

Latin Sentence Structure

Always try to untangle sentences by looking at word endings. If you can identify the subject and the object, then the battle is half won. Remember also that a lot of sentences are structured around a **participle** as well as a verb. The participle usually agrees with the subject, but it can agree with the object, in which case it needs to be handled carefully. For example:

- **Caecilius, villam ingressus, Metellam conspexit = Caecilius, having entered the house, caught sight of Metella (ingressus agrees with the subject Caecilius)**
- **Caecilius Metellam conspectam salutavit = Caecilius greeted Metella having been caught sight of i.e. Caecilius caught sight of and greeted Metella (conspectam agrees with the object Metellam)**

Here are some things to remember about the most important **constructions**. The list is not exhaustive, but it gives you the absolute essentials. If you need more help, come and speak to us in the Classics Room, and we can give you some useful books.

- **ut/ne + subjunctive (purpose).** For example: **audiunt ut cognoscant = they listen in order that they may find out**
- **ut/ne + subjunctive (indirect command).** For example: **eos monuimus ne fugerent = we advised them not to run away**
- **ut + subjunctive (result).** For example: **tam diligenter audiebant ut cognoscerent = they listened so hard that they found out**
- **timeo ne + subjunctive = I am afraid that.** For example: **timebant ne occiderentur = they were afraid that they might be killed**
- **cum + imperfect subjunctive = while.** For example: **cum cenaremus = while we were dining**
- **cum + pluperfect subjunctive = when.** For example: **cum cenavissemus = when we had dined**
- **cum + ablative = with.** For example: **cum Quinto cenavimus = we dined with Quintus**
- **noun + participle in ablative (i.e. ablative absolute) = when/since.** For example: **gladio fracto, miles fugit = with the sword having been broken, the soldier ran away (i.e. since his sword had been broken ...)**

A verb of speaking (hearing, knowing, thinking, believing etc.) + accusative + infinitive = indirect statement. To see how to translate an indirect statement, take **putamus poetam mox recitaturum esse** as an example.

- translate the verb with **that**: **putamus = we think that**
- take the **accusative** as the next subject: **putamus poetam = we think that the poet**
- take the **infinitive** as the next verb e.g. **putamus poetam mox recitaturum esse = we think that the poet will recite soon**

Remember that **se** in an indirect statement refers back to the subject of the main verb. Translate as **he** or **she** or **they**. For example:

- **servus dixit se fugisse = the slave said that he** (not 'he himself') **had run away**
- **ancillae dixerunt se fugisse = the slave-girls said that they** (not 'they themselves') **had run away**