

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

Learning to write the Greek letters and how to pronounce them is introduced in this lesson. Mastering the sight and sounds of the alphabet lays the cornerstone for learning the sight and sounds of Greek words in all subsequent lessons. Your first step toward learning NTGreek is to memorize the Greek alphabetical characters and the order in which they occur in the alphabet. You are sowing the seed for future failure if you do not thoroughly learn them!

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, correctly to write both the small and capital letters, and the proper pronunciation of each alphabetical character. 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. Two major types of speech sounds constitute the Greek alphabet as with the English alphabet. The open sounds with “free” breath are the vowel letters, and 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 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 fō nēm. The twenty-four Greek alphabetical characters represent twenty-four different phonemes.

“pat” and “bat” have different meanings because the two consonant 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” but not with “p”.

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

This lesson introduces each Greek alphabetical character’s phoneme, as well as the pronunciation of each Greek alphabetical letter.

1.1 The Greek Alphabet

The approach in learning the Greek alphabet is first by seeing the individual capital and small letter, then correctly pronouncing and correctly writing them 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).

The suggested procedure for learning the alphabet is straightforward. Use the provided practice Greek alphabet practice pages on pages 1-19 through 1-24. Proper penmanship while learning to write the Greek letters is an essential step in learning Greek. Possible confusion between the letters is avoided from the start if bad habits are not learned!

Next, use the animated tutorial link below each Greek alphabetical letter to learn how properly to form the character and how its phoneme and alphabetical character 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 β, and β is pronounced as the first letter in its alphabetical name, βῆτα (*bēta*). Knowing how to pronounce the character's alphabetical name, therefore, 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 its initial 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. Beginning on page 1-5, the order does not reflect these separate categories, but rather the Greek letters' proper alphabetical order.

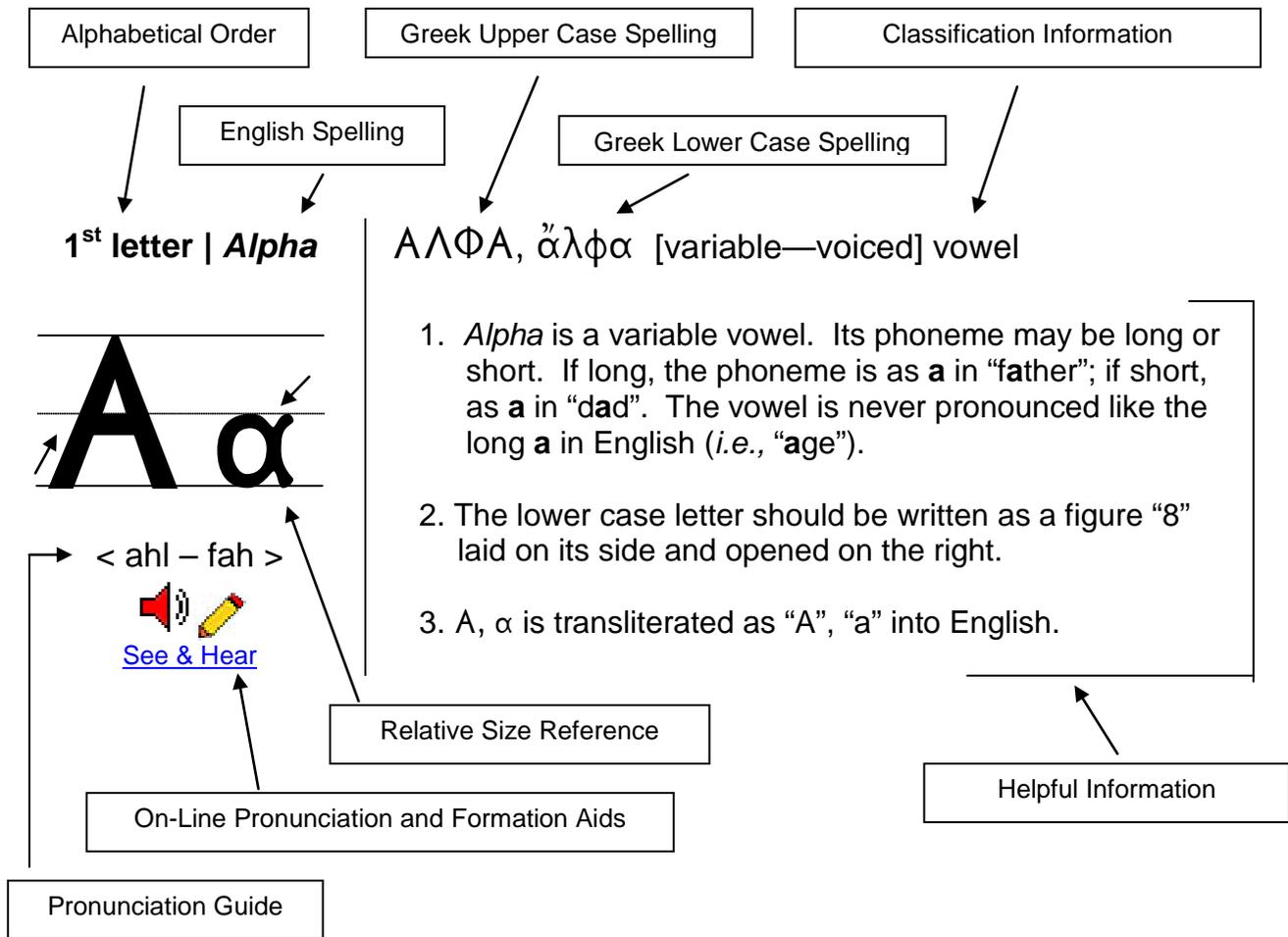
Moreover, each of the twenty-four Greek letters is represented by two forms. The first letter illustrates the capital letter (or upper case), and then its corresponding small letter (or lower case) follows. The capital letters should be studied along with their matching small letters. The letters should 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—if at all possible—a Greek letter should be written so that the final stroke ends to the furthest right where the next letter's stroke begins.

