

5

Sight and Sounds of Greek Words (Module C)

Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs Phonology (Part 5)

Overview

- 5.0 Introduction, 5-1
 - 5.1 Breathing Marks, 5-2
 - 5.2 Syllabification, 5-4
 - 5.3 Accents, 5-12
 - 5.4 Punctuation, 5-19
 - 5.5 Transliteration, 5-20
- Study Guide, 5-22

5.0 Introduction

Lesson Five concludes a five-part introduction to Greek phonology. Lesson Three presented a bird's-eye view of Greek vowels and consonants. Lesson Four concentrated on the organization of the Greek consonants and their phonetic correlation with one another. Lesson Five now focuses on the vowel sounds, including the diphthongs and their phonetic relationship with words beginning with other vowel sounds. Several editorial diacritical phonetic markings associated with vowels and diphthongs are also discussed.

Whereas Greek consonants are the most stable phonetic sounds among the letters, the pronunciation of the Greek vowels poses a formidable challenge. However, a few diacritical phonetic markings further aids to pronounce correctly vowel sounds and syllables in words. These markings include breathing marks (smooth and rough), accent marks (acute, grave, circumflex), and punctuation marks (comma, colon, period, question mark).

All diacritical markings are editorial because the earliest NTGreek manuscripts did not contain any such markings. They were added later to assist in the phonetic pronunciation of Greek by those to whom the language was foreign. However, this should not insinuate they are arbitrary or of little benefit, for they distinguish between words that would otherwise appear the same (*i.e.*, φόβου - “of fear”, φοβοῦ - “Fear!”; ὁ - “the”, ὃ - “which”; ἥν - “which”, ἦν - “was”).

Many instructors choose not to teach diacritical markings. Nevertheless, they are excellent phonological tools for the nonnative speaker when it is remembered

why they were used in the first place. This grammar follows the copyists' pedagogical approach and will make the most of them to aid in the pronunciation of NTGreek vowels and diphthongs where applicable.

5.1 Breathing Marks

The breathing diacritical mark is very important. There are two, the smooth ([˘]) and the rough (^ˆ). These complementary breathing marks modulate the aspiration for every initial vowel or diphthong. A smooth breathing specifies that there is no aspiration; a rough breathing indicates aspiration. When aspiration occurs, the initial vowel or diphthong is pronounced with an aspirated “h”.



A Greek letter does not represent the aspirated “h” sound as in English (“heat,” “helix,” “hinge”). *Ēta's* bisectional capital letter (Ἠ ἦ) represents the two breathing marks (Ἠ = rough and ἦ = smooth; ca. VII A.D.) after the letter had lost its original aspiration long before the NTGreek Era. They later then evolved to Ἠ and ἦ (ca. XI A.D.) to the modern breathing marks.

The breathing marks are phonologically important for every initial vowel and diphthong's pronunciation. Therefore, they must not be omitted while practicing writing Greek words in the exercises.

5.1.1 The smooth breathing mark is curled to the left like a closing single quotation and indicates that the initial vowel or diphthong is not aspirated. Thus, this mark does not affect the aspiration of an initial vowel or diphthong.

ἄλφα, ἔψιλον, ἦτα, ἰωτα, ὀμικρον, ὑψιλον, ὦμεγα
 (ἄλ-φα) (ἔ-ψι-λον) (ἦ-τα) (ἰ-ω-τα) (ὀ-μι-κρον) (ὑ-ψι-λον) (ὦ-με-γα)

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The smooth breathing mark is placed before a capital letter and not above it.

᾿Αλφα, ᾿Εψιλον, ᾿Ητα, ᾿Ιωτα, ᾿Ομικρον, ᾿Υψιλον, ᾿Ωμεγα
 (᾿Αλ-φα) (᾿Ε-ψι-λον) (᾿Η-τα) (᾿Ι-ω-τα) (᾿Ο-μι-κρον) (᾿Υ-ψι-λον) (᾿Ω-με-γα)

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The breathing mark appears over the second vowel when a word begins with a diphthong, whether or not the diphthong's initial vowel is capitalized.

αὐτός, Αὐτοῦ, οἶκει, Οἶκος, αἶων, Αἶωνια
(αὐ-τός) (Αὐ-του) (οἶ-κει) (Οἶ-κος) (αἶ-ων) (Αἶ-ων-ι-α)

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5.1.2 The rough breathing mark is curled to the right like an opening single quotation and indicates that the initial vowel or diphthong is aspirated. The rough breathing always affects the aspiration of an initial vowel or diphthong.

ὁ, οἶ, αἶ, ἐξ, ὁδος, ῥω, ἄγιος
(ὁ-δος) (ἄ-γι-ος)

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The rough breathing is placed before a capital letter and not above it. The initial rough breathing mark also is capitalized in English and not the first vowel. The initial vowel remains capitalized in Greek.

Ὅ, Ἅ, Ἐξ, Ὅδος, Ὅς, Ὅρα, Ἐτερος
(Ὅ-δος) (Ὅ-ρα) (Ἐ-τε-ρος)
(Ho) (Hē) (Hex) (Hodos) (Hos) (Hōrai) (Heteros)

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The rough breathing always appears over the second vowel when a word begins with an initial diphthong, whether or not the initial vowel is capitalized.

