

# 1

## The Greek Alphabet

Sight and Sounds of the Greek Letters (Module A)  
The Letters and Pronunciation of the Greek Alphabet  
Phonology (Part 1)

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### §1.0 Introduction

As might be expected, the forming and pronunciation of the Greek alphabet is first introduced in this lesson. Mastering the sight and sounds of the alphabet will lay the cornerstone for learning the sight and sounds of Greek words in all subsequent lessons. The first and single most important step in learning Greek is to memorize the sight and sounds of the alphabet.

Those who do not thoroughly learn the Greek alphabet are sowing the seed for future failure.

The Greek alphabet has twenty-four letters. Each letter is represented by both a small and capital letter. The difference between the small and capital letters is no different from the small and capital letters in English. Seven alphabetical letters are vowels, and the remaining seventeen letters are consonants. It is vital to learn the names of these letters, the form of both the small and capital letters, and the proper pronunciation of each. This will not be as difficult as expected, since many English and Greek alphabetical characters are very similar.



**§1.01 The types of Greek letters in the alphabet.** As with the English alphabet, two major types of speech sounds constitute the Greek alphabet. The open sounds with “free” breath are the **vowel** letters; the closed sounds with restricted breath are the **consonant** letters.

When one says “ah” for the doctor, an open sound is made with free passage of breath. The sound may be made as long as there is breath. This sound is a **vowel**, as are all the other open and freely breathed sounds in speech. The various vowel sounds are enunciated by modification of the shape of the oral chamber, and by movements of the tongue and lips. There are seven vowel letters in the Greek alphabet.

*The Greek alphabet contains seven distinct vowels and seventeen consonants.*

The open quality of vowels distinguishes them from another type of letter, the **consonant**. Simply stated, a consonant is any single letter that is not a vowel. The consonant letters are pronounced with the breath totally or partly blocked. This hindering of sound is done by the tongue, teeth, or lips. There are seventeen consonant letters in the Greek alphabet.

**§1.02 The Greek alphabetical letters and sounds.** A sound sufficiently distinct from other sounds as to differentiate meaning is a **phoneme**. Each phoneme is represented in writing by a unique alphabetical letter. For example, the words

*The term “phoneme” is pronounced as fónēm. The twenty-four Greek alphabetical characters represent twenty-four different phonemes.*

“pat” and “bat” have different meanings; this indicates in English the two letters, “p” and “b” are separate phonemes. Although the forming of these two letters by the lips is identical, the vocal cords are used with “b” and not with “p”.

A word’s phonetic pronunciation is produced by the quick succession of its individual letter phonemes. In “bat”, the combined phonemic sound of each alphabetical letter (“b” + “a” + “t”) yields the word’s total phonetic sound. However, only context determines the meaning of the word (“bat” as a stout wooden stick or club; “bat” as a nocturnal flying mammal; or “bat” as to move the eyelids quickly).

NTGreek Lesson One introduces both the phoneme of each Greek alphabetical character, as well as the pronunciation of each Greek alphabetical letter.

## §1.1 The Greek Alphabet

The approach in learning the Greek alphabet will be by first seeing, then correctly pronouncing, and finally writing the individual capital and small letters in their alphabetical order. Memorizing them in this order from the beginning will prove helpful later when using a Greek-English lexicon. A lexicon is more than a dictionary, for it also cites actual usages of a word within a document(s).

*Remember, the first and single most important step in learning Greek is to memorize the sight and sounds of the alphabet.*

The suggested procedure for learning the alphabet is straightforward. Use the provided practice Greek alphabet practice pages on pages twenty-two thru twenty-six. Proper penmanship in forming the Greek letters is an essential step in learning Greek. Possible confusion between Greek letters is avoided from the start if bad habits are not learned!

Next, use the animated on-line tutorial link provided below each Greek alphabetical letter both to see how to form properly the character and to hear its phoneme and letter is pronounced. On your practice sheets, practice writing both the capital and small Greek letters while listening to the letter's pronunciation.

As you listen to how an alphabetical character is pronounced, remember that the pronunciation of a letter's phoneme is learned by proper pronunciation of its alphabetical name. For example, the second letter in the Greek alphabet is  $\beta$ , and  $\beta$  is pronounced as the first letter in its alphabetical name,  $\beta\eta\tau\alpha$  (*bēta*).

Therefore, knowing how to pronounce the character's alphabetical name is to know how to pronounce the Greek letter's phoneme. This is also true for all the remaining letters in the alphabet. A Greek letter's phoneme has the same pronunciation as does the opening sound of its alphabetical letter's name.

*A Greek letter's phoneme has the same pronunciation as does the opening sound of its alphabetical letter's name.*

As stated before, the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet are divided into two types: seven are vowels and the remaining seventeen are consonants. Their order, beginning on page eight, does not reflect these separate categories, but rather their alphabetical sequence.

Moreover, each of the twenty-four Greek letters is represented by two forms. The first letter illustrates the capital letter (or upper case), and then its corresponding small letter (or lower case) follows. The capital letters should be studied along

with their matching small letters. The letters should be pronounced aloud several times while practicing writing them. The human eye must not carry the entire burden of learning and memorizing the alphabetical order of the Greek alphabet.