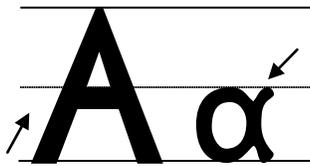
The Greek names for the lower case letters are spelled on the following pages with accompanying accents and breathing marks. Whereas these are for future

reference they may be disregarded for the time being. You will begin to learn their importance in Lesson Five.

The text boxes in the example below call attention to the reason each piece of information concerning a Greek alphabetical letter is cited. Each alphabetical letter will follow the same pattern.



1st letter | *Alpha*



< ahl – fah >

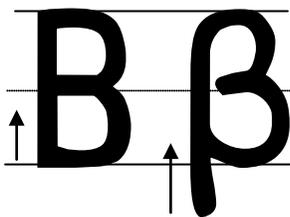


[See & Hear](#)

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.

2nd letter | *Bēta*



< bay – tah >

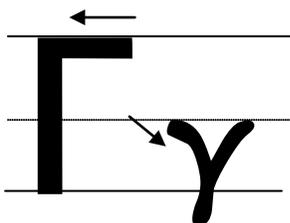


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

3rd letter | *Gamma*



< gahm – ma >

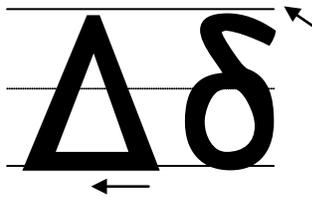


[See & Hear](#)

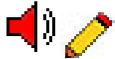
ΓΑΜΜΑ, γάμμα [palatal—voiced] consonant

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”.
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.

4th letter | *Delta*



< dell – tah >

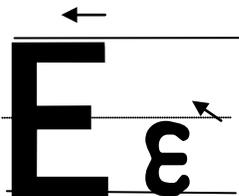


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

5th letter | *Epsilon*



< eh – pseeh – lawn >

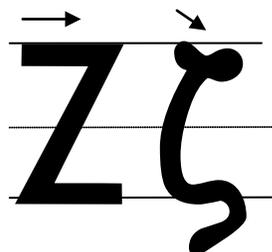


[See & Hear](#)

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. E, ε is transliterated as “E”, “e” into English.

