



What is Parsing and How Do You Do It?

Parsing in Latin is very simply the *process of analyzing a single word* to know exactly how it is functioning in a sentence. In fact, you have been parsing for a long time, since this is what is needed for accurate translation.

To thoroughly parse a word you need to give all the information you know about it – and this will be different for different parts of speech.

PARSING NOUNS, PRONOUNS, AND ADJECTIVES

To parse a noun, pronoun or adjective, you will need to give the case, number, gender and first form of the word being parsed.

**For pronouns you must also supply the person (1st, 2nd, 3rd) - the gender is determined from the antecedent*

e.g. To parse the word “regem” – you would say it is masculine accusative singular from rex, regis.

The first form of an adjective is the masculine, nominative singular form.

PARSING VERBS

To parse a verb, you will need to give the person, number, tense, mood, voice and first form of the verb being parsed.

e.g. To parse the word “amamus” you would say it is 1st person plural, present, active, indicative of amo, amare.

For taming a dragon of a translation, parsing is your best weapon!



SNAPPY ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED PARSING QUESTIONS...

WHY DO I HAVE TO PARSE THE WORDS WHEN I ALREADY KNOW WHAT THE SENTENCE SAYS?

If you can just look at a sentence and see how it goes together, Congratulations! This means that you are well on your way to being a fine translator. Odds are that you can't look at every sentence and do that. Parsing is a skill that helps you break down bits of difficult sentences so that they become easy. In fact, that practice of parsing alone will also help you read those simple sentences quicker and more accurately.

CAN YOU ONLY PARSE NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES AND VERBS?

Technically you can parse any word in Latin, but some of them don't have much information to give (e.g. to parse an adverb you can really only say that it is an adverb and what adjective (if any) it's related to). Also, if you have the nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs of a sentence correct, the rest usually becomes very clear. So those are the most important words to be able to parse.

WHEN WILL I NO LONGER NEED TO PARSE?

Never! Never! (Mua ha ha) Just kidding, sort of. Parsing is a tool that you will need less and less as your translation skills grow, but you will likely need to use it, even just a little, whenever you translate. I still parse on occasion when I hit a particularly tricky bit. For now, parse away!