

More on the genitive

Care needs to be taken with the apostrophe in English. Remember that, with most nouns, if the apostrophe comes before the s (e.g. farmer's), the possessor is singular; if it comes after the s (e.g. farmers') it is plural. If in any doubt, take out the apostrophe and put in the word 'of.' E.g. the *farmer's* table = the table *of the farmer*.

Extra care needs to be taken with English nouns which don't form their plural by adding 's.'

E.g. the woman's table = the table of the woman (singular);
the women's table = the table of the women (plural).

Coping with all the cases: from Latin

We have already seen that some cases in Latin use the same endings. Thus -ae can be genitive singular, dative singular, nominative plural or vocative plural. When we translate longer sentences this can become a problem and we need to get the old brain cells ticking.

For example, study the following sentence:

incolae terrae viam agricolae aedificant.

The ending -ae occurs three times in this sentence, so how can we tell which case each one is supposed to be?

The answer is: common sense. If we follow our Golden Rules of translating from Latin we will work out that the verb is aedificant and that the subject could be either incolae, terrae or agricolae. It would make no sense for terrae to be the subject (*the lands are building?* – I think not!); so our subject is either incolae or agricolae. If we have no other information about the story, we are free to choose which of these is more likely to be the subject. We have chosen incolae, but it would not be wrong to go for agricolae. Our analysis thus looks like this:

S	O	V
incolae	terrae viam	agricolae aedificant

At this stage we know the subject, verb and object of the sentence: the inhabitants build the road. So what do we do with terrae and agricolae? As I said, common sense now takes over. They can't be nominative, because we already have our subject, but both words could be genitive singular, dative singular or vocative plural. Vocatives only crop up when people are addressing each other, so we are left with:

The inhabitants of/to/for the land build the road of/to/for the farmer.

From this we select the most likely meaning (*the inhabitants of the land build the road for the farmer*) but there may be more than one possible answer. If so, select the one which *you* feel is most likely.

So you really want to learn Latin...

Exercise 3. 3

Study what it says on the left-hand page about the genitive and about coping with all the cases when translating from Latin. Notice how confusions over the endings can be minimised if you follow the rules of translating, finding the verb first, then the subject, then the object. Analyse and translate:

1. puella fābulam fēminis nārrābat.
2. agricolae viam incolis aedificābant.
3. incolae Rōmae fāmam Troiae amābant.
4. nautae, agricolās superāvistis!
5. incolae aquam agricolis parābant.
6. nautae incolam sagittis superāvērunt.
7. agricolae, viās et terram incolis parābitis.
8. fābulās Troiae et fāmam Graeciae nōn amant.

New vocabulary

Up until now, every word you have needed has been on the page you are working on, or on a previous page (in which case you should have learnt it!). From now on you may come across words in the exercises which you have not been given. These will normally be in the vocabulary for the chapter, but you may find it easier to look them up at the back.

Exercise 3. 4

Analyse and translate the following:

1. puella fābulās agricolae amābat.
2. agricola fābulam nōn amābat.
3. mēnsam agricolis fēmina parāvit.
4. puella sagittās agricolis parābat.
5. agricolae, fēminās sagittis nōn superābitis.
6. puellae, agricolae fēminās nōn superābunt.
7. incolae Troiae incolās Italiae superāvērunt.
8. nautae incolās Italiae superāvērunt.

Exercise 3. 5

Translate the following, giving alternative meanings where appropriate:

1. agricolae
2. sapientiā
3. puellis
4. terrārum
5. aquā
6. fābulārum
7. sagittis
8. pugnae

Using Latin

P.M.

The letters p.m. stand for post meridiem = after midday.