

Chapter 2

Diphthongs, Breathings, Punctuation, Accents

2.1 Chapter 1 introduced the letters and sounds of the Greek Alphabet.

We found that the sound of the gamma is modified when it is combined with another guttural :

γγ, γκ, γχ, γξ are like the English -ing, ink, inks.

2.2 Diphthongs - Greek vowels also form "diphthongs" very similar to those in English.

When two vowels come together, their sounds are modified.

Combination	Pronunciation	
	Koine	Modern Greek
αι	ai as in aisle	e as in get
αυ	au as in Faust	"ahf" or "ahv" as in half
ει	ei as in veil	ee as in see
ευ	eu as in feud	"ehf" or "ehv" as in ever
οι	oi as in oil	ee as in see
ου	oo as in boot	oo as in boot
υι	ui as in suite	ee as in see

2.3 Iota Subscript

One sometimes meets a iota written under one of the vowels α, η, or ω.

It looks like α̣ η̣ or ω̣. It is the remains of a iota which was once written after the other vowel.

It is no longer pronounced - just the sound of the main vowel is used.

The presence of the iota gives some useful information, so it has been retained rather than just dropped out.

2.4 Breathings

When the early Greeks adopted the Semitic alphabet, some of the Greek dialects did not aspirate an initial vowel, so they did not need a letter corresponding to the English "H".

However, the Attic dialect did aspirate some initial vowels - and when they came to use the alphabet there was no letter available for the "h" sound.

The Semitic "H" - "Hay" - had already been used for "Eta" with the "ay" sound.

So a new sign was made, by taking the top half of the H, and splitting it into two parts ῀ and ῁,

The first half means breathe out - "huh", and is called a "rough breathing" or *dasia* or *spiritus asper*,

The second half means "no huh", and is called a "smooth breathing", or *psili* or *spiritus lenis*.

There was no place for the breathing marks in the alphabet - they are not regarded as letters, and have been discontinued in modern Greek. However, they are a very useful help in pronunciation, and should be used when writing Koine or Classical Greek. They are written above an initial vowel. In the case of a diphthong, they are written over the second vowel of the pair. With capitals, they are written to the left of the vowel.

An initial rho also takes a rough breathing.

e.g. ῥιζα - (HRI-dza) root Ῥωμη - (HROA-may) Rome Ῥουθ - (hrooth) Ruth

2.5 Use of Capital Letters

Originally, Greek was written only in capitals, with no spaces between words.

The cursive letters were developed during the 10th century AD

In modern printed texts, capitals are used for the names of people and places. They are also used at the start of quotations, and at the start of a paragraph, but not at the start of a sentence.

2.6 Punctuation

Greek uses four punctuation marks :

- denoting a minor break, equivalent to the English comma.
- (a dot above the line) denoting a break equivalent to an English colon or semicolon.
- denoting a major break, equivalent to an English full stop or period.
- denoting a question, equivalent to an English question mark.

There are no quotation marks. Quotations are indicated by a capital letter, or by a comma followed by a capital letter, or by other introductory words

2.7 Accents

Accents are used to help in the pronunciation of Greek words. Originally Greek was probably tonal - the tone of voice might be higher or lower on parts of a word. Over time, this changed to a stress. There are some rules for where the accent should go on a Greek word. These are given in Appendix B2. Accents are important as an aid to correct pronunciation, but it is best not to worry about them at this stage - the eye and brain have enough to do at present matching the letters with their sounds.

Printed copies of the Greek New Testament show the accents, so when you read from the New Testament, either put a slight stress on the accents, or raise or lower the pitch of your voice.

There are three accents :

- ´ The acute, e.g. ἄ which slopes up to the right - raise the pitch by whatever feels comfortable, somewhere between a tone (doh - ray) and a fifth (doh - fa).
- ` The grave, e.g. ἄ which slopes down to the right - cancels what would have been a raised tone.
- ˘ The circumflex, e.g. ᾶ which is only used over long vowels or diphthongs, so there is time to raise the pitch and then drop back to the normal level. If this is a problem, just put a stress on the accent.

