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You Can't Get There from Here: The  
Story of the Third Conjugation

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## YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE: THE STORY OF THE THIRD CONJUGATION

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How does a student go from *tetigit* in the text to *tango* in the dictionary? Verbs in the third conjugation often prove difficult even for intermediate and advanced Latin students. The other conjugations all form the perfect stem with a *v* infix, with or without the thematic vowel.<sup>1</sup> Third conjugation verbs form their perfect stem in five ways. Three of these ways correspond to Greek; the fourth way is with the standard *u/v* infix; and the fifth way is with no stem-change at all. A complete overview of these five types may preemptively spare your students time and grief.

### THREE TYPES OF GREEK-LIKE PERFECTS

The Greek-like perfects of third conjugation are formed:

- (a) like a Greek aorist,
- (b) like a Greek second aorist, or
- (c) like a Greek perfect.

You do not have to know Greek for this to be helpful. It means that the general run of third conjugation verbs fall into one of three main sets:

Like Greek Type A above: Add *s* to stem (like a Greek first aorist).

Examples:

*cedo, cessi*<sup>2</sup>  
*scribo, scripsi*<sup>3</sup>  
*duco, duxi*  
*figo, fixi*  
*tingo, tinxi*  
*iungo, iunxi*

Like Greek Type B: Change stem vowel (like a Greek second aorist). Examples:

*capio, cepi*  
*facio, feci*  
*iacio, ieci*  
*rumpo, rupi*

Like Greek Type C: Reduplicate initial consonant (like a Greek perfect).<sup>4</sup> This usually weakens the stem vowel. Examples:

*curro, cucurri*  
*pango, pepigi*  
*parco, peperci*  
*pario, peperci*  
*pendo, pependi*  
*tango, tetigi*

### A FOURTH TYPE: STANDARD U/V PERFECT STEM

Standard *u/v* perfect stem, as in first, second, and fourth conjugations, is used

1. If the present stem ends in *-u*, then the *u* doubles as the perfect stem. Such a verb gets a second-conjugation style perfect:

*acuo, acuere, acui*  
*arguo, arguere, argui*  
*moveo, movere, movi*  
*nuo* (and compounds) *nuere, nui*

2. If there is an inceptive (*sc*) infix. If the verbs with the inceptive *-sc-* infix (which are all third conjugation) have a perfect active form, (many have no perfect or a deponent perfect), then the inceptive is lost (in the perfect tense, of course, inceptive would not make sense):

*ingemisco, ingemiscere, ingemui*  
*advesperasco, advesperascere*, (no perfect)

*gnosco* (and compounds), *novi*

*adscisco, adscivi*

*rapio* and *elicio* also mimic second conjugation: *rapui, elicui*.  
*cupio* and *sapio* mimic fourth conjugation: *cupivi, sapivi*.

### A FIFTH TYPE: -ND STEMS WITH NO CHANGE AT ALL

Third conjugation verbs in *-nd* undergo no change at all for their perfect stem:

*defendo, defendi*  
*scendo, scendi*  
*tendo, tendi*.

Here are some of the main third conjugation verbs sorted by manner of forming the perfect stem.

