

USES OF THE CASES

The following is an overview of the more common uses of the cases found in this book.

Nominative

The nominative case usually denotes the **subject** of a verb:

philosophia **animum** **fōrmat** (Seneca, 37.H.I)
philosophy shapes the mind

occidit **brevis** **lūx** (Catullus, 33.D)
the brief light dies

The nominative can also denote the **complement**:

deus **rēctor** **est** (Seneca, 37.H.II)
god is the ruler

Genitive

The genitive case typically denotes the **possessor** of something:

Ōrionis **ēnsem** (Ovid, 34.N.II)
Orion's sword

ex urbe **hostium** (Cicero, 38.E.V)
from the city of the enemy

Genitive of description (= **genitive of quality**) – denotes a particular quality of something:

armillās **magnī** **ponderis** (Livy, 38.A)
bracelets of great weight

aeris **cornua** **flexī** (Ovid, 34.A.I)
horns of curved bronze

Genitive of quantity (= **partitive genitive**) – denotes the whole, of which something is a part:

nōn multum **malī** (Cicero, 36.H)
not much evil

prōvinciālium **validissimīs** (Tacitus, 40.Q)
the strongest of the provincial inhabitants

Genitive of value – denotes the value of something, particularly after verbs of estimating and valuing:

omnēs ūnius **aestimēmus** **assis** (Catullus, 33.D)
let us value them all at a single penny

aliās **haud magnī** **facere** (Livy, 35.F)
he was not much concerned about the others

Objective genitive – denotes what would be the object, if the phrase were expressed by a verb (he desires *the sky*, they compete for *honor*):

caeli **cupīdine** (Ovid, 34.N.III)
by desire for the sky

honōris **aemulātiō** (Tacitus, 40.O)
competition for honor

With **words of remembering and forgetting**

nec mē meminisse pigēbit **Elissae** (Vergil, 37.J.I)
nor will it displease me to remember Elissa

nostrī **memorem** **lūctūs** (Graffito, 35.C)
commemorative of our grief

With other **verbs and adjectives**:

hominēs **bellandī** **cupidī** (Caesar, 36.D.III)
men desirous of making war

frūgis **egentēs** (Ovid, 38.C.III)
lacking grain

Dative

The dative case typically denotes the **indirect object**, i.e. **beneficiary** or **recipient**, of an action, and is often translated to or for:

dedit ōscula **nātō** (Ovid, 34.N.II)
he gave kisses to his son

convehunt omnia **gulae** (Seneca, 38.F.I)
they gather everything for their appetite

Dative of agent – denotes the agent of a passive verb (instead of **ā/ab** + ablative) or a periphrastic passive verb:

omnibus ille diēs **nōbīs** nātālis agātur (Sulpicia, 33.V)
let that birthday be celebrated by all of us

ego, quī nōn intellegor **ūllī** (Ovid, 36.G)
I, who am not understood by anyone

ubi diūtius **nōbīs** habitandum est (Petronius, 35.E.I)
where we must live for a longer time

Dative of possession – denotes the person to whom something belongs:

quicquid erit, erit **tibi** (Cicero, 34.E)
whatever there will be, will be yours

cui digiti pinguēs erit (Ovid, 35.M)
whose fingers will be fat

Dative of purpose – denotes the purpose of an action:

terra **divitiīs** foditur (Pliny, 34.B)
the earth is dug into for wealth

collēctam **exsiliō** pūbem (Vergil, 36.A.V)
young people assembled for exile

ūniversōs **cūrae** habuit (Suetonius, 40.N)
he treated them all considerately

Dative of reference – often denotes the person with whom an opinion is associated:

omnia **mihi** tempora sunt misera (Cicero, 36.H)
for me all the times are wretched

Dative of result – denotes the result of a situation:

negōtium **laetitia** fuit potius quam **timōrī** (Ammianus, 36.C.III)
the affair was a reason for rejoicing rather than fear.

Dative of separation – particularly with reference to people:

mihi nūmen ēripuit mentem (Vergil, 36.A.II)
a divine power snatched my mind from me

nē sit pāx adēempta **mihi** (Ovid, 36.F)
lest peace be taken away from me

Double dative – combining a **dative of purpose or result** with a **dative of reference**:

erit **mihi cūrae** (Petronius, 35.E.I)
it will be for a concern to me (= I will take care)

quid aliud **exitīō** **Lacedaemoniīs et Athēniēnsibus** fuit? (Tacitus, 40.Q)
what other thing caused the destruction of the Spartans and Athenians?

