

CHAPTER 1

First and Second Conjugation Verbs: Indicative, Imperative, and Infinitive

VERBS: THE BASICS OF CONJUGATION

Let's start simply: a verb is a word which indicates action or state of being. Everyone ought to know that. Look at some of the different forms of a simple verb in English, the verb "to see":

| GROUP I | GROUP II | GROUP III |
|---------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| I see. | I saw. | I am seen. |
| I do see. | | I was seen. |
| I am seeing. | | I will be seen. |
| I will see. | | I should have been seen. |
| I should be seeing. | | |
| I would see. | | |
| See! | | |
| I want to see. | | |

And so on; there are several left out. Look at the first group for now. You can detect something interesting going on here. You have a basic form of the verb - "see" - and it's undergoing changes. One kind of change is that different words are put before it, another is the "-ing" suffix attached to the end, and another is the addition of a suffix "-s" when you want to say "he/she/it sees".

You can see that the verb "to see" has a basic form, which is being modified slightly to show that the verb is being used in a different way.

This modification of a verb to show different aspects or conditions of the action is called "**conjugation**" (kahn juh GAY chion), and a verb is said to "**conjugate**" (KAHN juh gate) when it's modified to exhibit these different conditions.

A verb, therefore, has a basic form or set of forms, which then conjugate in order to change the way its meaning is to be understood in a particular context. These basic forms contain the core meaning of the verb, but the way the action is being applied and the circumstances under which the action is changing.

Now look at the second group - it's really a group of one. Here you have an entirely different form: "saw". How do you know that it's a part of the verb "to see?" From your experience with English, of course. This form of the verb is an entirely different **stem**, yet it's still just a variation of the basic verb "to see". So a verb can change its form entirely and still be a part of the same family of meaning. So also with the third group.

"Seen" is another stem of the basic verb "to see", and your native English sense tells you it's merely a variation of a verb you already know: "to see".

Again, we can put all kinds of words in front to conjugate it, but with this stem, no changes actually affect the stem itself. There's no such form as "seening", for example.

Now let's try an experiment.

Suppose you're not an English speaker and you come across the word "saw" while you're reading something. You don't know what it is, so you try to look it up in the dictionary just as it is: "saw".

Unless you have a very unusual dictionary you won't find it.

Why not?

Because "saw" is a variation of a more basic form.

In the same way, would you expect to find an entry in a dictionary for the word "stones?"

Of course not, because "stones" is just the plural form of "stone", a form you can easily deduce from the basic form "stone", if you know the rules of English grammar.

So before you can use a dictionary, you already have to know something about the language. And that's entirely understandable. How big would a dictionary have to be to list all the possible varieties of every word in the language? Consequently, before you look up a word in a dictionary, you must first reduce it to a form under which the dictionary will list it, and that often takes patience and some mental effort.

Let's go back to the verb "to see".

It has three different stems in its conjugation - "see, saw, seen" - and to use the verb intelligently you must know them all and you must know the rules governing their use.

We call these forms, the "**principal parts**" of the verb. You'll notice in English the way these principal parts are conjugated is by piling up all kinds of words in front of them. These words change the aspect of the action.

To sum up, to use any verb fully, you must know two things:

- (1) all the principal parts of the verb, and
- (2) the rules governing the conjugation of English verbs.

This is also true of Latin verbs.

LATIN VERBS : THE BASICS

As you may have guessed, Latin verbs have different rules governing the way they conjugate. For the most part - almost exclusively - Latin verbs conjugate by attaching endings to the stems themselves, without all the separate helping words put in front of the stem as in English to tell you how to understand the action.

So for a Latin verb, you must learn two things:

- (1) the stems, and
- (2) how the stems are modified at their ends to show different conditions under which the action is occurring.

Let's look at English again.

Here is the conjugation of the verb "to see" in the present tense :

| SINGULAR | PLURAL |
|-------------------|----------|
| I see | we see |
| you see | you see |
| he, she, it, sees | they see |

With the exception of the form "sees", the differences among these forms is made by the preceding word. In this instance, the change is in the person who is performing the action.

Now look at the Latin translation for the verb English verb "to see" with these modifications.

| | LATIN | ENGLISH |
|-----|---------|----------------|
| 1st | video | I see |
| 2nd | vides | you see |
| 3rd | videt | he/she/it sees |
| 1st | videmus | we see |
| 2nd | videtis | you see |
| 3rd | vident | they see |

As I told you before, Latin conjugates its verbs by attaching endings to the root of the verb itself, and here you can see it happening.

The common feature of the verb "to see" in Latin is the stem "vide-" and to show changes in person and number, Latin adds a suffix. These suffixes are called the "**personal endings**", because they indicate the person and the number of the conjugated form of the verb.

