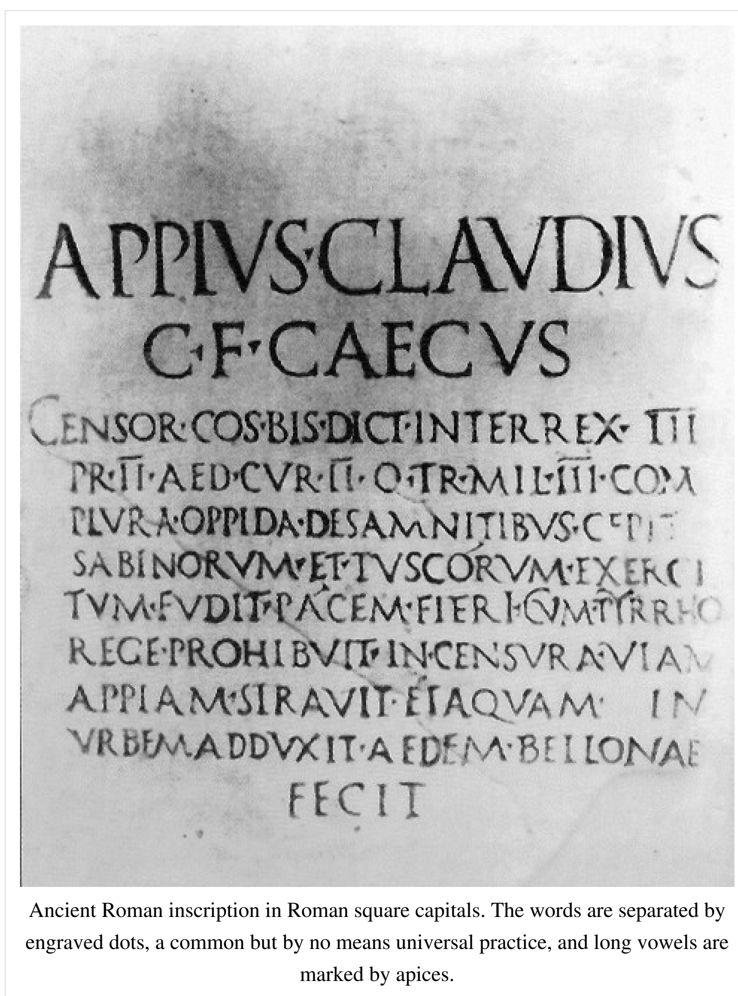
Latin spelling and pronunciation

Latin spelling or orthography refers to the spelling of Latin words written in the scripts of all historical phases of Latin, from Old Latin to the present. All scripts use the same alphabet, but conventional spellings may vary from phase to phase. The Roman alphabet, or Latin alphabet, was adapted from the Old Italic alphabet to represent the phonemes of the Latin language. The Old Italic alphabet had in turn been borrowed from the Greek alphabet, itself adapted from the Phoenician alphabet.

Latin pronunciation continually evolved over the centuries, making it difficult for speakers in one era to know how Latin was spoken in prior eras. A given phoneme may be represented by different letters in different periods. This article deals primarily with modern scholarship's best reconstruction of Classical Latin's phonemes (phonology) and the pronunciation and spelling used by educated people in the late Republic, and then touches upon later changes and other variants.



Ancient Roman inscription in Roman square capitals. The words are separated by engraved dots, a common but by no means universal practice, and long vowels are marked by apices.

Letters and phonemes

In Latin spelling, individual letters mostly corresponded to individual phonemes, with three main exceptions:

1. Each vowel letter—⟨a⟩, ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩, ⟨o⟩, ⟨v⟩, ⟨y⟩—represented both long and short vocalic phonemes. As for instance mons /ˈmoːns/ has long /oː/, pontem /ˈpontem/ short /o/. The long vowels were distinguished by apices in many Classical texts (móns), but are not always reproduced in modern copy. (Where they are, they are typically replaced with a macron: mōns.)
2. Some pairs of letters represented either two vowels in separate syllables, or a diphthong in a single syllable. For instance, aérivs /aˈeːrius/ starts with the syllables /a/ and /eː/, but aenéás /ajˈneːaːs/ starts with the syllable /aj/.
3. the letters ⟨i⟩ and ⟨v⟩ represented either the vowels /i/ and /u/, or the semivowels /j/ and /w/. So iv́lvs is /iˈuːlus/, starting with the vowel /i/, but iv́livs is /ˈjuːlius/, with the semivowel /j/.

