

INFINITIVE MOOD

451. The Infinitive is properly a noun denoting the action of the verb abstractly. It differs, however, from other abstract nouns in the following points: (1) it often admits the distinction of tense; (2) it is modified by *adverbs*, not by *adjectives*; (3) it governs the same case as its verb; (4) it is limited to special constructions.

The Latin Infinitive is the dative or locative case of such a noun¹ and was originally used to denote Purpose; but it has in many constructions developed into a substitute for a finite verb. Hence the variety of its use.

In its use as a verb, the Infinitive may take a Subject Accusative (§ 397. e), originally the object of another verb on which the Infinitive depended. Thus *iubeō tē valere* is literally *I command you for being well* (cf. substantive clauses, § 562. n.).

Infinitive as Noun

452. The Infinitive, with or without a subject accusative, may be used with *est* and similar verbs (1) as the Subject, (2) in Apposition with the subject, or (3) as a Predicate Nominative.²

1. As Subject:—

dolere malum est (Fin. v. 84), *to suffer pain is an evil.*

bellum est sua vitia nosse (Att. ii. 17), *it's a fine thing to know one's own faults.*

praestat componere fluctūs (Aen. i. 135), *it is better to calm the waves.*

2. In Apposition with the Subject:—

proinde quasi iniuriam facere id demum esset imperiō uti (Sall. Cat. 12), *just as if this and this alone, to commit injustice, were to use power.*

[Here *facere* is in apposition with *id*.]

3. As Predicate Nominative:—

id est convenienter naturae vivere (Fin. iv. 41), *that is to live in conformity with nature.* [Cf. *uti* in the last example.]

NOTE 1.—An infinitive may be used as Direct Object in connection with a Predicate Accusative (§ 393), or as Appositive with such Direct Object:—

istuc ipsum non esse cum fueris miserimum putō (Tusc. i. 12), *for I think this very thing most wretched, not to be when one has been.* [Here *istuc ipsum* belongs to the noun *non esse*.]

miserari, invidere, gestire, laetari, haec omnia morbos Graeci appellant (id. iii. 7), *to feel pity, envy, desire, joy,—all these things the Greeks call diseases.*

[Here the infinitives are in apposition with *haec*.]

¹ The ending *-i* (*amare, monere, regere, audire*) was apparently locative, the ending *-i* (*amari, moneri, regi, audiri*) apparently dative; but this difference of case had no significance for Latin syntax. The general Latin restriction of the *i*-infinitives to the passive was not a primitive distinction, but grew up in the course of time.

² In these constructions the abstract idea expressed by the infinitive is represented as *having some quality* or *belonging to some thing*.

NOTE 2. — An Appositive or Predicate noun or adjective used with an infinitive in any of these constructions is put in the Accusative, whether the infinitive has a subject expressed or not. Thus, — *nōn esse cupidū pecūnia est* (Par. 51), *to be free from desires* (not to be desirous) *is money in hand*. [No Subject Accusative.]

a. The infinitive as subject is not common except with *est* and similar verbs. But sometimes, especially in poetry, it is used as the subject of verbs which are apparently more active in meaning: —

quōs omnis eadem cupere, eadem ōdisse, eadem metuere, in ūnum cōgīt (Iug. 31), *all of whom the fact of desiring, hating, and fearing the same things has united into one*.

ingenuās didicisse fidēliter artis ēmolit mōrēs (Ov. P. ii. 9. 48), *faithfully to have learned liberal arts softens the manners*.

posse loquī ēripitur (Ov. M. ii. 483), *the power of speech is taken away*.

453. Rarely the Infinitive is used exactly like the Accusative of a noun: —

beatē vivere aliī in aliō, vōs in voluptāte pōnitis (Fin. ii. 86), *a happy life different [philosophers] base on different things, you on pleasure*.

quam multa . . . facimus causā amicōrum, precārī ab indignō, supplicāre, etc. (Lael. 57), *how many things we do for our friends' sake, ask favors from an unworthy person, resort to entreaty, etc.*

nihil explorātum habeās, nē amāre quidem aut amārī (id. 97), *you have nothing assured, not even loving and being loved*.

NOTE. — Many complementary and other constructions approach a proper accusative use of the infinitive, but their development has been different from that of the examples above. Thus, — *avāritia . . . superbiam, crudelitātem, deōs neglegere, omnia vēnalia habēre edocuit* (Sall. Cat. 10), *avarice taught pride, cruelty, to neglect the gods, and to hold everything at a price*.

