

ROMAN NUMERALS ON ROMAN TOMBSTONES

ROMAN NUMERALS	I	V	X	L	C	D	M
Indo-Arabic Numerals	1	5	10	50	100	500	1,000

When a Roman died, a tombstone was set up to mark the grave. On it was written the name of the person and how long they had lived.

In Latin, the phrase *VIXIT ANNOS*, followed by a numeral, means '*he (or she) lived for ... years*'. Sometimes the stone-carver shortened this to *VIX. ANN.* or sometimes even just *V. A.*

Exercise 1:

Look at these tombstones. How old were each of these Romans when they died?

1
LUCIUS AEMILIUS
RUFUS
VIXIT ANNOS XXIX

2
FLAVIA MINOR
VIX. ANN. LXXI

3
MANIUS
CLAUDIUS
GALLUS
V. A. XLIV

4
DECIMUS
VALERIUS
LENTULUS
VIXIT
ANNOS
XIII

5
HORTENSIA
COLUMBANA
V. A. XXXVI

6
LUCRETIA TERTIA
VIXIT ANNOS XCI

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

In addition to the number of years, sometimes Roman tombstones also tell us how many months, days, or even hours a person lived. These are the words to look out for:

MENSES or M. – *months*

DIES or D. – *days*

HORIS or H. – *hours*

As with V.A., the numeral comes *afterwards*, so M.X means 'ten months'

Exercise 2:

Look at these tombstones. How old were each of these Romans when they died?

(These are based on *real* tombstones in the Ashmolean Museum collection, and show the names and ages are of real Romans.)

1
QUINTUS
MUNATIDIUS GALLUS
VIX. ANN. V DIES. II

2 IANUARIUS
VIXIT
ANNOS XXII
MENSES V

3
LUCIUS
POMPEIUS
MARCELLINUS
VIXIT
ANNOS XXIII
M. V
DIES XI

4 GRESIUS
APOLAUSTUS
V. A. X
M. XI D. XVIII

5 CLAUDIUS
SUPERUS
V. A. XIII M. VII

6
LUCIUS ANNAIUS FIRMIUS
VIXIT ANNOS V M. II . D. VI H. VI

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Exercise 3:

How would you tell a Roman your age using V.A., M., D. and H.?