

## Syntax Anticipation: Accusative First

**Learning how to anticipate meaning in the right way makes all the difference for understanding quickly and easily.** In English, we usually expect the following order, with the (direct) object at the end:

Subject	Verb	Object
The girl	sees	<b>the roses.</b>
The boy	calls	<b>the sailor.</b>

Therefore, in Latin, if we hear the object first, we need to "leave a **blank space** in our understanding" for the subject. We often know the object is first if we find an **accusative** at the start. (You obviously have to learn how to recognize the accusative endings.)

For example, if you hear **rosâs** or **nautam** at the start of a sentence, you should have a feeling that some subject is needed. You should **instinctively feel** what you feel about **roses** in the first English sentence or **sailor** in the second sentence, namely that **something else is acting on it (or him, or her, or them)** and that this person, place, or thing is **not** being highlighted as the **source** of the action in the idea being expressed. So if you hear **rosâs** or **nautam** starting a sentence, you should **feel** what the following table indicates:

Subject	Verb	Object
?	?	<b>roses.</b>
?	?	<b>sailor.</b>

That is after an initial **rosâs** or **nautam**, you should have the kind of anticipation that follows the questions:

"Well, what **happens** to the roses? **Who does what** to them?"

"Well, what **happens** to the sailor? **Who does what** to him?"

The structure of the meaning is something like what we feel when we hear someone saying: "**Him**...I just don't like." Him is the (direct) object. Someone or something **else** has to be the agent.

When you get this feeling for the Latin objects that are given first, you are then prepared to interpret the rest of the sentence more quickly:

Rosâs ... **videt puella.** Nautam ... **puer vocat.**

Notice that the **subject** may or may not come second. The **verb** may or may not come at the end. These are other patterns for you have to "get a feel for." And Latin might not even express the subject with an entire word, but only in a personal verb-ending:

Rosâs vident . = **They** see the roses. Nautam vocâmus. = **We** call the sailor.

**Your task**, then, is to read and say aloud and hear yourself saying the Latin, while understanding the meaning, until you **feel very familiar** with a particular pattern of words as an expression of the particular meaning of the sentence. *Practice comprehension!*

Time spent doing this even with simple and obvious sentences will reward you later with many hours saved as you attain the ability to understand Latin sentences much more quickly and easily.

**Anticipating in the right way makes all the difference. Start with small units of meaning and practice them until they become automatic.**