αὐτή, Αὐτή, οὗτος, Οὗτος, εὕρισκω, Εὕρισκω
(αὐ-τή) (Αὐ-τή) (οὐ-τός) (Οὐ-τός) (εὕ-ρι-σκω) (Εὕ-ρι-σκω)
(hau-tē) (Hau-tē) (hou-tos) (Hou-tos) (heu-ri-skō) (Heu-ri-skō)

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5.1.3 Special Considerations (*Rhō*, *Upsilon*)

5.1.3.1 *Rhō* always has a rough breathing mark when it begins a word. However, it is pronounced as "rh" and not "hr". Some English words have their origins from Greek that begin with "rh" (*i.e.*, "rhapsody," "rhino," "rhetoric," "rhythm"). The rough breathing is placed before its capital's letter.

ῥαπιζω,	ῚΡεβεκκα,	ῥηγμα,	ῚΡιζα,	ῥιπτω
(ῥα-πι-ζω)	(ῚΡε-βεκ-κα)	(ῥηγ-μα)	(ῚΡι-ζα)	(ῥι-πτω)
(rha-pi-zō)	(Rhe-bek-ka)	(rhēg-ma)	(Rhi-za)	(rhi-ptō)

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5.1.3.2 *Upsilon* or the diphthong *upsilon + iota* always has a rough breathing mark when they begin a word. *Upsilon* is transliterated into English as "U, u" when part of a diphthong, otherwise transliterated as "Y, y" (*cf.* §5.5.6).

ὑπερ,	ῚΥαλος,	ὑβριζω,	ὑπο,	υίος,	Υιοθεσια
(ὑ-περ)	(ῚΥ-α-λος)	(ὑ-βρι-ζω)	(ὑ-πο)	(υί-ος)	(Υί-ο-θε-σι-α)
hy-per	Hy-a-los	(hy-bri-zō)	(hy-po)	(hui-os)	(Hui-o-the-si-a)

[Listen](#)



Upsilon's alphabetical name is not a contradiction to 5.1.3.2. Whereas its English spelling is "*upsilon*" (not "*hupsilon*"), the Greek spelling is ὕψιλον with a space between "ὕ" and "ψιλον."

5.2 Syllabification

Syllabification is the division of words into their individual syllables. Many Greek words have only one syllable, and all other words have two or more syllables. Guidelines for syllable division are needed to manage their division. As in the previous illustrations, hyphens are used in the examples below to indicate a word's correct syllable division.

5.2.1 Syllabification principles are needed to describe the phonetic process for the division of words into syllables. An apparent exception may appear time to time, indicating only that there is another underlying principle. The following hierarchical eight guidelines are in their order of importance.

5.2.1.1 Every word has as many syllables as it has separate vowels and/or diphthongs. Thus, every syllable must have one vowel or diphthong.

The following words have only one syllable.

έν, οί, δε, ήν, είς, έκ, και, συ, γαρ

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A syllable may begin with a consonant, vowel, or diphthong. A syllable may end with a consonant, vowel, or diphthong. Syllables may not have any consonants at all. The combined quantity of vowels or diphthongs determines the number of syllables in a word. Therefore, the vowel or diphthong is the necessary element for every Greek syllable.

The following words have two syllables.

σωζω, έτι, θητα, ουτε, εκει, σιγμα
(σω-ζω) (έ-τι) (θη-τα) (ου-τε) (έ-κει) (σιγ-μα)

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The following words have three syllables.

μεριζω, Μαρια, λαλεω, ιωτα
(με-ρι-ζω) (Μα-ρι-α) (λα-λε-ω) (ι-ω-τα)

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The following words have four or more syllables.

φοβομαι, ακηκοαμεν, εωρακαμεν
(φο-βε-ο-μαι) (ά-κη-κο-α-μεν) (έ-ω-ρα-κα-μεν)

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5.2.1.2 Two consecutive vowels that do not form a diphthong are divided.

ἔθεασαμεθα	ἔ-θε-α-σα-με-θα
ἄκηκοαμεν	ἄ-κη-κο-α-μεν
ἔωρακαμεν	ἔ-ω-ρα-κα-μεν
κενοω	κε-νο-ω
θεε	θε-ε
δια	δι-α
εὐωδια	εὐ-ω-δι-α
Σπανια	Σπα-νι-α
ἱερον	ἱ-ε-ρον
λυομεν	λυ-ο-μεν

5.2.1.3 A single consonant is pronounced with the following vowel or diphthong.

μαθητης	μα-θη-της	ἔπεχω	ἔ-πε-χω
λυμαινω	λυ-μαι-νω	λειπομεθα	λει-πο-με-θα
θελετε	θε-λε-τε	ἄγοραζω	ἄ-γο-ρα-ζω
λογος	λο-γος	λαλεω	λα-λε-ω
παλαι	πα-λαι	Υἱοθεσια	Υἱ-ο-θε-σι-α
ἦγετο	ἦ-γε-το	ἔψιλον	ἔ-ψι-λον
ἔγενετο	ἔ-γε-νε-το	᾽Ωμεγα	᾽Ω-με-γα

5.2.1.4 Syllables are divided between double consonants with their respective consonant being pronounced with their vowel or diphthong.