With **compound verbs and some other verbs**, including **crēdō**, **imperō**, **suādeō**:

omnibus incutiēns amōrem (Lucretius, 33.R)
instilling love in all

tēctīs succēdite **nostrīs** (Vergil, 36.B)
enter our houses

Accusative

The accusative case denotes the **direct object** of a verb:

ōtium et rēgēs et beātās perdidit urbēs (Catullus, 33.G)
leisure has destroyed both kings and prosperous cities

philosophia animum fōrmat (Seneca, 37.H.I)
philosophy shapes the mind

Accusative of respect – specifies that to which an adjective or participle applies:

nūdus membra (Vergil, 34.J)
naked in regard to his limbs (= bare-limbed)

Accusative of time – denotes how long something lasts:

apud Flaccum diēs xiii fuimus (Cicero, 36.H)
I have been at Flaccus' house for thirteen days

In **indirect statements**, the accusative is used to denote the subject of the infinitive:

rūmōrēs diffūdērunt gentēs arctōās cāsūs versāre (Ammianus, 36.C.II)
rumors spread that the peoples in the north were stirring up troubles

With certain **prepositions** – including **ad**, **apud**, **in**, **per**, **post**, **prope**, **trāns**:

trāns Rhēnum (Caesar, 36.D.VI)
across the Rhine

celerēs per aurās (Vergil, 37.J.III)
through the swift breezes

Ablative

The ablative case typically denotes **location**, **relative position**, and the **means** or **instrument** by which an action is achieved. It is often represented in English using *in*, *from*, *with*, or *by*.

Ablative absolute – providing context or information grammatically separate from the rest of the sentence:

salūte datā in vicem redditāque (Livy, 37.B)
once a greeting had been given and received

palam, spectantibus omnibus (Cicero, 38.E.I)
openly, while everyone was watching

Ablative of agent – denotes the agent of a passive verb (usually with **ā/ab**):

multī ā mē virī praedicārentur (Cicero, 35.G)
many men might be named by me

iussus est ab Hilariānō prōici (Perpetua, 37.I.III)
he was ordered by Hilarian to be thrown out

Ablative of cause – denotes the cause of an action:

similitūdine vītae et spē eiusdem licentiae (Tacitus, 40.J)
because of the similarity of their way of life and their hope of the same license

id hōc facilius eīs persuāsit (Caesar, 36.D.III)
he persuaded them more easily because of this

Ablative of comparison – as an alternative to **quam**:

dulcius urbe quid est? (Sulpicia, 33.U)
what is more pleasant than the city?

Ablative of degree of difference – with comparatives, to express the degree of difference:

paulō plēniōre (Suetonius, 35.J)
a little more full

multō inīquiōre (Plautus, 35.H)
much more unjust

Ablative of description

fuisse trāditur colōre candidō (Suetonius, 35.J)
he is said to have been of fair complexion

parilī aetāte Philēmōn (Ovid, 37.K.I)
Philemon, equally old

Ablative of instrument – denotes the instrument or means with which something is achieved:

teguntur lūmina nocte (Catullus, 33.G)
my eyes are covered by darkness

ōraque caeruleā excipiuntur aquā (Ovid, 34.N.III)
his mouth is received by the blue-gray water

Ablative of place – denotes where something happens (usually with a preposition):

fornācibus ignis anhelat (Vergil, 34.J)
in the furnaces the fire emits a hot blast

illā cōsensuēre casā (Ovid, 37.K.I)
they had grown old in that cottage

Ablative of price – denotes the specific cost of an item:

cum quīnque sēstertiīs ēmisset piscem (Seneca, 38.G)
since he had bought the fish for five thousand sesterces

Ablative of separation (usually with a preposition):

quae numquam potest dēmōvērī locō (Cicero, 37.C)
which can never be moved from its place

ut dēmātur ōtiō nausea (Seneca, 37.H.I)
so that tedium may be removed from leisure

Ablative of specification (= **ablative of respect**) – specifies a quality or state:

animīs opibusque parātī (Vergil, 36.A.V)
ready in their spirits and resources

Helvētiī reliquōs Gallōs virtūte praecēdunt (Caesar, 36.D.I)
the Helvetii surpass the remaining Gauls in virtue

Ablative of time – denotes the time when, or within which, something happens:

Quīnctius sextō decimō diē sē abdicāvit. (Livy, 37.B)
Cincinnatus resigned on the sixteenth day.

innumerābilis accidunt singulīs hōrīs (Seneca, 37.H.I)
countless things happen every hour

With certain **prepositions** – including **ā/ab, cum, ē/ex, in, prō, sine**:

ex nostrā prōvinciā (Cicero, 34.E)
from our province

prō aureīs dōnīs (Livy, 38.A)
instead of golden gifts

With certain **verbs** – including **potior, ūtor, fruor, fungor, vēscor**:

vēscimur bestiīs (Cicero, 34.D.II)
we feed on wild beasts

dentibus atque comīs ūteris emptīs (Martial, 35.P)
you use bought teeth and hair

Vocative

The vocative case is used for **direct address**:

Attice, crēde mihi (Ovid, 33.S)
Atticus, believe me

ō fōns Bandusiae (Horace, 34.G)
o spring of Bandusia

Locative

The locative case denotes the **place** where something happens:

ut Alexandriāe contigit (Ammianus, 34.I.IV)
as happened at Alexandria

domī nihil erat (Caesar, 36.D.VI)
there was nothing at home