

The Greek Alphabet and Pronunciation

Lower/ Upper	Greek Name	English Name	Pronunciation	Num ¹	Comments	
α A	ἄλφα	Alpha	a	as in <u>f</u> ather	1	short/long vowel
β B	βῆτα	Beta	b	as in <u>B</u> ible	2	
γ Γ	γάμμα	Gamma	g ²	as in <u>g</u> one	3	
δ Δ	δέλτα	Delta	d	as in <u>d</u> og	4	
ε Ε	ἕψιλόν	Epsilon ³	e	as in <u>met</u>	5	short vowel
Ϝ	διγάμμα	Digamma ⁴	w	as in <u>few</u>	6	Not used in NT
ζ Ζ	ζῆτα	Zeta	z ⁶	as in <u>daze</u> as in <u>zoo</u>	7	within a word @ beg of a word
η Η	ἦτα	Eta	ē	as in <u>obey</u>	8	long vowel
θ Θ	θῆτα	Theta	th	as in <u>th</u> ing	9	
ι Ι	ἰῶτα	Iota	i	as in <u>intrigue</u>	10	short/long vowel
κ Κ	κάππα	Kappa	k	as in <u>k</u> itchen	20	
λ Λ	λάμβδα	Lambda	l	as in <u>l</u> aw	30	
μ Μ	μῦ	Mu	m	as in <u>m</u> other	40	
ν Ν	νῦ	Nu	n	as in <u>n</u> ew	50	
ξ Ξ	ξῖ	Xsi (xi)	xs	as in <u>axiom</u>	60	dbl. cons. sound
ο Ο	ὀ μικρόν	Omicron ⁷	o ⁸	as in <u>not</u> <u>obey</u>	70	short vowel alt. pron.
π Π	πί	Pi	p ⁹	as in <u>p</u> each	80	
Ϟ	κόππα	Koppa ⁴	q	as in <u>qu</u> ick	90	Not used in NT
ρ Ρ	ῥῶ	Rho	r	as in <u>r</u> od	100	
σ/ς Σ	σίγμα	Sigma	s ¹⁰	as in <u>s</u> tudy	200	
τ Τ	ταῦ	Tau	t	as in <u>t</u> alk	300	
υ Υ	ὕ ψιλόν	Upsilon ¹¹	u/y	as in <u>un</u> iverse or <u>book</u>	400	short/long vowel
φ Φ	φῖ	Phi	ph ⁵	as in <u>ph</u> one	500	
χ Χ	χῖ	Chi	ch ^{5,12}	as in <u>loch</u>	600	
ψ Ψ	ψῖ	Psi	ps ⁵	ps as in <u>lips</u>	700	dbl. cons. sound
ω Ω	ὦ μέγα	Omega ¹³	o	o as in <u>tone</u>	800	
Ϻ	σάμπι	Sampi ⁴	s		900	Not used in NT

¹ Each letter had a numerical value assigned to it, similar to Hebrew and Latin; the Greeks wrote numbers using letters, akin to Roman numerals.

² γ before -γ, -κ, or -χ is pronounced (n): (angelos)

³ ε letter, named ἕ ψιλόν, literally means “simple e” sound.

⁴ Ϝ, Ϟ, Ϻ are three archaic letters used in NT times only as numbers.

⁵ ζ, ξ, and ψ are double-consonant sounds written as a single letter.

⁶ ζ sounds like “z” when occurring at the beginning of a word and as “dz” in the middle.

⁷ ο letter, named δ μικρόν, literally means “small o” sound.

⁸ ο will be pronounced as “o” in “omelet” in this course.

⁹ ρ at the beginning of a word is written with “rough” breathing (´).

¹⁰ ς written at the end of a word; σ elsewhere: σεισμός “earthquake.”

¹¹ υ letter, named ὕ ψιλόν, literally means “simple u” sound.

¹² χ may be pronounced either as “ch” in (German) Bach or as chasm, whichever you find more comfortable.

¹³ ω letter, named ὦ μέγα, literally means “big o” sound.

Vowels, Diphthongs & Diacritical Marks

I. Vowels

- A. There are *seven vowel letters* with *ten vowel sounds* (long vowels are marked with “~” above);
 B. Vowels are “paired”: short and long (e.g., short α with long ᾱ)

English Vowel	Greek Short		Greek Long		Formation
		Pronunciation		Pronunciation	
a	α	“a” as in f <u>a</u> ther	ᾱ	same as short	open
e	ε	“e” as in g <u>e</u> t	ἠ	e as in gr <u>e</u> y	open
i	ι	“i” as in p <u>i</u> n	ῖ	“i” as in mar <u>i</u> ne	close
o	ο	“o” as in o <u>me</u> let	ω	o as in n <u>o</u> te	open
u	υ	“u” as in fl <u>u</u> te	ῦ	same as short	close

II. Diphthongs:

- A. “Diphthong” comes from two Greek words: δι – “two” + φθόγγος – “sounds”;
 B. A diphthong refers to a single syllable that is composed of two vowels;
 C. The second letter is always a “close” vowel (ι, υ)

Diphthong	Pronunciation	Diphthong	Pronunciation
vowel + ι		vowel + υ	
αι	ai as in <u>a</u> isle	αυ	au as in Germ. <u>Sau</u> erkraut
ει	ei as in fr <u>e</u> ight	ευ	eu as in <u>E</u> ucharist at the beginning of a word
οι	oi as in <u>o</u> il	ου	ou as in <u>sou</u> p within a word
υι	ui as in <u>su</u> ite	ου	ou as in <u>sou</u> p
		rarely occur	
		ηυ	a as in gr <u>e</u> y + u as in Germ. Gr <u>ü</u> n (run the two sounds together)
		ωυ	o as in n <u>o</u> te + u as in Germ. Gr <u>ü</u> n (run the two sounds together)

III. Diacritical Marks

- A. **Breathing:** occurs with vowels or diphthongs at the beginning of a word:
 1. *Smooth* (´) points *away* from the word; vowel/diph. has a normal sound.
 2. *Rough* (´) points *towards* the word; the vowel/diph. is preceded by an “h” sound.
 B. **Accent:** occurs with vowels or diphthongs to indicate word stress
 1. *Acute* (´) can occur on any one of the *last three syllables*;
 2. *Circumflex* (˘) can occur on *either one of the last two syllables*;
 3. *Grave* (`) can occur *only on the last syllable*.
 C. **Iota Subscript:** α, η, or ω can combine with ι to form a single letter:
 1. ι is written below and does not affect the pronunciation: α, η, ω.
 D. **Diaeresis:** (¨) indicates two adjacent vowels are pronounced separately, e.g. ῥῆσῆαις.

IV: Punctuation:

- A. Comma (,): looks just like an English one. , = ,
 B. Period (.): looks just like an English one. . = .
 C. Semicolon (;): written s a period above the line. ; = ·
 D. Question Mark (?): looks like an English semicolon. ? = ;
 E. Apostrophe ('): looks like an English one but is used to indicate “elision”
 (when a word’s final vowel drops before next word beginning with a vowel. ἄλλ’ ἵνα