

## Latin > English

### A

A bene placito

"At your pleasure."

A fortiori

"From the stronger" — loosely, "even more so" or "with even stronger reason." Often used to lead from a less certain proposition to a more evident corollary. *e.g.* "It is unwise to invest in pyramid schemes, and, *a fortiori*, in e-mail pyramid schemes."

A pedibus usque ad caput

"From feet to head."

A posteriori

"From the latter" — based on observation, the reverse of *a priori*. Used in mathematics and logic to denote something that is known after a proof has been carried out.

A priori

"From the former" — presupposed, the reverse of *a posteriori*. Used in mathematics and logic to denote something that is known before a proof has been carried out.

A priori assumptione

"An assumption that something is true without proof."

Ab hinc

"From here on."

Ab imo pectore

"From the depths of (my) chest" — *i.e.* "from my heart". Attributed to Julius Caesar.

Ab initio

"From the beginning" or "from the start" — compare *in media res*; see also List of legal terms

Ab origine

"From the origin."

Ab ovo usque ad mala

"From the eggs to the apples," *i.e.*, from beginning to end (the Roman main meal traditionally began with an egg dish and ended with fruit)

Ab urbe condita (A.U.C.)

"From the founding of the city (of Rome)" — *i.e.* from 753 B.C., according to Livy's count; used as a reference point by the Romans for establishing dates, as we use A.D. today.

Absit omen

"May the presentiment not be realized."

Acta est fabula, plaudite!

"The play is over (literally, story is done), applaud!" common ending phrase of ancient Roman comedies

Ad astra per aspera

"A hard road leads to the heavens"

Ad captandum vulgus

"To appeal to the crowd (literally, to the "taking" of the common folk" — often used of politicians who make false or insincere promises appealing to popular interest.

Ad fontes

"To the sources" — a motto of Renaissance humanism.

Ad fundum

"To the bottom" or "To the end" — said during a generic toast, like "bottoms up!"

Ad hoc

"For this" — *i.e.* improvised, made up on the spot.

Ad hominem

"To the man" — usually, an argument criticizing the opponent's person rather than his ideas; or also an argument designed to appeal to personal interest rather than objective fact.

Ad infinitum

"To infinity" — going on forever.

Ad interim

"In the meantime" — as in the term "chargé d'affaires ad interim" for a diplomatic officer who acts in place of an ambassador.

Ad libitum (ad lib)

"At ease" — means "do as you please", "improvise", "just ramble on"; esp. in music partitures, theatrical scripts, etc..

Ad lucem

"Towards the light"

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam (A.M.D.G.)

"To the greater glory of God" — motto of the Jesuits.

Ad multos annos

"To many years!" — *i.e.* "Many happy returns!"

Ad nauseam

"To the point of nausea".

Ad pedem litterae

"At the foot of the letter" — *i.e.* "exactly as it is written".

Ad perpetuam memoriam

"To the eternal memory [of]"

Ad usum proprium (ad us. propr.)

"For own usage"

Ad valorem

"By the value" — *e.g.* *ad valorem* tax.

Advocatus Diaboli

"The Devil's Advocate" — said about someone who defends an unpopular view for the sake of discussion (and implying a lack of person belief in the validity of the argument).

Aegri somnia

"Troubled dreams."

Alea iacta est

"The die is cast" — said by Julius Caesar, in Suetonius, after his decision to defy Roman law by crossing the Rubicon with his troops. (Suetonius actually uses it in the future imperative "Alea iacta esto": "Be sure to cast the dice").

Alis volat propriis

"She flies with her own wings"

Alma mater

"Nourishing mother" — term used for the university one attends/has attended. The word "matriculation" is derived from "mater". The term suggests that the students are "fed" knowledge and taken care of by the university. The term is also used for a university's traditional school anthem.

Alter ego

"Another I" — a pseudonym or a close associate who always acts on one's behalf.

Amicus curiae

"Friend of the court" — an adviser, or a person who can obtain or grant access to the favour of powerful people (like Romana curia). In current U.S. legal usage, a third party allowed to submit a brief (an amicus brief) to the court.

Amor vincit omnia

"Love conquers all"

Anno Domini (A.D.)

"In the year of the lord" — indicates a year counted from the traditional date of birth of Jesus; also called the *Common Era* (C.E.) to remove religious implications.

Anno urbis conditae (A.U.C.)

"In the year from the founding of the city (Rome)" — see *Ab urbe condita*.

Annuit Cœptis

"He [God] has approved our undertaking" - motto of the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States and on the back of the US one dollar bill

Annus horribilis

"A horrible year" — used memorably by Queen Elizabeth II to describe what a bad year 1992 had been for her.

Ante cibum (a.c.)

"Before meals" (medical shorthand)

Ante litteram

"Before the letter" — said after an expression that described something that existed before the expression itself was introduced or became common. For example, one could say that Alan Turing was a computer scientist *ante litteram*, since the profession of "computer scientist" was not recognised in Turing's day.

Ante meridiem (a.m.)

"Before noon" — in the period from midnight to noon.

Ante prandium (a.p.)

"Before lunch" — *i.e.* before a meal. Used on pharmaceutical prescriptions.

Asinus asinorum in saecula saeculorum.

"The jackass of jackasses in the centuries of centuries", or "The greatest jackass in eternity."

Audentes Fortunas iuvat

"Fortune favors the bold"—allegedly the last words of Pliny the Elder before he left the docks at Pompeii to rescue people from the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE

Audietur et altera pars

"Let's hear also the other party"

Audio, video, disco

"I hear, I see, I learn"

Aurea mediocritas

"Golden Mean" — in Horace's *Odes*, an ethical goal.

Auri sacra fames

"Accursed hunger for gold" — from Vergil, *Aeneis* 3,57; later quoted by Seneca: *quod non mortalia pectora coges, auri sacra fames* ("What aren't you able to bring men to do, miserable hunger for gold!")

