

Rules for the Roman Pronunciation of Latin.

The letters are divided into vowels and consonants.

Vowels.

The vowels are the life and soul of the words, and each must be enunciated as one single pure sound. Each must be given its proper timbre, and to preserve it from the smallest shade of alteration one must studiously avoid the very slightest change in the position of lips and tongue during its articulation. In English a mixture or sequence of two sounds can nearly always be detected.

This would be fatal to good Latin pronunciation. The vowel sounds must be as far as possible uniform, without distinction of long or short, open or closed, no matter by what consonant they may be followed.

Should this rule be neglected, a disagreeable mixed effect will result, as in English the vowel sounds are modified almost indefinitely by their position in regard to the consonants. It is particularly important in singing the long neums to watch that the fluctuations in the melody shall not produce any change in the timbre of the vowel. e. g. *Kyrie*. (1)

A has a broad open full sound, something between the English *a* in the word *father* and the *u* of *butter*. It is never pronounced like the English *a* in *can*.

E has no exact English equivalent. It is between the *e* in the English *met* and the *a* in *frame, shame*.

I is like the English *ea* in *neat* or *ee* in such words as *feet, greet*, not as prolonged as it tends to be in the English *sheep* or *green*, but never like the *i* sound in *milk*. This is most liable to be overlooked at the beginning of Latin words. Practise *inter* = eenter, and *inimicus* = eeneemeecus.

O as in the English *for*, half open and very pure and uniform. Examples : *Deo, populo, ora*.

U like the *oo* in the English word *boot*. Ex. *Multus* = mooltoos; *secundum* = secoondoom, but not too much prolonged. Cp. remark on *i*.

Y must be treated as a vowel, and always pronounced like the Latin *i*. Ex. *Martyr* = marteer.

Consecutive Vowels.

As a general rule when two vowels come together each keeps its own proper sound and constitutes a separate syllable. Each vowel in the following words, for instance, must keep its own timbre and length: *di-e-i, fi-li-i, e-o-rum, a-i-e-bat, devoti-o*.

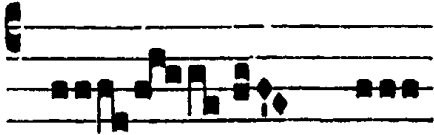
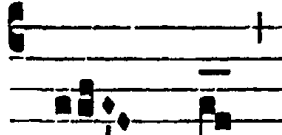
The above rule applies to *OU* and *AI* (both vowels heard separately and belonging to two different syllables); Exs. *prout* = pro-ut, *coutuntur* = co-utuntur, *ait* = a-it.

Exceptions: *Æ, Œ* are pronounced as one sound, exactly the same as *e*; see above.

AU and *EU*. In these cases the two vowel sounds form one syllable and are therefore uttered as one syllable, but the sound of both vowels is distinctly heard. Ex. *Lau-da, Eu-ge, Ceu*.

(¹) Be careful too not to sing *Kear-i-e*, but *Kee||ri-e*.

N. B. In this type of syllable the principal emphasis and interest belong to the first vowel. In *au* and *eu* the *u* takes a secondary place and almost forms a liaison with the following syllable. The correct effect will be achieved mainly by pronouncing the first vowel very purely and distinctly. This is particularly felt in singing, when several notes occur on one of these vowel syllables. The vocalisation is then all on the first of the two vowels, the second (*u*) must only be articulated on the last note of the syllable or rather at the precise moment of passing from this to the following syllable :

Offert. :		Ant. :	
Lau-	da	Eu-	ge
<i>rendered thus</i> : La-	uda	<i>rendered thus</i> : E-	uge

AY follows the same rule as *AU* and *EU*, both vowels being heard but both uttered at one vocal emission : *Raymundus* = *Raïmundus*.

EI is similarly treated when it occurs in an interjection, *heï* = *hēï* etc., but in all other cases it follows the general rule of the two syllables. Ex. *mei* = *me-i*, *Deitas* = *De-itas*.

U preceded by *Q* or *NG* and followed by another vowel keeps its normal pronunciation, but it is uttered in one enunciation and forms but one syllable with the following vowel, which vowel must keep its proper timbre. Ex. *Sanguis*, *qui*, *quæ*, *quod*, *quam*, *quoniam*. In these words the *u* plays the part of a liaison as noted in the case of *AU* and *EU*, except that it occupies the beginning of the syllable and not the end. The rule for *AU* and *EU* is to be applied here but in reverse order. The *u* sound is not indeed omitted, but, after passing it over as soon as possible, all the emphasis and interest of the syllable is made to attach to the second vowel on which practically all the notes are sung in the case of a neum-bearing syllable.

