

Word stress in Latin

1. The stress of a Latin word is determined by the quantity of the next to last (= penultimate) syllable.

2. There are two types of quantity: length by nature and length by position.
 - 2.1. *Length by nature:* The syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong. ha-**bē**-re, **clāū**-sus, **rō**-sae
 - 2.2. *Length by position:* The syllable contains a short vowel and is followed by two or more consonants or by a double consonant (z=ts, x=ks). mis-sa

The combination of a mute (*b, c, d, g, p, t*) or *f* and a liquid (*l, r*) does not make for length by position. ce-le-brō, **te-ne-brae**

A short vowel made long by position is still pronounced short.

- 2.3. The sequence of *-nf-*, *-ns-*, *-nx-*, *-nct-*, and (not always) *-gn-* cause a preceding vowel to lengthen. in-fe-rus, **con-se-crō**, **con-junx**, **sanc-tus**, **dig-nus**
- 2.4. A vowel is short or light (1) if it is a vowel that is not long by nature or position, (2) if it is in a final syllable ending in *-a* or *-e*, (3) if the syllable ends with a vowel and the following syllable begins with a vowel or *h*, (4) if it is a final syllable ending with consonants. (1) **dū-cē**, **rē-gē-rē**
 (2) **rō-sā**, **dūl-cē**
 (3) **rē-gi-ūs**, **prō-hi-bē-ō**
 (4) **rō-sām**, **īn-tēr**, **cā-pīs**

There are exceptions: Some grammatical forms have a long vowel in the final syllable. rō-sās, **hă-bē**, **lōn-gē**, **ă-mās**, aū-dīs

- 2.5. The length of a vowel cannot be guessed, but has to be learned. Therefore, memorizing the length of the vowels is an important part of learning new words. (In textbooks the length of a vowel is indicated by using a macron, a straight bar across the vowel.) pă-ter ↔ **mā-ter**
 ('pater' has a short *a*, 'mater' has a long *a*)
ōs, **ō-ris** ↔ **ōs**, **ōs-sis**
 (ōs [mouth] has a long *o* and ōs [bone] has a short *o*)

3. Words with one or two syllables have the stress always on the first syllable. dum, co-lor, pă-tris, **mā-tris**

Words with two or more syllables never have the stress on the last syllable.

4. If the penultimate syllable is long (by nature or by position), it has the stress. cer-tā-men, pau-per-tas, re-gi-ō-nis, vo-lup-tās
5. If the penultimate syllable is short, the preceding syllable (antepenultimate syllable) has the stress. re-gi-ō, **cor-po-ris**, **re-ge-re**
6. When a word is combined with an enclitic element (-que, -ve, -ne, -met) the stress is on the penultimate syllable, even if it is short. vi-rum → vi-**rum**-que, lū-mi-na → lū-mi-**na**-que