

# FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES:

An Encyclopedia of the World's Major  
Languages, Past and Present

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# ANCIENT GREEK

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**Language Name:** Ancient Greek, Classical Greek, Greek (without reference to time period, the ancient form of the language is usually taken as the unmarked value, and within Ancient Greek, the Attic dialect [see **Dialects** below] is the usual point of reference). **Autonym:** *hellēnikē* (actually an adjective derived from *Hellēn*, the word for a 'Greek' in general (as opposed to a member of one of the Greek dialect groups); as an adjective, it is modifying an understood noun 'language').

**Location:** Ancient Greek in its earliest attested forms (14th century B.C.) was spoken in the southern Balkan peninsula, in territory that is now the modern nation of Greece, both on the Greek mainland and on some of the Aegean islands, most notably Crete. By relatively early in the 1st millennium B.C., Greek was spoken over all of the Aegean islands and Cyprus, and there were Greek-speaking colonies in Asia Minor, along the west coast of what is now Turkey, in Southern Italy, in parts of the western Mediterranean, and in the Black Sea area. Colonization continued during the Archaic and pre-Classical periods up to the 7th century B.C. and into the Classical period, but it was during the Hellenistic period, as part of the expansion of the empire of Philip of Macedon and especially of his son, Alexander the Great, both of whom adopted Greek as the official language of their court, that Greek achieved its greatest geographic distribution, spreading all over the eastern Mediterranean, with a major cultural center in Alexandria, and the Levant, and extending as far east as India. The demarcation between Ancient and the beginnings of MODERN GREEK is considered to be at the end of the Hellenistic period, roughly in the 4th century A.D.

**Family:** Ancient Greek is generally taken to be the only representative of the Greek or Hellenic branch of Indo-European. There is some dispute as to whether Ancient MACEDONIAN (the native language of Philip and Alexander), if it has any special affinity to Greek at all, is a dialect within Greek (see below) or a sibling language to all of the known Ancient Greek dialects. If the latter view is correct, then Macedonian and Greek would be the two subbranches of a group within Indo-European that could more properly be called Hellenic.

**Related Languages:** As noted above, Ancient Macedonian might be the language most closely related to Greek, perhaps even a dialect of Greek. The slender evidence is open to different interpretations, so that no definitive answer is really possible; but most likely, Ancient Macedonian was not simply an Ancient Greek dialect on a par with Attic or Aeolic (see below). Despite some suggestive affinities to ARMENIAN and Indo-Iranian, the general consensus is that these connections are not so strong as to warrant treating these branches as part of a larger subgroup within Indo-European. Although culturally there are close ties in the Classical and post-Classical periods between speakers of Greek and speakers of LATIN, and this has been reflected in Western academic circles (where courses on comparative Greek and Latin grammar are taught as part of classical linguistics), Greek and Latin are not closely related within Indo-European.

**Dialects:** The main dialects of Ancient Greek, identifiable in the end of the Archaic period, are (1) Attic-Ionic, comprising Attic and Ionic; (2) Aeolic, consisting of Boeotian and Thessalian on the mainland and the Greek of the island of Lesbos and of adjacent northwest Asia Minor; (3) Arcado-Cypriot, taking in Arcadian, in the Peloponnesos, and Cypriot, and (4) West Greek, covering not only Northwest Greek, such as Aetolian and Locrian, but also Doric, which includes Laconian (the dialect of Sparta), Corinthian, Megarian, Cretan, and Rhodian. Attic-Ionic and Arcado-Cypriot are sometimes classed together as East Greek, with Aeolic being seen as intermediate between East and West Greek. The ancients themselves were aware of some of these dialect differences, as indicated by the existence of verbs such as *aiolízein* 'to speak Aeolic', *dōrízein* 'to speak Doric', and *attikízein* 'to speak Attic', all of which can be contrasted with *hellēnízein* 'to speak (common) Greek' (cf. the autonym *hellēnikē* noted above).