In all other cases *u* followed by another vowel falls under the general rule, e. g. the two vowels are distinctly sounded and belong to two different syllables : Examples. *tu-a*, *tu-ae*, *tu-o* etc.

CUI follows the general rule (two syllables) and must be clearly distinguished from *qui*; but there are certain hymns (see the rule for hypermetric syllables p. 141) in which this word has to be treated as one syllable :

Epiphany Hymn for Lauds, verse one, line two :

Major Bethlem *cui* contigit

Hymn for the Dedication of Churches, last verse, third line :

cui laus potestas gloria

The metrical rhythm makes these cases very easy to determine.
I used as a semi-vowel, see *J* below.

Consonants.

These, as their very name implies, can only be pronounced in contact with another element, e. g. the vowels. They must be articulated with a certain crispness and energy, as otherwise the words will become unintelligible and the reading weak and nerveless.

C is soft before *e*, *ae*, *oe*, *i*, *y*; that is before the sounds of *e* and *i*. It is pronounced like the English *ch* (*tch*) in the word *cherish*. Exs. *Sacerdos* = sachairdos; *caelum* = chayloom; *Caecilia* = chaycheelea.

CC before the same sounds = *tch*. *Ecce* = etchay.

SC before the same sounds = *sh* : *Descendit* = deshendeet. Otherwise *SC* is hard as in the English word *scan*.

But for these exceptions *C* is always hard like the English *k*. Exs. *Caritas*, *siccum*, *scandalum*, and *Ch* is hard like *k* before every vowel, even *e* and *i*

G is soft before the sounds of *e* and *i* (*e*, *ae*, *oe*, *i*, *y*) as in the English word *generous*. Exs. *Genitori*, *Regina*.

In every other case it is hard, as in the English *go*. Exs. *Galea*, *gladius*, *gloria*.

GN has the French sound heard in the word *agneau* to which the nearest English equivalent would be *N* followed by *Y*. Ex. *Magnificat* = Ma-nyi-ficat.

H is pronounced as *K* in *mihi* (*meekee*) and *nihil* (*neekeel*) and the compounds of *nihil*. (These two words were formerly written *michi*, *nichil*). In all other cases *H* is mute (never aspirated). Ex. *hi* = ee.

J or the semi-vowel *I* is always pronounced like the English *Y*, but it must be uttered in one enunciation with the following vowel. The two sounds form only one syllable. Exs. *Jam* or *iam*, *Allelu-ja* or *Allelu-ia*, *Jesus* or *Iesus*, *Jo-annem* or *Io-annem*.

It is naturally the vowel following the *j* which plays the predominating part in the syllable, and the neums are sung on it when they occur with this type of syllable.

R. Care must be taken never to omit this sound, as is done in cultivated English, when it occurs with another consonant.

Practise sounding the *r* in *carnis* and *martyr*, rolling it on the tongue, to avoid saying *canis* and *mater*.

S is always hard or dental as in the English words *yes*, *isolated essence*. Never pronounce it like a *Z*.

Ti before a vowel and preceded by any other letter but *S*, *T*, or *X* is pronounced as *tsi*. Exs. *Gratia* = gratsia : *patientia* = patsientsia; but *modestia* = modestia. Otherwise *T* as in English, except that *TH* always = *T*. Ex. *Thesaurus* = tesaurus.

X has the same sound as in English, but *XC* (before *e*, *ae*, *oe*, *i*, *y*;) presents a certain amount of difficulty as it is not a pure Italian sound. The *X* being practically equivalent to *CS* or *KS*, the *C* which follows this *X* combines with the *S* sound which ends the compound *X* = *KSC*. It was noted above that *SC* before the sounds of *e* and *i* is pronounced *sh*; *XC* thus equals *ksh* : Exs. *Excelsis* = ekshelsis; *excessus* = ekshessus. Before every other vowel *XC* has the ordinary hard sound of the letters composing it : *XC* = *KSC*. Ex. *Excussorum*.

Y see Vowels.

Z is pronounced as *dz*. Example. *Zizania* = dzi-dza-nia.

