

Mastering New Testament Greek Textbook

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CHAPTER 4

Second Declension Nouns

You will be able to—

1. understand the English syntax of nouns in sentences (subject, object, number, gender, etc.),
2. understand the Greek noun system (gender, number, case),
3. write out the second declension paradigm for masculine and neuter nouns, and
4. master ten high-frequency vocabulary words.

Introduction

A noun is commonly defined as a word that stands for a person, place or thing.

Natanya = person
Store = place
Car = thing

Gender

Gender in English is determined by the sex of the referent: “king . . . he,” “queen . . . she.” Objects that are neither male nor female are considered neuter: “table . . . it.” In Greek some inanimate objects are given male or female designations. Be careful not to confuse Greek grammatical gender with biological gender!

οἶκος “House” is masculine.
ἱερόν “Temple” is neuter.
ἐκκλησία “Church, congregation” is feminine.

Number

Both English and Greek inflect words for number. Both languages have singular and plural nouns. Notice the change on the end of the Greek words.

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
heaven	heavens	οὐρανός	οὐρανοί
man	men	ἄνθρωπος	ἄνθρωποι

Case

English uses word inflections in order to indicate changes in case. Case is the role a word plays in the sentence (such as subject, object, possessive).

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Subjective Case (Greek: Nominative)

This is the subject of the verb.

He hit the ball.

The subject of the sentence can usually be discovered by putting “who” or “what” before the verb.

He ran to the store.

Who ran to the store? He (= subject).

Objective Case (Greek: Accusative)

This is the object of the verb.

The ball hit him.

The object of a sentence can usually be discovered by putting a “who” or “what” after the verb.

He hit the ball.

He hit what? The ball (= object).

Possessive Case (Greek: Genitive)

This indicates who is the possessor.

He hit his truck.

The possessive case often can be discovered by asking “whose?”

Charlie hid his cake.

Whose cake? His (possessive).

Nominative	=	subject of the sentence
Accusative	=	object of the sentence
Genitive	=	Possessive

Declensions: First, Second, Third

There are three noun declensions in Greek. A declension is a grouping of nouns that are inflected with a shared set of endings. The difference in endings does not affect the translation procedure for first, second, and third declensions. The second declension nouns are characterized by an o as the final letter of the stem. They are largely masculine or neuter. First declension nouns are characterized by an η or α for the final letter and are mostly feminine. Third declension nouns have stems that end in a consonant.

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We will learn the second declension before the first because it is more frequent. Second declension nouns are largely masculine, as indicated in lexical lists by placing the masculine definite article ὁ (“the”) after the nominative singular form. Each noun should be learned with its definite article that indicates its gender. Second declension nouns that are neuter are marked by placing the neuter definite article τό (“the”) after the root.

Article

In contrast to English, which uses “a” as an indefinite article (“a book”), Greek has no indefinite article. Thus, the Greek indefinite noun may be translated “book” or “a book.” Greek nouns are assumed to be indefinite unless marked by the article (“the”). The Greek article can actually be used for several functions beyond making a noun definite. For now, simply be aware of the nominative form of the definite article, which will indicate the gender of the noun being learned:

- ὁ = masculine (“the”)
- ἡ = feminine (“the”)
- τό = neuter (“the”)

Gender

Greek nouns are masculine, feminine, or neuter in gender. Often this gender is more a syntactical feature than a metaphysical statement, as many inanimate objects are given grammatical gender. Thus “year” (ἔτος) is neuter, while “day” (ἡμέρα) is feminine, but “time” (χρόνος) is masculine.

Number and Agreement

As in English, Greek has both singular and plural nouns. The verb most often matches the number of the subject noun just as in English:

Students (plural) love Greek.
The student (singular) loves Greek.

Inflectional Forms

In Greek, there are five inflectional forms marking the various cases or roles that nouns play in sentences.

Nominative Form

Most Often Marks the Subject of the Sentence

Music calms the heart.

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“Music” is the subject of the sentence. In Greek it would be marked with a nominative inflectional ending. With “is” verbs it can be used as a predicate nominative as in “It is he.” Here “he” (nominative) is used rather than the accusative “him.”

Genitive Form

Often Expresses a Possessive, Description, Origin, Relation, Limits quality

The Pharisee went to the house of God (description)

The book of the chief was worn (possessive).

The writing of the prophet (origin)

The son of Mary (relation).

Note the different meanings of “of” in these sentences.

“Of God” or “God’s” would be marked in Greek with a genitive inflectional ending. We will generally use the keyword “of” when translating the genitive, although the genitive may actually function in many other ways as well.

Dative Form

Often Marks the Indirect Object, Location, Agency

He spoke a word to the apostle (Indirect Object)

She went to the class (location).

He was struck by the catcher (agency)

“To the apostle” would be marked with a dative inflectional ending in Greek. The dative functions in many ways. In some contexts it may also be translated “for” or “at” or “by” or “with.” We will generally use the key words “to, for, at, by, with” (remember = 2 by 4, ate (at) with) when translating the dative.

Accusative Form

Indicates the Object of the Sentence.

Joy saw the ball.

