THE ABLATIVE

The Ablative Case is characterized by three broad uses: 1) **Separation** (*from*); 2) **Instrumentality or Means** (*by, with*); 3) **Locality** (*at or in a place or time*).  

I. **Separative Ablative** (*ablativeus separativus*)

A. **Ablative with Separative Prepositions, Verbs and Adjectives.**

1. The ablative is used with separative prepositions ā, *ab* (*abs*), dē, *ex, sine*.
   - *Ab* or *a* to denote personal agent in the passive voice (*from whom or which the action proceeds*): *ab elephantis obtūtī*, trampled by elephants. (C. I.E.2)
   - But the ablative of means (always *without* a preposition) is used to denote the instrument by which an action is performed: *Marcus gladiō interfactus est*. (Cf. II.A.1)
   - *Ab, a* or *ex* to express *point of view from which*: ā *tergo*, from the rear; ā *latere*, from the side; *ex hāc parte*, on this side.
   - *De* or *ex* to show *condition or situation from which*: *ex vinculis causam dicere*, to plead a cause in chains; *fiēri dē rhētore cōnsul*, to become consul from professor.
   - *Ex* to show *material of which a thing is made*: pōcula *ex aurō*, cups of (= made from) gold. (The preposition in this use is freely omitted by poets).
   - The ablative is always used with *cōram, palam, prae*, and *prō*. The original idea was one of separation: *cōram*, in the presence of, *prō*, in front of, etc.

2. Verbs meaning "keep away from, free from, deprive, lack," etc. take the ablative. The preposition (if used) is *ab, dē, or ex*.
   - A preposition is typically used with verbs of literal separation. But if the verb itself contains a separative preposition (*ab, dē, or ex*), the preposition is often omitted: *ab urbe proficīscī*, to set out from the city *castrīs ēgressī* or *ē castrīs ēgressī*, going out of the camp
   - The preposition is regularly omitted with verbs of figurative separation only: *magistrātū sē abdicāvit*, he abdicated his office (literally: "... himself from ...") *proellīō supersēdēre*, to refrain from battle

3. Adjectives of separation denoting "freedom from" or "want of" take the ablative, with or without *ab*.
   - In Cicero, these adjectives are *liber*, free; *pūrus*, pure; *nūdus*, stripped; *orbus*, bereft; *vacuus*, empty.
   - In later poetry and prose, these adjectives may take the genitive, in analogy to adjectives with the objective genitive.

B. **Ablative with Verbs and Adjectives of Difference or Aversion**

Verbs and adjectives of difference or aversion take the ablative with *ab*.

*ab eō dissentiō*, I disagree with him
*abhorret ā meīs mōribus*, it is foreign to my ways
*Aliēnus* may take or omit the preposition: *aliēnum dignitātē imperī*.
*Aliēnus* may also take a genitive or dative.

Late writers freely employ the dative with these verbs.

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1No system has fully categorized the wide variety of uses of the ablative. This system is adopted from Greenough’s *New Latin Grammar*, with borrowings from Hale & Buck’s *A Latin Grammar* and Bradley’s revision of Arnold’s *Latin Prose Composition*. 

3. Certain ablatives of comparison are used for brevity in place of clauses:
   opīniōne, spē, solitō, dictō, aequō, crēdibili, iūstō, exspectātioñe, necessārio
   celerius opīniōni, sooner than expected
   sērius spe omnium, later than all hoped.
   amnis solitō citātior, a stream swifter than usual
   gravius aequō, more seriously than was right
   longius necessārio, farther than was necessary

II. Instrumental Ablative (ablativus instrumentalis)

A. Ablative of Means
1. The ablative of means denotes the means or instrument of an action.
   meīs labōribus rem pūblicam liberāvī, by my toils I have saved the state
   gladiīs pugnātum est, the battle was fought with swords
   litterīs certior fiēbat, he was informed by (means of) dispatches
   But means may also be expressed by per + accusative: cōnsulūsī mē per litterās,
   you consulted me by letter.
2. The ablative is used with verbs and adjectives of filling, abounding, etc.
   Deus bonīs omnibus explēvit mundum, God has filled the world with all good things
   opīmus praeda, rich with spoils
   vita plēna et cōnferā voluptātibus, a life filled and crowded with delights
3. The deponents ětor, ětor, ěngor, potior, vescor (with their compounds)
   govern the ablative.
   Potior sometimes takes the genitive, as in potīrī rērum, to be master of affairs.
4. Opus est and ěsus est (impersonal expressions) take an ablative of the thing
   needed.
   magistrātibus opus est, there is need of magistrates
   nunc vīribus ěsus est, now there is need of strength
   But the ablative with ěsus is rare in classical prose.
   Opus is often used as a predicate, with the thing needed in the nominative as subject.
   dux nōbis opus est, we need a leader

