Latin Syntax

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Case Functions

The Latin language usually indicated the syntactical function of nouns (e.g., subject, objects, locations, possessive attributes, etc.) by having them appear in one of five different cases. Each case can fulfil a variety of different functions in a sentence. Since English does not (usually) use cases (but instead relies more on word order and prepositions), we have to find ways to describe all of those Latin case functions to understand what a word means and be able to translate it. While English would, for example, say "in Rome" (using a preposition to show that 'Rome' is meant to be a location in this phrase), Latin would say *Romae* (using the 'locative' case function to convey the same information). Keep in mind, however, that Latin also has prepositions, so that syntactical functions are spread out over both systems.
The following is a list of all major case functions.

The Nominative

Subject	
The Person or thing about whom the statement is made.	
Iulia ambulat.	"**Julia** takes a walk."

Predicative	
A Predicative completes the Subject-Predicate phrase. It has the same case as the noun it belongs to.	
Marcus **Romānus** est.	"Marcus is **a Roman**."
Caesar **dictātor** factus est.	"Caesar was made **dictator**."

The Nominative can **only** be the Subject of a sentence (or dependent on it as a Predicative) and the Subject can **only** be a Nominative.

It is important to note that the Subject can also be included within the Predicate of a sentence, since the Latin language does not have to use Personal Pronouns: *ambulat* ("he/she/it walks") is already a full sentence, the subject being implied in the verb form (3rd Person Singular).

The Accusative

Direct Object

Something other than the Subject and the Indirect Object affected by the Verb.

Marcus **Iuliam** vidit. "Marcus sees **Julia**."

Some verbs use two direct objects:

Magister **discipulās linguam Latīnam** docet. "The teacher teaches the students Latin."

Accusative of Motion Towards

Expresses the motion of something towards/a direction. Sometimes combined with a Preposition.
(Not to be confused with the Indirect Object)

Iulia **Italiam** venit. "Julia comes **to Italy**."

Accusative of Extension in Space or Time

Expresses an extension in Space or Time. This Accusative is used without a Preposition

Multōs annōs vīxit "He/She lived **for many years**.
(or "many years long")

Tria millia passuum processit "He/She advanced **three miles**."

The Dative

Indirect Object

Something other than the Subject and the Direct Object affected by the Verb.

Often translatable with 'to' or 'for'.

Marcus **Iuliae** librum mittit.	"Marcus send **Julia** a book." or: "M. sends a book **to Julia**."

Dative of Purpose or End

Expresses the **purpose** for which a person or thing serves. It is often combined with a Dative of Reference.

Ea res mihi **summae voluptāti** est.	"This thing serves **as the greatest pleasure** to me (i.e., this is a great pleasure for me)"

In this example, *summae voluptati* is the Dative of Purpose (of what purpose is this thing?); *mihi* is Dative of Reference (with reference to whom is it of great pleasure?).

Dative of Agent

Describes the acting person in a Gerundive phrase.

Usually translatable by 'by' or, better, reformulated using 'have to/must'.

Liber **mihi** legendus est.	"The book is to be read **by me** (i.e., **I have to** read the book)."

Dative of Possessor (with *esse*)
If used with a form of the verb *esse* ('to be'), the Dative can indicate the Possessor of the Subject of a sentence. Since we normally translate this with the verb 'to have' in English, the Latin Dative becomes the Subject (i.e., the possessor) and the Latin Subject an indirect object (i.e., the possessed). Liber **mihi** est. "A book is **to me** (i.e., **I** have a book)." Prudentia est **illī puellae**. "**That girl** has prudence."

The Genitive

Genitive Attribute

Makes one noun depend upon another noun. It is used without a Preposition.

Usually translated with "of".

This often indicates Possession.

Ōrātiō **Cicerōnis**	"Cicero's speech"

Subjective & Objective Genitive

A Genitive Attribute can appear with two slightly different meanings when it describes a noun that expresses a verbal action (like: 'the fear', expressing the action of 'fearing' or 'the love', expressing the action of 'loving'.)

The Genitive, in these cases, can either express the **Subject** of the verbal action (i.e., the one who is *doing* the action):

amor **mātris**	"The love of the mother [e.g., towards her children] (i.e., the one she feels = she is the subject of the loving)"

or

The Genitive can express the **Object** of the verbal action (i.e., the one affected by the action):

amor **mātris**	"The [e.g. children's] love of the mother" (i.e., the one directed at her = she is the object of someone else's love).

Genitive of Material

Describes what something is made of.

poculum **aurī**	"a goblet **of** (or: **made of**) **gold**"

Partitive Genitive

Describes the larger group or context to which something belongs. Usually translated with "of". (Not to be confused with the Possessive Genitive)

pars **urbis**	"a part **of the city**"

The Partitive Genitive is often used with certain pronouns and adjectives such as *aliquid, quid, multum, plūs, minus, satis, nihil, tantum, quantum*:

satis **eloquentiae**	"enough/sufficient (of) **eloquence**"
Quid **novī**?	"What (of) **new** (things)? = What's the news?"
nihil **certī**	"nothing (of) **certain**"

Genitive Object

A few verbs take a Genitive as their object, e.g., *meminisse* ("to remember"). Grammars often don't call this a "Genitive Object", though.

cōnstantiae tuae meminī	"I remember your perseverance."

Genitive of Quality

Describes a **quality** of something or someone. Usually used in combination with an adjective! Used without a Preposition.

Cf. Ablative of Quality.

Catilina erat **summae audaciae** vir.	"Catilina was a man **of the highest boldness**."

The Ablative

Ablative of Means or Instrument

The **Means** or **Instrument** by which something is done. It is used without a preposition.

Usually translatable by 'with' or 'by':

Litterās **stilō** scrīpsit.	"She wrote the letter **with a pencil.**"
Suīs laboribus urbem cōnservāvit.	"She saved the city **by her (own) labors**."

Ablative of Respect

Describes the **Respect** in which something is true. Used without a preposition.

Usually translated with "with respect to":

Hī omnēs **linguā** inter sē differunt.	"These (people) were all different to each other **with respect to (their) language**."

Ablative of Manner

Describes the **Manner** in which an action takes place.

It is usually used with the preposition *cum*:

Id **cum virtūte** fēcit.	"She did it **with courage**."

Not to be confused with the Instrumental Ablative!

Ablative of Time

Describes the **Time** something takes place at or within. Usually without a Preposition.

Eō tempore id facere nōn poteram.	"I could not do it **at that time**."
Paucīs horīs id facient.	"They will do it **within a few hours**."

Ablative of Location & Locative

Describes the **Location** something is at.

