

PARTICIPLES: AN INTRODUCTION

I. DEFINITIONS AND FEATURES:

Participle: an adjective derived from a verb. e.g.: “the **surprising** news” (i.e. news that **surprises** someone).

In Latin, participles display all the features of standard adjectives; that is, they have *number* (sg. / pl.), *gender* (m. /f. /n.), *case* (nominative / genitive, etc.), and *reason for case* (they agree with some noun or implied noun), plus the verbal features of tense (perfect / present / future) and voice (active / passive).

There are four main types of participles in Classical Latin: PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES (the fourth principal parts of verbs, which you’ve been memorizing patiently from day one), FUTURE ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, and FUTURE PASSIVE PARTICIPLES.

II. FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

A.

PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES (the 4th principal parts of verbs) decline like 1st and 2nd declension adjectives (i.e., like magnus, —a, —um).

You can generally translate them as “[having been] **VERBed**”, for any verb “to **VERB**”; the participle indicates that the action **VERB** has been done to the noun, and that the action is complete by the time of the main verb.

Coctus equus est bonum cibum: “**cooked** horse is good food” (as opposed to horse which is still being cooked, or horse which is going to be cooked).

B.

PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES are formed from the verbal stem. For 1st, 2nd and regular 3rd conjugation verbs, strike off the -re of the infinitive (2nd principal part) and add -ns to form the nominative singular, for all three genders. (So, for pulsāre, pulsā- + -ns = pulsāns, the present active participle.) The -iō verbs of the 3rd conjugation and all 4th conjugation verbs are just a little different: for them, strike off the ere/ire of the infinitive, and add -iēns to the stem. These participles are 3rd declension adjectives of one ending and decline like potēns.

You can always translate these participles as “**VERBing**” (for any verb “to **VERB**”); the participle indicates that the noun it agrees with is doing the action at the time of the main verb.

Equus momordit virum cantum cantantem: “the horse bit the man **singing** the song (**who was singing** the song).”

C.

FUTURE ACTIVE PARTICIPLES are formed from the fourth principal part by inserting -ūr- between the stem of the participle and the inflectional ending. So for cantāre (“to sing”) the fourth principal part is cantātus; strike off -us and you have the stem (cantāt-); add -ūr- (cantātūr-) and then re-attach the appropriate inflectional ending (-us, -a, -um, etc). These participles decline like magnus, -a, -um .

You can generally translate them as “going to **VERB**” or “about to **VERB**,” for any verb “to **VERB**”; the participle indicates that the noun it agrees with will do the action **VERB** at some time after the main verb.

Vir cantātūrus cantum bonum cibum vīdit: “the man **about to sing** the song (**who was about to sing** the song) saw the good food.” Note that, like verbs, the future active participle can take a direct object (if the verb it comes from can take a direct object).

It’s very easy to mistake the future active participle for the perfect passive participle, but these similar forms have radically different meanings, so beware of the -ūr-.

D.

FUTURE PASSIVE PARTICIPLES (GERUNDIVES) are formed from the verbal stem; find the verbal stem by taking the present active infinitive, striking off the -re; then put onto the stem the suffix -nd- and inflectional endings of the first and second declension. (So, for pulsāre: pulsā- + -nd- + -us = pulsandus, the masculine form of the future passive participle.) These participles decline like magnus, -a, -um.

Future passive participles usually indicate obligation or necessity: an action that must or ought to be done. (Compare the English idiom: “You *will* do this.” It’s not a prediction, but an implied command.) The person who must or ought to do the action is in the dative without a preposition, “the dative of agent”); the thing the action must or ought to be done to is expressed by the noun the participle agrees with.

Librī legendī tibi sunt: “the books must be read by you.”

Brūtus pulsandus Caesarī est: “Brutus ought to be beaten by Caesar.”

PARTICIPLES OF PULSARE

pulsō, pulsāre, pulsāvī, pulsātum “to beat, to knock upon”

	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
FUTURE	<u>pulsātūrus</u> , -a, -um : “going to beat”	<u>pulsandus</u> , -a, -um : “must be beaten”
PRESENT	<u>pulsāns</u> , <u>pulsantis</u> : “beating”	-----
PERFECT	-----	<u>pulsātus</u> , -a, -um : “[having been] beaten”