B. Ablative of Manner (ablativus modi)
1. The manner in which an action is performed is expressed by the ablative,
   with cum if no adjective is present. If an adjective modifies the noun, cum
   is optional but, if used, is placed between adjective and noun.
   cum celeritāte vēnit, he came with speed
   magnā celeritāte vēnit, he came with great speed
   magnā cum celeritāte vēnit, he came with great speed
2. Certain words regularly take the ablative without preposition, having the
   force practically of adverbs:
   casū, by chance
   cōnsiliō, by design
   cōnsultō, deliberately
   forte, by chance
   fraude, deceitfully
   iūre, rightly
   iniūriā, unjustly
   silentō, silently
   vī, by force
E. Ablative of Quality (Descriptive Ablative)

1. Quality may be denoted by the ablative + adjective or genitive modifier.
   *animō meliōre sunt gladiātōrēs*, the gladiators are of a better mind
   *vir summō ingenii*, a man of the greatest genius
   *mulier eximia pulchritūdinē*, a woman of rare beauty

2. Physical qualities are often denoted by this use of the ablative.
   *capillō sunt prōmissō*, they have long hair
   *ut capite opertō sit*, to have his head covered

F. Ablative of Price, Value, or Penalty (*ablativus pretii*)

1. The definite price of an object is put in the ablative.
   *agrum vēndidit sēstertium sex milibus*, he sold the land for 6,000 sesterces

2. An indefinite price may be expressed by the ablative.
   *magnō ēmerat*, he had bought at a high price
   *nōn nihilō aestimandum*, not to be reckoned as worthless
   *parvō pretīō redēmpτa*, bought at a low price
   The genitive is also often used in this construction.

3. With verbs of exchanging, either the thing obtained or the thing given may be in the ablative.
   *fidem suam pecūniā committat*, he barters his faith for money
   *exsilium patriā sēde mūāvit*, he exchanged his native land for exile

4. Verbs of punishing or fining may take the ablative.
   *capite pāñīrēτur*, he is punished with death
   *multātōs agrīs*, mulcted of their fields.
   Verbs of condemning regularly take a Genitive of Penalty (e.g., *capitis damnāre*),
   but occasionally the ablative, especially with *capite*.

G. Ablative of Specification (*ablativus limitationis*)

1. The ablative is used to denote that *in respect to which* anything is or is done.
   *virtūte praecēdunt*, they excel in courage
   *claudus alterō pede*, lame in one foot
   *maior nātū*, older
   *paulum aētāte prōgressus*, somewhat advanced in age

2. Similar is the use of the ablative to express that *in accordance with which* anything is or is done.
   *meō iūre*, with perfect right
   *meā senientiā*, in my opinion

3. The adjectives *dignus* and *indignus* take the ablative.
   *suppliciō dignus*, worthy of punishment
   *indigna homine līberō*, unworthy of a free man
   The genitive is sometimes seen in poetry and colloquial usage.
   (Cf. III.D.3).
2. The following Locative Ablatives are used by Cicero without a preposition:
   dextrā, on the right
   laevā, sinistrā, on the left
   corpore, on or in the body
   animō, animīs, in mind (but in animō with est and habeō)
   memorīā, in or within the memory
   linguā, in the language
   nōmine, under the name
   speciē, under the pretext
   lēge, condicionē, under the condition

C. Ablative of Time at or within Which (ablat ivus temporis)
   1. The Time at or within Which anything is or is done is usually expressed by
      the ablative without preposition
         diē septimō pervenit, he arrives on the seventh day
         superiōre aestāte cognōverat, he had learned the previous summer
   2. In is regularly used:
      • To denote a time of life (unless accompanied by a modifier):
         in puerītā, in boyhood
         But: extrēmā puerītā, at the end of boyhood
      • To denote an office held (unless accompanied by a numeral):
        in cōnsulātū nostrō, in my consulship
        But: quārtō cōnsulātū, in his fourth consulship
      • To express situation:
        in tāli tempore, in such a state of affairs
        in civīli bellō, in a civil war
        But: secundō Pūnicō bellō, in the second Punic War
      • With a numeral:
        ter in annō, three times in a year

D. Locative Ablative with Certain Verbs and Adjectives
   1. Fīdō and cōnfidō may take the ablative.
      multum nātūrā locī cōnfidēbant, they had great confidence in the nature of the country
      Fīdō and cōnfidō also take the Dative, regularly of a person in Cicero.
      Diffidō takes the Dative in Cicero, both Dative and Ablative in later writers.
   2. Nītor, rely, stō, constō, abide by, take an ablative, typically without in.
   3. Contentus, dignus, indignus (cf. II.G.3), frētus, and laetus take an ablative.
      contenūs hāc iniquitātē nōn fuit, he was not content with this iniquity
      cognitūne dignum, worthy of acquaintance
      indigna homīne līberō, unworthy of a free man
      frētus grātiā Brūtī, relying on the favor of Brutus
      laetus praedā, rejoicing in the booty