

Grammar: adjective declensions

Overview

An adjective describes a noun e.g. *hot* chocolate.

This means that it needs to have the same set of grammatical endings as the noun. It will agree with the noun it qualifies in gender, case and number.

Uses

Adjectives can be used in two main ways.

Attributive

An attributive adjective is one that simply describes the noun,

The brave soldier walks into the house

which in Latin would be:

miles fortis in villam ambulat.

Predicative

A predicative adjective is used with the verb 'to be' and completes a sentence about the noun,

The soldier is brave

which in Latin would be:

miles est fortis.

Word order

In prose, Latin adjectives usually come *after* the noun.

miles fortis

the brave soldier

Exceptions are adjectives to do with quantity and size,

magnus miles

the great soldier

Other notes

There is not always a noun for the adjective to qualify. In this case, you can supply a noun. The most frequently found unstated nouns are, according to the gender and number of the adjective:

Masculine	Man/men
Feminine	Woman/women (but also sometimes 'hand(s)' or 'house')
Neuter	Thing(s)

First and second declensions

For an introduction to adjectives and their declensions, see the *Adjectives overview*

1st and 2nd declension adjectives take the same endings as 1st and 2nd declension nouns.

If you look one up in a dictionary, you will find it with three possible endings: *bonus*, *-a*, *-um*.

bonus means good

The three different forms written out completely would be *bonus*, *bona*, *bonum*. These are the masculine, feminine, and neuter nominative singulars.

So,

bonus filius

good son

but

bona filia

good daughter

	Singular			Plural		
	Masc	Fem	Neut	Masc	Fem	Neut
Nominative	bonus	bona	bonum	boni	bonae	bona
Accusative	bonum	bonam	bona	bonos	bonas	bona
Genitive	boni	bonae	boni	bonorum	bonarum	bonorum
Dative	bono	bonae	bono	bonis	bonis	bonis
Ablative	bono	bona	bono	bonis	bonis	bonis

Summary of case functions

Nominative	subject	What it is that <i>does</i> the verb
Accusative	(direct) object	What it is the verb <i>acts upon</i>
Genitive		'of'
Dative	(indirect) object	'for, to'
Ablative		'by, with, from'

Possessive adjectives

Latin also declines the possessive adjectives 'my, your, his, her, its, our, their' in the same fashion; that is to say, they are first and second declension adjectives.

1. et stuppea vincula collo ... *Exercise 1*
2. magnus adulescentium numerus. *Exercise 11*
3. inde loci mortalia saecla creavit ... *Exercise 9*
4. quia anima mea dulcedine requiescit. *Exercise 5*
5. manu pineam quate taedam. *Exercise 4*

Examples drawn from the exercises

Locate the adjective in each sentence and identify its number, gender and case. Note with which noun the adjective agrees.

The number after each question indicates the exercise from which it has been drawn, so that you can look at the example in context.

Further examples drawn from Cicero

1. idemque nunc lectissimos viros ... *Pro Caelio 5*
2. Sunt enim ista maledicta pervulgata ... *Pro Caelio 6*
3. Quis est enim, cui via ista non pateat? *Pro Caelio 8*
4. tum etiam multos ... viros et bonos ... *Pro Caelio 14*

3rd declension adjectives

3rd declension adjectives take the same endings as 3rd declension nouns.

If you look a 3rd declension adjective up in a dictionary, you will find it with two possible endings, *fortis*, *-e*.

fortis means strong, brave.

The two different forms written out completely would be *fortis*, *forte*. These are the masculine, feminine, and neuter nominative singulars.

So,

fortis filius

strong son

but

fortis nomen

strong name

	Singular		Plural	
	Masc & fem	Neut	Masc & fem	Neut
Nominative	fortis	forte	fortes	fortia
Accusative	fortem	forte	fortes	fortia
Genitive	fortis	fortis	fortium	fortium
Dative	forti	forti	fortibus	fortibus
Ablative	forti	forti	fortibus	fortibus

Some adjectives do not have a separate neuter form, e.g. *ingens*, *hugus*

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	ingens	ingentes
Accusative	ingentem	ingentes
Genitive	ingentis	ingentium
Dative	ingenti	ingentibus
Ablative	ingenti	ingentibus

Examples drawn from the exercises

Locate the adjective in each sentence and identify its number, gender and case. Note with which noun the adjective agrees.

The number after each question indicates the exercise from which it has been drawn, so that you can look at the example in context.

1. sed etiam omnium oculos in semet haud inmerito convertit. *Exercise 10*
2. His autem omnibus druidibus praeest unus. *Exercise 11*
3. Principio genus herbarum viridemque nitorem terra dedit ... *Exercise 9*
4. ut multo mihi maior acriorque ignis mollibus ardet in medullis. *Exercise 8*
5. cupio, patres conscripti, me esse clementem ... *Exercise 7*
6. hic unus dolor est ex omnibus acer amanti ... *Exercise 6*
7. date palmas nobiles. *Exercise 5*