A

CLASSICAL PRIMER

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Contents

Introduction

For a few people, the mere mention of Classics will trigger monochrome memories of facing the blackboard with books on their heads for posture, chanting out meaningless conjugations of *amo*, *amas*, *amat* in unison. For the vast majority, however, there will be no such associations, and Classics will merely be that subject that was studied at posh schools that look like Hogwarts.

To save you looking it up, let us say briefly that Classics is the study of the culture of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, and takes in all aspects of their life and learning – from the languages to their literature, philosophy, art, history, sciences, politics, religion and all sorts. Through their texts, buildings and monuments, both civilizations have left us (literally) heaps of information about how they lived. But the real fascination in the subject doesn't come just from being immersed in their lives, but also by realizing just how many aspects of our own daily life have been directly influenced by theirs.

Everyone knows that the Romans built roads. But we can also thank both empires for bringing us central heating, concrete, the twelve-month calendar, plumbing, heated swimming pools, cranes and – most crucially – pizza. That's not to mention the cultural benefits such as laws, a welfare system, philosophy and language. And, without ancient mythology and literature, Shakespeare would barely have strung a sentence together.

The Greek empire at one point stretched as far east as India, and the Romans once had control over most of Europe, the Near East and northern Africa. The Greeks made sense of the stars, figured

out π, gave us $a^2+b^2=c^2$, and even managed to work out the circumference of the Earth. It took the rest of the planet centuries to emulate any of these achievements (Columbus did not confirm that the Greeks had been quite right about the Earth's being round till 1,700 years later), and there is no doubt that our world without these Greek and Roman influences would be a very different place.

Back in the good old days of the last century (I hasten to add this is several decades before I was born), having a sound Classical education was deemed a jolly good thing. In the face of its rapid demise, this book is intended to give anyone who has an interest in knowing about the basis of our own culture an insight into the key influences we can thank the Greeks and Romans for.

Any reciting of *amo*, *amas*, *amat* will be entirely voluntary.

DAN CROMPTON

Chapter 1

Greek and Latin Languages

THE GREEK LANGUAGE: FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA

Ancient Greek is not an easy language to master. However, its influence over so much of our language today means that it deserves a few moments to pick up the basics – at the very least so that you might be able to recognize the difference between a τ α β ε ρ ν α and an α κ ρ ο π ο λ ι ς on your next holiday.

HISTORY

The oldest surviving form of Ancient Greek is Mycenaean Greek, which used an alphabet now known as Linear B from as early as 1600 BC. Scholars spent years trying to decipher Linear B from remnants unearthed in Crete, Mycenae and elsewhere, and it wasn't until 1952 that its syllabic letters were finally cracked.

The current Greek alphabet, derived from Phoenician, didn't appear for another 800 years or so, in about 800 to 700 BC. (The Phoenicians were an ancient civilization based around the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, who had important trading and cultural influences across the whole region from around this time. Whole books could be written on them – and indeed have been – but we really must crack on.) The mountainous mainland and the isolation of the country's islands meant that many dialects of the language were able to exist side by side for many centuries, until a common Greek (Koine Greek) was settled on in the fourth century BC. This was probably as a result of Alexander the Great's incredible expansion of the Greek empire during this time (all the way to India), which required tens of thousands of soldiers to come together and be coherently governed with one common language.

THE ALPHABET

You'll be pleased to hear that it won't take decades of research to pick up the basics of the alphabet, though, and we'll have you reading simple words in no time. In these examples, you'll see how many of the words we use today are derived from Ancient Greek words – or, in some cases, straightforward transliterations of the original word.

There will be no vocabulary test at the end.

