

# Dēclīnātiōnēs

## Cases:

Latin has the following cases, which correspond to prepositions plus the nouns in English:

|                   | Question                     | Abbreviation |
|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Nominative</b> | who or what?                 | Nom.         |
| <b>Genitive</b>   | whose?                       | Gen.         |
| <b>Dative</b>     | to whom?                     | Dat.         |
| <b>Accusative</b> | whom or what?                | Acc.         |
| <b>Ablative</b>   | how? with what? when? where? | Abl.         |
| <b>Vocative</b>   | —                            | Voc.         |

The sixth case, the vocative, does not appear here, since as a rule it is the same as the nominative. Only the second declension has a special form: for the singular of nominatives ending in *-us*, it is *-e*; for those ending in *-ius*, it is *-ī*.

## Substantives:

Substantives are words designating things, living beings, conditions, places and many other things, for instance dog and cat, man and woman, house and garden, fear and joy, etc. Except at the beginning of sentences, substantives are written with small initial letters. Only proper names like Marcus or Gallia (Gaul) are capitalized.

Latin has the following five declensions:

|                    |                                       |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| First declension:  | <b>a</b> -declension                  |
| Second declension: | <b>o</b> -declension                  |
| Third declension:  | consonant stems; i-stems; mixed class |
| Fourth declension: | <b>u</b> -declension                  |
| Fifth declension:  | <b>e</b> -declension                  |

Except for the third declension, which combines three classes, the declensions are referred to by their stem vowel: so they are called the “**a**-declension” and so forth.

You can find the word stem by clipping off the end of the genitive plural:

| Genitive Plural   | Word Stem | Declension                                   |
|-------------------|-----------|--|
| <b>amīcā-rum</b>  | amīca-    | ā-declension                                 |
| <b>dominō-rum</b> | domino-   | o-declension                                 |
| <b>rēg-um</b>     | rēg-      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> declension (consonant stems) |
| <b>mari-um</b>    | mari-     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> declension (i-stems)         |
| <b>urbi-um</b>    | urb(i)-   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> declension (mixed class)     |
| <b>domu-um</b>    | domu-     | u-declension                                 |
| <b>rē-rum</b>     | re-       | e-declension                                 |

### ā-Declension (Prīma Dēclīnātiō):

Example: **anima**, **-æ f.** soul, breath, life

|      | Singular      |                 | Plural          |                  |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Nom. | <b>Anima</b>  | the soul        | <b>animæ</b>    | the souls        |
| Gen. | <b>Animæ</b>  | of the soul     | <b>animārum</b> | of the souls     |
| Dat. | <b>Animæ</b>  | to/for the soul | <b>animīs</b>   | to/for the souls |
| Acc. | <b>animam</b> | the soul        | <b>animās</b>   | the souls        |
| Abl. | <b>Animā</b>  | by the soul     | <b>animīs</b>   | by the souls     |

Notes:

Most substantives of the a-declension are feminine. But the following are masculine:

|                                |        |                              |            |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|------------|
| <b>poēta</b> , <b>-æ m.</b>    | Poet   | <b>nauta</b> , <b>-æ m.</b>  | sailor     |
| <b>agricola</b> , <b>-æ m.</b> | farmer | <b>incola</b> , <b>-æ m.</b> | inhabitant |

The following occur only in the plural (plural words):

|                                  |      |                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|--------|
| <b>divitiæ</b> , <b>-ārum f.</b> | poet | <b>insidiæ</b> , <b>-ārum f.</b> | ambush |
|----------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|--------|

The following occur only in the singular:

|                        |         |                        |           |
|------------------------|---------|------------------------|-----------|
| <b>jūstitia, -æ f.</b> | justice | <b>scientia, -æ f.</b> | knowledge |
|------------------------|---------|------------------------|-----------|

Many substantives have different meanings in singular and plural:

|                       |                          |                          |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <b>cōpia, -æ f.</b>   | supply, quantity         | <b>cōpiæ, -ārum f.</b>   | troops                                 |
| <b>littera, -æ f.</b> | letter (of the alphabet) | <b>litteræ, -ārum f.</b> | letter (mail), scholarship, literature |

In some combinations older forms are retained:

|               |                           |                                    |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Gen. Sg.      | <b>pater familiās</b>     | father of the family               |
| Dat./Abl. Pl. | <b>dīs et deābus</b>      | (with) the gods and goddesses      |
| Dat./Abl. Pl. | <b>filiīs filiābusque</b> | (with) the sons and daughters      |
| Locative      | <b>Rōmæ</b>               | in Rome (to the question "where?") |

### ō-Declension (Secunda Declinātiō):

Includes substantives whose nominative singular end in **-us** and **-er**, as well as neuters in **-um**.

