

## THE SUPINE

The Supine is a **verbal abstract of the fourth declension** that **indicates only the abstract action of a verb**. It conveys even less information than the infinitive, lacking both tense and person, and only has two forms, each with a distinctive use:

- (1) **The Accusative in -um** with a verb of motion where the supine is used to indicate **purpose**.
- (2) **The Ablative in -ū** with an adjective where the supine indicates an **action related to a specific quality** (similar to Ablative of Respect).

### USE 1: Accusative indicating purpose with verb of motion. ♦ “I come to bury Caesar.”

The Supine in -um is used after **verbs of motion** to express **purpose**. **N.B.** The motion can merely be implied. The Supine may take an object in the proper case:

Ex. quid est, imusne sessum? etsi admonitum venimus te, non flagitatum (De Or. 3.17), *how now, shall we be seated? though we have come to remind, not to entreat you.*

nuptum dare, *to give in marriage.*

The Supine in -um is especially **common with eo** (to go),

Ex. fuere cives qui rem publicam perditum irent ( Sall. Cat. 36), *there were citizens who went about to ruin the republic.*

### USE 2: Action related to an asserted quality. ♦ “It is shocking to see.”

The Supine in -ū used with a few **adjectives** and with the nouns **fas, nefas, and opus**, to denote an action in reference to an asserted quality:

Ex. mirabile dictū, *a thing amazing to have spoken/said*  
 miserabile visū, *a thing wretched to have seen*  
 [COMPARE with Gerund: mirabile dicendo, lit. *amazing to be speaking*]

si hoc fas est dictū (Tusc. 5.38), *if this is lawful to say.*

The Supine in -ū is **found especially with such adjectives** as indicate an **effect on the senses** or the **feelings**, and those which denote ease, difficulty, and the like. But with *facilis, difficilis, and iucundus*, the preposition “*ad*” with the gerund is more common. In poetry, the **infinitive** often appears in place of the **supine**.

The Supine in -ū with a verb is extremely rare: as, pudet dictu (Tac. Agr. 32), *it is a shame to tell.*