Elliott walked home.

“The ball” is the object of the sentence. It would be marked by an accusative inflectional ending in Greek. The accusative’s basic idea is limiting the content, direction, extent or goal of the verb or preposition it is associated with. It limits the quantity while the genitive will limit the quality (Wallace). It can also be used as

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the subject of the infinitive and some verbs will take a double accusative (e.g. “he will teach you [1] all things [2]”).

Vocative Form

Is Used for Direct Address

Sister, you are the one!
O Lord, how majestic is your name.

“Sister” receives a direct address and would be marked by a vocative inflectional ending in Greek.

You should be able to chant through this declension. Because the vocatives are so few and often the same as the nominative, you need only to chant the Nom.-Acc. The vocative will be recognized when it appears, and it is often the same as the nominative.

Masculine Second Declension Forms (Stem Ending in o)

λόγος = word

	Singular	Plural	Inflectional Endings	
Nom.	λόγος	λόγοι	ος	οι
Gen.	λόγου	λόγων	ου	ων
Dat.	λόγῳ	λόγοις	ῳ	οις
Acc.	λόγον	λόγους	ον	ους
Voc.	λόγε	λόγοι	ε	οι

Meaning of Inflectional Forms

	Singular	Plural		
Nom.	λόγος	a word	λόγοι	words (subject of sentence)
Gen.	λόγου	of a word	λόγων	of words (possessive, origin)
Dat.	λόγῳ	to a word	λόγοις	To (indirect object)
Acc.	λόγον	a word	λόγους	words (direct object)
Voc.	λόγε	O word	λόγοι	O words (direct address)

- Nominative = subject of the sentence
- Genitive = descriptive/possessive usually translated with keyword “of”
- Dative = indirect object/agency/location usually translated with keyword “to, by, for, with at”
- Accusative = direct object of a sentence

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➤ Vocative = direct address (e.g., O words, tell us how to read Greek)

Another way to look at case (Hansen and Quinn, Greek: An Intensive Course, 20):

Accusative **Dative** **Genitive**

Motion toward or into in Motion away from/out of
=====> <=====

Neuter Second Declension Forms (Stem Ending in o)

ἱερόν = temple

	Singular	Plural
Nom./Voc.	ἱερόν	ἱερά
Gen.	ἱεροῦ	ἱερῶν
Dat.	ἱερῷ	ἱεροῖς
Acc.	ἱερόν	ἱερά

Meaning of Inflectional Forms

	Singular	Plural	
Nom.	ἱερόν	ἱερά	temples (subject of sentence)
Gen.	ἱεροῦ	ἱερῶν	of temples (possessive)
Dat.	ἱερῷ	ἱεροῖς	To temples (indirect object)
Acc.	ἱερόν	ἱερά	temples (direct object)
Voc.	ἱερόν	ἱερά	O temples (direct address)

Note that in the neuter the nominative, accusative and vocative always have the same form. The genitive and dative neuter have the same endings as the masculine. You should be able to chant through this paradigm, lumping the vocative with the nominative.

Declining Nouns

Verbs are parsed (PAI, 1st sg, from λύω, “I loose”). Nouns are declined using the following pattern: Case, number, gender, base Greek word, meaning.

For example:

λόγῳ Dative, Singular, Masculine, from λόγος, meaning “to a word”

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ἱερῶν Genitive, Plural, Neuter, from ἱερόν, meaning “of temples”

Word Order

The order of words in a sentence in Greek may be the same as in English (subject + verb + object). Greek puts inflectional endings on nouns to mark their case. This allows Greek to change the word order for various purposes without substantially altering the meaning of a sentence. For example, the subject may be placed after the verb and the object placed before the verb for emphasis while retaining the original meaning of the sentence. Recent studies have shown that word order is important, so the good student will keep an eye on the order of syntactic units (VSOM versus SVOM etc.).

One comment on the vocabulary forms. In lexical lists, nouns such as δοῦλος are followed by -οῦ, which gives the genitive singular ending, indicating that it is a second declension noun. The ὁ article is given to specify that it is masculine.

Second Declension Noun Chant

λόγος	(word: Subject)	ἱερόν	(temple: Subject)
λόγου	(of a word)	ἱεροῦ	(of a temple)
λόγῳ	(to/by/for a word)	ἱερῷ	(to/by/for a temple)
λόγον	(word: Object)	ἱερόν	(temple: Object)
λόγοι	(words: Subject)	ἱερά	(temples: Subject)
λόγων	(of words)	ἱερῶν	(of temples)
λόγοις	(to/by/for words)	ἱεροῖς	(to/by/for temples)
λόγους	(words: Object)	ἱερά	(temples: Object)

Vocabulary

ἀγαπάω	I love (143)
γράφω	I write (191)
δέ	but, and (2,792)
δοῦλος, -ου, ὁ	servant, slave (124)
εὕρισκω	I find (176)
ἱερόν, -οῦ, τό	temple (71)
λαός, -οῦ, ὁ	people (142)
νόμος, -ου, ὁ	law (194)
οἶκος, -ου, ὁ	house (114)
ὥς	as, about, how (504)