

Grammar: Roman names

Overview

Romans had a system of *tria nomina* (three names) for citizens.

The praenomen	personal name
The nomen	family name
The cognomen	name designating family branch

Publius Ovidius Naso
Publius Vergilius Maro
Marcus Tullius Cicero

The plural form of a *nomen* can be used to refer to a whole family.

The *praenomina* can be shortened to just the first letter or two:

Letter(s)	Name
A.	Aulus
App.	Appius
C. / G.	Gaius
Cn./ Gn.	Gnaeus
D.	Decimus
L.	Lucius
M.	Marcus
M'.	Manius
P.	Pulius
Q.	Quintus
Ser.	Servius
Sex.	Sextus
Sp.	Spurius
T.	Titus
Ti.	Tiberius

Note that several of these (Decimus, Quintus, Sextus) come from numbers. These may originally have designated simply the birth order of a son.

Feminine forms of these names ending in '-a' are also available.

Women were called by the feminine form of their father's cognomen. Further detail is added by using the genitive of a woman's father or husband's cognomen.

Names in general decline like any other noun.

Examples drawn from Cicero

1. An vero vir amplissimus, P. Scipio, pontifex maximus, Ti. Gracchum mediocriter labefactantem statum rei publicae privatus interfecit; *In Catilinam 1.I.3*
2. Nam illa nimis antiqua praetereo, quod C. Servilius Ahala Sp. Maelium novis rebus studentem manu sua occidit. *In Catilinam 1.I.3*
3. Decrevit quondam senatus, ut L. Opimius consul videret, ne quid res publica detrimenti caperet; *In Catilinam 1.II.4*
4. interfectus est propter quasdam seditionum suspiciones C. Gracchus, clarissimo patre, avo, maioribus, occisus est cum liberis M. Fulvius consularis. *In Catilinam 1.II.4*
5. Simili senatus consulto C. Mario et L. Valerio consulibus est permissa res publica; *In Catilinam 1.II.4*
6. num unum diem postea L. Saturninum tribunum pl. et C. Servilium praetorem mors ac rei publicae poena remorata est? *In Catilinam 1.II.4*
7. Erat temporibus illis iucundus Metello illi Numidico et eius Pio filio; audiebatur a M. Aemilio; vivebat cum Q. Catulo et patre et filio; a L. Crasso colebatur; *Pro Archia 6*
8. Itaque ille Marius item eximie L. Plotium dilexit, cuius ingenio putabat ea quae gesserat posse celebrari. *Pro Archia 20*
9. Omnes denique illi Maximi, Marcelli, Fulvii, non sine communi omnium nostrum laude decorantur. *Pro Archia 22*

10. Decimus quidem Brutus, summus vir et imperator, Acci,
amicissimi sui, carminibus templorum ac monumentorum aditus
exornavit suorum. *Pro Archia 27*