Substantives in **-us**

Example: **amicus, -ī m.** friend

|      | Singular      |                   | Plural          |                    |
|------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Nom. | <b>amicus</b> | the friend        | <b>amīcī</b>    | the friends        |
| Gen. | <b>amīcī</b>  | of the friend     | <b>amīcōrum</b> | of the friends     |
| Dat. | <b>amīcō</b>  | to/for the friend | <b>amīcīs</b>   | to/for the friends |
| Acc. | <b>amicum</b> | the friend        | <b>amīcōs</b>   | the friends        |
| Abl. | <b>amīcō</b>  | by the friend     | <b>amīcīs</b>   | by the friends     |

The **vocative** is **not** formed, as in all the other declensions, like the nominative, but uses the ending **-e**:

**Salve, amīce!** Hello, friend!

Substantives in **-ius** have **-ī** in the vocative:

**Mī fili!** My son!

**Dīc, Gai!** Speak, Gaius!

⚠ **Danger!** Possible confusion! Not all substantives in **-us** belong to the o-declension. They can also belong to the u-declension. For this reason you should always learn the genitive form along with the nominative — pronouncing it aloud helps in remembering it: “**amīcus, amīcī** — masculine —friend,” but “**cāsus, cāsūs** — masculine —fall; anything that befalls: case, incident; accident”

Substantives in **-er**

Example: **puer, -ī m.** boy

|      | Singular      |                | Plural          |                 |
|------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Nom. | <b>puer</b>   | the boy        | <b>puerī</b>    | the boys        |
| Gen. | <b>puerī</b>  | of the boy     | <b>puerōrum</b> | of the boys     |
| Dat. | <b>puerō</b>  | to/for the boy | <b>puerīs</b>   | to/for the boys |
| Acc. | <b>puerum</b> | the boy        | <b>puerōs</b>   | the boys        |
| Abl. | <b>puerō</b>  | by the boy     | <b>puerīs</b>   | by the boys     |

Substantives in **-er** are masculine. In most substantives in **-er**, the **-e-** is present only in the nominative singular: **liber, librī, librō, librum** (book), etc. Declined like **puer** are the following:

|                        |            |                           |               |
|------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| <b>gener, -erī m.</b>  | son-in-law | <b>socer, -erī m.</b>     | father-in-law |
| <b>vesper, -erī m.</b> | evening    | <b>liberī, -erōrum m.</b> | children      |

## Substantives in *-um*

Example: **templum, -ī n.** temple, shrine

|      | Singular       |                   | Plural           |                    |
|------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Nom. | <b>templum</b> | the temple        | <b>templa</b>    | the temples        |
| Gen. | <b>templī</b>  | of the temple     | <b>templōrum</b> | of the temples     |
| Dat. | <b>templō</b>  | to/for the temple | <b>templīs</b>   | to/for the temples |
| Acc. | <b>templum</b> | the temple        | <b>templa</b>    | the temples        |
| Abl. | <b>templō</b>  | by the temple     | <b>templīs</b>   | by the temples     |

In the dictionary you will find substantives of the o-declension always given with their genitive form and their gender:

**amicus, -ī m.** friend      **liber, -brī m.** book  
**puer, puerī m.** boy, child      **forum, -ī n.** forum, marketplace

### Notes:

Most substantives of the o-declension in *-us* and *-er* are masculine. Exceptions are:

**Corinthus, -ī f.** Corinth (city)      **Ægyptus, -ī f.** Egypt  
**humus, -ī f.** ground, earth      **vulgus, -ī n.** the (common) people

### Plural words:

**liberī, -erōrum m.** children      **arma, -ōrum n.** weapons

The following have different meanings in singular and plural:

**auxilium, -iī n.** Help      **auxilia, -ōrum n.** auxiliary troops  
**castrum, -ī n.** Castle      **castra, -ōrum n.** camp (military)

### Third Declension (Tertia Dēclīnātiō):

The third declension (also called “mixed declension”) includes three different types: the consonant stems, the i-stems and the mixed class, which combines characteristics of the first two types.

