

Subjects and objects

The most important distinction which you must learn to make when dealing with nouns is that between subject and object.

1. The subject of a sentence is the person or thing *doing the verb*.
E.g. The girl loves the farmer.
In this romantic example, the *girl* is the subject because she is doing the loving.
2. The object (or *direct* object, as it should really be called), is the person or thing *having the verb done to him (or her or it)*. Thus in our example above, the *farmer* is the object because he is the one getting loved!

We can thus analyse a simple English sentence using the initial **S** for subject, **V** for verb and **O** for object as follows:

S	V	O
The girl	loves	the farmer.

Subjects and objects in Latin

English makes it obvious who the subject is and who the object is by means of the **word order**. Thus we can tell at once the difference between 'the girl loves the farmer' (where the *girl* is the subject) and 'the farmer loves the girl' (where the *farmer* is the subject).

But in Latin this distinction is made, not by means of word order, but by means of **endings**. The nominative case ending shows that a noun is the subject and the accusative case ending shows that it is the object.

Thus:

S	V	O	S	O	V
The girl	loves	the farmer	=	puella agricolam	amat
		or		agricolam	puella amat
		or		amat agricolam	puella

Verbs in the sentence

The verb in Latin very often, but not always, comes at the end of the sentence.

E.g. The girl loves the farmer = *puella agricolam amat*

E.g. The farmers love the girl = *agricolae puellam amant*

But notice, too, how the *verb ending* changes to reflect who is doing the verb. In the first example the subject was *the girl*, and so the verb ending was 3rd person singular (for 'she'). But in the second example the subject was *the farmers*, so the verb ending was 3rd person plural (for 'they').

No wonder they say Latin is good for training the mind!

So you really want to learn Latin...

Exercise 2.3

Study the information on the left-hand page about subjects and objects. Notice how sentences can be analysed by putting S, V and O over the words. Analyse the following sentences by writing S, V and O over the words.

1. The farmer loves the girl.
2. The girls love the queen.
3. The sailors love the girls.
4. The girls love stories.
5. The sailors will overcome the farmers.
6. The farmers will overcome the sailors.

Exercise 2.4

Read the information on the left-hand page about subjects and objects in Latin and verbs in the sentence. Then look carefully at your analysis of the sentences above. Now translate them into Latin. Remember the following rules:

- The subject must be in the nominative case: **-a** (singular) or **-ae** (plural)
- The object must be in the accusative case: **-am** (singular) or **-ās** (plural)
- The verb should normally be at the end, with the correct ending
- Nouns use *noun* endings (like *mēnsa*)
- Verbs use *verb* endings (like *amō*)

Exercise 2.5

Here are some more nouns of the 1st declension:

patria = fatherland, country	sagitta = arrow
aqua = water	fēmina = woman
via = road, street, way	victōria = victory

Using these and the nouns you have already met, translate the following into Latin. N.B. a sentence need not necessarily have a direct object. E.g. 'The girl was *working*' has a subject (*the girl*) and a verb (*was working*) but no object.

1. The sailors love the fatherland.
2. The farmer was not working.
3. The women prepare the tables.
4. The sailors were not fighting.
5. The farmers have prepared a way.
6. The woman will not hurry.
7. The sailors love water.
8. The girl was singing.
9. The woman was calling the girls.
10. The women were singing.

Viā

viā = by way. Going to Scotland *via* Carlisle means *by way of* Carlisle.

Using Latin