

## Chapter 4

**Rule 1:** Neuter nominatives and accusatives (of the same number) are always the same.

**Rule 2:** Adjectives agree with their antecedents (the noun they go with) in number, gender and case.

**Rule 3:** The stem of the Latin verb "to be" is \*es-.

**Rule 4:** A substantive derives its "substance" from its gender.

### I. Grammar

- Second-Declension Neuter Nouns.** Second-declension neuters differ from second-declension masculines only in the nominative singular and nominative and accusative plural. They also differ from their masculine counterparts in that the vocative singular is (as expected) the same form as the nominative singular (unlike the *-us/-e* distinction of second-declension masculine).
- The -A Ending.** Over the years, I have found that no single ending causes students more trouble than the *-a* of the neuter nominative/accusative plural. Having just learned *-a* as the fem. nom. sing. ending in Latin and having *-a* as a fem. ending for many a woman's name in their own language, English-speaking students tend to associate *-a* with the feminine gender exclusively. Now, however, it is shown to be a neuter ending! Obvious English derivatives like "data" and "agenda" do little to help, since most students assume such words are singular (and probably also feminine) from current English (mis)usage. It's important, then, to drive into them that *-a* is a neuter plural ending seen at least as often in Latin as its feminine counterpart—if not more so, since it occurs twice in the neuter declension whereas the fem (short) *-a* occurs but once. If I could change one thing about Wheelock's book—and I wouldn't change much!—I would teach these neuter forms before their feminine counterparts to make the students' first impression of *-a* be the neuter plural.
- Adjectives.** As students can now see from the full declension of adjectives, the first and second declensions are, in fact, part of the same declensional system, with the masculine and neuter forms separated from their feminine counterparts only because they look superficially different. In reality, of course, there is less difference than there appears and, as we have seen, considerable borrowing among the declensions. Several identical endings will cause some difficulty: *-um* is both masculine and neuter accusative singular (and therefore also neuter nominative singular); *-a*, as stated above, is both feminine nominative singular and neuter nominative/accusative plural.
- Adjective Bases.** Adjectives appear in the vocabulary in their nominative forms. If the masculine nominative singular form of the adjective is irregular, the feminine will exhibit the true base used to create other forms of the adjective. For the time being, this entails mostly *-er* adjectives, such as *noster, nostra, nostrum*, which students will encounter in the next lesson. In other cases, the adjective has one irregular form for the nominative, and therefore the genitive will be given to supply the base, for example, *potens*, a type of adjective they will encounter somewhat later in the book. [You should note but not necessarily burden your students with the fact that adjectives ending *-ius* in the masculine nominative singular normally form a genitive singular in *-iī* and a voc. sing. in *-ie*.]
- To Be.** The stem of the Latin verb "to be" is \*es-. The Indo-European forms of the present tense were:

*esmi	*smes, *smos
*essi, *esi	*ste
*esti	*senti

Both second person forms (\*essi, \*ste) and the third singular (\*esti) came into Latin with only minor changes: the primary endings (-si, -ti) lost their distinctive flavor (-i), in accordance with a general pattern in Latin. The early Roman author Plautus preserves a second singular form, *ess*. The other forms are not as easy to explain. The change from *es-* to *so-* (e.g. participle form \*sont-) and later to *su-* before the nasals *m* and *n* is regular but without clear parallel. Does, however, the verb "to be" in any language really need parallels, as well reinforced as its forms

are in daily usage? All too often "to be" has a life of its own. Tell students just to memorize the forms—saying them aloud can be very helpful—and if they wish to know why the forms are what they are, put this diagram on the board:

*es- [ <i>*su-</i> before nasals] +	-m > <i>sum</i>	-mus > <i>sumus</i>
-s > <i>es(s)</i>	-tis > <i>estis</i>	
-t > <i>est</i>	-nt > <i>sunt</i>	

6. **Intransitive Verbs, Linking Verbs and Predicates.** Explain the difference between verbs which "carry action" across a verb to a direct object in the accusative case ("trans/itive" verbs, lit. "going across") and those which do not ("intransitive"). Among intransitive verbs are those which "link," i.e. "equate," the subject and a predicate (nominative) and are therefore called "linking" verbs. The most most basic and common of all linking verbs is "to be." Also, remind students that the subject of the Latin sentence can be "hidden" in the verb form, and therefore the predicate nominative (noun or adjective) may seem to be the subject, since it may be the only nominative noun expressed, e.g. *sumus Romani* (the "we" in *sumus* is the subject; *Romani* is the predicate).
7. **Substantives.** Little will cause more general trouble for English-speaking students of Latin than substantives, adjectives functioning as nouns. Without gender distinction, substantives in English are naturally more limited than in Latin, so that when one refers to "the good" in English, it can be a neuter concept or a person or people from either gender group. The Latin substantive, however, is much more specific and was therefore more useful to Romans. Point out to students that a Latin substantive derives its "substance" (the noun understood behind it) from its gender: the masculine gender implies "man", the feminine "woman" and the neuter "thing". The concept is deceptively simple, but its later ramifications—such as participles functioning as nouns—are still far off in the distant future. Nevertheless, it is imperative that you instill this concept early and properly. Stress its importance. Wheelock buries an explanation of this crucial grammatical concept in a note which is not even attached to the grammar (p. 22, note 5).

