

Greek for the Rest of Us

Personal Study Helps

Pronunciation

When γ is followed by γ, κ, χ, or ξ it is pronounced as a ν (Nu).

Diphthongs

αι - Thailand

ει - freight

οι - oil

αυ - sauerkraut

ου - coup

υι - suite

ευ, ηυ - eeuw

Breathing Marks

Either breathing mark is placed before an initial capital letter.

Accents

acute - ´

grave - θεòς

circumflex - τῆ

Advanced Information

A **diaeresis** is placed over the second vowel if it would normally be a diphthong but each vowel is pronounced separately.

Ἡσαΐας

An **elision** is used when the final vowel of a word drops off.

ἄλλα > ἄλλ´

Verbs – Voice

When a verb is **active**, the subject is doing the action of the verb.

"I *feed* the cat."

"They *called* an ambulance."

When a verb is **passive**, the subject is receiving the action. English forms the present passive by adding the helping verb "am/is/are" or "am/are/being."

"Fluffy *is walked* by Jeff."

"They *are being called* by the police."

You can tell if a verb is passive by placing "by" after the verb and seeing if that makes sense.

Verbs – Aspect-Type of Action

Verbs that describe an ongoing process are **continuous**.

"The cats *are running* through the house."

"Paul *used to persecute* the Christians."

Verbs that describe a recently completed action that have present consequences are **perfect**.

"I have studied hard and should be able to understand the Bible better."

Undefined verbs say nothing about the type of action other than the event occurred or occurs.

I enjoy blogging.

I walked all night.

Verbs – Mood

A verb in the **indicative** describes something that is, as opposed to something that may or might be, or something that is commanded which would include statements and questions. Examples would be:

"I am poor."

"Are you wealthy?"

Clause and Phrase

A **clause** is a group of related words that includes a subject and verb.

After I went home, the cat greeted me.

I will study God's Word because I love Him.

A **phrase** is a group of words that does not have a subject or an indicative verb.

After going home, the cat greeted me.

Because of love, I will pray for my enemies.

Dependent (or "Subordinate") and Independent

A **dependent** or **subordinate** clause cannot grammatically stand on its own or contain the main subject/verb of the sentence-the two most important words to locate in a sentence.

An **independent** clause can stand on its own as a sentence.

Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions connect independent clauses (e.g., *and, but, therefore*).

Subordinate conjunctions begin a dependent clause and often connect it to an independent clause (e.g., *because, if, since, when, where*).

Types of Clauses

Relative clauses always start with a relative pronoun (e.g., *who, whose, whom, which, that*).

Write to those who helped us move.

Certain bloggers, whose names I will not mention, are very devoted to a particular Bible translation.

Types of Phrases

Prepositional phrases begin with a preposition and contain the preposition's object and other modifiers.

The monster is under the bed.

He walked through the woods to find Bigfoot.

Participial phrases begin with a participle and can include its direct object and other modifiers.

After eating dinner, I started washing the dishes.

The goat testicles, eaten by the natives are delicious.

The cat sitting on the chair is taking my spot.

Phrases and Clauses Can Act as Parts of Speech

As a **noun**:

Whoever is for me is not against me. (subject)

Give the money to *whoever needs it*. (object of preposition)

Adjectival:

He *who is not for me* is against me.

Easter is a day of *joy*. (i.e. "Easter is a *joyful* day.")

Adverbially (as an adverb):

Drive *with care*. (i.e., "Drive *carefully*.")

Subject and Predicate

The **subject** is the subject of the main verb and anything that modifies it.

The great big cat lying on the couch is licking its fur.

cat is the subject of the verb *is licking* and *The great big cat lying on the couch* is considered the "subject" of the entire sentence as opposed to the "predicate."

The **predicate** is everything else including the main verb. *is licking its fur* is the predicate.

Mounce's term **phrasing** is also called *sentence flow* or *discourse analysis*.

