

Syntactical Flexibility in Latin

Some Basic Patterns for Latin Sentences

All of the Latin sentences below mean the same thing: "The boys are giving roses to the girls" or "The boys are giving the girls roses."

Subject First:

Subject / Dir. obj. / Ind. obj. / Verb
pueri rosas puellis dant

Subject / Dir. obj. / Verb / Ind. obj.
pueri rosas dant puellis

Subject / Ind. obj. / Dir. obj. / Verb
pueri puellis rosas dant

Subject / Ind. obj. / Verb / Dir. obj.
pueri puellis dant rosas

Subject / Verb / Ind. obj. / Dir. obj.
pueri dant puellis rosas

Subject / Verb / Dir. obj. / Ind. obj.
pueri dant rosas puellis

Indirect Object First:

Ind. obj. / Subject / Verb / Dir. obj.
puellis pueri dant rosas

Ind. obj. / Subject / Dir. obj. / Verb
puellis pueri rosas dant

Ind. obj. / Dir. obj. / Subject / Verb
puellis rosas pueri dant

Ind. obj. / Dir. obj. / Verb / Subject
puellis rosas dant pueri

Ind. obj. / Verb / Subject / Dir. obj.
puellis dant pueri rosas

Ind. obj. / Verb / Dir. obj. / Subject
puellis dant rosas pueri

Direct Object First:

Dir. obj. / Subject / Verb / Ind. obj.
rosas pueri dant puellis

Dir. obj. / Subject / Ind. obj. / Verb
rosas pueri puellis dant

Dir. obj. / Ind. obj. / Subject / Verb
rosas puellis pueri dant

Dir. obj. / Ind. obj. / Verb / Subject
rosas puellis dant pueri

Dir. obj. / Verb / Subject / Ind. obj.
rosas dant pueri puellis

Dir. obj. / Verb / Ind. obj. / Subject
rosas dant puellis pueri

Verb First:

Verb / Subject / Ind. obj. / Dir. obj.
dant pueri puellis rosas

Verb / Subject / Dir. obj. / Ind. obj.
dant pueri rosas puellis

Verb / Dir. obj. / Subject / Ind. obj.
dant rosas pueri puellis

Verb / Dir. obj. / Ind. obj. / Subject
dant rosas puellis pueri

Verb / Ind. obj. / Subject / Dir. obj.
dant puellis pueri rosas

Verb / Ind. obj. / Dir. obj. / Subject
dant puellis rosas pueri

Notice how the Latin words can be ordered with far more flexibility than English words would. English generally limits itself to just the two common patterns given above. Learning to read Latin easily means becoming able to grasp the meanings in such a wide range of possible word order. Extensive practice with the micro-structures will be beneficial.

Constitutive Phrases: Notice that these **24 four-word sentences**, break down into just **12 two-word phrases**.

dant puellis / dant pueri / dant rosas

puellis dant / puellis pueri / puellis rosas

pueri dant / pueri puellis / pueri rosas

rosas dant / rosas puellis / rosas pueri

Learn to perceive immediately the meaning that is carried by each of these shorter phrases.