Infinitive as Apparent Subject of Impersonals

454. The Infinitive is used as the apparent Subject with many impersonal verbs and expressions:

Such are *libet, licet, oportet, decet, placet, vīsum est, pudet, piget, necesse est, opus est, etc.*: —

libet mihi cōsiderāre (Quinct. 48), *it suits me to consider*.

necesse est morī (Tusc. ii. 2), *it is necessary to die*.

quid attinet glōriōsē loquī nisi cōstanter loquāre (Fin. ii. 89), *what good does it do to talk boastfully unless you speak consistently?*

neque mē vixisse paenitet (id. 84), *I do not feel sorry to have lived*.

gubernāre mē taedēbat (Att. ii. 7. 4), *I was tired of being pilot*.

NOTE. — This use is a development of the Complementary Infinitive (§ 456); but the infinitives approach the subject construction and may be conveniently regarded as the subjects of the impersonals.

455. With impersonal verbs and expressions that take the Infinitive as an apparent subject, the personal subject of the action may be expressed —

1. By a Dative, depending on the verb or verbal phrase: —

rogant ut id sibi facere liceat (B. G. i. 7), *they ask that it be allowed them to do this.*

nōn lubet enim mihi dē senectūte vitam (Cat. M. 84), *for it does not please me to lament my life.*

visum est mihi dē senectūte aliquid cōscribere (id. 1), *it seemed good to me to write something about old age.*

quid est tam secundum nātūram quam senibus ēmori (id. 71), *what is so much in accordance with nature as for old men to die?*

extingui hominī suō tempore optābile est (id. 85), *for a man to die at the appointed time is desirable.*

2. By an Accusative expressed as the subject of the infinitive or the object of the impersonal: —

si licet vivere eum quem Sex. Naevius nōn volt (Quinct. 94), *if it is allowed a man to live against the will of Sextus Naevius.*

nōnne oportuit praescisse mē ante (Ter. And. 239), *ought I not to have known beforehand?*

ōrātōrem irāsci minimē decet (Tusc. iv. 54), *it is particularly unbecoming for an orator to lose his temper.*

puḍeret mē dicere (N. D. i. 109), *I should be ashamed to say.*

cōsilia ineunt quōrum eōs in vestigiō paenitere necesse est (B. G. iv. 5), *they form plans for which they must at once be sorry.*

NOTE. — Libet, placet, and visum est take the dative only; oportet, puḍet, piget, and generally decet, the accusative only; licet and necesse est take either case.

a. A predicate noun or adjective is commonly in the Accusative; but with licet regularly, and with other verbs occasionally, the Dative is used: —

expedit bonās esse vōbīs (Ter. Haut. 388), *it is for your advantage to be good.*
licuit esse ōtiōsō Themistocli (Tusc. i. 33), *Themistocles might have been inactive* (it was allowed to Themistocles to be inactive).

mihi neglegenti esse nōn licet (Att. i. 17. 6), *I must not be negligent.* [But also neglegentem.]

cūr his esse liberōs nōn licet (Flacc. 71), *why is it not allowed these men to be free?*

nōn est omnibus stantibus necesse dicere (Marc. 33), *it is not necessary for all to speak standing.*

NOTE. — When the subject is not expressed, as being indefinite (*one, anybody*), a predicate noun or adjective is regularly in the accusative (cf. § 452. 3. N.²): *as, — vel pāce vel bellō clārum fieri licet* (Sall. Cat. 3), *one can become illustrious either in peace or in war.*

Complementary Infinitive

456. Verbs which imply *another action of the same subject* to complete their meaning take the Infinitive without a subject accusative.

Such are verbs denoting *to be able, dare, undertake, remember, forget, be accustomed, begin, continue, cease, hesitate, learn, know how, fear, and the like* :—

hōc quēō dicere (Cat. M. 32), *this I can say.*

mittō quaerere (Ros. Am. 53), *I omit to ask.*

vereor laudāre praesentem (N. D. i. 58), *I fear to praise a man to his face.*

ōrō ut mātūrēs venīre (Att. iv. 1), *I beg you will make haste to come.*

oblivisci nōn possum quae volō (Fin. ii. 104), *I cannot forget that which I wish.*

dēsine id mē docēre (Tusc. ii. 20), *cease to teach me that.*

dicere solēbat, *he used to say.*

audeō dicere, *I venture to say.*

loquī posse coepī, *I began to be able to speak.*

NOTE.—The peculiarity of the Complementary Infinitive construction is that no Subject Accusative is in general admissible or conceivable. But some infinitives usually regarded as *objects* can hardly be distinguished from this construction when they have no subject expressed. Thus *volō dicere* and *volō mē dicere* mean the same thing, *I wish to speak*, but the latter is object-infinitive, while the former is not apparently different in origin and construction from *quēō dicere* (complementary infinitive), and again *volō eum dicere*, *I wish him to speak*, is essentially different from either (cf. § 563. *b*).