6th letter | *Zēta*



< zay – tah >

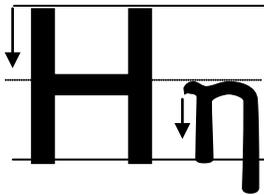


[See & Hear](#)

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. Z, ζ is transliterated as “Z”, “z” into English.

7th letter | *Ēta*



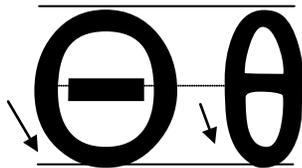
< ay – tah >



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 *epsilon*.
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 *epsilon*.

8th letter | *Thēta*



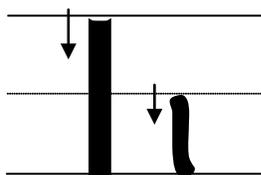
< thay – tah >



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”.
2. The lower case letter may be written without lifting the pen.
3. Θ, θ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Th”, “th”.

9th letter | *Iōta*



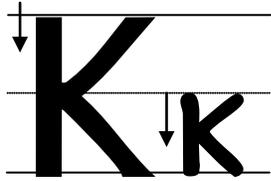
< yi – oh - tah >



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.

10th letter | *Kappa*



< kap – pah >

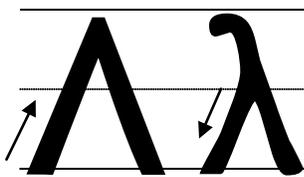


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
2. Both case letters are formed like their English counterparts.
3. Κ, κ is transliterated as “K”, “k” into English.

11th letter | *Lambda*



< lahm – dah >

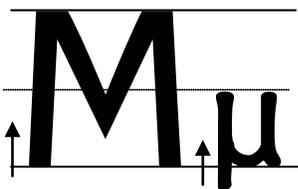


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

12th letter | *Mū*



< mew >

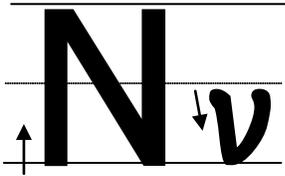


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

13th letter | *Nū*



< new >

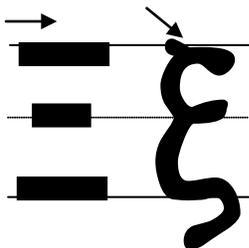


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

14th letter | *Xsī*



< x – see >

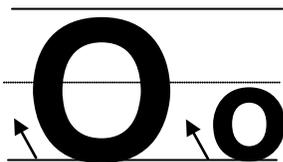


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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.

15th letter | *Omīkron*



< au – me – krahn >

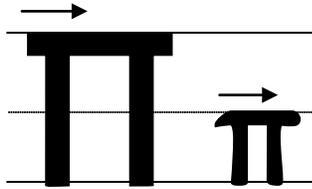


[See & Hear](#)

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. O, ο is transliterated into English as “O”, “o”.

16th letter | *Pī*



< pee >

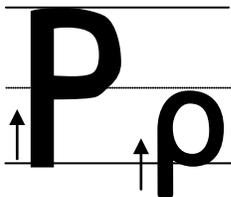


[See & Hear](#)

Π, π̂ [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”.
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.

17th letter | *Rhō*



< hrow >

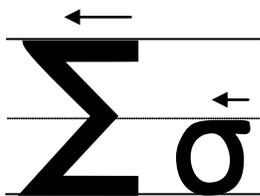


[See & Hear](#)

Ρ, ρ̂ [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.
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”.

18th letter | *Sigma*



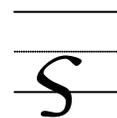
< sig – mah >



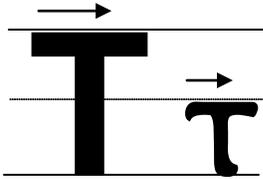
[See & Hear](#)

ΣΙΓΜΑ, σίγμα [sibilant—continuant] consonant

1. *Sigma* is the only pure sibilant consonant. Its phoneme (unvoiced) is as the **s** in “sit” or as “is” (voiced).
2. When *sigma* occurs as the final letter in a word, it is written as ς, otherwise, lower case is σ (*i.e.*, σεισμος). 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”.



