

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 fōrmāt*
philosophy shapes the mind

(Seneca, 37.H.I)

occidit *brevis lūx*
the brief light dies

(Catullus, 33.D)

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

deus *rēctor est*
god is the ruler

(Seneca, 37.H.II)

Genitive

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

Ōrionis *ēnsem*
Orion's sword

(Ovid, 34.N.II)

ex urbe *hostium*
from the city of the enemy

(Cicero, 38.E.V)

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

armillās *magnī ponderis*
bracelets of great weight

(Livy, 38.A)

aeris *cornua flexī*
horns of curved bronze

(Ovid, 34.A.I)

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

nōn *multum malī*
not much evil

(Cicero, 36.H)

prōvinciālūm *validissimīs*
the strongest of the provincial inhabitants

(Tacitus, 40.Q)

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

omnēs *ūnius a estimēmus assis*
let us value them all at a single penny

(Catullus, 33.D)

aliās *haud magnī facere*
he was not much concerned about the others

(Livy, 35.F)

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

caelī *cupīdine*
by desire for the sky

(Ovid, 34.N.III)

honōris *aemulātiō*
competition for honor

(Tacitus, 40.O)

With **words of remembering and forgetting**

nec mē *meminisse pigēbit Elissae*
nor will it displease me to remember Elissa

(Vergil, 37.J.I)

nostrī *memorem lūctūs*
commemorative of our grief

(Graffito, 35.C)

With other **verbs and adjectives**:

hominēs *bellandī cupidī*
men desirous of making war

(Caesar, 36.D.III)

frūgis *egentēs*
lacking grain

(Ovid, 38.C.III)

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 agātūr (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 digitī pinguēs erit (Ovid, 35.M)
whose fingers will be fat

Dative of purpose – denotes the purpose of an action:

terra dīvitīs 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 laetitiae 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 adēmpta 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 exitiō Lacedaemonīs 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
leisure has destroyed both kings and prosperous cities

(Catullus, 33.G)

philosophia animum fōrmāt
philosophy shapes the mind

(Seneca, 37.H.I)

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

nūdus membra
naked in regard to his limbs (= bare-limbed)

(Vergil, 34.J)

Accusative of time – denotes how long something lasts:

apud Flaccum diēs xiii fuimus
I have been at Flaccus' house for thirteen days

(Cicero, 36.H)

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

rūmōrēs diffūdērunt gentēs arctōās cāsūs versāre
rumors spread that the peoples in the north were stirring up troubles

(Ammianus, 36.C.II)

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

trāns Rhēnum
across the Rhine
 celerēs per aurās
through the swift breezes

(Caesar, 36.D.VI)

(Vergil, 37.J.III)

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
once a greeting had been given and received
 palam, spectantibus omnibus
openly, while everyone was watching

(Livy, 37.B)

(Cicero, 38.E.I)

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

multī ā mē virī praedicārentur
many men might be named by me
 iussus est ab Hilariānō prōicī
he was ordered by Hilarian to be thrown out

(Cicero, 35.G)

(Perpetua, 37.I.III)

Ablative of cause – denotes the cause of an action:

similitūdine vītae et spē eiusdem licentiae
because of the similarity of their way of life and their hope of the same license
 id hōc facilius eīs persuāsit
he persuaded them more easily because of this

(Tacitus, 40.J)

(Caesar, 36.D.III)

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

dulcīs urbe quid est?
what is more pleasant than the city?

(Sulpicia, 33.U)

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

paulō plēniōre
a little more full
 multō inīquiōre
much more unjust

(Suetonius, 35.J)

(Plautus, 35.H)

Ablative of description

fuisse trāditur colōre candidō
he is said to have been of fair complexion
 pariī aetāte Philēmōn
Philemon, equally old

(Suetonius, 35.J)

(Ovid, 37.K.I)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ablative of separation (usually with a preposition):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

innumerābilia accident singulīs hōrīs
countless things happen every hour (Seneca, 37.H.I)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vocative

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

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

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

Locative

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

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

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