Adjectives

An adjective can also function **substantivally**—as if it were a noun. (also in Greek)

The *Good*, the *Bad*, and the *Ugly* are all welcome here.

Adjectives can appear in the **predicate**. (also in Greek)

The Bible is *burgundy*.

In English "the" is the definite article and "a" the indefinite. θ is often called the Greek **definite article** but it has one of the widest ranges of meaning of all Greek words.

Phrases

Cases

English	Greek	usage
Subjective	Nominative	subject
Possessive	Genitive	possession
--	Dative	indirect object
Objective	Accusative	direct object

A **preposition** is a word that indicates the relationship between two things. The word that follows is called the object. Together with modifiers it's called a **prepositional phrase**. In Greek, some prepositions may be in a different case than its object.

- Prepositions can have a wide range of meaning.
- Its case can change its meaning.
- The definite article may be dropped (as in *sin was in world*).

Participial Phrases

A **participle** is an -ing word. A participial phrase is always dependent.

Clauses

Clauses have a finite verb and a subject of that verb. They can modify a word or perform a function in the sentence.

The first word in a **relative clause** is a relative pronoun.

The person *who is sitting at the table* is my friend.

The **antecedent** is the word the pronoun represents. In phrasing, try to connect a relative pronoun to its antecedent. A relative pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender. Sometimes the antecedent is substituted for the pronoun in a translation. They may be far apart in Greek so in English we need to be reminded.

With phrasing, try to keep **adverbial clauses** together.

Conditional clauses are sentences that have an "if" clause called the **protasis** and the "then" clause called the **apodosis**.

1. **First class.** Also called condition of fact. If (or since) something is true, then something will occur. First class doesn't necessarily mean the apodosis is true. It may be assumed for the sake of argument.
2. **Second class.** "Contrary to fact." If something is true, even though it's not, then something would happen. "...*if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord.*"
3. **Third class.** "More probably future." If this happens, then something will probably occur, or theoretically would probably occur. Or it could be an axiomatic truth. "*If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble...*"
4. **Fourth class.** "Less probably future." If something happens, as it is not likely (in the mind of the author) to happen, then something else will happen. (No complete illustration in the NT)

Verbs-Greek

Aspect is the type of action.

- continuous
- undefined
- perfect

Voice and Deponent Verbs

Greek verbs have active and passive **voice** as they do in English. They use different personal endings which can be seen in a paradigm.

Greek also has a category called **deponent** which is always passive in form but always active in meaning. Most of the time they are listed as passive. If the lexical form of a word ends in ομαι it's deponent in the present tense.

The other voice is the **middle**. Be cautious about placing too much weight on the middle. It's very nuanced.

- In some tenses the middle and passive forms are identical. Some say middle/passive.
- Most middles are deponent and therefore have active meanings. 75% in the NT are deponents.
- The proper definition is that the *subject does the action of the verb in some way that concerns itself.*

Greek Passives and Translators

Sometimes context shows that when a verb is passive, God is doing the action of the verb. This is called a **divine passive**.

Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for *they will be comforted*.

Subjects and Objects

A Greek sentence doesn't require an expressed subject. A verb by itself can be a complete sentence, like *I say*. Greek may also drop a verb's direct object, and English translators will add them back in since English usually doesn't allow this.

1 Peter 1:8 whom not seeing you love (Greek)
 Though you have not seen him, you love *him*. (NIV)

Present Indicative

The indicative mood describes a fact or asks a question. Active or passive voice may be used. The present tense verb usually—but not always—indicates an action occurring in the present time. Be aware that the time frame is from the *writer/speaker's point of view*, not the reader.

See **Uses of the Present Tense** on page 152.

Future Indicative

To form the future you add a helping verb like *will* or *shall* to the present tense stem of the verb.

I will work hard.

In Greek the future has the strongest emphasis on time. As a general rule, the future is translated with the undefined aspect "*I will run*" rather than "*I will be running*".

