

Chapter 8

RULE 1: The thematic vowel of third conjugation is *-i-* (*-u-* in the present third plural, *-e-* in the imperfect tense).

RULE 2: The future tense sign in third conjugation is *-e-*.

I. Grammar

A. Third Conjugation

If you had any friends left in the class, third conjugation will fix that. As with third declension, it is advisable on reaching third conjugation to tell students that Latin has four conjugations in total and one major sub-conjugation (third *-io*). Let them know that, after learning this conjugation, they are more than halfway through the conjugations, even if they are nowhere near halfway through all verb forms—don't tell them that!

A notoriously mercurial short thematic vowel marks this conjugation. It shows up as *-i-* or *-u-*, or sometimes *-e-*, and disappears altogether in the future tense. The infinitive in third conjugation has a short *-e-* where in second the *-ê-* is long. This distinction is important, and therefore I require students to memorize the long *-ê-* in second as a mandatory long mark, although strictly there should be no confusion. The imperative uses *-e* in the singular, with the exception of four verbs which drop the *-e* (*dic, duc, fac, fer*) and are better memorized when students encounter these verbs. The imperative plural exhibits a predictable *-ite*.

B. Future

In third conjugation, the future tense is formed, not by adding *-bi/bu-* as in first and second conjugation, but by adding *-e-* (or *-a-* in the first person singular). This will present a problem for some students, because the third-conjugation future tense sign looks like the thematic vowel in second conjugation. Reinforce to students that in reality this should not cause confusion because no Latin verb belongs to two conjugations. If the verb belongs to second conjugation, the *-e-* signals the present tense; if it belongs to third, the *-e-* indicates that the verb is future. Thus, students must know to what conjugation a verb belongs before they can translate the verb correctly. Stress this! [If you introduced the imperfect tense with the future in Chapter 5, you will want to introduce the imperfect of third conjugation here. Explain to students that the thematic vowel *-e-* is used in the imperfect which is formed as follows: verb stem + thematic vowel + imperfect tense sign (*-ba-*) + personal endings, just as in first and second conjugations, e.g. *duc-e-ba-m*. It should seem refreshingly simple.]

Practice is the best way to acquaint students with the third-conjugation forms and how they differ from forms in other conjugations. For that reason I use a practice sheet (downloadable [here](#)). But before you do, first introduce the new vocabulary for Chapter 8 which includes several third-conjugation verbs.

C. The History of Third Conjugation

Third conjugation is a motley collection of verb types with certain similarities:

1. regular thematic verbs (*dico, duco, ago, lego*);
2. reduplicated stems (*gigno, sero, reddo, bibo*);
3. stems with a nasal infix, that is, an *-n-* or *-m-* inserted in the stem (*iungo, linquo, rumpo*) or a nasal suffix (*cerno, temno, sino*);
4. inchoatives [which denote "action beginning"] in *-sco* (*cresco, disco, nosco, posco*; and later forms, *obdormisco, calesco*);

5. and other verbs with various suffixes, such as *-to* (*necto*), *-do* (*tendo*), and *-so* (*quaeso*, *capesso*, *laccio*) [*-so* is a desiderative or intensive suffix, that is, it denotes "the wish to do something"; the *-s-* is related to the Greek future tense marker].

For the derivation of the future tense marker *-e/a-* from Indo-European subjunctive forms, see above (Chapter 5, The Future Tense). The thematic vowel, originally *-e/o-*, in general changes to *-i-*. As expected, the thematic vowel disappeared in the first person singular. In the first and third persons plural, the original endings, **-omos* and **-onti*, became *-imus* (or *-umus*) and *-unt* on the pattern of weakened vowels in unaccented syllables. Into the classical period, *-umus* rivalled *-imus* in forms which did not show a second person plural in *-itis*, e.g. *sumus*, *volumus*, *nolumus*, *malumus*. Only before *-r* did the thematic vowel *-e-* remain, as in the second person singular passive ending, *-eris*.

II. Vocabulary

[Be sure to make students focus on which conjugation verbs belong to.]

- **copia:** Like *litterae* and *mores*, the plural *copiae* has a significantly different meaning from the singular *copia*, cf. Eng. "force/s" where the singular can carry the same military connotation as the plural ("a force of men" vs. "military forces"). Originally, *copia* comes from **co-opia* (*cum/ops*), "joined might."
- **ratio:** literally, "the process of (*-tio*) reckoning (*ra-*, cf. *reor*"). It can be applied to the calculation of figures in a column, the logical deduction of an argument or the style in which either is done.
- **ad:** Like most prepositions showing motion towards, *ad* takes an **accusative** object. Cognate with English "at," sometimes having the same meaning as the English preposition.
- **ex/e:** Explain to students that *ex* is used mostly before a word beginning with a vowel sound, *e* only before one beginning with a consonant sound. Like most prepositions showing motion away from, it takes an **ablative** object.
- **dum:** Like *tum* (Chapter 5), *dum* seems to have originated as an accusative form indicating extent of time, attached to a pronominal base of an unknown sort.
- **ago:** A very old verb with many connotations and involved in many idioms, functioning as widely as English "do." Basically, it involves motion of some sort, a passage through time or space. It is often colorless, relying on a more precise noun to render an exact meaning, e.g. the idiom *gratias agere*, literally "to drive/push thanks (to someone)." Because the Romans heard the idiom literally, they followed it with a dative: "to give thanks *to someone*." We, however, have a transitive verb, "to thank," which takes a direct object: "to thank *someone*." When translating from English to Latin, students will have to remember to rewrite the English verb "to thank someone" as "to drive thanks *to someone*" and use the **dative**, not accusative case.
- **duco:** Literally, "lead"; figuratively, "consider" ("lead with the mind"). [Another very old and pervasive Indo-European stem (originally **deuk-*) which came into English as "tug," as shown by Grimm's Law which demonstrated that inherited Indo-European/Latin *d* is cognate with English *t* (**duo = two**, **dens = tooth**);]

III. Sentences

Practice and Review

1. Note that *erit* here can have a sense of "there will be."
1. "Many things" requires only one word in Latin, a neuter plural substantive.
1. Encourage students to use *-que* instead of *et* to reinforce the newer construction.

IV. Quiz 3

Quiz 3

NOMEN TUUM

I. Decline the noun *ratio* in all cases, singular and plural. (10 pts.)

II. Conjugate the verb *ago* in the present tense, all persons and numbers. (6 pts.)

III. Translate the following verb forms. (15 pts.)

1. habebis
2. scribis
3. videmus
4. ducemus
5. age

IV. Give the proper form of *bonus* which agrees with the following nouns. (6 pts.)

1. virtutum
2. corpora
3. homini
4. civitatibus
5. terris
6. mos

V. Give NOMINATIVE, GENITIVE and GENDER (in Latin!) of the following words. (13 pts.)

1. letter
2. work
3. peace
4. time
5. character