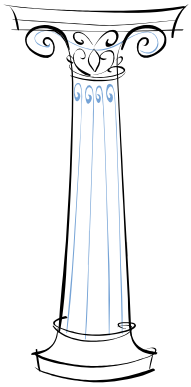
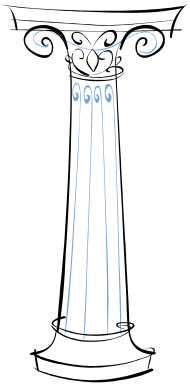
Grammatical Cases



Nominative	subject; predicate nominative
Genitive	possessive
Dative	indirect object
Accusative	direct object
Ablative	object of a preposition



Comparisons to English usage

- The nominative case marks the subject of a statement and is used with a copula (linking verb): "*Mary* is going to the store" or "*Mary* is my sister". It also names the predicate nominative: "Mary is my *sister*".
- The genitive case (also known as the possessive case) expresses possession, measurement, or source. In English, the genitive case is represented analytically by the preposition of or by the enclitic "–'s", which itself developed from the genitive case. This "–'s" closely resembles the Latin third declension's genitive suffix "–is". In Latin, as in English, the genitive singular may be identical to the nominative plural of a noun (apart from the apostrophe in English, which does not change pronunciation): e.g., "equi" = "horse's/ horses", insulae = "island's/ islands", etc.
- The dative case marks the recipient of an action, the indirect object of a verb. In English, the prepositions to and for tend to denote this case analytically. However, note that in English, the dative may be marked by word order without a preposition; contrast "Give me the book" with "Give the book to me" ("Give to me the book" would be incorrect or at least very unusual).
- The accusative case marks the direct object of a verb. In English, except for a small number of words which display a distinct accusative case (e.g., who/whom, I/me, he/him), the accusative and nominative cases are identical in form; they are usually distinguished only by word order.
- The ablative case expresses separation, indirection, or the means by which an action is performed. In English, the prepositions by, with, from, in and on are most commonly used to indicate this case.
- The vocative case is used to address someone or something in direct speech. In English, this function is expressed by intonation or punctuation: "*Mary*, are you going to the store?" or "Mary!" ("Mary" is vocative). Historically, English-language noun paradigms translated this case with a prefaced interjection such as "O Mary!"