

# Why Do We Study Latin?

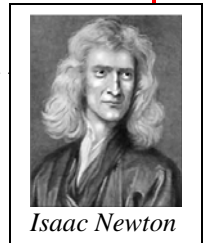
Why do we study the Latin Language? There are at least 6 good reasons that I can think of:

First, it is **Latin** we are learning. This is a language that was used during the Roman Republic and Empire and dominated world culture for at least 1500 years of human history. Then it remained important for another 500. Compare this to the approx. 1000-year existence of English!



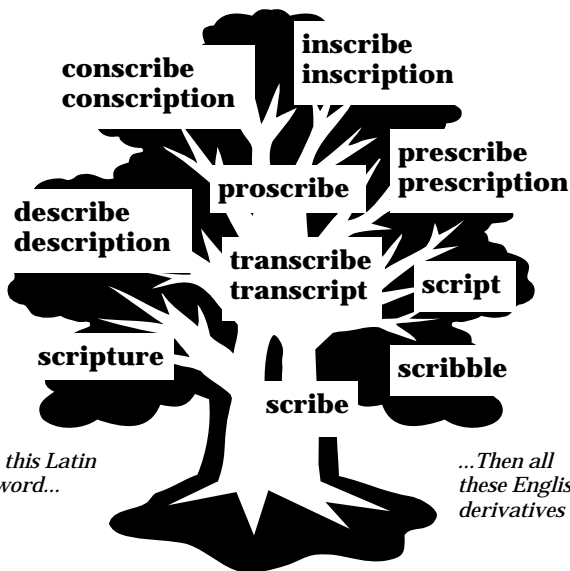
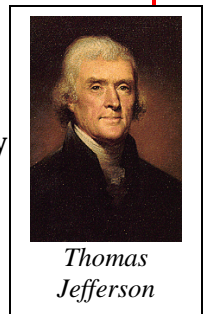
Latin as a form of human expression is a precise and beautiful language. It is the language of Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil, and after them it would be the curriculum of school children for the next 1900 years. Consequently, most of the greatest thinkers and movers and shakers in our Western tradition such as Augustine, Erasmus, Isaac Newton, and Thomas Jefferson, to name a few, read the Latin authors, wrote in Latin, thought and spoke in ways organized by Latin language. To celebrate her 60th birthday, Queen Elizabeth I spent two weeks translating the ancient Latin

philosopher Boethius into English. Now, there's someone who knew how to throw a party! So, remember as you decline your nouns and conjugate your verbs, that you are taking your place in a 2000-year line of students, like little Willie Shakespeare, who have gone before you chanting, "amo, amas, amat..."



The second reason to learn Latin is that you will learn much new **English vocabulary** and be able to better understand the English words you already

know. The tree below shows how, by learning one Latin root word, scribe, which means "to write," you can add all these English derivatives, which are somehow related to the idea of writing, to your vocabulary store! It's estimated that at least 60% of English vocabulary is derived from Latin. And these are the words that are used by lawyers, theologians, writers, historians, people in the medical field, scientists--in short, the more educated segment of our society.



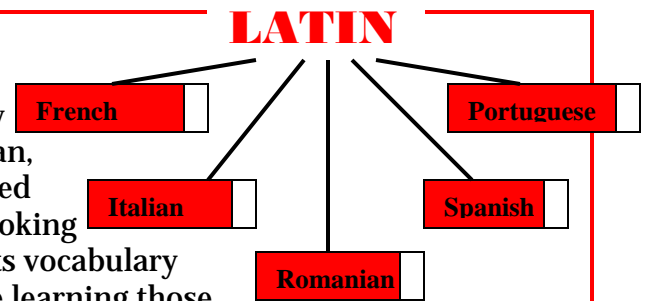
Learn this Latin root word...

...Then all these English derivatives

**“scribere” = to write**

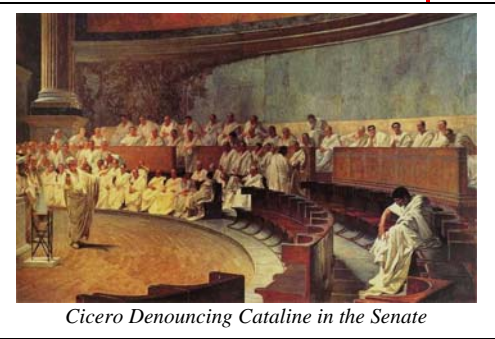
The more words you know, the better you can express your ideas, and the better you can do this, the more you can accomplish in every endeavor. Studies show that those who use language well are also the highest paid and most successful in their careers.

Our third reason for learning Latin is that, besides helping our English, we can gain a **foundation for all language study**. Ninety to ninety-five percent of Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian vocabulary is derived from Latin. On this diagram you can see, by looking at the red part of each language how much of its vocabulary comes from Latin. So knowing Latin will make learning those languages much easier. In addition, language learning principles acquired in the study of Latin transfer to the learning of non-Romance languages as well. How to conjugate a verb, what a perfect passive participle is, what a reflexive pronoun is used for...all these grammar goodies are found in every language. So think if it, with your foundation in Latin, you'll become a language learning machine!



The fourth reason for studying Latin is to **grow our brain power**. Through the diligent effort and the particular skills required to learn the language, you will find that you are also learning to be more observant, analytical, logical, accurate, and organized in your thinking. In other words, you'll get smarter! Won't this come in handy in all of life?!

The fifth reason to learn Latin is to **learn wisdom**. That may seem like a tall order, but in conjunction with studying the language of the Romans, we will study their history and culture. Many of the ideas and achievements of the Romans are our heritage. They have been handed down to us through the centuries and we make use of them without realizing it. In studying the Romans, we will see the good, the bad, and the ugly. Examples worthy of following, such as Mucius who burned off his right hand to protect his city and its people. There will be examples that warn us what to avoid, such as the traitor Coriolanus, held back only by the pleas of his mother,



*Cicero Denouncing Cataline in the Senate*

<b>Verbal SAT Scores for Language Students</b>					
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	
Latin	<b>674</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>678</b>	
All Students	508	508	503	502	
French	642	643	637	637	
German	627	637	632	632	
Spanish	575	573	577	574	
Hebrew	630	620	623	622	

2004-06 Taken from Table 6 in College-Bound Seniors — A Profile of SAT Program Test Takers. 2007 data taken from 2007 College-Bound Seniors-Total Group Profile Report.

from betraying Rome. President Harry Truman said that oftentimes when he was confronted with a thorny problem, he found more wisdom in reading Plutarch (an ancient historian of the Romans) than in all his cabinet advisors. This study will give you, too, much to ponder as you set out to make your mark in history.

Finally, our sixth reason for studying Latin is that students who learn Latin **score higher on the SAT test** (that's the one you take to get into college) than students of any other language. There are no guarantees, of course, but why not put the odds of scoring better in your favor?

So, those are the reasons to learn Latin. What are we waiting for? Let's get started!