Show your students examples of Latin substantives:

*parvus* = "a small (man)"

*mala* = "a bad (woman)" OR "bad (things)" [Remember to say that neuter substantives are VERY common in Latin.]

*verorum* = "of true (men/things)"

*stulti* = "of a stupid (man/thing)" OR "stupid men" (as subject)

If students shrug this off as easy, warn them to bear in mind always that, when they parse a sentence and end up with an adjective that has no expressed antecedent (the noun to which the adjective refers), they should look at the gender of the adjective and supply the noun "man/men", "woman/women" or "thing/things." To make a vague and not very accurate but fun cultural point, I like to note that, because English shows a preference for having a noun stated with adjectives, we get a glimpse of how material, how thing-oriented modern society is. For those so inclined, it's an opportunity for a fiery sermon (of less than a minute!) on the decline of Western Civilization. Actually English is full of substantives, but we think them of as nouns, such as, for some reason, many of the words for condoms: prophylactics, rubbers, Trojans. The major difference is that Latin can and does create substantives with virtually any adjective where English tends to do it only with certain ones.

## II. Vocabulary

[Remember to ask students the declension to which nouns belong. I also ask what the nom/acc. pl. form would be of any neuter word we happen to encounter, since that form can be particularly troubling.]

- **bellum:** Wheelock is a crafty fox. He frequently juxtaposes forms, which because of a superficial similarity may cause undisciplined students confusion. Here he juxtaposes *bellum* ("war") and *bellus*, -a, -um ("beautiful"). From

the outset he forces students to choose from context the correct translation of a Latin form which could by formation be translated several different ways. Students hate it, but it's good for them.

- **cura**: This verb does not mean "cure"! *Cura* implies worry, a form of love, the type of concern that mothers have for their children; like the old joke: "What's a sweater?" "A thing you wear when your mother's cold." That's *cura*. [Originally, it was \**koisa-* and changed to *cura* by rhotacism.]
- **mora**: This noun does not mean "death"!
- **nihil**: Reinforce that just because *nihil* does not change endings does not mean it does not have a specific (case or) usage in a sentence. A noun not having endings makes memorization easier and translation harder. [Originally, \**ne-hil*, the same *ne-* as in *nefas* or *nemo* (*ne-homo*).]
- **periculum**: Literally, it means a "little trial" (*per-* base, cf. *peritus*, + diminutive ending)
- **otium**: This noun means "peace" as in "peace and quiet," not "war and peace" (that's *pax*). The opposite of *otium* is *neg-otium* (< \**nec-otium*), "business" (literally, "no free time").

### III. Sentences

#### Practice and Review

[Stress sentences with predicate nominatives (1, 2, 6, 7) and neuters, esp. nom/acc. pl. (1-4).]

1. Ask students why Wheelock specifies what Latin word *bella* comes from.
1. If someone asks, admit that a prepositional phrase can function in the place of a predicate, but reinforce that the object of the preposition will still be ablative (or acc.), not nominative. If, on the other hand, no one asks, let it pass without comment.
1. When the verb "to be" stresses the existence of something, in English we say, "there is/are . . ." When "there" is used this way, it is called a subject marker. Latin has no subject marker like "there" (*ibi* is locational). Stress to students the difference between the two English "theres".
1. Make sure that before turning in the assignment students understand how to determine the correct case, number and gender of a predicate nominative. They must know what the subject is (here, cares/sons) and its number and gender (fem. pl./masc. pl.). Some students will mistakenly make the predicate nom. agree with "son's" or "great men."

### IV. Quiz 2

#### Quiz 2

##### I. Decline *malus* in all cases, numbers and genders. (30 pts.)

Case	Singular	
Nom.		
Gen.		
Dat.		
Acc.		
Abl.		

Case	Plural	
Nom.		
Gen.		
Dat.		
Acc.		
Abl.		

**II. Conjugate the present tense of the verb esse. (6 pts.)**

Person	Singular	Plural
First		
Second		
Third		

**III . Give the Latin for the following words. (7 pts.)**

1. man
2. down from; about
3. have, hold
4. friend
5. war
6. pretty, handsome
7. leisure, peace

**IV. Translate the following sentence into English which shows that you know exactly how the Latin grammar works. (7 pts.)**

Viri boni de pecuniâ non cogitant et pericula belli non laudant.