The other 17 letters had mostly always the same sound value, with very few exceptions, as for instance the word vrbs, which was pronounced /ˈurps/ in spite of the spelling. The Romans didn't write *vrps for the same reason that English spells *dogs*, not **dogz*, in spite of the pronunciation being /dɒgz/: the stem is spelled uniformly and this outranks the one-letter to one-sound phonetic principle.

In the tables below, letters (and digraphs) are paired with the phonemes they usually represent in IPA. English upper case letters are used to represent the Roman square capitals from which they derive. Latin as yet had no equivalent to the English lower case. It did have a Roman cursive used for rapid writing, which is not represented in this article.

Consonants

Table of single consonants

		Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar		Glottal
					plain	labial	
Plosive	**voiced**	b /b/	d /d/		g /ɡ/		
	voiceless	p /p/	t /t/		c *or* k /k/[1] □q□ clarified minimal pairs between /k/ and /k^{w}/, making it possible to distinguish between cui /kuj/ (with a diphthong) and qu□ /k^{w}iː/ (with a labialized velar stop). □x□ represented the consonant cluster /ks/, which in Old Latin which could be spelled □ks□, □cs□ or □xs□. Adding to all this, □c□ originally represented both /k/ and /ɡ/. Hence, it was used in the abbreviation of common praenomina (first names): gáivs was written as c. and gnaeus as cn. Misunderstanding of this convention has led to the erroneous spelling □Caius□.</ref>	qv /k^{w}/[2]</ref>	
	aspirated[3] Subsequently, the aspirates began making an appearance in a number of Latin words which were not learned borrowings from classical Greek, initially as allophones of the unaspirated plosives, in proximity to /l/ and /r/. Because □ch□, □ph□ and □th□ were already available to represent these sounds graphically, this resulted in standard forms such as pvlcher, lachrima, gracchvs, trivmphvs, thereby reducing the phonemes' erstwhile marginal status, at least among educated speakers.[4]</ref>	ph /p^{h}/	th /t^{h}/		ch /k^{h}/		

Fricative	**voiced**		z /z/[5] In classical verse, □z□ always counted as two consonants.[6] This might mean that the sound was geminated, i.e. [zː], or pronounced /dz/.</ref>				
	voiceless	f /f/[7]</ref>	s /s/				h /h/
Nasal		m /m/[8]	n /n/		g *or* n /ŋ/[9] Also, □g□ probably represented a velar nasal before □n□ (agnus [ˈaŋnʊs]).[][10]</ref>		
Rhotic			r /r/[11]</ref>				
Approximant			l /l/[12] comparative evidence indicates that, when after a vowel, *l exīlis* [l] occurred before an /i/ or another /l/, while *l pinguis* [ɫ] occurred in all other circumstances. According to Allen, /l/ when not after a vowel (word-initial or following a consonant) was always *l exīlis* [l].[13]</ref>	i /j/[14] iv́s /ˈjuːs/, cvivs /ˈkujjus/. Because such a doubled consonant in the middle of a word makes the preceding syllable heavy, the vowel in that syllable is traditionally marked with a macron in dictionaries, although the vowel is usually short: □cv́ivs□ or □cv́jvs□. Compound words preserve the /j/ of the element that begins with it: adiect□vvm /adjekˈtiːwum/. Note that intervocalic □i□ can sometimes represent a separate syllabic vowel /i/, such as in the praenomen gáivs /ˈɡaː.i.us/.</ref>		v /w/[15]	
Consonant table notes (C 1, 2, 3, etc.):							

Double consonants

Double consonants were geminated: ⟨bb⟩ /bː/, ⟨cc⟩ /kː/, etc. In Early Latin, double consonants were not marked, but in the 2nd century BC, they began to be distinguished in books (but not in inscriptions) with a diacritical mark known as the sicilicus, which was described as being in the shape of a sickle.