Θαδδαιος	θαδ-δαι-ος
ἄγγελος	ἄγ-γε-λος
γλωσσα	γλωσ-σα

σαββασιν	σαβ-βα-σιν
πορρω	πορ-ρω
ἐκκλειω	ἐκ-κλει-ω
Μαθθαιος	Μαθ-θαι-ος
γαμμα	γαμ-μα
καππα	καπ-πα
ἄλλα	ἄλ-λα

5.2.1.5 Two or more adjacent consonants begin a syllable if they can begin a word. This inseparable grouping of consonants is called a consonant cluster. Greek words can begin with many consonant combinations that English does not. A list of all the consonant clusters is provided on the following page.

ῥαβδον	ῥα-βδον
ἐστιν	ἐ-στιν
τεκνον	τε-κνον
Χριστος	Χρι-στος
ἄνθρωπος	ἄν-θρω-πος
ζωγρεω	ζω-γρε-ω
λελυσθε	λε-λυ-σθε
φοβητρα	φο-βη-τρα
γεγραπται	γε-γρα-πται
Πετρος	Πε-τρος
ἀποστολος	ἀ-πο-στο-λος
ἐκτενεις	ἐ-κτε-νεις
αἴφνιδιος	αἴ-φνι-δι-ος
διαγινωσκω	δι-α-γι-νω-σκω

GREEK CONSONANT CLUSTERS

Any potential consonant cluster may be verified by a [Greek-English lexicon](#). A consonant cluster is established by whether or not it begins a Greek word. For example, the consonants θλ in the table below constitute a cluster because they can begin a Greek word (θλιψις). Consonantal clusters are never to be divided between syllables, and are always pronounced with their following vowel or diphthong (they never end a syllable). A consonant cluster is pronounced like their individual consonants, except that they are rapidly blended together.

Nine consonant clusters below are not attested in NTGreek as beginning a word. Their attestation is derived, however, from Classical Greek words. These clusters have been included because of their frequency within NTGreek words. They are indicated by an asterisk to the right of the consonant cluster.

βδ	βδελυγμα	πλ	πληγη	τλ*	τλημων
βλ	βλεπω	πν	πνευμα	τμ*	τμηγω
βρ	βρεφος	πρ	πρεσβευτης	τρ	τρεφω
γλ	γλωσσα	πτ	πτωχεια	φθ	φθαρτος
γν	γνους	σβ	σβεννυμι	φλ	φλεγω
γρ	γραφω	σγ*	σγαλη	φν	φνει
δμ*	δημος	σθ	σθενωω	φρ	φρονεω
δν*	δνοφεος	σκ	σκανδαλον	χθ	χθες
δρ	δραγμα	σκλ	σκληρος	χλ	χλευη
ζβ	ζβεννυμι	σκν*	σκνιπος	χν	χνους
ζμ	Ζμυρνα	σμ	σμυρνα	χρ	Χριστος
θλ	θλιψις	σπ	σπουδη	ψχ*	ψχεντ
θν	θνησκω	σπλ	σπλαγχνον		
θρ	θριξ	στ	στομα		
κλ	κλεπτω	στλ*	στλιξ		
κμ*	κμητος	στρ	στρεφω		
κν	κνισα	σφ	σφοδρα		
κρ	κρινον	σφρ	σφραγισ		
κτ	κτισις	σχ	σχισμα		
μν	μνα				

5.2.1.6 A grouping of consonants that does not constitute a consonant cluster is divided, with the first consonant pronounced with the preceding vowel or diphthong. Thus, the first consonant closes the syllable before, and the second consonant begins the following syllable.

ἐμπροσθεν	ἐμ-προ-σθεν
φοβηθεντες	φο-βη-θεν-τες
συγχειρω	συγ-χει-ρω
ὀρκωμοσια	ὀρ-κω-μο-σι-α
ἀρχης	ἀρ-χης
πορφυρα	πορ-φυ-ρα
ὄρκος	ὄρ-κος
κεντρον	κεν-τρον

5.2.1.7 Greek phonology generally dictates the nasal consonants *mū* and *nū* form a consonantal cluster with the preceding consonant, unless the preceding consonant is either lambda or rhō. The two voiced liquid consonants lambda and rhō do not phonologically mix well with the two voiced nasals, and therefore divided when juxtaposed together. These exceptions are underlined.

τεκνον	τε-κνον NOT τεκ-νον
μιμνησκομαι	μι-μνη-σκο-μαι
τολμαω	<u>τολ-μα-ω</u>
κοσμος	κο-σμος NOT κοσ-μος
ἔθνος	ἔ-θνος NOT ἔθ-νος
πραγμα	πρα-γμα
ὀφθαλμος	<u>ὀ-φθαλ-μος</u>
θερμος	<u>θερ-μος</u>
ἀρνεομαι	<u>ἀρ-νε-ο-μαι</u>

5.2.1.8 Grammars usually divide compound words where joined. A compound word is two distinct words combined together to form a new word. Normally the first word will be a Greek preposition such as ἀνά, ἀπό, δια, εἰς, ἐκ, ἐπι, κατά and προ. This grammar, however divides words into syllables according to the above seven rules. In the examples below, both possibilities are illustrated.

εἰσηλθον	εἰ-σηλ-θον or εἰσ-ηλ-θον
εἰσφέρω	εἰ-σφε-ρω or εἰσ-φε-ρω
ἀναγώ	ἀ-να-γώ or ἀνα-γώ
κατελάβεν	κα-τε-λα-βεν or κατ-ε-λα-βεν
ἀποστελλώ	ἀ-πο-στελ-λώ or ἀπο-στελ-λώ
συνεχω	συ-νε-χω or συν-ε-χω

Those who exclusively divide between compound words face obvious instances where syllables cannot divide. An important case in point is where double consonants follow an initial vowel after the first word of a compound word (διαγγελλώ < δια + ἀγγελλώ). Since Greek syllables cannot begin with double consonants, they must resort to the “natural way” to divide the word phonetically correct. Consider the following examples.

