

What's in Your Latin Toolbox? Developing Reading Skills

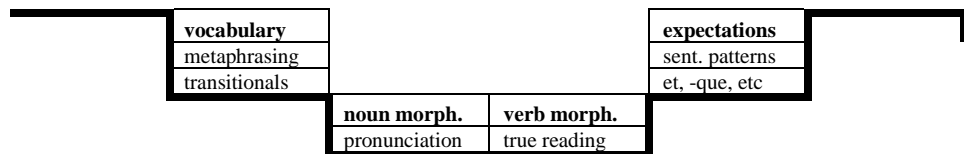
Reading *fluency* in Latin is not something naturally developed nor often expressly taught in Latin classes. Usually the best and brightest students continue with Latin, and most of them are efficient at decoding our beloved ancient inflectional language. But decoding does very little to develop meaningful reading skills, limiting the speed of progress through a passage. Students are eventually overwhelmed by real Latin because of vocabulary and the complexity of structures, not to mention what seems like impossible to disambiguate sentences.

However, reading skills can be taught from the beginning of Latin and reinforced continuously throughout the learning process. Students can be made aware of the mental toolbox they are developing and taught to use it.

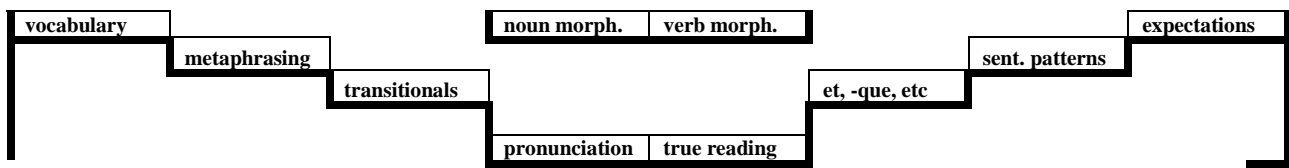
Consider if the following were a closed toolbox. Your worst students never open it. They assume that opening the toolbox might be like asking for directions—something they will only do as a last resort.

vocabulary	expectations
metaphrasing	sent. patterns
transitionals	et, -que, etc
noun morph.	verb morph.
pronunciation	true reading

But some students will at least open the toolbox, though maybe not all the way. They might assume they don't need to because the other compartments that are currently unreachable really aren't critical. In fact, many will reach straight in for vocabulary and base all expectations solely on intuiting a sentence based on known vocabulary. The better student will also consider the morphology of the nouns and verbs in the sentence. Rarely do they consider anything else.



But when the toolbox is completely opened and the tray containing vocabulary and expectations removed, we find that there are many things we have available to use in the toolbox that can help students (and ourselves) become better readers of Latin.



Our goal should be to practice using all of the items in the toolbox so often that they become automatic and unconscious, a seamless practice in our Latin reading habits.

The Partially Opened Toolbox: Noun Morphology, Verb Morphology, Vocabulary, & (Immediate or False) Expectations.

If the toolbox is only partially opened, students only have access to vocabulary and expectations—which, because they are immediate expectations, may well be false expectations—on top, and if they reach down noun morphology as well as verb morphology. With luck, these latter two will be well organized and orderly.

The beginning young Latin student is often ill-equipped with this partially opened toolbox to read a sentence longer than four or five words. Students want and need immediate gratification, immediate illucidation—not immediate frustration. They often believe that knowledge of vocabulary or access to a dictionary and common sense will be enough, and thus only reach for these easy tools on top.

Sometimes this quick access to information seems to be enough, as in this sentence:

- multī aegrōtī, quī ex illō fonte aquam bibērunt, postea convaluērunt.

The biggest mistake in translating with this particular sentence seems to be “Many sick people, who drank from the water fountain, afterwards got better.” This is very close, and this is basically what the sentence means. But we truly want our students to see that *ex illō fonte* is “from that fountain” and that *aquam* is the direct object of *bibērunt*. In their eyes, though, they got the immediate gratification of an easy expectation leading to a mostly correct translation.

However, consider this sentence:

- Martem saepe in proeliō servāvī.

