

Hints/Suggestions For Beginning to Speak Latin

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1) *Utere generali pro particularibus* (Use the general for the specific). You may not remember the names of all the cups, bowls, plates, etc. Fine. Don't get caught on it in conversation. Use the general terms:

almost anything you put something in: *vas* or *receptaculum*

almost anything technological or toolish: *instrumentum*

almost anything you eat: *cibus*

almost any fruit: *fructus* or *pomum*

almost anything you drink: *potio*

almost anything that flows: *liquor*

almost anything that moves something from one place to another: *vehiculum*

almost anything alive that moves itself: *animal*

any person: *homo* (not *persona*, which is a perennial temptation)

almost anything thought or believed: *consilium* or *sententia*

almost any location/place/spot/room/area: *locus*

almost anything: *res* (the single most useful word of all)

The above words, coupled with *hic-haec-hoc* and a gesture, will cover an astounding number of possibilities.

You can also do this with verbs. Latin has a handful of verbs which can be made to do stupendous amounts of work in a conversation.

Video. This can serve as "I see," "I understand," or in the past can mean things like "I met" (always a tricky thing to express in Latin, usually done by the Romans with *obviam* or *obvius*, maybe *incido*, *occurro*, *convenio*, *obvenio*).

Ago. Remember learning that long list of its meanings in Latin I? Now is the time to use it. Yes, it can mean anything when it has an accusative, and without an accusative it can mean "discuss."

Habeo. Means "have in hand" but also "own," and gets really useful with infinitives: "*Quid habes dicere?*" "*Nihil habeo facere.*" It almost serves as a future and an expression of necessity. With "non" it can serve in place of verbs like *careo* and *egeo* which you know are going to make you trot out an ablative.

Fero. Yet another great Latin verb. "Carry," "bring," but also "report."

Facio. Like *ago*, this verb will satisfy almost every accusative you need a verb for.

Dico. Pretty indispensable, though as mentioned *ago* and *fero* will serve in its place when needed.

Sum. Necessary.

Possum and *volo* and *placet mihi*. Very useful. These plus infinitives will build you hundreds of sentences in no time.

The above ten verbs will not only provide you with tons of things you can say, but your first questions to other people will probably use one of these verbs. Mastering their forms and tenses and using them often is a great way to build confidence and fluency in Latin.

2) *Scito aliquas sententias Latinas memoriter* (Memorize a few Latin phrases). It's useful to use the "Erasmus approach" with Latin conversation. Erasmus was a collector and master of innumerable adages, which he could deploy at will in conversation. It's useful to read through some Latin proverbs (there are many collections available, in book form or online) or florilegia from the authors. Try to commit some to memory. They serve as ready-made sentences for you to insert when appropriate (which they often are). *De gustibus non est disputandum. Vetus canis non docetur. Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit. Non omne quod nitet aurum est. Hoc opus, hic labor est.* Not only are they useful in themselves, but if your interlocutors recognize them they usually get some pleasure as well. And if you vary them slightly to fit the context better, the pleasure will be doubled.

3) *Dic quod potes, nec cura quod non potes* (Say what you can, don't worry about what you can't). They say the great Ted Williams would never swing and miss during batting practice. He wouldn't attempt to hit home runs: he would just make sure he made contact with every single ball he saw. By focusing on a limited objective and not trying to do too much, he got continually better. Say what you can, always trying to say it correctly and clearly, and listen for the reply. *Disces eundo.*