

## GRAMMATICAL GENDER

Every Latin noun has an inherent grammatical gender: masculine, feminine, or neuter. This gender never changes. Nouns that signify biologically masculine persons or animals are almost always grammatically masculine. Likewise, nouns that signify biologically feminine persons or animals are almost always grammatically feminine. However, nouns that refer to biologically neutral things are frequently grammatically masculine or feminine. For instance, *uvais* is biologically neither masculine nor feminine; however, it is considered grammatically feminine. Likewise, *caseus* is biologically neutral but is grammatically masculine.

Fortunately, there is no need to commit the genders of most Latin nouns to memory, as grammatical gender is closely associated with a noun's spelling. 1st-declension nouns (that is, a-nouns) are almost always feminine. 2nd-declension *us*-nouns (including the -r and -er variations) are almost always masculine. 2nd-declension *um*-nouns, however, are always neuter. The gender of 3rd-declension nouns is more difficult to determine: they are fairly equally divided into masculine, feminine, and neuter.

Whenever you learn a 3rd-declension noun, you must commit its gender to memory: for example, *panis* m (for masculine), *caro carnis* f (for feminine), and *mare maris* n (for neuter). Likewise, whenever a noun has an irregular gender, you must memorize its gender: for instance, *propheta* m, or *domus* f.

Every once in a while, you will encounter a vocabulary with the letter *c* instead of *m*, *f*, or *n*. The letter *c* means "common gender", which means it may be either masculine or feminine.