

# English Grammar for Students of Latin

***The Study Guide  
For Those Learning Latin***

***Third Edition***

***Norma W. Goldman***

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*Third Edition*

*Norma W. Goldman*

The Olivia and Hill Press®



**THE O&H STUDY GUIDES**

Jacqueline Morton, editor

*English Grammar for Students of Spanish*

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*Gramática española para estudiantes de inglés*

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Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 978-0-934034-34-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2003114557

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## STUDY TIPS

*English Grammar for Students of Latin* explains the grammatical terms that are in your Latin textbook and shows you how they relate to English grammar. Once you understand the terms and concepts as they apply to your own language, it will be easier for you to understand what is being introduced in your textbook and by your teacher.

### STUDY GUIDE

**Before doing an assignment** — Read the sections in *English Grammar for Students of Latin* that cover the topics you are going to study in your textbook.

**Homework** — Take notes as you study your textbook. Highlighting is not sufficient. The more often you write down and use vocabulary and rules, the easier it will be for you to remember them. Complete exercises over several short periods of time rather than in one long session.

**Written exercises** — As you write Latin words or sentences say them out loud. Each time you write, read, say, and hear a word, it reinforces it in your memory.

**In class** — Take notes. You will know what the teacher considers important, and it will reinforce what you are studying.

**Objective** — You have learned something successfully when you are able to take a blank sheet of paper and write a short sentence in Latin using the correct form of the Latin words without reference to a textbook or dictionary. The *Study Tips* below will help you with this learning process.

### TIPS FOR LEARNING VOCABULARY

One aspect of language learning is remembering a number of foreign words.

**To learn vocabulary** — Flashcards are a good, handy tool for learning new words and their meaning. You can carry them with you, group them as you wish, and add information as you advance. Creating your own flashcards is an important first step in learning vocabulary.

1. Write the Latin word or expression on one side of an index card and its English equivalent on the other side.
2. On the Latin side add a short sentence using the word or expression. It will be easier for you to recall a word in



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context. To make sure that your sentence is grammatically correct, copy an example from your textbook. For review purposes, note down the chapter and page number of your textbook where the word is introduced.

3. On the Latin side include any irregularities and whatever information is relevant to the word in question.

**How to use the cards** — Regardless of the side you're working on, always say the Latin word aloud.

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1. Look at the Latin side first. Going from Latin to English is easier than from English to Latin because it only requires your recognizing the Latin word. Read the Latin word(s) out loud, giving the English equivalent, then check your answer on the English side.
2. When you go easily from Latin to English, turn the cards to the English side. Going from English to Latin is harder than going from Latin to English because you have to pull the word and its spelling out of your memory. Say the Latin equivalent out loud as you write it down; then check the spelling. Some students prefer closing their eyes and visualizing the Latin word and its spelling.
3. As you progress, put aside the cards you know and concentrate on the ones you still don't know.

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**How to remember words** — Below are suggestions to help you associate a Latin word with an English word with a similar meaning. This first step will put the Latin word in your short-term memory. Use and practice, the next steps, will put the words in your long-term memory.

1. There are many words, called **COGNATES**, that have the same meaning and approximately the same spelling in English and Latin.

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English	Latin
poet	poēta
orator	orātor
temple	templum

2. Try to associate the Latin word with an English word that has a related meaning.

Latin	English	English derivative
māter	mother	maternal
vir	man	virility
patria	fatherland	patriotic

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3. If the Latin word has no similarities to English, rely on any association that is meaningful to you. The more associations you have for a word, i.e., the more “hooks,” the easier it is for you to remember it. Different types of associations work for different people. Find the one that works best for you. Here are some suggestions:

- Group words by topics or personal associations — It is easier to learn new words if you group them. You can group them according to topics such as food, clothing, activities related to daily life (work, travel, study, the home), or Roman mythology, etc.
- Associate the word with an image — If you have trouble remembering a particular word, you might want to create a “bizarre image” in your mind with which to associate it. This method is very subjective and only works for some people.

miser = *wretched*

Scrooge is a **wretched** miser.

rēgīna = *queen*

The **queen**, Elizabeth *Regina*, ruled for almost 50 years.

4. To reinforce the Latin word and its spelling, use it in a short sentence.

### TIPS FOR LEARNING WORD FORMS

Another aspect of language learning is remembering the various forms a word can take; for example, another form of *book* is *books*, and *do* can take the form of *does*. As a general rule, the first part of the word indicates its meaning and the second part indicates its form.

