

# DESCRIPTIVE GENITIVE

The first use of the genitive case, as you learned in the last lesson, is possessive, answering the question "whose?" or "belonging to what?" But in Latin, the genitive case is also used for more general connections. The second use is descriptive, where the noun in the genitive case describes or specifies another noun.

The descriptive genitive accomplishes in Latin what the preposition "of" or occasionally another preposition does in English. "Of" links one noun with another and describes or specifies the first noun with the second.

Consider the following examples:

A herd **of goats**  
My love **of chocolate**  
A ring **of gold**  
The bread **of life**

In Latin, the noun in the descriptive genitive describes or specifies the other noun, so there is no need in Latin for a preposition like "of" at all.

Consider the following examples:

*Poculum vini* ("a cup of wine")  
*Vir Dei* ("a man of God")  
*Multitudo filiorum* ("a large number of sons")

It should be noted that many grammarians divide the descriptive genitive into a number of different subcategories such as partitive, objective, qualitative, material, epexegetical. These categories can be particularly helpful for detailed exegesis but are not necessary for understanding Latin.