Vowels

Monophthongs

Latin has five vowel qualities, which may occur long or short.

	Front		Central		Back	
	long	**short**	**long**	**short**	**long**	**short**
Close	í /iː/	i /i/			v́ /uː/	v /u/
Mid	é /eː/	e /e/			ó /oː/	o /o/
Open			á /aː/	a /a/		

Long and short vowels

Each vowel letter (with the possible exception of y) represents at least two phonemes. ⟨a⟩ can represent either short /a/ or long /aː/, ⟨e⟩ represents either /e/ or /eː/, etc.

Short mid vowels (/e, o/) and close vowels (/i, u/) were pronounced with a different quality than their long counterparts, being also more open: [ɛ], [ɔ], [ɪ] and [ʊ].[1]

Short /e/ most likely had a more open allophone before /r/ tending toward near-open [æ].[2]

Adoption of Greek upsilon

⟨y⟩ was used in Greek loanwords with upsilon (⟨υ⟩, representing /y/). Latin originally had no close front rounded vowel as a distinctive phoneme, and speakers tended to pronounce such loanwords with /u/ (in archaic Latin) or /i/ (in classical and late Latin) if they were unable to produce [y].

Sonus medius

An intermediate vowel sound (likely a close central vowel [ɨ] or possibly its rounded counterpart [ʉ]), called *sonus medius*, can be reconstructed for the classical period.[3] Such a vowel is found in doc**v**mentvm, opt**i**mvs, lacr**i**ma (also spelled doc**i**mentvm, opt**v**mvs, lacr**v**ma) and other words. It developed out of a historical short /u/ which was later fronted due to vowel reduction. In the vicinity of labial consonants, this sound was not as fronted and may have retained some rounding.[4]

Vowel nasalization

Latin vowels also occurred nasalized. This was indicated in writing by a vowel plus ⟨m⟩ at the end of a word, or by a vowel plus either ⟨m⟩ or ⟨n⟩ before a fricative,[5] as in monstrum /ˈmonstrum/ → [ˈmõstrʊ̃].

Diphthongs

⟨ae⟩, ⟨oe⟩, ⟨av⟩, ⟨ei⟩, ⟨ev⟩ originally represented diphthongs: ⟨ae⟩ represented /aj/, ⟨oe⟩ represented /oj/, ⟨av⟩ represented /aw/, ⟨ei⟩ represented /ej/, and ⟨ev⟩ represented /ew/. However, soon after the Archaic period, /aj/ and /oj/ lowered the tongue position in the falling element,[6] and started to become monophthongs (/ɛː/ and /eː/, respectively) in rural areas at the end of the republican period.[7] This process, however, does not seem to have been completed before the 3rd century AD in Vulgar Latin, and some scholars say that it may have been regular by the 5th century.[8]

Vowel and consonant length

Vowel and consonant length were more significant and more clearly defined in Latin than in modern English. Length is the duration of time that a particular sound is held before proceeding to the next sound in a word. Unfortunately, "vowel length" is a confusing term for English speakers, who in their language call "long vowels" what are in most cases diphthongs, rather than plain vowels. (This is a relic of the Great Vowel Shift, during which vowels that were once pronounced phonemically longer became these diphthongs.) In the modern spelling of Latin, especially in dictionaries and academic work, macrons are frequently used to mark long vowels: ⟨ā ē ī ō ū⟩, while the breve is sometimes used to indicate that a vowel is short: ⟨ă ĕ ĭ ŏ ŭ⟩.

