IN THIS CHAPTER

- Keeping Latin alive
- Recognizing Latin derivatives and loanwords
- Finding out about the Latin alphabet
- Pronouncing Latin in a couple of ways

Chapter 1

You Already Know a Little Latin

Take one look at Latin, and you might say, "That's Greek to me!" You hear stories of demanding schoolmasters and are plagued by images of endless hours of memorization dancing through your head. After all, Latin is not the language of intellectual lightweights. It's the language of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Vergil, Ovid, and St. Augustine. Intellectuals such as Thomas Jefferson and W.E.B. Du Bois, used it. And Leonardo da Vinci used Latin in his notes, even going so far as to write the words backwards so ordinary folks couldn't read them. And in the movie *Tombstone*, Doc Holliday recognizes that his rival is an educated man just because he quotes the language of the Caesars.

"Noli timere!" the Romans would say. *"Have no fear!"* What do you think the children, gladiators, and working-class folks were speaking in those days? They used Latin, and so can you. In fact, you probably already know some Latin. This chapter takes a look at these familiar words and phrases. So relax, and enjoy this little jaunt back to the golden age of Rome.

Latin: Not as Dead as You May Have Hoped

An old rhyme about Latin goes like this: "Latin is a dead, dead language, as dead as it can be. It killed the ancient Romans, and now it's killin' me!" Well, Latin may have seemed deadly to the student who first penned those lines, but the rumors of Latin's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Latin was originally the language of a small group of people living in central Italy around the eighth century BCE. Eventually, those people — the citizens of a town called Rome — spread their culture and influence across the Mediterranean world, making Latin the common language for many nations in antiquity.

Wars, intrigue, and general decline led to the fall of the mighty Roman Empire in 476 CE, but Latin did not die with the last Roman emperor. People continued to write, read, and speak Latin for years. Although its use eventually began to dwindle, university scholars still used it until just about 300 years ago. Latin is dead today only in the sense that no group of people has it as their native language. In other words, no one learns Latin as a first language. Latin continues to influence the world, however, through the many languages derived from it, as well as through the wealth of culture, art, and literature rooted in, as Edgar Allan Poe put it, "the grandeur that was Rome."

Familiarity Breeds Comfort: Latin You Already Know

Have you ever sent someone a *memento?* Have you watched a *video?* Listened to an *audio* cassette? If you understand the italicized words in the preceding sentences, then you're already using Latin. **Memento** is the Latin word for *remember,* **video** is the Latin word for *see,* and **audio** is the word for *hear.* Are you a *homo sapiens?* Not only are you a member of the human race, but the Latin says that you're a wise person, as well. Do you watch sporting events in a *coliseum?* Then you're tipping the hat to ancient Rome's most famous gladiatorial arena — the Colosseum.

Some Latin expressions are so much a part of the English-speaking world that you know what they mean, even when changed. "Veni! Vidi! Visa!" for example, has become a popular slogan that even non-Latinists recognize as "I came! I saw! I shopped!"

English uses many Latin words without any change in spelling or any significant change in meaning. You can read more about these words in Chapter 17, but here are a few to get you started:

- **senator** (*senator*)
- **gladiator** (*gladiator*)
- **consul** (*consul*)

Many other Latin words involve the change of only a few letters:

- **copiosus** (*copious*)
- **defendo** (*defend*)
- **signum** (*sign*)

The following sections take a look at some Latin derivatives and loanwords, proving why Latin is anything but a dead language.

English in a toga: Latin derivatives

Do you recognize this famous quotation?

> I **pledge allegiance** to the flag of the **United States** of **America,** and to the **republic** for which it **stands, one nation,** under God, **indivisible,** with **liberty** and **justice** for all.

That, of course, is the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance.

Or how about this?

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this **continent,** a new **nation, conceived** in **Liberty,** and **dedicated** to the **proposition** that all men are **created equal.**

Many of you know that as the opening of President Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*.

Guess what? If you can read those sentences, then in a way, you have been reading Latin. All the highlighted words are *Latin derivatives* — that is, English words that look like Latin words and have similar meanings.

Many people study Latin because of the influence of Latin on the English vocabulary. More than half of English is derived from Latin, after all. Table 1-1 lists just a few Latin words and the cornucopia (that's **cornu** [*horn*] and **copia** [*supply*]) of English words they provide.

