

### Background Information

The Romans, just like many of us, had three names: *praenōmen* (similar to our first name), *nōmen* (similar to our last name), and *cognōmen* (a more specific version of the family name). There was a set of fewer than 20 different options for *praenōmina*, the names used to distinguish one family member from another. The *nōmen* was the clan name, passed down from father to son: you might compare this to a modern last name, which can refer to the entire extended family. A woman would receive the feminine form of her father's *nōmen*. For example, the daughter of a Cornelius would be Cornelia. The *cognōmen* was a name specific to a certain family branch of the clan.

Unlike our modern American names, Roman names often told much about the social status of the individual. Only free Roman men had three names: slaves would have one name and women would usually have only a *nōmen* and *cognōmen*. When women did have a *praenōmen*, it was the feminine form of her father's or husband's *praenōmen*. (However, for the purposes of this lesson, all girls can take a *praenōmen* to get the full experience of choosing three Roman names.)

Because of the high infant mortality rate, the Romans would not name their children immediately at birth. Rather, the family would wait eight or nine days after the child's birth before giving him a name. On this day, the family conducted a special ceremony, and the day was called the *diēs lūstricus* ("day of purification"). All of the child's family and relatives – and slaves as well – would present him with toys.

The child's presents would have included a *bullā*, locket-like medallions that Roman children wore around their necks until they became adults. A child's *bullā*, which contained an amulet, would protect him from evil and witchcraft. It could be made of either gold or leather.



## Nōmina Rōmāna

Step I. Choose a *praenōmen* (personal name): \_\_\_\_\_.

PVERĪ		PVELLAE	
Aulus	Publius	Aula	Publia
Appius	Quīntus	Appia	Quīnta
Decimus	Servius	Decima	Servia
Gāius	Sextus	Gāia	Sexta
Gnaeus	Spurius	Gnaea	Spuria
Lūcius	Tiberius	Lūcia	Tiberia
Mānius	Titus	Mānia	Titia
Marcus	Vibius	Marcia	Vibia
Numerius		Numeria	

Step II. Choose a *nōmen* (clan name): \_\_\_\_\_ (your last name).

Step III. Choose a *cognōmen* (family name): \_\_\_\_\_.

PVERĪ		PVELLAE	
Agrippa	Lepidus	Agathō	Faustina
Antōnius	Līvius	Agrippīna	Honōrāta
Augustus	Lūcrētius	Antōnia	Horātia
Aurēlius	Maximus	Augusta	Lepida
Balbus	Mezentius	Aurēlia	Līvia
Caesar	Paulus	Aurōra	Lūcrētia
Cassius	Perseus	Balba	Maxima
Cicerō	Pompēius	Cassia	Mezentia
Clēmēns	Rūfus	Clēmentia	Philomēla
Drūsus	Scīpiō	Creūsa	Pompēia
Faustinus	Valerius	Cynthia	Servīlia
Honōrātus	Vergilius	Diāna	Valeria
Horātius	Vīctor	Drūsilla	Vīctōria

Happy *Diēs Lūstricus*! Write your full Roman name here:

\_\_\_\_\_

*praenōmen*

\_\_\_\_\_

*nōmen*

\_\_\_\_\_

*cognōmen*