The Ablative of Location is usually used with a preposition, except when used for cities, towns, small islands, or in combination with certain adjectives denoting a part of the whole (*cunctus, totus, summus, medius*, etc.) as well as with some idiomatic expressions (like *parte, regiōne, terrā marīque*, etc.).

Marcus **Carthāgine** est.	"Marcus is **in (the city of) Carthage**."
Iulia **in Italiā** est.	"Iulia is **in Italy**.
Cicerō **in magnā casā** vivit.	"Circero lives in a big house."

In the first and second declension singular, a lot of the cities, towns, and small islands (as well as *domus, rūs, & humus*) use the old **Locative** case instead (which is identical to the Genitive):

Rōmae, Ephesī, domī	"in Rome, in Ephesus, at home"

Ablative of Separation and Place from which

The Ablative of Place from which describes a **Movement away** from a place. Usually with a prepositions like *ab, dē, ex*:

Multī **ex agrīs** in urbem venient.	"Many will come **from the country** to the city."

The Ablative of Separation simply describes that some person or thing is separate from another, without implying any real movement. There is not always a preposition.

Cicerō hostēs **ab urbe** prōhibuit.	"Cicero kept the enemy **away from the city**."
Eōs **timōre** liberāvit.	"She freed them **from fear**."

Ablative of Comparison

Describes the person or object something is compared to with an adjective in the comparative. Used without a preposition.

Marcus clarior est **Titō**. "Marcus is more famous than Titus."

Ablative of Quality

Describes a **Quality** of something or someone. Usually used in combination with an adjective! Used without a preposition.

Cf. Genitive of Quality.

vir **summā virtute** est. "He is a man **of the highest virtue**."

Ablative of Degree

Describes the **Degree** to which something differs from something else in a comparison. Used without a preposition.

Tantō melius erat. "She was better **by so much**."

Multō acrius vigilabō. "I will watch out **much more** keenly."

Ablative of Personal Agent

Describes the **Agent** in a passive phrase. Used with a preposition (a/ab).

Ab amicō id scriptum est. "It was written **by a friend**."

The Predicative

A **Predicative** is a part of a sentence's **Predicate**. Roughly speaking, a predicative completes a verb that would not convey the full meaning of the predicate alone.
A predicative can either be a **Noun** (predicative nominal) or an **Adjective** (predicative adjective).

For example, in the sentence "Marcus is a musician", the full predicate would be "to be a musician". "Marcus is" alone, does not convey the full meaning of the predicate. "Musician" is a predicative nominal.
In the sentence "Marcus is tall", the full predicate would be "to be tall" and "tall" a predicative adjective.

There is a variety of different verbs that frequently need a predicative: "call, feel, seem, and become" are some examples.

"Marcus calls Julius a friend."	→ "to call (someone) a friend"
"Marcus feels bad about his exam."	→ "to feel bad"
"After finishing school, Julia became a lawyer."	→ "to become a lawyer"
"Sicily is an island"	→ "to be an island"

In Latin, the predicative has to agree with the word it belongs to (in case for nouns; in case, number, and gender for adjectives):

*Sicili**a** insul**a** est.* (nominative)
*Marc**us** magn**us** est.* (singular, masculine, nominative)
*Marcus Iuli**um** amic**um** dicit.* (singular, masculine, accusative)

In the last example, you can see that a predicative does not necessarily have to belong to the subject of the sentence.

Just like any other part of the sentence, the predicative can itself be extended by other descriptions (for example, by adjectives or a genitive attribute):

Marcus Iulium amicum bonum vocat – "Marcus calls Julius a *good* friend."
Marcus Iulium amicum Cornelii bonum vocat. – "Marcus calls Julius a *good* friend *of Cornelius*."

Distinction between Predicative and Attribute

A predicative is not to be confused with an attributive use of an adjective. The difference is that a predicative always modifies the predicate part of a sentence, while an attributive adjective simply describes any noun (without further relation to the action of the sentence).

In a sentence like

> "The tall woman enters the room",

the adjective "tall" has no further relation to the predicate "enters"; the predicate would be complete without the adjective as well, since it is a simple attributive adjective describing "the woman".

In a sentence like

> "The woman is called tall by her friends",

the adjective "tall" is part of the predicate "is called tall". Without it, the predicate would have a different meaning. It is therefore a predicative adjective.

The Infinitive

The Latin Infinitive is a non-finite verb form that does not inflect for person or number, though it does inflect for tense and voice.
The Infinitive was originally a noun form denoting the action of a verb abstractly. This substantive use, however, grew weaker during the development of the language and moved more towards a verbal meaning.
The Infinitive (like the gerund) is a form in between a noun and a verb. As a noun, it can function as the Subject or an Object of the sentence. As a verb, it can take own objects and gets modified by adverbs.

The Latin Language has 5 different Infinitive Forms:

The Infinitive is always a neuter form.

	Active	Passive
Present	laudā-re	laudā-rī
Perfect	laudā-v-isse	laudātum esse
Future	laudātūrum esse	–

The Infinitive as Subject:

Like in English, the Latin infinitive can function as a Subject of a sentence.

> ***Navigāre*** *negotium magnum est.* → "**To sail** is a difficult affair."

> ***Cōnfīdere*** *decet,* ***timēre*** *nōn decet* → "It's suitable **to have confidence**, **to fear** is not suitable."

The Infinitive as Object:

Like in English, some verbs (like *posse*, *discere*, *velle*, *dēsinere*, *audēre*, *cōnāri*, etc.) can take an infinitive as an Object (this is sometimes called a "complementary infinitive").

> *dēsine id mē* ***docēre.*** → "Stop **lecturing** me about that."

> *audet* ***dicere.*** → "He dares **to say.**"

Accusative with Infinitive

Besides serving as the subject or object of a sentence, the infinitive often appears in other syntactical constructions as well. The most common one is the "Accusative with Infinitive".
It introduces a new statement (subject and verb) into the sentence, that functions, in its entirety, as an object of the superordinate verb.

The same construction exists in English as well:

In sentences like

"I saw her go" or "I would like him to know",

we have, each time, a superordinate sentence consisting of a Subject and a Predicate ("I" and "saw"/"would like") and a depending clause consisting of an Accusative and an Infinitive that functions as the object of the superordinate clause. "What did I see?" → "her go". In these cases, we can even see the accusative in English (her/him as opposed to she/he).

The difference is that Latin uses this kind of construction much more often than English, usually in cases where English prefers to use a "that" clause, for example in indirect discourse:

Marcus dicit Iuliam in Italia ***esse****.* → "Marcus says that Julia **is** in Italy."

In such a sentence, the Latin infinitive becomes the Predicate of the English "that" sentence and the Latin accusative its subject.