διαγγελλώ	δι-αγ-γελ-λώ	NOT δια-γγελ-λώ
διαλλαγήθι	δι-αλ-λα-γήθι	NOT δια-λλα-γήθι
ἐπιρραπτει	ἐ-πιρ-ρα-πτει	NOT ἐπι-ρρα-πτει
ἀπολλυμεθα	ἀ-πολ-λυ-με-θα	NOT ἀπο-λλυ-με-θα
καταγγελλειν	κα-ταγ-γελ-λειν	NOT κατα-γγελ-λειν

A little bit of common sense serves as a good guide where to divide Greek syllables. It is still a good idea, however to learn the above guidelines.

In order to discuss Greek accents (§5.3), further knowledge concerning Greek syllables is necessary. Accentuation is inextricably bound to a syllable’s designation and position, and to its quantity.

5.2.2 Designation and position of syllables. A Greek word with three or more syllables is polysyllabic. A disyllabic word has two syllables, and a word with only one syllable is monosyllabic. Only the last three syllables of a Greek word are labeled and the only three that may be accented. The last syllable of a word is called the ultima, the next to the last syllable, the penult, and the syllable before the penult is the antepenult (“before the *penult*”).

Polysyllabic λελυκετω	Disyllabic λογοι	Monosyllabic συ
antepenult ↓ penult ultima ↓ ↓ λε λυ κε τω	penult ultima ↓ ↓ λο γοι	ultima ↓ συ

Words with three syllables or more only require the above designations. The last syllable is always the ultima, whether a word is polysyllabic, disyllabic, or monosyllabic. Thus, a monosyllabic word such as συ has an ultima, but it has neither a penult nor antepenult. The disyllabic word λογοι has an ultima and a penult, but no antepenult. A polysyllabic word such as λελυκετω has all three, as do longer words.

A syllable is considered closed if it terminates with a consonant, and open if it ends with a vowel or diphthong (do not confuse this terminology with “open” and “close” vowels). Thus in the word, λογος (λο-γος), the ultima is closed and the penult is open. In the polysyllabic word, ανθρωπος (αν-θρω-πος), both the ultima and antepenult are closed and the penult is open.

5.2.3 Syllable quantity depends on the vowel or diphthong in a syllable. If a syllable contains a long vowel or diphthong, its quantity is long. If it contains a short vowel, its quantity is short. The only exception is when the diphthongs αι and οι end a word (i.e., και, μαγοι). These two diphthongs are considered short for accenting purposes. Syllables with *alpha*, *iōta*, and *upsilon* may be long or short, determined by further considerations (cf. §5.3.6).

5.3 Accents

Similar to breathing marks, Greek accents are associated with vowels and diphthongs, but never with *rhō*. Also like breathing marks, accents were employed later than NTGreek times by copyists of Greek manuscripts to assist in the pronunciation of Greek words.

Although accents were not part of the original NTGreek text, their importance lies in their phonological benefit for the beginning Greek student. This will become evidently clear before the close of this lesson. For example, the variable vowel, *iōta*, may be pronounced either long or short. After learning a few principles of Greek accentuation, you will learn that *iōta* in ὑμῖν is long, whereas in ἀσεβέσι it is short. Moreover, learning Greek accents will increase appreciation for the intonated beauty and history of the Greek language.

In the end, the best students will be those who learn proper accentuation in the early stages, for they will go the farthest distance the fastest. Do not be dissuaded by former students who use their Greek text as a paperweight and espouse that accents are not important. To learn NTGreek effectively, the ear and voice need to carry as much of the burden as possible, and not only the eye.

5.3.1 Names of the accents. Except for specific exceptions (introduced in later lessons), Greek words are written with one of three accents. The three accents are the acute (´), grave (`), and circumflex (ˆ).

5.3.2 Position of accents. Just like breathing marks, all accents are written over the vowel which forms the nucleus of the stressed syllable. In instances of a diphthong, however, the accent is written over the second vowel, unless the second vowel is an *iōta* subscript.

[Listen](#) Acute: ἐπί, κατά, ἀνεώχθη, λόγος, αὐτοῦς
 (ἐ-πί) (κα-τά) (ἀ-νε-ώ-χθη) (λό-γος) (αὐ-τούς)

[Listen](#) Grave: παρὰ, ψυχὴ, ἀδελφὸς, θεὸς, τοὺς, αὐτὸς
 (πα-ρὰ) (ψυ-χὴ) (ἀ-δελ-φὸς) (θε-ὸς) (αὐ-τὸς)

[Listen](#) Circumflex: νῦν, πῦρ, Ἰησοῦς, βῆτα, δεῖ, αὐτῶ
 (Ἰ-η-σοῦς) (βῆ-τα) (αὐ-τῶ)

5.3.21 Combination of breathing marks and accents. When a breathing mark and either the acute or the grave accent occur over the same vowel or diphthong, the accent is written beside and just after it. In the case of a circumflex, the accent is written over the breathing mark.

