

## Chapter 24

**RULE 1:** The noun/subject of an ablative absolute is “absolute” from (i.e. not a constituent of) the main sentence, in theory.

**RULE 2:** The passive periphrastic carries a sense of obligation or necessity (“must, have to”). It uses the dative case (without a preposition) to express the agent.

### I. Grammar

#### A. The Ablative Absolute

There are basically three types of ablative absolutes in Latin:

1. ablative noun + ablative perfect participle (the most common type): “with *X* having been *Y*-ed”;
2. ablative noun + ablative present participle: “with *XY*-ing”;
3. ablative noun + ablative noun/adjective: “with *X* (being) *Y*” [there is no present participle for *sum*].

As with participles, reinforce the literal meaning of the ablative absolute first. Only then teach the less literal—and arguably better!—English translations of ablative absolutes as clauses (“when, if, since, although”). That is, stress the simple, direct meaning of the Latin words in an absolute absolute, before you try to relate them to the main sentence.

You should also call to students’ attention that the “absolute” part of the ablative absolute means that the construction is grammatically “removed” from the main sentence. In other words, the subject of the ablative absolute should not be a constituent of the main sentence, in theory—there are many exceptions in Plautus, for instance—and if the noun in the ablative absolute is used elsewhere in the sentence, the participle should be attached to the noun there, making an ablative absolute unnecessary.

For the sake of simplicity, I advise calling the noun of the ablative absolute the “subject” and the participle the “verb.” Besides making the question “What case and why?” easier to ask and answer, this also helps with the transition to translating ablative absolutes as clauses since these constituents most often take on the functions of subject and verb in that process.

For the little understood history of the ablative absolute, see Wheelock, p. 111, note 1.

#### B. The Passive Periphrastic

Arguably, the most difficult thing about the passive periphrastic is its name, so I always start by explaining the term itself. “Periphrastic” is derived from Greek and refers to a “roundabout (*peri-*) way of saying (*-phrastic*) something”—cf. the Latin-based term *circumlocution* (“speak around”)—in this case “something said in an indirect way using the passive voice.” A more descriptive and precise name might be the “gerundive of obligation or necessity.”

While it is relatively easy to learn that this construction adds a sense of “must” or “should” to the basic meaning of the verb, it’s far more difficult for students to remember that the Latin construction is always passive, implying “must **be**, should **be**.” You must stress this—or, to say it *latiné*, this must be stressed by you.

In addition to that, there are three important points about the passive periphrastic:

1. **Voice.** Because the Latin construction is always passive and the English is not, often the best translation of a Latin passive periphrastic entails changing the voice of the verb from passive to active in English (and making

other necessary alterations in the sentence). And because Roman writers often use this construction, this inversion of voice will happen with some frequency in translation. However, students should learn to do this only after mastering the literal translation of the passive periphrastic first.

2. **“Have to.”** In this same regard, English offers its own peculiarities. When it implies necessity, “must” has no true past-tense form—“must have” is not the past tense of “must” but implies probability (e.g. “He must have left,” meaning that he has *probably* departed)—thus, to create a past tense for “must” (i.e. to show obligation), English is obliged to use another verb form, “had to” (the past form of “has/have to”). This is another example of “composite conjugation” (cf. *go/went* and *am/is/be*), comparable to Latin *fero/tuli* and *tollo/sustuli* (see [Chapter 22](#)); see also [Chapter 27](#), *bonus*.
3. **Dative of Agent.** Unlike other passive forms, the passive periphrastic does not take an ablative agent but a dative of agent. Since no dative form will ever be the object of a free-standing preposition (i.e. one that is not in compound with a verb, see [Chapter 35](#)), there can be no distinction in the passive periphrastic between personal and impersonal agent, in the same way that the presence or absence of the preposition *ab* distinguishes agents in other passive constructions. [The dative of agent grew out of the original and most basic sense of the dative, that is, “reference” or the implication of the dative person or thing in the action of the verb (see [Chapter 38](#)). For example, *hoc est quaerendum mihi* moved easily from “This thing must be sought **and it’s my responsibility**” to “This thing must be sought **by me**.” That the future active participle had in origin no sense of voice or tense (see [Chapter 23](#), History of Latin Participles) contributed most likely to its failure to adopt the same sorts of ablative agents as true passives in Latin.]