Greek letter	Alphabet symbol	Closest equivalent in English	Used in a Greek word
Alpha	Α, α	*a* in *pathetic*	παθητικος (pathetikos) capable of feeling
Beta	Β, β	*b* in *barbarian*	βαρβαρος (barbaros) foreign
Gamma	Γ, γ	*g* in *grammar*	γραμμα (gramma) letter
Delta	Δ, δ	*d* in *domestic*	δομος (domos) house
Epsilon	Ε, ε	*e* in *exit*	εξοδος (exodos) way out
Zeta	Ζ, ζ	*z* in *zoo*	ζωον (zo-on) animal
Eta	Η, η	long 'eh' sound as in *air*	αηρ (aer) air
Theta	Θ, θ	*th* in *theology*	θεος (theos) god
Iota	Ι, ι	*i* in *plinth*	πλινθος (plinthos) brick
Kappa	Κ, κ	*c* in *catastrophe*	καταστροφη (catastrophe) an overturning
Lambda	Λ, λ	*l* in *lamp*	λαμπας (lampas) torch
Mu	Μ, μ	*m* in *mathematics*	μαθησις (mathesis) education
Nu	Ν, ν	*n* in *Nike*	νικη (nike) victory
Xi	Ξ, ξ	*x* in *toxic*	τοξον (*toxon*) (poisoned) arrow

Omicron	Ο, ο	*o* in *topical*	τοπος (topos) place
Pi	Π, π	*p* in *epic*	επος (epos) word
Rho	Ρ, ρ	*r* in *rhythm*	ῥυθμος (rhythmos) rhythm
Sigma	Σ, σ, ς	*s* in *symbol*	συμβολον (sumbolon) sign
Tau	Τ, τ	*t* in *technology*	τεχνη (techne) skill
Upsilon	Υ, υ	*u* in *prune*	προυμνον (proumnon) plum
Phi	Φ, φ	*ph in philosophy*	φιλοσοφια (philosophia) love of wisdom
Chi	Χ, χ	*ch* in *loch*	χριστος (christos) the anointed one, Christ
Psi	Ψ, ψ	*ps* in *Cyclops*	Κυκλοψ (kuklops) round eye
Omega	Ω, ω	long 'oh' sound as in *ochre*	ωχρος (ochros) pale

NOT AN IOTA OF DIFFERENCE

On top of these twenty-four characters, there is a whole heap of accents called *diacritics*. They began to be seen in texts from about 400 BC onwards in answer to some of the ambiguities in the language. They can appear on any of the seven vowels in the alphabet and are used to denote either tone of the vowel or stress on the syllable.

Luckily for modern Greeks, the tonal diacritics were officially scrapped in 1982 (probably for being far too confusing). Unfortunately for students of Ancient Greek, we need to know the difference between the letter η with no

diacritic, and one with an iota subscript (ῃ). And the less we say about the differences between ᾐ and ᾗ, the better. In fact, the letter η on its own can have about six different meanings, dependent on the placement or not of the various diacritics.

The only diacritic that perhaps you should pay attention to is the aspiration, which is almost like a very small *c*-shape that can be placed over any of the vowels and also over a Rho as in ῥ (rh), ἁ (ha) or ἑ (he). The aspiration gives any letter a breathing *h* sound, which doesn't exist as a letter in Greek in its own right. This gives us the silent *h* in many English words that are derived from Greek, such as *rhythm*. For simplicity, I have left out all diacritics from this book except for the aspiration.

A QUICK TRIP TO HONOLULU

Way back in the twentieth century, an American linguist discovered something truly staggering in the Greek language: when comparing some of the language's basic words, he found remarkable similarities with similar words in the Hawaiian language.

Observing the list of words below indicated some ancient link between the two languages.

HAWAIIAN		ANCIENT GREEK	
aeko	'eagle'	αετος (aetos)	'eagle'
no'ono'o	'thought'	νοος (no-os)	'mind'
mana'o	'think'	μανθανω (manthano)	'learn'
mele	'sing'	μελος (melos)	'melody'
lahui	'people'	λαος (laos)	'people'
meli	'honey'	μελι (meli)	'honey'
kau	'summer'	καυμα (kauma)	'heat'
mahina	'month'	μην (men)	'month'
kia	'pillar'	κιων (kion)	'pillar'
hiki	'come'	ικανω (hikano)	'arrive'

I know what you're thinking: what on earth is going on? Is it possible that the Ancient Greeks took a wrong turn on the way to Athens and accidentally found themselves on Waikiki Beach?