TABLE 1-1 Latin Words and Their Derivatives

Latin	Definition	Derivatives
aequus	*level, fair*	equinox, equal, equivocate, iniquity
augere	*to increase*	augment, auction, author
bene	*well*	beneficiary, benediction, benign, benevolent
capere	*to seize*	precept, capture, captious
dicere	*to say*	diction, indict, edict, dictate
ducere	*to lead*	ductile, induction, reduce, education
magnus	*large*	magnify, magnitude, magnate, magnanimous
pater	*father*	patrimony, patristics, patronize, patrician
rogare	*to ask*	interrogate, arrogance, prerogative, surrogate
scribere	*to write*	inscribe, prescription, nondescript, describe
tenere	*to hold*	tentative, tentacle, attention
videre	*to see*	visual, vision, visor, provide, advise, envy

Many derivatives come from various parts of Latin words.

One word worthy of note is the Latin verb meaning *to bear* or *to carry*. The full dictionary entry for this word is **fero, ferre, tuli, latus.** From this word, English gets "fertile" and "collateral."

The fact that derivatives pick and choose from Latin words also accounts for some of the changes in spelling among related words. The full dictionary entry of the Latin verb meaning *to stick* or *to cling* is **haereo, haerere, haesi, haesus.** From the parts with *r* come words such as "adhere" and "cohere," but from the parts with *s* you find "adhesion" and "cohesion." You can see more about verbs and their dictionary forms in Chapter 2.

You can also find certain patterns in how a word changes from Latin to English. Many Latin words for intangible virtues or qualities end in **–as.** These words appear as English words that end in **–ty:**

Latin Word	English Word
gravitas	*gravity*
humilitas	*humility*
pietas	*piety*
dignitas	*dignity*
paupertas	*poverty*

The Romans made a distinction in types of poverty. They referred to simple *lack of wealth or meager resources* as **paupertas,** but used **egestas** for *absolute destitution.* Here's another interesting tidbit regarding how Latin elements continue to appear: Many Roman army camps, or **castra** eventually turned into towns. Their military origin is preserved in such town names as Lancaster, Manchester, Worcester, and Chester.

In the debit column: Latin loanwords

Derivatives retain their Latin origins in subtle, altered forms. Loanwords wear a gleaming toga and let everyone know that they're Latin words and won't change for anyone. Many areas of study, such as law, medicine, the church, and science, have specialized vocabularies made up of a large percentage of loanwords from Latin. You can explore these areas in more detail in Chapters 11 through 14.

Loanwords are Latin words that have entered the English language with no change in spelling, although sometimes there may be a slight difference in the words' meanings. Table 1-2 lists several common loanwords, together with their original Latin meanings and the current English definitions.

When a Roman ran for office, he wore a special toga that had been whitened to reflect the sun. Called a **toga candida,** this garment let everyone know who the candidates were. In the days before paid political commercials and televised debates, you had to do something to get yourself noticed!

TABLE 1-2

Latin Loanwords

Latin	Latin Meaning	English Meaning
agenda	things to be done	list of things to be done
agent	they will do	person/thing that does something
data	given	information used to make a decision
genius	spirit	person of above-average ability
habitat	s/he lives	place where a plant or animal typically lives
interim	meanwhile	intervening period of time
memento	remember!	gift of remembrance
propaganda	things to be spread	spread of ideas to help or harm
scribe	write!	person who writes for others
tenet	s/he holds	belief held by a particular group
video	I see	a visual recording
virile	masculine	having the nature of a male

A GUESSING GAME

Cover up the last column and see if you can guess the meaning of the Latin verbs that the following English words are derived from:

Derivative	Latin Verb	Latin Definition
amateur	**amare**	*to love*
sedentary	**sedere**	*to sit*
navigate	**navigare**	*to sail*
vivacious	**vivere**	*to live*
exclaim	**clamare**	*to shout*

From A to Z: The Latin Alphabet

One feature makes Latin easier to understand than some other languages: the alphabet. Latin has no strange characters and no funny accent marks. If you know the English alphabet, then you already know the Latin alphabet and then some. Present-day readers can also remember a couple of tricks to help them decipher Latin:

- **Latin uses the same letters as English with a few exceptions:**
  - Latin never uses the letter *W*.
  - Few Latin words use *K;* they use *C* instead.
  - Latin used *I* and *V* as both consonants and vowels until much later, when someone had the bright idea to bend the *I* into a *J* and round the *V* into a *U*.
- **Everything ran together.** That's right. No spaces, no punctuation.

Here's an example of what that would have looked like:

> INTHEEARLYSTAGESOFTHELANGUAGEYOUCANSEETHATLATIN
> WASWRITTENONLYINMAJUSCULEORCAPITALLETTERSANDWIT
> HOUTANYPUNCTUATIONTHEREWASNOMORESPACEBETWEENW
> ORDSTHANTHEREWASBETWEENLETTERSAPPARENTLYTHEROM
> ANSHADNODIFFICULTYWITHTHISSYSTEMBECAUSETHEYCARRI
> EDLATINTOTHEENDSOFTHEIRWORLD

Here it is again with spacing and punctuation:

> In the early stages of the language, you can see that Latin was written only in *majuscule,* or capital, letters and without any punctuation. There was no more space between words than there was between letters. Apparently, the Romans had no difficulty with this system because they carried Latin to the ends of their world.

