

# Chapter 27

**RULE 1:** Adjective bases ending in *-l-* and *-r-* form superlatives ending in *-limus* and *-rimus*, respectively.

## I. Grammar

This is largely a chapter of memorization: (1) two rules for forming "irregular" superlatives; and (2) seven adjectives which exhibit "irregular" comparison. Review with the students the forms introduced here and as much as possible leave the memorizing to them. Concentrate, instead, on preparing them for the test which follows this chapter. With that in mind, be sure to allot plenty of time for the sentences in this chapter, since they encompass the best review of the constructions which the students will see on the test. If you didn't have time for the review sheet in the last chapter, this is another opportunity to go over it. Click [here](#) for that worksheet.

There is one especially important irregularity to call to the students' attention in Chapter 27. The singular of *plus* operates as a (neuter) noun and takes a partitive genitive after it (cf. *satis*); conversely, the plural (*plures/plura*) functions as an adjective.

### A. The History of "Irregular" Comparison in Latin

The superlatives ending *-limus* and *-rimus* are the product of a regular assimilation of consonants: adjective base ending *-l* + (?)*-semo-* > *-limus*, cf. *vel-se* > *velle*; and adjective base ending *-r* + (?)*-semo-* > *-rimus*, cf. *fer-se* > *ferre*.

- **bonus:** As with most "irregular" comparisons, *bonus*, *melior*, and *optimus* represents a composite comparison, a single system formed from the union of originally unrelated words. English *good*, *better*, and *best* is another example of composite comparison, in which the *\*bat-* stem underlying *better* and *best* is related to an Old English word *bôt* ("remedy, compensation") which renders also *boot* in the sense "profit" (cf. booty). The original base of *melior* is uncertain, but *optimus* is reconstructed as *ob-* (the preposition in the sense "in front, before") + *-timus* (the superlative suffix seen also in *in-timus*, *ul-timus*, originally denoting extremeness).
- **magnus:** The base is *\*mag-* to which *-n-* has been added in the positive form of the adjective. This *-n-* is a common adjective suffix, seen also in **dig-nus** and **ple-nus**; cf. also Greek **dei-nos** (from the *dei-* base meaning "fear") and **sem-nos** (from the *sem-* base meaning "revere"). The comparative *maior/maius* loses the *-n-* suffix and is simply the product of *mag-* + *-ios* (see [Chapter 26](#)). Note that in Latin *-gi-* and *-di-* become consonantal *-i* (=j), cf. *lovis* from early Latin *Diovis*. *Maximus* = *\*mag-* + *\*-semos* (or *\*-temos*).
- **malus:** This represents another composite comparison utilizing two different adjective stems: *mal-* and *ped-*. *Peior* = *ped-* + *\*-ios* (see *magis* above); *pessimus* = *ped-* + *\*-semos* (or *\*-temos*). The origin of the *ped-* base is uncertain.
- **multus:** Yet another composite comparison, in this case of the *mult-* and the *pl(e)-* stems. The *pl(e)-* stem is associated with the *ple-* verb base meaning "fill" (cf. *pleo*, *plenus*; Greek *pleo*, *polus*). It is tempting, however, to see contamination from the *pl-* base meaning "fold, make many" (cf. *plico*, *duplex*, *multiplex*), cognate by Grimm's Law to English *fold*. The *-us* ending of the comparative *plus* may have been borrowed from *minus* which is not a comparative in origin at all (see *parvus* below). The plural is regular: *\*ple-ios-es* > *pleores* (by rhotacism) > *plures* (by analogy to *plus*). Likewise, *\*ple-* + *-is-* + *-(s)ema* > archaic *plisima* (attested in the *Carmen Saliare*) > *plirim-* (by rhotacism) > *plurim-* (by analogy to *plus*).
- **parvus:** *Parvus* has a suffix, *-v-*, seen also in *salvus* ("safe"), *clivus* ("slope") and *arvum* ("field"). The base *par-* without the suffix can be seen in *parum(per)*. The comparative *minor/minus* is not a comparative in origin but a simple adjective, *minu-* + *-s*, from the same stem which produces the verb *minuo* ("lessen"). The comparative sense derives from the meaning of the stem. As often happens with correlative pairs or opposites, *minus* influenced *plus* by adding a *-u-*, creating dual forms linked by meaning and form. The superlative adds the suffix *\*-mo-* to the *min(u)-* base.
- **prae/pro:** Originally, *primus* = *\*pris-* + the superlative suffix *\*-mo-*. The *-s-* in *\*pris-* is lost through a process which deletes *-s-* before voiced consonants, e.g. *\*is-dem*, *\*quis-dam*.

