

WHAT IS A VERB?

A **VERB** is a word that expresses the "action" of the sentence.
 "Action" is used in the broadest sense,
 not necessarily physical action.

Let us look at different types of words that are verbs:

- a physical activity to run, to hit, to talk, to walk
- a mental activity to hope, to believe, to imagine,
to dream, to think
- a state or condition to be, to feel, to have, to sleep

Many verbs, however, do not fall neatly into one of the above three categories. They are verbs, nevertheless, because they represent the "action" of the sentence.

The book *costs* only \$5.00.

The students *seem* tired.

The verb is the most important word in a sentence. You usually cannot write a **COMPLETE SENTENCE**, that is, express a complete thought, without a verb.

It is important to identify verbs because the function of the other words in a sentence often depends on their relationship to the verb. For instance, the subject of a sentence is the word doing the action of the verb, and the object is the word receiving the action of the verb (see *What is a Subject?*, p. 30, and *What are Objects?*, p. 36).

IN ENGLISH

To help you learn to recognize verbs, look at the paragraph below where the verbs are in *italics*. Some verbs are single words, and some are verb phrases, that is, a group of words that make up a single verb idea.

The myth about Jupiter who *came* to earth in the form of a human being *is* familiar to most people. Jupiter, king of the gods, *tested* the hospitality of the people in a certain village. He *had taken* his son Mercury with him, and when the two *had entered* the village and *had sought* refuge for the night in many homes, every home *was closed* to them. The villagers *stoned* the strangers and *set* their dogs on them. Only the old Philemon and his wife Baucis *welcomed* the strangers in their humble cottage. Although they

thought that the strangers *were* poor wanderers, they *set* their best table for them. The gods *thanked* the old couple. Jupiter *transformed* their cottage into a temple and *made* Philemon and Baucis custodians. At their death they *were* both *turned* into trees. The trees still *stand* on either side of the entrance to the temple.

40

There are two types of verbs depending on whether or not the verb can take a direct object.

- a **TRANSITIVE VERB** is a verb which takes a direct object. It is indicated in the dictionary by the abbreviation *v.t.* (*verb transitive*).

The old couple *welcomed* the strangers.

| |
v.t. direct object

50

- an **INTRANSITIVE VERB** is a verb that does not take a direct object. It is indicated in the dictionary by the abbreviation *v.i.* (*verb intransitive*).

The trees still *stand* on either side of the entrance.

|
v.i. (no direct object)

Many verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, depending on whether or not they have a direct object in the sentence.

The gods *entered* the house.

| |
v.t. direct object

60

The gods *entered* and all stood amazed.

|
v.i. (no direct object)

IN LATIN

As in English, a verb is a word that shows physical action, a mental activity, or a state or condition.

TERMS TO TALK ABOUT VERBS

- **INFINITIVE OR DICTIONARY FORM** — The verb form that is the name of the verb is called an infinitive: *to eat*, *to sleep*, *to drink* (see *What is the Infinitive?*, p. 53). In the English dictionary a verb is listed without the "to": *eat*, *sleep*, *drink*.
- **CONJUGATION** — A verb is conjugated or changes in form to agree with its subject: *I do*, *he does* (see *What is a Verb Conjugation?*, p. 56).
- **TENSE** — A verb indicates tense, that is, the time (present, past, or future) of the action: *I am*, *I was*, *I will be* (see *What is Meant by Tense?*, p. 61).

70

80

- **MOOD** — A verb shows mood, that is the speaker's attitude toward what he or she is saying (see *What is Meant by Mood?*, p. 93).
- **VOICE** — A verb shows voice, that is, the relation between the subject and the action of the verb (see *What is Meant by Active and Passive Voice?*, p. 89).
- **PARTICIPLE** — A verb may be used to form a participle: *writing, written; singing, sung* (see *What is a Participle?*, p. 78).
- **TRANSITIVE OR INTRANSITIVE** — A verb can be classified as transitive or intransitive depending on whether or not the verb can take a direct object (see p. 49).

90



REVIEW

Underline the verbs or verb phrases in the following sentences.

- Circle whether the verb is transitive (v.t.) or intransitive (v.i.)

- | | | |
|---|------|------|
| 1. Niobe praises her children. | v.t. | v.i. |
| 2. Juno is watching her husband. | v.t. | v.i. |
| 3. Daphne was running fast. | v.t. | v.i. |
| 4. Jupiter loved many females. | v.t. | v.i. |
| 5. Diana kills all of Niobe's children. | v.t. | v.i. |

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF A VERB?