457. Many verbs take either a Subjunctive Clause or a Complementary Infinitive, without difference of meaning.

Such are verbs signifying *willingness, necessity, propriety, resolve, command, prohibition, effort, and the like* (cf. § 563) :—

dēcernere optābat (Q. C. iii. 11. 1), *he was eager to decide.*

optāvit ut tollerētur (Off. iii. 94), *he was eager to be taken up.*

oppugnāre contendit (B. G. v. 21), *he strove to take by storm.*

contendit ut caperet (id. v. 8), *he strove to take.*

bellum gerere cōstituit (id. iv. 6), *he decided to carry on war.*

cōstitueram ut manērem (Att. xvi. 10. 1), *I had decided to remain.*

NOTE 1.—For the infinitive with subject accusative used with some of these verbs instead of a *complementary* infinitive, see § 563.

NOTE 2.—Some verbs of these classes never take the subjunctive, but are identical in meaning with others which do :—

eōs quōs tūtārī dēbent dēserunt (Off. i. 28), *they forsake those whom they ought to protect.*

aveō pugnāre (Att. ii. 18. 3), *I'm anxious to fight.*

a. In poetry and later writers many verbs may have the infinitive, after the analogy of verbs of more literal meaning that take it in prose:—

furit tē reperire (Hor. Od. i. 15. 27), *he rages to find thee.* [A forcible way of saying *cupit* (§§ 457, 563. b).]

saevit exstinguere nōmen (Ov. M. i. 200), *he rages to blot out the name.*

fuge quaerere (Hor. Od. i. 9. 13), *forbear to ask* (cf. § 460. n. 1).

parce piās scelerāre manūs (Aen. iii. 42), *forbear to defile your pious hands.*

458. A Predicate Noun or Adjective after a complementary infinitive takes the case of the subject of the main verb:—

fieri que studēbam eius prōdentiā doctior (Lael. 1), *I was eager to become more wise through his wisdom.*

sciō quam soleās esse occupātus (Fam. xvi. 21. 7), *I know how busy you usually are* (are wont to be).

brevis esse labōrō, obscurus fiō (Hor. A. P. 25), *I struggle to be brief, I become obscure.*

Infinitive with Subject Accusative

459. The Infinitive with Subject Accusative is used with verbs and other expressions of *knowing, thinking, telling, and perceiving* (*Indirect Discourse*, § 579):—

dicit montem ab hostibus tenēri (B. G. i. 22), *he says that the hill is held by the enemy.* [Direct: *mōns ab hostibus tenētur.*]

Infinitive of Purpose

460. In a few cases the Infinitive retains its original meaning of Purpose.

a. The infinitive is used in isolated passages instead of a subjunctive clause after *habēō, dō, ministrō*:—

tantum habēō pollicēri (Fam. i. 5 a. 3), *so much I have to promise.* [Here the more formal construction would be *quod pollicear.*]

ut Iovī bibere ministrāret (Tusc. i. 65), *to serve Jove with wine* (to drink).

meridīē bibere datō (Cato R. R. 89), *give* (to) *drink at noonday.*

b. *Parātus, suētus*, and their compounds, and a few other participles (used as adjectives), take the infinitive like the verbs from which they come:—

id quod parātī sunt facere (Quint. 8), *that which they are ready to do.*

adsuefactī superārī (B. G. vi. 24), *used to being conquered.*

currū succēdere suētī (Aen. iii. 541), *used to being harnessed to the chariot.*

cōpiās bellāre cōnsuētās (B. Afr. 73), *forces accustomed to fighting.*

NOTE.—In prose these words more commonly take the Gerund or Gerundive construction (§ 503 ff.) either in the genitive, the dative, or the accusative with ad:—
 insuētus nāvigandī (B. G. v. 6), *unused to making voyages.*
 alendis liberis suētī (Tac. Ann. xiv. 27), *accustomed to supporting children.*
 corpora insuēta ad onera portanda (B. C. i. 78), *bodies unused to carry burdens.*

c. The poets and early writers often use the infinitive to express purpose when there is no analogy with any prose construction:—

filius intrō iit vidēre quid agat (Ter. Hec. 345), *your son has gone in to see what he is doing.* [In prose: the supine *visum.*]

nōn ferrō Libycōs populāre Penātis vēnimus (Aen. i. 527), *we have not come to lay waste with the sword the Libyan homes.*

lōricam dōnat habēre virō (id. v. 262), *he gives the hero a breastplate to wear.*
 [In prose: *habendam.*]

NOTE.—So rarely in prose writers of the classic period.