#### Consonant stems

This type (also called “consonantal declension”) includes substantives whose stem ends in a consonant, e.g., ***lēx, lēgis*** f. (law). It differs from the other two types of the third declension, the i-stems and the mixed class, in the ablative singular (**–e**), genitive plural (**–um**), and, additionally in the neuters, in the nominative and accusative plural (**–a**). It is important to memorize well these marks of the consonantal declension: **–e, –um, –a**.

Example: ***lēx, lēgis*** f. law

|      | Singular            |                | Plural                |                 |
|------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Nom. | <b><i>lēx</i></b>   | the law        | <b><i>lēgēs</i></b>   | the laws        |
| Gen. | <b><i>lēgis</i></b> | of the law     | <b><i>lēgum</i></b>   | of the laws     |
| Dat. | <b><i>lēgī</i></b>  | to/for the law | <b><i>lēgibus</i></b> | to/for the laws |
| Acc. | <b><i>lēgem</i></b> | the law        | <b><i>lēgēs</i></b>   | the laws        |
| Abl. | <b><i>lēge</i></b>  | by the law     | <b><i>lēgibus</i></b> | by the laws     |

Substantives of the consonantal declension can be of any gender. Masculines and feminines are declined like ***lēx***. Neuters of this declension are declined as follows:

Example: **opus, -eris** *n.* work, labor

|      | Singular      |                 | Plural          |                  |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Nom. | <b>opus</b>   | the work        | <b>opera</b>    | the works        |
| Gen. | <b>operis</b> | of the work     | <b>operum</b>   | of the works     |
| Dat. | <b>operi</b>  | to/for the work | <b>operibus</b> | to/for the works |
| Acc. | <b>operem</b> | the work        | <b>opera</b>    | the works        |
| Abl. | <b>opere</b>  | by the work     | <b>operibus</b> | by the works     |

In the dictionary you will find substantives of the consonantal declension always given with their genitive form and their gender. Since you cannot always tell from the nominative what the word stem is, the genitive must be learned along with the nominative:

**senex, senis** *m.* old man

**opus, -eris** *n.* work

### Notes:

#### Plural words:

**parentēs, -um** *m.* parents

**mājōrēs, -um** *n.* ancestors

Words which change their stems:

**Juppiter, Jovis** *m.* Jupiter

**iter, itineris** *n.* route

There are special forms for **bōs, bovis** *m/f.* head of cattle (ox, bull, cow) and **vās, vāsīs** *n.* vessel, utensil, equipment:

|      | Singular     | Plural      | Singular     | Plural  |
|------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| Nom. | <b>bōs</b>   | bovēs       | <b>vās</b>   | vāsa    |
| Gen. | <b>bovis</b> | boum        | <b>vāsīs</b> | vāsōrum |
| Dat. | <b>bovī</b>  | būbus/bōbus | <b>vāsī</b>  | vāsīs   |
| Acc. | <b>bovem</b> | bovēs       | <b>vās</b>   | vāsa    |
| Abl. | <b>bove</b>  | būbus/bōbus | <b>vāse</b>  | vāsīs   |

### i–stems

The i-stems (also called the “i-declension”), whose main feature is the stem-ending **-ī-**, include only a few substantives. Their characteristics are **-ī, -ium, -ia**.

Example: **turrīs, turris** *f.* tower

|      | Singular      |                  | Plural            |                   |
|------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Nom. | <b>turrīs</b> | the tower        | <b>turrēs</b>     | the towers        |
| Gen. | <b>turrīs</b> | of the tower     | <b>turrium</b>    | of the towers     |
| Dat. | <b>turrī</b>  | to/for the tower | <b>turribus</b>   | to/for the towers |
| Acc. | <b>turrim</b> | the tower        | <b>turrēs/-īs</b> | the towers        |
| Abl. | <b>turrī</b>  | by the tower     | <b>turribus</b>   | by the towers     |

Substantives of the i-stems, which follow this pattern, are usually feminine (exception: **Tiber, -is** *m.* Tiber [river], because river names are masculine).

