

Grammar: Verbs of fearing

Overview

There are several different ways of expressing fears in Latin. The simplest is to use an infinitive:

e.g. timeo ire

I am afraid to go

If the subordinate clause consists of more than a verb, however, the verb of fearing is followed by *ut/ne* + subjunctive. The tense of the subjunctive follows the rules set down by the sequence of tenses. Unlike other constructions, *ut* is used for a negative fear, *ne* for a positive, because the speaker wishes the opposite to what he fears to happen. I am afraid that I might crash my car = May I not crash my car
I am afraid that I might not pass my exam = May I pass my exam

In English, the negative can be written as *lest* + the reverse of the verb:

I am afraid lest I fail my exam.

ne encompasses both of these ways of expressing a negative fear.

e.g. timeo ut sustineas labores

I fear that you will not hold out under your toils

timeo ne tibi praeter lacrimas queam reddere

I am afraid lest I can give you *only* tears in return

I am afraid that I can give you *nothing but* tears in return

Notes

ne non = *ut* (as a double negative) after *vereor*

the participle + *ne* + historic sequence subjunctive is another

possible way of expressing fear:

veritus ne videretur, se celavit

Afraid that he might be seen, he concealed himself.

Examples drawn from the exercises

1. quae scire timet, †quaerere† fata iubet.

Exercise 8

Further examples

1. etenim vereor, ne haec ipsa nimium multa esse videantur.

Pro Caelio 14

2. timeo ne C. Verres propter hanc eximiam virtutem in re militari omnia quae fecit impune fecerit.

In Verrem 2.V.3

3. quid erat quod iam Oppianicum poena adfectum pro maleficiis et eiectum e civitate quisquam timeret? quid metuebat? ne oppugnaretur a perdito? an ne accusaretur a damnato? an ne exsulis testimonio laederetur?

Pro Cluentio LXVI.169

4. etenim vereor ne haec ipsa nimium multa esse videantur;

Pro Cluentio XVI.41

5. sic metuit ne condemnaretur extrema servuli voce morientis.

Pro Cluentio LXVI.187

6. Nonne ipsam domum metuet, ne quam vocem eiciat, non parietes conscios, non noctem illam funestam ac luctuosam perhorrescet?

Pro Caelio 60

7. An timebant, ne tot unum, valentes imbecillum, alacres perterritum superare non possent?

Pro Caelio 66

8. Nec tamen illud genus alterum nocturnorum testium pertimesco.

Pro Caelio 20

9. non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum philosophi mortui irrideant.

De Senectute 85

10. Orator metuo ne languescat senectute;

De Senectute 28