Just like the Participles, the Infinitive never denotes a specific time, but always the time relation of its action to the superordinate verb:

The action described by a **present infinitive** is not present, but simply **simultaneous** the main clause.
The action described by a **perfect infinitive** is not in the perfect tense, but simply **before** the main cl.
The action described by a **future infinitive** is not in the future tense, but simply **after** the main clause.

Marcus dicet Iuliam in Italia ***esse****.* → "Marcus will say that Julia **is** in Italy." (at the time M. speaks)
Marcus dicit Iuliam in Italia ***fuisse****.* → "Marcus says that Julia **was** in Italy."
Marcus dixit Iuliam in Italia ***futuram esse****.* → "Marcus said that Julia **will be** in Italy."

Nominative with Infinitive

A construction somewhat similar to the Accusative with Infinitive is the Nominative with Infinitive. It consists of a passive predicate plus infinitive that both go with the Subject of the sentence. The same construction exists in English as well.

The Nominative with Infinitive mainly appears with verbs like *dicere*, *existimāre*, *putāre*, *iubēre*, *habēre*, etc.
Once again, the tense of the infinitive expresses a time relation to the main clause!

Marcus dicitur in Italia ***esse***. → "Marcus is said **to be** in Italy."

Marcus putābātur in Italiā ***fuisse***. → "Marcus was believed **to have been** in Italy."

Marcus iussus est in Italiam ***prōficere***. → "Marcus was commanded **to go** to Italy."

The Historic Infinitive

Sometimes, when the narration gets a little more dramatic or turns into a more rapid, listing style, authors (especially of historiography) stop using finite verb forms as predicates, but simply use infinitives as the main verbs of a sentence. These infinitives are usually called "Historical Infinitives".

At the beginning, this might be a little tricky to spot, but since those sentences are often lacking the "real" predicate and the historical infinitive usually appears several times in a row, it will get easier with time.

At Romani domi militiaeque intenti festinare, parare, alius alium hortari, hostibus obviam ire, libertatem, patriam parentisque armis tegere.

"But the Romans intensively made haste at home and in the field, made preparations, encouraged each other, went towards the enemy, and protected their liberty, their, fatherland, and their parents with weapons."

The Participle

This entire description is only about participles that do not simply form the passive tense (with esse) of finite verbs with Perfect stems, but only about separate participles.

It is not that easy to define what a participle actually is. Most grammars describe it as a form between verb and adjective; *particeps* = "having a share of (verb and adjective)".
They are formed out of verb stems, but with adjective endings. A participle describes some kind of verbal action that gets attributed to a noun in a quasi-adjectival way.

This verbal action can take place actively or passively, and it can take place in three different time relations to the rest of the sentence: it can be before, simultaneous to, or after the rest.
This gives us six different ways a participle can appear in, which are demonstrated with the verb "to praise" in the following chart:

	Active	Passive
Before	having praised	having been praised
Simultaneous	praising	being praised
After	about to praise	about to be praised

Now, imagine those in the context of a sentence about a teacher and a student:

"The **teacher** is at school **praising** *the student*."

Here, the core of the sentence is just "the teacher is at school". The teacher, however, is described closer by a new verbal action ("to praise") and this verbal action is attributed to the teacher almost like an adjective. (We could even say "the praising teacher", like we could say "the old teacher").
This is called a participle. In this case it is *active* and happens *simultaneously* to the rest (he is at school *while* praising the student).

We could also imagine this participle action taking place in the passive voice:

"The **student**, **being praised** by the teacher, is at school".

This time, the participle describes the student. It still happens simultaneously, though.

We can easily imagine the whole participle situation taking place before the main verb:

> "The **teacher**, **having praised** the student (yesterday), is (now) in school." (active)
> "The **student**, **having been praised** by the teacher (yesterday), is (now) in school" (passive)

The formulation becomes a bit more clunky if we want it to take place *after* the main verb, but it is nevertheless possible in English:

> "The **teacher**, **about to praise** the student (tomorrow), is in school (now)" (active)
> "The **student**, **about to be praised** by the teacher (tomorrow), is in school (now)."

Latin Participles

This functions in exactly the same way in Latin as well. The only difference is that Latin can only use three of the six scenarios of the chart above:

- before & passive
- simultaneous & active
- after & active

The other three options (before & active; simultaneous & passive; after & passive) can't be expressed with participles in Latin!

The three existing participles in Latin are usually called:

- **Perfect Passive Participle** (PPP)
- **Present Active Participle** (PAP)
- **Future Active Participle** (FAP)

Just like with the infinitives, the names are a bit misleading (*before* is called "perfect"; *simultaneous* is called "present"; *after* is called "future"). They don't designate absolute times however, but relations!

Morphology:

The PPP takes the present stem of a verb and add -ns, -ntis with endings of the 3rd declension
The PAP takes the fourth principal part and adds endings of the 1st & 2nd declension
The FAP takes the fourth principal part and adds -urus, -ura, -urum (1st & 2nd declension endings)

(cf. "Morphology" overview for details)

Syntax:

Since the participle, as a quasi-adjective, always describes a certain noun in a sentence, it has to agree with that noun in Case, Number, & Gender, just like any other adjective!
In the examples above, the participle only described the Subject of the sentence, but it can also describe any other noun:

> "The teacher praises the **student**, **having completed** her homework."

Here, "the student" (the direct object) is described by a participle. In Latin the participle would therefore appear in the Accusative Singular feminine.
As in all the examples above, we see that, being also a verb, the participle can have objects itself (here: "her homework").

You probably also noticed by now that participles sound very clunky in English: nobody would really say "the student having completed her homework". Therefore, it is almost always necessary to understand the meaning of the Latin participle *as* a participle first, but then reformulate (often without a participle) in English.
The Latin participle conveys a variety of different adverbial information that the English participle cannot quite capture. They are mainly: relative time, cause, purpose, or concession. The English language therefore tends to express this kind of information by using not a simple participle, but instead a full-grown subordinate clause. This is another reason why we usually have to reformulate when translating a Latin participle. We should try to understand what the Latin participle is supposed to express and then formulate more naturally with one of the following kinds of subordinate clauses (not all of them work every time!). Take the following example:

Discipulus laudatus a magistro gaudet. literally: "student, having been praised"

Temporal clause:

> "After he was praised by the teacher, the student is happy."

Causal clause:

> "Because the student was praised by the teacher, he is happy."

Concessive clause:

> "Although the student was praised by the teacher, he is happy."

Relative clause:

> "The student, who was praised by the teacher, is happy."

Some grammars also tend to distinguish participles by their different syntactical functions. Those are usually described as:

Attributive Participle: in this function, the participle has no connection to the finite verb and just functions like an adjective describing another noun. (E.g. *Edimus cenam* ***coctam*** – "We ate a cooked meal")

Predicative Participle: in this function, the participle is a necessary addition to the predicate that either goes with the subject or the object of a sentence (E.g. *Gallia est* ***divisa*** *in partes tres* – "Gaul is divided in three parts").

