

INDICATIVE VERBS

A Latin verb is composed of two parts: a stem and an ending. The process of joining a stem and ending is called conjugating. When you learn a verb, it is essential that you learn the verb stem, for example, *aedifica_*, *pon_*, and *accip(i)_*. These stems are not truly Latin words by themselves. In order to use a Latin verb in a sentence, you must first add an ending. In this lesson, you learn the singular and plural endings for indicative verbs.

The indicative is a verb mood: that is, it determines how a verb functions within a sentence. The indicative mood is used to show that a verb operates within the realm of facts. Indicative verbs, therefore, are used in all statements and questions of fact, for example, "The man walks." or "Does the man walk?". The vast majority of verbs in Latin literature, consequently, are indicative.

Regular Verbs

Latin verbs can be divided into five groups depending on the final letter in the verb stem. There are a-stem verbs (such as *fla_*, *sta_*, *aedifica_*), e-stem verbs (such as *vide_*, *habe_*, *doce_*), consonant- or u-stem verbs (such as *cad_*, *frang_*, *pon_*, *extru_*), weak i-stem verbs (such as *accip(i)_*, and *percut(i)_*), and strong i-stem verbs (such as *aperi_* and *veni_*). Traditionally, these five groups have been divided into four conjugations or verb-patterns: 1st conjugation (a-stem verbs), 2nd conjugation (e-stem verbs), 3rd conjugation (consonant-, u-stem, and weak i-stem verbs), and 4th conjugation (strong i-stem verbs). In this course, we will only refer to verbs by qualitative terms: a-stem, e-stem, *-stem (that is, any consonant- or u-stem), (i)-stem (that is, weak i-stem), and i-stem.

*-stem (that is, consonant- or u-stem) verbs, such as *cad_*, *pon_*, *frang_*, and *extru_*, should be thought of as the norm. In the singular, they end in *(i)t*; in the plural, they end in *(u)nt*. So, the singular forms are *cadit*, *ponit*, *frangit*, and *extruit*. The plural forms are *cadunt*, *ponunt*, *frangunt*, and *extruunt*.

The vowels *i* and *u* in the endings *(i)t* and *(u)nt* are enclosed in parentheses because they are variable vowels. This means that they remain or drop out depending on what sounds best. The general rule for this is quite simple: variable vowels drop out after another vowel. This allows them to easily adapt to a-stem, e-stem, (i)-stem, and i-stem verbs. So, in the singular, it is *aedificat*, not *aedificait*; *videt*, not *videit*; and so on. In the plural, it is *aedificant*, not *aedificaunt*; *vident*, not *videunt*. However, where the *i* meets a *u*, both are retained. Thus, it is *accipiunt*, and *veniunt*. The following chart shows singular and plural indicative forms for all five groups of verbs.

| Type | Sg. | Pl. |
|----------|----------|------------|
| *-stem | pon-it | pon-unt |
| a-stem | fla-t | fla-nt |
| e-stem | vide-t | vide-nt |
| (i)-stem | accipi-t | accipi-unt |
| i-stem | veni-t | veni-unt |

Irregular verbs

A handful of very common Latin verbs are irregular: that is, they use more than one stem, break the normal rules for dropping variable vowels, or both. The verbs *su/es_* and *e/i_* are the two most important irregular verbs. Not only are they common in themselves, they also take prefixes to form a number of common compounds, such as *ab-est* and *ab-it*.

su/es ("to be")

| Sg. | Pl. |
|------|-------|
| es-t | su-nt |

e/i ("to go")

| Sg. | Pl. |
|-----|-------|
| i-t | e-unt |