- **superus**: Syncope, the loss of a short vowel/syllable in an unstressed position (cf. English *gen'ral, ev'ry*), often does not take place in Latin when the syllable following is short, hence **superus** and **superior** but *supremus*. For *summus*, see [Chapter 26](#).

## II. Vocabulary

- **sol**: Cognate with English *sun* and Greek *helios*, *sol* derives from the Indo-European base \**savol* or \**savel*. For loss of intervocalic *w* (*v* in Latin), compare *Mars* which comes originally from *Mavors*.
- **acer**: This adjective **contracts** (base = *acr-*). Note the special feminine form *acris*.
- **facilis**: Meaning literally, "do-able," *facilis* has the widely attested adjective suffix *-il-* ("able"), cf. *habilis, gracilis, similis*.
- **pulcher**: This adjective contracts to *pulchr-* (see [Chapter 5](#)). The unusual *-ch-* has an interesting history. In Plautus' day, as many Greek words were infiltrating Rome, aspirated letters (phi, chi, theta) were written and pronounced in their unaspirated form (pi, kappa, tau). But shortly after 150 BCE it became a mark of refined speech to reintroduce aspirates. This vogue went so far as to aspirate some native Latin words not of Greek origin. Cicero grumbles that he follows this practice against his better judgment and retains the non-native aspiration seen in some basic Latin words, such as *pulcher* and *triumphus* (*Orator* 48.160). Quintilian also mentions over-aspiration in the case of *chorona, praecho* and *chenturio* (*Inst.* 1.5.20).
- **sapiens**: The metaphor behind this word equates erudition with taste. It finds a counterpart in the English expression "tasteful," meaning "appreciating what is beautiful and decorous," implying the wisdom which comes of having sampled things widely and thus recognizing the best of fine literature, philosophy, or other arts and sciences.
- **similis**: This adjectives comes from the Indo-European stem \**sem-/som-*. The same base appears in *semper, semel, simul*, as well as Greek *heis* and English *same* (see [Chapter 3](#)). *Sim-ilis* is equivalent in formation to Greek *hom-alos* ("level").
- **appello**: = *ad-* + *pello*, literally "push toward," hence "accost, sue" and later "call by name."
- **felix**: Originally an agricultural term, *felix* was later extended in meaning; see [Chapter 25](#) (s.v. *puto*). The base *fe-* comes from a root meaning "suckle," cf. *femina* "one giving suckle" (see [Chapter 16](#)) and *fecundus* "abounding in fertility." *Felix* in its basic agricultural sense carried a connotation of "fruit-bearing, fertile." Later, its meaning was extended to "favored by the gods, auspicious, lucky, happy, favorable."

## III. Sentences

### Practice and Review

1. Note *quam* + superlative
1. Ask students how *quam pessimus* would be expressed if it were an ablative of comparison.

## IV. Review for Test 1

### Test 1: Review

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#### NOMEN TUUM

I. VERB FORMS. Translate the following verb forms into English. Give all pertinent information. [If the form does not have case, number or gender, leave those spaces blank.] (30 pts.)

| Verb    | TENSE | VOICE | CASE | NUMBER | GENDER |
|---------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| 1. peti |       |       |      |        |        |

| Verb                    | TENSE | VOICE | CASE | NUMBER | GENDER |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>2. relictâ</b>       |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>3. versurum esse</b> |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>4. putatas esse</b>  |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>5. credidi</b>       |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>6. ridenda</b>       |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>7. ostendisse</b>    |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>8. nescientes</b>    |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>9. quaesitororum</b> |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |
| <b>10. pellere</b>      |       |       |      |        |        |
| Translation             |       |       |      |        |        |

**II. CONSTRUCTIONS.** Translate the following phrases or sentences into English. Be sure that your translation properly reflects the tense and voice of the verb forms. (20 pts.)