Your average student will probably translate this incorrectly as “Mars is often saved in battle” instead of “I have often protected Mars in battle.” (These words are spoken by the *Cambridge Latin Course*’s own miles glōriōsus, Modestus, in Stage 22.) We can pull out our hair in frustration and point out the endings, but the fact remains that we are expecting students to make a significant shift in the way their minds have been trained to work with language up until they encountered Latin.

The students that will most easily embrace Latin will be those who already like puzzles and decoding. And even if we can get students to declare that Martem is accusative, that does not mean that they will translate this sentence correctly because they have not yet trained their minds to accept and process information in any other way except with immediacy. And unless we find a way to retrain the brain to accept information differently and to slow its approach a bit, most students will choke on sentences like this:

- Quod ubi Caesar animadvertit, nāvēs longās, quārum et speciēs erat barbarīs inūsitiōrior et mōtus ad ūsum expeditior, paulum rēmōvērī ab ōnerariis nāvibus et remīs incitārī et ad

lātus apertum hostium constituī atque inde fundīs, sagittīs, tormentīs hostes propellī ac submovērī iussit; quae rēs magnō ūsuī nostrīs fuit. (DBG 4.25.1)

They probably will begin with “Because when Caesar noticed, the long ships... uh... I give up...” instead of “And when Caesar noticed this, he ordered the long ships...” Yes, we will come back to this sentence. And all is not lost if you have packed your toolbox well. We can, in fact, train our brains to accept Latin in word order as a living language if we make sure that we have plenty of tools in our toolbox and learn how to use them.

Metaphrasing and Sentence Patterns

I have long since been a big supporter of a strategy called metaphrasing. I keep my metaphrasing to this simple sentence: Someone (nominative) verbed something (accusative) to someone (dative). You won't always need the dative, and in those cases you can omit it. As for genitives and ablatives, I explain that genitives act more like an adjective, mainly piggy-backing on other nouns, and ablatives, at least in the beginning, are in prepositional phrases. My focus is helping students (and myself for that matter) rewire the brain to accept information in Latin word order, especially the core of the sentence.

I use metaphrasing primarily in warm-ups.

[SEE HANDOUT]

Sentence patterns go hand in hand with metaphrasing. When we talk about sentence patterns, it can be very basic like NOM + ACC + Verb or NOM + DAT + ACC + Verb, and either of these can have the NOM understood. Students think that sentence patterns disappear once sentences gain complexity, but I like to point out that this is not necessarily true. [SEE HANDOUT]

Other useful patterns are ACC + NOM + VERB or ACC + VERB + NOM with the strong contrast of accusative to nominative (as opposed to the nominative simply being understood). [SEE HANDOUT]

Sentence patterns for me can also be understanding patterns created by certain constructions, like indirect statements, commands with imperō, commands with iubeō, nesting/framing with participles. [SEE HANDOUT]

Transitionals Plus Et, -Que, etc

By transitionals, I don't mean tamen and tandem, but little things that some students struggle with understanding. [SEE HANDOUT]

- connecting relatives, understanding exactly how they are functioning and why
- pronouns like *ille* to indicate a change of subject (can be different depending upon the author)
- datives up front (word order as a transition)

The dreaded AND in all of its forms: et, -que, -atque, ac. My students hate my favorite question when we hit any form of and: What is AND connecting? I remind them that and joins like things, and to remember that -que is connecting with something previous.

Pronunciation and True Reading

In my image of the toolbox I have Vocabulary and (false/immediate) Expectations on a tray that lifts out with Pronunciation and True Reading hiding underneath. But why is pronunciation down there with true reading? If you aren't reading out loud (with consistent, clear pronunciation), chances are you are not internalizing vocabulary since you are not truly hearing the word, you are probably not keeping your head IN LATIN but your mind is making those extraordinarily fast leaps to construct meaning without taking in enough information to construct meaning correctly. Misunderstandings can totally corrupt meaning for a passage. True expectation is built upon all you know, not just guessing from vocabulary you recognize.

Simplified Rules for Reading (Based on Dexter Hoyos' Rules for Reading)

**And when it says "read" in these rules, I mean read out loud so as to truly hear the whole word, especially the endings.