Uses of the future include *predictive*—what will happen in the future; *imperative*—a command; or *gnomic*—a generic event like "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*"

Two Past Tenses (Imperfect and Aorist)

The present tense can be either continuous or undefined. In the past tenses the difference is explicit. The imperfect is always continuous and the aorist is always undefined. John 19:3 "and *struck* him" is continuous (see NRSV and NET).

Time is secondary to **aspect**. The Greek is telling you the type of action more than the time of the action.

See page 158 for **Uses of the Imperfect** and **Uses of the Aorist** .

Present Indicative

The Greek perfect is often used to express many great theological truths. The action is brought to completion with the effects felt in the present (at the time of the writer, if not later). The action of the verb normally occurs in the past.

See page 163 for **Uses of the Perfect**.

Participle

English

Present participles are formed by adding "-ing" to a verb. They are defined as *verbal adjectives*.

They can have an adverbial function.

After *eating*, my mom gave me dessert.

Eating is a participle that tells us something in relationship to the verb *gave*. My mom gave me the dessert after she was done eating. (*After* is an adverb that emphasizes when the action of the participle occurred.)

A participle can also have an *adjectival* function.

The man, *sitting* by the window, is my father.

Sitting tells us something about the noun *man*.

When a participle has elements such as a direct object or an adverb, the participle and its accompanying elements form a **participial phrase**. In phrasing, it's important to identify the beginning and the end of the participial phrase, much like you do with relative clauses. The participial phrase is always dependent.

In a sentence like, "While walking, she saw him." English requires that *she* is the one who is walking, not *he* since *she* is closer in word order to the participle.

Greek

Participles are widely used in the NT. You will discover that they have a much wider range of usage in Greek than in English and this flexibility presents certain difficulties to the translator.

Aspect

It's key to understand that the significance of participles is primarily one of aspect, i.e., type of action. This is the genius of participles, as it is with all of the nonindicative verbal forms such as subjunctive, infinitive and imperative (found later in the notes). It has the three aspects of *present* which describes a continuous action but does not necessarily mean the event is occurring in the present time, *aorist* (undefined) and *perfect*. It's difficult to bring this significance into English.

Adjectival Participle

Adjectival. Because a participle is a verbal adjective, it can behave as an adjective. The participle will modify some other noun or pronoun in the sentence and will agree with that word in case, number, and gender, just like an adjective.

Substantival

Since an adjective can also function as a noun, a participle can also. (In English, when an "-ing" word is used as a noun, it's called a *gerund*.) Anything an adjective can do a participle can do, usually better.

Mark 9:23 all things possible to the *believing* (Greek)

All things are possible for *one who believes*. (ESV)

Words need to be added to say the same thing in English as in the Greek, just as is done with substantival adjectives.

Adverbial Participle

The adverbial participle tells us something about the finite verb. In many cases the translator will add words to bring out the significance of the participle. See examples starting on page 180 and read about relative time on page 184.

Subjunctive

English

The subjunctive doesn't describe what is but what may or might be. It's the mood of possibility or probability.

I *might learn* Spanish.

If we *were wealthy*, we would give more money to the poor.

A common use of the subjunctive in English is in an *if* clause. *If I were* instead of *I am*.

Greek

The basic definition is the same as in English. However, there are some significant differences.

Aspect. A Greek verb has time significance only in the indicative. The only significance that a verb in the subjunctive has is one of aspect. This is the same as with the participle. There is no concept of absolute past or absolute present time in the subjunctive.

See **Uses of the Subjunctive** on page 187.

Infinitive

English

An infinitive is a verbal noun, much like the participle is a verbal adjective. It's most easily recognized as a verb preceded by the word *to*

To study is my highest aspiration.

The infinitive *to study* is the subject of the sentence.

I began *to sweat* when I realized the final exams were two weeks away.

In this sentence, the infinitive *to sweat* is completing the action of the verb *began*.

