

**P**erfect Tense Verbs; Perfect Stem, Perfect Active Tense of All Conjugations;  
Perfect Tense of *Sum* and *Possum*; Dative of Possession



Oil painting of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. By Jean Baptiste Genillon (1750–1829).

## MEMORĀBILE DICTŪ

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### **Quid sī nunc caelum ruat?**

“What if the sky should fall now?” (Terence, *The Self-Tormentor*, 719)

A proverbial saying for anything regarded as improbable and beyond our power.

## READING

Born into a wealthy northern Italian family in about 61 CE, Gāius Plīnius Caecilius Secundus is known to us as Pliny, and specifically as Pliny the Younger, to distinguish him from his uncle and adopted father Pliny the Elder (ca. 23/24–79 CE). His career in public administration culminated in his governorship of Bithynia, a province in what is today Turkey. He appears to have died in around 112–113 CE.

An individual of immense learning and oratorical talent, Pliny has left us ten books of letters that offer a vivid picture of upper-class life during the Roman Empire at the height of its prosperity and power.

The following passage is an adapted and abbreviated version of the sixteenth letter in his sixth book of letters. Here he describes the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which destroyed the towns of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae on the Bay of Naples in 79 CE. In this letter he also relates the death of his uncle, author of the *Historia Natūrālis*, “Natural History,” a multi-volume encyclopedia of lore about the human as well as natural world.

### DĒ MONTIS VESUVIĪ INCENDIŌ

1 Avunculus meus Mīsēnī erat classis praefectus. Eō diē, quō tantae  
clādis initium fuit, avunculus forīs iacēbat librīsque studēbat. Māter  
mea eī nūbem subitō ostendit novam et inūsītātā, quae in caelō prope  
montem Vesuvium vidēbātur esse. Nūbēs fōrmam habuit similem  
5 fōrmae, quam in arboribus saepe vidēmus. Nam summa nūbēs in  
multās partēs sicut in rāmōs sēparābātur. Avunculus, homō rērum  
nātūrae valdē studiōsus, causam nūbis intellegere cupīvit. Iussit igitur  
nāvēs parārī: nam ad lītus nāvigāre cupīvit, quod est prope montem  
Vesuvium. Deinde nauta epistolam avunculō dedit. “Fēmina,” inquit  
10 nauta, “quae prope montem Vesuvium habitat, epistolam ad tē mīsīt.”  
Avunculus epistolam lēgit et statim intellēxit in monte Vesuviō esse  
incendium māgnū: fēminam perīculum timēre nāvibusque fugere  
cupere. Animus fortis avunculō erat. Cōsiliū igitur novum cēpit. Ad  
hominēs nāvigāre dēcrēvit, quī prope montem Vesuvium habitābant, et  
15 eōs perīculō māgnō liberāre. Nam saxa et cinerēs calidī ē caelō in eōs  
cadēbant. Illūc igitur nāvigāvit, sed numquam revēnit. Ibi enim fūmus  
fūnestus et cinerēs eum cum multīs aliīs oppressērunt.



## READING VOCABULARY

\*avunculus, avunculi, m. – uncle  
 \*caelum, caeli, n. – sky, heaven, weather  
 calidus, calida, calidum – hot  
 \*causa, causae, f. – cause, reason  
 cēpit cōnsilium – he made a plan  
 \*cinis, cineris, m. – ash  
 \*clādēs, clādis, f. – disaster  
 \*classis, classis, f. – fleet  
 cupīvit – wanted, desired  
 dēcrēvit – he decided  
 dedit – gave  
 eō diē – on that day  
 \*fēmina, fēminae, f. – woman  
 forīs (adv.) – outside  
 fuit – was  
 \*fūmus, fūmī, m. – smoke  
 \*fūnestus, fūnesta, fūnestum – deadly  
 habuit – had  
 \*igitur (conj.) – therefore (usually the second word in its clause)  
 illūc (adv.) – to that place, thither  
 \*incendium, incendiī, n. – conflagration, eruption  
 initium, initiī, n. – beginning  
 intellēxit – understood  
 inūsītātus, inūsītāta, inūsītātum – strange, unusual  
 iussit – he ordered

