

Rules for Reading Latin Prose

from
Latin: How to Read it Fluently by B. Dexter Hoyos

RULE 1 A new sentence or passage should be read through completely, several times if necessary, so as to see all its words in context.

RULE 2 As you read, register mentally the ending of every word so as to recognize how the words in the sentence relate to one another.

RULE 3 Recognize the way in which the sentence is structured (its Main Clause(s), subordinate clauses and phrases). Read them in sequence to achieve this recognition and reread the sentence as often as necessary, without translating it.

RULE 4 Now look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary; and once you know what all the words can mean, reread the Latin to improve your grasp of the context and so clarify what the words in this sentence do mean.

RULE 5 If translating, translate only when you have seen exactly how the sentence works and what it means.

SUB-RULE Do not translate in order to find out what the sentence means. Understand first, then translate.

RULE 6A Once a subordinate clause or phrase is begun, it must be completed syntactically before the rest of the sentence can proceed.

B When one subordinate construction embraces another, the embraced one must be completed before the embracing one can proceed.

C A Main Clause must be completed before another Main Clause can start.

RULE 7 Normally the words most emphasized by the author are placed at the beginning and end, and all the words in between contribute to the overall sense, including those forming an embraced or dependent word-group. A word-group can be shown by linking its first and last words by an "arch" line.

RULE 8 The words within two or more word-groups are never mixed up together: "arches" do not cut across one another. But an "arch" structure can contain one or more interior "arches"; that is, embraced word-groups.

RULE 9 All the actions in a sentence are narrated in the order in which they occurred.

RULE 10 Analytical sentences are written with phrases and clauses in the order that is most logical to the author. The sequence of thought is signposted by the placing of word-groups and key words.