19th letter | *Tau*



< tau >

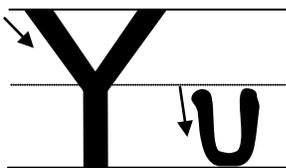


[See & Hear](#)

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”.
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”.

20th letter | *Upsilon*



< ew – pseeh - lawn >

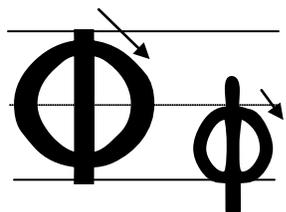


[See & Hear](#)

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*.

21st letter | *Phi*



< fee >

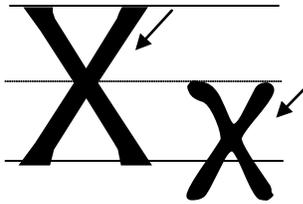


[See & Hear](#)

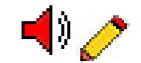
ΦΙ, φῖ [labial—aspirate] consonant

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”.
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”.

22nd letter | *Chī*



< khey >

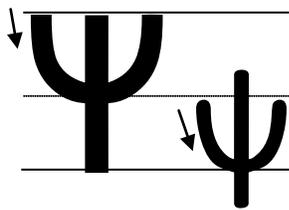


[See & Hear](#)

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*.
2. Χ, χ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Ch”, “ch”.

23rd letter | *Psī*



< psee >

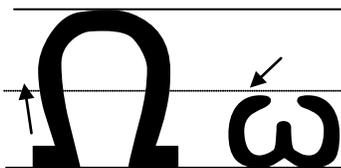


[See & Hear](#)

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**”.
2. The lower case letter’s stem drops below the base line.
3. Ψ, ψ is transliterated by two consonants into English, “Ps”, “ps”.

24th letter | *Ōmega*



< oh – may – gah >



[See & 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. Similarities exist between the Greek and English alphabetical letters. These similarities exist in form (orthography) 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.

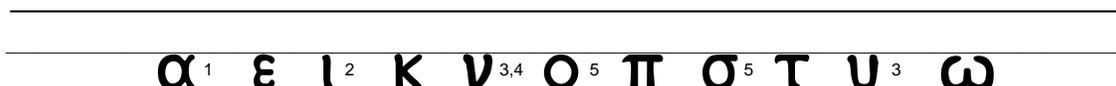
[Listen to the Greek Alphabet](#)

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 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 to these eleven letters](#)

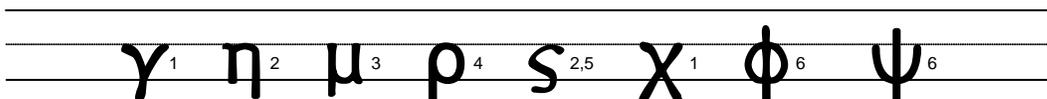


1. α (*alpha*) should be written as a figure 8 laid on its side and opened on the right, and not as the English “a”.
2. The ι (*iota*) is never dotted.
3. The letters ν (*nu*) and υ (*upsilon*) are easily confused. Write ν pointed at the bottom and turn the right upward stroke inward at the top; υ is written rounded at the bottom with the right straight upward stroke.
4. Ν, ν (*nu*) 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: *omikron* (\omicron) and *sigma* (σ). Notice that *sigma* wears a "hat" whereas *omikron* 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.

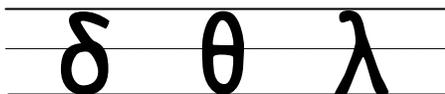
[Listen to these eight letters](#)



1. Both γ (*gamma*) and χ (*chi*) may be written crossing the line.
2. η (*eta*) 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 (*mu*) distinguishes it from υ (*upsilon*). Notice these distinctions in the following word pairs: κόσμου - κόσμον, τύπου - τύπον.
4. ρ , ρ (*rho*) must not be confused with "P/p" in English, nor ω (*omega*) 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 (*phi*) and ψ (*psi*) 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*, *theta*, and *lambda*. These lower case letters' height corresponds to their upper case letters.