The arrow accompanying each case letter indicates the starting point and direction of flow when forming a Greek character. Greek is read from left to right like English. Therefore, a Greek letter should be written so that the final stroke ends to the furthest right where the next letter's stroke begins.

The Greek names for the lower case letters are spelled on the following pages with accompanying accents and breathing marks. Whereas these are for future reference, for the time being, these accents and breathing marks may be disregarded. You will learn these in Lesson Five.

Alphabetical Order

Greek Upper Case Spelling

Classification Information

English Spelling

Greek Lower Case Spelling

1<sup>st</sup> letter | *Alpha*

ΑΛΦΑ, ἄλφα [variable—voiced] vowel

1. *Alpha* is a variable vowel. Its phoneme may be long or short. If long, the phoneme is as **a** in “father”; if short, as **a** in “dad”. The vowel is never pronounced like the long **a** in English (*i.e.*, “age”).

2. The lower case letter should be written as a figure “8” laid on its side and opened on the right.

3. Α, α is transliterated as “A”, “a” into English.

< ahl - fah >

See and Hear

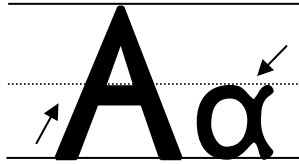
Relative Size Reference

On-Line Pronunciation and Formation Aids

Pronunciation Guide

Helpful Information

1<sup>st</sup> letter | *Alpha*



< ahl – fah >

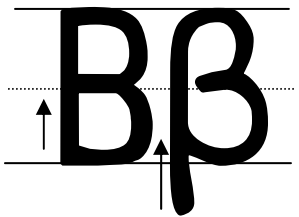


See and Hear

ΑΛΦΑ, ἄλφα [variable—voiced] vowel

1. *Alpha* is a variable vowel. Its phoneme may be long or short. If long, the phoneme is as **a** in “father”; if short, as **a** in “dad”. The vowel is never pronounced like the long **a** in English (*i.e.*, “age”).
2. The lower case letter should be written as a figure “8” laid on its side and opened on the right.
3. Α, α is transliterated as “A”, “a” into English.

2<sup>nd</sup> letter | *Bēta*



< bay – tah >

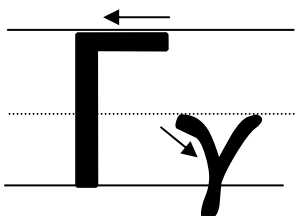


See and Hear

ΒΗΤΑ, βῆτα [labial—voiced] consonant

1. *Bēta* is a labial consonant. Its phoneme is pronounced by the closure of the lips and the vocal cords vibrate when pronouncing the phoneme. Its phoneme is as the **b** in “ball”. [more](#)
2. The upper case letter is identical to its English counterpart. The lower case letter looks similar to its upper case letter, except that it has a tail dropping below the base line. Begin the letter with an upward stroke below the line.
3. Β, β is transliterated as “B”, “b” into English.

3<sup>rd</sup> letter | *Gamma*



< gahm – ma >

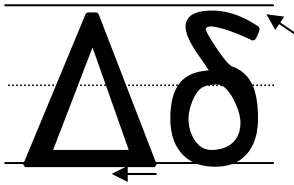


See and Hear

ΓΑΜΜΑ, γάμμα [palatal—voiced] consonant

1. *Gamma* is a palatal consonant, formed in the back of the throat by the closure of the tongue against the soft palate. Vocal cords vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **g** in “got”—never as the **g** in “gin”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter’s “tail” drops below the base line. The lower and upper case letters look very different from each other.
3. Γ, γ is transliterated as “G”, “g” into English.

4<sup>th</sup> letter | *Delta*



< dell – tah >

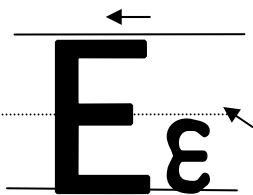


See and Hear

ΔΕΛΤΑ, δέλτα [dental—voiced] consonant

1. *Delta* is a dental consonant, formed with the tip of the tongue behind the upper teeth. The vocal cords vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **d** in “dog”.  
[more](#)
2. The lower and upper case letters look very different. Both case letters may be completed in a single stroke.
3. Δ, δ is transliterated as “D”, “d” into English.

5<sup>th</sup> letter | *Epsilon*



< eh – pseeh – lawn >

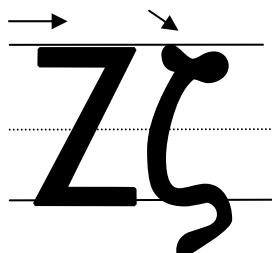


See and Hear

Ε ΨΙΛΟΝ, ἔ ψιλόν [short—voiced] vowel

1. *Epsilon* is a short vowel. It is always pronounced short. Its phoneme is as the **e** in “net”. The vowel is always short and is never pronounced like the English long **e** as in “equal”. Its corresponding long phoneme is *ēta* (HTA).
2. Be sure to differentiate between the lower case English “e” and the Greek “ε” when written.
3. Ε, ε is transliterated as “E”, “e” into English.