1. servo a ducibus expulso
2. adolescentibus veritatem audientibus
3. cupiditas bono non accipienda est
4. quoque cive
5. beatior deo

**III. COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES.** Supply the proper positive, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives below. Give ONLY masculine nominative singular forms. (10 pts.)

| #  | POSITIVE | COMPARATIVE | SUPERLATIVE |
|----|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. |          |             | pessimus    |
| 2. | magnus   |             |             |

| #  | POSITIVE | COMPARATIVE | SUPERLATIVE |
|----|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 3. |          |             | supremus    |
| 4. |          | similior    |             |
| 5. | pulcher  |             |             |

**IV. SENTENCES.** Translate the following sentences into lucid English which closely reflects the grammar of the Latin sentences. Answer the grammar questions appended. (40 pts.)

1. Negaverunt **sedona** daturus esse alicui **quem** nesciverunt.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| What case is <b>se</b> and why?   |  |
| What case is <b>dona</b> and why? |  |
| What case is <b>quem</b> and why? |  |

2. **Hostibus** eo **die** victis, orator **populo** narravit timorem servitutis expulsum esse.

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| What case is <b>Hostibus</b> and why? |  |
| What case is <b>die</b> and why?      |  |
| What case is <b>populo</b> and why?   |  |

3. Primus credit sole **essedeum** maiorem aliis **dis**.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| What mood is <b>esse</b> and why? |  |
| What case is <b>deum</b> and why? |  |
| What case is <b>dis</b> and why?  |  |

## ANSWERS

### I. VERB FORMS

- peti*: present passive (infinitive, hence no case, number or gender); "to be sought"
- relicta*: perfect passive (participle), ablative singular feminine; "(by/with/from her) having been left behind"
- versurum esse*: future active (infinitive), nominative singular neuter or accusative singular masculine/neuter; "(him/it) to be about to turn"
- putatas esse*: perfect passive (infinitive), accusative plural feminine; "(them = women) to have been thought"
- credidi*: perfect active (indicative!, hence no case or gender, but the number is (first person) singular); "I have believed"
- ridenda*: future passive (participle), nominative singular feminine OR neuter plural nominative/accusative; "(she/things) about to be laughed at"
- ostendisse*: perfect active (infinitive, hence no case, number or gender); "to have shown"
- nescientes*: present active (participle), nominative/accusative plural masculine/feminine; "(they = men/women) not knowing"
- quaesitorum*: future active (participle), genitive plural masculine/neuter; "(of them = men/things) about to seek"
- pellere*: present active (infinitive, hence no case, number or gender); "to drive out"

## II. CONSTRUCTIONS

1. With the servant having been expelled by the leaders (less literally = when the servant was/had been expelled by the leaders, . . .)
2. With the young men hearing the truth (= when the young men hear/d the truth,)
3. Desire must not be accepted by a good man (= dative of agent with passive periphrastic). [This is a full sentence.]
4. With each man (being) a citizen (= since/although each man is/was a citizen,)
5. More blessed than a god (= ablative of comparison)

## III. COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES

| #  | POSITIVE | COMPARATIVE | SUPERLATIVE  |
|----|----------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. | MALUS    | PEIOR       | pessimus     |
| 2. | magnus   | MAIOR       | MAXIMUS      |
| 3. | SUPERUS  | SUPERIOR    | supremus     |
| 4. | SIMILIS  | similior    | SIMILLIMUS   |
| 5. | pulcher  | PULCHRIOR   | PULCHERRIMUS |

## IV. SENTENCES

1. They said that they (themselves) would not give gifts to anyone whom they did not know.

**se:** Accusative, Subject of Indirect Statement

**dona:** Accusative, Direct Object in Indirect Statement

**quem:** Accusative, Direct Object in Relative Clause

2. With the enemy having been conquered on that day (OR since the enemy had been conquered on that day), the orator explained to the people that the fear of slavery had been driven out.

**Hostibus:** Ablative, Subject of the Ablative Absolute

**die:** Ablative of (Point in) Time

**populo:** Dative, Indirect Object

3. He first believed that the sun was a god greater than the other gods.

**esse:** Infinitive, Verb of Indirect Statement

**deum:** Accusative, Predicate in Indirect Statement

**dis** (plural of *deus*, see Wheelock p.57): Ablative of Comparison