The **PRINCIPAL PARTS** of a verb are the forms we need in order to create all the different tenses.

1

IN ENGLISH

English verbs have three principal parts:

1. the infinitive without "to"
2. the past tense
3. the past participle

If you know these parts, you can form all the other tenses of that verb (see *What is an Infinitive?*, p. 53; *What is the Past Tense?*, p. 65, and p. 81 in *What is a Participle?*).

10

English verbs fall into two categories depending on how they form their principal parts:

1. **REGULAR VERBS**—These verbs are called regular because their past tense and past participle forms follow the predictable pattern of adding *-ed*, *-d*, or *-t* to the infinitive.

INFINITIVE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
to walk	walked	walked
to seem	seemed	seemed
to burn	burned (burnt)	burned (burnt)

Since the past tense and the past participle are identical, regular verbs have only two principal parts, the infinitive and the past.

20

2. **IRREGULAR VERBS**—These verbs are called irregular because their principal parts do not follow a regular pattern.

INFINITIVE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
to be	was	been
to sing	sang	sung
to go	went	gone
to write	wrote	written

30

IN LATIN

Latin verbs have four principal parts:

1. the 1st person singular of the present tense
2. the infinitive
3. the 1st person singular of the perfect tense
4. the perfect passive participle

40

In the vocabulary of your textbook and in the dictionary a verb entry for the verb *to love* would look as follows: **amō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum**, with part of the stem or base (**am-**) understood to be continued for each form (**amāre, amāvī, amātus, -a, -um**).

The first principal part (**amō**) is the 1st person singular of the present tense (*I love, am loving, do love*). It is the form under which a verb is listed in a vocabulary or dictionary.

The second principal part (**amāre**) is the infinitive (*to love*), which indicates the conjugation to which the verb belongs, and which, with the **-re** dropped (**amā-**), provides the present stem of the verb on which the present, imperfect, and future tenses are based.

50

The third principal part (**amāvī**) is the 1st person singular of the perfect tense (*I loved, have loved, did love*). It provides the stem (**amāv-**) for the perfect system (all the perfect tenses: perfect, past perfect, and future perfect).

The fourth principal part (**amātus, -a, -um**) is the perfect passive participle (*having been loved*), used as a verbal adjective (see p. 82) and to make the perfect tenses in the passive voice (see *Perfect tenses in the passive voice*, p. 91).

You will find additional information on the principal parts in the chapters dealing with the various verb tenses.



REVIEW

I. Write the principal parts of these English verbs.

INFINITIVE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
1. to think	_____	_____
2. to run	_____	_____
3. to drive	_____	_____

II. Using the principal parts of the regular verb *love*, **amō, amāre, amāvī, amātus (-a, -um)**, as an example, write the principal parts of the regular verb *laudō* (*praise*).

■ Write the English translations of the principal parts above.

	PRESENT TENSE 1 st PER. SING.	INFINITIVE	PERFECT TENSE 1 st PER. SING.	PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE
LATIN	_____	_____	_____	_____
ENGLISH	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____		_____	
	_____		_____	

WHAT IS THE INFINITIVE?

The **INFINITIVE** is a form of the verb without person or number, giving its basic meaning. 1

The Latin equivalent of the verb *to study* is **discere**.
└────────┘
infinitive

IN ENGLISH

All verbs have two infinitives: a present infinitive and a perfect infinitive.

PRESENT INFINITIVE — The present infinitive is composed of two words: *to* + the dictionary form of the verb: *to love*, *to walk*. The **DICTIONARY FORM** is the form of the verb that is listed as the entry in the dictionary: *love*, *walk*. 10

PERFECT INFINITIVE — The perfect infinitive is composed of *to have* + the past participle (see p. 81 in *What is a Participle?*): *to have loved*, *to have walked*.

