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**Latin for the New Millennium  
Student Text, Level 1**

Milena Minkova and Terence Tunberg

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Reprint with corrections, 2013

**Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc.**  
1570 Baskin Road  
Mundelein, Illinois 60060  
[www.bolchazy.com](http://www.bolchazy.com)

Printed in Canada

**2015**  
by Friesens

ISBN 978-0-86516-560-1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

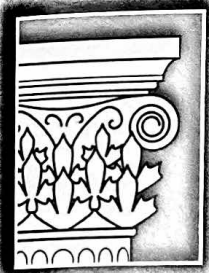
Minkova, Milena.

Latin for the new millennium : student text, level 1 / Milena Minkova and  
Terence Tunberg.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.  
ISBN 978-0-86516-560-1 (v. 1 : hardbound : alk. paper) 1. Latin language--  
Grammar. I. Tunberg, Terence. II. Title.

PA2087.S.M562 2008  
478.2'421--dc22

2008014705



# INTRODUCTION

## ALPHABET

The Latin alphabet was derived from the Etruscan alphabet some time before the seventh century BCE. The Etruscans were a people in pre-Roman Italy.

Their alphabet owes much to the Greek alphabet. In turn, the Greek alphabet was derived from the Phoenician alphabet. Phoenician traders had spread their system of writing throughout the Mediterranean region. The Phoenician alphabet itself can be traced to the North Semitic alphabet, which was used in Syria and Palestine as early as the eleventh century BCE, and is considered to be the earliest fully developed alphabetic writing system.



An Etruscan couple reclining on a funeral sarcophagus.

Look at the English alphabet in the left column, and at the Latin alphabet in the right one. The Latin alphabet is accompanied by the names of the Latin letters (in parentheses).

English Alphabet		Latin Alphabet		
Uppercase	Lowercase	Uppercase	Lowercase	Letter Name
A	a	A	a	(a "äh")
B	b	B	b	(be "bay")
C	c	C	c	(ce "cay")
D	d	D	d	(de "day")
E	e	E	e	(e "ëh")
F	f	F	f	(ef)
G	g	G	g	(ge "gay")
H	h	H	h	(ha "hah")
I	i	I	i	(i "ee")
J	j			
K	k	K	k	(ka "kah")
L	l	L	l	(el)
M	m	M	m	(em)
N	n	N	n	(en)
O	o	O	o	(o "öh")
P	p	P	p	(pe "pay")
Q	q	Q	q	(qu "koo")
R	r	R	r	(er)
S	s	S	s	(es)
T	t	T	t	(te "tay")
U	u	U	u	(u "oo")
V	v	V	v	(u consonant)
W	w			
X	x	X	x	(ix "eex")
Y	y	Y	y	(upsilon)
Z	z	Z	z	(zeta "dzayta")

The English alphabet is derived directly from the Latin alphabet. This accounts for the great similarities between the two alphabets. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet and 24 in the Latin. The differences are the following:

- The letter **W, w** (which is the doubled letter **v**) is missing in the Latin alphabet.
- The letter **J, j** is a more recent invention. In fact, it appears in Latin texts written during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as well as in many modern editions of ancient Latin texts. It is used to indicate the semi-vowel **i**, sometimes called consonantal **i**. The consonantal **i** is

the *i* at the beginning of a word before a vowel, or *i* between two vowels. According to this method, for example, *lūlius* is written *Jūlius*, and *Āiax* is written *Ājax*. In this book, the letter *J, j* will not be used.

- The distinction between the vowel *U, u* and the consonant *V, v* also belongs to later times. Initially, there was only one letter *V, u* used both for the vowel and the consonant, e.g., *Vrbs*, “The City,” (i.e., Rome), or *uictor*, “the winner.” However, in accord with the prevailing practice of expressing the vowel with *U, u*, and the consonant with *V, v*, in this book the two letters will be distinguished.



The Latin words *senātus*, *rēgēs*, *ūlla*, *gentēs*, and *prīmus* are engraved on this stone.



Sign from Pompeii carved on stone with Latin letters.

## PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN

### VOWELS

There are six vowels in Latin and their pronunciation is as follows:

Long Vowel Sound	Short Vowel Sound
<i>ā</i> is pronounced as in “father”: <i>ōrātor</i> “orator”	<i>a</i> is pronounced as in “alike”: <i>amō</i> “love”
<i>ē</i> is pronounced like the <i>a</i> in “rave”: <i>nēmō</i> “nobody”	<i>e</i> is pronounced as in “pet”: <i>bene</i> “well”
<i>ī</i> is pronounced like the double <i>e</i> in “seen”: <i>līmes</i> “boundary”	<i>i</i> is pronounced as in “pit”: <i>nihil</i> “nothing”
<i>ō</i> is pronounced as in “stove”: <i>videō</i> “(I) see”	<i>o</i> is pronounced as in “often”: <i>rosa</i> “rose”
<i>ū</i> is pronounced as in “moon”: <i>ūnus</i> “one”	<i>u</i> is pronounced as in “put”: <i>tum</i> “then”
<i>ȳ</i> comes from Greek and is pronounced in length somewhere between the <i>i</i> in “hit” and the <i>u</i> in “mute”: <i>Pȳramus</i> “Pyramus”	<i>y</i> comes from Greek. Its sound, whether long or short, lies in between the sounds of <i>i</i> and <i>u</i> much as in the French “sûr,” but the sound of short <i>y</i> is less drawn out than that of long <i>y</i> : <i>lyricus</i> “lyrical”





