Roman Numerals on Roman Tombstones

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 he/she 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. __________________
2. __________________
3. __________________
4. __________________
5. __________________
6. __________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman Numerals</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indo-Arabic Numerals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 of real Romans.)

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________
5. ____________________
6. ____________________

Exercise 3:

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