**To learn forms** — Paper and pencil are the best tools to learn the various forms of a word. You should write them down until you get them right. The following steps will make learning forms easier.

1. Look for a pattern in the different forms of a word.
  - Which letters, if any, remain constant?
  - Which letters change?
  - Is there a pattern to the changes?
  - Is this pattern the same as one you have already learned?
  - If this pattern is similar to one you have already learned, what are the similarities and differences?

2. Once you have established the pattern, it will be easy to memorize the forms.

- Take a blank piece of paper and write down the forms while saying them aloud.
- Continue until you are able to write all the forms correctly without referring to your textbook.

3. Write short sentences using the various forms.

**To review forms** — You can use flashcards to review forms as well as to learn them.

**Macrons** — Some of the vowels in Latin words have a long mark over them called a **MACRON**. It is an indication that the vowel is to be held longer and pronounced differently from the way in which the unmarked or short vowels are pronounced. It is important to mark and learn the long vowels for the ending of Latin words. Consult your Latin textbook for the pronunciation of short and long vowels.

*Norma Goldman*

## TO THE TEACHER

In our presentation of English grammar, we have avoided projecting Latin grammar onto contemporary English and have followed the current trend in the teaching of grammar in our schools. English nouns, for instance, are no longer identified as having gender. English teachers talk about the function or use of a noun, rather than case. Since these terms and concepts, and many others, are unfamiliar to today's students, we have opted to introduce them as they apply to Latin where, in any event, they are much more developed.

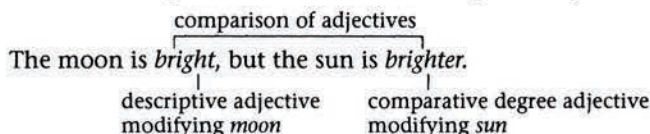
*Jacqueline Morton*, editor

We wish to pay tribute to Norma Goldman who passed away a few years ago. Norma was a dedicated teacher whose enthusiasm for Latin and Roman culture was appreciated by all. We also wish to thank Krista M. Kulesa, a recent M.A. graduate in Classics at Wayne State University, who reviewed the latest printing of English Grammar for Students of Latin.



## WHAT IS MEANT BY COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES?

The term **COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES** is used to refer to the forms of descriptive adjectives used to compare the different qualities of the nouns they modify.



### IN ENGLISH

There are three different degrees of comparison.

1. **POSITIVE DEGREE** — This form refers to the quality of one person or thing. It is simply the basic adjective form (see *What is a Descriptive Adjective?*, p. 121).

The philosopher is *wise*.

The moon is *bright*.

The sword is *expensive*.

His speech is *interesting*.

2. **COMPARATIVE DEGREE** — This form compares the quality of one person or thing with that of another person or thing. It is formed differently depending on the length of the adjective.

- by adding *-er* to short adjectives

The philosopher is *wiser* than many men.

The sun is *brighter* than the moon.

- by adding the word *more* in front of longer adjectives

This sword is *more expensive*.

This orator's speech is *more interesting*.

3. **SUPERLATIVE DEGREE** — This form is used to stress the highest degree of a quality. It is formed differently depending on the length of the adjective.

- by adding *-est* to short adjectives

The philosopher is the *wisest* in Athens.

The sun is the *brightest* star in our heavens.

- by adding the word *most*, *very*, or *exceedingly* in front of longer adjectives

This sword is the *most expensive* in Rome.

Cicero's speech is *very interesting*.



IN LATIN

As in English, descriptive adjectives have three degrees of comparison: positive, comparative, and superlative.

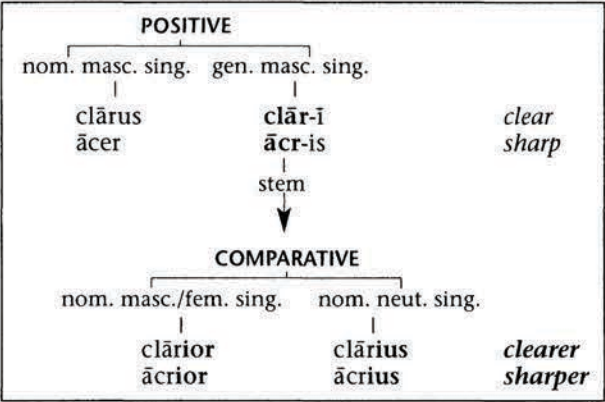
Like all Latin adjectives, comparatives change form in order to agree in case, gender, and number with the noun or pronoun they modify.