Alexander the Great managed to extend the Greek Empire all the way to India, but even he would have had quite some difficulty making the 8,000-mile trip to Hawaii, teaching the locals some Greek words, and heading back in time for dinner. Keeping the holiday a secret from any historians would also have been tricky.

A few theories have been put forward to explain this linguistic phenomenon. And the one that most academics have settled on is quite possibly the most irritating: it is just a coincidence. I won't go into any more detail than that, since we're clearly wasting our time.

THE GRAMMAR BASICS (IN ANY LANGUAGE)

You may have heard some rather scary things about Latin and Greek grammar. But I can assure you that there are some simple basics that will help you understand how the languages work with only minimal effort. Long tables of verbs and nouns can be daunting – but, when put into context, they need not be anything to fear. First, a quick look at how the Latin and Greek (and indeed English) languages are structured.

Different languages structure sentences in different ways. In English, we rely very heavily on the order of our words to dictate what is going on. So, in the very different sentences 'Jack loves Jill' and 'Jill loves Jack', you can tell who is loving whom by the order of the words. Latin and Greek tend not to care a jot for word order, so have to use other indicators to let you understand what on earth is going on.

Verbs in the languages use different endings to indicate who is doing that verb, and the nouns also have different endings depending on what function in the sentence the noun represents. This means that the words can be placed in almost any order, and you can clearly see which nouns and which verbs fit together from their endings. So in the Latin equivalent of 'Jack likes Jill', the words could be in any order, but you can tell who is doing what by the different endings on the words.

In Latin, *puella* means 'girl' and *puer* means 'boy'.

So: *puella amat puerum* means 'the girl loves the boy'
But: *puellam amat puer* means 'the boy loves the girl'

The number of different inflections of verbs and nouns means that the teaching of Classical languages tends to involve lots of tables. The unfortunate truth is that one of the most effective ways of learning the rules is simply by repetitious reading (yes, out loud) of the verb and noun tables, which is perhaps why Latin gets such a bad rap in school.

NOUNS: THE CASES

Nouns serve different functions in different sentences. If you consider the sentence:

Jack gives the ball to Jill in the garden

it is clear that Jack, Jill, the ball and the garden all have a different role to play in the meaning of the sentence. In English, word order and prepositions ('to Jill', 'in the garden') let us know what function each word has. Latin has divided its nouns into six different functions (or cases), and Greek has divided its nouns into five basic functions, each of which can have different endings to show which case they are.

1. Nominative

This is the **subject** of a sentence – the word that is doing the main action. In the sentence above, 'Jack' is the nominative. We get the word 'nominative' from the Latin *nomenare* ('to nominate'), as this word has been given the title of head of the sentence.

2. Vocative

This arises when we are **speaking** to someone – 'Oi, Jack!' The word 'vocative' is from the Latin *vox*, meaning 'voice' (the English word 'voice' comes from the same root).

3. Accusative

This is the **object** of a sentence – the word to which the main action is being done. In the sentence above, 'the ball' is the accusative, as it is the object of the main verb. In English, we can see the accusative case in words such as 'him' and 'her' (as opposed to 'he' and 'she').

The word 'accusative' clearly comes from the same root as the English 'accuse', and originally indicates motion against something.

4. Genitive

This usually describes **possession** – if you can say 'of' before the noun, it's probably genitive. So, in the phrase 'Jack's ball' (or 'the ball of Jack'), Latin and Greek would pop 'Jack' in the genitive.

The word 'genitive' is from the same root as 'generate', 'general' and even (excuse me) 'genitals', and indicates origin.

5. Dative

This is an **indirect object** of a sentence – if you can say 'to' or 'for' before the noun, it's probably dative. In the sentence above, 'to Jill' puts her in the dative.

The word 'dative' is to do with giving things to someone – and is from the same root as English words 'donate' and 'date' (see here for more details).

6. Ablative

Bit of a funny one. It often indicates **motion away from**, as well as being used with a lot of common prepositions like Latin *ex* ('out of'), *in* ('in') and *cum* ('with'). If you graduate *magna cum laude* in the USA, you are doing so 'with great praise'. The words *magna*

laude are both in the ablative following *cum.*

The ablative does not exist in Greek. Instead, its functions are mainly swallowed by the Greek genitive. The word 'ablative' comes from the Latin *ablatus*, which literally means 'carried away'.