6<sup>th</sup> letter | *Zēta*



< zay – tah >

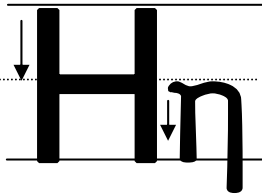


See and Hear

ΖΗΤΑ, ζήτα [compound—continuant] consonant

1. *Zēta* is a compound consonant. Its phoneme is a combination of δ + [unvoiced] σ, or δ + [voiced] σ. Respectively, its initial phoneme is as the **z** in “gaze”, and its medial phoneme as **dz** in “adz”.
2. The lower and upper case letters look different. The small letter’s “tail” curls and drops below the base line.
3. Ζ, ζ is transliterated as “Z”, “z” into English.

7<sup>th</sup> letter | *Ēta*



< ay – tah >

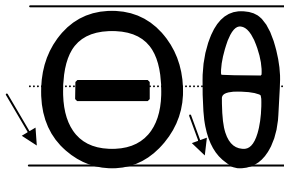


See and Hear

ΗΤΑ, ἤτα [long—voiced] vowel

1. *Ēta* is a long vowel. It is always pronounced long. Its phoneme is as **a** in “gate” or **e** in “obey”. Its corresponding short phoneme is *epsīlon*.
2. The lower case letter looks like an English “n”. However, it is pronounced very differently! The stroke ends below the base line.
3. Η, η is transliterated as “Ē”, “ē” into English. Always employ the macron mark above *ēta* to differentiate it from the short vowel *epsīlon*.

8<sup>th</sup> letter | *Thēta*



< thay – tah >

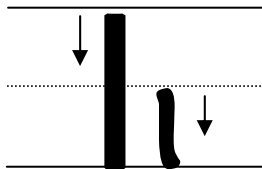


See and Hear

ΘΗΤΑ, θήτα [dental—aspirate] consonant

1. *Thēta* is a dental consonant, formed with the tip of the tongue behind the upper teeth, with its sound accompanied with a strong emission of breath. Its phoneme is as the **th** in “thing”—never as **th** in “this”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter may be written without lifting the pen.
3. Θ, θ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Th”, “th”.

9<sup>th</sup> letter | *Iōta*



< yi – oh – tah >

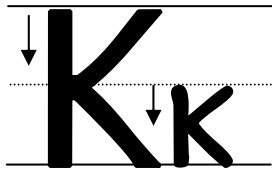


See and Hear

ΙΩΤΑ, ἰώτα [variable—voiced] vowel

1. *Iōta* is a variable vowel. Its phoneme may be pronounced long or short. If long, the phoneme is as **i** in “machine”; if short, as **i** in “hit”. *Iōta* is never pronounced like the English long “i” (*i.e.*, “kite”).
2. The lower case letter is never dotted as the English “i”.
3. Ι, ι is transliterated as “I”, “i” into English.

10<sup>th</sup> letter | *Kappa*



< kap – pah >

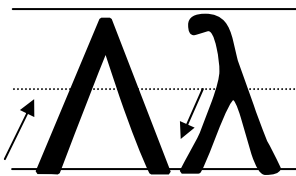


See and Hear

ΚΑΠΠΑ, κάππα [palatal—unvoiced] consonant

1. *Kappa* is a palatal consonant, formed in the back of the throat by the closure of the tongue against the soft palate. The vocal cords do not vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **k** in “kin”. [more](#)
2. Both case letters are formed like their English counterparts.
3. Κ, κ is transliterated as “K”, “k” into English.

11<sup>th</sup> letter | *Lambda*



< lahm – dah >

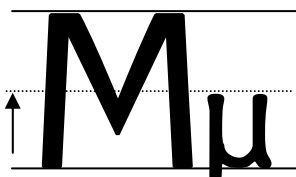


See and Hear

ΛΑΜΒΔΑ, λάμβδα [liquid—continuant] consonant

1. *Lambda* is a liquid consonant. Air is allowed to pass through the oral cavity while its phoneme is pronounced. Its phoneme is as the **l** in “lot”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter has a hook at the top that slants to the left. The upper case letter looks like *delta*, except that there is not a base line stroke.
3. Λ, λ is transliterated as “L”, “l” into English.

12<sup>th</sup> letter | *Mū*



< mew >

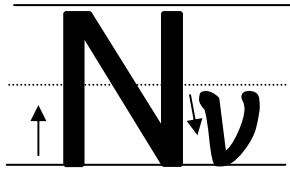


See and Hear

ΜΥ, μῦ [nasal labial—voiced continuant] consonant

1. *Mū* is a nasal labial consonant. Its phoneme is formed by the rounding of the lips, with most of the sound allowed to pass through the nasal cavity instead of the mouth. The vocal cords vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **m** in “man”. [more](#)
2. The lower and upper case letters look different. The lower case letter has a tail. Sufficient tail helps distinguish it from *upsilon*.
3. Μ, μ is transliterated as “M”, “m” into English.

