

Why Rivendell Uses Latin in Our Curriculum

What are the goals of our Rivendell curriculum?

Our curriculum is organized along the Rivendell Road, a series of integral, multi-faceted units designed to help young travelers think, write, read, and count well as they “Explore God’s World and Discover Their Place in It.”¹

- *Thinking well*: learning to use reason and critical thinking skills
- *Writing well*: understanding and clearly communicating what’s learned
- *Reading well*: discovering how to uncover meaning from a text
- *Counting well*: fluency in computation, problem-solving, and deduction

How does Latin fit with those goals?

We teach Classical Latin, a fixed form of the language with regular grammar rules that give students a laboratory in which to study word order, grammatical constructs, and sentence structure.

At Rivendell, Latin is integrated with the spelling and grammar curriculum. Because so many English words have Latin roots, students gain tools to decipher unfamiliar words they may encounter as they read more advanced texts. As students study parts of speech in Latin, they are able to use English more effectively to write and communicate. English vocabulary words are unlocked as students master Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Latin helps Rivendell students understand texts more deeply and write more clearly.

Because of its logical, systematic structure, Latin study also promotes critical thinking skills. Students practice precision and attention to detail, both of which are essential for thinking and counting well. Latin is woven throughout the language of science, law, medicine, civics, and theology. It’s the most influential language in history.

Our Latin students also learn Roman culture, politics, history, and mythology. They’re diving into the contextual backdrop of the New Testament, Western civilization, and the United States government, all of which are part of their core unit studies. As students engage with God’s world, Latin study assists their understanding of Scripture, citizenship, identity, and “how we got here.”

Other benefits of learning Latin include allowing students to focus on form, grammar, and vocabulary without worrying about accuracy in pronunciation and accent. Many of our graduates continue Latin studies in high school or use their Latin background for foreign language credit. Latin is an excellent foundation for other Romance languages (Spanish, French, and Italian among others), providing up to 90% of the vocabulary. Those who choose to study any modern language have already been exposed to linguistic ideas such as declensions, case endings, moods, agreement, conjugations, and gendered words. Our Latin

¹ https://www.rivendellschool.net/academics/rivendell_road_curriculum.cfm

students generally score above average on the National Latin Exam and Latin study often boosts other standardized test scores. Plus, you can enjoy all the Latin jokes in Harry Potter.

When will students begin Latin and what do they learn each year?²

Third Form (4th-5th grade) Rivendell students begin taking Latin classes twice a week, using the books *Minimus* and *Minimus Secundus*. Fourth grade students investigate parts of speech such as adverbs, conjunctions, and direct objects. Fifth grade students dive deeper into irregular verbs, participles, and complete sentences.

Sixth graders use *Cambridge Latin 1* and meet four times a week. They explore verb tenses, direct/indirect objects, and linguistic concepts such as declensions and conjugations.

Fourth Form (7th-8th grade) students continue with *Cambridge Latin 2 & 3*, meeting four times per week. They use Latin to analyze clauses, phrases, moods, and voices. By the end of their time at Rivendell, students could be ready for high school Latin II or III.

All Latin students progressively gain vocabulary comprehension, grammar insights, and English spelling fluency for words derived from Latin roots. Each year connects Roman culture, history, and beliefs to their impact on Western thought.

Frequently Asked Questions

Could Rivendell use a modern spoken language instead of Latin to achieve these goals?

Studying Latin helps Rivendell students become more proficient at using English and prepares them for learning other new languages down the road. Most modern languages are constantly evolving and changing; Latin introduces linguistic concepts useful for any language study, teaches grammatical structure and logical thinking, and provides cultural background information.

Rivendell chooses to focus on Latin because it's the best tool for achieving our curricular aims. And Latin can be a great first step to accessing the immense benefits of learning a modern language - just as learning a musical instrument or playing on a sports team are also wonderful ways to discover your place in God's World. We don't cover every possible subject here, but we strongly believe Rivendell students are learning the foundational skills they need for future successful, satisfying, and God-honoring adventures.

What if my middle school student is new to Rivendell and to Latin?

Welcome to the "last homely house." We are delighted you're here. We offer three different gradated Latin sections for our middle school students, so that all of them can gain the benefits of studying this influential language. Almost all area public and private high schools offer Latin classes if students would like to continue, or their Latin study would help them prepare for the future language of their choice.

² <https://www.cambridge.org/us/education/subject/classics/latin> to see all these textbooks