PRESENT INFINITIVE	PERFECT INFINITIVE
to be	to have been
to write	to have written
to love	to have loved

Although the infinitive is the most basic form of the verb, it can never be used in a sentence without another verb that is conjugated (see *What is a Verb Conjugation?*, p. 56). 20

To learn is challenging.
└──┘ |
infinitive conjugated verb

It is important *to be* on time.
| └──┘
conjugated verb infinitive

Mark and Julia *want to come* home.
| └──┘
conjugated verb infinitive

The dictionary form of the verb, rather than the infinitive, is used after such verbs as *let*, *must*, *should*, and *can*. 30

Mark *must come* home by midnight.
|
dictionary form

Apollo *let* his son *drive* the chariot of the sun.
|
dictionary form

As in English, all verbs have a present infinitive and a perfect infinitive. Latin also has a future infinitive.

PRESENT INFINITIVE — The present infinitive, the second principal part of the verb, ends in *-re* (see *What are the Principal Parts of a Verb?*, p. 51). The present infinitive form provides two essential elements.

1. **CONJUGATION** — The ending of the present infinitive enables you to identify the conjugation to which the verb belongs: 1st -āre, 2nd -ēre, 3rd -ere, or 4th -īre.
2. **PRESENT STEM** — The stem of the present infinitive, referred to as the **PRESENT STEM**, gives you the stem to which are attached the personal endings of the present tense, as well as the tense signs and personal endings for the imperfect and future tenses. (See *What is the Present Tense?*, p. 63, *What is the Past Tense?*, p. 65, and *What is the Future Tense?*, p. 71.)

PERFECT INFINITIVE — The perfect infinitive is formed by adding *-isse* to the perfect stem of the verb (see pp. 66).

	PRESENT INFINITIVE	PERFECT INFINITIVE	
1 st	amāre	amāvisse	<i>to love, to have loved</i>
2 nd	docēre	docuisse	<i>to teach, to have taught</i>
3 rd	capere	cēpisse	<i>to take, to have taken</i>
4 th	venīre	vēnisse	<i>to come, to have come</i>

FUTURE INFINITIVE — The future infinitive is a verb phrase formed by adding the ending **-ūrus, -a, -um** to the present stem + **esse**. It is mainly used in indirect statements (see p. 111 in *What is Meant by Direct and Indirect Statements?*).

amātūrus esse *about to love*

The present infinitive has three main functions:

- as a complementary infinitive; i.e., to complete the meaning of a conjugated verb

Mark and Julia want to come home.

Marcus et Iulia domum venire desiderant.

infinitive conjugated verb

- as a noun, particularly as subject of a sentence (see *What is a Subject?*, p. 30)

To learn is easy.

Discere est facile.

infinitive conjugated verb

- as a verb in an indirect statement (see p. 111)

He says that the gods are coming.

Dīcit deōs venīre.

verb of saying infinitive

80

CONSULTING THE DICTIONARY

In English it is possible to change the meaning of a verb by placing short words (prepositions or adverbs) after it. For example, the verb *look* in Column A below changes meaning depending on the word that follows it (*to, after, for, into*). In Latin it is impossible to change the meaning of a verb by adding a preposition or an adverb as in Column A. An entirely different Latin verb corresponds to each meaning.

90

COLUMN A		MEANING	LATIN
to look	→	to look at <i>I looked at the photo.</i>	spectāre
to look for	→	to search for <i>I am looking for my book.</i>	quaerere
to look after	→	to take care of <i>I am looking after the children.</i>	cūrāre
to look into	→	to investigate <i>We'll look into the problem.</i>	investigāre

100

When consulting an English-Latin dictionary, all the examples above under Column A can be found under the dictionary entry *look* (spectāre); however, you will have to search under that entry for the specific expression to find the correct Latin equivalent.



REVIEW

Give the English infinitive for the italicized verbs below.

1. Apollo *gave* Midas ass's ears. _____
2. His barber *knew* the secret. _____
3. His barber *was* the only one who *saw* the ears. _____
4. He *dug* a hole in the ground. _____
5. He *whispered* the secret into the hole. _____
6. The reeds in the hole *sang* the secret aloud. _____

WHAT IS A VERB CONJUGATION?

A **VERB CONJUGATION** is a list of the six possible forms of the verb for a particular tense.

I am
you are
he, she, it is
we are
you are
they are

Different tenses have different verb forms, but the principle of conjugation remains the same. In this chapter all our examples are in the present tense (see *What is the Present Tense?*, p. 63).¹

IN ENGLISH

The verb *to be* conjugated above is the English verb that changes the most; it has three forms: *am*, *are*, and *is*. (The initial vowel is often replaced by an apostrophe: *I'm*, *you're*, *he's*). Most English verbs only have two forms such as the verb *to love*.

