

Latin Accentuation

General Rules for Accentuation:

1. Accent the **second-to-last syllable**, unless that **syllable** is short:

for- TŪ-na a- MĀ-mus Ro-MĀ-ni.

2. Accent the **third-to-last syllable** if the second-to-last **syllable** is short:

phi-lo -SO-phi-a pe -CŪ-ni-a HO-mi-nis

The essential rule is: **Accent long penultimates, otherwise antepenultimates.**

👉 **Hint:** The **last syllable is never accented**. If the word has only two syllables, the accent **must** be on the first syllable: magna cum lau-de; car-pe di-em; ex post fac-to; al-ma ma-ter.

👉 **Hint:** With words of more than two syllables you will only have the choice of **second-to-last** or **third-to-last**. Pick the second-to-last if it is long. Remember the phrase **mystérium treméndum**. The **-ri-** is not a long syllable, so the accent falls back to the third-to-last syllable. The **-en-** is long by the rules below, so it takes the accent.

General rules for Syllable Length:

1. **Syllables** are long if they **contain a long vowel** (often indicated by a punctuation mark): ser-vā-re.
2. **Syllables** are long if they **contain a “double-vowel sound”** (diphthong): sae-pe; lau-das.
3. Syllables are long if their vowel sound is placed **before two consonants**:

pu-el-la ter-ra a-du-les-cen-ti-a sum-ma

But see the exceptions below.

Exceptions to the Syllable-length Rules

1. Double-sounds like the letter **X** count as **two** consonant-sounds.
2. Single-sounds even if written with two letters, count as **one** sound (**ch, ph, th**).
3. A stop (**p, b, t, d, c, g**) plus a liquid (**l, r**) can count as **one** consonant: te-nebra.

👉 **Hint:** Learn the principles in the first box above **before** you go on to learn the second; learn the third box last. But you will need to know all these boxes to apply the rules correctly.