\*lēgit – read  
 \*lītus, lītoris, n. – shore  
 \*māter, mātris, f. – mother  
 Mīsēnī – at Misenum (*Mīsēnum*, ī, n. – a base for the imperial Roman navy in the Bay of Naples)  
 mīsīt – sent  
 \*mōns, montis, m. – mountain  
 \*nāvis, nāvis, f. – ship  
 nāvigāvit – he sailed  
 \*nūbēs, nūbis, f. – cloud  
 \*numquam (adv.) – never  
 \*oppressērunt – overwhelmed, suppressed  
 ostendit – pointed out  
 \*pars, partis, f. – part  
 praefectus, praefectī, m. – prefect, commander, chief  
 rāmus, rāmī, m. – branch  
 rērum nātūra, nātūrae, f. – nature  
 revēnit – he returned  
 \*studeō, studēre, studuī, — + dative – to study, to be eager for, to be interested in  
 studiōsus, studiōsa, studiōsum + genitive – interested in, a student of  
 summus, summa, summum – the top of  
 Vesuvius, Vesuviī, m. – (Mount) Vesuvius  
 \*Words marked with an asterisk will need to be memorized later in the chapter.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What event interrupted the studies of Pliny's uncle?
2. What did Pliny's uncle decide to do?
3. What changed his mind?
4. What happened to Pliny's uncle at the end of the story?

# LANGUAGE FACT I

## PERFECT TENSE VERBS

In the Latin reading passage there are some new forms of verbs already treated in earlier chapters. These are forms of the perfect tense, a tense that refers primarily to past time:

*cēpit* “s/he/it took” (perfect tense of *capiō*)

*dedit* “s/he/it gave” (perfect tense of *dō*)

*fuit* “s/he/it was” (perfect tense of *sum*)

*habuit* “s/he/it had” (perfect tense of *habēō*)

In the same passage there are also perfect tense forms of verbs that have not appeared in previous chapters.

*lēgit* “s/he read” (perfect tense of *legō*)

The meaning of the perfect differs in subtle ways from the imperfect—the past tense introduced in Chapter 11. While the imperfect tense refers to a **continuing** action or state in the past, the perfect indicates either a single act in the past or a **completed** action.

For example, *dīcēbat*, means “s/he was saying” (i.e., a continuing action), but *dīxit* (the same verb in the perfect tense) usually means “s/he said” or “s/he did say” (once and for all).

But the perfect has yet another distinctive meaning. It can refer to an action completed just before the present time. In English the auxiliary verb “have” or “has” indicates this distinction. In Latin this nuance is clear from the context (e.g., adverbs may indicate that an action has just been completed). In the following sentences the verb *legere* (“to read”) is used in the imperfect tense and in both meanings of the perfect tense.

*Librum legēbat.* “S/he was reading the book.”

*Librum legēbat. Deinde dīxit: “Librum tandem lēgī.”* “S/he was reading the book. Then s/he said: “At last I have read the book.”

*Librum lēgit.* “S/he read the book.”

When the past action is negative, or is to be emphasized, “did” is used in the translation.

*Librum nōn lēgī.* “I did not read the book.”

*Librum lēgī.* “I did read the book.”

### ► EXERCISE 1

Find and translate nine more perfect tense forms from the Latin reading passage.

# VOCABULARY TO LEARN

## NOUNS

avunculus, avunculī, m. – uncle  
caelum, caelī, n. – sky, heaven, weather  
causa, causae, f. – cause, reason  
cinis, cineris, m. – ash  
clādēs, clādis, f. – disaster  
classis, classis, f. – fleet, class (of people)  
fēmina, fēminae, f. – woman  
fūmus, fūmī, m. – smoke  
incendium, incendiī, n. – conflagration, eruption  
lītus, lītoris, n. – shore  
māter, mātris, f. – mother  
mōns, montis, m. – mountain  
nāvis, nāvis, f. – ship  
nūbēs, nūbis, f. – cloud  
pars, partis, f. – part

## ADJECTIVE

fūnestus, fūnesta, fūnestum – deadly

## VERBS

legō, legere, lēgī, lēctum – to read, to choose  
opprimō, opprimere, oppressī, oppressum – to overwhelm, suppress  
studeō, studēre, studuī, — + dative – to study, to be eager for, to be interested in

## ADVERB

numquam – never

## CONJUNCTION

igitur – therefore (usually the second word in its clause)

## ► EXERCISE 2

Find the English derivatives based on the Vocabulary to Learn in the following sentences. Write the corresponding Latin word.

1. Celestial phenomena greatly interest me.
2. Archaeologists found several cinerary urns at that site.
3. These people are introducing a totally subjective mode of thinking in which causality plays no role.
4. Terrible destruction was caused in the city by incendiary bombs.
5. Naval architecture is a very exacting science.
6. Karl Marx advocated an entire philosophy of history based on class conflict.
7. Your teacher has a very avuncular manner.
8. The littoral region here sustains a wide variety of plant and animal life.
9. This part of the hospital is the maternity ward.
10. Underprivileged people in the Roman world were cruelly oppressed.
11. The gender of this noun is feminine.
12. The carpet in the apartment was so dirty it had to be fumigated.
13. Why were you not present at the lecture?
14. I agree with you only partially.
15. I will be a lifelong student.