SINGULAR

1 ST PERSON	I <i>love</i>
2 ND PERSON	you <i>love</i>
3 RD PERSON	{ he <i>loves</i> she <i>loves</i> it <i>loves</i>

PLURAL

1 ST PERSON	we <i>love</i>
2 ND PERSON	you <i>love</i>
3 RD PERSON	they <i>love</i>

Because English verbs change so little, it isn't necessary to learn "to conjugate a verb;" that is, to list all its possible forms. For most verbs, it is much simpler to say that the verb adds an "-s" in the 3rd person singular.

IN LATIN

The word *conjugation* comes from two Latin ideas: *con* (*with*) and *jug* (*join*); the endings are joined to the stem of the verb

¹Unless otherwise specified, all tenses are in the active voice (see *What is Meant by Active and Passive Voice?*, p. 89).

resulting in a verb form. Unlike English verb forms, Latin verb forms change endings to indicate the different persons (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) and number (singular and plural). (See *What is a Personal Pronoun?*, p. 41).

The first step is to establish whether the verb is a regular or irregular verb.

40

- Almost all verbs follow a predictable pattern and are called **REGULAR VERBS**. Only one example must be memorized, and the pattern can then be applied to other verbs in the same group.
- A few verbs do not follow a predictable pattern and are called **IRREGULAR VERBS**. The conjugation of these verbs must be memorized individually. Some common verbs are irregular, for instance *esse* (*to be*). Consult your textbook for the conjugation of irregular verbs.

50

For each tense, a Latin verb has six different endings, one for each person in the singular and in the plural. These endings are called **PERSONAL ENDINGS**. Let us look at the conjugation of the regular verb **amāre** (*to love*) in the present tense.

SINGULAR

1 ST PERSON	amō	<i>I love, I am loving, I do love</i>
2 ND PERSON	amās	<i>you love, you are loving, you do love</i>
3 RD PERSON	amat	<i>he, she, it loves; he, she, it is loving; he, she, it does love</i>

60

PLURAL

1 ST PERSON	amāmus	<i>we love, we are loving, we do love</i>
2 ND PERSON	amātis	<i>you love, you are loving, you do love</i>
3 RD PERSON	amant	<i>they love, they are loving, they do love</i>

Since the personal endings of the verb indicate the subject, Latin subject pronouns do not usually have to be expressed: the 1st person singular **amō** can only mean "I love." In the 3rd person singular, however, the **-t** personal ending may refer to a masculine, feminine, or neuter subject: **amat** can mean "*he* loves, *she* loves," or "*it* loves." In this case, you will have to look at the previous sentences, i.e., the **CONTEXT**, to identify the subject.

70

Marcus flōrēs portat. Flōrēs amat.

Mark is carrying the flowers. He loves the flowers.

Iūlia flōrēs portat. Flōrēs amat.

Julia is carrying the flowers. She loves flowers.

Animal flōrēs dēvōrat. Flōrēs amat.

The animal is eating the flowers. It loves flowers.

HOW TO CONJUGATE A REGULAR VERB

Regular verbs are conjugated according to one of four patterns, or groups (also called "conjugations"), referred to as the **1st CONJUGATION**, the **2nd CONJUGATION**, the **3rd CONJUGATION**, and the **4th CONJUGATION**. To conjugate a regular verb these are the steps to follow.

1. **CONJUGATION** — Establish the conjugation of the verb by looking at the vowel that precedes the **-re** of the infinitive (see *What is the Infinitive?*, p. 53).

CONJUGATION	INFINITIVE ENDING		
1 st	-āre	amāre	to love
2 nd	-ēre	docēre	to teach
3 rd	-ere	mittere	to send
4 th	-īre	audīre	to hear

It is important to distinguish between the long and short **-e-** in the infinitive of verbs, because they indicate the difference between the 2nd and 3rd conjugations. Your Latin textbook will also refer to a category of 3rd conjugation verbs called **3rd-iō**, so called because a characteristic **-i-** appears in several forms: *faciō* (*I do, I make*), *faciēbam* (*I did, I made*), *faciam* (*I shall make*). The **3rd-iō** verbs take the usual 3rd conjugation personal endings.

2. **STEM** — Determine the present stem to which you will add the personal endings by dropping the **-re** ending of the infinitive (see p. 54).

