

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

philosophy shapes the mind

occidit brevis lūx

the brief light dies

(Seneca, 37.H.I)

(Catullus, 33.D)

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

deus rēctor est

god is the ruler

(Seneca, 37.H.II)

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

philosophia animum fōrmat

philosophy shapes the mind

(Catullus, 33.G)

(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

rumours 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

(Caesar, 36.D.VI)

celerēs per aurās

through the swift breezes

(Vergil, 37.J.III)

Genitive

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

Ōrionis ēensem

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 aēstimēmus 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 honour):

caelī cupīdine
by desire for the sky

(Ovid, 34.N.III)

honōris aemulātiō
competition for honour

(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 ūscula nātō
he gave kisses to his son

(Ovid, 34.N.II)

convehunt omnia gulae
they gather everything for their appetite

(Seneca, 38.F.I)

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
let that birthday be celebrated by all of us

(Sulpicia, 33.V)

ego, quī nōn intellegor ūlli
I, who am not understood by anyone

(Ovid, 36.G)

ubi diūtius nōbīs habitandum est
where we must live for a longer time

(Petronius, 35.E.I)

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

quicquid erit, erit tibi
whatever there will be, will be yours

(Cicero, 34.E)

cui digitī pinguēs erit
whose fingers will be fat

(Ovid, 35.M)

Dative of purpose – denotes the purpose of an action:

terra dīvitīs foditūr
the earth is dug into for wealth

(Pliny, 34.B)

collēctam exsiliō pūbem
young people assembled for exile

(Vergil, 36.A.V)

ūniversōs cūrae habuit
he treated them all considerately

(Suetonius, 40.N)

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

omnia mihi tempora sunt misera
for me all the times are wretched

(Cicero, 36.H)

Dative of result – denotes the result of a situation:

negōtium laetitiae fuit potius quam timōrī
the affair was a reason for rejoicing rather than fear.

(Ammianus, 36.C.III)

Dative of separation – particularly with reference to people:

mihi nūmen ēripuit mentem
a divine power snatched my mind from me
nē sit pāx adēmpta mihi
lest peace be taken away from me

(Vergil, 36.A.II)

(Ovid, 36.F)

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

erit mihi cūrae
it will be for a concern to me (= I will take care)
quid aliud exitiō Lacedaemoniis et Athēniēnsibus fuit?
what other thing caused the destruction of the Spartans and Athenians?

(Petronius, 35.E.I)

(Tacitus, 40.Q)

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

omnibus incultiēns amōrem
instilling love in all
tēctis succēdite nostrīs
enter our houses

(Lucretius, 33.R)

(Vergil, 36.B)

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 vītiae et spē eiusdem licentiae
because of the similarity of their way of life and their hope of the same licence
id hōc facilius eīs persuāsīt
he persuaded them more easily because of this

(Tacitus, 40.J)

(Caesar, 36.D.III)

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

dulcius 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
parilī 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 (Catullus, 33.G)
my eyes are covered by darkness

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

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

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

illā cōnsenuēre 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 dēmovērī locō (Cicero, 37.C)
which can never be moved from its place

ut dēmātūr 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.

innumerābilia 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 bēstīs (Cicero, 34.D.II)
we feed on wild beasts

dentibus atque comīs ūteris ēmptīs (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 Alexandrīae contigit (Ammianus, 34.I.IV)
as happened at Alexandria

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