Aut Caesar aut nihil

"Caesar or nothing" — *i.e.*, all or nothing. (Caesar is here used in the meaning emperor.)

Aut vincere aut mori

"Either conquer or die".

Ave atque vale

"Hail and farewell!"

Ave Europa, nostra vera Patria

"Hail Europe, our true Fatherland" — Anthem [song] of pan-Europeanists

## B

Beati possidentes

"The happy who possess", translation of a quote from Euripides

Bis in die (bid)

"Twice a day" (medical shorthand)

Bona fide

"In good faith."

Bona officia

"Good services", a nation's offer to mediate in disputes between two other nations

Bonum commune communitatis

"General welfare." Literally, "common good of the community."

Bonum commune hominis

"Common good of man."

Busillis

Pseudo-Latin meaning "baffling puzzle" [baffling=rätselhaft] or "difficult point". John of Cornwall (ca. 1170) was once asked by a scribe what the word meant. It turns out that the original text said *in diebus illis magnis plenæ* ("in those days plenty of great things"), which the scribe misread as *indie busillis magnis plenæ* ("in India there were plenty of large *busillis*")... (<http://digilander.libero.it/summagallicana/Volume1/A.VIII.8.01.htm>).

## C

Cacoethes scribendi

"Bad habit of writing" — *i.e.* an insatiable urge to write. From Juvenal.

Carthago delenda est

"Carthage must be destroyed." A common ending phrase used by the Roman senator Cato the Elder in his speeches, asking the Senate to destroy the weakened state of Carthage after the Second Punic War.

Casus belli

"Event (that is the justification for, or the cause) of war."

Cave canem

"Beware of the dog" — found written on a floor mosaic depicting a dog, at the entrance of a Roman house excavated at Pompeii [2] (<http://www.harcourtschool.com/activity/pompeii/imagesHTM/Canem.html>)

Caveat emptor

"Let the buyer beware" — *i.e.* the purchaser of the goods is responsible for checking whether they suit his need.

Caveat lector

"Let the reader beware" — *i.e.* the writer does not vouch for the accuracy of a text. Probably a recent calque on *caveat emptor*.

Caveat venditor

"Let the seller beware" — the seller of goods is responsible for providing information about the goods to the purchaser.

Cetera desunt

"The rest is missing."

Ceteris paribus

"All other things being equal."

Ceterum censeo

"In conclusion, I think that..." — Cato the Elder used to conclude his speeches, on any topic whatsoever, with *Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam* ("In conclusion, I think that Carthage must be destroyed").

- Christus Rex  
"Christ the King."
- Citius altius fortius  
"Faster, higher, stronger" — Motto of the modern Olympics.
- Circa (ca.)  
"Around" — in the sense of "approximately, about"; usually of a date, e.g. "Jesus was actually born *circa* 6 BC"
- Claves Sancti Petri  
"The keys of St. Peter" — symbol of the Papacy.
- Cogito ergo sum  
"I think therefore I am" — (French philosopher Rene Descartes) Through this ultimate rationalistic view, Descartes attempts to prove the existence of one's self not through one's sense experience but through reasoning.
- Compos mentis  
"Of sound mind" — sometimes used rather humorously.
- Concordia cum veritate  
"In harmony with truth"
- Conditio sine qua non  
"Condition without which not" — *i.e.* "indispensable".
- Confer (cf.)  
"Compare" — used as an abbreviation in text to recommend a comparison with another thing. Literally, "bring together."
- Confoederatio Helvetica (C.H.)  
"Helvetian Confederation" — the official name of Switzerland, which explains the use of "ch" for its ISO country code and Internet domain.
- Consummatum est  
"It is completed" — In the Latin translation of John 19:30, the last words of Jesus on the Cross.
- Contemptus saeculi  
"Contempt for the secular (world)" — the monk's or philosopher's rejection of mundane life and values.
- Corpus Christi  
"Body of Christ."
- Corpus delicti  
"Body of the crime" — the body of facts that prove a crime.
- Corpus vile  
"Vile body" [vile=abscheulich]— a person or thing fit only to be the object of an experiment.
- Cui bono  
"Good for whom?" — a maxim which suggests that considering who will benefit is likely to reveal who is responsible for an unwelcome happening.
- Cui prodest  
"Whom does it benefit?" — short form for *cui prodest scelus, is fecit* in Seneca's *Medea*; the murderer is the one who gains by the murder.
- Cuius est solum eius est usque ad coelum et ad inferos  
"To whomsoever that owns the land, he owns what is above and below it"
- Cujus Regio, Ejus Religio  
"Whose rule, his religion" — The religion of the king is the religion of people
- Cum gladius et fustibus *or* cum gladiis et fustibus  
"With sword and staff" — from the Bible.
- Cum gladio et sale.  
"With sword and salt." Motto of a well-paid soldier.
- Cum grano salis  
"With a grain of salt" — *i.e.* not to be taken too seriously.
- Cum hoc, ergo propter hoc  
"With this, therefore because of this" — a logical fallacy.

Cum laude

"With honors."

Curriculum vitae

"Course of life" — a résumé.

Cur tu me vexas?

"Why do you annoy me?"

## D

Decus et Tutamen

"An ornament and a safeguard" — encribed on the edge of the British £1 coin

De facto

"In fact" — Said of something that actually *is* the case, in contrast to a legal or official rule or status or version, which is described as *de jure*. In some contexts *de facto* refers to the "way things really are" rather than what is "officially" presented as the fact. E.g., "*Although the emperor held the title and trappings of head of state, the Shogun was the de facto ruler of Japan.*"

De jure

"By law."

De minimis

"About minimal things."

De novo

"Anew."

Deus ex machina

"A god from a machine" — a contrived or artificial solution, usually to a literary plot. Refers to the practice in Greek drama of lowering by machine an actor playing Zeus onto the stage — as though he were descending from Olympus — to resolve an awkward plot.

Deus vult!

"God wills it" — this slogan was the principal one of the Crusades.

