

Conjugation of Verbs

The inflection of a verb is called a Conjugation. Most verb inflections in English have disappeared, although we still distinguish between I *go*, he *goes*, etc. Latin, however, retains full inflections for most verbs, the forms of which must be mastered in order to distinguish meaning.

Through conjugation a verb expresses: **Person, Number, Tense, Mood and Voice.**

1. PERSON & NUMBER: A verb agrees with its subject in number and person. There are Three Persons and Two Numbers, arranged thus:

1st person singular (I)	1st person plural (we)
2nd person singular (you)	2nd person plural (you)
3rd person singular (he, she it)	3rd person plural (they)

In English person and number normally cannot be determined without the aid of pronouns (*I, you, we, they*, etc.) except in the 3rd pers. sing.: *I go, you go, we go, they go*; but *he goes*.

Latin always distinguishes number and person: *amo* (I love), *amas* (you love) *amat* (he loves), etc. Because person and number are contained in the endings themselves, the personal pronouns (*I, you, he*, etc.) are used mainly for emphasis.

The personal endings in Latin distinguish the person and number of the verb, and must be mastered early:

1st person singular	-o, -m	1st person plural	-mus
2nd person singular	-s	2nd person plural (you)	-tis
3rd person singular	-t	3rd person plural (they)	-nt

2. TENSE: Latin tenses have the same general meaning as the corresponding English tenses:

Continued action:	Present:	I love, I am loving, I do love.
	Imperfect:	I loved, I was loving, I did love.
	Future:	I will love.
Completed action:	Perfect:	I have loved, I loved.
	Pluperfect	I had loved.
	Future Perfect	I will have loved.

Note that the emphatic (I do love) and the progressive (I am loving) tenses do not exist as separate forms in Latin.

3. MOOD: Latin has four Moods: Indicative, Subjunctive, Imperative, Infinitive.

a) **Indicative:** The Indicative is used for statements and questions: *I love that book. Are you reading that book?*

b) **Subjunctive:** The Subjunctive has many uses, including commands, conditions, wishes, possibility, and dependent clauses. It is often translated by the English indicative; frequently by auxiliary verbs indicating uncertainty or wish (*may, might, would, should*); sometimes by the (now rare) subjunctive (*I wish I were in Rome*); sometimes by the Infinitive; and often by the Imperative.

c) **Imperative:** The Imperative is used to express command or exhortation: *Go! He shall be set free!*

d) **Infinitive:** The Infinitive is chiefly used as an indeclinable noun (*To err is human*) or as a complementary infinitive to complete the meaning of another verb (*I want to go*).

Note that the basic idea of a verb expressed by the Infinitive is not limited (*infinitivus*) by person or number (though it is limited by tense and voice).

4. **VOICE:** Latin has two Voices (Active and Passive) with uses corresponding to English: *I love* (Active); *I am loved* (Passive).

a) The **Active Voice** expresses what the subject of the verb is or does: *I am well. I love.*

b) The **Passive Voice** expresses what is done *to* the subject of the verb: *I am loved.* The subject "I" is no longer the actor in the sentence, but the recipient of the action.

Note that only transitive verbs can have a full passive voice. A little thought will show that such forms as "I live" or "we persevere" can have no meaning in the passive voice. But meaning *can* attach to 3rd person singular forms of some intransitive verbs: *His life was lived well.*

The Verb to Be: The verb "to be" is irregular in English and Latin. Learn the forms for the Present Indicative:

sum	sumus
es	estis
est	sunt

Principal Parts: The complete conjugation of a verb can be obtained from its Principal Parts, which must be memorized when a verb is first encountered. The Four Principal Parts are:

- 1) Present Indicative, 1st pers. sing.
- 2) Infinitive
- 3) Perfect Indicative, 1st pers. sing.
- 4) Perfect Passive Participle.

Thus: *amo* (I love)
amare (to love)
amavi (I loved)
amatus (loved)