Prior to the Archaic period, the earliest attested dialect is Mycenaean Greek, preserved mainly on clay tablets inscribed with syllabic characters commonly referred to as "Linear B"; these tablets have been found primarily at sites of major Mycenaean palaces, with the earliest coming from Knosos on Crete (where Mycenaeans had overcome the local Minoan rulers) dating from the 14th century B.C., and others coming from sites on the mainland somewhat later, e.g., Mycenae and Pylos from the 13th and 12th centuries B.C., the dates being a function of the adventitious preservation of the tablets in fires that destroyed the palaces. The relationship of Mycenaean Greek with the dialects of the later Archaic period is uncertain, since it shows some innovative features in common with both Arcado-Cypriot and (at least part of) Aeolic; moreover, considerable uniformity is evident in Mycenaean both during its two centuries of attestation and over its geographic range of mainland Greece, the Peloponnesos, and some Aegean islands, especially Crete. Thus it has been suggested that Mycenaean Greek may represent a suprasegmental koine in use in the 2nd millennium B.C. Also, although

not a distinct dialect, the language of the Homeric epics, especially the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, represents an archaic form of Greek, largely based on Ionic but with a significant overlay of Aeolic. In the Hellenistic period, a dialect known as Pamphylian is found in southwest Asia Minor, but it may not be a separate dialect so much as a local variety heavily influenced by the Hellenistic Koine. The Hellenistic Koine refers to the form of the language that spread extensively in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, roughly from 300 B.C. to A.D. 300, based mainly on Attic and Ionic, with some input, to a much lesser extent, from other dialects; it shows some degree of simplification of certain structural features and innovative pronunciations as compared with Greek of the Classical period.

**Number of Speakers:** With the spread of Greek during the Hellenistic period, the number of speakers grew accordingly over Alexander's empire, and surely numbered above several million (though not all in the empire spoke Greek as their first language) at its peak.

## Origin and History

The earliest stages of the prehistory of Greek, from the conventional date of reconstructed Proto-Indo-European, roughly 4500 B.C., to the first attestation in the Mycenaean period, c. 1400 B.C., are somewhat obscure. Still, it is generally agreed that Proto-Greek speakers first entered southeastern Europe, and the Balkans in particular, sometime between 2200 B.C. and 1600 B.C., most likely coming in several different migratory waves. The earliest of these migrations may well have been speakers of what in the first millennium B.C. became Arcado-Cypriot, and in the second millennium B.C. is represented by Mycenaean Greek (note the affinities referred to above between Mycenaean and Arcado-Cypriot), settling in the southern part of the Greek mainland and in the Peloponnesos. A later wave brought Ionic speakers into Attica as well as other parts of central Greece and the Peloponnesos. At this point, still in the second millennium B.C., West Greek speakers are believed to have been grouped in the northwestern part of the southern Balkan peninsula.

The next major historical event that had important linguistic consequences is the Dorian invasions of 12th century B.C., in which West Greek speakers from the northwest moved into the Peloponnesos, leading to the end of the Mycenaean civilization and thus to the establishment of a new dialect base in Greece. The small pocket of Arcadian speakers in the central Peloponnesos is presumed to be a remnant of a more widespread Arcado-Cypriot-like dialect from the 2nd millennium B.C. (note the affinities Mycenaean Greek shows with later Arcado-Cypriot). The Dorians moved as well into many of the Aegean Islands, including Crete, so that the dialect picture in 1st millennium B.C. Greece is quite different from that of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Somewhat later, in the eighth century B.C., a period of massive colonization began, spreading Greek throughout the eastern Mediterranean, with colonists from mainland localities transplanting their dialect abroad, sometimes with different dialects in neighboring settlements (as in southern Italy, for instance).