Dis aliter visum

"The gods decided differently."

Dies irae

"Day of wrath."

Disiecti membra poetae

"Members of a dismembered poet" *i.e.* "the scattered remnants of the poet" (Horace, *Satires*, I, 4, 62), battered poetry.

Dominus Vobiscum

"God be with you" — phrase used during and at the end of Catholic sermons; greeting form among and towards members of Catholic organizations (*i.e.* priests, nuns etc.)

Dramatis personae

"People of the play" — the characters represented in a dramatic work; cast.

Duces Tecum

"Bring with You" — see subpoena duces tecum.

Dulce bellum inexpertis

"War may seem sweet to those who have never been involved". A phrase from Erasmus (16th century).

Dulce et decorum est

"It is sweet and honourable" — the beginning of a phrase from an ode by Horace: "*dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori*", "it is sweet and honourable to die for one's country." Used by Wilfred Owen as the title of a poem about World War I; see *Dulce Et Decorum Est*.

Dulce et Utile

"Sweet and useful."

## E

E pluribus unum

"From many, one" - one of the national mottoes of the United States of America.

Ecce homo

"Behold the man!" — in the Latin translation of the Gospel of John these words are spoken by Pilate as he presents Jesus crowned with thorns to the crowd.

Editio princeps

"First edition."

Emeritus

"From merit" — often used to refer to a retired professor.

Esse quam videri

"To be, rather than to seem"

Esto perpetua

"Let it be everlasting" — used by the historian Fra Paolo Sarpi of his native Venice.

Et alii (et al.)

"And others" — used to abbreviate a list of names (*Alii* is actually masculine, so it can be used for men, or groups of men and women; the feminine *et aliae* is appropriate when the "others" are all female.)

Et cetera (etc. or &c.)

"And the rest" — nowadays also "and others", "and so on", "and more".

Et in Arcadia ego

"I, also, am in Arcadia" — see *memento mori*.

Et tu, Brute

"And thou, Brutus?" — literal quotation from William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. He renders as Latin in an English play what was originally quoted as Greek supposedly spoken by a Roman. But Plutarch quotes Caesar as saying, *καὶ σὺ τέκνον Kai su, teknon?* — Greek for "You too, my child?" (Greek would have been the language of Rome's elite at the time.) However it is unlikely that Caesar actually said these words.

Ex animo

"From the heart" — *i.e.* "sincerely".

Ex ante

"From before" — "beforehand", "before the event", *i.e.* based on prior assumptions.

Ex Cathedra

"From the Chair" — a phrase applied to the Pope when he is speaking infallibly and, by extension, to others who speak with supreme authority or arrogance.

Ex Deo

"From God."

Ex gratia

"From kindness" or "from grace" — referring to someone performing an act out of kindness as opposed to being forced to do it.

Ex hypothesi

"From the hypothesis" — *i.e.* *by hypothesis*.

Ex libris...

"From the books (library) of..."

Ex nihilo

"From nothing" — Some Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions hold that God created the universe from nothing.

Ex officio

"From the office" — when someone holds one position by virtue of holding another, *e.g.* the U.S. vice president is *ex officio* president of the Senate.

Ex parte

- "By (or for) one party" — a legal term.
- Ex post facto  
"From after the fact" — of a law with retroactive effect.
- Ex tempore  
"This instance" or "Right away" or "Immediately"
- Ex vi termini  
"By definition."
- Excelsior  
"Higher" — *i.e.* "ever upward!"
- Exempli gratia (e.g.)  
"For the sake of example", "for example."
- Exeunt  
"They leave" — see *exit*.
- Exeunt omnes  
"They all leave" — see *exit*.
- Exit  
"He/she leaves" — used *e.g.* in theatrical stage directions.
- Experimentum crucis  
"Critical experiment" — a decisive test of a scientific theory.

## F

- Felo-de-se  
"Evildoer upon himself" — that is, one who commits suicide.
- Fiat lux (et facta est lux)  
"Let there be light (and there was light)" — from Genesis.
- Fidei Defensor (Fid Def or fd)  
"Defender of the Faith" — a title given to Henry VIII of England by Pope Leo X on October 17, 1521 before Henry became an heresiarch. Appears on all British coins, usually abbreviated.
- Fons et origo  
"The wellspring and origin."

## G

- Genius loci  
"The spirit of the place."
- Gloria in excelsis Deo  
"Glory to God in the highest."

## H

- Habeas corpus  
"You must have the body" — *i.e.* you must justify an imprisonment. First two words of the Writ to bring a prisoner to court (Charles II of England, Habeas Corpus Act - 1679) and commonly used as the general term for a prisoner's legal right to have the charge against specifically identified.
- Habemus papam  
"We have a pope" — used in a Catholic Church conclave to announce a successful ballot to elect a new pope.
- Haec olim meminisse iuvabit

"Perhaps, we'll look back at this and smile." Virgil's Aeneid  
Hic iacet...  
"Here lies..." — written on gravestones or tombs.  
Hic sepultus...  
"Here is buried..."  
Hic sunt leones  
"There are lions" — written on uncharted territories of old maps  
Honoris causa  
"For the sake of honor" — said of an honorary title, e.g., Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.  
Horas non numero nisi serenas  
"I only count the sunny hours" — common inscription on sundials.  
Hora somni (h.s.)  
"At bedtime", literally "at the hour of sleep" (medical shorthand)  
Horribile dictu  
"Horrible to say" — *i.e.* "a horrible thing to relate."