Long consonants were indicated through doubling (for example, anvs 'old woman' and annvs 'year', two different words with distinct pronunciations), but Latin orthography did not distinguish between long and short vowels, nor between the vocalic and consonantal uses of ⟨i⟩ and ⟨v⟩. A short-lived convention of spelling long vowels by doubling the vowel letter is associated with the poet Lucius Accius. Later spelling conventions marked long vowels with an apex (a diacritic similar to an acute accent), or in the case of long ⟨i⟩, by increasing the height of the letter. Distinctions of vowel length became less important in later Latin, and have ceased to be phonemic in the modern Romance languages, where the previous long and short versions of the vowels have either been lost or replaced by other phonetic contrasts.

Vowel length was phonemic in Latin, and sometimes resulted in minimal pairs: anvs /ˈanus/ ('old woman'), ánvs /ˈaːnus/ ('ring, anus').

Syllables and stress

In Early Latin, as in Proto-Italic, stress normally fell on the first syllable of a word.[9] During this period, the word-initial stress triggered changes in the vowels of non-initial syllables, the effects of which are still visible in classical Latin. Compare for example f**a**ció /ˈfa.ki.oː/ ('I do/make'), in which the /a/ was originally stressed, with aff**i**ció /ˈaf.fi.ki.oː/, in which it was originally unstressed, and was therefore reduced. In the earliest Latin writings, the original unreduced vowels are still visible. Study of this vowel reduction, as well as syncopation (dropping of short unaccented syllables) in Greek loan words, indicates that the stress remained word-initial until around the time of Plautus, the 3rd century BC.[10] The placement of the stress then shifted to become the pattern found in classical Latin. (Thus a change to /af.ˈfi.ki.oː/.)

In classical Latin, according to the penultimate rule, stress was placed relative to the end of the word rather than the beginning as in early Latin. The distinction between heavy and light syllables was important as it determined where the main stress of a word fell, and was the key element in classical Latin versification. According to Cicero and Quintilian, it determined the accentuation of classical Latin.[11] According to the rule stress-accent falls on the penultimate syllable if it is of 'heavy', and on the antepenultimate if the penultimate is 'light.'[12]

Words were normally stressed on the penultimate syllable if that syllable was heavy, and on the antepenultimate syllable if the pentultimate syllable was light. In words of two syllables, the stress was always on the first syllable.[13] A heavy syllable (sometimes called a "long" syllable) is a syllable that contains either a long vowel or a diphthong, or ends in a consonant. If a single consonant occurs between two syllables within a word, it is considered to belong to the following syllable, so the syllable before the consonant is light if it contains a short vowel. If two or more consonants (or a geminated consonant) occur between syllables within a word, the first of the consonants goes with the first syllable, making it heavy. Certain combinations of consonants, e.g. ⟨tr⟩, are exceptions: both consonants go with the second syllable.

Elision

Where one word ended with a vowel (including a nasalised vowel, represented by a vowel plus ⟨m⟩) and the next word began with a vowel, the first vowel, at least in verse, was regularly elided; that is, it was omitted altogether[*citation needed*], or possibly (in the case of /i/ and /u/) pronounced like the corresponding semivowel. Elision also occurred in Ancient Greek but in that language it is shown in writing by the vowel in question being replaced by an apostrophe, whereas in Latin elision is not indicated at all in the orthography, but can be deduced from the verse form. Only occasionally is it found in inscriptions, as in *scriptust* for *scriptum est*.

Latin spelling and pronunciation today

Spelling

Modern usage, even when printing classical Latin texts, varies in respect of *i* and *v*. During the Renaissance the printing convention was to use *I* (upper case) and *i* (lower case) for both vocallic /i/ and consonantal /j/, to use *V* in the upper case and in the lower case to use *v* at the start of words and *u* subsequently within the word regardless of whether /u/ and /w/ was represented.[14]

Many publishers (such as Oxford University Press) have adopted a purist convention of using *i* (upper case) and *i* (lower case) for both /i/ and /j/, and *v* (upper case) and *u* (lower case) for both /u/ and /w/. This is also the convention used in this article.

An alternative approach, less common today, is to use *i* and *u* only for the vowels, and *j* and *v* for the approximants.