The Classical period, during which Athens established itself as the political, cultural, and economic center of the Greek world, was still a period in which the various dialects were able to thrive, though increasingly Attic was being used as a common language throughout much of Greece. This expansion of Attic led to the adoption of some non-Attic features by users of the dialect, even in Attica. This dialect mixing repre-

sented the beginnings of the *koinē diálektos*, or 'common dialect', more usually referred to simply as the Koine, as Koine Greek, or as Hellenistic Greek (after the historical period in which it arose). With the rise of the Macedonian Empire in the fourth century B.C. and the decision of Philip II of Macedonia to adopt (the modified) Attic as the official administrative language of his state, and with the subsequent expansion of Macedonian influence under his son Alexander the Great, the Greek language, in its emerging Koine Greek form, was spread throughout Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Persia. The resulting language was remarkably uniform throughout this territory, but, due in part to influences from substratum languages in the areas it came to be spoken in, as local populations shifted to the new variety of Greek, including speakers of any older dialects of Greek that were eventually ousted (especially in the eastern Mediterranean), there was some variation as well. What might be (somewhat artificially) characterized as a standard form of the Koine was the language used for the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament, and as the medium for a vast array of literary, philosophical, religious, historical, and scientific documents from the Hellenistic period. In addition, there are numerous official inscriptions in stone written in the Koine, and thousands of informal personal letters and documents written on papyrus. The Koine also is the basis for the development of Medieval and Modern Greek.

## Orthography and Basic Phonology

The earliest writing system for Greek was the so-called Linear B syllabary, adapted from another system originally designed for an entirely different language; the source system probably was that now known as "Linear A", found all over Crete and at other Minoan sites from the second millennium B.C. Greek Linear B was in use at the various Mycenaean palaces in the second millennium B.C., most notably Pylos in the Peloponnesos and Knosos on Crete (after the Mycenaean invasion there), and has been found mostly inscribed onto clay tablets for record-keeping purposes, though, more rarely, the signs have been found painted onto vases as well. In Cyprus in the first millennium B.C., inscriptions occur that are written in a syllabary, entirely different from, but surely related to, the Mycenaean one, with both most likely having a common source, presumably Minoan Linear A.

Still, the most significant and enduring writing system for Greek is the Greek alphabet. Adapted from the West Semitic (probably

### Table 1: Consonants

		Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	voiceless, unaspirated	p	t		k	
	voiceless, aspirated	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>		k <sup>h</sup>	
	voiced	b	d		g	
Fricatives			s (z)			h
Nasals		m	n		(ŋ)	
Liquids			l, r (ɾ)			
Glides		w		j		

PHOENICIAN) consonantal writing system and embellished with separate signs for vowel sounds, the Greek alphabet first appears in inscriptions in the eighth century B.C. The paths of transmission from Phoenician and of diffusion within the Greek world are obscure, but there is considerable variation in local ("epichoric") varieties of the alphabet all over Greece, both in the shapes of and the phonetic value attached to various letters. The Ionian alphabet came to predominate, ultimately becoming the standard medium in Athens and most Greek states.

## The Greek Alphabet (Ionian Version)

Capital Letter	Small Letter	Transliteration
A	α	a
B	β	b
Γ	γ	g
Δ	γ before γ κ χ ξ	n
E	δ	d
Z	ε	e
H	ζ	z
Θ	η	e:, ε
I	θ	th
K	ι	i
Λ	κ	k
M	λ	l
N	μ	m
Ξ	ν	n
O	ξ	x
Π	ο	o
P	π	p
Σ	ρ	r
T	σ (s in final position)	s
Υ	τ	t
Φ	υ	y, u
X	φ	ph
Ψ	χ	kh, ch
Ω	ψ	ps
	ω	o:, δ
	# ‘	h
	# ’	—

The phonological descriptions in this article are of the Attic dialect, unless otherwise specified (see Table 1 above).

The sounds given in parentheses are conditioned variants of

other phones: [ŋ] is an allophone of /n/ before velars; the voiceless trill [ɾ] occurs in initial position, while the voiced variant [r] occurs elsewhere; [z] is an allophone of /s/ that occurs before voiced consonants.