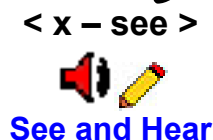
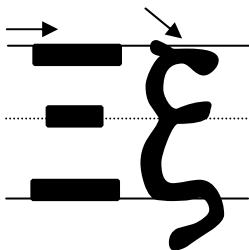
13<sup>th</sup> letter | *Nū*



NY, ν̂ [nasal dental—voiced continuant] consonant

1. *Nū* is a nasal dental continuant consonant. The tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge with its sound forced up through the nasal cavity while the air is not complete stopped. The vocal cords vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **n** in “new”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter must not be confused with the English letter “v”. *Nū* and *upsilon* are often confused. Write *nū* pointed at the bottom and turn the right upward stroke inward at the top.
3. N, ν is transliterated as “N”, “n” into English.

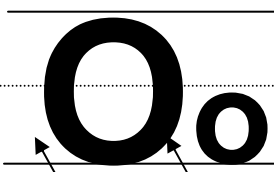
14<sup>th</sup> letter | *Xsī*



Ξ, ξ̂ [compound—unvoiced continuant] consonant

1. *Xsī* is a compound consonant. Its phoneme is a combination of κ + [unvoiced] σ. Its phoneme is approximate to **x** in “axe” or in “six”. [more](#)
2. The lower and upper case letters are very different. The lower case letter is distinctive with a curl stroke at the top and bottom.
3. Ξ, ξ is transliterated “Xs”, “xs” or “X”, “x” in English.

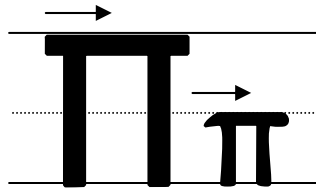
15<sup>th</sup> letter | *Omīkron*



Ο ΜΙΚΡΟΝ, ὀ μικρόν [short—voiced] vowel

1. *Omīkron* is a short vowel. It is always pronounced short. Its phoneme is as the **o** in “pot”. The corresponding long phoneme is *ōmega*.
2. Both case letters are written like their English counterparts. The alphabetical character’s name may be spelled as *omīkron* or *omīcron*.
3. Ο, ο is transliterated into English as “O”, “o”.

16<sup>th</sup> letter | *Pī*

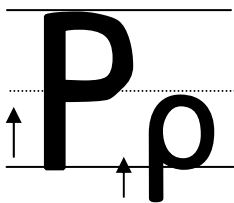


< pee >



See and Hear

17<sup>th</sup> letter | *Rhō*

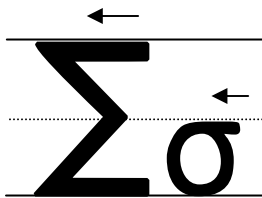


< hrow >



See and Hear

18<sup>th</sup> letter | *Sigma*



< sig – mah >



See and Hear

Π, π [labial—unvoiced] consonant

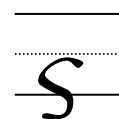
1. *Pī* is a labial consonant. The phoneme is formed by the closing the lips. The vocal cords do not vibrate. Its phoneme is as the **p** in “party”. [more](#)
2. Both lower and upper case letters are written with three strokes. The two support strokes may be written first, with the “shelf” stroke last.
3. Π, π is transliterated as “P”, “p” into English.

Ρ, ρ [liquid—continuant] consonant

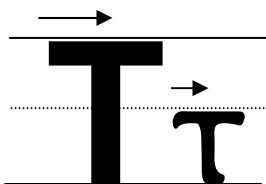
1. *Rhō* is a liquid consonant. Air is allowed to pass through the oral cavity while its phoneme is pronounced. Its phoneme is as the **r** in “red”. Whenever *rhō* begins a word, it is aspirated. As the spelling of its name indicates (*rhō*), a flow of breath accompanies the letter. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter has a tail that drops below the base line. Be careful! Do not confuse this letter with the English “p”.
3. Ρ, ρ is transliterated into English as “R”, “r”.

Σ, σ, ς [sibilant—continuant] consonant

1. *Sigma* is the only pure sibilant consonant. Its phoneme (unvoiced) is as the **s** in “sit” or as “is” (voiced). [more](#)
2. When *sigma* occurs as the final letter in a word, it is written as ς, otherwise, lower case is σ (*i.e.*, σεϊσμος). Final *sigma* is a printing convention and is not found in any ancient manuscripts.
3. Σ, σ, ς is transliterated into English as “S”, “s”.



19<sup>th</sup> letter | *Tau*



< tau >

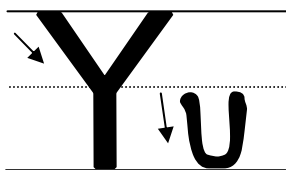


See and Hear

ΤΑΥ, ταῦ [dental—unvoiced] consonant

1. *Tau* is a dental consonant, formed with the tip of the tongue behind the upper teeth. Its phoneme is as the **t** in “talk”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter never has the top stroke below its top like the English “t”.
3. Τ, τ is transliterated into English as “T”, “t”.