[Listen to these three letters](#)



1.2.4 Three of the lower case letters extend above and below the line. These letters are *beta*, *zeta*, and *xi*.

[Listen to these three letters](#)



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 Greek Capital Letters [Listen](#)

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



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.

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.

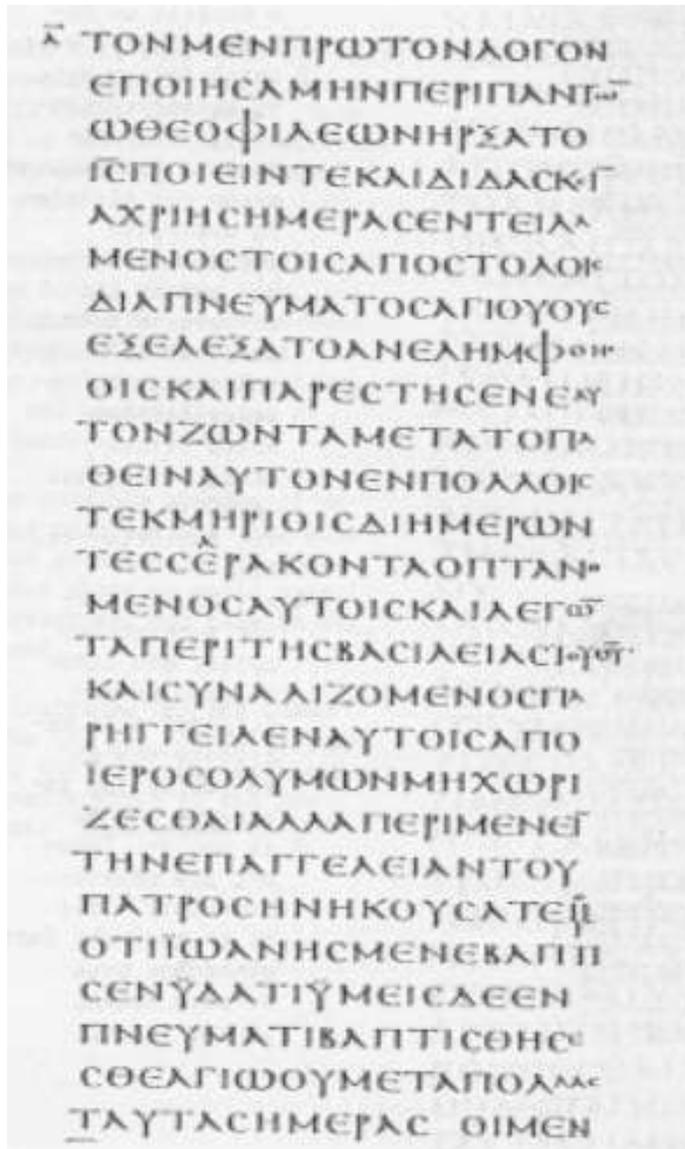
Originally the Greek alphabet had several other letters, but they dropped out of use before the New Testament era. However, their continued influence is still felt, especially in Greek verbs. In addition, the Greeks added five other letters that were not part of the Phoenician alphabet (υ, φ, χ, ψ and 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 Ἰωάννου Α' (A = first letter in the alphabet), Second John was Ἰωάννου Β' (B = second letter in the alphabet), and Third John was Ἰωάννου Γ' (Γ = third letter in the alphabet).

