



Unit 4

Declension

LESSON

Grammar Goal

This lesson introduces the concept of **declension** for nouns.

Declension

As you learned in the previous lesson, Latin nouns change their endings. For example, the singular ending is different than the plural. The changing of endings (*inflection*) in nouns is called **declension**, and the various distinct endings are called **cases**. Latin has seven **cases**: *nominative*, *genitive*, *dative*, *accusative*, *ablative*, *vocative*, and *locative*. Five of these cases are more commonly used, and will be first introduced in our lessons (*nominative*, *genitive*, *dative*, *accusative*, and *ablative*).

Case

Each Latin **case** is associated with a different function or meaning. For example, the **nominative case** is used to express the subject of a sentence, whereas the **accusative case**, indicates the direct object. Study the chart below and memorize the function of the **nominative**, **genitive**, and **accusative cases**.

CASE	FUNCTION	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
NOMINATIVE	subject	subject of a clause
GENITIVE	possession	of, or 's
ACCUSATIVE	direct object	direct object of a clause

Nominative Case

As mentioned, the subject of a Latin sentence or clause (a group of words with a subject and a predicate) is in the **nominative case**. In English, the subject of a sentence or clause generally comes before the verb.

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Genitive Case

The genitive case is used to express possession in Latin. In English, possession is indicated by adding *of* before a noun or adding a 's to the end.

Accusative Case

In Latin the direct object of a sentence or clause is in the **accusative case**. English generally places the direct object right after the verb.

Study the chart of a Latin noun below in the **nominative**, **genitive**, and **accusative cases** (singular and plural). Look closely at how the ending changes, and the translation of the word into English.

SINGULAR

Case	Latin Form	English Translation
Nominative	puella	girl (<i>as a subject</i>)
Genitive	puellae	of the girl, the girl's
Accusative	puellam	girl (<i>as a direct object</i>)

PLURAL

Nominative	puellae	girls (<i>as a subject</i>)
Genitive	puellarum	of the girls, the girls'
Accusative	puellas	girls (<i>as a direct object</i>)

Nota Bene

You might have noticed that some of the case endings are the same. The context of a Latin clause or sentence will help you decide the case of a noun. The Latin writer will give clues in the words around the noun to help you understand the sentence.

Latin also does not have a definite or indefinite article, *the* or *a(n)*. When translating Latin nouns, it is up to you to include the article that fits best.

STUDY GUIDE

Key Terms

- Using the Lesson, define the following key terms:
- Memorize the key terms.

Declension:

Case:

Nominative Case:

Genitive Case:

Accusative Case:

Vocabulary to Memorize

Nouns

ancilla, maidservant

domina, lady

fabula, story

fera, wild beast

Verb

necat, he (she or it) kills

vocat, he (she or it) calls

EXERCISES

Identify the Case and Number

- For each noun, identify the case and number.
- If there are multiple possibilities, write down all that apply.

1. **Exemplum:** puellae genitive singular, nominative plural
2. fortunarum _____
3. causas _____
4. silvam _____
5. terra _____
6. lunae _____

Translate into English

- Translate each noun into English.
- If there are multiple translations for the noun (due to the case and number), write down all that apply.
- If the noun is nominative, indicate that the word is the subject by writing "subject", if it is an accusative, write "direct object."

7. **Exemplum:** puellas girls (direct object)
8. fugam _____
9. lunae _____
10. terrarum _____
11. nauta _____
12. iniurias _____

Translate into English

- Translate each sentence into English.

13. **Exemplum:** Domina puellas vocat.

Example: The lady calls the girls.

14. Nautae fabulas narrant.

15. Agricola terram laborat.

16. Ancilla dominam nuntiat.

17. Agricolae feras necant.

LATIN COMPOSITION

Instructions

- Rewrite the following sentences, changing the singular nouns to plural ones.
- If the subject of the sentence becomes plural, change the verb ending to make it agree.
- Keep the same order of words in the sentence.

Follow the steps below to develop good composition habits. Change the underlined words in the example.

Step 1: Read the example.

Agricola terram ruri laborat, et filia agricolae in silva ambulat.

Step 2: Prepare to Write. Use the boxes below to understand the words in the example and to select words to use in your composition.

Important Words from Example

ruri, noun = in the country

in, preposition = in

ambulat, verb = he (she or it) walks

Use your study guides to learn the meaning of the other words.

Step 3: Write your composition.

LATIN READING PASSAGE

- Read the passage aloud, multiple times.

In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram. Terra autem erat inanis et vacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas.

English Translation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. However, the earth was formless and empty. And darkness was on the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was being moved above the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

Grammar Exercise

- Using the grammar lesson and the English translation, identify the case and number of the following words.

- 1. terram _____
- 2. terra _____
- 3. tenebrae _____
- 4. aquas _____