

Chapter 25

RULE 1: Indirect Statement = Accusative Subject + Infinitive Verb [There is no “that” in Latin!]

I. Grammar

This is one of the most difficult chapters students will face. I advise scheduling at least one extra day for it, which allows time to introduce the material, cover two worksheets and do the sentences. One of the worksheets addresses the formation of infinitives and simple indirect statements, and the other focuses on the different ways in which Latin and English express indirect statement.

A. Formation of Infinitives

The formation introduced in this chapter is far and away the easiest part of the lesson. Indeed, only one infinitive form, the perfect active, is entirely new to the students—the future passive infinitive is so rare that it hardly warrants a first-year student’s attention—the others they have already learned either in whole (present active and passive) or in part (perfect passive and future active).

Start by pointing out to students that Latin has a full set of infinitives, unlike participles; that is, it has all six infinitives, encompassing two voices (active/passive) and three tenses (past/present/future). Next, show how to form the perfect active infinitive by adding *-isse* to the perfect active base (the third principal part minus *-i*). Then point out the periphrastic infinitives—the perfect passive and the future active—which are a combination of the appropriate participle (giving the infinitive its tense and voice) and *esse* (representing the “mood”). In particular, note that, since the periphrastic infinitives include participles which are by definition adjectives and thus must agree with an antecedent, the participle part of the infinitive will decline and agree with its subject or whatever the participle refers to (i.e. usually who or what is the “subject” of the infinitive).

Stop here and do the first half (top) of the first worksheet entitled “Practice: Infinitives and Indirect Statement.” Click [here](#) for that worksheet.

B. The History of Latin Infinitives

For present infinitives, see [Chapter 1](#) (active) and [Chapter 18](#) (passive). In origin, *-isse* is a combination of the perfect stem ending *-is-* and the true (i.e. unhotacized) infinitive ending *-se*. The rarely seen future passive infinitive was formed from the active periphrastic future infinitive, e.g. *cubitum ire* (supine + infinitive of *eo*: “to go lie down”), to which the passive marker *-i* was added to reinforce the voice.

C. Indirect Statement

1. Indirect Statement in English

As always when facing complex constructions, you’re best to explicate English usage before launching into the Latin:

1. Begin by reviewing what a **subordinate clause** is (see above, [Chapter 17](#)). Give several examples: “When I come, . . .,” “After you go, . . .,” “Wherever a 500-pound canary wants to sit, . . .”
2. Then define **indirect statement**: “a subordinate clause which relates a thought or statement indirectly” (e.g. “He said *that he was very good*.”). It helps to point out the opposite, **direct statement**, which entails quoting a person’s words or ideas directly (“He said, “*I am so good!*”).

Thus, there are the two essential ingredients in an indirect statement:

1. The first is a verb of perception or, as my old Latin teacher used to say, “verbs of the head” (i.e. verbs which encompass things most often done from the neck up: thinking, speaking, hearing, sensing, etc.). For a list of verbs which can introduce indirect statement, see Wheelock, p.119 (bottom of the page).
2. The second is a subordinate clause with its own subject and verb. This clause is the indirect statement itself.

In this respect, the English and Latin manner of expressing indirect statement are not so far apart. Moreover, English can express indirect statement the same way Latin does, using an accusative-infinitive construction, which means that students already have some experience with making the transition between this and “that” clauses. They just aren’t used to doing it as much as they will have to in Latin class.

The most significant difference between indirect statement in English and Latin is that the classical Romans lacked a conjunction equivalent to the word “that”—that is, not the demonstrative or relative pronoun “that,” but the “that” that introduces many English indirect statements and calls for a finite verb rather than an infinitive—fortunately, some English verbs regularly take both the “that” construction and the accusative-infinitive construction which will help students see how to make the transition. Consider, for a moment, “believe”:

1. I believe *him to be* a good man.
2. I believe *that he is* a good man.

“Believe” has the advantage for English students that it can take both an accusative/infinitive construction and a “that” clause. It’s useful to remind students that, when they forget or feel uncertain about how to change from the first sentence type (accusative/infinitive) to the second (“that”)—after all, that’s what they’ll do most often when translating from Latin—remembering how “believe” works in English can help them recall the proper way to make this shift.

2. Indirect Statement in Latin: No “that” in Latin!

First, remind students there’s no Latin equivalent to sentence 2 (above), because there’s “no ‘that’ in Latin,” more memorable words from my old Latin teacher. Next, I ask the students to describe sentence 1 (above) in terms of Latin grammar, with the hope they’ll say the following

SUBJECT	MAIN VERB	ACCUSATIVE	INFINITIVE	PREDICATE (= ACC!)
I	consider	him	to be	a good man.

I tell the students that this is the only way Latin forms indirect statement, so Romans had to use this with all “verbs of the head” where we use “that” most often. Say, for instance, I want to say “I say *that he is a good man.*” Latin will have to say “I say *him to be a good man*” or “I claim *him to be . . .*” or “I think *him to be . . .*”, all places where we would use “that.” In effect, what students will have to learn to do is change the nominative subject of an English “that” clause to an accusative form in Latin and alter the English indicative verb to a Latin infinitive, the same way that “that he is” in sentence 2 is equivalent to “him to be” in sentence 1.

