

Syntactical Flexibility in Latin: Some Basic Patterns for Latin Sentences

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

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

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

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

Constitutive Phrases

All the sentences on the left mean the same thing: *"The boys are giving roses to the girls" or "The boys are giving the girls roses."* But the Latin words are ordered with far more flexibility than they would be in English, which generally limits itself to just these two common patterns for expressing this thought. 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. Notice that these 24 sentences, break down into just 12 two-word phrases. Learn to perceive immediately the meaning that is involved in each of these shorter 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