# Roman Names 1: Men and Boys

When we think of famous Romans, we often only remember *one* of their names. In fact, Roman citizen men often had **three** names, and citizen women had **two.**

Parents of a Roman boy combined three elements to make his full name:

1. *praenomen:* a simple, common name like *Marcus, Quintus* or *Publius.*
   When writing down a *praenomen*, most Romans only gave the first letter or two.
2. *nomen:* a clan name, like a modern surname.
3. *cognomen:* a nickname to show which particular branch of the clan he belonged to. In Rome, many important people shared the same *nomen,* so it was important to have a distinctive *cognomen.* A *cognomen* might describe what that branch of the family was like, or might be the name of the place they originally came from:

e.g. L. Caecilius Iucundus
*Lucius Caecilius-Delightful branch*

M. Egnatius Rufus
*Marcus Egnatius-Redhead branch*

Q. Roscius Gallus
*Quintus Roscius-Gaul branch*

**A. Name a Roman**

Try inventing some Roman names by choosing a *praenomen, nomen*, and *cognomen* from each column, e.g. M. Flavius Domitianus

| *praenomen* | *nomen* | *cognomen* |
|---|---|---|
| M. (Marcus) | Aemilius | Brutus (unreasonable) |
| L. (Lucius) | Clodius | Domitianus (home-loving) |
| Q. (Quintus) | Flavius | Columbanus (dove) |
| C. (Gaius) | Hortensius | Maximus (greatest) |
| D. (Decimus) | Lucretius | Vitalis (full of life) |
| A. (Aulus) | Pomponius | Lentulus (slow) |
| Ti. (Tiberius) | Valerius | Bibulus (drunk) |

**B. Reading Latin Inscriptions**

You are going to see some pictures of real Latin inscriptions. Can you read the names that have been highlighted?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**C. Choose Your own Roman name:**

What would your Roman name be?

You could use your first name for your *praenomen,* and your surname for your *nomen* (just add *–us* or *–ius* to make them sound a bit more Latin).

Then choose a *cognomen*. Some suggestions are given below, but if you have a Latin dictionary or textbook, you might be able to find an adjective for yourself:

> Civilis (polite)
> Crassus (solid)
> Felix (lucky)
> Memor (with a good memory)
> Magnus (tall, great)
> Gregorius (sociable)
> Paullus (small)
> Albinus (pale)
> Pulcher (handsome)
> Tacitus (silent)

**D. *Quis est?* Who is it?**

Try to invent 5 more Roman names. You could try characters from books or famous people. See if other people can guess who they are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.