3. Relative Tense in Indirect Statement

The addition of tense change makes the difficult only more so. Since infinitives, like participles, operate on relative time—that is, their tense is relative to that of the main verb—the translation of the infinitive in indirect statement depends on the tense of the main verb. Also as with participles, the present infinitive shows contemporaneous action, the perfect prior action and the future subsequent action. All this becomes more urgent with indirect statement than the other relative-tense constructions students have encountered so far (ablative absolutes, participles used in a causal, concessive or conditional sense) because the change from relative time to absolute time must take place when they translate indirect statement from Latin since English cannot tolerate the use of accusative-infinitive constructions with many of the most common “verbs of the head.”

Examples are the best way to clarify this. With a present-tense main verb (time +0), there is no problem with the conversion from accusative-infinitive indirect statement to the English “that” construction, because infinitive tenses correspond directly to their finite equivalents:

PRESENT MAIN VERB		English	=	Latin
(“I say”) [time = +0]	1.	I say that he is good	=	I say him to be a good man (present infinitive = +0) <i>Dico eum esse bonum</i>
	2.	I say that he will be good	=	I say him to be about to be good (future infinitive = +1) <i>Dico eum futurum esse bonum</i>
	3.	I say that he was/has been good	=	I say him to have been good (perfect infinitive = -1) <i>Dico eum fuisse bonum</i>

The same is true if the main verb is future tense (+1):

FUTURE MAIN VERB		English	=	Latin
(“I will say”) [time = +1]	4.	I will say that he is good	=	I will say him to be good (present infinitive = +0) <i>Dicam eum esse bonum</i>
	5.	I will say that he will be good	=	I will say him to be about to be good (future infinitive = +1) <i>Dicam eum futurum esse bonum</i>
	6.	I will say that he was good	=	I will say him to have been good (perfect infinitive = -1) <i>Dicam eum fuisse bonum</i>

Problems arise when the main verb is past-tense (-1):

PAST MAIN VERB		English	=	Latin
(“I said”) [time = -1]	7.	I said that he was good	=	I said him to be good (present infinitive = +0)

PAST MAIN VERB		English	=	Latin
				<i>Dixi eum esse bonum</i>
8.	I said that he would be good	=	I said him to be about to be good (future infinitive = +1) <i>Dixi eum futurum esse bonum</i>	
9.	I said that he had been good	=	I said him to have been good (perfect infinitive = -1) <i>Dixi eum fuisse bonum</i>	

Note the following:

- In sentence 7, *was* is contemporaneous with the main verb—both are past tense (-1)—so the proper infinitive to use is the present or contemporaneous infinitive (*esse*).
- In sentence 8, *would* shows subsequent action (+1), and the proper Latin infinitive to use is, therefore, the future infinitive (*futurum esse*). [I tell students that for the time being—until they study conditional sentences in Chapter 33—English *would* is a signal that the Latin sentence contains an indirect statement with a past-tense main verb and a future infinitive.]
- In sentence 9, *had* which is the English modal signifying the pluperfect tense (-2) is the result of a past-tense infinitive (-1) compounded onto a past-tense main verb (-1); so, the proper infinitive to use in this case is the perfect infinitive (*fuisse*).

At this point, most likely, students' minds will be swimming with new forms and combined tenses, especially in the last three sentences (7-9). The best way to part the waters is by appealing again to English examples. Return to "believe" and change the main verbs in sentences 7-9 from "said" to "believed":

1. I believed **that he was good** = I believed **him to be good**
2. I believed that **he would be good** = I believed **him to be about/going to be good**
3. I believed **that he had been good** = I believed **him to have been good**

Stress to students that they have only to expand the knowledge they already have of English infinitive usage to comprehend the essential nature of indirect statement in Latin. For all its complexity, Latin indirect statement introduces no syntactic forms entirely foreign to English. All they have to remember and practice doing is three things: (1) leaving out "that," (2) changing nominative subjects into the accusative and (3) turning absolute-tense main verbs to relative-tense infinitives.

Now take the students back to the worksheet and go over the second half of the first page, focusing on the transition from relative-time constructions (infinitives) to their absolute-time equivalents (finite verbs). Click [here](#) for that worksheet.

4. The Subject in Indirect Statement

Because the verb of indirect statement is an infinitive—not a finite verb which takes a nominative subject—the subject will be accusative, just as in English: "I believe *him* to be good." That means that, if the verb is linking, the predicate noun or adjective will be accusative also, to agree with the subject: "I believe the teacher to be *him*."

Finally, when the subject of the indirect statement is the same as that of the main sentence, it will be reflexive: "I believe *myself* to be a good person," "You believe *yourself* to be a good person," etc. Here, Latin uses the first- and second-

person pronouns which, students will hopefully remember, are identical to the first- and second-person reflexives, e.g. “I believe *me* to be a good person.”