So in the example sentence above:

Jack	gives	ball	to Jill	in the garden.
nominative	verb	accusative	dative	ablative

LATIN NOUN DECLENSIONS

Latin nouns generally fit into one of five different declensions – that's five slightly different ways that the cases can appear. They can also be masculine, feminine or neuter in grammatical behaviour. The logic for some nouns having a gender is clear (as in *puella* for 'girl' and *puer* for 'boy'), but in most nouns it just indicates which grammatical patterns that word will follow. In very basic terms, many feminine nouns end in *–a*, many masculine nouns end in *–us*, and many neuter nouns end in *–um.*

It is conventional to read these tables (out loud) down the page, with singular first and then plural.

1ST DECLENSION (FEMININE)

puella 'girl'

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	puell–a	puell–ae
Vocative	puell–a	puell–ae
Accusative	puell–am	puell–as
Genitive	puell–ae	puell–arum
Dative	puell–ae	puell–is
Ablative	puell–a	puell–is

So, in the sentences below, you can see how the accusative ending on *puell–am* in the second example makes her the object of love, rather than the subject of the sentence:

1. *puella amat puerum* means 'the girl loves the boy'
2. *puellam amat puer* means 'the boy loves the girl'

2ND DECLENSION (MASCULINE OR NEUTER)

servus 'slave' (masculine) *bellum* 'war' (neuter)

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	serv–us	serv–i	bell–um	bell–a
Vocative	serv–e	serv–i	bell–um	bell–a
Accusative	serv–um	serv–os	bell–um	bell–a
Genitive	serv–i	serv–orum	bell–i	bell–orum
Dative	serv–o	serv–is	bell–o	bell–is
Ablative	serv–o	serv–is	bell–o	bell–is

Masculine nouns in the 2nd declension end in *–us*, and give us the delightful plurals used in English like 'cacti' and 'octopi'. Some people refer to the plural of female restaurant staff as 'waitri', but I

can assure you this is incorrect.

Neuter nouns in the 2nd declension end in *–um* in the singular and *–a* in the plural, with the same ending in nominative, vocative and accusative. Here you can see why in English we use plurals ending in '*–a*' for 'bacterium', 'forum', 'medium', 'equilibrium' and many other words taken from Latin.

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN LATIN GRAMMAR

It's a strange circumstance that feminine 1st-declension nouns have no separate ending for the vocative case, whereas the 2nd-declension masculine nouns do have a distinction. It is also worth noting that neuter nouns of any declension have the same ending for nominative, vocative and accusative (both singular and plural). Exactly the same principles can be seen in Greek masculine, feminine and neuter nouns (see here.), as well as in several other languages.

A theory to explain this is that male-dominated ancient societies aimed their education, philosophy, politics and literature towards men. They had much more use for a vocative case to differentiate between speaking *to* a man and speaking *about* him. The need for differentiation could have been less so among women, who were kept away from public philosophizing and discussions.

Similarly, the inanimate objects that fall under the neuter gender tend not to be the active participants of a sentence – they instead have things done *to* them. For this reason, it becomes less important to differentiate between the nominative and accusative, as context will do the explaining for you. Neuter nouns, therefore, can get away with having the same endings in these cases without causing any confusion about who is the subject of the main verb.

The theory isn't watertight by any means, but is one way of looking at why noun endings in Latin, and indeed many other languages, are the way they are.

3RD DECLENSION

(MASCULINE, FEMININE OR NEUTER)

miles 'soldier' (masculine) *opus* 'work' (neuter)
(feminine endings are the same)

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	miles	milit–es	opus	oper–a
Vocative	miles	milit–es	opus	oper–a
Accusative	milit–em	milit–es	opus	oper–a
Genitive	milit–is	milit–um	oper–is	oper–um
Dative	milit–i	milit–ibus	oper–i	oper–ibus
Ablative	milit–e	milit–ibus	oper–e	oper–ibus

Third-declension nouns are a bit different, as they have a slightly different word stem from the accusative or genitive onwards. As before, however, the neuter nouns have the same endings in the first three cases. The plural of *opus* is where we get the name for musical operas in English.