CONJUGATION	INFINITIVE	STEM
1 st	amāre	amā-
2 nd	docēre	docē-
3 rd	mittere	mitte-
4 th	audīre	audī-

The present stem is used for the present tense (see p. 63), the imperfect tense (pp. 65-6), and the future tense (p. 71). Consult your textbook for irregularities and for the stems to be used for other tenses.

3. **PERSONAL ENDINGS** — Add the personal endings you have memorized.

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1 st	-ō or -m ¹	-mus
2 nd	-s	-tis
3 rd	-t	-nt

¹-m appears in the imperfect and future tenses.

These personal endings are the same for the present, imperfect, and future tenses of all four conjugations. In order to distinguish between these tenses which have the same stem and personal endings, one or two letters, called a **TENSE SIGN**, are inserted between the stem and the personal endings in the imperfect (see p. 65) and in the future tenses (see p. 71). Consult your textbook for irregularities and for the endings to be used for other tenses.

120

Let us look at other regular verbs belonging to the same conjugation to see how a pattern is applied.

130

amāre	<i>to love</i>
portāre	<i>to carry</i>
cantāre	<i>to sing</i>

1. **CONJUGATION** — The **-ā-** which precedes the **-re** infinitive ending indicates that they belong to the 1st conjugation.
2. **STEM** — Dropping the **-re** ending of the infinitive gives us the present stem of each verb.

amā-
portā-
cantā-

140

3. **PERSONAL ENDINGS** — The same personal endings are added to the stem of each verb to form the present tense.

PERSON			
SINGULAR			
1 st	amō ¹	portō ¹	cantō ¹
2 nd	amās	portās	cantās
3 rd	amat	portat	cantat
PLURAL			
1 st	amāmus	portāmus	cantāmus
2 nd	amātis	portātis	cantātis
3 rd	amant	portant	cantant

150

Your Latin textbook lists the complete pattern for the other three conjugations.

¹The 1st person singular in the 1st conjugation contracts the final **-a** of the stem + the personal ending **ō** to **ō** → **amō**.



REVIEW

- I. Circle the infinitive ending for each Latin verb below.
- Circle the conjugation to which each verb belongs.

1. cantāre (to sing)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
2. vīvere (to live)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
3. dēbēre (to owe)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
4. mūnīre (to fortify)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
5. crēdere (to believe)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

- II. The Latin equivalent of the verb *to praise* is **laudāre**.
- Indicate the stem.
 - Write the Latin present tense conjugation of the verb.
 - Write a simple English translation for each form.

STEM: _____

1 st PER. SING.	_____	_____
2 nd PER. SING.	_____	_____
3 rd PER. SING.	_____	_____
1 st PER. PL.	_____	_____
2 nd PER. PL.	_____	_____
3 rd PER. PL.	_____	_____

WHAT IS MEANT BY TENSE?

The **TENSE** of a verb indicates when the action of the verb takes place: at the present time, in the past, or in the future. The word *tense* comes from the Latin **tempus**, meaning *time*.

you eat	PRESENT
you ate	PAST
you will eat	FUTURE

As you can see, just by putting the verb in a different tense and without giving any additional information (such as "you eat *now*," "you ate *yesterday*," "you will eat *tomorrow*"), one can indicate when the action of the verb takes place.

Tenses may be classified according to the way they are formed. A **SIMPLE TENSE** consists of only one verb form: *ate*, while a **VERB PHRASE** consists of one or more auxiliaries plus the main verb: *am eating* (see *What are Auxiliary Verbs?*, p. 75).

IN ENGLISH

Listed below are the main six tenses in English.

PRESENT I eat	PRESENT PERFECT I have eaten
PAST I ate	PAST PERFECT I had eaten
FUTURE I will eat	FUTURE PERFECT I will have eaten

As you can see, there are only two simple tenses (present and past). The other tenses are verb phrases. The listing of the forms of a verb in all six tenses is called a **SYNOPSIS**. Above is a synopsis of the verb *eat* in the 1st person singular.

IN LATIN

In Latin, the same six tenses are divided into two systems, depending on whether the present stem (see p. 54) or perfect stem (see p. 66) is used to form the tense.