In the third person, however, sense demands a distinction between “him(self)” and “him” (someone else). In Latin, the reflexive *se* is used for “him(self)” when the subject in indirect statement is the same as that of the main sentence. This is true for both singular (“him/her/it[self]”) and plural (“them[selves]”):

- SINGULAR: He believes *himself* to be (**se esse**) a good person.
- PLURAL: They believe *themselves* to be (**se esse**) good people.

When the third-person subject of indirect statement is non-reflexive, Latin uses a demonstrative pronoun:

- SINGULAR: He believes *him* (i.e. someone else) to be (**eum esse**) a good person.
- PLURAL: They believe *them* (i.e. some other people) to be (**eos esse**) good people.

The same holds true for *suus*, *-a*, *-um* and *eius/eorum/earum*: “He believes me to be **his** (own) friend (= *suum*)” versus “He believes me to be **his** (i.e. someone else’s) friend (= *eius*).”

Finally, help students practice turning “that” clauses into accusative-infinitive constructions, and vice versa, by doing the last two pages of the worksheet, an adaptation of Horace’s famous encounter with the bore (*Satires* 1.4). Click [here](#) for that worksheet.

II. Vocabulary

- **hostis**: An *i*-stem noun. The Latin plural corresponds to an English collective singular, “the enemy” (versus the singular “an enemy”). [*Hostis* is cognate with English both “guest” and “host” (each meaning “stranger” from the other’s point of view) and Greek *xenos* (“foreigner”), all derived from Indo-European **ghostis* (Greek uses the zero grade **ghs-* (> *ks-*) + *-enos*). From Latin *hostis*, English derives *host* in the sense of “the host(s) of heaven.” One Indo-European base underlies *hostis*, *civis* and *homo*, **ghem-/ghom-* meaning “human being.”]
- **ait**: This is a defective verb used mainly in the third person (but *aio* and *ais* are attested) and restricted to the present and imperfect tenses. [*Aio*, which the Romans pronounced “*ai-yo*” and sometimes even spelled *aiio*, comes from **agyo*, cf. *maior* < **magyos*, *peior* < **pedyos* (see [Chapter 27](#)); the *-g-* can still be seen in compounds, *adagium* and *prodigium*.]
- **credo**: *Credidi* is a peculiar “internally reduplicated” perfect, as if *credo* were a compound of *do* (*dedi*) like *trado* (*tradidi*). [The analogy with *trado* is the simplest explanation for the unusual reduplication, but the real reason may, in fact, stem from Indo-European. It has been suggested that **cred-* originally meant “a pledge” and to this base has been added **dhe-*, the verb base meaning “put, make” (coming into English as *do*, into Greek as *the-* and into Latin as *fac-*). The new compounded verb form, **cred-dhe-*, thus meant “to set a pledge,” a sense later extended into the realm of believing, the symbolic relationship involved into pledging one’s trust. This compound, it is surmised, lies behind the reduplication.]
- **nego**: In Latin, this verb is used as the main verb to negate an indirect statement (which then, of course, does not have a negator), where English uses “say” and puts a negator in the indirect statement. In other words, Latin says, “He **denied** (*negavit*) that he was bad”, where English says, “He said that he was **not** bad.” Students should learn to negate an indirect statement which is introduced with “say” this way, for instance, in the English-to-Latin sentence (P&R 13) on page 120.
- **puto**: This verb originally meant “prune, trim” in reference to vegetation (cf. *putus* “clean, pure”), a sense which was later extended to accounting (“to clear up or settle accounts”) and then generalized to all sorts of mental processes. This is one of many pieces of evidence that Rome was originally a farming community. Quite a few other Latin words originate as agricultural terms which were later expanded through metaphor: *pecunia* “money” from *pecus* “cattle” (wealth as an abundance of cattle), *emolumentum* “profit” from *molere* “to grind” (gain as the amount of flour milled from grain), *laetus* “fat, rich, productive; and later, happy” from *laetare* “to manure (a field)” (happiness as the result of having a bountiful field), and *rivalis* “rival (in love)” from *rivus* “a stream” (a rival for the affections of a mistress as the counterpart to a neighbor who quarrels with you over water-rights).

- **adulescens:** This word is related to *adole(sc)o*, “to burn; to pile up (an altar).” The presumption seems to be that youth “burns, is hot” with love.
- **huc:** The long mark—which is mandatory!—distinguishes this adverb from *hic*, the nominative singular masculine form of the demonstrative pronoun.
- **nescio:** The adjective *nescius* (“ignorant”) which is based on this verb became in Old French *nice*, meaning “foolish” (13th c.), then “wanton” (14th c.), “coy” (15th c.), “dainty, subtle” (16th c.), “appetizing, agreeable” (18th c.) and finally today’s “reasonably good.” Thus, it evolved from “stupid” to “pleasant”!

III. Sentences

With the extra day on this chapter you should have plenty of time to cover the sentences thoroughly. Focus on those with indirect statement (P&R 2, 7, 10; all the *Sententiae Antiquae*) and insist that students identify the “accusative subject of indirect statement” and the “infinitive verb of indirect statement.” These show up as answer for “What mood and why?” and “What case and why?” so often, I have students abbreviate them as “Inf, VIS” and “Acc, SIS.”