20<sup>th</sup> letter | *Upsilon*



< ew – pseeh - lawn >

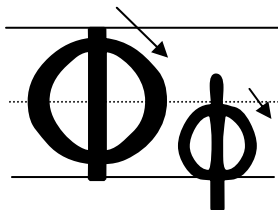


See and Hear

Υ ΨΙΛΟΝ, ὕ ψιλόν [variable—voiced] vowel

1. *Upsilon* is a variable vowel. Its phoneme may be pronounced long or short. If long, the phoneme is as the **u** in “lute”; if short **u** as in “put”. The phoneme is never pronounced as the English long “u” (*i.e.*, “use”).
2. *Upsilon* and *nū* may be confused when written. Form *upsilon* with a rounded bottom with the right upward stroke turned outward.
3. Υ, υ is transliterated into English as “Y”, “y”, or as “U”, “u” when α, ε, η, or ο precede *upsilon*.

21<sup>st</sup> letter | *Phi*



< fee >

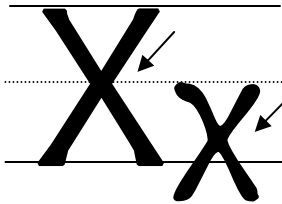


See and Hear

ΦΙ, φῖ [labial—aspirate] consonant

1. *Phi* is a labial aspirate consonant. Its phoneme is pronounced by the near closing of the lips and an emission of breath. Its phoneme is as the **ph** in “phone” or the **f** as in “fat”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter’s tail extends below the base line. The letter is often written as one stroke.
3. Φ, φ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Ph”, “ph”.

22<sup>nd</sup> letter | *Chī*



< khey >

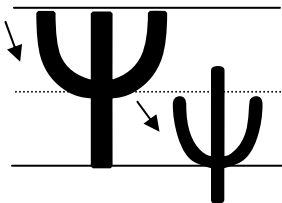


See and Hear

ΧΙ, χῖ [palatal—aspirate] consonant

1. *Chī* is a palatal aspirate consonant. It is formed in the throat by the closure of the tongue against the soft palate while allowing air to pass. Its phoneme is as the **ch** in “**chemist**”, or the **k** in “**kiosk**”. The phoneme may be easily confused with *kappa* unless it is remembered that the breath is not entirely cut off with *chī*. [more](#)
2. Χ, χ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Ch”, “ch”.

23<sup>rd</sup> letter | *Psī*



< psee >

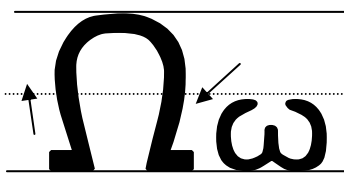


See and Hear

ΨΙ, ψῖ [compound—unvoiced continuant] consonant

1. *Psī* is a compound consonant. The phoneme is a combination of π + [unvoiced] σ. Initial phoneme is as the **ps** in “**psalms**”, and its medial or final phoneme is as the **ps** in “**lips**” or “**taps**”. [more](#)
2. The lower case letter’s stem drops below the base line.
3. Ψ, ψ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Ps”, “ps”.

24<sup>th</sup> letter | *Ōmega*



< oh – may – gah >



See and Hear

Ω ΜΕΓΑ, ὦ μέγα [long—voiced] vowel

1. *Ōmega* is a long vowel. Its phoneme is always pronounced long. Phoneme is as **o** in “**note**”.
2. Do not confuse the lower case letter with the English “w”.
2. Ω, ω is transliterated as “Ō”, “ō” into English. Always employ the macron mark above *ōmega* to differentiate it from the short vowel *omikron*.

**§1.1.1 Memorizing the Greek alphabet.** Many similarities exist between the Greek and English alphabetical letters. These similarities are in form and sound (phoneme). The Greek alphabetical order parallels the English for a while, then differs, and then begins to parallel again. It is recommended that the Greek alphabet be memorized in five groups of letters, each beginning with a familiar looking English corresponding vowel: α (*alpha*), ε (*epsilon*), ι (*iota*), ο (*omicron*), and υ (*upsilon*). These suggested groupings follow. [Listen](#)

Αα	Ββ	Γγ	Δδ		
Εε	Ζζ	Ηη	Θθ		
Ιι	Κκ	Λλ	Μμ	Νν	Ξξ
Οο	Ππ	Ρρ	Σσς	Ττ	
Υυ	Φφ	Χχ	Ψψ	Ωω	

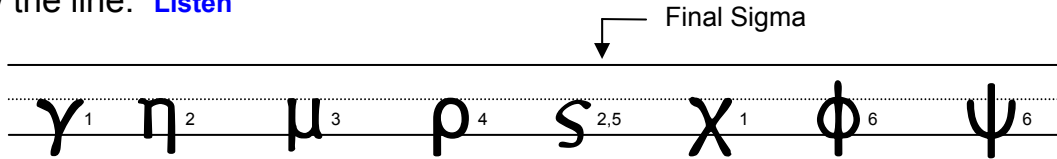
## §1.2 The Greek Small Letters

**§1.2.1** Eleven of the Greek lower case letters do not extend below the line, and are approximately as wide as they are high. The height of these lower case letters are one-half of the height of their corresponding upper case letters. [Listen](#)

