

FIRST DECLENSION NOUNS (-a)

Formation: Nouns of the First Declension are declined thus:

	Singular	Plural
Nom.	-a	-ae
Gen.	-ae	-ārum
Dat.	-ae	-īs
Acc.	-am	-ās
Abl.	-ā	-īs

N.B.: The long **-ā** of the ablative singular distinguishes it from the nominative singular, which has a short **-a**.

Example:

Nom.	<i>silva</i> (the forest)	<i>silvae</i> (the forests)
Gen.	<i>silvae</i> (of the forest)	<i>silvārum</i> (of the forests)
Dat.	<i>silvae</i> (to the forest)	<i>silvīs</i> (to the forests)
Acc.	<i>silvam</i> (the forest)	<i>silvās</i> (the forests)
Abl.	<i>silvā</i> (in or by the forest)	<i>silvīs</i> (in or by the forests)

N.B.: Because Latin has no article (*the* or *an*), *silva* may mean *the forest*, *a forest*, or simply *forest*.

Gender: Nouns of the first declension are overwhelmingly **feminine**.

A very few nouns in the first declension are masculine:

- 1) Some natural genders such as *agricola* (farmer), *nauta* (sailor), *pīrāta* (pirate), *poēta* (poet), *scrība* (scribe or clerk).
- 2) Some personal or family names: *Catīlīna*, *Mūrēna*, *Dolābella*, *Scaevola*.
- 3) And *Hadria* (the Adriatic).

Even fewer nouns are of common gender: *incola* (inhabitant) and *advena* (stranger).

Adjectives, of course, will always agree with gender: *pīrāta malus* (evil pirate), *poēta clārus* (famous poet).

Dea and Fīlia: For the dative and ablative plural of *dea* (goddess) and *fīlia* (daughter) the endings **-ābus** (*deābus* and *fīliābus*) are used to distinguish these nouns from the second declension nouns *deus* (god) and *fīlius* (son).

Familiās: An old genitive in **-ās** is preserved in the word *familiās* (of the family), often with *pater*, *mater*, *fīlius*, or *fīlia*. Thus, *pater familiās* (father of the family = head of the household).