## I

Ibidem (ibid.)  
"In the same place" — usually in bibliographic citations.  
Id est (i.e.)  
"That is (to say)", abbreviated as "i.e." — sometimes "in this case," depending on the context. *When celebrating this holiday (i.e. Christmas), hang a wreath on your door.* It is never equivalent to "e.g.".  
Igni ferroque  
"By fire and iron" — a phrase describing scorched earth tactics. Also seen as *igne atque ferro*, *ferro ignique*, and other variations.  
Imago dei  
"In the image of God" — a religious concept.  
Imitatio dei  
"In imitation of God" — a principle, held by several religions, that believers should strive to resemble their god(s).  
Imperium in imperio  
"An empire within an empire" — *i.e.* a group of people within a nation's territory who are beginning to look as if they most of the members owe primary allegiance to the upper member(s) of the group, so that the allegiance of the group depends more than it should on the relationship of the leader(s) with the larger empire.  
Imperium sine fine  
"Empire without end". In Virgil's Aeneid, Jupiter ordered Aeneas to found a city (Rome) from which would come an everlasting, neverending empire, the empire-without-end.  
Imprimatur  
"(It) may be printed" — an authorization to publish, granted by some censoring authority (originally a Catholic Bishop).  
In absentia  
"In the absence" — *e.g.* of a trial carried out in the absence of the accused.  
In camera  
"In secret" (literally "in the chamber")  
In duplo  
"In two (copies)"  
In effigie  
"In (the form of) an image" — as opposed to "in the flesh" or "in person".  
In extenso

- "In long (form)" — *i.e.* "in full", "completely", "unabridged."
- In fidem  
"To faith" — to the verification of
- In fine (i.f.)  
"Finally."
- In flagrante delicto  
"In flaming crime" — *i.e.* "caught red-handed."
- In flore  
"In bloom."
- In foro  
"In forum" — in court.
- In illo tempore  
"At that time", found often in the Gospel lecture during the Mass. It is used to mark a time in an indetermined past.
- In loco  
"At the place" — as e.g., "the water samples were analyzed *in loco*."
- In loco parentis  
"In place of the parents" — Legal term, "assuming custodial/parental responsibility and authority".
- In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum  
"In your hands I commend (i.e., entrust) my spirit", according to Luke 23:46 the last words of Jesus on the Cross.
- In media res  
"In the middle things" or " — by Horace, refers to the literary technique of beginning a narrative in them middle of, or at a late point in, the story, after much action has already taken place. Examples include the Iliad, the Odyssey, and Paradise Lost. Compare *ab initio*.
- In memoriam  
"In memory of" — *i.e.* to remember or honor a deceased person.
- In nuce  
"In a nutshell."
- In partibus infidelium  
"The land of the infidels" — infidels here refers to non-Christians. After Islam conquered a big part of the Roman Empire, the corresponding bishoprics didn't disappear, but remained as honorific titles.
- In rerum natura  
"In the nature of things."
- In saeculo  
"In eternity", without end, forever
- In salvo  
"In safety."
- In silico  
"In silicon", an experiment or process performed as a computer simulation. Compare with *in vitro* and *in vivo*. This is pseudo-latin, though clever. The "on" ending of silicon matches no latin noun declension, though there are Greek neuter nouns that end in "-on"; the ablative case ending is simply taken by analogy from *in vivo* and *in vitro*.
- In statu nascendi  
"In the state of being born" — just as something is about to begin.
- In situ  
"In place" — in the original place, position, or arrangement. In medical contexts it implies that the condition is "still" in its original place and has not spread.
- In toto  
"In all" — "totally", "completely".
- In triplo  
"In three (copies)."
- In vitro

"In glass" — an experiment or process performed in a non-natural laboratory setting, for example in a test tube.

In vivo

"In life" — an experiment or process performed in a living specimen, as opposed to *in vitro*.

Incredibile dictu

"Incredible to say."

Index librorum prohibitorum

"List of prohibited books" — a list of books considered heretical by the Catholic Church.

Inter alia

"Among other things."

Inter arma enim silent leges

"In times of war, the law falls silent." —Cicero

Inter caetera

"Among others". Title of a papal bull.

Inter spem et metum

"Between hope and fear."

Inter vivos

"Between the living" — said of property transfers between living persons, as opposed to inheritance; often relevant to tax laws.

Integer vitae scelerisque purus

"Untouched by life and free of wickedness" — by Horace, used as a funeral hymn.

Intra muros

"Within the walls" — *i.e.* "not public"; intramural.

Intra Vires

"Within the authority," literally, the "strengths" or powers.

In usum Delphini

"In the manner of the *Dauphin*" — rare variant of *ad usum Delphini*.

Iipse dixit

"He, himself, said it" — emphasizes that some assertion comes from some authority. See appeal to authority.

Ipsissima verba

"The very words themselves" — *i.e.* "strictly word for word." see *verbatim*.

Ipsso facto

"By the fact itself."

Ita vero

"Thus (it is) true" — *i.e.* "thus indeed". A useful phrase, as the Romans had no word for "yes".

Ite, missa est

"Leave, the mass is finished" — the final words of the Roman Missal (literally "go, it is dismissed", *i.e.* the congregation is dismissed, or "go, this is the mass", *i.e.* there is no more mass to be said)

Iunctis viribus

"By united efforts."

Ius primae noctis

"Right of the first night" — the *droit de seigneur*.

## L

Lapsus calami

"A slip of the pen."

Lapsus linguae

"A slip of the tongue."

Lapsus memoriae

"Memory lapse."

Laus deo

"Praise be to God."

Legitime

"Forced share" — a legal term describing the portion of a deceased person's estate from which the immediate family cannot be disinherited.

Lex talionis

"Law of retaliation" — cf. Retributive justice, an eye for an eye.

Locus classicus

"A classic place" — a quote from a classical text used as an example of something.

Lorem ipsum

A mangled fragment from Cicero's *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* ("On the Ends (Limits) of Good and Evil," 45 BC), used as typographer's filler to show fonts (a.k.a. greeked text).

Lucus a non lucendo

"The word for 'grove' is *lucus* (=light) because it is **not** light in a grove" ? etymology by opposites. Or possibly: The light shineth not into the grove.

Lupus in fabula

"Wolf from the fable." — i.e. "Speak of the wolf, and he will come". Occurs in Terence's play *Adelphoe*.

