

Common Latin Pronunciation Mistakes – American English Speakers

1. Unlike English, which has many words in which some of the letters are silent, in Latin every letter in the word is pronounced:
 - a. Double consonants:
 - *Ancilla*: the double l's are both pronounced, as two syllables “*cil*” + “*la*”.
 - *Sacculum*: as “*sac*”+ “*cu*”+ “*lum*”.
 - b. No “silent” letters, as in common in English:
 - “Dave” – “Da” + “veh”, not like English where final “e” is frequently silent.
 - c. No “schwa” sound. This is the short “uh” sound that is common in English and is sometimes used for about every vowel.
 - The vowel sound is as in the word “the”.
 - The “e” in “dinner”.
 - The “a” in “adjustment”.
 - d. Remember: every vowel in Latin is always pronounced the same way, in any word, either long or short.
2. Learning to pronounce Latin front vowels.

If you've ever taken French or Spanish (or read Chaucer), think of the vowels that way.

As has been pointed out, the front vowels (“e”, “i”, “y”) were once pronounced in English like they are in Latin. Practice reading an English paragraph pronouncing the vowels as in Latin.

3. There is no “flat a” sound in Latin. This is the vowel sound in words like:
 - Apple
 - Cat
 - Add

In Latin it is either a short “a” (as in “Roma”) or the long “a” (as in Davus – “daahvus”).

4. The “short-o” sound is always an “o” sound, not a “short a” sound. For example, the word “hoc”. It is not pronounced like the English words “top” or “hock”, rather like the English words “goat” or “boat”. It is a short “o” sound.

5. In English the short and long back vowel sounds are frequently quite different sounds. In Latin, this isn't so. It really is a case of the sound being shorter or longer: "oh" versus "ohh"; "ah" versus "ahhh". The same for "u".
6. The "u" vowel is never pronounced with a leading "y" sound like "you". It is always "oo" (short) or "oooo" long.