Neuters, which include substantives in **-ar, -e, al** (memory aid: “Areal”), are declined as follows:



Example: **animal, animālis** *f.* animal, creature

|      | Singular        |                  | Plural            |                   |
|------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Nom. | <b>animal</b>   | the tower        | <b>animālia</b>   | the towers        |
| Gen. | <b>animālis</b> | of the tower     | <b>animālium</b>  | of the towers     |
| Dat. | <b>animāli</b>  | to/for the tower | <b>animālibus</b> | to/for the towers |
| Acc. | <b>animal</b>   | the tower        | <b>animālia</b>   | the towers        |
| Abl. | <b>animāli</b>  | by the tower     | <b>animālibus</b> | by the towers     |

The i-stems include:

|                              |       |                                  |        |
|------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|--------|
| <b>turris, -is</b> <i>f.</i> | tower | <b>sitis, -is</b> <i>f.</i>      | thirst |
| <b>mare, -is</b> <i>m.</i>   | sea   | <b>exemplar, -āris</b> <i>n.</i> | model  |

Notes:

The substantive **vīs** *f.* (“force”) does not have a genitive or dative singular: acc. sg. **vim**, abl. sg. **avī**. The plural is built regularly from the stem **vīr-**: **vīrēs, vīrium, vīribus, vīrēs, vīribus**. Also, its meanings in singular and plural are different:

|                      |                        |                                |                 |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>vīs</b> <i>f.</i> | power, strength, force | <b>vīrēs, vīrium</b> <i>f.</i> | military forces |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|

## Mixed class

The mixed class has characteristics of both the consonantal and i-stems: **-e, -ium, -a**. These substantives thus agree with the consonant stems except in the genitive plural.

Example: **hostis, -is** *m.* enemy

|      | Singular      |                  | Plural          |                    |
|------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Nom. | <b>hostis</b> | the enemy        | <b>hostēs</b>   | the enemies        |
| Gen. | <b>hostis</b> | of the enemy     | <b>hostium</b>  | of the enemies     |
| Dat. | <b>hostī</b>  | to/for the enemy | <b>hostibus</b> | to/for the enemies |
| Acc. | <b>hostem</b> | the enemy        | <b>hostēs</b>   | the enemies        |
| Abl. | <b>hoste</b>  | by the enemy     | <b>hostibus</b> | by the enemies     |

Since the substantives of the mixed class can be of any gender, it is a good idea to memorize not only the genitive but also the gender. Neuters form their forms as described above, with the exception of the acc. sg. (= nom. sg) and the nom./acc. pl., for example: **cor, cordis** *n.* heart, acc. sg. **cor**, nom./acc. pl. **corda**.

Members of the mixed class include:

words in **-is** and **-ēs** with the same number of syllables in *nominative* and *genitive singular*, e.g.,

|                             |      |                              |                 |
|-----------------------------|------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>nāvis, -is</b> <i>f.</i> | ship | <b>clādēs, -is</b> <i>f.</i> | military defeat |
|-----------------------------|------|------------------------------|-----------------|

except:

|  |     |  |      |
|--|-----|--|------|
| <b>canīs, -is</b> <i>f.</i> ,<br>gen. pl. <b>canum</b> | dog | <b>sēdēs, -is</b> <i>f.</i> ,<br>gen. pl. <b>sēdum</b> | seat |
|--|-----|--|------|

words with more than one consonant before the *genitive* ending, e.g.,

|                              |      |                               |              |
|------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>urbs, urbis</b> <i>f.</i> | city | <b>gēns, gentis</b> <i>f.</i> | ethnic group |
|------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|--------------|

except the following names for family members:

|   |        |  |        |
|---|--------|--|--------|
| <b>pater, -tris</b> <i>m.</i> ,<br>gen. pl. <b>patrum</b> | father | <b>māter, mātris</b> <i>f.</i> ,<br>gen. pl. <b>mātrum</b> | mother |
| <b>parentēs, parentum</b> <i>m.</i>                       |        | parents  |        |

Notes:

**Plural words:**

**forēs, -ium** *f.* door (wings)      **narēs, -ium** *f.* nose

The following have different meanings in singular and plural:

**aedēs, -is** *f.* temple      **aedēs, -ium** *f.* house  
**finis, -is** *n.* end, border      **finēs, -ium** *n.* territory  
**pars, -rtis** *f.* part, side      **partēs, -ium** *f.* party, faction

**u-Declension (Quārta Dēclīnātiō):**

The main characteristic of this declension is the stem ending **-u-** which appears in all cases except the dative and ablative plural.