## BY THE WAY

Everywhere in this book long vowels are indicated by macrons, i.e., *ā, ē, ī, ō, ū, ŷ*, while above the short vowels there are no signs. Sometimes two words differ from each other only in the length of the vowel. For example, *mālum*, with a long *a* means “apple,” while *malum* with a short *a* means “bad thing.”

## ► EXERCISE 1

Repeat these words aloud after your teacher pronounces them.

- |            |           |           |             |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. alō     | 7. lēnis  | 13. probō | 19. sūtor   |
| 2. alumnus | 8. sēdēs  | 14. nota  | 20. ūsus    |
| 3. rāna    | 9. iter   | 15. pōnō  | 21. syllaba |
| 4. rādō    | 10. timeō | 16. dōnum | 22. Pŷrēnē  |
| 5. teneō   | 11. nītor | 17. ululō |             |
| 6. petō    | 12. mīrus | 18. lupus |             |

## DIPHTHONGS

Diphthongs are two vowels combined in one syllable and pronounced together as one sound. There are six diphthongs in Latin:

- **ae** much like the *y* in “sky”: *laevus* “left”
- **au** pronounced as *ou* in “our”: *aurum* “gold”
- **ei** pronounced as *ei* in “feign”: *oiei!* “alas!”
- **eu** pronounced *eeo*, much as if in the two words “grey blue” you were to subtract the “gr-” and the “bl-” and combine the two vowel sounds: *Eurōpa* “Europe”
- **oe** pronounced as *oy* in “boy”: *proelium* “battle”
- **ui** pronounced nearly like “we”: *hui!* “oh!”

It is believed that quite early, still in ancient times, the diphthongs **ae** and **oe** began to be pronounced as *e*. If you encounter them written *aē* or *aĕ*, and *oē* or *oĕ*, this means that they are not diphthongs and the letters should be pronounced separately: *āēr*, *poēta*.

The diphthongs are always long.

## ► EXERCISE 2

Repeat these words after your teacher pronounces them.

- |           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1. aestās | 7. seu     | 13. aēneus |
| 2. aequō  | 8. moenia  | 14. poēma  |
| 3. raeda  | 9. neu     | 15. hei    |
| 4. laudō  | 10. poena  | 16. huic   |
| 5. aut    | 11. neuter |            |
| 6. aula   | 12. Poenus |            |

# CONSONANTS

- *c* is pronounced as in “come”: *clārus* “bright,” *censeō* “(I) deem,” *cārus* “dear.”
- When *b* is followed by *s*, as in *urbs* “city,” the sound of *b* approaches that of *p*: a sound we might represent as *urps*.
- *g* is pronounced as in “get”: *gaudium* “joy,” *gignō* “(I) beget, (I) bear,” *grātia* “favor, agreeableness.”
- Some think that the Romans of Cicero’s time (first century BCE) pronounced the two consonants *ng* as *ngn*: for example, the adjective *māgnus* “great,” would have been pronounced in a way that we might represent as *mangnus*.
- *k* is a very rare consonant. In fact, it appears only in two words: *Kalendae* “the first day of every month in the Roman calendar,” and in the personal name *Kaeso*.
- *q* appears always in combination with *u* and the combination *qu* is pronounced as in “queen”: *quattuor*, “four.”
- *v* has a sound similar to *w* (as in the word “wife”): *videō* “I see.”
- The consonant *u* in the combination *su* sounds like the English *w* in the following four words: *suēscō*, “(I) become accustomed”; *Suēvī*, a name of a German tribe; *suādeō*, “(I) advise”; *suāvis*, “sweet.”
- The letter *r* is trilled slightly. The sound has no exact equivalent in English, but is heard in many other European languages. The best way to make this sound is to pronounce *r* as in “rope,” but vibrate the end of the tongue slightly as you say it.
- *x* is a double consonant (equivalent to *cs* or *gs*) that sounds much like the *x* in “six.”
- *z* is another double consonant (equivalent to *dz*) and sounds almost like *z* in “zebra.” It begins with a slight *d* sound first, so in pronouncing this letter you should hear *dz*.
- *ph* sounds like *p* in “pen,” but with the addition of a slight breath of air represented by the *h*; *th* sounds like *t* as in “Tom,” but with the addition of a slight extra breathing represented by the *h*; *ch* sounds nearly like the combination *kh*. These consonants are borrowed from Greek and appear in Greek words: *zephyrus* “western breeze,” *chorus* “chorus,” *theātrum* “theatre.” When *p* and *t* are not accompanied by *h*, this slight aspiration is absent.
- When consonants are doubled, as in the verb *aggredior*, the consonantal sound is lengthened slightly.