α<sup>1</sup> ε ι<sup>2</sup> κ υ<sup>3,4</sup> ο<sup>5</sup> π σ<sup>5</sup> τ υ<sup>3</sup> ω

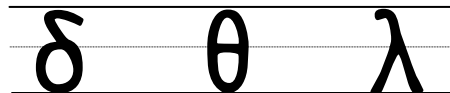
1. α (*alpha*) should be written as a figure 8 laid on its side and opened on the right, and not as the English “a”.
2. The ι (*iota*) is never dotted.
3. The letters ν (*nū*) and υ (*upsilon*) are easily confused. Write ν pointed at the bottom and turn the right upward stroke inward at the top; υ is written rounded at the bottom with the right straight upward stroke.
4. Ν, ν (*nū*) should not be confused with the English “v”. The English “v” has no Greek counterpart. Furthermore, never say “n” for ν.
5. There is another pair of letters other than ν and υ which may be confused except for a small, but a very important difference: *omicron* (ο) and *sigma* (σ). Notice that *sigma* wears a “hat” whereas *omicron* does not.

**§1.2.2** Eight Greek lower case letters rest on the line and extend below it, and are as high as those in §1.2.1. None of their corresponding upper case letters drop below the line. [Listen](#)

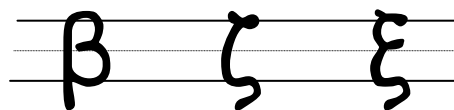


1. Both γ (*gamma*) and χ (*chi*) may be written crossing the line.
2. η (*ēta*) and σ (*final sigma*) are not usually made to extend as far below the line as the others in this group.
3. A sufficient stem on μ (*mū*) distinguishes it from υ (*upsilon*). Notice these distinctions in the following word pairs: κόσμου - κόσμον, τύπου - τύπον.
4. Ρ, ρ (*rhō*) must not be confused with “P/p” in English, nor ω (*ōmega*) with the English “w”.
5. There is one *sigma* with two forms. It is written σ at the beginning or in the middle of a word, and ς at the end. Examples: σός, νόσος, σεισμός.
6. The stems of φ (*phī*) and ψ (*psī*) extend above the middle line.

**§1.2.3** Three of the Greek lower case letters rest on the line, but are twice as high as in §1.2.1 above. These letters are *delta*, *thēta*, and *lambda*. These lower case letters’ height corresponds to their upper case letters. [Listen](#)



**§1.2.4** Three of the lower case letters extend above and below the line. These letters are *bēta*, *zēta*, and *ksi*. [Listen](#)



Below are all of the lower case letters in their alphabetical order. This may prove helpful, because it illustrates their respective height when written together.

[Listen](#) α β γ δ ε ζ η θ ι κ λ μ ν ξ ο π ρ σ τ υ φ χ ψ ω

### §1.3 The Greek Capital Letters

All of the capital letters are of uniform height and rest on the base line. They should be learned in conjunction with their corresponding small letters.

When practicing, aim at simplicity, clarity, and ease of recognition. Use the animated examples [on-line](#) or those given below to learn how to form the characters. Every student will develop their own writing style, and slight variations from the printed forms below will not generally cause confusion.

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι

Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π

Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω

**§1.3.1** Nine capital letters do not correspond to their small letters. These capital letters are Γ, Δ, Ζ, Η, Λ, Ξ, Σ, Υ and Ω. Special attention to these upper case letters are required in order to associate them with their lower case letters.

Γ γ Δ δ Ζ ζ Η η Λ λ

Ξ ξ Σ σς Υ υ Ω ω

The chart in the next section summarizes and highlights what has been presented thus far for all the Greek letters, which will be helpful as a review. The alphabetical letter names of the three variable vowels, *alpha*, *iōta*, and *upsilon* should be pronounced long when reciting the alphabet.

## §1.4 The Greek Alphabet Charted

The capital and small letters appear in the first column, with their Greek and English spellings in the second and third columns, respectively. Breathing marks and accents have been included where appropriate (these will be introduced in Lesson Five). The fourth column gives an English approximate pronunciation of the Greek letter, and its phonetic value in the fifth column. The sixth column illustrates the English equivalent (transliteration) to the Greek letter.

Letter	Greek	English	Sounds As	Phonetic	Trsl.
A α	ἄλφα	āphā	ahl-fah	a in father (long) a in dad (short)	a
B β	βῆτα	bētā	bay-tah	b in ball	b
Γ γ	γάμμα	gāmmā	gahm-mah	g in got	g
Δ δ	δέλτα	dēltā	dell-tah	d in dog	d
E ε	ἒ ψιλόν	ēpsilōn	eh-pseeh-lawn	e in net	e
Z ζ	ζῆτα	zētā	zay-tah	dz in adz (initial) z in gaze (medial)	z
H η	ἦτα	ētā	ay-tah	e in obey	ē
Θ θ	θῆτα	thētā	thay-tah	th in this	th
I ι	ἰῶτα	iōtā	yi-oh-tah	i in machine (long) i in hit (short)	i
K κ	κάππα	kāppā	kap-pah	k in kin	k
Λ λ	λάμβδα	lāmbdā	lahm-dah	l in lot	l
M μ	μῦ	mū	mew	m in man	m
N ν	νῦ	nū	new	n in new	n
Ξ ξ	ξῖ	xsī	x-see	x in axe	x
O ο	ὀ μικρόν	ōmīkron	au-me-krahn	ough in ought	o
Π π	πί	pī	peeh	p in party	p
P ρ	ῥῶ	rhō	hrow	r in ride rh in rhino (aspirate)	r
Σ σ ς	σίγμα	sīgmā	sig-mah	s in sit (unvoiced) s in is (voiced)	s
T τ	ταῦ	tau	tau	t in talk	t