## M

Magna cum laude

"With great honor."

Magno cum gaudio

"With great joy."

Magna Europa est Patria Nostra

"Greater Europe is our [common] Fatherland" — Political motto of pan-Europeanists

Magnum opus

"Great work" — said (sometimes ironically) of someone's masterpiece.

Mala fide

"In bad faith" — said of an act done with knowledge of its illegality, or with intention to defraud or mislead someone.

Malum discordiae

"[The] evil of discord"

Malum in se

"Wrong in itself" — a crime that is inherently wrong; cf. *malum prohibitum*.

Malum prohibitum

"Prohibited wrong" — something that society decided to forbid, but is not inherently evil.

Manu propria (m.p.)

"Done with one's own hand"

Me vexat pede

"Kick me" (literally, "annoy me by means of a foot")

Mea (maxima) culpa

"By my own (very great) fault" — used in Christian prayers and confession.

Melita, domi adsum.

"Honey, I'm home." (from the joke phrasebook, *Latin Language for All Occasions*; gramatically correct, but the phrase would be anachronistic in ancient Rome)

Memento mori

"Remember that you will die!"

Mirabile dictu

- "Wonderful to tell."  
Modus operandi (M. O.)  
"Way of working" — usually used to describe a criminal's methods.
- Modus ponens  
"Method of adding" — loosely "method of affirming", a logical rule of inference, saying that from proposition *P* and *if P then Q* one can conclude *Q*.
- Modus tollens  
"Method of subtracting" — loosely "method of denying", a logical rule of inference, saying that from propositions *not Q* and *if P then Q* one can conclude *not P*.
- Modus morons  
Not actually Latin, but a wordplay on the above two, referring to the oft-made logical fallacy that from *if P then Q* and *not P*, one would conclude *not Q*.
- Modus vivendi  
"Way of living" — *i.e.* an accommodation between disagreeing parties to allow life to go on.
- Morituri te salutant  
"They who are about to die salute you!"
- Multum in parvo  
"Much in little" — *e.g.* "Latin phrases are often *multum in parvo*, because they convey much in few words."
- Mutatis mutandis  
"Changing what is to be changed" — *i.e.*, "with the appropriate changes".

## N

- Natura non contristur  
"nature isn't sentimental"
- Nemine contradicente (nem. con.)  
"Without contestation" — literally, "with no one speaking against;" used especially in committees, where a matter may be passed *nem. con.*
- Nemo dat quod non habet  
"No one can pass better title than they have;" literally, "no one gives what he doesn't possess."
- Ne plus ultra (also *nec plus ultra, non plus ultra*)  
"nothing more beyond" literally, but figuratively it is a descriptive phrase meaning the best or most extreme example of something. The Pillars of Hercules, for example, were the *ne plus ultra* (in the literal sense) of the ancient Mediterranean world. Charles V's heraldic emblem reversed this idea, using a depiction of this phrase inscribed on the Pillars—without the negation. This represented Spain's expansion into the New World.
- Nihil obstat  
"Nothing prevents" — a notation, usually on a title page, indicating that a Catholic censor has reviewed the book and found nothing objectionable to faith or morals in its content. See also *imprimatur*.
- Nihil per os (n.p.o.)  
"Nothing by mouth" (medical shorthand)
- Nolens (aut) volens  
"Willing or not," comparable with "willy-nilly", though that is derived from Old English will-he nil-he (*i.e.* [whether] he will or [whether] he will not).
- Noli me tangere  
"Touch me not" — according to the Gospel of John, this was said by Christ to Mary Magdalene after his Resurrection.
- Nolle prosequi

"Not willing to prosecute" — a legal motion by a prosecutor or other plaintiff to drop legal charges, usually in exchange for a diversion program or out-of-court settlement.

Nolo contendere

"No Contest" a plea that can be entered on behalf of a defendant in a court that states the accused doesn't admit guilt but will accept punishment for a crime. Nolo contendere pleas cannot be used as evidence in another trial.

Nomen nescio (N. N.)

"Name unknown" — literally, "I do not know the name", implying an unknown person.

Non causa pro causa

"Non-cause for cause" — a logical fallacy.

Non compos mentis or Non compos sui

"Of unsound mind."

Non mihi solum

"Not for myself alone"

Non obstante veredicto

"Notwithstanding the verdict" — a legal motion asking the court to reverse the jury's verdict on the grounds that the jury could not reasonably have reached such a verdict.

Non sequitur

"It does not follow" — a statement that is the result of faulty logic.

Non serviam

"I will not serve."

Nota bene (n.b.)

"Note it well" — *i.e.* "please note", "important note."

Novus Ordo Seclorum

"New Order of the Ages" — motto on the Great Seal of the United States; from Vergil.

Nullam rem natam

"No thing born" — *i.e.* "nothing". It has been claimed that this expression is the origin of Italian *nulla*, French *rien*, and Spanish/Portuguese *nada*, all with the same meaning.

Numerus clausus

"Closed number."

## O

O tempora, O mores!

"Oh the times! Oh the morals!" (Marcus Tullius Cicero, Catilina I, 1, 2) also translated "Oh the times! Oh the customs!".

Oculus dexter (O.D.)

"Right eye" (ophthalmologist shorthand)

Oculus sinister (O.S.)

"Left eye" (ophthalmologist shorthand)

Odi et amo

"I hate (her), and I love (her)" — from Catullus.

Odium theologicum

"Theological hatred" — a name for the special hatred generated in theological disputes.

Opera omnia

"All works" — the collected works of some author.

Opera posthuma

"Posthumous works" — *i.e.* published after the author's death.

Opere citato (op. cit.)

"In work (already) cited" — used in academic works when referring again to the last source mentioned or used.

Ophidia in herba

"A snake in the grass" — any hidden danger or unknown risk.

Opus Dei

"The Work of God" or "God's Work".