Interestingly, the *–ibus* ending seen here in the dative plural is still used in English and other languages the world over. The Latin plural dative of the word *omnis* ('all') is *omnibus*, meaning 'for everyone', and it is from this word form that we get the word 'bus'.

There are also 4th- and 5th-declension nouns in Latin (tables below), but I will stop there as I can see someone at the back nodding off.

4TH DECLENSION

(MASCULINE, FEMININE OR NEUTER)

manus 'hand' (feminine) *cornu* 'horn' (neuter)
(masculine endings are the same)

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	man-us	man-us	corn-u	corn-ua
Vocative	man-us	man-us	corn-u	corn-ua
Accusative	man-um	man-us	corn-u	corn-ua
Genitive	man-us	man-uum	corn-us	corn-uum
Dative	man-ui	man-ibus	corn-u	corn-ibus
Ablative	man-o	man-ibus	corn-u	corn-ibus

5TH DECLENSION (ALMOST ALL FEMININE)

res 'thing'

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	r-es	r-es
Vocative	r-es	r-es
Accusative	r-em	r-es
Genitive	r-ei	r-erum
Dative	r-ei	r-ebus
Ablative	r-e	r-ebus

VERBS

Well, here it is. I did promise in the introduction to this book that

there would be no reciting of *amo*, *amas*, *amat.*

I lied.

(I could of course have chosen another verb as a demonstration of Latin conjugation, but it seems wrong to veer away from an old favourite that will have any linguaphobe quietly turning over to the next chapter.)

Similarly to nouns, Latin verbs also have endings to help you understand who is doing what in the sentence. Below is the irregular verb *esse* 'to be' (which is always very handy) as well as the old favourite regular verb *amare* 'to love', just to give the flavour of how Latin verbs work.

	esse 'to be' (irregular)		*amare* 'to love' (regular)	
I	sum		am–o	
you (singular)	es		am–as	
he/she/it	est		am–at	
we	sumus		am–amus	
you (plural)	estis		am–atis	
they	sunt		am–ant	

The first person singular ('I') always ends in *–o*, as in the English word 'video' (meaning 'I see') or the old-fashioned dog's name 'Fido' (meaning 'I trust').

The third person singular ('he/she/it') ends in *–t*, as in the English word 'exit' ('he goes out') or 'caveat' ('may he be careful'). (*Caveat* is actually in the subjunctive mood, which is used to indicate possibility or hypothetical action.)

Going back to the earlier examples, you can see how *puella amat puerum* means 'the girl loves the boy', but, if more than one person were doing the loving, you'd need a plural word ending: *puellae*

amant puerum means 'the girls love the boy'.

Latin verbs are a whole feast in themselves, and the tables of verb endings continue relentlessly to indicate different tenses, moods and voices, but I think we'll leave them here for now and press on with the basics of the Greek language.

EVERYONE'S SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

You may notice from the forms of the Latin regular verb *amo* that there are some similarities in endings with modern European languages, such as French, German and Spanish.

The *–s* ending for 2nd person singular ('you') is common in many languages; the *–mus* ending for 1st person plural ('we') can be seen in the Spanish *–mos*; and the *–nt* ending for 3rd person plural ('they') is also seen in French. There are even some clear similarities with the regular Greek endings (as on this page).

As demonstrated in the first chapter, languages often borrow from one another, giving us English vocabulary rooted in words from Latin, Greek, Norse or any number of other origins. However, it's not just vocabulary that we borrow: the very structure of language can be shared across very wide areas. You can see similarities in verb, noun and adjectival endings (as well as vocabulary) not only across Europe but across most Indo-European languages – all the way over to the ancient Indian language Sanskrit.

THE GREEK GRAMMAR BASICS

THE 'THE'

The first thing to learn in Greek is the definite article (otherwise known as 'the'). The forms of the definite article have similarities with noun and adjective endings throughout Greek, so are a good basis for getting to grips with the rest of the language. If you get the definite article down, then you're laughing. (Or crying, depending on how long it takes you.)