Letter	Greek	English	Sounds As	Phonetic	Trsl.
Α α	ἄλφα	āphā	ahl-fah	a in father (long) a in dad (short)	a
Β 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
Ε ε	ἒ ψιλόν	ēpsīlōn	eh-pseeh-lawn	e in net	e
Ζ ζ	ζῆτα	zētā	zay-tah	z in gaze (initial) dz in adz (medial)	z
Η η	ἦτα	ētā	ay-tah	e in obey	ē
Θ θ	θῆτα	thētā	thay-tah	th in this	th
Ι ι	ἰῶτα	iōtā	yi-oh-tah	i in machine (long) i in hit (short)	i
Κ κ	κάππα	kāppā	kap-pah	k in kin	k
Λ λ	λάμβδα	lāmbdā	lahm-dah	l in lot	l
Μ μ	μῦ	mū	mew	m in man	m
Ν ν	νῦ	nū	new	n in new	n
Ξ ξ	ξῖ	xsī	x-see	x in axe	x
Ο ο	ὀ μικρόν	ōmīkron	au-me-krahn	ough in ought	o
Π π	πί	pī	peeh	p in party	p
Ρ 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
Τ τ	ταῦ	tau	tau	t in talk	t
Υ υ	ῦ ψιλόν	ūpsīlon	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

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?



ΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ
ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑ ΜΗΝ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΝΤΩ
ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕ ΩΝ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ
ΙΣΤΟΙΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΕΙ
ΑΧΡΙ Η ΣΗΜΕΡΑ ΣΕΝ ΤΕΙΛΑ
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙΣ
ΔΙΑ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΟΥΣ
ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ ΑΝΕΛΗΜΦΘΗ
ΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΕΣΤΗΣΕΝ ΕΑΥ
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 ΥΔΑΤΙ ΥΜΕΙΣ ΔΕ ΕΝ
ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΒΑΠΤΙΣΘΗΣΕ
ΣΘΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΟΥ ΜΕΤΑ ΠΟΛΛΑΣ
ΤΑΥΤΑΣ ΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΟΙΜΕΝ

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

β β β β

γ γ γ γ

δ δ δ δ

ε ε ε ε

ζ ζ ζ ζ

η η η η

θ θ θ θ

ι ι ι ι

κ κ κ κ

λ λ λ λ

μ μ μ μ

ν ν ν ν

ξ ξ ξ ξ

ο ο ο ο

π π π π

ρ ρ ρ ρ

ο ο ο ο

ς ς ς ς

↑ Final Sigma

τ τ τ τ

υ υ υ υ

φ φ φ φ

χ χ χ χ

ψ ψ ψ ψ

ω ω ω ω

Exercise 2: Practice associating the Greek small and capital letters

Practice writing all the capital letters with their matching small letters in their alphabetical order. This is very important that you do this. Acquire the habit to 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

Β β Β β

Γ γ Γ γ

Δ δ Δ δ

Ε ε Ε ε

Ζ ζ Ζ ζ

Η η Η η

Θ θ Θ θ

Ι ι Ι ι

Κ κ Κ κ

Λ λ Λ λ

Μ μ Μ μ

Ν ν Ν ν

Ξ ξ Ξ ξ

Ο ο Ο ο

Π π Π π

Ρ ρ Ρ ρ

Σ σ ς Σ σ ς

Τ τ Τ τ

Υ υ Υ υ

Φ φ Φ φ

Χ χ Χ χ

Ψ ψ Ψ ψ

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 _____.

- All the Greek capital letters are of _____ height and _____ on the base line.
- Vowels are the basic sound in speech, made by vibrating the _____ .

Exercise 5: True or False Questions

- When pronouncing the vowels, all of them are voiced. True False
- When pronouncing the consonants, all of them are voiced. True False
- Modern Greek is spoken today like Reconstructed New Testament Greek. True False.
- Desiderius Erasmus was a pharmacist in the early 1800s. True False
- The twenty-four Greek alphabetical characters represent twenty-four different phonemes in Erasmian Greek pronunciation. True False
- English is spoken identically in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. True False
- 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 “ΑΒ Γs”

[Listen to the Greek Alphabet](#)

Αα Ββ Γγ Δδ Εε Ζζ Ηη Θθ

Ιι Κκ Λλ Μμ Νν Ξξ Οο Ππ

Ρρ Σσς Ττ Υυ Φφ Χχ Ψψ Ωω

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.