ἄνθρωπος, ἔν, ὕδωρ, ἔτι, εἶς, ἦν, οἶδα, αἶμα

[Listen](#)

5.3.22 Capital letters and accents. When a word's vowel is capitalized, both the breathing mark and accent are placed before the word. In cases of a diphthong, the breathing and accent marks are placed over the second vowel.

Ἕλληνα, Ἑραστός, Ἡμεῖς, Εὐβούλος, Αἴγυπτος

[Listen](#)

Accents and breathing marks are not normally used with uncials. Very rarely are they written over a capital in order to emphasize the position of the accent in the word.

5.3.22.1 Improper Diphthong Exception. When an improper diphthong begins with a capital letter, both the breathing and accent (if present) are placed before it. In this manner, improper and proper diphthongs are differentiated.

ἄδης > Ἄιδης (Hāides)

Two principal guidelines are now discussed to determine which accent can stand over what vowel or diphthong.

5.3.3 Syllable quantity affects accents. Both the acute and grave accents can stand over either a long or a short syllable. These two accents are not restricted by syllable quantity. The circumflex accent is always over a long vowel.

Acute over a short syllable: δέλτα, σίγμα, πατρίς, ἄνθρωπος

Acute over a long syllable: Κῶς, ἐγκλείω, οἶ, πείσας, φήμη

Grave over a short syllable: αὐτοῖ, Χριστόν, χωρὶς, ἦλι

Grave over a long syllable: χρώς, καταβολήν, λεγιών

Circumflex over only a long syllable: βῆτα, ζῆτα, ἦτα, ἰῶτα, μῦ, ξῖ

5.3.4 Maximum accent sustention is the accent’s ability to carry the syllable or syllables that follow. The acute can sustain three syllables; therefore, it may stand over an ultima, penult, or antepenult. The circumflex can sustain two syllables; therefore, its accent may stand over only an ultima or penult. In either instance, the syllable is always long. The grave accent can sustain only one syllable; therefore, its accent is always over the ultima..

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

5.3.5 De-evolution of accents. Greek accents were not always used. They were first introduced by ancient grammarians as an attempt to preserve a phonetic record of their language. Ancient Greek words and word-groups were intonated; meaning voice pitch within them rose and fell during speaking.

The grammarians accented syllables that were pitched higher than unaccented syllables, and not because of stress. The rising and falling of pitch was what made the language sound musical. The Greek word for “accent” is *prosōidia*, a term used for “a song (words) sung to music”. The “musical” accents represent a higher pitch in voice. Thus, one syllable is not emphasized by stress over another as it is by pitch or a lack of it.

English also has a musical accent in some instances. The intonation rise of the acute captures the second syllable of “*Really?*” when something surprising or unexpected is said. Likewise, the falling tone in the same syllable indicates displeasure, embodying the falling intonation of the grave. The circumflex accent blends the acute and grave accents and confined only to long syllables in which the voice rose in pitch during the first half and fell in the second. The circumflex is roughly equivalent to a combined acute and grave accent; therefore it is never used to accent an antepenult syllable.

The three Greek accents may be represented as in musical notation. Pitch would vary with individuals, and the intervals would not be the same. Interestingly, these accents were rigidly observed by those who produced the Greek classics.

Sometime before the Koinē Era, all three accents eventually came to represent stress and not pitch. Thus, Greek accented syllables are represented by extra loudness on its accented syllable, clearer quality of the vowel and some slight lengthening. An abridged monotonic accentual system was officially adopted in 1982 by Modern Greek.



Although the ancient accentual pitch has been lost, NTGreek may be read successfully without knowing any more about accents and rules by which they are governed. So why learn the Greek accents?

As stated in the introduction, Greek words may be differentiated by the position and type of the accent. Compare the English word pair “min’ute” (a unit of time) with “minute’” (something very small). The shift of accent not only changes the manner in which these words are divided (“min-ute” and “mi-nute”), but also lengthens the vowel quality in “i” and “u” in the latter case! Greek vowel quantity shift also occurs when an accent shifts within the same word.

5.3.6 Accents and variable vowels. The variable vowels’ long and short phonetic sounds are not orthographically distinguished, as with the spelling differences between *ēta* and *εpsilon*. In some instances, however, accents discriminate their phonetic value. The following guidelines serve as a guide.

5.3.6.1 *Alpha*

1. The *alpha* improper diphthong (α) is always long, regardless what syllable is accented.
2. *Alpha* is always long when accented with a circumflex accent.
3. *Alpha* is always long because of crasis. Crasis is a type of contraction in which two vowels or diphthongs merge into one new vowel or diphthong, making one word out of two. Crasis is marked by the retention of the breathing of the second word. The coronis breathing mark looks like an apostrophe above the contracted and long vowel.

κᾶν (for καί + ἄν), κάγω (for καί + ἐγώ)



The coronis mark is not identical to the smooth breathing mark. The coronis marks the omission and contraction of final vowels and diphthongs with the next word's initial vowel or diphthong.

4. *Alpha* is always long in all the alphabetical letters' names.

ἄλφα, ᾿Αλφα, γάμμα, δέλτα, ζῆτα, ἦτα, θῆτα

5. Initial *alpha* is long in proper names and places that have been transliterated into Greek from another language. The medial vowel may or may not be long.

᾿Αδάμ, ᾿Αβραάμ, ᾿Αβιαθάρ, ᾿Αγαρ

Further information to distinguish between its long and short pronunciation will be discussed in future lessons where applicable.