Most modern editions, however, adopt an intermediate position, distinguishing between *u* and *v* but not between *i* and *j*. Usually the non-vocalic *v* after *q* or *g* is still printed as *u* rather than *v*, probably because in this position it did not change from /w/ to /v/ in post-classical times.[15]

Textbooks and dictionaries indicate the length of vowels by putting a macron or horizontal bar above the long vowel, but this is not generally done in regular texts. Occasionally, mainly in early printed texts up to the 18th century, one may see a circumflex used to indicate a long vowel where this makes a difference to the sense, for instance *Româ* /ˈroːmaː/ ('from Rome' ablative) compared to *Roma* /ˈroːma/ ('Rome' nominative).[16] Sometimes, for instance in Roman Catholic service books, an acute accent over a vowel is used to indicate the stressed syllable. This would be redundant for one who knew the classical rules of accentuation, and also made the correct distinction between long and short vowels, but most Latin speakers since the 3rd century have not made any distinction between long and short vowels, while they have kept the accents in the same places, so the use of accent marks allows speakers to read aloud correctly even words that they have never heard spoken aloud.

Pronunciation

Post-Medieval Latin

Since around the beginning of the Renaissance period onwards, with the language being used as an international language among intellectuals, pronunciation of Latin in Europe came to be dominated by the phonology of local languages, resulting in a variety of different pronunciation systems.

Loan words and formal study

When Latin words are used as loanwords in a modern language, there is ordinarily little or no attempt to pronounce them as the Romans did; in most cases, a pronunciation suiting the phonology of the receiving language is employed.

Latin words in common use in English are generally fully assimilated into the English sound system, with little to mark them as foreign, for example, *cranium*, *saliva*. Other words have a stronger Latin feel to them, usually because of spelling features such as the digraphs ⟨ae⟩ and ⟨oe⟩ (occasionally written as ligatures: ⟨æ⟩ and ⟨œ⟩, respectively), which both denote /iː/ in English. In the Oxford style, ⟨ae⟩ represents /eɪ/, in *formulae*, for

example.[citation needed] The digraph ⟨ae⟩ or ligature ⟨æ⟩ in some words tend to be given an /aɪ/ pronunciation, for example, *curriculum vitae*.

However, using loan words in the context of the language borrowing them is a markedly different situation from the study of Latin itself. In this classroom setting, instructors and students attempt to recreate at least some sense of the original pronunciation. What is taught to native anglophones is suggested by the sounds of today's Romance languages, the direct descendants of Latin. Instructors who take this approach rationalize that Romance vowels probably come closer to the original pronunciation than those of any other modern language (see also the section below on "Derivative languages").

However, other languages—including Romance family members—all have their own interpretations of the Latin phonological system, applied both to loan words and formal study of Latin. But English, Romance, or other teachers do not always point out that the particular accent their students learn is not actually the way ancient Romans spoke.

Ecclesiastical pronunciation

Because of the central position of Rome within the Catholic Church, an Italian pronunciation of Latin became commonly accepted, but studies by Frederick Brittain (published as *Latin in Church; the history of its pronunciation*) show that this was not the case until the latter part of the 19th century. This pronunciation corresponds to that of the Latin-derived words in Italian. Before then, the pronunciation of Latin in church was the same as the pronunciation as Latin in other fields, and tended to reflect the sound values associated with the nationality of the speaker (Brittain, *Latin in Church; the history of its pronunciation*).

The following are the main points that distinguish modern ecclesiastical pronunciation from Classical Latin pronunciation:

- Vowels are long when stressed and in an open syllable, otherwise short.[17]
- The digraphs ⟨ae⟩ and ⟨oe⟩ represent /ɛ/.
- ⟨c⟩ denotes [tʃ] (as in English ⟨ch⟩) before ⟨ae⟩, ⟨oe⟩, ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩ or ⟨y⟩.
- ⟨g⟩ denotes [dʒ] (as in English ⟨j⟩) before ⟨ae⟩, ⟨oe⟩, ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩ or ⟨y⟩.
- ⟨h⟩ is silent except in two words: *mihi* and *nihil*, where it represents /k/. Of course, the medieval spellings 'michi' and 'nichil' are now considered incorrect. However, the silent ⟨h⟩ is regional, as ⟨h⟩ is fully pronounced in North America in all cases, e.g., in the phrase *da nobis hodie* from the Pater Noster.[18]
- ⟨s⟩ between vowels represents /z/;[19] ⟨sc⟩ before ⟨ae⟩, ⟨oe⟩, ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩ or ⟨y⟩ represents /ʃ/.
- ⟨ti⟩, if followed by a vowel and not preceded by ⟨s⟩, ⟨t⟩, or ⟨x⟩, represents [tsi].[20]
- the letter ⟨v⟩ when it starts a syllable is pronounced /v/, and not /w/ as in classical Latin. Between ⟨ng⟩, ⟨q⟩, ⟨s⟩, and a vowel, it retains the ancient /w/ pronunciation, and as a syllable nucleus it retains /u/. Unlike in the ancient orthography, the letter v is now written ⟨v⟩ when it is pronounced /v/, but ⟨u⟩ when it is pronounced /w/ or /u/.
- ⟨th⟩ represents /t/.
- ⟨ph⟩ represents /f/.
- ⟨ch⟩ represents /k/.
- ⟨y⟩ represents /i/.
- ⟨gn⟩ represents /ɲ/.
- ⟨x⟩ represents /ks/, the /s/ of which merges with a following ⟨c⟩ that precedes ⟨ae⟩, ⟨oe⟩, ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩ or ⟨y⟩ to form /ʃ/, as in *excelsis* /ekʃelsis/[20] ⟨x⟩ may sometimes be pronounced /ɡz/ at the end of certain words like *REX* /reɡz/, and before some long vowel sounds.
- ⟨z⟩ represents /dz/.

In his *Vox Latina: A guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Latin*, William Sidney Allen remarked that this pronunciation, used by the Catholic Church in Rome and elsewhere, and whose adoption Pope Pius X recommended in a 1912 letter to the Archbishop of Bourges, "is probably less far removed from classical Latin than any other 'national' pronunciation"; but, as can be seen from the table above, there are, nevertheless, very significant

differences.[21] Pius X issued a Motu Proprio in 1903 making the Roman pronunciation the standard for all liturgical actions in the Church[*citation needed*] meaning that any Catholic who celebrates a liturgy with others present be it the Mass, a baptism, or the Liturgia Horarum, then they are to use this pronunciation.[*citation needed*] The ecclesiastical pronunciation has since that time been the required pronunciation for any Catholic performing an action of the Church[*citation needed*] and is also the preferred pronunciation of Catholics whenever speaking Latin even if not as part of liturgy. The Pontifical Academy for Latin is a regulatory body in the Vatican that is charged with regulating Latin for use by Catholics similar to the way Académie française regulates the French language within the French state.

Outside of Austria and Germany it is the most widely used standard in choral singing which, with the rare exception like Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex*, is concerned with liturgical texts. A startling occurrence was its use in the motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*.[22] Anglican choirs adopted it when classicists abandoned traditional English pronunciation after World War II. The rise of historically informed performance and the availability of guides such as Copeman's *Singing in Latin* has led to the recent revival of regional pronunciations.

Pronunciation shared by Vulgar Latin and Romance

Because it gave rise to many modern languages, Latin did not strictly "die"; it merely evolved over the centuries in diverse ways. The local dialects of Vulgar Latin that emerged eventually became modern Italian, Spanish, French, Romanian, Portuguese, Catalan, Romansh, Dalmatian, Sardinian, and many others.

Key features of Vulgar Latin and Romance include:

- Almost total loss of /h/ and final /m/.
- Monophthongization of /aj/ and /oj/ into /e/.
- Conversion of the distinction of vowel length into a distinction of height, and subsequent merger of some of these phonemes. Most Romance languages merged short /u/ with long /oː/ and short /i/ with long /eː/.
- Loss of marginal phonemes such as aspirates (/p^h/, /t^h/), and /k^h/) and the close front-rounded vowel [y] in all environments.
- Loss of /n/ before /f/ and /s/[23] (CL *sponsa* > VL *sposa*), though this phenomenon's influence on the later development of Romance languages was limited due to written influence and learned borrowings.[24]
- Palatalization of /k/ before /e/ and /i/, probably first into /kj/, then /tj/, then /tsj/ before finally developing into /ts/ in loanwords into languages like German, /tʃ/ in various Italian dialects and Romanian, /θ/ or /s/ in Spanish (depending on dialect) and /s/ in Catalan, Occitan, French and Portuguese. French and some dialects of Occitan had a second palatalisation of /k/ to /ʃ/ (French ⟨ch⟩) or /tʃ/ before Latin /a/.[25]
- Palatalization of /ɡ/ before /e/ and /i/, and of /j/, into /dʒ/ (where it remains in Italian and Romanian), then into /ʒ/ in Catalan, Occitan, French and Portuguese. Spanish and Galician underwent this shift, but then went further, changing /ʒ/ to /ʃ/. And then Spanish (but not Galician) changed /ʃ/ to /x/ or /h/ (depending on accent), where it remains today. French (and Occitan, but partially) underwent a second palatalisation, of /ɡ/ before Latin /a/.[25]
- Palatalization of /ti/ followed by vowel (if not preceded by s, t, x) into /tsj/, then /sj/ and /s/ in Catalan, Occitan, French and Portuguese, /θ/ in Castilian Spanish, /ts/ in Italian.
- The change of /w/ (except after /k/) and /b/ between vowels, into /β/, then /v/ (in Spanish, [β] became an allophone of /b/ instead).

Examples

The following examples are both in verse, which demonstrates several features more clearly than prose.

From Classical Latin

Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 1, verses 1–4. Quantitative metre. Translation: "I sing of arms and the man, who, driven by fate, came first from the borders of Troy to Italy and the Lavinian shores; he [was] much afflicted both on lands and on the deep by the power of the gods, because of fierce Juno's vindictive wrath."

1. Ancient Roman orthography (before 2nd century)[26]

    arma·virvmqve·canó·tróiae·qv□·pr□mvs·abór□s

    □taliam·fátó·profvgvs·láv□niaqve·vénit

    l□tora·mvltvm·ille·etterr□s·iactátvs·etaltó

    v□·svpervm·saevae·memorem·iv́nónis·ob□ram

2. Traditional (19th century) English orthography

    Arma virúmque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris

    Italiam, fato profugus, Lavíniaque venit

    Litora; multùm ille et terris jactatus et alto

    Vi superum, sævæ memorem Junonis ob iram.

3. Modern orthography with macrons (as Oxford Latin Dictionary)

    Arma uirumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs

    Ītaliam fātō profugus, Lāuīniaque uēnit

    lītora; multum ille et terrīs iactātus et altō

    uī superum, saeuae memorem Iūnōnis ob īram.

4. Classical Roman pronunciation

    [ˈarma wiˈrũːk□e ˈkanoː ˈtroːjaj k□iː ˈpriːmus aˈboːriːs

    iːˈtaliãː ˈfaːtoː ˈprofuɡus, laːˈwiːnjak□e ˈweːnit

    ˈliːtora ˈmuɫt□ ĩll et ˈterriːs jakˈtaːtus eˈtaɫtoː

    wiː ˈsuperũː ˈsajwaj ˈmemorẽː juːˈnoːnis oˈbiːrãː]

Note the elisions in *mult(um)* and *ill(e)* in the third line. For a fuller discussion of the prosodic features of this passage, see Dactylic hexameter.

Some manuscripts have "Lavina" rather than "Lavinia" in the second line.

From Medieval Latin

Beginning of Pange Lingua by St Thomas Aquinas (13th century). Rhymed accentual metre. Translation: "Extol, [my] tongue, the mystery of the glorious body and the precious blood, which the fruit of a noble womb, the king of nations, poured out as the price of the world."

1. Traditional orthography as in Roman Catholic service books (stressed syllable marked with an acute accent on words of three syllables or more).

    Pange lingua gloriósi

    Córporis mystérium,

    Sanguinísque pretiósi,

    quem in mundi prétium

fructus ventris generósi

Rex effúdit géntium.

