LATIN GRAMMAR I
Wheelock 7: Third Declension Nouns

1. Characteristics of Third Declension Nouns

1.1. What makes a noun (or adj) 1st declension? The noun stem/base ends with –a before adding case endings: port**a**, port**ā**rum.What makes a noun (or adj) 2nd declension? The noun stem ends with –o before adding case endings (rem. the –o sometimes shifts to –u): amīc**u**s, amīc**ō**rum; dōn**u**m, dōn**ō**rum.

1.2. What makes a noun (or adj) 3rd declension?[1] The noun's stem (or base) ends with a <u>consonant</u> (to which case endings are added!) The lexical form (= Nom sg form) almost always obscures the real cons. base/stem due to phonetic changes. To learn the true noun stem, find the Gen sg (always provided in vocab list) and drop the case ending, *–is*.

amor, amōris (m) *love*;   stem = amōr–

carmen, carminis (n) *song, poem*;   stem = _____

civitās, civitātis (m) *state, citizenship*; stem = _____

rēx, rēgis (m) *king*;   stem = _____

1.3. Nouns of 3rd decl. can be any gender: M, F, N. Note: the M/F forms pattern together, and the N forms are mostly the same but with some differences. Remember: in neuter words, the Nom/Acc forms are always identical to each other. Here are the case endings with 1st and 2nd decl. endings to compare (voc case is omitted since usully = nom):

	2	1	2			3	3
Sing.	**Masc**	**Fem**	**Neut**		**Sing.**	**M/F**	**N**
Nom	–us	–a	–um		Nom	–s/ –	–
Gen	–ī	–ae	–ī		Gen	–is	–is
Dat	–ō	–ae	–ō		Dat	–ī	–ī
Acc	–um	–am	–um		Acc	–em	–
Abl	–ō	–ā	–ō		Abl	–e	–e
Pl.	**Masc**	**Fem**	**Neut**		**Pl.**	**M/F**	**N**
Nom	–ī	–ae	–a		Nom	–ēs	–a
Gen	–ōrum	–ārum	–ōrum		Gen	–um	–um
Dat	–īs	–īs	–īs		Dat	–ibus	–ibus
Acc	–ōs	–ās	–a		Acc	–ēs	–a
Abl	–īs	–īs	–īs		Abl	–ibus	–ibus

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[1] Note: in Wheelock Ch. 14 we will learn about a special kind of 3rd decl noun called i-stem nouns.

1.4. The Nom sg. forms often obscure the real noun stem due to common phonetic changes.
1.4.1. Stops + s

Velar stops (c, g) + s   > x   (easy to understand if pronounce: rēg+s > rēx)
Dental stops (t, d) + s   > s   (the dental cons. drops: virtūt+s > virtūs)
Labial stops (p, b) + s   > ps/bs   (no written change)

1.4.2. Vowel changes can happen in final syllables:
In 2-syllable (disyllabic) stems, the final syllable i in the stem often is e in the nom sg:
carmen, carminis; stem carmin– (song). Other vowel changes also happen.

2. Sample 3rd declension paradigm

Sing.	M/F	N	rēx, m. *king* Stem?	virtūs, f. *merit* Stem?	homō, m. *man* Stem?	corpus, n. *body* Stem?
Nom	–s/–	–	rēx (rēg-s)	virtūs (virtūt-s)	homō	corpus
Gen	–is	–is	rēg–is	virtūtis	hominis	corporis
Dat	–ī	–ī	rēg–ī	virtūtī	hominī	corporī
Acc	–em	–	rēg–em	virtūtem	hominem	corpus
Abl	–e	–e	rēg–e	virtūte	homine	corpore

Pl.	M/F	N				
Nom	–ēs	–a	rēg–ēs	virtūtes	hominēs	corpora
Gen	–um	–um	rēg–um	virtūtum	hominum	corporum
Dat	–ibus	–ibus	rēg–ibus	virtūtibus	hominibus	corporibus
Acc	–ēs	–a	rēg–ēs	virtūtēs	hominēs	corpora
Abl	–ibus	–ibus	rēg–ibus	virtūtibus	hominibus	corporibus

3. Gender of 3rd decl nouns
3.1. Natural gender: If a noun has natural gender, that will determine its grammatical
gender. So rēx = king (masc!); uxor = wife (fem!).

3.2. Some helps for gender of nouns without natural gender (but the natural gender rule
always takes precedence over the following). In the following general cases, you can usually
tell the gender of a 3rd decl noun if the noun (the lexical form in nom sg, not noun
stem/base) ends a particular way:

3.2.1. Masculine: Nouns ending in –er, -or. (ERROR). As Wheelock notes, agent nouns
ending in –or (but the ō is long except in Nom sg before r) fall under this category:

actor, actōris	one who acts, actor
victor, –ōris	one who overcomes, victor

Note: other masc. 3rd decl nouns might end in: -os, -nis, -guis, -cis, -es (–itis), -ex (–icis).

3.2.2. Feminine: Nouns ending in –s, -o, -x. (SOX). The abstract nouns that Wheelock notes fit this description:

vēritās, –tātis	truth
virtūs, –tūtis	virtue, worth, manliness
multitūdō, –tūdinis	multitude, numerousness
nātiō, –tiōnis	birth, race, nation

3.2.3. Neuter: Nouns ending in –l, -a, -n, -c, -e, -t. (LANCET). Aside from these, other neuter nouns could end with –ar and –us (with gen. –ris, to be distinguished from 2nd decl. masc. –us nouns). Some of the nouns Wheelock mentions fit here:

animal, –mālis	animal
mare, –maris	sea
nomen, –minis	name
exemplar, –plāris	model, pattern
genus, generis	origin, kind, type
corpus, corporis	body (the stem vowel o is short, unlike masc. –or nouns with long ō after Nom: amor, amōris, amōrī)

There is no need to memorize all these patterns. The natural gender rule, then ERROR SOX LANCET get you most cases. Most important, learn the gender of nouns (+ gen sg) as you acquire and memorize new vocab.

4. Noun-Adjective Agreement: As discussed in earlier chapters, attributive adjs must agree with their nouns in case, gender, number (CG#). Frequently, that means the endings will look the same (if the noun and adj. follow the same *declension pattern*). But the noun could follow a different declension pattern from the adj.—so even though they do match CG#, their forms' endings will not *visibly look identical*.

Same Declensions	Different Declension
magnus amīcus	magnus rēx
magnī amīcī	magnī rēgis
magna amīca	magna virtūs
magnam amīcam	magnam virtūtem