PRESENT SYSTEM	PERFECT SYSTEM
present	perfect
imperfect	past perfect or pluperfect
future	future perfect

These tenses are discussed in separate sections: *What is the Present Tense?*, p. 63; *What is the Past Tense?*, p. 65; *What is the Past Perfect Tense?*, p. 69; *What is the Future Tense?*, p. 71; and *What is the Future Perfect Tense?*, p. 73.

**REVIEW**

- I. Write a synopsis in the 1st person singular ("I") for the English verb *think*.

PRESENT _____

PRESENT PERFECT _____

PAST _____

PAST PERFECT _____

FUTURE _____

FUTURE PERFECT _____

- II. Write a synopsis in the 3rd person plural ("they") for the English verb *eat*.

PRESENT _____

PRESENT PERFECT _____

PAST _____

PAST PERFECT _____

FUTURE _____

FUTURE PERFECT _____

WHAT IS THE PRESENT TENSE?

The **PRESENT TENSE** indicates that the action is happening at the present time. It can be at the moment the speaker is speaking, a habitual action, or a general truth.

PRESENT TIME	I <i>see</i> you.
HABITUAL ACTION	He <i>smokes</i> constantly.
GENERAL TRUTH	The sun <i>rises</i> every day.

IN ENGLISH

There are three forms of the verb that indicate the present tense. Each form has a slightly different meaning:

SIMPLE PRESENT	Pan <i>watches</i> the nymph.
PRESENT PROGRESSIVE	Pan <i>is watching</i> the nymph.
PRESENT EMPHATIC	Pan <i>does watch</i> the nymph.

To ask questions, you need to use the progressive or emphatic form.

Is Pan watching the nymph?
Does Pan usually watch the nymph?

IN LATIN

Unlike in English, there is only one verb form to indicate the present tense. The Latin present tense is used to express the meaning of the simple, progressive, and emphatic forms of the English present tense.

The present tense in Latin is a simple tense formed by adding a set of personal endings to the present stem of the verb (see p. 58 and *What is a Verb Conjugation?*, p. 56).

Pan watches the nymph.

|
spectat

Pan is watching the nymph.

└──┘
spectat

Pan does watch the nymph.

└──┘
spectat

When translating a Latin verb in the present tense into English, you will have to choose the most appropriate of the three English meanings according to the context.

N. B. Since the Latin present is always indicated by the stem plus the ending of the verb without an auxiliary verb such as *is* and *does*, do not translate these English auxiliary verbs into Latin. Simply put the main verb in the present tense.



REVIEW

Below are three Latin sentences followed by their English translation.

- Write the English translation for each verb in the progressive form.
- Write the English translation for each verb in the emphatic form.
- Write each sentence in English as a question.

1. Puellae aquam sacram **portant**.

*The girls **carry** the sacred water.*

PROGRESSIVE FORM: _____

EMPHATIC FORM: _____

QUESTION: _____?

2. Virgō Vestālis ignem sacram **cūrat**.

*The Vestal Virgin **takes care** of the sacred fire.*

PROGRESSIVE FORM: _____

EMPHATIC FORM: _____

QUESTION: _____?

3. Virgīnēs Vestālēs in aede sacrā **habitāt**.

*The Vestal Virgins **live** in a sacred building.*

PROGRESSIVE FORM: _____

EMPHATIC FORM: _____

QUESTION: _____?

WHAT IS THE PAST TENSE?

The **PAST TENSE** is used to express an action that occurred previously, some time before the present time.

I saw you yesterday.

IN ENGLISH

There are several verb forms which indicate that the action took place in the past.

SIMPLE PAST	I worked
PAST PROGRESSIVE	I was working
PAST EMPHATIC	I did work
WITH HELPING VERB USED TO	I used to work
PRESENT PERFECT	I have worked

10

The simple past is a **SIMPLE TENSE**; that is, it consists of one word (*worked* in the example above). The other past tenses are called **VERB PHRASES**; i.e., they consist of more than one word, an auxiliary verb plus a main verb: *was working*, *did work*, *have worked* (see *What is an Auxiliary Verb?*, p. 75).

IN LATIN

There are two Latin tenses which correspond to the several verb forms above: the imperfect and the perfect (present perfect in English).

20

THE IMPERFECT TENSE

The imperfect is a simple tense formed with the present stem + the imperfect tense sign **-bā-** + personal endings (see pp. 57-9). The personal endings are the same as those of the present tense, except that the 1st person singular ends in **-m** (*spectā-* + *-ba-* + *m* → *spectābam* (*I watched*)).