## P

Pace

"With peace" — used to indicate that the speaker contradicts someone else: "...but acquired characteristics are not inherited, *pace* Lamarck..."

Pace tua

"With your permission."

Panem et circenses

"Bread and circus plays" — Juvenal, Satires 10, 81, describing all that was needed for the emperors to placate the Roman mob, and today used to describe any public entertainment used to distract public attention from more important matters.

Parens patriae

"Parent of the country."

Pari passu

"With equal step" — moving together, simultaneously, etc..

Passim

"Throughout", "here and there", "frequently" — of a word that occurs several times in a cited text; also, in proof reading, of a change that is to be repeated everywhere needed.

Pater familias

"Father of the family."

Pater peccavi

"Father, I have sinned" — the traditional beginning of a Catholic confession.

Pax Americana

"The Peace of America" — a euphemism for the United States of America and its sphere of influence, adapted from *Pax Romana* (q.v.)

Pax Britannica

"The Peace of Britain" — a euphemism for the British Empire, adapted from *Pax Romana* (q.v.)

Pax Dei

"Peace of God", Peace and Truce of God movement, 10th Century, France.

Pax Romana

"The Peace of Rome" — the peace forcefully imposed by the Roman Empire.

Pax Sinica

"The Peace of China" — a euphemism for periods of peace in East Asia during times of a strong Chinese empire, adapted from *Pax Romana* (q.v.)

Pax tecum

"Peace be with you (singular)."

Pax vobiscum

"Peace be with you (plural)."

Pendent opera interrupta

"The work hangs interrupted" — from the Aeneid of Virgil, Book IV

Per annum

"Per year."

Per ardua ad astra

"Through adversity to the stars." — Motto of the British Royal Air Force

Per aspera ad astra

"The hard way towards the stars," or "through hardship to the stars."

Per capsulam

- "By letter."
- Per caput or per capita  
"Per head" — *i.e.* "per person".
- per curiam  
"by [the] court."
- Per os (p.o.)  
"By mouth" (medical shorthand)
- Per procurationem (p.p.)  
Through the agency (of) — used to indicate that a person is signing a document on behalf of another person (correctly placed before the name of the person signing, but often placed before the name of the person on whose behalf the document is signed, sometimes through incorrect translation of the alternative abbreviation "per pro." as "for and on behalf of").
- Per se  
"By itself" or "in itself" — *i.e.* without referring to anything else, intrinsically, taken without qualifications, etc.; for instance, negligence per se.
- Per stirpes  
"Per branch" — used in wills to indicate that each *branch* of the testator's family should inherit equally; contrast per capita.
- Perpetuum mobile  
"Thing in perpetual motion."
- Persona non grata  
"Person not wanted" — an unwanted or undesirable person. In diplomatic contexts, a person rejected by the host government. (Unwelcome, banned)
- Petitio principii  
"Begging the principle" — *i.e.* "begging the question"; a logical fallacy.
- Pia desideria  
"Pious desires."
- Pia fraus  
"Pious betrayal" — expression from Ovid used to describe betrayal which serves Church purposes.
- Pons asinorum  
"Bridge of asses." Any obstacle that stupid people find hard to cross, originally used of Euclid's Fifth Proposition in geometry.
- Pontifex Maximus  
"The greatest high priest" — a traditional epithet of the pope and previously of the Roman emperors. The *pontifices* were the most important priestly college of the ancient Roman religion; their name is usually thought to derive from *pons facere*, 'to make a bridge', which in turn is usually linked to their religious authority over the bridges of Rome, especially the Pons Sublicius.
- Posse comitatus  
"Power of the county".
- Post cibum (p.c.)  
"After meals" (medical shorthand)
- Post facto  
"After the fact." (see ex post facto)
- Post hoc, ergo propter hoc  
"After this, therefore because of this" — a logical fallacy.
- Post meridiem (p.m.)  
"After noon" — in the period from noon to midnight.
- Post mortem  
"After death."
- Post scriptum (p.s.)  
"Post script" used to mark additions to a letter, after the signature.
- Prima facie

"At first sight" — used to designate evidence in a trial which is suggestive, but not conclusive, of something (e.g. a person's guilt).

Primum non nocere

"First, do no harm." — A medical precept, attributed to Hippocrates.

Primus inter pares

"First among equals" — a title of the Roman emperors.

Pro bono (publico)

"For the (public) good" — said of a lawyer's work that is not charged for.

Pro forma

"As a matter of form"

Pro hac vice

"for this occasion" — request of a state court to allow an out-of-state lawyer to represent a client. (see List of legal terms)

Pro studio et labore

"For hard work and labor."

Pro rata

"For the rate" — e.g. per hour.

Pro re nata (prn)

"As needed" (medical shorthand)

Pro tempore

"For the time (being)" — *i.e.* "temporary."

Profanum vulgus

"The uninitiated masses" — from Horace.

Propria manu (p.m.)

"By own hand."

Punctum saliens

"The outstanding point" — *i.e.* the essential or most notable point.

## Q

Quære

"(You might) ask..." — used to introduce questions, usually rhetorical or tangential questions.

Qualis artifex pereo!

"What a great artist dies with me!" — attributed to Nero by Suetonius.

Qua patet orbis

"As far as the world extends"

Quaque die (qd)

"Every day" (medical shorthand)

Quaque hora (qh)

"Every hour" (medical shorthand)

Quarter in die (qid)

"Four times a day" (medical shorthand)

Quid novi ex Africa?

"What's new out of Africa?" — derived from an Aristotle quote.

Quid pro quo

"A thing for a thing" — *i.e.* a favor for a favor.

Quidnunc? or Quid nunc?

"What now?" — as a noun, a *quidnunc* is a busybody or a gossip.

Quo vadis

"Where are you going?" — according to Christian legend, asked by St. Peter meeting Jesus on the Appian way in Rome.

Quo vide (q.v.)

"Which see" — used after a term or phrase that should be looked up elsewhere in the current document or book.

Quae vide (qq.v.)