Adverbial Participle: in this function, the participle describes the circumstances of the agreeing noun while the action of the sentence takes place. It describes an action besides the action of the predicate. The adverbial Participle is the most common use of the participle in classical Latin. (*Mihi* ***dormienti*** *epistula tua reddita est* – "Your letter was delivered to me sleeping = while I was sleeping").

Examples:

Magister puerum **laudans** in schola est. The **teacher**, **praising** the boy, is at school.
→ PAP in Nom. Sg. (describing the Subject)

We could translate with a temporal clause. The PAP is simultaneous. Therefore: "The teacher is at school **while** praising the boy" or as a relative clause "The teacher, **who** praises the boy, is at school."

Magister **puerum dormientem** non laudat. The **teacher** does not praise the sleeping boy.
→ PAP in Acc. Sg. (describing the Direct Object)

Here, the literal translation actually sounds good as it is, but we could also translate with a temporal clause: "The teacher does not praise the boy **while** he (the boy) was sleeping." or even as a causal clause: "The teacher does not praise the boy **because** he was sleeping."

Magister **pueris scribentibus** donum dat. The teacher gives the writing boys a gift.
→ PAP in Dat. Pl. (describing the Indirect Object)

Here, we could again translate with a temporal, relative, or causal clause, or even a concessive clause: "The teacher gives the boys a gift **although** they are writing."

Urbs aedificata laudatur a hominibus. The city, having been built, is praised by the people.
→ PPP in Nom. Sg. (describing the Subject)

Once again, a participle describing the subject, but it is 'before & passive'. Since it sounds clunky in English, we might want to translate with temporal clause instead: "After the city was built, it was praised by the people."

The Future Active Participle:

The Future Active participle does not really have a direct equivalent in English, but we can come close with a provisional literal translation, like "about to …".

Discipulus *domum iit magistrum* ***laudaturus***. "The **student**, **about to praise** the teacher, went home."
→ FAP in Nom. Sg. (describing the Subject)

The FAP can also convey a <u>purpose</u> or <u>intention</u>: "The student went home **to** praise his teacher."

Ablative Absolute

An Ablative Absolute is (usually) a construction with a participle and a noun. Just as the other participle constructions, the participle introduces a new action to the sentence. In this construction, however, the participle and its agreeing noun are not syntactically dependent on any other part of the sentence. They are unconnected (*absolutus* = "unconnected, detached"). Logically however, they do describe the circumstances of the sentence.
Since we do not usually use this kind of construction in English, it is necessary to translate immediately as a subordinate clause. Since there is no direct connection, a relative clause is not possible here.
The relative time that the participle expresses is the same as in other sentences.

Urbe captā Romani abierunt. ("city captured | the Romans left")

There is no grammatical connection between the main clause and the participle construction. The city is not the object of the "leaving", the "capturing" is no predicate describing "the Romans", etc. We can imagine, of course, that the Romans are the ones who did the capturing and also that they are only leaving *because* the city is now captured and therefore their work is done, but grammatically this is not clear. That the there was a city captured is simply a circumstance of departure of the Romans. In English, the unconnected phrases sound clunky. We usually want to express the logical connection between the two things more visibly. We have several options to do so (though not all make sense all the time):

Temporal clause:

"After the city was captured, the Romans left."

Causal clause:

"Because the city was captured, the Romans left."

Concessive sentence:

"Although the city was captured, the Romans left."

Ablative Absolute without Participle

Sometimes an Ablative Absolute can even appear without any participle at all, but with another noun fulfilling the descriptive function of the Participle.

Compare the following two sentences (and their provisional translations):

> Caesare dormiente milites Romani Galliam eunt.
> Caesar sleeping | the Roman soldiers went to Gaul.
>
> Caesare duce milites Romani Galliam eunt.
> Caesar the leader | the Roman soldiers went to Gaul.

The first case is a normal Ablative Absolute (a participle and an agreeing noun, describing the circumstances of the main clause, but not being directly linked to any part of that main clause; both in the Ablative).
The second case does almost the same, but with two nouns. They describe the circumstances of the main clause, while not being directly linked to any part of that main clause. The soldiers went to Gaul and the circumstances are that "Caesar was the leader".

This construction most frequently appears with "job" descriptions, but sometimes also with adjectives:

Romulo rege	With Romulus as king/While R. was king
Cicero consule	While Cicero was consul/Under the consulship of Cicero
matre invita	The mother unwilling = against the mother's will
me vivo	Me alive = In my lifetime/while I was (still) alive
Eo mortuo	Him dead = After his death
nobis insciis	We unknowing = without our knowledge
Augusto imperatore	With Augustus as emperor/While A. was emperor

Translating the Participle

The following overview tries to give a systematic approach to translating every participle that appears in a sentence, no matter what function.

If you find a participle in a Latin sentence, you could go through the following steps:

1. Does the Participle go with a form of *esse* (only for PPP and FAP)?
    a. Is it a finite form of *esse*?
        i. Then it is probably part of the Predicate (start sentence again)
    b. Is it an infinitive of *esse*?
        i. Then it might be part of an Accusative with Infinitive construction (cf. p. 15)
2. Does the Participle stand without a form of *esse*?
    a. Find the agreeing noun
    b. Is it an Attributive Participle (= like an adjective)?
        i. Then translate literally.
    c. Is it not an Attributive Participle?
        i. Is the agreeing noun syntactically a part of the sentence?
            1. Then it is not an Ablative Absolute
        ii. Is the agreeing noun an ablative and not syntactically a part of the sentence?
            1. Then it is an Ablative Absolute

The nd-Forms

In Latin, there are two almost identical looking verb forms that both add "nd" as their sign. We will call those forms collectively "nd-forms". They consist of the Gerund and the Gerundive. The following overview is written strictly from the perspective of translation and disregards most linguistic explanation.

The Gerund

The Gerund is a "verbal noun", i.e., a nominalized form of a verb. Within a sentence, it behaves as a verb (it can be described by adverbs and have objects), but it functions also as a noun (it declines like nouns, can have prepositions, be a genitive attribute, etc.). In English, a verbal noun is usually formed by adding "-ing" to a verb.

In a sentence like

> Seeing his old friend briefly made him very happy.

"seeing" is a verb. As such it can be described by an adverb ("briefly") and also have objects ("his old friend"). Nevertheless, it functions as the Subject of this sentence (like a noun). We can ask: *Who* or *what* made him happy? → "Seeing his old friend".