There may have been a voiced dental affricate [dʒ], corresponding to the letter <ȝ> (see above), but most of the evidence concerning the pronunciation of <ȝ> suggests it represented a true cluster of [z] + [d] (thus phonemically /s/ + /d/). Dialectally, [w] had a wider distribution than in the

Dialectally, [w] had a wider distribution, being found in most dialects outside of Attic-Ionic in positions other than postvocalic; [j] occurs in Mycenaean in initial and intervocalic position. Mycenaean also had a series of labio-velar stops ( $g^w$ ,  $k^w$ ,  $k^{wh}$ ) that correspond, under different conditions and in various words, to labials, dentals, or velars in first millennium B.C. Greek. In addition, one set of signs (the "z-series") in the Mycenaean Linear B syllabary seems to represent a series of affricates, writing sounds that derive from clusters of dental and velar stops with a palatal glide. Generally, differences from Attic in the other dialects are not so much in the phonemic inventory but rather in the lexical distribution of sounds; still, some spellings in non-Attic inscriptions may point to segmental differences, e.g., Central Cretan (Doric) <ζ> / <θθ> and Ionic <σσ>, corresponding to Attic <ττ>, may indicate a [tʰ] if not still in the dialects at least in a stage not far removed in time from the attested spellings.

### Table 2: Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i ī y ŷ		
High-Mid	e ē		o ō
Low-Mid	ē		ō
Low		a ā	

By contrast to the relatively straightforward consonant inventory, the vowel system of Ancient Greek was quite complex. As illustrated in the preceding table, length was distinctive. The front-rounded vowels /y ȳ/ are found only in the Attic-Ionic dialect; the other dialects have back-rounded /u ū/ instead. In addition to the vowels above, Ancient Greek had the following diphthongs: *aj, oj, ew, aw, yj, ēj, āj, ōj, ēw, āw*. The Ancient Greek vowels are shown in the following table.

The Ancient Greek accentual system was pitchbased, with three distinctions: high pitch (acute) and low pitch (grave),

possible on long or short vowels, and, only on long vowels, and contour (high-low) pitch (circumflex). Accent placement was predictable generally only in finite verb forms and some noun forms, and in certain morphologically definable formations; otherwise it was unpredictable, and placement of accent served to distinguish words, e.g., *nomós* 'district' vs. *nómos* 'low'. Similarly, accent type on a given syllable also could signal lexical distinctions, e.g., *oíkoi* 'at home' vs. *oĩkoi* 'houses'. Generally, only one high pitch was allowed per word and it had to fall on one of the last three syllables; in certain groups of clitic elements, multiple high pitches on a single prosodic group were possible.

A basic phonological process involving consonants was the iterative deletion of all word-final consonants other than [s r n], the only final consonants therefore allowed on the surface; thus underlying /gálakt/ 'milk NOM.SG' surfaced as [gála], and /kléptōnts/ 'stealing NOM.SG.M' surfaced as [kléptōn]. Other morphophonemic alternations include *t* appearing as *s* before *i* (e.g., *plōút-os* 'wealth' / *plou̓s-ios* 'wealthy'), devoicing/deaspiration before *s* (e.g., *ág-ō* 'I lead' / *ák-s-ō* 'I will lead', *é-graph-e* '(s)he was writing' / *é-grap-s-e* '(s)he wrote'), and intervocalic loss of /s/, e.g., *alēthēs* 'true NOM.SG.NEUT' / *alēthẽ* 'a true NOM.PL.NEUT' (which, in Attic, contracts to *alēthē*), among others. Contractions of vowel sequences are quite usual, even across word boundaries when the first element is a prosodically weak word such as the definite article or *kai* 'and'; the outcomes of these contractions vary from dialect to dialect and constitute one of the major isoglosses distinguishing the dialects.

The Classical Attic system given above underwent several changes in the post-Classical period, not all of which were completed by the end of the Hellenistic period, around the fourth century A.D. In the consonants, earlier *b d g* fricativized, giving *v ð γ*, as did *ph th kh*, yielding *f θ x*, and *h* was lost (a change found in several ancient dialects other than Attic). New instances of the voiced stops *b d g* were provided by loanwords and possibly also as variants of voiceless *p t k* after nasals. In addition, the once-allophonic [z] took on phonemic status. In the vowels, earlier [ō] raised to [ū], distinctive vowel length was lost, and the movement of several vowels to [i] was under way; the long palatal diphthongs lost their offglide, the *w* offglide became [v] or [f] depending on the voicing of the following sound, and each of the other diphthongs merged with some short monophthong. The ultimate result is the (considerably simplified) vowel system:

	Front	Central	Back
High	i y		u
Mid	ε		ο
Low		a	

These changes in the phonology were the beginnings of the developments that characterize Modern Greek in contrast to Classical Greek.