Greek

The Greek is capable of a somewhat wider use. It has no case, which means it's indeclinable. When it's preceded by a definite article, the article is always neuter singular and is declined according to the function of the infinitive. For example, if the infinitive is the subject, the article will be in the nominative case.

An infinitive can have a direct object and adverbial modifiers.

To study for a long time brings one to a state of mental exhaustion.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase *for a long time* modifies the infinitive *to study*. An infinitive has tense and voice. It has no person and no number.

Subject. Because an infinitive isn't a finite verbal form (which have subjects), it technically cannot have a subject. However, there is often a noun in the accusative case that acts as if it were the subject of the infinitive.

Hebrews 5:12 need you have the *to teach* you *someone* (Greek)

You need *someone to teach* you. (NIV)

Aspect. The infinitive has no time significance whatsoever. The infinitive built on the present stem indicates a continuous action; the aorist stem indicates an undefined action; the perfect stem indicates a completed action with ongoing implications. It's usually impossible to carry this significance into English. Translators generally use the present punctiliar form of the verb like *to see*, *to eat*.

Adverbial Uses of the Infinitive

1. A finite verb's meaning may be incomplete apart from some additional information. An infinitive is often used to complete that meaning (*complementary*).

Acts 2:4 they began *to speak* other tongues (Greek)
They began *to speak* in other tongues. (NIV)

2. **Articular infinitive and preposition.** When the infinitive is preceded by a preposition and the article, there are specific rules of translation. This is the most difficult use of the infinitive and the most idiomatic. We have no construction like it in English. See page 191.

3. Another function of the infinitive is to express purpose, *in order that (purpose)*.

- a. Purpose can be expressed using the articular infinitive preceded by εἰς or πρός discussed on pg 191.
- b. The articular infinitive with the article in the genitive case (no preposition) can also express purpose.
- c. The infinitive all by itself (without a preposition or the article) can express purpose.

Matt 5:17 not do not think that I came *to abolish* the law (Greek)
Do not think that I came *to abolish* the law. (NASB)

4. A common way of indicating the *result* of some action is to use a clause introduced by ὥστε. In this case it will not be followed by a finite verb as is the case in English but by an infinitive. Because we do not have a similar use of the infinitive in English, it must be translated with a finite verb.

Luke 5:7 they filled both the boats *so that to sink* them (Greek)
They ... filled both boats so full *that they began to sink*. (NIV)

Substantival Uses of the Infinitive

Because the infinitive is a verbal noun, it can perform any function that a substantive can. When used as a substantive, it will usually be preceded by the definite article. It can be translated with *to* and the verb, although normally they use another way to say it. This is a common construction.

Philippians 1:21 to me *the to live* Christ and *the to die* gain (Greek)
For to me, *to live* is Christ and *to die* is gain. (NASB)

Imperative

English

The verb is in the imperative mood when it's making a command. It's in the second person, often with an exclamation mark. The understood subject is *you* (singular).

Greek

As is the case with participles and infinitives, the imperative has a greater range of meaning in Greek. It has second *and* third person, and it's aspect is significant. It does not indicate time.

Person. Because there is no English equivalent to a third person imperative, the translation must be a little idiomatic. *Let him look* or *He must look!* The words *let* or *must* and a pronoun supplied from the person of the verb (*him*), can be added to convey the correct meaning.

Aspect. The imperative built on the present tense stem is called the **present imperative** and indicates a continuous action. The imperative built on the aorist tense stem is called the **aorist imperative** and indicates an undefined action. There is no time significance with the imperative. Sometimes, to get the significance of the aspect into English, the translator may use the key work *continually* in the translation of the present imperative, although this is somewhat stilted English: *continually eat*.

See page 195 for examples of **Uses of the Imperative**.

Nominative and Vocative

Stem. The basic form of a noun or adjective is called the *stem*. The stem of the word God is Θεο.

Nominative. The Greek equivalent of the English subjective case is the nominative case. When a Greek word is the *subject of a verb*, it is in the nominative case. (Jeff: Who or what *did* the verb.)

