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Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

You will be able to—

1. identify syllables for pronunciation;
2. identify the three Greek accents;
3. recognize the basic rules of Greek accents;
4. identify proclitics and enclitics;
5. identify rough/smooth breathings, apostrophes, and diaeresis markings;
6. identify four Greek punctuation marks;
7. remember English grammar (parts of speech, noun declension, and verb parsing), and
8. gain a mastery of ten more Greek vocabulary words.

Syllable Slicing

In order to correctly pronounce Greek words, we need to be able to identify how the syllables are combined to make words. Greek divides words into syllables in almost the same way as English. So if you don't recognize a new word, just try to pronounce it as you would in English. Generally, start at the left and divide after the vowel.

Four Syllable Rules

1. A consonant or pronounceable consonant cluster (i.e., any consonant combination that can begin or end a Greek word) goes with the vowel that follows it.
2. Split two consonants if they are the same letter or if they create an unpronounceable combination (i.e., any consonant combination that cannot begin or end a Greek word).
3. Split two vowels (except for diphthongs), allowing only one vowel or diphthong per syllable.
4. Split compound words into their original parts before applying the rules of syllable division.

Check a Greek lexicon to determine whether or not a particular consonant cluster can begin or end a word. If you can find a word that begins with that cluster, it is safe to assume that it is a pronounceable cluster and should not be divided. The following examples illustrate the rules for word division. The four rules are briefly: 1) consonants go with following vowel, 2) split consonants (except clusters), 3) split vowels (except diphthongs), and 4) split words.

(1) A consonant or pronounceable consonant cluster goes with what follows:

	Syllables		Meaning	
ἀμήν	ἀ	μήν	truly, verily	μ goes with following vowel
δόξα	δό	ξα	glory, fame	ξ goes with following vowel
ἐγώ	ἐ	γώ	I	γ goes with following vowel
λέγω	λέ	γω	I say	γ goes with following vowel
λόγος	λό	γος	word, statement	γ goes with following vowel
κύριος	κύ	ριος	LORD	ρ goes with following vowel
κόσμος	κό	σμος	world	σμ is a cluster vid. Σμύρνα
Πέτρος	Πέ	τρος	Peter	τρ is a cluster vid. τρεῖς
Χριστός	Χρι	στός	Christ	στ is a cluster vid. στολή

(2) Split two consonants: Consonant clusters are divided if they are the same letter or if they create an unpronounceable combination:

	Syllables		Meaning
ἄγγελος	ἄγ	γε λος	angel, messenger (γ/γ)
ἀδελφός	ἀ	δελ φός	brother (λ/φ)
ἄνθρωπος	ἄν	θρωπος	man (θρ is a pronounceable cluster)
καρδία	καρ	δί α	heart (ρ/δ)
ἔρχεται	ἔρ	χε ται	he/she/it comes (ρ/χ)
μαρτυρέω	μαρ	τυ ρέ ω	I testify (ρ/τ)
βάλλω	βάλ	λω	I throw (λ/λ)

(3) Split two vowels (except for diphthongs), allowing only one vowel or diphthong per syllable:

	Syllables		Meaning
ἀκούω	ἀ	κού ω	I hear, obey (ου is a diphthong)
θεός	θε	ός	God (ε/ο)
καρδία	καρ	δί α	heart (ι/α)
κύριος	κύ	ριος	lord, LORD (ι/ο)
υἱός	υἱ	ός	son (υι is a diphthong) (υι/ο)
Φαρισαῖος	φα	ρι σαῖος	Pharisee (αι is a diphthong) (αι/ο)

(4) Split compound words into their original parts before applying the rules of syllable division:

Example: When the preposition **σύν** (“with”) combines with the verb **ἄγω** (“I lead”), the syllable breaks are **συν-ά-γω**, not **συν-νά-γω** as rule 2 would require.

Syllable Names

Traditionally, the last three syllables of a word have had specific names. The last syllable is called the “ultima,” the second from the last the “penult,” and the third from the last the “antepenult.” Penult means “almost last” in Latin. Antepenult means “before the almost last.”