As an abstract verbal noun, it can **only** be **Singular** and **Neuter** (you could neither count something like "seeing" nor could you attribute another gender to it).
In Latin, the Gerund declines following the second declension and can therefore only have the endings *-um*, *-o*, and *-i*.

There are two cases where the English Gerund can do more than the Latin Gerund: It can be the Subject of a sentence (as in the example 'seeing' above) and it can be a direct object. For both of those functions, Latin would use an Infinitive (see above)! Therefore, there is no Nominative form of the Gerund, and there will usually never be an accusative unless with a preposition.

All Gerunds are **active** in voice.

videre	Gen.	Dat.	Acc.	Abl.
Sg. Neuter	vide-**nd**-i	vide-**nd**-o	vide-**nd**-um	vide-**nd**-o

The Gerundive

The Gerundive is a "verbal adjective" and somewhat more complicated for us since (unlike for the Gerund) there is no direct equivalent in the English language. It fulfills a handful of different functions (see next page for details):

1. It either expresses a necessity or (with *non*) prohibition in the Passive Voice
2. Or it substitutes the non-existing Present and Future Passive Participle

Since the Gerundive is an adjective, it has to agree with a noun in the sentence. Therefore, it must be able to exist in all different **Cases**, **Numbers**, and **Genders** (as opposed to the Gerund, which only exists in the neuter singular). For this, it follows the 1st declension for masculine and neuter, and the 2nd declension for feminine forms.
This is also one easy indicator to distinguish between the two in a sentence.

Translating "nd-Forms"

When an "nd-Form" appears in a sentence, the first thing you should do is to decide whether it is a Gerund or a Gerundive.

A Gerund can only be Singular and Neuter and does not have a noun it agrees with.

A Gerund can have every form (of the 1st and 2nd declension) and does have a noun it agrees with.

Translation of a Gerund

- Translate provisionally by "nominalizing" with an English "-ing" form
- Pay attention to the case and potential prepositions and try to build it into the sentence accordingly.

Example:

hoc modus ***vivendi*** (*vivere* = "to live) → **living**

Now, *vivendi* is Genitive. We therefore have to ask what kind of function this could play in the sentence. Here, it is probably a Genitive attribute depending on *hoc modus* → "this way **of living**"

Translating a Gerundive with *esse*:

The Gerund functions as a predicative that denotes a necessity **and** a passive voice. A literal translation would be "something is to be done". There is a necessity ("is to be") and it's passe (the thing doesn't do itself).
Since this usually sounds a bit clunky, we can just always translate Gerundives with *esse* by using "have to" (or "must not" if with *non*) while keeping it in the passive.

Discipulus laudandus (non) est.

"The student is to be praised." → "The student has to be (must not be) praised."

Translating a Gerundive without *esse*:

Since a Gerundive does not exist in English, we usually just have to try different options one by one. Most of them will not sound like proper English but give you a sense of the meaning that will allow you to formulate smoother in a second step.

1. Translate like a Gerund and add the agreeing noun as a genitive attribute with "of"
    a. Just as with the Gerund, you have to pay attention to the case and potential prepositions to understand the meaning
        i. The ablative without preposition often denotes an instrument or means
            1. *Castris ponendis Romani imperium muniebant.* → "By building of fortresses, the Romans protected the empire."
        ii. The ablative with *in* usually denotes a timeframe (while/during/etc.)
            1. *In libris legendis multi discipuli somno oppressi sunt.* → "During the reading of the books, many students fell asleep."
        iii. Sometimes a certain case and preposition is just required by the sentence
            1. *Parata sum ad libros legendos.* → "I am ready for the reading of (the) books"
2. Translate the Gerundive attributive with "worth of" or "should be"
    a. Just as with the Gerund, you have to pay attention to the case and potential prepositions to understand the meaning
        i. *Libros legendos tibi do.* → "I give you books worth reading" (they are a "must-read" so to say: it's necessary but they don't read themselves)

The Subjunctive

The Subjunctive is one of the three moods of the Latin language (the others being the Indicative and the Imperative).

It is quite hard to narrowly define what a Subjunctive is in general. Almost all Indo-European languages do have some form of subjunctive. However, it has very different functions in different languages.

The Latin subjunctive alone is already quite a broad topic in itself. This is mainly due to the fact that it covers an array of functions that were, in older Indo-European languages, originally spread out over a "Subjunctive" *and* an "Optative" mood and then merged into just one mood → our Subjunctive.[1]

Roughly speaking, we could say that the Subjunctive mood describes something as either "**wanted**" or (some degree of) "**possible**" from the **perspective of the speaker**. In this capacity, the subjunctive primarily appears in independent/main clauses.

Subjunctive in an Independent/Main Clause

In an independent clause, the function of the Latin subjunctive could be divided into three main groups that all express a notion of "wanted" or a degree of "possibility":

1) Optative (expressing wishes in a broader sense)
2) Hortative (expressing encouragements and prohibitions in a broader sense)
3) Potential (expressing potential and irreal actions)

Subjunctive in a Dependent/Subordinate Clause

There are a lot of different subordinate clauses in Latin that use the subjunctive mood. For most of them (like *ut*-clauses, etc.), we do not translate in any particular way that would take this subjunctive into account.
That is mainly due to the fact that those sub-clauses developed, in some way or another, from originally (paratactical) main clauses where the subjunctive did indeed fulfill a specific function. That function was lost in the process, but the subjunctive case was kept. In those cases, the different forms of the Subjunctive merely indicate different time relations.

[1] "Mood" is, by the way, a rather bad term. It's probably based on an old confusion of pronunciation and translation of the Latin term *modus*. We should better call it "mode", since it really doesn't say anything about whether the speaker is happy or sad or angry, etc.

The Subjunctive in Independent Clauses

The Optative ("Wishes") [Negation with *ne*]

fulfillable wishes:

1. In the Present – Present Subjunctive

   Utinam sanus sis → May you be healthy.

2. In the Past – Perfect Subjunctive (almost never used)[2]

   Utinam sanus fueris → May you have been healthy.

unfulfillable wishes:

1. In the Present – Imperfect Subjunctive

   Utinam sanus esses → If only you were healthy.

2. In the Past – Pluperfect Subjunctive

   Utinam sanus fuisses → If only you had been healthy.

[2] This usually doesn't appear in Latin literature.

The Hortatory Subjunctive ("Commands", "Prohibitions") [Negation with *ne*]

The Hortative: Encouragement to the 1. Person Plural – Present Subjunctive

Grati simus! → Let us be thankful!

The Iussive: Command to the 3. Person – Present Subjunctive

Ne effugiant hostes! → The enemies shall not flee!

The Prohibitive: Prohibition to the 2. Person – Perfect Subjunctive

Ne dubitaveris! → Don't hesitate!

