

Latin Scansion

- A line of **Latin hexameter** verse is made up of **six** metrical units or feet.
- Each foot is either a **dactyl (long short short — u u)** or a **spondee (long long — —)**. Sometimes a trochee (**long short — u**) is used in place of a spondee in the final foot of the line.
- A syllable is **long** if it is long in time. This is the case if the syllable has long vowel or diphthong, or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Otherwise a syllable is **short**.
- For example: **civis spectat amicos**
 - first — **i** — in **civis** is a long vowel = **long** syllable
 - second — **i** — in **civis** is a short vowel + two consonants = **long** syllable
 - — **e** — in **spectat** is a short vowel + two consonants = **long** syllable
 - — **a** — in **spectat** is a short vowel + only one consonant = **short** syllable
 - **a** — in **amicos** is a short vowel = **short** syllable
 - — **i** — in **amicos** is a long vowel = **long** syllable
 - — **o** — in **amicos** is a long vowel = **long** syllable
 - So we get: **long long long short short long long — — — u u — —**
- **Scanning** a line means dividing it into dactyls and spondees. In the example above, we have **spondee dactyl spondee**.
- In hexameters, the **fifth** foot is a **dactyl** and the **sixth** foot is a spondee. Mark these in first.
- Then mark **long** syllables in the first four feet, using the rules given above, and see if you can work out the pattern of dactyls and spondees.

- Sometimes a bit of arithmetic helps. For example, if you have eight syllables over four feet, you can only scan these as four spondees. If you have twelve syllables over four feet, you can only scan these as four dactyls.

- Example: **arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab oris**

- Mark a dactyl in the fifth foot:

| | | | — u u | |

- Mark a spondee in the sixth foot:

| | | | — u u | — — |

- Mark remaining long syllables:

| — ? ? — ? ? — — — — | — u u | — — |

- Work out first four feet:

| — u u | — u u | — — | — — | — u u | — — |

- The **caesura** is a break between words that usually occurs in the **third** foot. Mark it with a double vertical line. So in the example above:

- The third foot is **arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab oris**

- So the caesura falls between **cano** and **Troiae**

- This is marked as: | — u u | — u u | — || — | — — | — u u | — — |

- **Elision** occurs when one word ends in a vowel/diphthong or — m and the next word begins with a vowel. For example:

- **grata est** is scanned **grat(a) est**: — —

- **ventriculum et tenui** is scanned **ventricul(um) et tenui**: — u u — u u —