Rule 1 Read the sentence or passage completely. In order to see all the words in context, *reread as needed.*

Rule 2 While reading, register the word endings and their relationship to one another.

Rule 3 Now look up unfamiliar words. *Reread as needed.*

Rule 4 Recognize word groups and read them in sequence. *Reread as needed.*

Rule 5 Once a subordinate clause or phrase has begun, it must be completed before the rest of the sentence can proceed. *Reread as needed.*

Rule 6 Translate only when you know how a sentence works and what it means.

These rules are good, but they leave out HOW to recognize the word groups (which seems so obvious to us, but not necessarily to our students), or the importance of reading in word order or even more importantly how to read in word order and train our brains to accept the information and process it. This is where all of these other tools in our toolbox are most useful.

Metaphrasing is one of my favorite tools, and is useful for dealing with not only syntax but also unknown or forgotten vocabulary because it gives your head a framework on which to hang all the other information in the sentence leaving, in the case of missing vocabulary, just that one puzzle piece left that becomes obvious more often than not. Learning how to paraphrase whole phrases makes recognizing word groups significantly easier and trains your brain to think not in terms of single words, but whole phrases and clauses. Learning to anticipate certain underlying sentence patterns, or patterns expected with, say, indirect statements or *iubeō* and similar, makes recognizing these relationships when reading something new significantly easier. Recognizing and anticipating certain types of transitions helps you to understand the relationships between

words. And my very favorite, understanding what *et* or *-que* is doing in a sentence, significantly reveals phrasing and structure.

So what is in your Latin toolbox? More importantly, what is in your student's toolbox? Maybe it's time to open up that toolbox and look through all that is available to develop solid reading skills.

What's in Your Latin Toolbox? Developing Reading Skills

The closed toolbox.

vocabulary	expectations
metaphrasing	sent. patterns
transitionals	et, -que, etc
noun morph.	verb morph.
pronunciation	true reading

The partially opened toolbox.

vocabulary	expectations
metaphrasing	sent. patterns
transitionals	et, -que, etc
noun morph.	verb morph.
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The fully opened, fully packed toolbox, ready for use.

vocabulary	noun morph.	verb morph.	expectations
metaphrasing			sent. patterns
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	pronunciation	true reading	

1. Vocabulary, (Immediate & False) Expectations, Noun Morphology, & Verb Morphology

- multī aegrōtī, quī ex illō fonte aquam bibērunt, postea convaleuerunt. (“fōns sacer,” *Cambridge Latin Course*, p. 6)
“...they drank from the water fountain...” vs “...they drank water from that fountain...”
- Martem saepe in proeliō servāvī. (“Modestus,” *Cambridge Latin Course*, p. 31)
“Mars is often saved in battle” vs “I have often protected Mars in battle.”
- quod ubi Caesar animadvertit, nāvēs longās, quārum et speciēs erat barbarīs inūsitiōr et mōtus ad ūsum expeditior, paulum rēmovērī ab ōnerariis nāvibus et remīs incitārī et ad lātus apertum hostium constituī atque inde fundīs, sagittīs, tormentīs hostes propellī ac submovērī iussit; quae rēs magnō ūsuī nostrīs fuit. (*Dē Bellō Gallicō* 4.25.1)
“Because when Caesar noticed, the long ships... uh... I give up...” vs “And when Caesar noticed this, he ordered the long ships....”

2. Metaphrasing & Sentence Patterns

- Someone (nominative) verbed something (accusative) to someone (dative).
 - Latin 1:
 - multōs servōs* > Someone verbed *many slaves* to someone.
 - mercātor* > *The merchant* verbed something to someone.

- *latrōnibus* > Someone verbed something .

