

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING SCANSION

Most students enjoy scanning, once they understand how to do it. We have found the following steps helpful in teaching dactylic hexameter and elegiacs.

Begin by explaining to students that Latin meter, based on patterns of long and short syllables, differs from the meters of English poetry, especially iambic pentameter, which are based on word stress. Persuade students that learning scansion is important because classical poetry should be read aloud, since it was composed to be heard as well as read.

For dactylic hexameter:

- use a pronunciation guide to discuss the quantity of vowels and diphthongs and to remind students that all syllables in Latin are pronounced
- remind students to consult vocabulary lists and dictionaries for macrons
- also remind them of those forms that are always long (e.g., datives and ablatives of the first and second declensions, masculine nominative and accusative plurals, etc.)
- then introduce the concept of meter as an alternation of long and short syllables and write out the pattern for dactyls – ∪ ∪ and spondees – –
- remind students that a hexameter line consists of six feet
- write out the patterns for a dactylic hexameter line on the blackboard or overhead projector:

dactylic hexameter line:

1    2    3    4    5    6  
– ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪ | – –  
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