5.3.6.2 *iōta*

1. *iōta* is always long in the following alphabetical letters' names.

ἔψιλόν, ὀμικρόν, ὠψιλόν

2. *iōta* is always long when accented with a circumflex mark.

ξῖ, πῖ, φῖ, χῖ, ψῖ, ὠμῖν, θλῖψις, χρῖσμα

3. The first *iōta* is long in proper names and places that have been transliterated into Greek another language. The medial vowel may or may not be long.

Μιχαήλ, ᾿Ηλί

Further information to distinguish between its long and short pronunciation will be discussed in future lessons where applicable.

5.3.6.3 *Upsilon*

When accents are discussed more in depth, it does make a decisive difference whether or not *upsilon* is long or short to determine its syllable accent.

1. *Upsilon* is always long when accented with a circumflex accent.

μ̂, ν̂, ν̂ν, ταν̂ν, π̂ρ, τ̂φος, ὕς

2. *Upsilon* is long in its alphabetical letter's name (as noted by the circumflex accent over it).

ὕ ψιλόν, ὕ ψιλόν

As with the previous two variable vowels, further information to distinguish between its long and short pronunciation will be discussed in future lessons where applicable.

5.3.7 Long by position. The two natural short vowels (*epsilon*, *omicron*) and the three variable vowels (*alpha*, *iota*, and *upsilon*) may become long when followed by two or more consonants, a double consonant, or a compound consonant. However, the vowel may be either long or short if the first of two consonants following these vowels is a stop consonant AND the second is either a liquid or a nasal consonant.

5.3.8 Long by contraction. A final accented short vowel is dropped (or elided) when immediately preceding another word beginning with a long or short vowel, or a diphthong. The vowel is syncopated and indicated by an apostrophe that looks identical to the smooth breathing mark following the first word.

The final word's vowel is omitted because of hiatus, which is a phonological term referring to the lack of a consonant separating the clash of vowel sounds. The result is that the following word is easier for the speaker to pronounce.

Whenever contraction occurs because of elision, the variable vowel is always long in the second word pair as in #s 2, 5, and 6 below.

Contracted words are quickly pronounced in succession without a pause as in the following examples. Note how the last consonant of the first word pair easily glides into the first syllable of the following word.

1. ἀπό αὐτοῦ is written ἀπ' αὐτου, but pronounced as ἀ-παυ-του
2. ἀπό ἀρχῆς is written ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, but pronounced as ἀ-παρ-χῆς
3. μεθὰ ἡμῶν is written μεθ' ἡμῶν, but pronounced as με-θη-μῶν
4. μετὰ αὐτοῦ is written μετ' αὐτοῦ, but pronounced as με-ταυ-του
5. δὲ ἄν is written δ' ἄν, but pronounced as δάν
6. ἀλλὰ ἐντολὴν is written ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν, but pronounced as ἀλ-λεν-το-λήν
7. ἀλλὰ ἐκ is written ἀλλ' ἐκ, but pronounced as ἀλ-λεκ

The below examples illustrate elision.

1 John 1:1: Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς

[Listen](#)

1 John 1:3: ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν

[Listen](#)

1 John 1:5: ἦν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν

[Listen](#)

1 John 1:6: ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ σκότει

[Listen](#)

1 John 1:7: κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ

[Listen](#)

1 John 2:5: ὅς δ' ἄν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον

[Listen](#)

1 John 2:16: οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν

[Listen](#)

1 John 2:27: ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς

[Listen](#)

3 John 13: Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος

[Listen](#)

3 John 15: ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα

[Listen](#)

John 12:30: Οὐ δι' ἐμὲ ἡ φωνὴ αὕτη γέγονεν ἀλλὰ δι' ὑμᾶς

[Listen](#)

5.4 Punctuation

The last diacritical marks discussed are the punctuation symbols. The oldest manuscripts have few punctuation marks, the earliest being patristic comments and early versions. Uncial manuscripts were written without spaces between words, and without any space between sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. For better or worse, most modern NTGreek include four types of punctuation marks. Φέρει is used below as an example for the punctuation marks.

- φέρει. - period indicates full stop
- φέρει, - comma indicates minor pause
- φέρει· - colon or semicolon indicates major pause
- φέρει; - question mark – identical to the English semicolon – Yikes!

NTGreek modern texts usually capitalize proper names, the first letter of direct quotations, the first letter of an Old Testament quotation, and a paragraphs' first letter that begin a new paragraph. However, most editors do not capitalize words that begin a new sentence.

5.5 Transliteration

Transliteration is the transcription of a host's alphabetical letters into the equivalent characters of a receptor's language. Transliteration aids pronouncing difficult words, as well as recognizing English words derived from Greek. The common convention equivalences are as follows.

A, α = A, a	Θ, θ = Th, th	O, ο = O, o	Χ, χ = Ch, ch
B, β = B, b	Ι, ι = I, i	Π, π = P, p	Ψ, ψ = Ps, ps
Γ, γ = G, g	Κ, κ = K, k	Ρ, ρ = R, r	Ω, ω = Ō, ō
Δ, δ = D, d	Λ, λ = L, l	Σ, σ, ς = S, s, s	ΑΙ, αῖ = Āi, āi
Ε, ε = E, e	Μ, μ = M, m	Τ, τ = T, t	ΗΙ, ηῖ = Ēi, ēi
Ζ, ζ = Z, z	Ν, ν = N, n	Υ, υ = U, u or Y, y	ΩΙ, ωῖ = Ōi, ōi
Η, η = Ē, ē	Ξ, ξ = X, x	Φ, φ = Ph, ph	´ = H, h

Several matters require attention during transliteration.