"Which things see" — plural of "quo vide".

Quod erat demonstrandum (Q.E.D.)

"That which was to be demonstrated" — often written (abbreviated) at the bottom of a mathematical proof.

Quo errat demonstrator

"Where the prover errs" — a pun on *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

Quo usque tandem?

"For how much longer?" — from Cicero's speech to the Roman senate regarding the conspiracy of Catiline: *Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? i.e.* "For how much longer, Catilina, will you abuse our patience?".

## R

Rara avis

"A rare bird" — *i.e.* an extraordinary or unusual thing (from Juvenal's *Satires: rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cycno*, "a rare bird on the earth, and very like a black swan").

Ratio legis

"Legal foundation."

Reductio ad absurdum

"Reduction to absurdity" — a technique of argument that proves the thesis by showing that its opposite is absurd or logically untenable. This is an oft-used method of proof in mathematics and philosophy.

Regnat populus

"Let the People rule."

Repetitio est mater studiorum

"Repetition is the mother of study"

Requiescat in pace (R.I.P.)

"May he rest in peace" — a benediction for the dead. Often inscribed on tombstones or other grave markers.

Res ipsa loquitur

"The thing speaks for itself" — a phrase from the common law of torts that means negligence can be inferred from the fact that such an accident happened, without proof of exactly how.

Res ipsa loquitur, sed quid in infernos dicet?

"The thing speaks for itself, but what the hell did it say?" — a sarcastic pseudo-Latin commentary on *res ipsa loquitur*, reminding the listener that we must still interpret the significance of events that "speak for themselves."

Res iudicata

Literally, "Judged thing" — *i.e.* matter which has been decided by a court. Commonly, the legal concept that once a matter has been finally decided by the courts it cannot be litigated again. See also Double jeopardy

Res nullius

"Nobody's thing" — *i.e.* goods without owner.

Romani ite domum

"Romans go home" — as written one hundred times over the palace walls by Brian of Nazareth. See Monty Python's "Life of Brian"

Rosa rubicundior, lilio candidior, omnibus formosior, semper in te glorior

"Redder than the rose, whiter than the lilies, fairer than everything, I will always glory in thee."

## S

Saltus in demonstrando

"Leap in demonstration."

Salva veritate

"With truth preserved," or "saved by the truth."

Salvo errore et omissione (s.e.e.o.)

"Except for errors and omissions" — appears on statements of "account currents".

Salvo honoris titulo (SHT)

"Excluding the title" — used in writings to unfamiliar persons, as an excuse for not using the correct title.

Sancta sedes

"the Holy Chair" — *i.e.* the Papacy or the Holy See.

Sapere aude

"dare to be wise"

Sedes apostolica

"the Apostolic Chair" — *i.e.* the Papacy or the Holy See.

Sede vacante

in the absence of

Servus servorum Dei

"Servant of the servants of God" — a title for the Pope.

Semper fidelis

"Always faithful" — motto of the United States Marine Corps, often abbreviated *Semper Fi.*

Semper paratus

"Always prepared"

Semper ubi sub ubi

"Always where under where" — a Latin translation joke. Nonsensical, but the English translation is a pun of "Always wear underwear"

Senatus Populusque Romanus (SPQR)

"The Senate and the People of Rome" — *i.e.* "The Aristocrats and the Commoners", the official name of the Roman Republic. "SPQR" was carried on battle standards by the Roman Legions.

Sesquipedalia verba

"Words a foot and a half long" — long and complicated words that are used without necessity.

Sic

"Thus", "just so" — states that the preceding quoted material appears exactly that way in the source, usually despite errors of spelling, grammar, usage, or fact.

Sic itur ad astra

"Thus to the stars" — that's how to achieve fame.

Sic passim

"thus in various places" — used when referencing books; see *passim*.

Sic semper tyrannis

"Thus always to tyrants."

Signetur (sig)

"Let it be labeled" (medical shorthand)

Sine anno (s.a.)

"Without year" — used in bibliographies to indicate that the date of publication of a document is unknown.

Sine die

"Without a (set) day" — originally from old common law texts, where it indicates that a final, dispositive order has been made in the case: there is nothing left for the court to do, so no date for further proceedings is set.

- Sine ira et studio  
"Without anger or bias" — impartially. From Cornelius Tacitus, Annals 1,1.
- Sine loco (s.l.)  
"Without place" — used in bibliographies to indicate that the place of publication of a document is unknown.
- Sine nomine (s.n.)  
"Without name" — used in bibliographies to indicate that the publisher of a document is unknown.
- Sine qua non  
"Without which not" — used to denote something that is an essential part of the whole.
- Sine scientia ars nihil est  
"Art without knowledge is nothing". A skill (ars) and knowledge (scientia) are tightly interwoven and could not exist one without the other.
- Sit venia verbo  
"With apologies for the word" — *i.e.* "pardon my French."
- Stanta pede  
"On standing foot" — immediately.
- Statim (stat)  
"Immediately" (medical shorthand)
- Status quo (ante)  
"The state that was (before)" — the status of affairs or situation prior to some upsetting event.
- Stet  
"Let it stand" — marginal mark in proofreading to indicate that something previously deleted or marked for deletion should be retained.
- Stricto sensu  
"In the strict sense."
- Stupor mundi  
"Wonder of the world", the title by which Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, was known.
- Sua sponte  
"Of own accord.", legal term
- Sub Cruce Lumen  
"Under the Light of the Cross."
- Sub iudice *or* sub iudice  
"Under a judge" — said of a case that cannot be publicly discussed until it is finished.
- Sub poena duces tecum  
"Bring with you under penalty" — legal writ requiring appearance with documents, etc..
- Sub poena (subpoena)  
"Under penalty" — of a request (usually by a court) that must be complied to on pain of punishment.
- Sub rosa  
"Under the rose" — secretly (a rose was placed above a door to indicate that what was said in the room beyond was not to be repeated outside).
- Sub specie æternitatis  
"From eternity's point of view." (Spinoza, *Ethics*)
- Sui generis  
*Of its (own) kind* — in a class of its own.
- Sui juris  
*Of one's own right* — capable of (legal) responsibility; legal and ecclesiastical use.
- Sum quod eris / Fui quod sis  
"I am what you will be / I was what you are" — gravestone inscriptions that remind the reader of the inevitability of death. Also see *Tu fui, ego eris*.