## Basic Morphology

For the most part, Ancient Greek was a fusional inflecting language morphologically, with relevant grammatical informa-

tion generally being indicated through the endings of inflected words, i.e., nouns, pronouns, adjectives, articles (which, in Homeric Greek, were clearly pronouns, with the determiner function developing by the Classical period), and verbs. Each ending typically encoded values for several categories simultaneously.

Nominal forms in Ancient Greek, comprising nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and determiners (specifically, the definite article), showed markings for five cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and vocative), three numbers (singular, dual, and plural), and three generally arbitrary noun classes ("genders", usually referred to as masculine, feminine, and neuter). In addition, cutting across the gender classes were different inflectional ("declensional") classes for nouns and adjectives, based on phonological characteristics of the final segment(s) of the stem, thus giving *o*-stems (in the nouns mainly masculine but with some feminines, as well as neuters with a different nominative/accusative form), *ā*-stems (mostly feminine but with some masculines), *i*-stems (mostly masculine and feminine, though some neuters occur), various consonant stems (*s*-stems, *n*-stems, *t*-stems, etc., in all genders), and so on. In most accounts, the *ā*-stems are considered one inflectional class (though the feminine and masculine *ā*-stems have different endings in some cases), the *o*-stems a second, and consonant stems (subsuming *i*- and *u*-stems, largely for historical reasons) a third.

The actual endings that realized these various categories were thus quite diverse, so that, since agreement in gender, number, and case was required between heads and modifiers, the actual form that these agreeing elements took could be very different. Some of these possibilities are illustrated below:

	<u>Masculine</u> 'the wise divinity'	<u>Feminine</u> 'the worthy hope'
Meaning		
Singular:		
Nominative	ho sophōs daímōn	hē axiā elpīs
Accusative	tōn sophōn daímona	tēn axiā elpída
Genitive	toū sophōū daímonos	tēs axiās elpídos
Dative	tōi sophōi daímoni	tēi axiāi elpídi
Vocative	sophē daímon	axiāēlpí
Dual:		
Nom/Acc/Voc	tō sophō daímone	tō axiā elpíde
Gen/Dat	toín sophōín daímónoin	taín axiáin elpídoín
Plural:		
Nom/Voc	hoi sophōi daímones	hai axiái elpídes
Accusative	toūs sophōūs daímonas	tās axiās elpídas
Genitive	tōn sophōn daímónōn	tōn axiōn elpídōn
Dative	tois sophōis daímosi	tais axiáis elpísi

The same phonological segments could signal very different categories, depending on the gender and inflectional class they occurred in. For instance, *-es* signaled, neuter singular nominative/accusative of *s*-stem adjectives (e.g., *alēthēs* 'true') and nominative plural masculine/feminine for consonant stems (e.g., *daímones/elpídes* above); *-os* could mark masculine nominative singular of *o*-stems (e.g., *sophōs* above), genitive singular of consonant stems (e.g., *daímonos/elpídos* above), or

nominative/accusative singular of neuter *s*-stems (e.g., *génos* 'race'), etc. Personal pronouns had special forms, while demonstrative and other pronouns generally followed some other nominal declensional pattern. Adjectives also showed inflection for comparative and superlative degree.

The verbal system of Ancient Greek encoded many more categories than did the nominal system. The categories of tense (present, past, and future), aspect (distinguishing continuous action [imperfective] from simple occurrence [so-called "aoristic"] from completed action [perfective]), and voice (active, passive, and so-called "middle") are relevant for all verbs, whether finite, i.e., those that show the encoding of three persons and three numbers (singular, dual, plural), in agreement with the subject and of mood (indicative, subjunctive, imperative, and optative), or nonfinite, i.e., without person, number, and mood marked, covering the participles (11 in all) and the infinitives (11 in all). Not all combinations of categories have distinct realizations or even any realization at all; for instance, there are no first person dual active forms, there are no moods other than the indicative for the past imperfective (the so-called imperfect), and passive and middle voice forms are identical in the present tense and the imperfect as well as in the present and past perfective (the so-called present perfect and pluperfect).