PASSAGE: mercātor ōlim cum merce pretiōsā Arabiam trānsībat.... multōs servōs quoque habēbat, quī mercem custōdiēbant....mercātor servīque latrōnibus ācritē resistēbant, sed latrōnēs tandem servōs superāvērunt. (“mercātor Arabs” CLC Unit 2 100)

ii. Latin 2:

- *fīlium, hastā vulnerātum* > Someone verbed the son, wounded by the spear.
- *agricolam ipsum, glādiō interfectum* > Someone verbed the farmer, killed with a sword.
- *pastōrēs, timōre irāque commōtī,* > The shepherds, overcome with fear and anger, verbed something.
- *pastōrēs, Belimicum Rōmānōsque vituperantēs* > The shepherds, cursing Belimicus and the Romans, verbed something. OR Someone verbed the shepherds, cursing Belimicus and the Romans.

PASSAGE: (*pastōrēs*) *fīlium agricolae vīdērunt, hastā graviter vulnerātum. agricolam ipsum vīdērunt, gladiō centuriōnis interfectum. tandem abiērunt, timōre irāque commōtī, Belimicum Rōmānōsque vituperantēs.* (“ultiō Rōmāna” CLC Unit 3 144)

iii. Latin 3:

- *Domitia lectīcā vecta* > Domitia, carried in a sedan chair, verbed something.
- *comitantibus servīs* > Someone verbed something, with slaves accompanying/while slaves were accompanying.
- *servīs extrā iānuam relictīs* > After the slaves had been left outside the door, someone verbed something.
- *Salviō aulam intrantī* > Someone verbed something to Salvius entering the palace.

PASSAGES: *inde Domitia lectīcā vecta, comitantibus servīs, domum Hateriī profecta est. ... servīs extrā iānuam relictīs, Domitia cum Chionē ingressa est.* (“īnsidiae” CLC Unit 3 276)

Salviō aulam intrantī obviam iit Epaphrodītus. cōmiter excēpit. (“honōrēs” CLC Unit 3 282)

iv. Latin 4:

- *ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem*

PASSAGE:

*diffugimus vīsū exsanguēs. illī agmine certō
Lāocoonta petunt; et prīmum parva duōrum
corpora nātōrum serpēns amplexus uterque
implicat et miserōs morsū dēpascitur artūs;
post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem
corripiunt spīrīsque ligant ingentibus; et iam
bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum
terga dati superant capite et cervicibus altis.* (*Aeneid* 2.212-219)

b. Sentence Patterns

i. (NOM) + (DAT) + ACC + VERB

1. cēterī, audāciā Glabriōnis obstupefactī, oculōs in Imperātōrem dēfīxōs tenēbant nec quicquam dīcere audēbant. (“cōnsilium Domitiānī 2” CLC Unit 4 48)
2. illī agmine certō /Lāocoonta petunt; (*Aeneid* 2.212-213)

ii. ACC + NOM + VERB / ACC + VERB + NOM (*contrast* of ACC to NOM as opposed to NOM understood, above)

1. Gallia est omnis dīvīsa in partēs trēs, quārum ūnam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitānī, tertiam quī ipsōrum linguā Celtae, nostrā Gallī appellāntur. Hī omnēs linguā, institūtīs, lēgibus inter sē differunt. Gallōs ab Aquitānīs Garumna flūmen, ā Belgīs Mātrōna et Sēquana dīvidit. (*Dē Bellō Gallicō* 1.1)
2. (*verb with dative object as opposed to accusative*)
Salviō aulam intransī obviā iit Epahrodītus. (“honōrēs” CLC Unit 3 282)

iii. Other types of patterns:

1. Indirect statements: Verb of the Head + ACC + (ACC) + INF
2. Commands with *imperō*: DAT + *imperat* + ut + subjunctive
3. Commands with *iubeō*: *iubet* + acc + infinitive / acc + infinitive + *iubet*
4. Nesting with participles: (noun + abl of means/agent + perfect passive participle; noun + accusative + present active/perfect passive participle; noun + genitive + participle; noun + prep phrase + participle.)