As before with the Latin tables, it is conventional to learn this case by case from left to right (ὁ, ἡ, τ ο). There is no vocative case in the definite article.

THE DEFINITE ARTICLE ('THE')

Singular	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
Nominative	ὁ	ho	ἡ	heh	το	to
Accusative	τον	ton	την	ten	το	to
Genitive	του	tou	της	tes	του	tou
Dative	τῳ	toy	τῃ	tay	τῳ	toy

Plural	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
Nominative	οἱ	hoy	αἱ	hay	τα	ta
Accusative	τους	tous	τας	tas	τα	ta
Genitive	των	ton	των	ton	των	ton
Dative	τοις	tois	ταις	tais	τοις	tois

The accents (diacritics) shown here change the sounds of the vowels a little bit. The *c*-shaped diacritic above ὁ and ἡ puts an aspiration before the vowels, making them sound like 'ho' and 'heh'. The subscript iotas in the singular datives (τ ῳ, τ ῃ, τ ῳ) sound as though they have the iota letter (ι) placed after them,

giving you 'toy', 'tay', 'toy' sounds.

You may be familiar with the English phrase 'hoi polloi' – often used by complete berks to refer to the general population. The original is from the Greek οἱ πολλοί (pronounced 'hoy polloy'), meaning 'the many'. The word οἱ is the definite article for words in the masculine plural, as you can see in the table. And πολλοί means 'many' and is the same word we get the English prefix 'poly-' from, for words like 'polygon', 'polymorphic' and 'polyester'.

Now that you know how the Greek definite article works, you can correct anyone who refers to 'the hoi polloi' for using too many definite articles.

NOUNS

The good news about Greek nouns is that there are just three declensions. In very basic terms, many feminine nouns end in –η ('–e'), many masculine nouns end in –ος ('–os') and many neuter nouns end in –ον ('–on'). These are cognate with the Latin *–a*, *–us*, *–um* endings.

The bad news is that most of the nouns used in Greek don't really fit into these declensions properly and that it can sometimes seem as though every word were an exception to the rule. But the brave reader should give this a go, and you'll be reading simple sentences in no time at all. (And no worries if you want to go back to the start of Chapter 1 for guidance on the Greek alphabet.)

1ST DECLENSION

(MOSTLY FEMININE, BUT SOME MASCULINE)

τιμη ('tim-eh') (feminine): 'honour'

Singular			
Nominative	ἡ	τιμ–η	he tim–eh
Vocative		τιμ–η	tim–eh
Accusative	την	τιμ–ην	ten tim–en
Genitive	της	τιμ–ης	tes tim–es
Dative	τῃ	τιμ–ῃ	tay tim–ay

Plural			
Nominative	αἱ	τιμ–αι	hay tim–ay
Vocative		τιμ–αι	tim–ay
Accusative	τας	τιμ–ας	tas tim–as
Genitive	των	τιμ–ων	ton tim–on
Dative	ταις	τιμ–αις	tais tim–ais

This feminine noun uses the feminine definite article from the previous table, and shows how similar the endings can be. This is why learning the definite article upfront gives you a firm base from which to learn the rest of the language.

Incidentally, the word τ ι μ η (‘timeh’) is where we get the boy’s name Timothy from. It is combined with Greek θ ε ο ς (‘theos’), meaning ‘god’, to describe someone who honours their god.

2ND DECLENSION

(MOSTLY MASCULINE AND NEUTER, WITH A FEW FEMININE EXCEPTIONS)

λ ο γ ο ς (‘logos’) (masculine): ‘word’

Singular			
Nominative	ὁ	λογ-ος	ho log-os
Vocative		λογ-ε	log-e
Accusative	τον	λογ-ον	ton log-on
Genitive	του	λογ-ου	tou log-ou
Dative	τῳ	λογ-ῳ	toy log-oy

Plural			
Nominative	οἱ	λογ-οι	hoy log-oy
Vocative		λογ-οι	log-oy
Accusative	τους	λογ-ους	tous log-ous
Genitive	των	λογ-ων	ton log-on
Dative	τοις	λογ-οις	tois log-ois

Because λ ο γ ο ς ('logos') is masculine, it is paired with the masculine definite article here. Once again, you can see how the endings match. As with Latin masculine nouns in the 2nd declension, there is a distinctive ending for the vocative case.

