

Grammar: The third declension

Overview

The third declension is the third group of nouns, grouped according to their similar pattern of endings. For the other declensions, go to the appropriate page:

- 1st declension
- 2nd declension
- 4th declension
- 5th declension

Third declension nouns can be masculine, feminine or neuter. They are characterised by a change in the stem. There is no clear pattern to the nominative, but the other cases decline regularly.

Summary of basic case endings

Nominative	subject	what does the verb
Accusative	(direct) object	what the verb is done to
Genitive		'of'
Dative	(indirect object)	'to, for'
Ablative		'by, with, from'

Declension tables

Masculine

pater, patris (m) - father

Case	sing.	pl.
Nom.	pater	patres
Acc.	patrem	patres
Gen.	patris	patrum

Dat.	patri	patribus
Abl.	patre	patribus

Feminine

mater, matris (f) - mother

Case	sing.	pl.
Nom.	mater	matres
Acc.	matrem	matres
Gen.	matris	matrum
Dat.	matri	matribus
Abl.	matre	matribus

Neuter

nomen, nominis (n) - name

Case	sing.	pl.
Nom.	nomen	nomina
Acc.	nomen	nomina
Gen.	nominis	nominum
Dat.	nomini	nominibus
Abl.	nomine	nominibus

The genitive singular will always show the stem change. When looking up third declension words you will find the stem given as: *pater, -ris* to show the change. It is important to learn both the nominative and the genitive so that you know how the full paradigm will decline.

A variation: i-stems

Some words gain an extra *-i-* in the genitive plural. These are words that in the nominative have the ending *-is*, or are only one syllable.

rex, regis (m) – king

Case	sing.	pl.
Nom.	rex	reges
Acc.	regem	reges
Gen.	regis	regium
Dat.	regi	regibus
Abl.	rege	regibus

Examples drawn from the exercises

Locate the third declension noun in each sentence and identify its number, gender and case.

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. funem manu contingere gaudent. *Exercise 1*
2. religiones interpretantur. *Exercise 11*
3. Ac ne totam quidem urbem tectis occupaverunt. *Exercise 10*
4. ratione coorta ... *Exercise 9*
5. sternuit approbationem. *Exercise 8*
6. ... in Etruriae faucibus *Exercise 7*
7. dolor est. *Exercise 6*
8. non sunt clades. *Exercise 5*
9. ... carmina tinnula ... *Exercise 4*

10. Murus imperii, timor hostium, gloriosum servitium ...

Exercise 3