The value of some of these categories and their interactions with one another require some comment. With regard to voice, middle is used to mark actions that a subject performs on himself or herself (e.g., reflexives), or for his or her own benefit, though in some instances, especially verbs that have only middle voice forms (so-called deponent verbs), such as *ergázomai* 'I work' (not 'I work for myself'), middle voice seems to be simply a different inflectional class. With regard to the various tense and aspect categories, the interrelationships among the categories are noteworthy, and are summarized below, giving the conventional names for the different tense-aspect combinations:

<u>Tense</u>	Present	Past	Future
<u>Aspect</u>			
Continuous	present	imperfect	future
Simple	—	aorist	future
Completed	perfect	pluperfect	future perfect (generally only passive)

The verbal inflectional picture is complicated further by the fact that a variety of formations existed for different combinations of categories, and that the endings could be different for each formation. For example, some verbs formed the aorist tense with an *-s* suffix, in which case the first person singular ending was *-a* (e.g. *égrap-s-a* 'I wrote'), while others modified the root vocalism, in which case the first person singular ending was *-on* (e.g., *élip-on* 'I left', vs. present *léip-ō*). Similarly, a few verbs have a first person singular ending *-mi* in the present, while most have *-ō*, with further differences in other person/number endings. Finally, phonological differences in verbal stems could lead to surface differences in the realization of categories; for instance, stems ending in a consonant or the front-rounded vowel *-y-* marked their third person singular

imperfect with the ending *-e* (e.g., *égraph-e* '(s)he was ing') while those ending in *-a-* had a third person singular perfect in *-ā*, from a contraction of /ae/ (e.g., *etímā* '(s)he honoring').

A full synopsis of the verb *gráphō* 'I write' is given on next page, with first person singular forms for all tense, aspect, voice, and all moods but imperative, for which second singular is used, as well as nonfinite participial and infinitive forms; not all forms given here are actually attested, but were, in principle, possible. In the table, past tense form: Aorist unless otherwise marked, and perfect forms are present perfect unless otherwise marked.

Several changes in morphological categories took place between Classical Greek and Hellenistic Greek. In both the noun and the verb, dual number became increasingly restricted in use, and ultimately was lost. In the noun, the dative case being replaced in Hellenistic times by various prepositional alternatives and in some functions by the genitive case. In the verb, the optative mood was increasingly on the wane, partly the result of sound changes that led to partial homophony between several forms in the paradigm, with the subjunctive and, so, with the indicative. Similarly, the various forms of the perfect (present perfect, pluperfect, and future perfect) were reduced and less, eventually being lost. In a change that affected both the morphology and the syntax, the infinitive began to give way in this period to finite subordinate-clause substitutes. There were also several changes in the actual form of grammatical endings, due to sound changes and analogical changes within the various systems of endings.

## Basic Syntax

The order of major constituents in a sentence was generally free, so that both Subject-Verb and Verb-Subject orders were found. Similarly, the object may precede or follow the verb, even the subject, though weak pronominal objects generally occurred as clitics in second position within their clause, or as part of a string of clitic elements, including sentence connectives. These possibilities are illustrated in the example sentences at the end of this chapter.

Elements that make up constituents, however, are subject to tighter ordering restrictions. For example, the definite article always precedes a noun it occurs with, and adjectives generally occur between the article and the noun. In fact, Greek shows a systematic word-order difference between attributive adjectives, which follow the article (possibly repeated after the noun) and determine a noun phrase, and predicative adjectives, which occur outside the article and determine a copular sentence (with zero-copula), as illustrated below with *ho* 'the', *sophós* 'wise' and *basileús* 'king':

- |                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| a. <i>ho sophós basileús</i>    | 'the wise king'    |
| b. <i>ho basileús ho sophós</i> | 'the wise king'    |
| c. <i>sophós ho basileús</i>    | 'the king is wise' |
| d. <i>ho basileús sophós</i>    | 'the king is wise' |