There are several English verb forms that indicate that the imperfect should be used in Latin.

30

1. when the English verb form is in the past progressive tense (*were watching*)

The nymphs were watching the stag in the woods.

Nymphae cervum in silvīs spectābant.

imperfect

2. when the English verb form is in the past emphatic tense (*did work*)

*The women **did work** in the fields for a long time.*
 Diū fēminae in agrīs labōrābant.

imperfect

3. when the English verb form includes, or could include, the helping verb "used to" or "was accustomed to" (*used to work, was accustomed to work*)

*Narcissus **used to watch** his reflection in the pool.*
 Narcissus in stagnō imāginem suam spectābat.

imperfect

THE PERFECT TENSE

The perfect tense of all four conjugations is formed with a **PERFECT STEM** based on the third principal part of the verb and a special set of perfect personal endings.

1. **PRINCIPAL PART** — Identify the third principal part of a verb (see *What are the Principal Parts of a Verb?*, p. 51).

amō, amāre, amāvī, amātum

3rd principal part → perfect

2. **PERFECT STEM** — To find the perfect stem, drop the final -ī of the third principal part.

amāv-

The perfect stem is not only the stem to which the perfect personal endings (see 3 below) are added to form the perfect tense; it also serves as the stem to form the past perfect and future perfect tenses (see *What is the Past Perfect Tense?*, p. 69 and *What is the Future Perfect Tense?*, p. 73).

3. **PERSONAL ENDINGS** — Add the perfect personal endings. They are the same for all the conjugations.

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1 st	-ī	-imus
2 nd	-istī	-istis
3 rd	-it	-ērunt

The perfect tense has several English translations; for example **amāvī** can be translated *I loved*, *I have loved*, and *I did love*.

SELECTION OF THE IMPERFECT OR PERFECT TENSE

When discussing and describing past events and activities, both the imperfect and the perfect are used. Whether to put a verb in the perfect or the imperfect tense often depends upon the context. As a general guideline, the difference in the two tenses is as follows:

IMPERFECT → tells "how things used to be" or "what was going on" during a period of time

PERFECT → tells "what happened" during a fixed period of time

Here is an example. In English, the same form of the verb *to go*, namely "went," is used in the two answers below: "I *went* to the park." However, the tense of the Latin verb *īre* (*to go*) changes depending on the question asked.

■ "What happened?"

QUESTION: *What **did** you **do** yesterday?*

ANSWER: *I **went** to school.*

The question and answer tell "what happened yesterday;" therefore, the Latin equivalent of *did do* and *went* are in the perfect.

QUESTION: *Quid **ēgistī** heri?*

ANSWER: *Ivī in scholam.*

■ "How things used to be"

QUESTION: *What **did** you **all do** when you were children?*

ANSWER: *We **went** to school.*

The question and answer tell "how things used to be;" therefore, the Latin equivalent of *did do* and *went* are in the imperfect.

QUESTION: *Quid **agēbātis** quandō liberī erātis?*

ANSWER: *Ībāmus in scholam.*

■ "What was going on?"

Since the perfect and the imperfect indicate actions that took place at some time in the past, often during the same period, you will often find the two tenses intermingled in a sentence or a story.

*Callisto **was walking** in the woods when she **saw** a bear.*

Both actions *was walking* and *saw* took place at the same time in the past. What was going on? *Callisto **was walking*** → imperfect. What happened? *She **saw** a bear* → perfect.

Callistō per silvās **ambulābat** cum ursam **vīdit**.

imperfect

perfect

120

Consult your Latin textbook for additional guidelines to help you choose the appropriate tense. Practice by analyzing English paragraphs. Pick out the verbs in the past and indicate for each one if you would put it in the perfect or the imperfect. Sometimes both tenses are possible, but usually one of the two is more logical.



REVIEW

Circle the verbs in *italics* that would be put in the Imperfect and underline the verbs in *italics* that would be put in the Perfect in Latin.

I *was sitting* at home in the evening watching television. The dog *was sleeping* beside me, and I *was* not afraid because he *was* a good watch dog. My husband *was working* late, and my son *was sleeping* upstairs. Suddenly I *heard* a noise in the kitchen. The dog *sat up* and *barked*. I *ran* upstairs and *called* the police on the phone. They *arrived* in minutes and *found* that a broom had fallen out of the closet.