

Exercises to Build Predictive Reading Skills  
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Whether one is using the reading method or the more traditional grammar method or a combination, the goal is to develop in students the ability to read Latin. Linguistic research shows that the ability to predict is an important part of the reading process. While text passages in books provide necessary reading experience, many exercises, even in reading method textbooks, follow traditional patterns. Often these patterns are based, in fact, on English word order, and are not as effective in teaching and testing predictive abilities as they could be.

This session provides examples of kinds of exercises that require students to predict, especially based on Latin word order. For example, traditional exercises with prepositional phrases ask students to fill in the ending on the noun object of the preposition given the preposition, noun base, and verb. Or, they give the English and ask students to translate into Latin. Giving the English verb and/or “into” does less to help students remember that Latin “in” can predict a verb of motion. In reading Latin, students usually must predict the kind of verb (often coming several lines later in the text), given only the prepositional phrase.

While grammatical terms can be important, predictive exercises using only Latin can be a way of testing syntactic concepts without having to use terms like direct object, infinitive, etc. An exercise can give students an accusative, dative, or infinitive, etc., and ask them to choose what kind of word they expect. This again keeps the emphasis on Latin word order patterns. Students will more often have to predict a verb that takes a dative when encountering a noun in the dative rather than to give or expect a dative given a certain verb, as in most exercises. It can also give them practice in disambiguating words that can be multiple forms, such as genitive singular, dative singular, or nominative plural.

Exercises can be used to teach the predictive power of meanings of words as well. The importance of short sentence connectors can be shown by the ability to predict where the entire sentence is going by one word. Students can learn that they can read a sentence and predict without having the actual verb yet. Not waiting for the verb is one of the most common major mistakes students make.

The exercises in general help students become familiar with building units of meaning by working with chunks of meaningful units and by having to choose what will fulfill their expectation to complete a meaningful unit. Most of these exercises are multiple choice or matching, which makes them easy to grade, and they can be put on-line so students can get immediate feedback.