Within the noun phrase, the article afforded great flexibility with extended pronominal modifiers possible, even multiple "embeddings" of articulated nouns (see Example Sentence 3

A Full Synopsis of the Verb *gráphō*

A. Active Voice	Present	Past	Future	Perfect
Indicative	gráphō	égraphon IMPERF égrapsa	grápsō	gégrapha egegráphē PLUPERF
Subjunctive	gráphō	grápsō	—	gegráphō
Optative	gráphoimi	grápsaimi	grápsōimi	gegráphoimi
Imperative	gráphe	grápson	—	gégraphe
Infinitive	gráphein	grápsai	grápsēin	gegráphenai
Participle	gráphōn	grápsas	grápsōn	gegraphós
B. Middle Voice				
Indicative	gráphomai	egraphómēn IMPERF egrapsámēn	grápsomai	gégrammai egegrámmēn PLUPERF
Subjunctive	gráphōmai	grapsōmai	—	gegramménos
Optative	graphoímēn	grapsaímēn	grapsoímēn	gegramménos eíēn
Imperative	gráphou	grápsai	—	gégrapso
Infinitive	gráphesthai	grápsasthai	grápsēsthai	gegráphthai
Participle	graphómenos	grapsámenos	grapsómenos	gegramménos
C. Passive Voice				
Indicative	gráphomai	egraphómēn IMPERF egráphthēn	graphésomai	gégrammai egegrámmēn PLUPERF
Subjunctive	gráphōmai	graphthō	—	gegrápsomai FUT PERF
Optative	graphoímēn	graphtheíēn	graphēsóimēn	gegramménosō gegramménos eíēn gegrapsoímēn FUT PERF
Imperative	gráphou	graphthēti	—	gégrapso
Infinitive	gráphesthai	graphthēnai	graphésēsthai	gegráphthai gegrápsēsthai FUT PERF
Participle	graphómenos	graphtheís	graphēsómenos	gegramménos gegrapsómenos FUT PERF

Nominative case is used to mark the subjects of finite verbs, while accusative is the usual case for the subject of an infinitive. Accusative is also the typical case for the direct object, though some verbs idiosyncratically govern objects in other cases (e.g., *árkhomai* 'begin' takes a genitive object). The dative case marks indirect objects as well as parties with an interest in some action, possession with 'be', agent with some passives, instrument or cause, accompaniment, time at which, and place in which. The genitive marks a variety of relations between nouns, including possession, and can be used for partitive verbal objects, e.g., (Thucydides 1.30) *tês gês étemon* 'they ravaged some of the land' (literally: 'of-the land they ravaged'). The vocative is essentially an asyntactic case, being used for direct address.

Accusative, dative, and genitive can also be assigned by prepositions; although some prepositions govern just a single case (e.g., *en* 'in' always takes the dative), in many instances a preposition can govern more than one case, with differences in meaning associated with the differential case assignment. For example, *epí* 'on, upon' occurs with the dative or genitive to denote place on which, but with the accusative for place toward which.

Greek negation is marked by one of two separate (adverbial) words, distributed mainly according to verbal mood: *ou* occurs with the indicative and the optative moods, whereas *mé* occurs with the subjunctive and the imperative. The two negation markers can co-occur, with their relative order correlating with

different functions; for example, *ou mé* is an emphatic negator with a future tense, but *mé ou* can be used in an interrogative sentence that implies a negative answer. The negative marker tends to precede the main verb but need not be adjacent to it.

As with phonology and morphology, so too with syntax are various changes to be found between Classical and Hellenistic Greek. Besides changes with moods and with the dative (see Basic Morphology), a striking change in the syntax was the increased use of finite complementation in place of infinitival forms. Although the infinitive is still very much in use in Hellenistic Greek, it often competes with finite expressions; thus both *áxios lúsai* 'worthy to loosen (INFINITIVE)' and *áxios hína lúsō* 'worthy that I loosen (FINITE)' occur in the New Testament.