3. Transitionals Plus Et, -Que, etc

a. quī coordinating relative (quī = et is/ea/id, tying back to the previous information)

- i. convīvae, cum vīdissent quid coquus parāvisset, eius artem vehementer laudāvērunt. **quā** rē dēlectātus, Haterius servīs imperāvīt ut amphorās vīnī Falernī inferrunt. (“cēna Haterī” CLC Unit 3 242)
- ii. “quid est pauper?” rogāvīt cōnsul Sabīnus, quī mīlle servōs habēbat. **quibus** verbīs audītīs, omnēs plausērunt, iocō dēlectātī. (“philosophia” CLC Unit 3 244)
- iii. “nēmō nisi īnsānus labōrat.” **cui** respondit Euphrosynē vōce serēnā, “omnibus autem labōrandum est.” (“philosophia” CLC Unit 3 244)
- iv. **quod** ubi Caesar animadvertit, nāvēs longās, quārum et speciēs erat barbarīs inūsītātior et mōtus ad ūsum expeditior, paulum rēmōvērī ab ōnerariīs nāvibus et remīs incitārī et ad lātus apertum hostium constituī atque inde fundīs, sagittīs, tormentīs hostes propellī ac submovērī iussit; quae rēs magnō ūsuī nostrīs fuit. (*Dē Bellō Gallicō* 4.25.1)

b. ille (indicating a change in subject, usually from the previous object)

- i. servus Salvium et Quīntum ad ātrium dūxit. **illī**, postquam ātrium intrāvērunt, magnam turbam vīdērunt. (“caerimōnia” CLC Unit 2 56)

- ii. Strythiō, vir summae patientiae, lucernam tulit amīcōque trādidit. **ille**, cellam ingressus, ē cōspectū discessit. (“Modestus custōs” CLC Unit 3 89)
 - iii. diffugimus vīsū exsanguēs. **illī** agmine certō Lāocoonta petunt; (*Aeneid* 2.212-213)
- c. in conversations between two people, datives:
- i. **cui** respondit Euphrosynē vōce serēnā, “omnibus autem labōrandum est.” (“philosophia” CLC Unit 3 244)
 - ii. **Pūbliō hoc nārrāntī** Domitiānus manū significat ut dēsistat. (“inquisitiō” CLC Unit 4 86)
 - iii. **Salviō rogantī** quid esset agendum, aliī alia suādēbant. (“accūsātiō” CLC Unit 4 103)
- d. what is “and” connecting (parallel constructions, but what is parallel?):
- i. mercātor servīque latrōnibus ācriter resistēbant, sed latrōnēs tandem servōs superāvērunt. (“mercātor Arabs” CLC Unit 2 100)
 - ii. tandem abiērunt, timōre irāque commōtī, Belimicum Rōmānōsque vituperantēs. (“ultiō Rōmāna” CLC Unit 3 144)
 - iii. **et** p̄rimum parva duōrum corpora nātōrum serpēns amplexus uterque implicat et miserōs morsū dēpascitur artūs; post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem corripit sp̄rīsQUE ligant ingentibus; (*Aeneid* 2.213-217)
 - iv. quod ubi Caesar animadvertit, nāvēs longās, quārum **et** speciēs erat barbarīs inūsitātior **et** mōtus ad ūsum expeditior, paulum rēmōvērī ab ōnerariis nāvibus **et** remīs incitārī **et** ad lātus apertum hostium constituī ATQUE inde fundīs, sagittīs, tormentīs hostes propellī **ac** submōvērī iussit; quae rēs magnō ūsuī nostrīs fuit. (*Dē Bellō Gallicō* 4.25.1)

4. Pronunciation and True Reading Expectations and Habits

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Premiere Programs

Rusticatio (two options, July 2-9 and July 17-24, Charles Town, WV) and **Septimana Californiana** (June 30-July 7, Los Angeles, CA) are week-long Latin immersion programs, suitable for all who have completed at least the equivalent of two years of college Latin. Through various conversational activities, participants will begin to activate their knowledge of Latin.

Why Speak Latin?

Our modern language colleagues know that mastery comes when the student has internalized the language. They understand that internalizing happens through communication; through experiences that intimately, directly, and frequently involve the hearing and speaking faculties. Internalizing requires quick, immediate exchanges; communication that promotes thinking in the target language, without recourse to English. This principle is equally valid in Latin instruction, because, as we all know from personal experience as babies and young children, all human beings learn language by speaking and hearing.

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