Letter	Greek	English	Sounds As	Phonetic	Trsl.
Υ υ	ὕ ψιλόν	ūps̄ilon	ew-pseeh-lawn	u in lute (long) u in put (short)	y, u
Φ φ	φῖ	phī	fee	ph in phone	ph
Χ χ	χῖ	chī	khey	ch in chemist	ch
Ψ ψ	ψῖ	psī	psee	ps in psalm (initial) ps in lips (medial)	ps
Ω ω	ὦ μέγα	ō mēgā	oh-may-gah	o in note	ō

### §1.5 Further Information

The word *alphabet* (ἄλφάβητος from ἄλφα + βῆτα) is derived from the first two letters of the twenty-four Greek letters commonly used by the Greeks. The consonants employed in the Greek alphabet are for the most part adapted from the Phoenician alphabet.

Originally the Greek alphabet had several other letters, but they dropped out of use before the New Testament era. However, their continued influence is still felt, especially in Greek verbs. In addition, the Greeks added five other letters that were not part of the Phoenician alphabet (υ, φ, χ, ψ and ω, which are the last five letters of the Greek alphabet).

The Greek alphabetical letters did double duty, serving also as numbers. For example, First John was written as Ἰωαννου Α' (A = first letter in the alphabet), Second John was Ἰωαννου Β' (B = second letter in the alphabet), and Third John was Ἰωαννου Γ' (Γ = third letter in the alphabet).

A near full size reproduction of Acts 1:1-5 from Codex Vaticanus is below. Codex Vaticanus is a fourth-century Greek text. In the first column is the Codex Vaticanus. The second column displays the passage transcribed into a modern (SPlonic) type. How many of the letters can you recognize?

Notice how some of the capital letters (or uncials) are differently formed. In this particular Codex, *sigma* is formed like the English "C". Also notice the lack of word divisions (!) and the complete absence of accents and breathing marks, and an almost lack of punctuation. There are even some abbreviations used. For example, Ἰησους ("Jesus") is abbreviated as ΙΣ̄ in line four.

ΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ  
ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΜΗΝ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΝΤΩ  
ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΩΝ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ  
ἸΣΤΟΙΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΕΙ  
ΑΧΡΗΣΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΕΝΤΕΙΛΑ  
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙΣ  
ΔΙΑ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΟΥΣ  
ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ ΑΝΕΛΗΜΦΘΗ  
ΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΕΣΤΗΣΕΝ ΕΝ ΑΥ  
ΤΟΝ ΖΩΝΤΑ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΟ ΠΑ  
ΘΕΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΝ ΠΟΛΛΟΙΣ  
ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΟΙΣ ΔΙΗΜΕΡΩΝ  
ΤΕΣΣΕΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ ΟΠΤΑΝΟ  
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΩ  
ΤΑ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΥ·  
ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΑΛΙΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΠΑ  
ΡΗΓΓΕΙΛΕΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟ  
ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ ΜΗ ΧΩΡΙ  
ΖΕΣΘΑΙ ΑΛΛΑ ΠΕΡΙΜΕΝΕΙ  
ΤΗΝ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ  
ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΝ ΗΚΟΥΣΑΤΕ ἵ  
ΟΤΙ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΜΕΝ ΕΒΑΠΤΙ  
ΣΕΝ ὙΔΑΤΙ ὙΜΕΙΣ ΔΕ ΕΝ  
ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΒΑΠΤΙΣΘΗΣΕ  
ΣΘΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΟΥ ΜΕΤΑ ΠΟΛΛΑΣ  
ΤΑΥΤΑΣ ΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΟΙ ΜΕΝ

ΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ  
ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΜΗΝ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΝΤΩ  
ΩΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΩΝ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ  
ἸΣΤΟΙΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΕΙ  
ΑΧΡΗΣΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΕΝΤΕΙΛΑ  
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙΣ  
ΔΙΑ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΟΥΣ  
ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ ΑΝΕΛΗΜΦΘΗ  
ΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΕΣΤΗΣΕΝ ΕΝ ΑΥ  
ΤΟΝ ΖΩΝΤΑ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΟ ΠΑ  
ΘΕΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΝ ΠΟΛΛΟΙΣ  
ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΟΙΣ ΔΙΗΜΕΡΩΝ  
ΤΕΣΣΕΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ ΟΠΤΑΝΟ  
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΩ  
ΤΑ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΥ·  
ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΑΛΙΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΠΑ  
ΡΗΓΓΕΙΛΕΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟ  
ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ ΜΗ ΧΩΡΙ  
ΖΕΣΘΑΙ ΑΛΛΑ ΠΕΡΙΜΕΝΕΙ  
ΤΗΝ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ  
ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΝ ΗΚΟΥΣΑΤΕ  
ΟΤΙ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΜΕΝ ΕΒΑΠΤΙ  
ΣΕΝ ὙΔΑΤΙ ὙΜΕΙΣ ΔΕ ΕΝ  
ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΒΑΠΤΙΣΘΗΣΕ  
ΣΘΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΟΥ ΜΕΤΑ ΠΟΛΛΑΣ  
ΤΑΥΤΑΣ ΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΟΙ ΜΕΝ

