

# Grammar: the dative case

## *Overview*

Translating the dative as 'to' or 'for' will give you its basic meaning.

There are fewer special uses of the dative than for other cases.

For the endings see the pages on individual declensions:

1st declension nouns

2nd declension nouns

3rd declension nouns

4th declension nouns

5th declension nouns

## *The dative of indirect object*

Transitive verbs such as *do, dare, dedi, datus* need two objects to complete their sense.

I give the jug to the girl

which in Latin would be:

**do amphoram puellae**

where *amphoram* is the **direct object** and *puellae* is the **indirect object**.

Other verbs that do this include *monstro* and *respondeo*.

## *The dative following certain verbs*

Two types of verbs commonly take a dative after them

### **Certain intransitive verbs**

There is a small number of intransitive verbs that govern the

dative. Intransitive verbs are ones that do not have a direct object. e.g. I go, I die.

Latin examples include:

cui credo?	In whom do I trust?
cui placeo?	Whom do I please?
cui pareo?	Whom do I obey?
cui faveo?	Whom do I favour

## Compound verbs

Compound verbs include those formed by putting prepositions on the front of a verb root. These prefixes include: *ob-*, *inter-*, *prae-*, *pro-*, *in-*, *ad-*, *ante-*, *circum-*, *post-*, *sub-*, *super-*.

Intransitive compound verbs govern a dative, e.g.

impero militi	I order the soldier (understand 'I give orders <i>to</i> the soldier)
amicae occurro	I meet my girlfriend.

Transitive verbs govern both an accusative and a dative, e.g.

bellum patriae infero	I inflict war on the fatherland
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## *The dative of agent*

A gerundive construction will use a dative agent, and not the usual ablative associated with passive agents.

Therefore we find:

Spartacus *militi* necandus est  
**Spartacus must be killed *by a soldier*.**

Where in the perfect tense the sentence would be:

Spartacus *a milite* necatus est  
**Spartacus was killed *by a soldier*.**

No preposition before the dative is necessary.

## *The dative following certain adjectives*

A small range of adjectives that already include the idea of 'to' take the dative.

I am near (to) home

in Latin would be:

**sum proximus villae**

Other adjectives to note include those denoting attitude or (dis)similarity to something, such as *simillimus*, *carus*, *amicus*.

## *The possessive dative*

A common way to denote possession in Latin is to say 'There are to me five friends' rather than 'I have five friends'.

In Latin: *sunt mihi quinque amici* instead of: *habeo quinque amicos*

Both are correct Latin, but using the dative of possession alters the emphasis in the sentence.

## *The dative of advantage and disadvantage*

The dative can tell you for whose benefit (or lack of) an action is done.

I brought this wine for you

which in Latin would be:

**vinum tibi tuli.**

## *The ethic dative*

The ethic dative is not particularly common. It is in essence self-referential, and so not closely connected with the rest of the sentence.

I (for my part) think this is a stupid idea.  
which in Latin would be:

**mihi cogito hanc sententiam ridiculam esse.**

### *The dative of purpose*

Closely related to the above, the dative can also express the purpose or reason for an action.

go to the supermarket for my shopping.

which is an alternative way of saying:

**I go to the supermarket to shop.**

In Latin, an example would be:

**eo ad ludum studio**

The above constructions can be combined, leading to a **double dative** construction.

The soldiers go to the plain for a battle on behalf of Anthony.

which is an alternative way of saying:

The soldiers go to the plain to fight for Anthony.

which in Latin would be:

**milites ad campum pugno Antonio eunt.**

The second dative (the 'on behalf of whom' one) is also called a dative of reference.

### *Short examples*

Translate each of the following and identify the use(s) of the dative in each.

filius sunt matri caritati.

septem equi sunt imperatori.

multam pecuniam amico dono tibi dedisti.

pueri ad ludum studio eunt.

senator iudicibus imperaverat.

Near to the house are several trees.

The slave girl went to the shop to get some food for her  
mistress.

Books are a great source of truth for scholars.

Your welfare is a concern of mine.

The soldier met a werewolf in the street.

### *Examples drawn from the exercises*

What kind of dative is being used in each of the following sentences?

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. at Acme, ...dulcis pueri ebrios ocellos illo purpureo ore  
suaviata, 'sic,' inquit ... *Exercise 8*
2. hic unus dolor est ex omnibus acer amanti, speranti subito  
si qua venire negat. *Exercise 6*

### *Examples drawn from Cicero*

1. usque repetens hunc video mihi principem et ad  
susciendam et ad ingrediendam rationem horum  
studiorum exstitisse. *Pro Archia 1*

2. vox huius hortatu praeceptisque conformata non nullis aliquando salutis fuit. *Pro Archia 2*
3. quaeso a vobis ut in hac causa mihi detis hanc veniam accommodatam huic reo. *Pro Archia 3*
4. Nec vero corpori solum subveniendum est, sed menti atque animo multo magis *De Senectute 36*
5. An ne illas quidem vires senectuti relinquemus, ut adolescentis doceat, instituat, ad omne officii munus instruat? *De Senectute 14*
6. Etsi ipsa ista defectio virium adolescentiae vitiis efficitur saepius quam senectutis; libidinosa enim et intemperans adolescentia effectum corpus tradit senectuti.

*De Senectute 29*