1. POSITIVE DEGREE — This form is simply the basic adjective form, i.e., the dictionary form.

Gladius est **ācer**.  
|                    |  
noun    adjective positive degree  
└─ nom. masc. sing. ─┘  
*The sword is **sharp**.*

2. COMPARATIVE DEGREE — This form is based on the genitive masculine singular stem of the adjective in the positive degree. The comparative degree is formed differently depending on whether the genitive stem ends with a consonant or a vowel.

- Adjectives with a genitive masculine singular positive stem ending with a consonant use that form as a stem + **-ior** (for the masculine and feminine) or **-ius** (for the neuter).



These comparative forms are declined like the two-form adjectives in Group B (see p. 123).

Hic discipulus respōnsum **clārius** dedit.  
|                    |  
noun    adjective comparative degree  
└─ acc. neut. sing. ─┘  
*This student gave a **clearer** answer.*

Lingua est **ācrior** quam gladius.

noun      adjective comparative degree  
└─ nom. fem. sing. ┘

*The tongue is **sharper** than the sword.*

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- Adjectives whose genitive masculine singular positive stem ends with a vowel add the word **magis** (*more*, an adverb that doesn't change form) before their positive form in the appropriate case.

Vīctōria **magis dubia** nunc vidētur.

noun      adjective comparative degree  
└─ nom. fem. sing. ┘

*Victory now seems **more doubtful**.*

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3. SUPERLATIVE DEGREE — The superlative degree is formed differently depending on the ending of the positive adjective. Regardless of the form, all the adjectives of the superlative degree are declined like Group A (see pp. 122-23).

- Most superlatives use the genitive singular stem of the positive form + **-issimus, -a, -um**.

Respōnsum philosophī **clārissimum** erat.

noun      adjective superlative degree  
                    **clār-** (gen. sing. stem) + **-issimum**  
└─ nom. neut. sing. ┘

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*The philosopher's answer was **most clear**.*

- Adjectives with a nominative masculine singular positive form ending in **-er** use that form as a stem + **-rimus, -a, -um**.

Sōcratēs mentem **ācerrimam** habēbat.

noun      adjective superlative degree  
                    **ācer-** + **-rimam**  
└─ acc. fem. sing. ┘

*Socrates had a **very sharp** mind.*

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- Adjectives with a nominative masculine singular positive form ending with a vowel add the word **maximē** (*most, very*, an adverb that doesn't change form) before their positive form in the appropriate case.

Vīctōria **maximē dubia** nunc vidētur.

noun      adjective superlative degree  
└─ nom. fem. sing. ┘

*Victory now seems **most doubtful**.*

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N. B. — In English and in Latin there are frequently used comparative adjectives that are irregular and must be memorized. Because many words used in English are derived from these Latin forms, memorizing them should not be difficult.

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Positive (masc.)	Comparative (masc.)	English derivative	Superlative (masc.)	English derivative
bonus <i>good</i>	melior <i>better</i>	<i>ameliorate</i>	optimus <i>best</i>	<i>optimist</i>
malus <i>bad</i>	pēior <i>worse</i>	<i>pejorative</i>	pessimus <i>worst</i>	<i>pessimist</i>
magnus <i>great</i>	maior <i>greater</i>	<i>major</i>	maximus <i>greatest</i>	<i>maximum</i>

SUMMARY

Below is a reference chart summarizing the formation of the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives .

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Positive degree	Comparative degree	Superlative degree
<div>↓</div> clārus, -a, -um clār- → gen. stem  ācer, ācris, ācre ācr- → gen. stem	<div>STEM: genitive singular of positive degree + -ior for masc. &amp; fem. + -ius for neuter</div> <div>↓</div> GROUP B: 3 <sup>rd</sup> declension  clārīor, clārīus  ācīor, ācīus	<div>STEM: genitive singular of positive degree + -issimus, -a, -um OR STEM: nominative singular of positive degree + -rimus, -a, -um</div> <div>↓</div> GROUP A: 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> declension  clārīssimus, -a, -um  ācerīmus, -a, -um



REVIEW

In the sentences below, draw an arrow from the adjective to the noun it modifies.

- Circle the degree of comparison: positive (P), comparative (C), or superlative (S).

1. Blood is thicker than water.

P   C   S
2. Your parents are your best friends.

P   C   S
3. The poet is famous.

P   C   S
4. Poets are more famous than soldiers.

P   C   S
5. Ovid is a most famous poet.

P   C   S



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