Let's set these personal endings out :

| | | | |
|------------|------|---|----------------|
| 1st person | -o | = | I |
| 2nd person | -s | = | you (singular) |
| 3rd person | -t | = | he, she, it |
| 1st person | -mus | = | we |
| 2nd person | -tis | = | you (plural) |
| 3rd person | -nt | = | they |

Now try your hand at conjugating some other Latin verbs.

The verb meaning "to warn, advise" in Latin has the stem "mone-";
the verb meaning "to be strong" in Latin has the stem "vale-";
and the verb meaning "to owe, ought" in Latin has the stem "debe-".

Translate the following into Latin.

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| we owe, ought | debemus |
| they see | _____ |
| she advises | _____ |
| you (pl.) are strong | _____ |
| they warn | _____ |
| you (sg.) are strong | _____ |
| I owe, ought | _____ |
| we see | _____ |

CONJUGATIONS OF LATIN VERBS

You now know the single most important characteristic of Latin verbs:

they conjugate by adding suffixes to a stem.

You also now know the most common kind of suffix: the personal endings.

Next you need to know something more about the stems.

There are four groups of Latin verbs, called "conjugations", determined by the final vowel attached to the end of the stem.

The verbs you've been working with have stems which end in "-e".

Verbs whose stems end in "-e" are called "2nd conjugation" verbs.

If, however, the stem of the verb ends in "-a" then it's called a "1st conjugation" verb.

Verbs whose stem ends in short "-e" are called "3rd conjugation".

And verbs whose stem ends in "-i" are called "4th conjugation".

Like this:

| | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
| lauda- | vale- | duc- | veni- |
| ama- | vide- | ag- | senti- |
| cogita- | mone- | carp- | audi- |

The first several chapters of Wheelock are concerned only with the first and second conjugations, so for now we'll postpone any further discussion of the third and fourth conjugation.

But for now, you need to recognize that the principal difference between the four conjugations of Latin verbs is in the vowel that comes between the stem and the personal endings.

All four conjugations follow the same rules for conjugating :

stem (which includes the characteristic stem vowel) + personal endings.

You have already worked with second conjugation verbs.

Now let's have a look at an example of a first conjugation verb.

We'll use the verb "to love" as the example, which has the stem "ama-".

So "ama-" means "love" but to use it in a sentence, we have to add the personal endings.

The stem of the verb is "ama-", so to conjugate it, we just add the personal endings to it, following the same rules that apply to second conjugation verbs.

Fill in the stem and personal endings in the blanks on the following chart but hold off filling in the conjugated forms for now :

| | STEM | + | PERSONAL ENDING | = | CONJUGATED FORM |
|-----|-------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1st | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 2nd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 3rd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 1st | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 2nd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 3rd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |

Now for the conjugated forms.

If you follow the rules of conjugation that apply for second conjugation verbs, you should write the form "amao" for the first person singular. But listen to how easily the two vowels "a" and "o" can be simplified into a single "o" sound. Say "ao" several times quickly and you'll see that the two sounds are made in the same place in the mouth.

Over time, Latin simplified the sound "ao" to just "o". The final written form is "amo", not "amao".

So write "amo" for "I love". Aside from this small irregularity, however, the personal endings are attached directly to the stem without any alteration or loss of the stem vowel.

Fill in the rest of the conjugated forms.

(If you're unsure of yourself, check your work against the paradigm on page 3 of Wheelock.)

Now conjugate another paradigm of a second conjugation verbs : "mone-"

| | STEM | + | PERSONAL ENDING | = | CONJUGATED FORM |
|-----|-------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1st | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 2nd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 3rd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 1st | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 2nd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |
| 3rd | _____ | + | _____ | = | _____ |

THE ENGLISH PRESENT TENSES

Look at the following conjugated forms of the English verb "to see".

- I see.
- I am seeing.
- I do see.

Each of these forms refers to present time - and are therefore present tenses - but each is different. We're so accustomed to these different present tenses in English that we can hardly explain what the different meanings are, even though we're instantly aware that there is a distinction being made.

Try to explain the differences among "I see", "I am seeing" and "I do see".

It's difficult, but these different present tenses are essential to the way we speak.

In reality English is one of the few languages which has these three present tenses, and it's very hard to foreign students of English to learn how and when to use them.

"I see" is called the Simple Present tense;

"I am seeing" is called the Present Progressive; and

"I do see" is called the Present Emphatic.

Now try to come up with the differences. The point of this is that Latin has only one present tense.

So, when we see "laudas", for example, it can be translated into English as "you praise", "you do praise", or "you are praising". We have to let our native sense of the simple present, the present progressive, and the present emphatic tell us which to use.