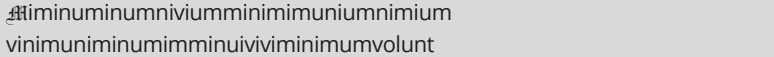
Fortunately, most Latin texts today include modern conventions, such as punctuation and capitalization. Most texts also make a distinction between *V* and *U*, but many still keep *I* as both consonant and vowel.

SOUNDIN' LIKE A ROMAN: PRONUNCIATION

You may hear that Latin is not a spoken language, and it's true that no one learns Latin as a native language anymore. In its heyday, however, everyone in the civilized world — that is, the part of the world the Romans considered civilized because they'd conquered it — spoke Latin. In fact, more people spoke Latin than read or wrote it because most folks were illiterate. An education was available only to families who could afford it.

CAN I HAVE A TRANSCRIBER *AND* A TRANSLATOR, PLEASE?

The earliest editions of a Roman manuscript were often made centuries after the original. These copies, handwritten mostly by monks, not only preserved the texts but also contributed to their legibility because the monks added features, such as punctuation and lowercase letters. Not all the changes in calligraphy, however, made the Latin text easier to read. In the 13th through 15th centuries, the monks used a script in which the quill strokes were the same width as the space between letters. Too many similar letters next to each other often produced a "picket fence" look, like this:



mimi numinum nivium minimi munium nimium vini muniminum imminui viuv minimum volunt

Translated, this sentence says, "The tiny mimes of the snow spirits in no way wish, while they are alive, the tremendous task of [serving] the wine of the defenses to be diminished."

Well, I guess that one, even translated, isn't that much easier to understand. But you get the point.

Fortunately, later Latin grammarians who taught the increasing number of **barbari** (*foreigners*) how to speak the language of the new world power left some pronunciation clues. Latin literature itself also offers hints about pronunciation. In one of his poems, for example, the poet Catullus (84–54 BCE) pokes fun at someone for the way he pronounces certain words. Arrius, the object of the poet's wit, over-aspirates some of his words. That is to say, he puts the "h" sound in front of vowels, perhaps to sound more Greek and, therefore, more refined. Understanding that Catullus is making fun of Arrius, you can reason backward to see that such pronunciation wasn't common — or at least not acceptable — among Romans of that time.

Combining these clues with knowledge of how languages form and change over the years (called *historical linguistics*), scholars have more or less established an agreed-upon pronunciation, which is often referred to as the *Classical pronunciation*. Another system for pronouncing Latin comes from a later period of the language and is sometimes called the *Ecclesiastical pronunciation (also called "Church pronunciation")* because of its use in the Latin Mass and church hymns.

REMEMBER

If you deal mostly with secular texts before the second century CE, then you need to focus on the Classical pronunciation. If your primary interest is in Latin related to the church or in secular writings from the second century onward, then you should know the Ecclesiastical pronunciation.

Classical pronunciation

The big advantage for those who want to learn how to pronounce Latin is that it doesn't have any silent letters. You hear every letter in a Latin word. Pronunciation becomes a simple matter of knowing the sounds of vowels (see Tables 1-3 and 1-4) and consonants (see Table 1-5).

TABLE 1-3 Vowel Sounds

Long Vowel	Pronunciation	Short Vowel	Pronunciation
a	ah (f**a**ther)	a	uh (ide**a**)
e	ay (m**a**te)	e	eh (b**e**d)
i	ee (s**ee**d)	i	ih (p**i**t)
o	o (n**o**te)	o	oh (p**o**t)
u	oo (m**oo**n)	u	u (p**u**t)
y	uw/umlaut (German **ü**ber)	y	uw/umlaut (German H**ü**tte)

A few vowel combinations, called *diphthongs*, are so common that their sounds have merged into one. Table 1-4 shows how they sound.

TABLE 1-4 Diphthong Sounds in Classical Latin

Diphthong	Pronunciation	As In English
ae	igh	f**igh**t
au	ow	h**ow**
ei	ey	th**ey**
eu	eyoo	th**ey** t**oo**
oe	oi	t**oi**l
ui	uey	chewy

Most Latin consonants have the same sounds as in English, with the exceptions listed in Table 1-5.

