

CHAPTER 2

Breathings, Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

Breathing Marks -- Adapted for Modern Greek by Dr. Perry Phillips

*Modern Greek does not use breathing marks. When reading the New Testament text with Modern Greek pronunciation, **ignore the breathing marks** whether smooth or rough. For completeness, however, we explain breathing marks since they appear in the Greek New Testament.*

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

1. Smooth breathing (ϝ) does not affect vocalization.

Smooth breathing (ϝ)

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

2. Rough breathing (ϛ) added an “h” sound before the sound of the initial vowel in "university" or "Erasmus" (both older) vocalizations. *In Modern Greek, rough breathing is treated like smooth breathing; that is, it does not affect vocalization.*

Rough breathing (ϛ)

ἕξ	six as in hexagon (<i>but pronounced "ex" in Modern Greek</i>)
υῖός	son, descendant (Note: breathing goes on the second vowel of the diphthong initial word) (<i>but pronounced "yos" [y as in yes] in Modern Greek</i>)
ὑπέρ	in behalf of, above (<i>but pronounced "eeper" in Modern Greek, as in prepare</i>)
ἵνα	that, in order that (note the breathing mark beside the acute accent) (<i>but pronounced "eena" in Modern Greek, as in hyena.</i>)

Note: An initial rho (ρ) always takes a rough breathing (ῥῆμα word). It has no effect, however, on the pronunciation. *In Modern Greek the initial ς is always pronounced "ee" as in "meet."*

Three Accents Used in Koine Greek

Koine Greek employs three accent marks described immediately below. In Modern Greek, however, these three accents have been replaced by a vertical accent (') to specify syllable emphasis, not tone or pitch variation. When reading the New Testament with Modern Greek pronunciation, use these accents to stress the syllable on which they appear, but do not change your pitch.

In spite of the uniform vocalization of these accents in Modern Greek, we will continue the discussion on accents as seen in the New Testament since they are universally present in New Testament Greek texts.

1. Acute (´) angles upward (left to right), originally indicating a rising pitch.

λέγω (I say)

2. Grave (`) angles downward, originally indicating a falling pitch.

ἀδελφὸς (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)
	ῆ	ώ	I (ultima acute)

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

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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		brother (ultima grave)
	ᾶ	μῆν		truly, verily (ultima grave)

Potential Placement Chart

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

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

You will be able to—

1. identify syllables for pronunciation;
2. identify the three Greek accents used in Koine Greek (*Remember: Modern Greek uses only one accent*);
3. recognize the basic rules of Greek accents;
4. identify proclitics and enclitics;
5. identify rough/smooth breathings, apostrophes, and dieresis 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 pronounce Greek words correctly, 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.

In what immediately follows, we will retain New Testament Greek accent marks even though they do not have the same significance in Modern Greek. Recall that Modern Greek ignores breathing marks and uses one accent mark in multisyllabic words, and that is to stress the syllable when vocalizing the word. Monosyllabic words have no accent mark.

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

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

	Syllables		Meaning	
ἀμήν	ἄ	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	ἄ	δελ	φός	brother (λ/φ)
ἄνθρωπος	ἄν	θρω	πος	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	ρέω	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	ἄ	κού	ω	I hear, obey (ου is a diphthong)
θεός	θε	ός		God (ε/ο)
καρδία	καρ	δί	α	heart (ι/α)
κύριος	κύ	ρι	ος	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 συ-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	
προ	κό	σμος	world
	φή	της	prophet

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

ἄ

δελ

φός

brother

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	λύ ω	I loose (penult acute)
λύεις	λύ εις	you loose (penult acute)
λύει	λύ ει	he/she/it looses (penult acute)
λύομεν	λύ ο μεν	we loose (antepenult acute)
λύετε	λύ ε τε	you (pl.) loose (antepenult acute)
λύουσι	λύ ου σι	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.

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

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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 ‘ 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)

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.

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

- | | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 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.

διά + 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).

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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 (Syntax)

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 <u>walked</u> home.
Complete predicate:	Joy <u>walked home</u> .
Compound predicate:	Joy <u>walked home and raked leaves</u> .

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).

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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.

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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).

CHAPTER 2 Accents, Syllables, and English Grammar

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)