Antepenult	Penult	Ultima	
	κό	σμος	world
προ	φή	της	prophet
ἀ	δελ	φός	brother

Three Accents

1. Acute (´) angles upward (left to right), originally indicating a rising pitch. Today we use the accents to specify syllable emphasis, not tone or pitch variation.
λέγω (I say)
2. Grave (`) angles downward, originally indicating a falling pitch.
ἀδελφός (brother)
3. Circumflex (˘) angles upward then downward, originally indicating a rising then falling pitch.
αὐτοῦ (his)

Potential Accent Placement

1. Acute may occur on any of the last three syllables (antepenult, penult, ultima).

Acute on Any of the Last Three Syllables

Syllables	Meaning
ἄγ γε λος	angel, messenger (antepenult acute)
δό ξα	glory, fame (penult acute)
έ γώ	I (ultima acute)

2. Circumflex may occur only on the last two syllables (but only if the vowel or diphthong is long).

Circumflex on Either of the Last Two Long Syllables

Syllables	Meaning
Φα ρι σαῖ ος	Pharisee (penult circumflex)
αὐ τοῦ	his (ultima circumflex)

Diphthongs are considered long except for οι or αι in a final syllable.

3. Grave may occur only on the last syllable.

Grave on the Last Syllable

Syllables		Meaning
ἀ	δελ	φὸς
	ἀ	μῆν
		brother (ultima grave)
		truly, verily (ultima grave)

Potential Placement Chart

	Antepenult	Penult	Ultima
Acute	´	´	´
Circumflex		ˆ	ˆ
Grave			`

Six Accent Rules

Rule 1: Nouns Are Retentive

Nouns attempt to keep their accents on the same syllable as the base form you learn in the vocabulary lists or find in the lexicon.

man, human

ἄνθρωπος	antepenult acute
ἄνθρώπου	penult acute; long ultima causes change
ἄνθρώπῳ	penult acute; long ultima causes change
ἄνθρωπον	antepenult acute; short ultima, no change
ἄνθρωπε	antepenult acute; short ultima, no change

Rule 2: Verbs Are Recessive

The verb's accent has a tendency to recede toward the first syllable as far as possible.

λύω	λύω	I loose (penult acute)
λύεις	λύεις	you loose (penult acute)
λύει	λύει	he/she/it looses (penult acute)
λύομεν	λύομεν	we loose (antepenult acute)
λύετε	λύετε	you (pl.) loose (antepenult acute)
λύουσι	λύουσι	they loose (antepenult acute)

Rule 3: Long Ultima, No Antepenult Accent

If the ultima is long, then the antepenult cannot be accented.

ἄνθρωπος	antepenult acute
ἄνθρώπου	penult acute; cannot accent antepenult because of ου
ἄνθρώπῳ	penult acute; cannot accent antepenult because of ω

Rule 4: Long Ultima, Acute Penult

If the ultima is long and the penult is accented, then that accent must be an acute.

ἀνθρώπου	penult acute; long ultima ου causes change
ἀνθρώπω	penult acute; long ultima ω causes change
λύω	I loose (penult acute)
λύεις	you loose (penult acute)
λύει	he/she/it looses (penult acute)

Rule 5: Short Ultima, Long Penult Takes Circumflex

If the ultima is short and the penult is both long and accented, that accent must be a circumflex.

ἦλθεν	ἦλθεν	he went (short ultima; long penult) (Jn. 1:7)
ἐκεῖνος	ἐκεῖνος	that (short ultima; long penult) (Jn. 1:8)
πρῶτος	πρῶτος	first, earlier (short ultima; long penult) (Jn. 1:15)

Rule 6: Acute Ultima Changed to Grave

If an acute is on the ultima, it becomes a grave when followed by another word without intervening punctuation.

πρὸς τὸν θεόν	two graves and an acute (Jn. 1:1)
καὶ θεὸς ἦν	two graves and a circumflex (Jn. 1:1)

Words with No Accents

There are several short Greek words that do not have an accent. These clitics are pronounced as if they were part of the word that accompanies them. A clitic is a word that “leans on” the preceding or the following word.

1. Proclitic comes *before* the word that carries the accent.

Proclitic (before the accented word)

ὁ Χριστός	the Christ (Jn. 1:20) (ὁ has no accent; the ˆ is a breathing mark, not an accent—see below)
ὁ λόγος	the word (Jn. 1:1) (ὁ has no accent)
Ἐν ἀρχῇ	in the beginning (Jn. 1:1) (Ἐν has no accent)
οὐ κατέλαβεν	it did not understand/overcome (Jn. 1:5) (οὐ has no accent)

2. Enclitic comes *after* the word that carries the accent.

Enclitic (after the accented word)

πρῶτός μου	before me (Jn. 1:15) (μου has no accent) Note the accent added to the ultima of πρῶτός
Ἐγώ εἰμι	I am (Jn. 6:35) (εἰμι has no accent)

Breathing Marks

There are two breathing marks that are placed on vowels and diphthongs when they begin words.