3RD DECLENSION

(MASCULINE, FEMININE, NEUTER)

π ρ α γ μ α ('pragma') (neuter): 'deed, act'

Singular			
Nominative	το	πραγμα	to pragma
Vocative		πραγμα	pragma
Accusative	το	πραγμα	to pragma
Genitive	του	πραγματ–ος	tou pragmat–os
Dative	τῳ	πραγματ–ι	toy pragmat–i

Plural			
Nominative	τα	πραγματ–α	ta pragmat–a
Vocative		πραγματ–α	pragmat–a
Accusative	τα	πραγματ–α	ta pragmat–a
Genitive	των	πραγματ–ων	ton pragmat–on
Dative	τοις	πραγμασ–ι	tois pragmas–i

This is a neuter example of a 3rd-declension noun, and, as in Latin and many other languages, the neuter always has the same form for nominative, vocative and accusative in both the singular and plural.

VERBS

Greek's equivalent of *amo*, *amas*, *amat* is in the verb λ υ ω ('luo'), which is always the first verb that students learn. It's a bit of a strange piece of vocabulary with limited use, but its structure is wonderfully regular and allows you to see how the basic verbs behave.

ε ι μ ι ('eimi') 'I am' (irregular) λ υ ω ('luo') 'I loosen' (regular)

I	ειμι	eimi	λυ-ω	lu-o
you (singular)	ει	ei	λυ-εις	lu-eis
he/she/it	εστι	esti	λυ-ει	lu-ei
we	εσμεν	esmen	λυ-ομεν	lu-omen
you (plural)	εστε	este	λυ-ετε	lu-ete
they	εισι	eisi	λυ-ουσι	lu-ousi

Similarities with Latin can be seen in the -ω ending for 1st person singular ('I') and -ς ending for 2nd person singular ('you'), and there are a few other indicators in these endings that can be seen in many Indo-European languages should you wish to delve deeper.

Without wanting to put a dampener on things, let me say that Greek verbs are a pain. Learning the basics will take you a fair way, but it's not long before all the exceptions to the rule begin to creep out of the woodwork, so we should quit while we're ahead.

GREEK AND LATIN: *QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM*

There is a wealth of phrases from Latin that are still used in their original form as part of the English language. Some are very familiar to us (such as *carpe diem*), while others we use all the time perhaps without realizing their Latin origins (for example '*e. g.*'). This chapter explains some of the more common phrases that are still in use.

Latin phrase	Literally means	And in English
a priori	'from the previous'	An idea you held in your head prior to what experience might tell you. You may have had an *a priori* assumption that Latin was no longer in use.
ab initio	'from the beginning'	From the beginning.
ad absurdam	'to the absurd'	Taking a logical argument to its extreme conclusion in order to disprove it. In Chapter 5, you'll see how the Greek philosopher Zeno did this *ad absurdam*.
ad hoc	'to this (thing)'	Something that is for a specific purpose – an *ad hoc* committee can be an impromptu one set up for a particular reason.
ad infinitum	'to infinity'	Continuing to carry out an action *ad infinitum* would probably bore you after a while.
ad nauseam	'to sickness'	Likewise, repeating something *ad nauseam* is likely to leave you feeling less than chirpy.