The Potential Subjunctive ("Potential" or "Irreal" Action) [Negation with *non*]

Potential: Describing something that is viewed as "possible" by the speaker

1. of the Present – Present/Perfect Subjunctive

   Aliquis credat… → Somebody could believe…

2. of the Past – Imperfect Subjunctive

   Aliquis crederet… → Somebody could have believed…

Irreal: Describing something that is viewed as "impossible" by the speaker

1. of the Present – Imperfect Subjunctive

   Sine amicis vita tristis esset. → Without friends, life would be sad.

2. of the Past – Pluperfect Subjunctive

   Sine amicis vita tristis fuisset. → Without friends, life would have been sad.

Deliberative: deliberating question (asking for a possibility)

1. of the Present – Present Subjunctive

   Quid faciam? → What should I do?

2. of the Past – Imperfect Subjunctive

   Quid facerem? → What should I have done?

The Subjunctive in Dependent Clauses

As mentioned in the introduction, the subjunctive works a little different in dependent clauses. It often developed out of originally paratactical clauses and now serves merely as a marker for subordination instead of fulfilling the functions it has had in the independent clauses.

In cases where it does not modify the sentence by adding the notion of either “wished for” or a “possible” to the speaker’s perspective, the choice of subjunctive serves to indicate **relative time** (cf. Participles and Infinitives). The system of relative times is often called *consecutio temporum* (sequence of tenses). It can still be found almost like this in most Romance languages today. For these types of sentences, cf. p. 38.

Nevertheless, there are also some cases where the subjunctive does indeed indicate the speaker’s perspective by adding a notion of either “wished for” or “possible” to the dependent clause, just like it does in independent/main clauses.
Those cases are, e.g., the Conditional Clauses and the Relative Clauses. For this, cf. next page.

Conditional Clauses

Conditional clauses consist of two parts: the protasis (or "condition" = if-clause) and the apodosis (or "consequence" = main-clause). The Latin word of "if" is ***si***.

There are two kinds of conditional clauses: those in the Indicative and those in the Subjunctive.

In conditional clauses in the **Indicative**, the speaker does not make any statement about what they think about the likelihood of the action in the protasis or the apodosis. Those are therefore called "Indefinite" by some grammars.

If the speaker does want to make a statement about how likely (or "how possible") they deem the action of the clauses, then the subjunctive is used. Just as a potential subjunctive in independent clauses, it adds a notion of "possible" to either the apodosis or the protasis or both. Also just as in independent clauses, there are two "levels" of likelihood in the speaker's attitude:

Potential = speaker thinks that it is possible
Irreal = speaker thinks that it is not possible

Both exist in the present and in the past (see "potential subjunctive"). Though the Potential of the Past is almost never used!

Exemplary Sentences:

Indefinite (Indicative Mood)**:**

Si hoc dicis, mentiris.	If you say this (and I don't make any statement about whether you actually do so), you are lying.
Si hoc dixisti, mentitus es.	If you said this (and I don't make any statement about whether you actually did so), you were lying.

Potential:

Si hoc dicas, mentiaris.	If you should say this (and I think you could potentially do so), then you would be lying.

Irreal:

Si hoc diceres, mentireris.	If you said this now (and I know you don't actually do so), then you would be lying.
Si hoc dixisses, mentita esses.	If you had said this (and I know you didn't actually), then you would have been lying.

Subjunctive in Relative Clauses

One other case where the subjunctive actually does have a modifying function are Relative Clauses. Here, the speaker can twist the meaning slightly and specify their own perspective by adding a "wished for" or "possible" notion to the clause.

In a sentence like:

> *Legatos in Germaniam misit, qui epistolam tradiderunt.*

the meaning would be something like

> "She sent messengers to Germany who handed over the letter."

However, a speaker could add a notion of "wished for" to it to make it mean something like:

> "She sent messengers to Germany in order to hand over the letter." (≈ "…whom she wanted to hand over the letter.")

In this case, the Latin sentence would simply add a subjunctive to the verb:

> *Legatos in Germaniam misit, qui epistolam traderent.*

Those notions are usually collected under the categories:

> purpose (final clause), consecutive, causal, concessive

since it is often hard to etymologically trace the meaning back a notion of "possible" or "wished for". Often a smooth English translation won't even use a relative clause at all anymore.

Exemplary Sentences:

Stultus es, qui id credas.	You are stupid, because you think that (≈ …, you who thinks that). → causal
Nemo tam sapiens est, qui omnia sciat.	Nobody is so wise, that they know everything (≈ …, with the consequence that they are one who knows everything.) → consecutive
Rex, qui amicus populi Romani esset, exturbatus est.	The king, although he was a friend of the Roman people, was expelled. (≈ … although being one who was a friend) → concessive

Consecutio Temporum – Sequence of Tenses

In all the dependent clauses where the subjunctive does not add any specific twist to the meaning, it simply indicates the relative time of that subordinate clause to the action of its superordinate clause. Just as participles and with infinitives, there are three different possible time relations:

The action of the subordinate clause can happen **before**, **simultaneous**, or **after** the action of the main clause. However, the Latin language distinguishes between two different kinds of main clauses in this calculation:
Those with a **primary tense** and those with a **secondary tense**, each using a different set of subjunctives in their respective subordinate clauses.

That leads to the following chart:

Consecutio temporum

Main Clause	Subordinate Clause		
	Before	Simultaneous	After
Primary Tense: Present Future	Perfect Subjunctive (b)	Present Subjunctive (a)	FAP + *esse* (Present Subjunctive) (c)
Secondary Tense: Imperfect Perfect Pluperfect	Pluperfect Subjunctive (e)	Imperfect Subjunctive (d)	FAP + *esse* (Imperfect Subjunctive) (f)

Exemplary sentences:

a) *Interrogat, ubi puer sit*. She asks where the boy is.
b) *Interrogat, ubi puer fuerit*. She asks where the boy had been.
c) *Interrogat, ubi puer futurus sit*. She asks where the boy will be.

d) *Interrogavit, ubi puer esset*. She asked where the boy was.
e) *Interrogavit, ubi puer fuisset*. She asked where the boy had been.
f) *Interrogavit, ubi puer futurus esset*. She asked where the boy will be.