1. Smooth breathing ($\text{'}\text{'}$) does not affect pronunciation.

Smooth breathing ($\text{'}\text{'}$)

ἀδελφός	brother
ἄγγελος	angel, messenger
ἀμῆν	truly, verily
ἀπόστολος	apostle
ἐγώ	I

2. Rough breathing ($\text{'}\text{}$) adds an “h” sound before the sound of the initial vowel.

Rough breathing ($\text{'}\text{}$)

ἕξ	six as in hexagon
υἱός	son, descendant (note breathing goes on the second vowel of the diphthong initial word)
ὑπέρ	in behalf of, above
ἵνα	that, in order that (note the breathing mark beside the acute accent)

Note: an initial rho (ρ) always takes a rough breathing (ῥῆμα word). It has no effect on the pronunciation, however. Initial υ always takes a rough breathing, too.

Punctuation Marks

There are four punctuation marks in Greek. The comma and period are the same as in English. The colon and question mark are different.

1. Period (.)	λόγος.
2. Comma (,)	λόγος,
3. Colon (:)	λόγος:
4. Question Mark (;)	λόγος;

Apostrophe

In English, letters that drop out or are elided are marked with an apostrophe (e.g., it's = it is). Greek also uses an apostrophe to mark the missing letter(s). The final letter of a preposition, if it is a vowel, is dropped when it precedes a word that begins with a vowel.

διὰ + αὐτοῦ becomes δι' αὐτοῦ

(Note that the omitted alpha is replaced by an apostrophe; Jn. 1:3, 7; cf. Jn. 1:39)

Coronis

Sometimes a word with a final vowel followed by a word with an initial vowel will be contracted together. This is called "Crisis." A coronis (') is used to retain the breathing of the second word.

καί [and] + ἐγώ [I] becomes καὶγώ ("and I," Jn. 1:31, 33)

Quick Review of English Grammar

Parts of Speech

1. Noun names a person, place, thing or idea (e.g., book).
2. Adjective is a word used to qualify the meaning of the noun (e.g., good book).
3. Definite Article is a word that specifies a particular noun (e.g., the good book).
The indefinite article is "a" (e.g., a book).
4. Pronoun is a word used instead of a noun (e.g., the book, it).
5. Preposition is a relational word that connects an object (often a noun) to its antecedent (e.g., in the book).
6. Verb is often an action or state-of-being word that makes a statement, asks a question, or gives a command (e.g., read the book).
7. Adverb qualifies the meaning of the verb (e.g., read quickly).
8. Particle is a small indeclinable word expressing some general aspect of meaning, or some connective or limiting relation (see chapter 27).

Sentence Parts (Σψνταχ)

The sentence is divided into two parts:

1. Subject, about which something is said.

Simple subject:	<u>Terry</u> went to the store.
	The big red <u>truck</u> moved slowly.
Complete subject:	<u>The big red truck</u> moved slowly.
Compound subject:	<u>Terry and Dawn</u> went to the store.
Understood subject:	Please close the door (" <u>you</u> " is understood).

2. Predicate is that which is said about the subject.
 Simple predicate: Joy walked home.
 Complete predicate: Joy walked home.
 Compound predicate: Joy walked home and raked leaves.

Predicate nominative: It is I (rather than “It is me”). A predicate nominative completes the idea of the subject. It will most often occur with an “is” verb.

Phrases

A *phrase* is a group of words used as a single part of speech.

Perhaps the most common is the prepositional phrase:

The book by the bed is my textbook (the phrase acts like an adjective modifying “book”).

He held the book over his head (the phrase acts like an adverb modifying “held”).

Infinitive phrases often act as nouns, adverbs or adjectives:

With work you can expect to master Greek (as a noun).

He played to win (as an adverb).

He had plenty of water to drink (as an adjective modifying water).

Clause

A *clause* is a group of words that includes a subject and predicate. (A clause has a verb; a phrase does not.)

Phrase: The great big strong man (an adjective phrase)

Clause: The man who owns the store (an adjectival/relative clause)

A *main* clause expresses a complete thought and can stand alone.

A *subordinate* clause is dependent on the main clause and cannot stand alone. Note the following subordinate clauses.

When the store opened, the people pushed through the front door.

He knew that power had gone out of him.

Vanquishing Verbs

It is crucial for students of Greek to gain mastery over (conquer, vanquish) verbs.