### ADD S (Like Greek Aorist):

*ango, angere, anxi*  
*carpo, carpere, carpsi, carptus*  
*cedo, cedere, cessi, cessurus* [ac-, de-, in-, pro-, re-, se-]  
*cingo, cingere, cinxi, cinctus*  
*claudio, claudere, clausi, clausus*  
*cludo, cludere, clusi, clusus*  
*confido, confidere, confisus sum*  
*dico, dicere, dixi, dictus*  
*diligo, diligere, dilexi, dilectus*  
*divido, dividere, divisi, divisus*  
*duco, ducere, duxi, ductus*  
*extinguo, extinguere, extinxi, extinctus* [exc to -u base]  
*figo, figere, fixi, fixus*  
*tingo, tingere, tinxi, tinctus*  
*-fligo, -fligere, -flixi, -flictus*  
*flecto, flectere, flexi, flectus*  
*fluo, fluere, fluxi, fluctus*  
*gero, gerere, gessi, gestus*  
*iungo, iungere, iunxi, iunctus*  
*ludo, ludere, lusi, lusus* [all long]  
*mergo, mergere, mersi, mersus* [emerge, submerge]  
*mitto, mittere, misi, missus*  
*neglego, neglegere, neglexi, neglectus*  
*pango, pangere, panxi, panctus*  
*parco, parcere, peperci,*  
*pecto, pectere, pexi, pexus* [var. *pexui*]  
*pingo, pingere, pinxi, pictus*  
*pono, ponere, posui, positus* [double perfect infix. im-, sup-]  
*premo, premere, pressi, pressus*  
*rego, regere, rexi, rectus* [erego, pergo, porrigo, surgo]  
*repo, repere, repsi, repturus* [irrepo (inrepo) Cf. serpo]  
*scribo, scribere, scripsi, scriptus* [de-, pro-, sub]  
*serpo, serpere, serpsi* [same as repo?] *spargo, spargere, sparsi, sparsus*  
[sperg in compounds: *dispergo*]  
*-spicio, -spicere, -spexi, -spectus*  
*stringo, stingere, strinxi, strictus* [and compounds]  
*struo, struere, stuxi, structus* [exstruo, instruo]  
*sumo, sumere, sumpsit, sumptus* [sub-emo]  
*tego, tegere, texi, tectus*  
*traho, trahere, traxi, tractus* [and  
*-uro, -urere, -ussi, -ustus* [combuo, exuro, inuro]  
*vado, vadere, vasi, vasurus* [in-, e-, per-]  
*veho, vehere, vexi, vectus*  
*vivo, vivere, vixi, victus* [vigor]

### CHANGE STEM VOWEL (Like Greek Second Aorist):

*ago, agere, egi, actus*  
*capio, capere, cepi, captus*  
*cogo, cogere, coegi, coactus*

*emo, emere, emi, emptus* [inter-, per-, red-, e=i in compounds:  
*redimo, redemi*]  
*facio, facere, feci, factus* [fic in compounds: *perficio, perfecī*]  
*fero, ferre, tuli, latus*  
*frango, frangere, fregi, fractus* [a=i in compounds: *infringo*]  
*fugio, fugere, fugi*  
*fundo, fundere, fudi, fusus*  
*iacio, iacere, ieci, iactus*  
*lego, legere, legi, lectus* [lig in compounds: *eligo, elegī*]  
*lino, linere, levi, litus* [oblino]  
*linquo, linquere, liqui, lictus* [de-, re-]  
*pello, pellere, puli, pulsus* [de-, re-]  
*percello, percellere, perculi*  
*retundo, retundere, retudi, retusus*  
*rumpo, rumpere, rupi, ruptus*  
 -*sido, -sidere, -sedi, sessurus* [in-, prae-, sub-]  
*vinco, vincere, vici, victus*

## REDUPLICATE INITIAL CONSONANT (Like Greek Perfect):

*bibo, bibere, bibi, bibitus*  
*cado, cadere, cecidi, casurus*, [compounds short i: *concido, excido*]  
*caedi, caedere, cecidi, caesus* [compounds long i: *concido, excido*]  
*cano, canere, cecini, cantus*  
*condo, condere, condidi, conditus* [re-]  
*credo, credere, credidi, creditus*  
*curro, currere, cucurri, cursus* [re-]  
*dedo, dedere, dedidi, deditus*  
*disco, discere, didici, disciturus*  
*edi, edere, edidi, editus*  
*fallo, fallere, fefelli, falsus*  
*pario, parere, peperī, partus*  
*pendo, pendere, pependi, pensus*  
*perdo, perdere, perdidi, perditus*  
*posco, poscere, poposci*  
*pungo, pungere, pupugi, punctus*  
*reddo, reddere, redidi, reditus*  
*sisto, -sistere, -stiti*, [reduplicated *sto*, de-, in-]  
*tango, tangere, tetigi, tactus* [a=i in compounds: *contingo*]  
*trado, tradere, tradidi, traditus*  
*vendo, vendere, vendidi, venditus*