Summa cum laude  
"With the highest honor."  
Summum bonum  
"The supreme good."  
Summum malum  
"The supreme evil."  
Sunt omnes uno  
"They are all one."

## T

Tabula rasa  
"Scraped tablet" — *i.e.* "a blank slate". Romans used to write on wax-covered wooden tablets, which were erased by scraping with the flat end of the stylus. John Locke used the term to describe the human mind at birth before it had acquired any knowledge.  
Tabula gratulatoria  
"List of congratulations."  
Talis qualis  
"As such"  
Taliter qualiter  
"Somewhat"  
Tempora Heroica  
"The Heroic Age."  
Ter in die (tid)  
"Thrice a day" (medical shorthand)  
Terminus ante quem  
"Date before which" - in archaeology or history refers to the date before which an artifact or feature must have been deposited.  
Terminus post quem  
"Date after which" - in archaeology or history refers to the date after which an artifact or feature must have been deposited.  
Terra firma  
"Solid ground."  
Terra incognita  
"Unknown land."  
Terra nullius  
"Empty land."  
Tertium non datur  
"No third is given" — logical axiom that a claim is either true or false, with no third option.  
Treuga Dei  
"Truce of God" — a decree by the medieval Church that all feuds should be cancelled during the Sabbath (effectively from Wednesday or Thursday night until Monday).  
Tu autem  
"You, also" — see *memento mori*.  
Tu fui, ego eris  
"I was you, you will be me" — *i.e.* "What you are, I was; what I am, you will be."; a gravestone inscription to remind the reader that death is unavoidable.  
Tu quoque fili  
"You too, son" — attributed to Julius Caesar; see *Et tu, Brute*.

## U

Ubi re vera ... or ubi revera ...

"Where(as), in reality ..."

Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant

"Where they make a wasteland, they call it peace" — Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola*, ch. 30.

Ultima ratio

"Last argument" — the last resort. Louis XIV, King of France, had *Ultima Ratio Regum* ("The last resort of kings") engraved on the cannons of his armies.

Ultra vires

"Without authority"

Unus multorum

"One of many" — an average person.

Urbi et orbi

"To the city (of Rome) and to the globe" — standard opening of Roman proclamations; also a traditional blessing by the Pope.

Ut biberent, quando (or quoniam) esse nolent

"So that they might drink, since they refused to eat" — from a story by Suetonius (*Vit. Tib. 2.2*) and Cicero (*De Natura Deorum*, 2.3). The phrase was said by Roman admiral Publius Claudius Pulcher, right before the battle of Drepana, as he threw overboard the sacred chickens which had refused to eat the grain offered them — an unwelcome omen of bad luck. So the sense is "if they do not perform as expected, they must suffer the consequences".

Ut infra

"As below."

Ut retro

"As backwards" or "as on the back side" — *i.e.* "as above" or "as on the previous page".

Ut supra

"As above."

## V

Vade mecum

"Go with me" — a *vade-mecum* or *vademecum* is an item one carries around, especially a handbook.

Vade retro!

"Go back!" — *i.e.* "step back!", "begone!" Publius Terent, *Formio* I, 4, 203.

Vade retro Satana!

"Go back, Satan!" or "Go back, Lucifer!" — implied meaning "go away, do not dare to tempt me!". From a popular Medieval Catholic exorcism formula, apparently based on a rebuke by Jesus to Peter in the Vulgate, Mark 8:33: *vade retro me, Satana*. ("step back from me, Satan!").

Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas

"Vanity, vanity, all is vanity" (Bible, Ecclesiastes, 1:2)

Vaticinium ex eventu

"Prophecy from the event" - prophecy made to look as written before the events it describes, while in fact being written afterwards.

Veni, vidi, vici

"I came, I saw, I conquered" — the full text of a message sent by Julius Caesar to the Roman Senate, to describe his battle against King Pharnakles of Pontus near Zela in 47 BC.

Vera causa

"The true cause (of)"

- Verba ita sunt intelligenda, ut res magis valeat quam pereat  
Legal phrase meaning "Words are to be so understood that the subject-matter may be preserved rather than destroyed."
- Verbatim et litteratim  
"Word by word and letter by letter."
- Verbi divini minister  
"Servant of the word of God" — *i.e.* a priest.
- Versus (vs.)  
"Against" — as in "Good *versus* Evil."
- Veto  
"I forbid" — a right to unilaterally stop a certain piece of legislation.
- Via  
"By way (of)." — "I will contact you via e-mail"
- Via media  
"Middle path" — the Church of England was said to be a *via media* between the errors of Roman Catholicism and the extremes of Protestantism.
- Vice versa  
"With places exchanged" — *i.e.* "in reverse order", "conversely".
- Victoria et Mori!  
"Victory or Death!"
- Vide infra (v.i.)  
"See below."
- Vide supra (v.s.)  
"See above."
- Videre licet (videlicet, viz.)  
"one may see" — used to introduce examples or a listing of something just named.  
(*Videlicet* is not Latin, it is an English contraction.)
- Vis legis  
"Force of the law"
- Visio dei  
"God's vision."
- Vite ante acta  
"Life before the events" — *i.e.* a previous life
- Vivat, crescat, floreat!  
"May he/she/it live, grow, and flourish!"
- Vivat Regina!  
"Long live the Queen!"
- Vivat Rex!  
"Long live the King!"
- Votum separatum  
An independent, minority voice
- Vox clamantis in deserto  
"The voice of one shouting in the desert" — thus "unheeded", "in vain."