5.5.1 Accents. It is always good practice to place the proper accent over the transliterated vowel or diphthong.

5.5.2 Breathing marks. The rough breathing mark is transliterated as an “h,” and always placed before a capital letter or over lower case vowels and diphthongs. *Rhō* is the exception; an “h” is placed after it. The smooth breathing mark never affects the pronunciation of a vowel or diphthong; therefore, it is not usually represented in transliteration.

5.5.3 Nasal gamma. The nasal-*gamma* is transliterated as “ng,” “nk,” “nch,” and “nx” when gamma occurs before gamma, kappa, *chī*, and *xsī*.

ἄγγελος = ángelos ὄγκος = ónkos ἐλέγχει = elénchei σάλπιγξ = sálpinx

5.5.4 Double letters. Two English letters represent *thēta*, *phī*, *chī*, and *psī*.

θρίξ = thríx φάσις = phásis χθές = chthés ψιχίον = psichíon

5.5.5 Long vowels. The macron is placed over the long vowels ēta and ōmega to differentiate between their corresponding short vowels, *eps̄ilon* and *omīkron*.

θέλητε = thélēte βέλη = bélē λόγων = lógōn ὀπίσω = opisō

5.5.6 The vowel *ups̄ilon*. *Ups̄ilon* is transliterated by “u” when part of a diphthong (αυ, ευ, ου, υι, ηυ); otherwise it is transliterated as “y”.

υῖός = huiós ὑπέρ = hypér ὕδατι = hýdati εὕρομεν = heúromen

5.5.7 Improper diphthongs. The improper diphthongs, ᾱ, η̄, and ω̄ are respectively transliterated as āi, ēi, and ōi. The macron over the initial vowel distinguishes between the improper diphthongs and the proper diphthongs ai (αι), ei (ει) and oi (οι).

τιμᾶ = timāi τη = tēi τῶ λόγῳ = tōi lógōi ἦδει = éidei

5 | Study Guide

Sight and Sounds of Words (Module C)

Phonology (Part 5)

You have been introduced to all the necessary initial phonological information for NTGreek. Therefore, all Greek words will have their appropriate breathing and accentual marks from this point forward in the lessons.

The following exercises integrate the material covered in this lesson. In addition, there are further study aids available which are associated with this lesson for those who wish to pursue additional study.

Exercise One: The Greek alphabetical letter names.

Let us begin with the twenty-four Greek alphabetical letters. Concentrate on good penmanship and the letters' pronunciation. As you write each alphabetical letter's name, memorize the placement of its accent and place the appropriate stress on its syllable as you say the letter's name.

A α, ἄλφα _____

B β, βῆτα _____

Γ γ, γάμμα _____

Δ δ, δέλτα _____

E ε, ἒ ψιλόν _____

Z ζ, ζῆτα _____

H η, ἦτα _____

Θ θ, θῆτα _____

Ι ι, ἰῶτα _____

Κ κ, κάππα _____

Λ λ, λάμβδα _____

Μ μ, μῦ _____

Ν ν, νῦ _____

Ξ ξ, ξῖ _____

Ο ο, ὀ μίκρον _____

Π π, Πῖ _____

Ρ ρ, ῥῶ _____

Σ σ, σίγμα _____

Τ τ, ταῦ _____

Υ υ, ὕ ψιλόν _____

Φ φ, φῖ _____

Χ χ, χῖ _____

Ψ ψ, ψῖ _____

Ω ω, ὦ μέγα _____

Exercise Two: Syllabification. Divide the following Greek words into their appropriate syllables.

α. πνεῦμα

β. ἄγγελος

γ. διά

δ. καρδία

ε. ἄνθρωπος

ζ. ἀμήν

η. λυομένων

θ. ἔκπαλαι

ι. βότρυς

κ. γυναικάρια

λ. καθελόντες

μ. ὀψώνιον

ν. παγίδα

ξ. ἔτι

ο. εὖ

π. λοιδορέω

ρ. ὑποτάσσω

Exercise Three: Variable Vowels and Accent. Circle the variable letters known that are long because of their accent.

α. ὑμῖν

δ. ὕψιλον

η. νικᾶ

β. γεννᾶ

ε. τῦφος

θ. λόγοι

γ. ἡμᾶς

ζ. θλίψις

ι. ἦδει

Exercise Four: Transliteration. Transliterate the following English capital letters into Greek capital letters. All of these examples are actual Greek words. If applicable, include the rough breathing mark with the transliteration.

