

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 **animus** **fōrmat**
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)

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 **animus** **fōrmat**
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**
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 **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)

prōvinciālium **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 aestimēmus **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 ōscula 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** nātālīs agātur
let that birthday be celebrated by all of us (Sulpicia, 33.V)

ego, quī nōn intellegor ūllī
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 foditur
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** (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 adēmp̄ta **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 **exitio** **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

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 prōicī (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 licence

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

ōraque caeruleā excipiuntur aquā
his mouth is received by the blue-grey 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 cōsensuere 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 sesterces (Seneca, 38.G)

Ablative of separation (usually with a preposition):

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

ut dēmātur ōtiō 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)

Helvētīī 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:

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

innumerābilis accidunt 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 bēstiīs
we feed on wild beasts (Cicero, 34.D.II)

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

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