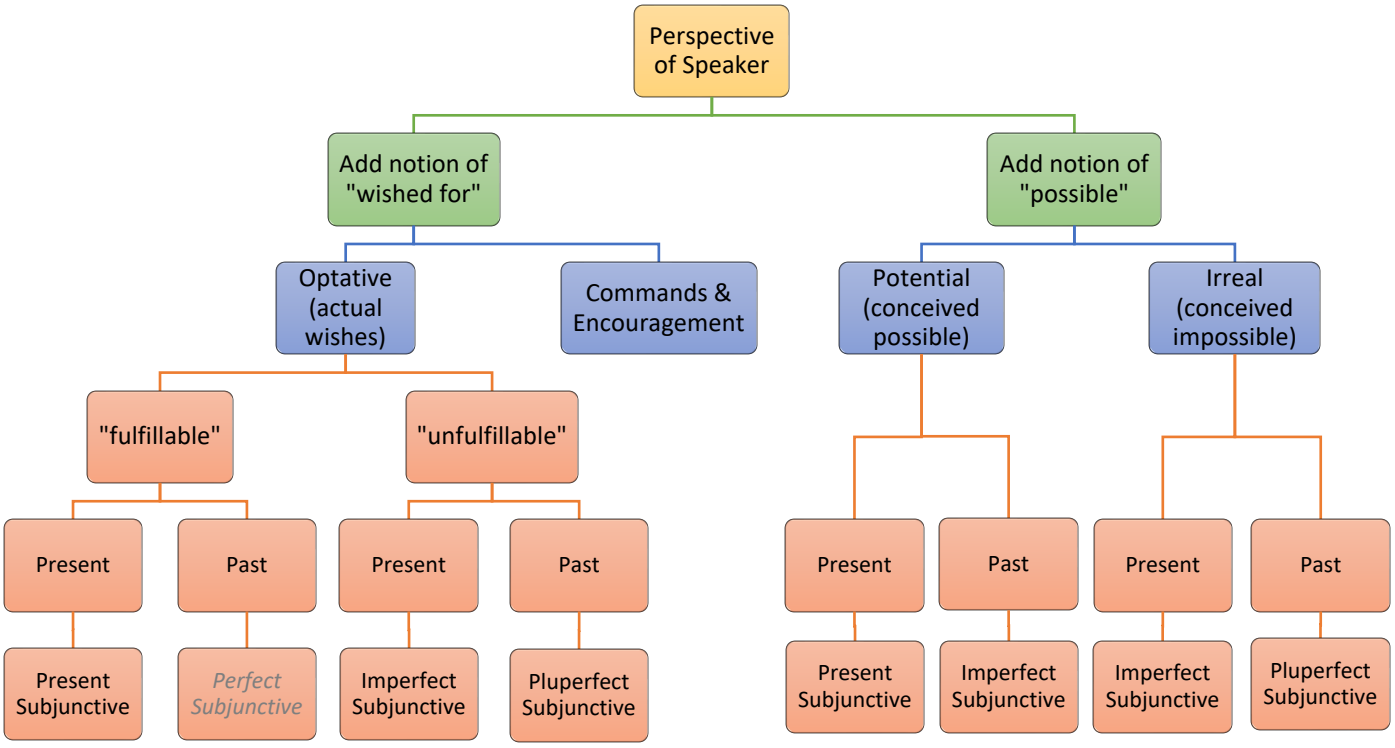
The *Coniugatio Periphrastica*

In the chart above, subordinate clauses with an action taking place **after** the action of their main clause, use what is called the *coniugatio periphrastica* (the circumscribing conjugation). This is a little workaround since there is nothing like an actual "Future Subjunctive" form in the Latin language.

However, this construction is only to be found in indirect questions and subordinate clauses introduced by *quin*. In all other cases (like *ut*-clauses, *cum*-clauses, relative clauses, etc.) the futurity is simply ignored, and the sentences are treated as "simultaneous".

Subjunctive – An Overview

The following is a diagram of the different functions of the Latin subjunctive in an **independent clause**. For a better overview, there are no specific Subjunctives given for the category "Commands & Encouragement". You can find them in the larger document on the Subjunctive.



Temporal Clauses

Temporal clauses are usually a kind of adverbial clauses that describe the chronological relation between two actions: the action of the main clause and that of the temporal clause. There are many different ways this can look like in Latin. The following is just a partial overview of the existing possibilities. As opposed to the other parts of this document, it is not meant to be memorized but rather as a short overview of what to expect in Latin literature.

Temporal clauses are introduced by a particle (like "when", "during", "after", "before", etc.). Their Latin equivalents mostly originate in earlier relative particles and so temporal clauses often function rather similar to relative clauses.

They can express three different time relations: before, simultaneously, after.

Each of them can appear in a lot of variations regarding the exact time relation, and in the Indicative or the Subjunctive and with different introductory particles.

We can also distinguish Temporal clauses by their mood: simple ones that use the Indicative, and those that originally contained some (not always recognizable) additional information (like a cause) and therefore use the Subjunctive.

For the ease of use, the following overview shall not be sorted by these broader categories, but instead by introducing particles.

Temporal Clauses with *postquam, ubi, ut, ut primum, simul atque* + Indicative

The action of the main clause starts right after the action of the temporal clause, which therefore mostly uses the perfect tense (or historical present).

The particles can be translated with "**after**", "**as soon as**", "**when**", "**since**"

Postquam tuas litteras legi, *me convenit Servius.*	"After I read your letter, Servius came to me."
Ubi omnis idem sentire itellexit, *posterum diem pugnae constituit*	"When/as soon as he understood that all were of the same opinion, he appointed the next day for the battle."
Simul atque introductus est, *rem confecit*	"As soon as he was brought in, he did the job."

Temporal clauses with *dum*, *donec*, *quoad*

dum + Present Indicative ("**while**"):

Dum haec geruntur, *Caesari nuntiatum est*	"While this was going on, a message was brought to Caesar."

dum, *donec*, *quoad* + Indicative ("**as long as**" / "**until**"):

Dum anima est, spes est	"As long as there is life, there is hope"
Hoc feci, dum licuit	"I did this while/as long as it w.as allowed."

dum, *donec*, *quoad* + (Present or Imperfect) Subjunctive gives a notion of intention or expectancy to the temporal relation:

expectas fortasse dum dicat	"You are waiting perhaps until he says…" (i.e., waiting for him to say)
Ego hic cogito commorari, *quoad me reficiam*	"I think I will stay here until I am well again" (i.e., I will wait with the intention to get well before I leave)

Temporal Clauses with *cum*

cum is by far the most versatile of all the conjunctions (not to be confused with *cum* + Abl. = "with"). The following list is, again, just for a quick orientation.