### ► EXERCISE 3

Translate each sentence with special attention to the previously discussed meanings of the perfect tense verb in parentheses.

**Example:** “Perīculum nōn intellēxī (first person singular), sed nunc intellegō,” inquit avunculus. “Iam igitur dēcrēvī (first person singular) ad hominēs, quī prope montem habitant, nāvigāre.”  
“I did not understand the danger, but now I understand <it>,” said uncle. “Therefore I have already decided to sail to the people who live near the mountain.”

1. Nautae prope lītus manēbant. Caelum semper cōspiciēbant. Deinde cōsiliū cēpērunt (third person plural). Nāvem parāre dēcrēvērunt (third person plural).
2. Epistulam ad hominēs, quī in viā exspectābant, statim mīsimus (first person plural), et eōs ad nōs venīre iussimus (first person plural).
3. Nautās exspectābāmus. Nunc eōrum nāvēs vidēre possumus. “Nautae,” inquit amīcus meus, “vērunt (third person plural)! ”

## LANGUAGE FACT II

### PERFECT STEM, PERFECT ACTIVE TENSE OF ALL CONJUGATIONS

The perfect is not only distinctive in its meaning; it has a series of forms that are very distinctive too.

You have already learned that **the principal parts** of a verb are used to make different verb forms. Most verbs have four principal parts. The first and second principal parts are important for the present, imperfect, and future tenses discussed in previous chapters. But the forms of the perfect active tense are derived from the **third** principal part of any verb.

Below are the principal parts of a verb from each conjugation. Note carefully the third principal part: this principal part is the form of the first person singular of the perfect active indicative.

First conjugation:	parō, parāre, <b>parāvī</b> , parātum – I prepare
Second conjugation:	teneō, tenēre, <b>tenuī</b> , tentum – I hold
Third conjugation:	dīcō, dīcere, <b>dīxī</b> , dictum – I say
Fourth conjugation:	audiō, audīre, <b>audīvī</b> , auditum – I hear
Third conjugation (-iō):	capiō, capere, <b>cēpī</b> , captum – I take

Learning the perfect forms is much easier than it might at first appear, because the perfect active endings are the same for **all** four conjugations. These endings are added to the perfect stem, which is found by dropping the **-ī** found in the third principal part.



Here are some general patterns for forming the perfect stem:

- Many first conjugation verbs form their perfect stem by adding **-v-** after the **-ā-** in the present stem (*parāvī*).
- Many fourth conjugation verbs form their perfect stem by adding **-v-** to the **-ī-** in the present stem (*audīvī*).
- Many second conjugation verbs have a perfect stem that ends in **-u-** before the **-ī** of the perfect ending (as in *tenuī* above).

**None of these patterns is absolutely consistent.**

Remember: add the same endings to the perfect stem of any verb, regardless of conjugation. Here is the perfect active of *parō* and *capiō*. Since the endings are the same, you do not need to learn different paradigms for all conjugations.

Perfect Active: <i>parō</i>			
Singular			
First Person	parāv-ī	parāvī	I prepared, did prepare (or) I have prepared
Second Person	parāv-istī	parāvistī	you prepared, did prepare (or) you have prepared
Third Person	parāv-it	parāvit	s/he/it prepared, did prepare (or) s/he/it has prepared
Plural			
First Person	parāv-imus	parāvimus	we prepared, did prepare (or) we have prepared
Second Person	parāv-istis	parāvistis	you prepared, did prepare (or) you have prepared
Third Person	parāv-ērunt	parāvērunt	they prepared, did prepare (or) they have prepared

Perfect Active: <i>capiō</i>			
Singular			
First Person	cēp-ī	cēpī	I took, did take (or) I have taken
Second Person	cēp-istī	cēpistī	you took, did take (or) you have taken
Third Person	cēp-it	cēpit	s/he/it took, did take (or) s/he/it has taken
Plural			
First Person	cēp-imus	cēpimus	we took, did take (or) we have taken
Second Person	cēp-istis	cēpistis	you took, did take (or) you have taken
Third Person	cēp-ērunt	cēpērunt	they took, did take (or) they have taken



### STUDY TIP

When you learn a new verb, learn all four principal parts. The endings of the perfect active are themselves very simple, and the same for all the conjugations.