TABLE 1-5 Consonant Sounds in Classical Latin

Latin Consonant	Pronunciation
c	k (**c**an; never as in "cereal")
g	g (**g**ood; never as in "genuine")
j	y (**y**outh)
r	r (always trilled)
s	s (**s**oft; never as in "fans")
v	w (**w**oman)
x	ks (wa**x**; never as in "xenophobic")
z	dz (a**dz**e)
bs	ps (la**ps**e)
bt	pt (exce**pt**)
ch	kh (**ch**aos; never as in "cheer")
gn	ngn (ha**ngn**ail)
ph	p-h (to**p-h**eavy)
th	t (**t**ourist)
ti	ti (pa**ti**o; never as in "nation")

Talkin' the Talk

A Roman senator talks with his father.

Senator: **Pater, cur dignitatem in viris Romanis non video?**

Father, why do I not see dignity among the Roman men?

Pater: **Cur me rogas?**

Why are you asking me?

Senator: **Quod magna de dignitate scribis et dicis.**

Because you write and speak great things about dignity.

Pater: **Fama in magnis, dignitas autem in humilitate habitat.**

Fame lives in great things, but dignity lives in humility.

REMEMBER

Remember that in ancient times, the letter *I* was used as a consonant instead of the letter *J*. Many modern editions of Latin texts retain this spelling.

Ecclesiastical pronunciation

Later Latin pronunciation is similar to the Classical pronunciation. In fact, you pronounce the vowels the same way. (Refer to Table 1-3 for the Classical pronunciation of vowels.) The only differences occur in diphthongs, which we discuss in the preceding section, and consonants. (See Table 1-6 for the Ecclesiastical diphthongs and Table 1-7 for the Ecclesiastical consonants.)

TABLE 1-6 Diphthong Sounds in Ecclesiastical Latin

Diphthong	Pronunciation	As in English
ae	ay	m**a**te
au	ow	h**ow**
ei	ey	th**ey**
eu	eyoo	th**ey** t**oo**
oe	ay	m**a**te
ui	uey	ch**ewy**

The sounds of consonants in Ecclesiastical pronunciation are mostly the same as in Classical pronunciation (refer to Table 1-5). A few sounds soften somewhat, though, in the later Latin pronunciation, and there is a different pronunciation for the consonant combinations *cc*, *gg*, and *sc.*

TABLE 1-7 Consonant Sounds in Ecclesiastical Latin

Latin Consonant	Pronunciation
c	ch (**ch**oose before *e, i, ae,* or *oe;* otherwise *k* as in **c**an)
g	g (**g**enuine before *e* or *i;* otherwise *g* as in "**g**ood")
j	y (**y**outh)
r	r (always trilled)
s	s (**s**oft; never as in fan**s**)
v	v (**v**ine)
x	ks (wa**x**; in words beginning with ***ex–*** and followed by a vowel, *h,* or *s*, then *gz* as in e**x**haust)
z	dz (a**dz**e)
bs	bs (o**bs**ess; if occurring as the last two letters, then as in o**bs**erve)
bt	bt (o**bt**ain)
cc	tch (ca**tch** before *e* or *i;* otherwise as *kk* in boo**kk**eeper)
ch	kh (**ch**aos; never as in cheer)
gg	dj (a**dj**ourn before *e* or *i,* otherwise *gg* as in le**g g**uard)
gn	ny (ca**ny**on)
ph	ph (tele**ph**one)
sc	sh (**sh**irt before *e* or *i*)
th	t (**t**ourist)
ti	tsee (as in tse**tse** fly)

Don't stress out: Accenting syllables

You need to know one more thing before launching out into the world of spoken Latin: accenting. Accenting, or placing the proper stress on a Latin word, is as simple as one, two, three — literally. `The first syllable of a two-syllable word is accented.` For two syllable words, accent the next to last syllable. For words with at least three syllables, always try to put the accent on the third to the last syllable. If the second to the last syllable is long, however, put the accent there.

How do you know if the second to last syllable is long? Again, it's as easy as one, two, three. A syllable is long if

- **The vowel is long.** For example, **videre** (*to see*).
- **Two consonants follow the vowel.** For example, **perditum** (*ruined*).
- **The vowel sound is a diphthong.** For example, **inaures** (*earrings*).

ULTIMATELY CONFUSING? NOT REALLY

In Latin, the last three syllables have names that you may hear or see in other Latin books: *antepenultimate, penultimate,* and *ultimate.* They sound a little confusing, but you can look at this as an opportunity to practice your understanding of derivatives.

If ante means *before,* paene means *almost,* and ultimus means *last,* then you can pretty easily figure out what these words actually mean:

Antepenultimate means "almost before the last" or "third from last."

Penultimate means "before the last."

Ultimate means "last."

In modern English, you say "last," "next to last," and "the syllable next to the next to last syllable, which I don't know why I have to identify anyway."