THE IMPERATIVE

Another conjugated form of Latin verbs is the "**imperative**" mood, or the **direct command**. Its name is its definition.

It's how you turn a verb into a direct command: "Look here", "Watch out", "Stop that", etc.

To form the imperative mood of any Latin verb, follow these rules:

Second Person Singular : stem

Second Person Plural : stem + -te

Form the imperative mood of the following Latin verbs:

lauda-

singular _____ plural _____

mone-

singular _____ plural _____

THE INFINITIVE

Verb forms which specify no person - 1st, 2nd, or 3rd - we call "infinite" or "**infinitive**", which means, literally, "without boundary".

That is to say, the form is not bounded by or limited to a certain person.

Theoretically, there are many verb forms which are "infinite", but in common usage the word "infinitive" is generally limited to forms which are translated into English as "to x" (where "x" is the meaning of the verb).

To form the infinitive, a "-re" suffix is added to the stem.

lauda + re = laudare (to praise)

mone + re = monere (to warn)

DICTIONARY CONVENTIONS FOR VERBS

As you can see, each verb has at least six different forms (there are many, many more which you'll learn later), and, for obvious reasons, it would be impossible for a dictionary to list all six of these possibilities under separate entries. That is, you can't look up "laudant" just as it's here, anymore than you could look up "they are saying" under "they" in an English dictionary.

You have to strip the conjugated form of the verb down to the form under which the dictionary will give it to you.

For the English "they are saying", obviously, you would look up "say", because you know the conventions an English dictionary uses for listing an English verb.

What are the conventions for a Latin dictionary?

If you see a form like "laudant" in a text you're reading and want to look it up, how do you do it?

What is its "dictionary" form?

The dictionary form for a Latin verb is not the stem, but the first person singular.

This means that when you want to look up "laudant" you have to look it up under the conjugated form "laudo", not under its raw stem "lauda-".

What you have to do to look up a Latin verb, therefore, is to imagine what the verb looks like in the first person singular and look it up under that.

There is no reason it has to be like this; Latin dictionaries could have adopted any other of a number of different conventions for listing verbs, but this just happens to be the way it is.

A consequence of this is that the first personal singular of a verb is considered to be the basic form of the verb. So, I'll say, for example, "The Latin verb for "to see" is "video", which is really saying "The Latin verb for "to see" is "I see." Again, this is just conventional, but it's how it's done.

To repeat, in order to look a verb up in the dictionary, you first have to reduce it to its first person singular form.

In the case of the conjugated form "laudant" you would follow this process.

- (1) The "-nt" suffix is the third person plural personal ending, so you take it off; that leaves you with "lauda-".
- (2) You remember that verbs conjugate by adding personal endings to the stem, so "lauda-" is the stem. But you can't look it up under the stem alone, because a dictionary lists verbs under the first person singular. You must reconstruct the first person singular to look this verb up.
- (3) Next ask yourself what the conjugation of a verb like "lauda-" is going to be, first or second conjugation? Since the final vowel of the stem is "-a-", the verb you're looking at is a first conjugation verb. And what does the first person singular or a first conjugation verb look like? It's "lauda + o = laudo" (since the "a" and the "o" contract to just "o"). So we say that "laudant" is from "laudo", just as we might say in English "seen" is from "to see".
- (4) Now you've simplified the verb to something you can look it up under - "laudo" - and the translation is "to praise".
- (5) The second entry for a verb in the Latin dictionary is its infinitive form. After "laudo", therefore, you see "laudare". Since you know that an infinitive is the stem plus the ending "-re", you can easily see the true stem of the verb simply by dropping off the final "-re" infinitive ending. This confirms the fact that the verb you're looking up is a first conjugation verb.
- (6) Now translate "laudant". With the personal ending brought back in the translation is "they praise" (or "they are praising", or "they do praise").

I know this may seem tedious at first, but concentrate on internalizing each one of these steps.

You'll benefit immensely when the grammar becomes more complicated.

The moral of all this is that you should never go browsing around in the dictionary hoping to find something that might match the word you're looking up.

You must think carefully about what you're looking for before you turn the first page of the dictionary. (You'll hear me say this repeatedly.)

VOCABULARY PUZZLES

- debeo, debere* This verb has an apparently odd combinations of meanings - "to owe; should, must, ought" - until we remember that our English verb "ought" is really an archaic past tense of the verb "to owe". As with the English verb "ought", the Latin verb "*debeo*" is often followed by an infinitive to complete its meaning: "I ought to see" = "*debeo videre*". An infinitive which completes the meaning of another verb is called a "**complementary infinitive**".
- servo, servare* Despite its appearance, this verb doesn't mean "to serve". Be careful with this one.