## ► EXERCISE 4

Change each infinitive into the perfect active form indicated in parentheses. Translate the changed form.

**Example:** iubēre (perfect active second person singular)  
iussisti you ordered/did order/have ordered

1. sēparāre (perfect active third person plural)
2. legere (perfect active first person plural)
3. discēdere (perfect active third person singular)
4. tangere (perfect active second person singular)
5. ārdēre (perfect active third person plural)
6. respondēre (perfect active second person plural)
7. cadere (perfect active second person singular)
8. dēlēre (perfect active third person plural)
9. opprimere (perfect active third person singular)
10. negligere (perfect active first person plural)
11. stāre (perfect active third person plural)

Daylight view of the excavated ruins of Pompeii with Mt. Vesuvius in the background.





## ► EXERCISE 5

Change the following present tense verbs into the perfect, keeping the same person and number. Translate the changed sentence. The Reading Vocabulary may be consulted.

**Example:** Ad hominēs nāvigāre dēcernō.

Ad hominēs nāvigāre dēcrēvī. I decided to sail to the people.

1. Ego et avunculus librōs legimus.
2. Nūbem novam in caelō cōspicimus.
3. Hominēs rērum nātūrae studiōsī causam nūbis novae intellegunt.
4. Dīcit nauta: “Mē iubēs nāvēs statim parāre.”
5. Perīculum valdē timētis. Novum igitur cōnsilium capere dēbētis.
6. Saxa et cinerēs calidī ē caelō subitō cadunt.
7. Eōrum epistolam iam legō.

## LANGUAGE FACT III

### PERFECT TENSE OF *SUM* AND *POSSUM*

You have already learned the principal parts of the irregular verbs *sum* and *possum*. You will remember that they lack a fourth principal part, but each has a third principal part, which is the first person singular of the perfect tense.

*sum, esse, fuī, — —* – to be

*possum, posse, potuī, — —* – to be able



#### BY THE WAY

*Sum* and *possum* have no passive forms.

Now it is easy to supply all the forms of the perfect active for each verb.

### Perfect Tense of *sum*

#### Singular

First Person	fu-ī	fuī	I was (or) I have been
Second Person	fu-istī	fuistī	you were (or) you have been
Third Person	fu-it	fuit	s/he/it was (or) s/he/it has been

#### Plural

First Person	fu-imus	fuiumus	we were (or) we have been
Second Person	fu-istis	fuistis	you were (or) you have been
Third Person	fu-ērunt	fuērunt	they were (or) they have been

### Perfect Tense of *possum*

#### Singular

First Person	potu-ī	potuī	I was able, could (or) I have been able
Second Person	potu-istī	potuistī	you were able, could (or) you have been able
Third Person	potu-it	potuit	s/he/it was able, could (or) s/he/it has been able

#### Plural

First Person	potu-imus	potuimus	we were able, could (or) we have been able
Second Person	potu-istis	potuistis	you were able, could (or) you have been able
Third Person	potu-ērunt	potuērunt	they were able, could (or) they have been able



Statue of a dancing faun in the *impluvium* of the atrium in the House of the Faun in Pompeii.



## ► EXERCISE 6

Translate into Latin. The Reading Vocabulary may be consulted.

1. Were you (plural) able to see the stones and hot ashes in the sky?
2. At that time you were able to send a man to the people who lived near Mount Vesuvius.
3. We were not able to read the woman's words.
4. Then there was suddenly a conflagration in the mountain.
5. I have already been able to read the letter of the woman. Now I am preparing the ships.
6. You were able to free the people from great danger.

## LANGUAGE FACT IV

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### DATIVE OF POSSESSION

In the passage at the beginning of this chapter you might have thought the following sentence was distinctive. Here you see a usage of the dative case that has not been discussed so far.

*Animus fortis avunculō erat.*  
My uncle had a brave spirit.

This sentence has been translated with the verb “have,” even though the Latin verb “to have” is not present. The person who owns or has something may be expressed in the dative case with some form of the verb *esse* (“to be”). Here the Latin literally says “For/to my uncle there was a brave spirit.” The dative of possession emphasizes the fact of possession.

Another example:

*Mihi sunt multī librī.*  
I have many books.



#### BY THE WAY

You can, of course, express possession using the verb *habeō*. In this case, the dative of possession is not used:

*Multōs librōs habeō.*

## ► EXERCISE 7

Translate into Latin in two ways, using both the verb *habēō* and the dative of possession.

**Example:** I have many friends.

*Multōs amīcōs habēō. Mihi sunt multī amīcī.*

1. Do you have an uncle?
2. He has a small mouth.
3. We have cruel enemies.
4. What names do you (plural) have?
5. They have rustic villas.