Cum *with Indicative*

cum temporal dates or defines the time at which the action of the main verb occurred ("when", "at the time when"). The main verb can be additionally described with (*nunc*, *tum*, *eo tempore*, etc.):

Caesar, cum (primum) per anni tempus potuit, ad exercitum contendit	"When/as soon as time allowed, Caesar went to the army"
Tum cum in Asia res magnas permulti amiserant "	*"*at that time, when many had lost great fortunes in Asia"

cum modal is not only denotes chronological simultaneousness, but also adds explanatory value ("on the grounds that"/ "by"):

cum tacent, clamant	"When they are silent, they cry out" (i.e., their silence is emphatic expression of their sentiments)

cum iterative gives a repetitive, general actions ("every time when"):

Gubernatores cum delphinos se in portum conicientes viderunt, tempestatem significari putant. –	"Every time the sailors saw dolphins swimming into the harbor, they thought that a storm was coming."

cum inversum denotes an inverted relation between main and subordinate clause. The subordinate clause action is going on when suddenly (unexpectedly) the temporal clause action hits:

Vixdum epistulam tuam legeram, cum ad me amicus quidam venit.	"I had just finished reading your letter, when all of a sudden, a certain friend arrived."

Cum *with Subjunctive*

cum narrative (or historic) is very common in narrations and gives the circumstances of the actions. It uses Imperfect Subjunctive when the circumstances are still ongoing, and Pluperfect Subjunctive when the circumstance are already completed

Cum essem otiosus domi,	"While I was at leisure at home,
M. ad me Brutus venerat	Marcus Brutus had come up to me."
Cum id nuntiatum esset, maturat.	"When this had been reported, he made haste."

cum causal (sometimes *praesertim cum*) gives a temporal relation that is also understood as a causal relation ("because", "since"):

id difficile non est,	"This is not difficult,
cum tantum equitatu valeamus	since we are so strong with respect to the cavalry."

cum concessive gives a temporal relation that is also understood as concessive ("though"):

cum primi ordines concidissent,	"Though the first ranks had fallen,
tamen acerrime reliqui resistebant	the others still resisted vigorously."

Temporal Clauses with *antequam* and *priusquam*

These words mean "sooner … than = before". Technically *ante* and *prius* modify the main clause, *quam* the subordinate clause. They can therefore be split up in a sentence.

The Indicative is used when a simply chronological sequence is shown:[3]

antequam legi tuas litteras,	"Before I read your letters, I wished the man to leave."
hominem ire cupiebam	
neque prius fugere destiterunt	"and they didn't stop their flight
quam ad flumen pervenerunt	before (until) they reached the river."

[3] Here just a few examples in the Perfect Tense. There are, however, various other combinations.

The Subjunctive often adds a notion of expectancy or purpose or describes an action that did not take place:

Navalis hostis ante adesse potest quam quisquam eum videre possit. "An enemy at sea can be there before anyone see him."

Nota bene:

There is a frequent construction of corresponding *cum* … *tum* …, meaning "… as well as (especially) …". It originally also stems from temporal structures (when already …, then surely also …), though it is usually not really recognizable as such anymore.

It functions similar to a corresponding *et* … *et* … with special emphasis on the *tum*-part:

cum *in ceteris civitatibus* "in other states, **and especially** in ours"
tum *maxume in nostra*

A Systematic Approach to Translation

In a certain way, Latin is a language like every other language. It can be understood by just reading it word by word like every other language can. However, in our modern way of studying Latin, most people never really develop a “feeling” for the language *as* a language and therefore have to rely on analyzing eqvh sentence *before* understanding it. In addition to that, the entirety of ancient Latin literature is written in a highly artificial style that was probably never really spoken in that exact same form, which makes understanding it even harder.

We can only reach the point of understanding Latin text in Latin by actually reading lots and lots of Latin which can be tricky if you haven’t reached the point of understanding Latin in Latin yet. We therefore sometimes have to fall back to slowly “deciphering” a sentence and translating it into our own language first to understand the meaning.

The following is a very systematic approach to translating Latin sentences. It is very detailed and meant as a tool to crack very tough sentences or as a place of reference for specific syntactical phenomena like participles and gerundives, etc.
It is not meant to be strictly followed for every sentence and not every aspect will be helpful for every sentence.

Steps of Translating a Latin Sentence

Before starting to translate, you should try to get a first sense of the potential meanings of all words and also think about what could be main and what subordinate clauses.

1. Find the Predicate
    a. The Predicate is a finite verb (no infinitive, no participle or nd-form without *esse*)
2. Find the Subject
    a. The Subject is in the Nominative
    b. There can be more than one Subject
    c. The Subject can sometimes be an Adjective, Pronoun, Participle (or rarely an Infinitive)
    d. If there is no Nominative the Subject is probably included in the Predicate
3. Do Subject and Predicate match?
    a. They must have the same number
    b. interim step: if the Predicate is passive you could now look for an ablative of agent. If a "personal" passive construction does not make sense it might be a Nominative with Infinitive (→ cf. p. 16)
4. Search for Objects
    a. Does the Predicate have any objects?
        i. Direct object: Accusative
        ii. Indirect object: Dative
5. Adjectives and (Possessive) Pronouns
    a. To which nouns do the adjectives and possessive pronouns belong to?
        i. Pronouns can be without agreeing noun
6. Genitive Attribute
    a. Try to find out which nouns the genitive describes
7. Are there indicators of Time, Location, or Direction?
    a. Time: mostly adverbial (*tum, hodie, semper*, etc.)
    b. Location: mostly in the ablative or locative case
    c. Direction: mostly in the accusative case with preposition *in*

8. **Now you can try to translate the remaining verbs of the sentence** (note that steps 4-7 can be applied again to every new verb)

    a. Are there any Infinitives in the sentence?

        i. Is it a Complementary (simple) Infinitive (e.g., he wants *to sing*)?

        ii. Is it an Accusative with Infinitive?

            1. Find the Subject Accusative and try to translate with a "that"-clause

    b. Are there any Participles in the sentence?

        i. Is there a finite form of *esse* belonging to the Participle?

            1. Then it is probably the Predicate (→ back to 1.)

            2. Remember that the PPP + *esse* can be a Perfect Passive Infinitive (→ back to 8.a.)

        ii. Is it a Participle without *esse*?

            1. Is the agreeing word in the part you already translated?

                a. Then it is a **non-Abl. Absolute** Participle (→ cf. overview Participle)

            2. Is the Participle in the Ablative case and its agreeing noun not included in the part you already translated?

                a. Then it is an **Ablative Absolute** (→ cf. overview Participle)

    c. Are there any nd-Forms in the sentence?

        i. Decide if it is a **Gerund** or a **Gerundive**

            1. A Gerund (verbal noun) has **no agreeing word** and is Singular Neuter

                a. Try to translate "nominalized" first (pay attention to the case)

            2. A Gerundive (verbal adjective) is declined like an adjective and **always agrees with another noun** in number, gender, and case

                a. Gerundive + ***esse***:

                    i. Translate with "must" or "mustn't"

                b. Gerundive w/o *esse* (choose one of these options):

                    i. Nominalize the Gerundive, add the agreeing word w/ "of"

                    ii. Translate as an infinitive construction

                    iii. Translate the Gerundive with "worthy of"