For the Infinitive used instead of a Substantive Clause of Purpose, see § 457.

For *tempus est abire*, see § 504. n. 2.

Peculiar Infinitives

461. Many Adjectives take the Infinitive in poetry, following a Greek idiom:—

dūrus compōnere versūs (Hor. S. i. 4. 8), *harsh in composing verse.*

cantārī dignus (Ecl. v. 54), *worthy to be sung.* [In prose: *quī cantētur.*]

fortis tractāre serpentis (Hor. Od. i. 37. 26), *brave to handle serpents.*

cantāre peritī (Ecl. x. 32), *skilled in song.*

faciles aures praebēre (Prop. iii. 14. 15), *ready to lend an ear.*

nescia vincī pectora (Aen. xii. 527), *hearts not knowing how to yield.*

tē vidēre aegrōtī (Plaut. Trin. 75), *sick of seeing you.*

a. Rarely in poetry the infinitive is used to express result:—

figit equum docilem magister ire viam quā mōnstret eques (Hor. Ep. i. 2. 64),
the trainer makes the horse gentle so as to go in the road the rider points out.

hic levāre . . . pauperem labōribus vocātus audit (Hor. Od. ii. 18. 38), *he, when called, hears, so as to relieve the poor man of his troubles.*

NOTE.—These poetic constructions were originally regular and belong to the Infinitive as a noun in the Dative or Locative case (§ 451). They had been supplanted, however, by other more formal constructions, and were afterwards restored in part through Greek influence.

b. The infinitive occasionally occurs as a pure noun limited by a demonstrative, a possessive, or some other adjective:—

hōc nōn dolēre (Fin. ii. 18), *this freedom from pain.* [Cf. *tōtum hōc beātē vivere* (Tusc. v. 33), *this whole matter of the happy life.*]

nostrum vivere (Pers. i. 9), *our life (to live):*

scīre tuum (id. i. 27), *your knowledge (to know).*

Exclamatory Infinitive

462. The Infinitive, with Subject Accusative,¹ may be used in Exclamations (cf. § 397. *d*):—

tē in tantās aerumnās propter mē incidisse (Fam. xiv. 1), *alas, that you should have fallen into such grief for me!*

mēne inceptō dēsistere victam (Aen. i. 37), *what! I beaten desist from my purpose?*

NOTE 1. — The interrogative particle *-ne* is often attached to the emphatic word (as in the second example).

NOTE 2. — The Present and the Perfect Infinitive are used in this construction with their ordinary distinction of time (§ 486).

a. A subjunctive clause, with or without *ut*, is often used elliptically in exclamatory questions. The question may be introduced by the interrogative *-ne*:—

quamquam quid loquor? tē ut ūlla rēs frangat (Cat. i. 22), *yet why do I speak? [the idea] that anything should bend you!*

egone ut tē interpellem (Tusc. ii. 42), *what, I interrupt you?*

ego tibi irāscerer (Q. Fr. i. 3), *I angry with you?*

NOTE. — The Infinitive in exclamations usually refers to something actually occurring; the Subjunctive, to something contemplated.

Historical Infinitive

463. The Infinitive is often used for the Imperfect Indicative in narration, and takes a subject in the Nominative:—

tum Catilina pollicērī novās tabulās (Sall. Cat. 21), *then Catiline promised abolition of debts (clean ledgers).*

ego instāre ut mihi respondēret (Verr. ii. 188), *I kept urging him to answer me.*
 pars cēdere, alii insequī; neque signa neque ordinēs observāre; ubi quemque periculum cēperat, ibi resistere ac prōpulsāre; arma, tēla, equī, virī, hostēs atque civēs permixtī; nihil cōsiliō neque imperiō agī; fors omnia regere (Iug. 51), *a part give way, others press on; they hold neither to standards nor ranks; where danger overtook them, there each would stand and fight; arms, weapons, horses, men, foe and friend, mingled in confusion; nothing went by counsel or command; chance ruled all.*

NOTE. — This construction is not strictly *historical*, but rather *descriptive*, and is never used to state a mere historical fact. It is rarely found in subordinate clauses. Though occurring in most of the writers of all periods, it is most frequent in the historians Sallust, Livy, Tacitus. It does not occur in Suetonius.

¹ This construction is elliptical; that is, the thought is quoted in Indirect Discourse, though no verb of *saying* etc. is expressed or even, perhaps, implied (compare the French *dire que*). Passages like *hancine ego ad rem nātam miseram mē memorābō?* (Plaut. Rud. 188) point to the origin of the construction.