## ► EXERCISE 3

Repeat these words after your teacher pronounces them:

- |                   |                        |                     |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <i>cibus</i>   | 7. <i>glōria</i>       | 13. <i>phasēlus</i> |
| 2. <i>capiō</i>   | 8. <i>Zeus</i>         | 14. <i>charta</i>   |
| 3. <i>cumulus</i> | 9. <i>bibliothēca</i>  | 15. <i>cēlō</i>     |
| 4. <i>crēscō</i>  | 10. <i>philosophia</i> | 16. <i>antīquus</i> |
| 5. <i>gemma</i>   | 11. <i>zōna</i>        |                     |
| 6. <i>Gallus</i>  | 12. <i>theōrēma</i>    |                     |

## ACCENT

A Latin word is made up not just of letters, but also of syllables. A Latin word has as many syllables as it has vowels or diphthongs (a diphthong works like a single vowel, since it is made up of two vowels pronounced together [see diphthongs, above]).

You will need to know the following terms, when learning about accent.

- *ultima*                      the last syllable in a word
- *penult*                      the second-to-last syllable in a word
- *antepenult*                the third-to-last syllable in a word

So, in the word *ze-phy-rus* the vowel *u* is the *ultima*, *y* is the *penult*, and *e* is the *antepenult*.

## RULES ABOUT THE STRESS ACCENT IN LATIN

1. The stress accent in Latin falls on either the *penult* or the *antepenult*.
2. The accent falls on the *penult*, if the *penult* is long. If the *penult* is short, the accent falls on the *antepenult*.
3. How to determine whether the *penult* is long or short.
  - a. If the *penult* contains a long vowel (or any diphthong), the *penult* itself is long. You often need to learn whether the vowel in the *penult* is long or short as a basic element in learning a new word. A macron above the vowel will tell you that the vowel is long, while the absence of a macron will indicate a short vowel. Pronouncing the word can help you remember the vowel lengths. For example, *vi-de-ō*, “I see,” is pronounced *vi’deō*; while *au-rō-ra*, “dawn,” is pronounced *aurō’ra*; and *po-pu-lus*, “people” is pronounced *po’pulus*.
  - b. If the vowel in the *penult* is followed by two or more consonants, the *penult* is long, **no matter whether the vowel in the penult is long or short**, and the accent necessarily falls on the *penult*. For example, *do-cu-men-tum*, “document,” is pronounced *documen’tum*.



### BY THE WAY

The consonant *x* is double (*cs* or *gs*) and counts as two consonants when determining whether the *penult* is long.

- c. There is one exception to ‘b’ above. Sometimes, even when there are two consonants between the *penult* and the *ultima*, they still do not determine that the *penult* is long. This happens when the two consonants are a mute and a liquid.

The mutes are *p, b, d, t, g, c*.

The liquids are *l, r*.

So, in the word *pal-pe-bra*, “eyelid,” the *antepenult* is accented (*pal’pebra*); the vowel of the *penult* is short, since it is followed by a mute and a liquid. Of course, rule ‘a’ still applies: in the word *the-ā-trum*, “theatre,” the *penult* is accented (*theā’trum*), since it is naturally long, something we learn from the macron.



## ► EXERCISE 4

Repeat each sentence aloud after your teacher reads it. Pay attention to the pronunciation and stress accent of each word.

### What it is Like to Live Over a Bathhouse!

(Adapted from Seneca, *Moral Letter 56*)

Ecce undique clāmor sonat! Suprā ipsum balneum habitō! Prōpōne nunc tibi omnia genera vōcum odiōsa! Fortiōrēs exercentur et manūs plumbō gravēs iactant, cum aut labōrant aut labōrantem imitantur. Gemitūs audiō, quotiēns spiritum remisērunt. Sunt quoque ūnctōrēs et tractātōrēs. Audiō crepitum manuum umerōs ferientium: sonus quoque ictuum mūtātur: nunc enim manus pervenit plāna, nunc concava. Audiō clāmōrēs, sī fūr est in balneō dēprehēnsus.

Look, there is noise sounding all around! I live above the bathhouse itself! Imagine to yourself now all the hateful types of voices! The stronger ones exercise themselves and swing their hands loaded with lead weights, while they work out—or imitate a person working out. I hear moans, every time they let go a <pent-up> breath. There are also anointers and masseurs. I hear the slap of hands hitting shoulders and the sound of the blows changes: for sometimes the hands come flat, sometimes cupped. I hear shouting, if a thief is caught in the bathhouse.

A pool from inside the Roman Baths in Bath, England.

