

### Vergil's Verb Tips: The Supine

If the supine is ...	... it will take this form ...	... and be used with ...	... and be translated as follows:
accusative	(4th principal part) -um <sup>1</sup>	motion verbs (particularly eō ) <sup>3</sup>	to x <sup>2</sup>
ablative	(4th principal part) -ū <sup>1</sup>	an adjective as an ablative of respect <sup>4</sup>	to x <sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

- The supine is identical in appearance to the fourth principal part, but has only two forms: accusative in ) -um and ablative in -ū. It is a fourth declension noun. Latin dictionaries that list the fourth form of the verb as -um instead of -us are actually providing the supine form rather than attempting to be politically correct (for details on the fourth principal part, i.e., the perfect passive participle, see Vergil's Verb Tips: The Participle).
- The literal translation of the supine is x-ing. In practice, however, the usual rule of thumb is translate as though it were a present active infinitive, to x (for help with use and forms of the infinitive, see Vergil's Verb Tips: The Infinitive). Constructions involving a supine do not normally ever use an actual infinitive, except occasionally (somewhat more common in poetry).
- The Accusative (a.k.a. The Former) Supine: The accusative supine may take a direct object, but does not have to do so. It normally occurs in conjunction with verbs of motion to express purpose.

Magister piscātum iit. (The teacher went fishing / to fish.)  
Amīcī eius piscēs cōnsūmptum vērunt. (His friends came to eat the fish.)

Such constructions are equivalent to the purpose clause: ut + subjunctive.

Magister iit ut piscāret. (The teacher went to fish / that he might fish.)  
Amīcī eius vērunt ut piscēs cōsūmeret. (His friends came to eat the fish /  
that they might eat the fish.)

The accusative supine construction is also equivalent to "ad + gerundive" or "causā / grātīā + gerund(ive)." (See the Vergil's Verb Tips: Gerunds and Gerundives.)

Magister causā piscandī iit. (The teacher went to fish / for the sake of fishing.)  
Amīcī eius ad piscēs cōnsūmptōs vērunt. (His friends came to eat the fish /  
for the fish to be eaten.)

4. The Ablative (a.k.a. The Latter) Supine: The ablative supine occurs as an ablative of respect (specification) with an adjective answering the question “in what degree is the adjective true?” or “how does the adjective apply?”

mīrābile dictū	(wondrous to tell / wondrous in the telling)
optimum factū	(the best thing to do / the best thing in the doing)
horribile vīsū	(horrible to see / horrible in the seeing)

Although typically used in conjunction with adjectives, the ablative supine may occur with a noun or verb.

Sī hoc fās est dictū.	(If this is lawful to say.)
Pudet dictū.	(It is shameful to say.)