis |
| 3rd | t | nt |

* Remember using the phrase MOST MUST ISNT
* e.g.: amo, amare, amavī, amatus

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | amo | amamus |
| 2nd | amas | amatis |
| 3rd | amat | amant |