2.8 Diuresis

Two dots over a vowel indicate that it is not part of a diphthong, but is to be pronounced separately.

e.g. Ἑβραΐστι - (Heb-rah-EES-tee) "in Hebrew"

2.9 Writing Practice

A. Using either a blank sheet or a copy of Appendix A2, write out the Greek Alphabet in sequence 50 times, saying the name and sound of each letter aloud as you write it.

e.g. "Alpha . . ah, Beta . . buh, Gamma . . guh,"

B. Write the Greek several times, while saying the Greek aloud :

Πάτερ ἡμῶν Father of us, i.e. Our Father

Remember to make the "nu" pointed. Be careful to put a rough breathing on ἡμῶν.

2.10 Dictionary Practice

The following Greek words (one for each letter of the Greek alphabet) each have English words which are derived from, or related to them. They are listed alphabetically to give you practice with a Greek Dictionary. For each word in column 1, write out its meaning in column 2, and then in column 3 write out one or more English words related to or derived from it - these are called "cognates".

Word	Meaning	Cognates
ἄγγελος		
βαπτίζω		
γῆ		
διάκονος		
ἐπιστολή		
ζωή		
ἡμέρα		
θρόνος		
ἰχθύς		
καρδία		
λίθος		
μόνος		
νεκρός		
ξηρός		
ὀφθαλμός		
πνεῦμα		
ρίζα		
συναγωγή		
τόπος		
ὔδωρ		
φόβος		
Χριστός		
ψυχή		
ᾠρα		

2.11 New Testament Passage for reading and translation : Matthew 1:1-6a

In your Greek New Testament, read the passage aloud several times until you can read it without long pauses or stumbling.

Note that in Ἀβραάμ, Ἰσαάκ, and Ναασσών, the alphas are sounded separately.

	Pronunciation	Translation
βίβλος	BIB-loss	(the) Book
γενέσεως	gen-ES-eh-osse	of the generations
Ἰησοῦ	Yeah-SOO	(of) Jesus
Χριστοῦ	Hh-ris-TOO	(of) Christ
υἱοῦ	hwee-OO	(of the) son
ἐγέννησεν	eh-GEN-ay-sen	(he) begat
τὸν, τοὺς, τῆς	are all forms of the Definite Article "the".	
<i>In Greek it often sounds impolite to refer to someone just by name - using the Definite Article makes it more polite - the equivalent of Mr., Mrs. or Ms.</i>		
δὲ	<i>links a phrase with one that went before, and is often best not translated</i>	
καί	kihe	and
ἐκ	eck	out of, from
Ἰούδας	YOU-dass	Judah (<i>Hebrew</i>), Judas (<i>Greek</i>)
<i>Ἰούδαν is the Accusative of Ἰούδας - we will learn more about this in chapter 4</i>		

τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ	his brothers	(<i>Accusative</i>)
Ῥαχάβ	Hra-HHAB	Rahab
Ἰωβὴδ	yohe-BAID	Obed
Ῥούθ	HROOTH	Ruth
βασιλέα	bas-il-EH-ah	king (<i>Accusative</i>)

2.12 Vocabulary - Read, write, and learn

	Pronunciation	Translation
Ἀβραάμ	ab-rah-AHM	Abraham
Ἀνδρέας	an-DREY-ass	Andrew
Δαβὶδ	da-VEED or da-WEED	David
Ἰακώβ	yak-OBE	Jacob
Ἰάκωβος	YAK-ohe-boss	James
Ἰησοῦς	yeah-ZOOSS	Jesus
Ἰσαάκ	is-ah-ACK	Isaac
Ἰούδας	YOO-dass	Judah (<i>Hebrew</i>), Judas (<i>Greek</i>)
Ἰσραήλ	yis-rah-ALE	Israel
Ἰωάννης	yohe-ANN-ace	John
Λουκᾶς	loo-KARS	Luke
Μαθθαῖος	mah-THIGH-oss	Matthew
Μωϋσῆς	moe-oo-SAISS	Moses
Παῦλος	POW-loss	Paul
Σαῦλος	SOW-loss	Saul
Χριστός	Hh-ris-TOSS	Christ
ἐκ	eck	out of, from
ἐν	en	in
καὶ	kihe	and, also
δὲ	deh	and, but, "er"

*(δέ is a conjunction showing that a phrase is connected to the preceding phrase
δέ is often best left untranslated.)*