## Contact with Other Languages

Ancient Greek shows a long history of the results of contact with speakers of other languages, and as noted above, the Koine period was characterized by extensive contacts between Greek speakers and non-Greek speakers, with a considerable number of Latin words entering the language. There are some words in Greek that seem to come from "pre-Greek" (sometimes referred to as "Pelagian"), i.e., from an indigenous language of the Balkans before the coming of the Greeks, e.g., *plínthos* 'brick', where the cluster *-nth-* is otherwise unusual in Greek.

Also, the Ancient Greek lexicon contains some early loanwords from Anatolian languages, e.g., *eléphas* 'ivory' (attested in Mycenaean Greek) and Semitic languages, e.g., *khitón* 'tunic', *kúminon* 'cumin', etc. (both attested in Mycenaean).

Other loanwords entered in the Classical period, mostly cultural loans from languages such as PERSIAN (e.g., *satrapeía* 'satrapy'), but it was in the later Hellenistic period that large numbers of loanwords from Latin made their way into Greek. In addition, derivational suffixes from these words came to have a wider use within Greek. Some examples include *magístōr* 'master' (Latin *magister*), *dēnárion* 'small coin' (Latin *denarius*), and *títlos* 'title' (Latin *titulus*), as well as the adjectival suffix *-ianos*, the agent noun suffix *-ários*, and the instrumental noun suffix *-áron*.

## Common Words

Nouns are cited in the nominative singular form, adjectives in nominative singular masculine; all forms cited are taken from the Classical Attic dialect as (somewhat artificially) representative of all of Ancient Greek:

man:	anér (male person); ánthrōpos (human being)
woman:	gunē
water:	húdōr
sun:	hēlios
three:	treís (NOM.M&F), tría (NOM.NEUT)
fish:	ikhthús
big:	mégas
long:	makrós
small:	mikrós
yes:	naí, málista; ge (and other affirmative adverbs as well)
no:	ou (more usually, 'not')
good:	agathós
bird:	órnis
dog:	kúōn
tree:	déndron

## Example Sentences

The following sentences provide instances of several of the verbal and nominal categories discussed above, and illustrate some aforementioned aspects of Greek syntax, e.g., possible placements of subjects and objects relative to the verb, negation, use of moods, use of cases, and the versatility provided by the definite article through the placement of modifiers between the article and the noun (multiple times in [3]) within the noun phrase.

- (1) ô Sôkrates, nûn mên anút-ōi ou  
O Socrates.VOC now but Anutos-DAT.SG NEG

peisó-metha all' aphíe-men se.  
believe-1PL.FUT.MID but acquit-1PL.PRES YOU.ACC  
'O Socrates! At this time, we will not believe Anutos, but we (will) acquit you.' (Plato *Apology* 29c)

- (2) ei oûn me epì tout-ois aphí-oite,  
if indeed me.ACC on this-DAT.PL acquit-2PL.PR

ép-oimi àn hu-mîn hótì "egô  
say-1SG.AOR.OPT PARTICLE you-DAT.PL that I.NOM

hu-mâs aspáz-omai mên kai phil-ô  
you-ACC.PL salute-1SG.PRES.MID but and love-1s

peís-omai dè mállon t-ôì the-ôì  
obey-1SG.FUT.MID but rather the-DAT.SG god-DA

è hu-mîn."

than you-DAT.PL

'If indeed you were to acquit me on these terms, I say to you (that) "I salute and love (you), but I will the god rather than you." (Plato *Apology* 29d)

- (3) t-à gàr t-ês t-ôn  
the-NOM.PL.NEUT for the-GEN.SG.F the-GEN.PL.M

poll-ôn psukh-ês ómmat-a  
many-GEN.PL.M soul-GEN.SG.F eye-NOM.PL.NEUT

karter-eîn pròs t-ò  
endure-PRES.INFIN toward the-ACC.SG.NEUT

theí-on aphor-ônta adúnat-a.  
divine-ACC.SG.NEUT looking-NOM.PL.NEUT powerless-  
PL.NEUT

'For the eyes of the soul of the multitude are powerless endure looking towards the divine.' (Plato *Sophist* 25

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