Tense generally describes the time of action of the verb (present, future, past), although the time/tense connection has been hotly contested recently (vid. S. Porter, R. Decker, D. Mathewson, et al.). Some see the Greek tense forms as being used to denote *Aktionsart* (how the action takes place [punctiliar, durative, iterative, inceptive...]) and others stress aspect (the writer’s view or portrayal of the action as opposed to when/how the action actually happened). You should be aware of all three perspectives.

Tense=time: Time is

Kathy walks everyday (present tense).

Kathy walked yesterday (past tense).

Kathy will walk tomorrow (future tense).

Horses gallop across the prairie (omnitemporal/gnomic; what they usually do).

God loves you (timeless).

The Greek verb forms (present/aorist/perfect) are not directly indicative of the time an event actually happened. Hence the present tense form can be used for events that are past, present, future, omnitemporal or timeless.

Aktionsart denotes the type of action, **how** it happens: These types of features are better understood as a result of the discourse level or based on the lexical meanings of particular verbs and combinations rather than to try to force such “meanings” onto the morphological tense forms (present, aorist, perfect).

Continuous/durative action (the event as a process), He is cooking.

Iterative (happens repeatedly) He kept shooting the ball.

Inceptive (event is beginning) She is leaving now.

Omnitemporal/gnomic: Horses gallop across the prairie (omnitemporal/gnomic; what they usually do)

Timeless: God loves you.

Aspect: the writer’s portrayal of an action (Porter/Decker/Mathewson)
the time is indicated more from adverbials, prepositions or time words than from the “tense” of the verb.

Present/Imperfect: immediacy, details, in progress, descriptive, foreground material
(can be used to portray present, past, future, omnitemporal or timeless action; so it is not time locked)

Aorist: wholistic, complete, undifferentiated, background material

Perfect/Pluperfect: state of affairs, foreground form

Mathewson defines background, foreground and frontground as follows:

1. *background*: this does not refer to material that is non-essential or unimportant, but to material that serves a supporting role.
2. *foreground*: this refers to material that is selected for more attention and often consists of the main characters and thematic elements in a discourse.
3. *frontground*: elements that are frontgrounded are singled out for special attention, are presented in a more well-defined way, and stand out in an unexpected manner in the discourse (Mathewson, 27).

Voice shows who does or receives the action of the verb. Voice indicates how the subject is related to the action of the verb.

Active: Subject does the action.

Middle: Subject does action for itself or emphasizing the subjects participation in the action of the verb (most often the Greek is translated into an English active or for him/her/itself [benefit])

Passive: Subject receives the action.

Mathewson has described it visually as:

Active: Subject ----> Verb (object)

Middle: Subject <--> Verb

Passive: Subjects <--- Verb (agent)

Examples of verb voice

Zachary shot the ball (active)—Zach does the action.

The ball was shot by Zachary (passive)—ball receives action.

Zachary himself passed the ball (middle)—Zach did it for himself.

Verbal mood shows how something is said.

Indicative: Portrayal of reality

Subjunctive: Desire, possible

Imperative: Command, entreaty

Optative: Wish, remote possibility

Examples of Verb Mood

Indicative: He learned Greek well.

Subjunctive: In order that he might learn Greek well . . .

If he studies, he may learn Greek well.

Imperative: Learn Greek well!

Optative: Oh that you might learn Greek.

(Hopefully, this will not be a remote possibility.)

Nouns

Nouns in Greek have gender, number, and case.

Gender: The Greek masculine, feminine, and neuter genders are often indicated by the endings attached to the noun. Abstract nouns and objects that are neither male nor female in English are often marked as either masculine or feminine in Greek (The boat, she left port).

Number: As an “s” often ends an English word that is plural, Greek likewise, has endings that mark whether a noun is singular or plural (e.g., book, books).

Case: In English we have three cases that are seen in how we use our pronouns.

Case will be an important feature in Greek and often difficult to grasp initially.

1. Subjective or nominative case:
She = subject (She did it.)
2. Objective or accusative case:
Her = object (The car hit her.)
3. Possessive or genitive case:
Hers = possessive (The car was hers.)

Greek adds two more:

4. Dative case: The case marking the indirect object. (I told the story to the apostles.)
5. Vocative case: The case of direct address. (O Lord, save me.)

Endings will be added to the Greek nouns to indicate gender, number and case.

Vocabulary

ἀδελφός	brother (343)
ἀκούω	I hear, obey (428)
δόξα	glory, fame (166)
ἔχω	I have, hold (708)
κόσμος	world (186)
κύριος	lord, Lord, sir (717)
λόγος	word (330)
Πέτρος	Peter (156)
υἱός	son (377)
Φαρισαῖος	Pharisee (98)