## SECOND CONJUGATION IN PERFECT (fall back to basic u/v infix):

*acuo, acuere, acui, acutus*  
*arguo, arguere, argui, argutus*  
*alo, alere alui, altus*  
*cerno, cernere, crevi, cretus* [de-, se-]  
*colo, colere, colui, cultus* [re-]  
*congruo, congruere, congrui*  
*consulo, consulere, consului, consultus*  
*elicio, elicere, elicui, elicitus*  
*exuo, exuere, exui, exutus* [opp. *induo*]  
*gemo, gemere, gemui*  
*gigno, gignere, genui, genitus* [reduplicated gen]  
*imbuo, imbuere, imbui, imbutus*  
*incumbo, incumbere, incubui*  
*luo, luere, lui, lutus* [*diluo, eluo*]  
*metuo, metuere, metui, metutus*  
*minuo, minuere, minui, minutus* [compounds: *diminuo, imminuo*]  
*nuo, nuere, nui, nutus* [ab-, ad-]  
*polluo, polluere, pollui, pollutus*  
*ruo, ruere, rui* [*inruo*]  
*solvo,olvere, solvi, solutus* [*exsolvo*]  
 -*statuo, -statuere, -statui, stitutus* [a = i in compounds: *constituo*]  
*sterno, sternere, stravi, stratus*  
*suo, suere, sui, sutus* [*insuo*]  
*tribuo, tribuere, tribui, tributus* [at-, con-, re-]  
*volo, velle* [*velere*], *volui* [ma- no-]  
*vomo, vomere, vomui, vomitus* [*evomo*]

## INCEPTIVES:

*consuesco, consuescere, consuevi, consuetus*

-*crebresco, -crebrescere, -crebui*  
*cresco, crescere, crevi, cretus*  
*dilucesco, diluescere, diluxi*  
*floresco, florescere, florui* [*floreo, florre*]  
*(g)nosco, (g)noscere, (g)novi, (g)notus* [G visible in compounds:  
*hebesco, hebescere*  
*ignosco, cognosco, praegnosco*]  
*ingemisco, ingemiscere, ingemui*  
*ingravesco, ingravescere*  
*mutesco, mutescere, mutui*  
*obsolesco, obsolescere, obsolevi, obsoletus*  
*obstipesco, obstipescere, obstipui*  
*obstrepo, obstrepere, obstrepui*  
*pasco, pascere, pavi, pastus*  
*percallesco, percallescere, percallui*  
*perhorresco, perhorrescere, perhorruī*  
*quiesco, quiescere, quievi, quieturus*  
*tabesco, tabescere, tabui*

## FOURTH CONJUGATION IN PERFECT

*arcesso, arcessere, arcessivi*  
*cupio, cupere, cupivi, cupitus*  
*laccio, lacessere, lacessivi*  
*peto, petere, petivi, petitus* [re-]  
*quaero, quaerere, quaesivi, quaesitus* [ae = i in compounds: *exquiro*]  
*sapio, sapere, sapivi*  
*sino, sinere, sivi, situs*

## SAME STEM AS PRESENT:

*defendo, defendere, defendi, defensus* [*offendo*]  
*incendeo, incendere, incendi, incensus*  
*ico, icere, ici, ictus*  
*prehendo,prehendere,prehendi,prehensus*  
*scendo, scendere, scendi*  
*tendo, tendere, tendi, tentus*  
*vello, vellere, velli, volsus* [*divello*]  
 -*vertere, verti, versus* [ante-, a-]

## SOME FINAL NOTES

1. A few high-frequency verbs are third declension in the perfect but pass for first, second, or fourth conjugation verbs. Examples: in first conjugation, *do, dare, dedi*<sup>5</sup> and *sto, stare, steti* are Type C; in the second conjugation, *maneo, manere, mansi* is Type A; in the fourth, *venio, venire, veni* is Type B.
2. The most frequent i-stems (*facio, capio, iacio, fugio* and their compounds) are Type B (vowel change like Greek second aorist): *feci, cepi, ieci, fugi*. Some fall into two camps at once: The compounds of -*spicio* are Type A and B (-*spexi*).

In sum, when a third conjugation verb leads your students to “dictionary look-up” problems, they will feel stymied. A student who knows there is a problem is a student who is ready to learn the solution, and you will be able to lay out the whole system, and to good effect.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Given that u and v are really the same letter, the first, second, and fourth conjugations all have the same perfect: *amav, monv, muniv*.

<sup>2</sup>The -d is assimilated to the s.

<sup>3</sup>Letter b before s is de-voiced (pronounced like a p).

<sup>4</sup>All of these lose their reduplication in compounds: *contigi, dependi*, and so on.

<sup>5</sup>Compounds of this verb are all third: *condo, condere, condidi, trado, tradere, tradidi*, and the like.

Thomas Winter taught his first Latin class in 1966, and is a second-year Russian student. Russian will be his ninth language.