# 1

## STUDY GUIDE

### Sight and Sounds of the Greek Letters (Module A)

#### The Letters and Pronunciation of the Greek Alphabet

#### Phonology (Part 1)

The goal of this lesson is to learn to say and write the Greek letters. First practice writing the small letters (lower case letters) with the guide given below, pronouncing each letter every time you write it. If you need added help in forming these Greek letters, an [on-line](#) animated tutorial is available. In Exercise 2, you will practice writing the capitals.

#### Exercise 1: Practice forming the Greek small letters

α α α α α

β β β β β

γ γ γ γ γ

δ δ δ δ δ

ε ε ε ε ε

ζ ζ ζ ζ ζ

η η η η η

θ θ θ θ θ

ι ι ι ι ι ι

κ κ κ κ κ

λ λ λ λ λ

μ μ μ μ μ

ν ν ν ν ν

ξ ξ ξ ξ ξ

ο ο ο ο ο

π π π π π

ρ ρ ρ ρ ρ

σ σ σ σ σ

Σ Σ Σ Σ Σ  
↑ Final Sigma

Τ Τ Τ Τ Τ

Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ

Φ Φ Φ Φ Φ

Χ Χ Χ Χ Χ

Ψ Ψ Ψ Ψ Ψ

Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

**Exercise 2: Practice associating the Greek small and capital letters**

Practice writing all the capital letters (upper case letters) with their matching small letters in their alphabetical order. This is very important that you do this. As always, pronounce each letter as you write it. Write and say these letters until you can do so with ease. Do not proceed until you can!

Α α Α α Α α

Β β Β β Β β

Γ γ Γ γ Γ γ

Δ δ Δ δ Δ δ

Ε ε Ε ε Ε ε

Ζ ζ Ζ ζ Ζ ζ

Η η Η η Η η

Θ θ Θ θ Θ θ

Ι ι Ι ι Ι ι

Κ κ Κ κ Κ κ

Λ λ Λ λ Λ λ

Μ μ Μ μ Μ μ

Ν ν Ν ν Ν ν

Ξ ξ Ξ ξ Ξ ξ

Ο ο Ο ο Ο ο

Π π Π π Π π

Ρ ρ Ρ ρ Ρ ρ

Σ σς Σ σς Σ σς

↑ Final Sigma

Τ τ Τ τ Τ τ

Υ υ Υ υ Υ υ

Φ φ Φ φ Φ φ

Χ χ Χ χ Χ χ

Ψ ψ Ψ ψ Ψ ψ

Ω ω Ω ω Ω ω

**Exercise 3: Writing the Greek alphabetical letters from memory**

Write both capital and small letters of the Greek alphabet from memory. Write the capital letters on the left side of the column and the small letters on the right side.

Capital	Small	Capital	Small	Capital	Small
1.		9.		17.	
2.		10.		18.	
3.		11.		19.	
4.		12.		20.	
5.		13.		21.	
6.		14.		22.	
7.		15.		23.	
8.		16.		24.	

**Exercise 4: Fill in the blank with the correct answer**

1. How many letters are there in the Greek alphabet? \_\_\_\_\_
2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ vowels and \_\_\_\_\_ consonants in the Greek alphabet.
3. Eleven Greek small letters do not extend below the line when writing them, and are approximately as wide as they are high. These letters are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Eight Greek small letters rest on the line and extend below it when writing them. These letters are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Three Greek small letters extend slightly above and below the line. What ones are they? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

6. All the Greek capital letters are of \_\_\_\_\_ height and \_\_\_\_\_ on the base line.
7. Vowels are the basic sound in speech, made by vibrating the \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Exercise 5: True or False Questions**

1. When pronouncing the vowels, all of them are voiced. True False
2. When pronouncing the consonants, all of them are voiced. True False
3. Modern Greek is spoken today like Reconstructed New Testament Greek. True False.
4. Desiderius Erasmus was a pharmacist in the early 1800s. True False
5. The twenty-four Greek alphabetical characters represent twenty-four different phonemes in Erasmian Greek pronunciation. True False
6. English is spoken identically in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. True False
7. Modern Greek is not pronounced any differently today than when the Apostle Paul spoke it in the First Century A.D. True False

**Exercise 6: Practice saying your “AB Γs”** [Listen](#)

Αα Ββ Γγ Δδ Εε Ζζ Ηη Θθ

Ιι Κκ Λλ Μμ Νν Ξξ Οο Ππ

Ρρ Σσς Ττ Υυ Φφ Χχ Ψψ Ωω