

Infinitives

General: An infinitive is, strictly speaking, an abstract verbal noun.

The infinitive is used in Latin, as in English, as a noun: *Errare humanum est* = To err is human. When so used, the Latin infinitive is an indeclinable neuter noun.

The infinitive is also used in Latin, as in English, to complete the meaning of another verb (complementary infinitive): *Possum videre* = I am able to see.

Unlike English, Latin rarely uses an infinitive to indicate purpose.

The infinitive is most widely used in Latin in Indirect Speech (Oratio Obliqua), which combines an accusative subject with an infinitive in subordinate clauses after a verbs of saying, thinking, and perceiving.

Puto eum sapientem esse = I think that he is wise.

Because the infinitive is widely used in the Indirect Speech, it must in Latin show tense and voice and (where able) gender. Note the forms of the infinitive:

Formation:

	Active	Passive
Present:	amāre (to love)	amārī (to be loved)
Perfect:	amāvisse (to have loved)	amātus esse (to have been loved)
Future:	amātūrus esse (to be about to love)	amātum irī (to be going to be loved)

Notes:

1) The present passive infinitive is formed by dropping the -e from the active infinitive and adding -ī. But in the third conjugation, the entire infinitive ending (-ere) is dropped before adding the -ī: *ducere ducī* (to be led).

2) The perfect passive and future active infinitives will show gender where appropriate: *Puto eam me amaturam esse* = I think she will love me. *Puto eos eam ad oppidum ducturos esse* = I think they will lead her to the town.

3) The future active infinitive, rare in English, is widely used in Latin for Indirect Speech constructions (see 2 above).

4) The future passive infinitive is rarely seen.