Case endings. Unlike English, most Greek nouns and adjectives change their form depending on their function in the sentence. This is done by using case endings—suffixes. If a word is the subject of a verb, the writer will put it into the nominative case by adding a nominative case ending onto the stem. ζ can be used as a nominative case endings. In John 3:16, which word is the subject?

ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον
he loved the God the world
God loved the world

We see the ζ case ending, recognize that this indicates the word is in the nominative case, and conclude that it is the subject of the verb. The word order does not identify the subject.

Gender. Most Greek nouns don't follow natural gender but you will see natural gender in pronouns.

Number. Greek indicates singular or plural with different case endings.

Agreement. When a word like an adjective or article modifies another word, it will agree with that word in case, number and gender.

Uninflected. Some words in Greek do not inflect, such as personal names and word borrowed from other languages. Abraham will always be Abraham (in Greek) regardless of its function in the sentence.

Lexical form. The lexical form of a noun is its nominative singular form. This is important because in doing a word study, the lexical form is needed to find the word.

Declensions. In Greek there are three basic inflectional patterns. Which pattern a word follows has no effect on its meaning, only its form. For baby Greek, we just need to recognize that different words will use different endings even though they may be in the same case, number and gender.

Uses of the Nominative

The normal use of the nominative case is to designate the *subject* of a verb. It can be the main subject of a sentence, or the subject inside a clause.

Romans 10:9 ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν
the God him he raised from dead
God raised him from the dead (NIV)

In phrasing and exegesis, it is necessary to identify the subject and main verb. That subject will be in the nominative.

The nominative is also used for a *predicate nominative*. In correct English we would say, "It is I," not, "It is me," because the verb "I am" in all its form is not followed by a direct object but by a predicate nominative. This means that the following word is in the subjective case. We have the same situation with the Greek verb εἶμι. which is always followed by a nominative. (ὁ χριστός is nominative – the Christ.)

Vocative

There is technically a fifth case in Greek, although it is so similar to the nominative that we still speak of the "four" cases in Greek. The vocative is the case of *direct address* as in "Come, Lord Jesus!" ὦ may be included if there is deep emotion as in "O woman, great is your faith!"

Word Order

Case endings are the key to knowing the function of a word as opposed to word order as we are used to in English. A Greek sentence may have different word orders and mean the same thing. Normal word order is conjunction, verb, subject and object. A Greek speaker may alter the word order for emphasis. If they want to emphasize a word, they move it forward in the sentence. This is difficult to translate.

Accusative

English

The direct object receives the *action of the verb* and is in the objective case. It is normally placed after the verb.

John hit the *ball*.

Greek

The corresponding case in Greek to the English objective case is the accusative case. Remember it's the case and not the word order that tells you how it functions in a sentence. See page 226 for **Uses of the Accusative**.

Dative

English

Technically, the indirect object is the person or thing that is "indirectly" affected by the action of the verb. This means that the indirect object is somehow involved in the action described by the verb, but not directly.

One way to find the indirect object is to put the word "to" in front of the word and see if it makes sense.

Karin threw *Brad* a ball.

Karin threw *to Brad* a ball.

Greek

Many of the times when English uses prepositions, Greek uses the dative case (often without prepositions).

τῷ ἐκκλησίᾳ > "to the church"

Since English doesn't have a dative case, the translator will often use an extra word in the translation of the dative such as "to" or "in". They are normally prepositions. See page 229 for **Uses of the Dative**.

Genitive

English

To indicate possession you can put "of" in front of a word ("The Word of God is true."), an apostrophe s after the word, or just an apostrophe if the word ends in "s". Sometimes there is ambiguity. What does "bowl of silver" mean? This often explains why translations are different.

Greek

The *head noun* is the word that the word in the genitive is modifying. In the phrase "love of God," "love" would be the head noun and "God" would be in the genitive. See page 232 for **Uses of the Genitive**.