All the rest of the consonants, viz. *B*, *D*, *F*, *K*, *L*, *M*, *N*, *P*, *Q* and *V* are pronounced as in English.

N. B. — Double consonants must both be clearly sounded. Ex. Latin *bello* = bel-lo, not the English *bellow*.

The letters are united to form syllables. In uttering these care must be taken not to separate one part of a syllable in order to join it on to another, as if, for example, one were to say jubil-atio instead of jubi-latio. ⁽¹⁾

Just as each vowel must keep its own timbre and each consonant its own sound, so each syllable must be given its own proper value. Doubtless in reading or recitation, or even in the singing of the psalms, there is no absolute equality between all the syllables : each carries its own weight in virtue of its composition and the place occupied by the accent in the word to which it belongs. But this variation in the length and weight of different syllables must never go so far as to sacrifice any one of them entirely or even lead to hurrying over any one excessively. The syllables composed of a single vowel must be watched particularly : *fili*, *eorum*, *gaudii*, *gaudia*, and indeed all the weak

(1) See Note page 24.

penultimate syllables of the dactyls : *Dóminus, sæcula, dèxteram, filio.*

In singing, the rhythmic regularity demanded by the melody tends to equalise the syllables yet more. The vowels should appropriate the whole value of the notes assigned to them as far as possible; while the consonants must only occupy just the time needed for their clear articulation. We may be forgiven for insisting at some length on this important point. Whatever may be the number of notes assigned to a syllable, every one must be sung on the vowel, and this vowel must not undergo any alteration by reason of the consonants in its vicinity, or in the course of long vocalised passages. Should the syllable begin with a consonant, this consonant must be articulated in the brief instant which precedes the first beat of the vowel : if, on the contrary, the consonant ends the syllable, its articulation should only occupy a small part of the length of the last note. (†)

One point in conclusion. Over and above the pauses demanded by the text—or the melody in the case of singing—care must be taken in pronouncing several different consonants and vowels in succession to avoid any break of continuity in the sound. Whether in such cases the vowels form part of the same word, or whether they occur in two adjacent words, the sound must be carried on quite smoothly. Exs. *mearum, quadraginta annis, venite adoremus.* There must be no interruption in the course of the sound

(†) What is noted here regarding the consonants applies, as we have said above, to the atonic element of the double vowels : u in *au, eu, qui, quæ*, and j or rather i in *Jesus* and *Alleluia*.

It may not be superfluous to insert a note here on the rules which govern the division of letters in writing Latin. This will help the pupils to pronounce each letter properly in the place which it occupies in the syllable or word.

I. A consonant is never doubled at the beginning or end of a word. To be doubled it must occur in the body of the word between two vowels, as in *annus, intelligo*. If a liquid consonant follows this double one, the sound of the latter is thereby shortened : *Affligo, attribuo*.

II. When a consonant occurs between two vowels in simple words it is joined to the second of these : *A-mor, Le-por*.

III. When two consonants are placed between two vowels, they must be separated : *Ec-ce, Car-nem*.

IV. Consonants which can be joined together at the beginning of a word must never be separated : *O-mnis, A-gnus, Pa-stor, etc.*

These double consonants are as follows : *Bd, Bl, Br, Cl, Cm, Cn, Ct, Cr, Dm Dn, Dr, Fl, Fr, Gl, Gn, Gr, Mn, Ph, Phl, Phn, Phr, Phth, Pl, Pn, Pr, Ps, Pt, Sc, Scr, Sh, Sgn, Sp, Sph, St, Sth, Str, Th, Thn, Tl, Tm, Tr*.

V. In compound words the consonants remain joined to the vowel with which they formed a word before the compound was made : *ab-eo, ad-oro, con-scientia*.

by aspiration (miserehatur), much less any fresh attack of the glottis before the second vowel. The consonants must of necessity interrupt the sound or obstruct its smooth flow to some extent; but as we have already said, the interruption or break must be as short as possible. The tendencies of English pronunciation sometimes lead to the introduction of a sort of aspiration or slight catch in the breath between certain consonants (c p b t) and the vowels next to them : *capere* becomes k'hapere, *pater* p'hater and *talis* t'halis.

As for the pronunciation of the words, the famous golden rule must always be borne in mind. *Non debet fieri pausa, quando debet exprimi syllaba inchoatæ dictionis.* Never take breath in a word just before a fresh syllable. (1)

(1) Elias Salomon, *Scientia ars musicae*, cap. XI.