Example: **passus, -ūs** *m.* step, pace

|      | Singular      |                 | Plural          |                  |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Nom. | <b>passus</b> | the step        | <b>passūs</b>   | the steps        |
| Gen. | <b>passūs</b> | of the step     | <b>passuum</b>  | of the steps     |
| Dat. | <b>passuī</b> | to/for the step | <b>passibus</b> | to/for the steps |
| Acc. | <b>passum</b> | the step        | <b>passūs</b>   | the steps        |
| Abl. | <b>passū</b>  | by the step     | <b>passibus</b> | by the steps     |

⚠ **Danger!** Possible confusion! The nominative singular of the substantives of the second declension also ends in **-us**. So the genitive singular has to be memorized along with the nominative singular in order to place the word into the correct declension.

Neuters of the u-declension have a nominative singular ending in **-ū**:

Example: **cornū, -ūs** *n.* horn

|      | Singular      |                 | Plural          |                  |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Nom. | <b>cornū</b>  | the horn        | <b>cornūa</b>   | the horns        |
| Gen. | <b>cornūs</b> | of the horn     | <b>cornuum</b>  | of the horns     |
| Dat. | <b>cornū</b>  | to/for the horn | <b>cornibus</b> | to/for the horns |
| Acc. | <b>cornū</b>  | the horn        | <b>cornua</b>   | the horns        |
| Abl. | <b>cornū</b>  | by the horn     | <b>cornibus</b> | by the horns     |

Notes:

Substantives of the u-declension are normally masculine except for **domus, -ūs** *f.* (house), **manus, -ūs** *f.* (hand) and **porticus, -ūs** *f.* (portico, colonnade).

The following words have **-ubus** instead of **-ibus** in the dative and ablative plural:

|                             |                 |   |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>arcus -ūs</b> <i>m.</i>  | bow             | ➔ | <b>arcubus</b>  |
| <b>artus -ūs</b> <i>m.</i>  | joint           | ➔ | <b>artubus</b>  |
| <b>tribus -ūs</b> <i>f.</i> | voting district | ➔ | <b>tribubus</b> |

**domus, -ūs** *f.* (house) has special forms: a few cases are declined according to the u-declension, others according to the o-declension

|      | Singular     | Plural                                    |
|------|--------------|---|
| Nom. | <b>domus</b> | <b>domūs</b>                              |
| Gen. | <b>domūs</b> | <b>domōrum/domuum</b>                     |
| Dat. | <b>domuī</b> | <b>domibus</b>                            |
| Acc. | <b>domum</b> | <b>domōs</b> (occasionally <b>domūs</b> ) |
| Abl. | <b>domō</b>  | <b>domibus</b>                            |

Also note:

**domō** from home      **domī** at home      **domum** (to) home

### e-Declension (Quīnta Dēclīnātiō):

The main characteristic of this declension is the stem ending **-e-** which appears in all cases.

Example: **rēs, -reī f.** thing, affair

|      | Singular   |                   | Plural       |                    |
|------|------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Nom. | <b>rēs</b> | the affair        | <b>rēs</b>   | the affairs        |
| Gen. | <b>reī</b> | of the affair     | <b>rērum</b> | of the affairs     |
| Dat. | <b>reī</b> | to/for the affair | <b>rēbus</b> | to/for the affairs |
| Acc. | <b>rem</b> | the affair        | <b>rēs</b>   | the affairs        |
| Abl. | <b>rē</b>  | by the affair     | <b>rēbus</b> | by the affairs     |

Notes:

All substantives of the e-declension are normally feminine except for **meridiēs, -eī m.** (noon, south) and **diēs, -eī m.** (day). When meaning “a fixed date” (e.g., payday, day to meet someone, do something), however, **diēs** is feminine.

|                   |            |                    |         |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------|---------|
| <b>diēs certa</b> | fixed date | <b>diēs festus</b> | holiday |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------|---------|

Special meanings of **rēs, -reī f.**:

|                       |                           |                    |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>rēs militāris</b>  | military affairs/practice | <b>rēs futūræ</b>  | the future          |
| <b>rēs secundæ</b>    | prosperity                | <b>rēs adversæ</b> | misfortune          |
| <b>rēs familiāris</b> | one’s private property    | <b>rēs gestæ</b>   | exploits            |
| <b>rēs Rōmānæ</b>     | Roman history             | <b>rēs pūblica</b> | republic, the state |