α. KAINĒ _____

ι. HETEROS _____

β. PSEUDOS _____

κ. ĀIDĒS _____

γ. KURIOS _____

λ. HŌRĀI _____

δ. TAPHEI _____

μ. HYPO _____

ε. TAXIN _____

ν. HAUTĒ _____

ζ. KOINON _____

ξ. HODOS _____

η. ŌMEGA _____

ο. EPSILON _____

θ. IĒSOUS _____

π. THĒTA _____

Exercise Five: Transliteration. Transliterate the following Greek minuscule letters into Greek capital letters. All of these examples are actual Greek words. If applicable, include the rough breathing mark with the transliteration.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| α. κόσμου _____ | η. ἅγιος _____ |
| β. ἔξω _____ | θ. δόξα _____ |
| γ. ἀρχῶν _____ | ι. ἑπτα _____ |
| δ. ἀληθής _____ | κ. λάρυγξ _____ |
| ε. δή _____ | λ. χάρις _____ |
| ζ. λύτρα _____ | μ. ζωή _____ |

Exercise Six: Multiple choice. Choose the best answer.

- The two Greek breathing marks are:
 - monosyllabic and disyllabic
 - crasis and coronis
 - acute and circumflex
 - smooth and rough
- The breathing mark which indicates the lack of aspiration is the
 - smooth
 - rough
 - circumflex
 - acute
- When $\hat{\upsilon}$ ψιλόν (Υ υ) begins a word, it always has
 - a smooth breathing mark
 - a rough breathing mark
 - a rough accent
 - a rough breathing and an accent

4. Every Greek word that begins with a vowel or diphthong must have

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| α. an accent | γ. a breathing mark and accent |
| β. a breathing mark | δ. a breathing mark if accented |

5. What are the three primary Greek accents?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| α. ´ ˘ ˆ | γ. ´ ˘ ˆ |
| β. ˙ ˑ ˆ | δ. ´ ˘ ˆ |

6. Which word has the smooth breathing mark and the grave accent?

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| α. ἔψιλόν | γ. ἔτι |
| β. εὐθέως | δ. εὐρίσκω |

7. Which word has the rough breathing mark and the circumflex accent?

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| α. ἦτα | γ. ῥίζα |
| β. ἄνθρωπος | δ. ἱερεῖς |

8. How many syllables does ἑωράκαμεν have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

9. How many syllables does ἀνεώχθη have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

10. How many syllables does Ἰησοῦς have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

11. How many syllables does μιμνήσκομαι have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

12. How many syllables does ὀρκωμοσία have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

13. How many syllables does Αἰώνια have?

- | | |
|------|------|
| α. 3 | γ. 5 |
| β. 4 | δ. 6 |

14. Which example is a polysyllabic word?

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| α. ἦτα | γ. λέοντι |
| β. λόγοι | δ. πρὸς |

15. Which example is a monosyllabic word?

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| α. σύ | γ. λέοντι |
| β. λόγοι | δ. διαγγέλλω |

16. When a vowel begins a word which is also a capital letter, the rough breathing mark is placed where?
- α. over the vowel γ. under the vowel
β. before the vowel δ. after the vowel
17. A smooth breathing mark specifies that there is
- α. aspiration γ. an accent mark over the ultima
β. no aspiration δ. a vowel in the word
18. Accents are associated with what kind of letters?
- α. consonants γ. semi-vowels
β. vowels, diphthongs, and *rhō* δ. vowels and diphthongs
19. Breathing marks are associated with what kind of letters?
- α. consonants γ. semi-vowels
β. vowels and diphthongs δ. vowels, diphthongs, and *rhō*
20. Which letter always has a rough breathing mark when it begins a word?
- α. *upsilon* γ. *alpha*
β. *ēta* δ. no letter always has a rough breathing
21. Which of the following pair of words is correctly transliterated?
- α. *ῥαπιζω* rhapizo γ. *ῥαπιζω* rhapizō
β. *ῥαπιζω* hrapizō δ. *ῥαπιζω* rapizō

22. Every word has as many syllables as it has separate

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| α. consonants | γ. semi-vowels |
| β. vowels and diphthongs | δ. total number of consonants |

23. As far as syllabification is concerned, two consecutive vowels which do not form a diphthong are

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| α. divided into syllables | γ. pronounced together |
| β. marked breathing | δ. never divided |

24. A single consonant surrounded by vowels normally

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| α. is omitted | γ. begins a new syllable |
| β. is not pronounced | δ. never occurs |

Exercise Seven: True or False Questions.

1. All consonants may be classified as either a stop or continuant consonant. There are NO exceptions. True False
2. The two liquid voiced continuants are *lambda* and *rho*. True False
3. The three labial stop consonants are *beta*, *pi*, and *theta*. True False
4. *Gamma* belongs to the same voiced order and is coordinate with the stop consonants *delta* and *beta*. True False
5. The palatal consonant stops belong to the same class because they are formed in back of the throat by the closure of the tongue near or touching the hard palate in the oral cavity. True False
6. *Gamma* may be either a voiced consonant stop, or a nasal continuant. True False

7. Every word has as many syllables as it has separate vowels and/or diphthongs. True False
8. A word that has two or more syllables is called disyllabic. True False
9. Two or more consonants together within a word begin a new syllable if they can begin a word. True False
10. A word that has three or more syllables is called monosyllabic. True False
11. If a syllable contains a long vowel (Η η, Ω ω) or diphthong, its quantity is undefined. True False
12. An inseparable grouping of consonants is called a consonant cluster. True False
13. Syllables are not usually divided between double consonants. True False
14. When a syllable is said to be “closed”, it means that the syllable ends with a vowel or diphthong. True False
15. Accent sustention pertains to the accent’s ability to carry the syllable or syllables that follow. True False

If this Greek lesson has been helpful and you wish to contribute toward further resources concerning the same subject material, your [donation](#) of any amount will be helpful.