addendum	'(a thing) that is to be added'	Something added onto a note or document. We get the English word 'add' from the same root, and the ending '–endum' shows this is a gerundive. I won't bore you with the details, but it puts a sense of obligation onto the verb. Incidentally, in case you want to be fancy, the plural of this is *addenda*.
affidavit	'he has pledged'	A written statement used for evidence in court. The word is a combination of *ad* + *fido* ('to be faithful' – which is where the old-fashioned dog's name comes from).
agenda	'(things) that are to be done'	A running order for a meeting. Just like *addendum*, this is a gerundive. The root verb *ago* generally means 'to do' and is where we get words like 'agitate' and 'act'. It is a plural noun, so you can be fancy by referring to a single item on the running order as an 'agendum'. Don't blame me if no one knows what you're talking about.
alma mater	'nourishing mother'	Your school, university or other formative institution. Originally this referred to any number of female deities, but someone in a straw boater must have once coined it for a university. A number of universities in the US have taken it a bit too literally by erecting statues of an actual nourishing mother figure.
ante bellum	'before the war'	Antebellum wistfulness seems to follow most wars, and is not specific to any particular one.

bona fide	'in good faith'	Genuine. This is the same *fido* ('faith' or 'trust') as in *affidavit* above.
carpe diem	'seize the day'	A well known phrase. The word *carpe* is an imperative, telling you to do something. Preferably today. (For the origin of the phrase, see the section on Horace in Chapter 4.)
caveat	'may he be careful'	An additional warning or advice. It's also a verb in English now, so you can caveat your advice to someone by telling them you might be wrong.
circa	'around'	From the same root as the word 'circle'. Anything that lies near enough to the thing you're talking about.
compos mentis	'in control of the mind'	Having all your capacities and being clear-thinking.
curriculum vitae	'the course of life'	We now either shorten it to CV, or in fact borrow from another language with the French *résumé*.
data	'given (things)'	Information or statistics. 'Data' is actually a plural noun, so to be pompously correct, you should use a plural verb with it too ('I think you'll find these data *are* incorrect, Professor Lambsbottom'). The singular is *datum*, which was used on Roman letters with the location to show where it was 'given' to a messenger. This led to the plural *data* referring to both the location and day that a letter was handed over – which is where we derive the English word 'date' from.

deus ex machina	'god from the machine'	This is a device used in theatre, literature or film in which the story is suddenly resolved by an unexpected (and convenient) event. The phoenix at the end of the first *Harry Potter* book springs to mind. It comes from the physical machinery in Greek and Roman theatre that would lower a god onto the stage from the heavens in order to quickly sort everything out before the last bus home.
e.g. (exempli gratia)	'for the sake of example'	For example.
ergo	'therefore'	Therefore. Often used by comic-book enthusiasts trying to prove a point. Its popularity may stem from its use by seventeenth-century French philosopher Descartes, who used the phrase *cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am').
forum	'a public place'	Any open platform for discussion (physical or digital). It is worth noting once again that the proper plural is 'fora'. We get the word 'forensic' from the same root – meaning evidence that is suitable for a public hearing.
i.e. (id est)	'that is'	Used to further explain a point.
in memoriam	'in the memory'	In memory of something.
in situ	'in the place'	Something in its original place.
in vino veritas	'truth in wine'	The embarrassingly honest witterings of a wine-fuelled night have caught many of us out.

ipso facto	'by the fact itself'	By that very fact, or therefore.
mea culpa	'through my fault'	Used mainly in Catholic prayer. It is in the ablative case, meaning it is '*through* my fault' that the sins have been committed. For extra guilt, you can add *mea maxima culpa*.
modus operandi	'way of working'	The way in which you do something. The word *operandi* is once again a gerundive (like *agenda* and *addendum*), as it implies a degree of obligation in the verb.
non sequitur	'it does not follow'	Something that doesn't follow what precedes it. I'm also partial to a spot of cake.
NB (nota bene)	'note well'	A fact that deserves special attention.
per centum	'of a hundred'	Often abbreviated to 'per cent' (or 'percent' in the US), or the % symbol (made up of two zeros and a division line to show division by 100).
per se	'of itself'	Essentially or intrinsically.
quasi	'as though'	Something that resembles a certain quality. Used as a prefix to nouns, adjectives and adverbs.
quid pro quo	'something for something'	Exchanging an object or service for one of equal value. If you want to refer to multiple things being exchanged, you could use '*quae pro quibus*', but that may be verging on the ridiculous.
QED (quod erat demonstrandum)	'which was to be demonstrated'	Said after a point has been demonstrated to be true.