A street in excavated Pompeii. Note the narrow road, the sidewalk, and in the middle of the street are raised stones that allowed people to cross the road, which might be filled with water or garbage.



## ► EXERCISE 8

Translate the following passage into English. Refer both to the Reading Vocabulary and the words explained below.

**Plinius:** Nūbem māgnam, quae est in caelō prope montem Vesuvium, iam cōspexit māter. Nūbemne, avuncule, vidēre potes?

**Avunculus:** Nūbem vidēre possum. Sum senex, sed mihi sunt oculī bonī atque validī.

**Plinius:** Quae est haec nūbēs? Ēius fōrma mihi vidētur esse nova. Tālis forma arboribus, nōn nūbibus esse solet.

**Avunculus:** Ubi primum māter tua nūbem mihi ostendit, eam esse inūsītātam intellēxī. Ad montem igitur nāvīgāre causamque nūbis investigāre cupīvī. Sed cōsiliū mūtāvī.

**Plinius:** Cūr cōsiliū mūtāvistī?

**Avunculus:** Fēmina, cūius villa ā monte Vesuviō nōn longē est, epistulam ad mē mīsīt, in quā dixit flammās ē monte venīre: saxa cinerēsque calidōs in hominēs cadere: ibi esse perīculum māgnū.

**Plinius:** Tūne igitur dē hominibus, quī ibi habitant, cōgitāvistī?

**Avunculus:** Ita vērō.

**Plinius:** Quid faciēs?

**Avunculus:** Illūc nāvīgābō hominēsque perīculō māgnō liberābō.

**Plinius:** Animus tibi est fortis!

haec (feminine demonstrative) – this  
investigō, investigāre, investigāvī, investigātum – to  
trace out, investigate  
ita vērō – yes indeed

mūtō, mūtāre, mūtāvī, mūtātum – to change  
tālis, tāle – such a  
ubi primum – as soon as  
validus, valida, validum – healthy, strong

## TALKING

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*fēriae, fēriārum, f. pl.* – vacation

*fēriās agere* – have a holiday

*acta, actae, f.* – the (sandy) seashore

*apricor, apricārī* – to sunbathe

*assāre in crāticulā (assō, assāre, assāvī)* – to barbecue

*folle volātīli lūdō (lūdere, lūsī, lūsum)* – to play volleyball

*harēna, harēnae, f.* – sand

*natō, natāre, natāvī, —* – to swim

*sōl, sōlis, m.* – the sun

*sōle adustus, adusta, adustum* – suntanned

*sub dīvō* – in the open, under the sky

*umbella, umbellae, f.* – sunshade, umbrella

*unguentum, unguentī, n.* – sunscreen

*natātōrium, natātōriī, n.* – swimming pool

## RELAXING AT THE BEACH

**Helena:** *Quandō (when), Christīna, ē lītore in urbem revēnistī (returned)?*

**Christīna:** *Et ego et parentēs herī (yesterday) revēnimus. Fēriās (holidays) bonās ēgimus. Lītus enim valdē amāmus.*

**Marīa:** *Adusta sōle mihi nōn vidēris. Nōnne (surely) tū et parentēs in actā aprīcārī solētis?*

**Christīna:** *Numquam forīs (outside) iacuimus, nisi (unless) unguentō oblitī (smeared). Medici dīcunt hominēs nōn dēbere diū in sōle manēre nisi unguentīs oblitōs.*

**Helena:** *Quid aliud cum parentibus in lītore fēcistī?*

**Christīna:** *Parva castella (castles) ex harēnā aedificāvimus. Folle volātīlī lūsimus. Vespere (in the evening) cibum (food) in crāticulā assāre sub dīvō semper solēbāmus.*

**Mārcus:** *Ea omnia in terrā fēcistī. Aquamne timuistī? Nōnne natāre solēbātis?*

**Christīna:** *Māne (in the morning) in natātōriō natāre solēbam. Hōrīs postmeridiānis (in the afternoon hours) autem saepe in actā sub (under) umbellā iacēbam prope mare librīsque studēbam.*

**Mārcus:** *Etiam in lītore, etiam in fēriīs librōs cūrābās! Quī homō sīc (so) umquam fuit dīligēns (diligent) ut (as) tū?!*

**Christīna:** *In scholā Latīnā (in the Latin class) ante fēriās dē montis Vesuviī incendiō lēgimus. Eō tempore, quō incendium in monte fuit, Plīnius et ēius avunculus forīs iacēbant librīsque studēbant!*