2. "Italianate" ecclesiastical pronunciation

[ˈpandʒe ˈliŋɡwa ɡloriˈoːzi

ˈkorporis misˈteːrium

saŋɡwiˈniːskwe pretsiˈoːzi

kwem in ˈmundi ˈpreːtsium

ˈfruktus ˈventris dʒeneˈroːzi

reks efˈfuːdit ˈdʒentsium]

Article notes

[6] Ralf L. Ward, *Evidence For The Pronunciation Of Latin* (http://www.jstor.org/pss/4344896), The Classical World, Vol. 55, No. 9 (Jun., 1962), pp. 273-275

[7] This simplification was already common in rural speech as far back as the time of Varro (116 BC – 27 BC): cf. *De lingua latina*, 5:97 (referred to in).

[8] Clackson & Horrocks, pp. 273-274

[11] Romance Languages: A Historical Introduction - 2010 p7 "1.1.4 The Penultimate Rule This rule assigning word stress in Latin is stated in terms of syllable weight. Once you have identified the boundaries of a syllable, you have to determine whether it's heavy or light. Definition: A syllable is heavy if it ..."

[12] Vox Graeca: The Pronunciation of Classical Greek William Sidney Allen - 1987 p151 "The Latin system is, as we know, governed by the so-called 'penultimate' rule (cf. VL, p. 83), whereby a stress-accent falls on the penultimate syllable if it is of 'heavy' structure, and on the antepenultimate if the penultimate is 'light'; according to ...

[14] Thus, for example, Henri Estienne's *Dictionarium, seu Latinae linguae thesaurus* (1531)

[15] This approach is also recommended in the help page for the Latin Wikipedia.

[16] Gilbert, Allan H.: "Mock Accents in Renaissance and Modern Latin (in Comment and Criticism)" (http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0030-8129(193906)54:2<608:MAIRAM>2.0.CO;2-I), *PMLA*, Vol. 54, No. 2. (Jun., 1939), pp. 608-610.

[17] This change, like many of the others, dated from early mediaeval times and was by no means limited to Italy: "Already in the Old English period vowel-length had ceased to be observed except in the penultimate syllable of polysyllambic words, where it made a difference to the position of the accent ... Otherwise new rhythmical laws were applied, the first syllable of a disyllabic word, for instance being made heavy by lengthening the vowel if it were originally light (hence e.g. *pāter* ... for *păter*)" -

[18] This pronunciation of *mihi* and *nihil* may have been an attempt to reintroduce intervocalically, where it seems to have been lost even in literary Latin by the end of the Republican period ().

[19] In ecclesiastical Latin, following usage in Rome rather than in Italy in general, this intervocalic softening is very slight (Liber Usualis (http://www.musicasacra.com/pdf/liberusualis.pdf), p. xxxviij).

[20] Liber Usualis (http://www.musicasacra.com/pdf/liberusualis.pdf), p. xxxviij

[22] Also criticised for various other anachronisms, not the least of which was the use of Latin instead of the official language of the eastern empire, Greek)

[25] See Pope, Chap 6, Section 4.

[26] "The word-divider is regularly found on all good inscriptions, in papyri, on wax tablets, and even in *graffiti* from the earliest Republican times through the Golden Age and well into the Second Century. ... Throughout these periods the word-divider was a dot placed half-way between the upper and the lower edge of the line of writing. ... As a rule, interpuncta are used simply to divide words, except that prepositions are only rarely separated from the word they govern, if this follows next. ... The regular use of the interpunct as a word-divider continued until sometime in the Second Century, when it began to fall into disuse, and Latin was written with increasing frequency, both in papyrus and on stone or bronze, in *scriptura continua.*" E. Otha Wingo, *Latin Punctuation in the Classical Age*, Mouton, 1972, pp 15–16.

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External links

- phonetica latinæ (http://la.raycui.com/): Classical and ecclesiastical Latin pronunciation with audio examples
- "Ecclesiastical Latin" (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09019a.htm?title=). *Catholic Encyclopedia*. 1910.
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