Click [here](#) for a worksheet which helps students practice translating ablative absolutes and passive periphrastics. As you did in the last chapter, reinforce to students that each type of participle has a specific expectation: present and future active participles expect (accusative) objects, perfect passive participles expect ablative agents, and future passive participles in passive periphrastics expect dative agents.

## II. Vocabulary

- **quisque:** = the interrogative pronoun (*quis, quid*) + the suffix *-que*. It might help students to know that the adjective for “each” (*quique, quaeque, quodque*) works in much the same way: the interrogative adjective (*qui, quae, quod*) + *-que*. *Quisque* is seen most often in connection with *suus* (e.g. *suus cuique*, “to each his own”), a relative pronoun, a superlative or a numeral.
- **re(d):** This is an inseparable verbal prefix, but unlike most other verbal prefixes, *re(d)-* cannot be used as an independent preposition. Along with *dis-*, *se(d)-* and a few others, it belongs in a special category related to but discrete from prepositions. Students should be aware that most often *re(d)-* adds only the connotation “back” or “behind” to the verb’s basic meaning; see below, *recipio* (“take back”) and *relinquo* (“leave behind”).
- **cur:** = the interrogative stem *\*qu(o)-* + the adverbial ending *-r* (cf. English **here, where**). The Old Latin form was *quor*, later changing to *cur*, cf. Greek *phôr* vs. Latin *fur*. The vowel change of *-o-* to *-u-* in *cur* may be due to Etruscan influence.
- **accipio, recipio, pello, expello, quaero, relinquo:** All these verbs belong to the third or third *-io* conjugations. This affords a good opportunity to review the differences in these difficult verb systems. Note also that:
  - a. Four of the verbs are compounds (*accipio, recipio, expello, relinquo*), which presents a chance to remind students to memorize the forms and meanings of base verbs first. After that, they should learn how the prefixes modify the basic meaning(s). Note also that reduplication in perfect forms is normally lost when the verb is compounded (e.g. *pepuli/expuli, tetigi/contigi, cucurri/recurrî*); however, there are exceptions (e.g. *dedi/tradidi*).
  - b. The present bases of *relinquo* and *pello* contain a nasal infix, which is lost in the perfect (see [Chapter 12](#)): *reli-n-quo* > *relinquo* and *\*pel-no* > *pello* (cf. *\*tol-no* > *tollo*). This is why there is only one *-l-* in *pepuli* and no *-n-* in *reliqui*.
  - c. The perfect bases of these verbs are formed in various ways: (1) vowel lengthening, *-cêpi, -lîqui*, (2) reduplication, *pepuli*, and (3) the addition of a *w*-sound, *quaesivi* (as if the verb belonged to fourth conjugation); see [Chapter 12](#).
  - d. The *-r-* in *quaero* is the product of rhotacism (see [Chapter 1](#)). Linguists reconstruct the pre-rhotacized form as *\*quaiso*.

### III. Sentences

Focus on those sentences which have ablative absolutes (P&R 1, 2, 3, 6; SA 2, 3, 4, 7, 8) and passive periphrastics (P&R 2, 8; SA 1, 5, 6, 9) and encourage students to translate these constructions literally first and then as clauses. They will need to understand the "clausal" translations of these constructions in order to do the English-to-Latin sentences successfully.

### IV. Quiz 1

#### Quiz 1

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NOMEN TUUM

#### I. Give the Latin marker for the following verb components. (10 pts.)

<b>EXAMPLE: imperfect tense</b>	<b>-ba</b>
<b>future active participle</b>	
<b>future passive participle</b>	
<b>future tense (I/II conjugations)</b>	
<b>future tense (III/IV conjugations)</b>	
<b>present active participle</b>	

#### II. Translate the following participles and indicate whether they expect a direct object (DO) or an agent (A) after them. (10 pts.)

1. pressus
2. relinquentes
3. ridens
4. quaerendum
5. narraturus

#### III. Translate the following phrases or sentences LITERALLY. (10 pts.)

1. signo a Caesare dato
2. libertas petenda erat
3. ducibus hostes expellentibus
4. haec vobis cupienda sunt
5. aliquo rege

#### IV. Vocabulary. Give the proper Latin vocabulary entry for each of the following words. For nouns, give nominative, genitive, and gender; for verbs, give the principal parts. (20 pts.)

1. receive (give *one* of the two verbs which mean this)
2. power
3. show
4. gift
5. ever
6. why

7. turn