ZONDERVAN

Biblical Greek: A Compact Guide
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### Greek Alphabet

**Name (English and Greek), transliteration, capital and small form, pronunciation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Letter</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha  αλφα</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>α</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>as in father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta  Βητα</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>as in Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma γαμμα</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>Γ</td>
<td>γ</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>as in gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta δελτα</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Δ</td>
<td>δ</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>as in dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon επιλόν</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>ε</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>as in met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta ζητα</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>ζ</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>as in daze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eta ητα</td>
<td>η</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>η</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>as in obey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Θητα</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>Θ</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>as in thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iota ιωτα</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>as in intrigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappa καππα</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>κ</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>as in kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambda λαμβδα</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>Λ</td>
<td>λ</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>as in law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu μυ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>μ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>as in mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu νυ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>ν</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>as in new</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Gamma (γ) usually has a hard “g” sound, as in “get.” However, when it is immediately followed by γ, κ, χ, or ξ, it is pronounced as a “n.”
2 Basics

Xi  ξι  x  Ξ  ξ  x as in axiom
Omicron  οικρόν  o  O  o  o as in not
Pi  πι  p  Π  π  p as in peach
Rho  ρό  r  P  ρ  r as in rod
Sigma  σιγμα  s  Σ  σ/ζ  s as in study
Tau  ταυ  t  T  τ  t as in talk
Upsilon  υπλόν  u/y  U  υ  u as German ü
Phi  φι  ph  Φ  φ  ph as in phone
Chi  χι  ch  X  χ  ch as in loch
Psi  ψι  ps  Ψ  ψ  ps as in lips
Omega  ωμεγα  o  Ω  ω  o as in tone

Diphthongs

The second vowel of a diphthong is an i or u.²

αι  as in aisle  αιρο
ει  as in eight  ει
οι  as in oil  οικία
αι as in sauerkraut  αυτός
ου  as in soup  ουδέ

¹ v if part of a diphthong, otherwise y.
² ωυ is used in Classical Greek, but occurs in the NT only in the name Μωυσής where there is always a diaeresis, indicating that it is not a diphthong.
Contractions

Single Vowels

Here are all possible contractions of single vowels. The four most common are in blue.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\alpha & \varepsilon & \eta & \iota & \upsilon & \omega \\
\alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \omega & \omega \\
\varepsilon & \eta & \varepsilon & \eta & \varepsilon & \omega & \omega \\
\eta & \eta & \eta & \eta & \eta & \omega & \omega \\
\omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omega \\
\omega & \omega & \omega & \omega & \omega & \omega & \omega \\
\end{array}
\]

Vowels and Diphthongs

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\alpha & \varepsilon & \eta & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \varphi \\
\alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \alpha & \omega & \omega \\
\varepsilon & \eta & \varepsilon & \eta & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \varphi \\
\eta & \eta & \eta & \eta & \eta & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron \\
\omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron & \omicron \\
\end{array}
\]

3 “Genuine” diphthong (not formed by a contraction)
4 “Spurious” diphthong (formed by a contraction)
4 Basics

Rules of Contraction

1. ου is formed from εο, οε, and οο.
   - ου → εο → ποιούμεν → ποιεομεν
   - ου → οε → πληρούτε → πληροετε
   - ου → οο → πληρούμεν → πληροομεν

2. ει is formed from εε.
   - ει → εε → ποιείτε → ποιεετε

3. ω is formed from almost any combination of omicron or omega with any other vowel, except for rule 1.
   - ω → αο → ἀγαπῶμεν → ἀγαπαομεν

4. α is formed from αε.
   - α → αε → ἀγαπάτε → ἀγαπαετε
   - α → αει → ἀγαπά → ἀγαπαει

5. η is formed from εα.
   - η → εα → ἡγάπησα → ἡγαγάπησα

---

1 In the first person singular of epsilon and omicron contracts, there is one extra step in the contraction process. No personal ending is used, so the connecting vowel lengthens to compensate, and the ensuing contraction is between the contract vowel and the lengthened connecting vowel. ποιεο → ποιεω → ποιω. πληροο → πληροω → πληρω.
6. Miscellaneous

οι † οει πληροῖς † πληροεις
πληροὶ † πληροει

7. The contraction of diphthongs

- If the contract vowel and the first vowel of the diphthong are the same, they simplify (i.e., one of the double letters drops off).

ει † εει ποιεῖς † ποιεις
ον † οου πληροῦσι † πληρουσι

- If the contract vowel and the first vowel of the diphthong are different, they contract. If the second vowel of the diphthong is an iota, it subscripts if possible; if it is an upsilon, it drops off.

α † αει ἀγαπά † ἀγαπαι
ον † εου ποιουσιν † ποιεουσι

8. Contract verbs contract as if the true personal endings are those visible in the present active indicative.

αω † ἀγαπῶ
αεις † ἀγαπᾶς
αει † ἀγαπά
αομεν † ἀγαπῶμεν
αετε † ἀγαπᾶτε
αουσι † ἀγαπῶσι(ν)
Basics

Rules of Accent

The acute ( ́ ) can occur on any of the last three syllables: ἀκηκόαμεν. λόγου. αὐτῶς.

The circumflex ( ̂ ) can occur only on one of the last two syllables and will always be over a long vowel:1 πλανώμεν. ἀρχῆς.

The grave ( ̀ ) is formed when a word is normally accented with an acute on the final syllable. When the word is not followed by a punctuation mark, then the acute becomes a grave: καὶ νῦν.

Accents on nouns try to stay on the same syllable (consistent accent). Accents on verbs try to move as far back toward the beginning of the verb as possible (recessive accent).

“Enclitics” are words pronounced so closely with the preceding word that the accent rules behave as if both words are one word. What this often means is that the accent over the enclitic will back up onto the preceding word.2

Enclitics include γέ, εἶμι (except εἶ), μου, πέρ, ποτέ, πού, πώ, πός, σὺ, τέ, τοί, τις, present indicative of φημί (except θῆς). ἔστιν can be unaccented, or accented ἔστιν and ἔστιν.

“Proclitics” have no accent as they “lean forward” to the following word. They include the article (masc. and fem.), some prepositions (εἰς, ἐκ, ἐν), conjunctions (εἰ, ὡς), and the negation οὐ (οὐκ, οὐχ).

---

1 η and ω are long vowels. α is always long. α, ι, and υ can be either long or short.
2 The preceding word will be oxytone, i.e., has an acute on its final syllable.