

LATIN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

THE ROMAN ALPHABET A B C D E F G H I L M N O P Q R S T U V X

You should recognize all of the above letters, but you may notice that some of them seem to be missing. This is not an accident. The Romans did not normally use the letters J, K, W, Y, or Z, though occasionally they needed a K, Y, or Z for foreign words and names.

Latin, unlike English, is pronounced exactly as it is spelled. In fact, it is not only similar to English but it is even easier to pronounce. There are very few exceptions in regards to its pronunciation. Correct pronunciation will make it easier to recognize and remember vocabulary and grammatical forms. The pronunciation of Latin is best learned by imitation of the teacher. There are three major sound groups.

VOWELS: There are five vowels in Latin, as in English, and each has a long and short sound. In addition, long vowels should be held for a longer time than short ones. Note the following English and Latin examples:

Short Vowels

a = English "alike" and Latin *pater*
e = English "pet" and Latin *ego*
i = English "sip" and Latin *iterum*
o = English "rob" and Latin *omnēs*
u = English "full" and Latin *ubi*

Long Vowels

ā = English "father" and Latin *māter*
ē = English "date" and Latin *trēs*
ī = English "sleep" and Latin *irātus*
ō = English "holy" and Latin *in hortō*
ū = English "boot" and Latin *ūnus*

DIPHTHONG: I personally love to say this word in English. This word simply means that a single sound is produced when two vowels are found side by side as in the following examples:

ae = like y in English "sky" and Latin *amicæ*, friends
au = like ow in English "cow" and Latin *audit*, he/she hears
ei = like ay in English "say" and Latin *deinde*, next, then
oe = like oi in English "oil" and Latin *foedus*, treaty, pact

CONSONANTS: Most consonants are pronounced as in English, but note the following:

c always has a hard sound and is pronounced as English k: *cibus*, food
g always has a hard sound, as English "get": *gens*, family, tribe
h should be treated as silent when following c, p and t like English "cat" NOT "chin," "pig" NOT "photo" and "test" NOT "theater."
i before a vowel is a consonant and pronounced as English y: *iānua*, door
r is trilled or rolled with the tip of the tongue: *rēs*, thing
s is always pronounced like the hissing of a snake as in English "sing," never as in "rose": *civis*, citizen
v is always pronounced as English w: *vōx*, voice

LATIN PRONUNCIATION EXERCISE

Pronounce the following list of famous people and places in Latin.

1. Rōma
2. Venus
3. Marcus Aurēlius Antōnīnus
4. Mars
5. Cerēs
6. Gaius Cornēlius Tacitus
7. Iūnō
8. Bacchus
9. Carthägō
10. Gnaeus Pompēius Magnus
11. Platō
12. Capitōlium
13. Fortūna
14. Mūsae
15. Graecia
16. Hispānia
17. Gaius Iūlius Caesar
18. Londinium
19. Titus Līvius Patavīnus
20. Rōmulus
21. Mercurius
22. Äfrica
23. Publius Ovidius Naso
24. Delphī
25. Neptūnus
26. Marcus Tullius Cicero
27. Vulcānus
28. Publius Virgilius Maro
29. Diāna
30. Britannia
31. Gallia
32. Aegyptus
33. Minerva
34. Vesuvius
35. Germānia
36. Iuppiter/Iovis
37. Gaius Valerius Catullus
38. Herculēs
39. Ulīxēs
40. Lacedaemonēs
41. Plūtō
42. Proserpina
43. Sōcratēs
44. Remus
45. Lucifer
46. Nerō Claudius Caesar
47. Vesta
48. Gaius Caligula Caesar
49. Saturnus
50. Titus Flāvius Domitiānus