

3

Sight and Sounds of Greek Words (Module A)

Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs
Phonology (Part 3)

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3.0 Introduction

Lesson Three continues the building blocks for learning Greek phonics by ordered combinations of syllables. Phonics is the study between letter-to-sound relationships in a language as a written musical note is to its instrument's sound.

Learning Greek phonetics trains the ear to hear the language. The approach to Greek phonics will not be entirely inductive or deductive, but a combination of both. This lesson includes the pronunciation of all Greek consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. The combination of these letters is blended into sounds to form single and multi-syllable Greek sounds.

Greek phonics prepares to read competently the Greek New Testament. Knowledge of the phonetic value is important to understand morphological changes in words in later lessons. Whereas these introductory lessons will not make one a linguist, they lay the basis to understand Greek phonics.

The Erasmic Greek pronunciation system is largely phonemic. Each phoneme or combinations of phonemes are represented by only one letter or combination of letters. If a Greek word is pronounced correctly, it can be spelled correctly. This system is not foolproof, however, because there are exceptions. These exceptions will be discussed in later lessons.

The foundation for Greek phonics was laid by learning the individual alphabetical sounds. Their likenesses and differences are now examined when blended, beginning with single syllable words and progressing to multi-syllable words.

3.1 Ten Phonetical Equivalent Consonants

Lesson Two began with ten Greek and English orthographic similar letters, which includes both vowels and consonants (§2.1).

English:	a	b	d	e	i	k	o	s	t	u
Greek:	α	β	δ	ε	ι	κ	ο	ς	τ	υ

There are also ten Greek phonetical equivalent consonants to ten English consonants. Although some orthographic similarities exist between these two groups, they are not identical.

The ten Greek consonants below share phonetic correspondence with ten English consonants. However, six of the ten Greek consonants underlined below have a different form than English, although they have the same phonetic sound.

Greek:	β	γ	δ	κ	<u>λ</u>	<u>μ</u>	<u>ν</u>	<u>π</u>	<u>σ/ς</u>	τ
English:	b	g	d	k	l	m	n	p	s	t

These Greek consonants are the easiest to learn first because of their phonetic correlation with English consonants.

The phonetic value of each consonant, vowel, or diphthong is clearly articulated while pronouncing a syllable. The differing combinations are phonetically pronounced in a blending manner just as in English. Unlike English, however, there are not any silent letters (*i.e.*, the “k” in “knot”, or the “d” in “Wednesday”) in the Erasmic pronunciation system. Therefore, if a Greek word is phonetically pronounced, then it can be correctly spelled. This will prove a great asset in subsequent lessons while learning vocabulary words.

It is easier to learn these ten consonants if they are practiced within syllables. Just as in English syllables, Greek syllables require a vowel sound. Two Greek short vowels will be used, *epsilon* and *omikron*. All examples are single syllables and familiar English words accompany the Greek consonants and vowel sounds.

3.1.1 Ten Consonants with *Epsilon*

[Listen](#)

βεγ, σετ, λεγ, μεν, Κεντ, δελ, δεν, κελπ

[Listen](#)

κεμπ, στεπ, στεπς, δεσκ, πετ, πεπ, βετ

[Listen](#)

κεπτ, σπεκ, τεν, τεντ, βεντ, ενδ, πεν

[Listen](#)

σεντ, δεντ, λετ, τελ, μελτ, μελδ, σενδ

[Listen](#)

πελτ, γετ, κεμπ, Βεν, βελ, βελτ, μενδ

3.1.2 Ten Consonants with *Omicron*

[Listen](#)

δογ, λοβ, ποπ, σοδ, δοτ, πονδ, Βοβ

[Listen](#)

ποτ, τοπ, νοτ, λοτ, σοπ, Τοδ, οδ

[Listen](#)

στοπ, Γοδ, βλοβ, τοπς, μοβ, λογ

[Listen](#)

λοπ, λoστ, τον, μογ, ον, μοπ

3.2 The Seven Vowels

There are two major categories of speech sounds in language, vowels and consonants. The open sounds with free breath are vowels and the closed sounds are consonants.

When a person says “ah” for the doctor, an open sound is made with free passage of breath. This open and breathy sound is a vowel. The open quality of vowels distinguishes them from consonants. Consonants are made with the breath totally or partly checked. This hindering of sound is done by the tongue, teeth, lips, and restriction of the throat.

The vowel sounds in Greek are alphabetically represented below.

[Listen](#)

Α α, Ε ε, Η η, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ, Ω ω

Two of these vowels are always pronounced long, two short, and three may be either long or short. These latter vowels are called **variable vowels** due to their phonetic dual nature. All seven vowels may be charted and compared together as below.

Always long: Η η, Ω ω

Always short: Ε ε, Ο ο

Variable: Α α, Ι ι, Υ υ

Similarly, these vowels may be horizontally charted:

Short:	Ε ε	Ο ο	Α α	Ι ι	Υ υ
Long:	Η η	Ω ω	Α α	Ι ι	Υ υ

Ēta is the long form for *epsilon*, and *ōmega* for *omikron*. There are not any distinct Greek letters to differentiate between the variable short and long forms

for *alpha*, *iōta*, and *upsilon*. There is a distinct phonetic sound, however, between the long and short sounds for *alpha*, *iōta*, and *upsilon*.

In a different manner, these same seven vowels may be also charted vertically:

Always Short	Always Long	Variable (short or long)	
Ε ε	Η η	Α α	Α α
Ο ο	Ω ω	Ι ι	Ι ι
		Υ υ	Υ υ

3.2.1 Open and Close Vowels

The Greek vowels are classified as “open” or “close.”

If the mouth is relatively open and the throat muscles relaxed while making the vowel sound, it is an open vowel. The open vowels are *alpha*, *epsilon*, *ēta*, *omikron*, and *ōmega*, regardless if they are long or short.

The close vowels are the remaining two vowels, *iōta* and *upsilon*. These vowels are sounded with the mouth almost closed with the tongue and lips in different positions in each case. In addition, the throat is constricted.

Six of the seven Greek vowels are used below in conjunction with the ten consonants already learned. *Upsilon* is not used because its sound actually does not occur in English, neither *alpha*'s long sound because of its rarity in English single syllable words.

The single syllable examples are familiar English words to help associate the Greek phonetic sounds.

3.2.1.1 The Long Sounds of *Ēta* and *Ōmega*

[Listen](#)

λη, βη, δη, γη, μη, πη, ση, λητ, βηκ, δητ

[Listen](#)

ηκ, ητ, γωτ, βηβ, νημ, των, λων, βωλτ

[Listen](#)

στητ, γητ, μωτ, νωτ, δωπ, σωκ, δωμ

[Listen](#)

γοτ, κεπτ, λες, βεστ, βομ, νετ, βεδ

3.2.1.2 The Short Sounds of *Alpha* and *Iōta*

[Listen](#)

α, αμ, δαδ, ταδ, λαδ, βαδ, σατ, ταν

[Listen](#)

ι, λιδ, λιπ, διγ, μιντ, λιμ, κιδ, τιπ, σιτ

3.2.1.3 The Long Sound of *Iōta*

[Listen](#)

ι, βι, μι, κιπ, διπ, σλιτ, Πιτ, τι, Λι, κιν

3.3 The Diphthongs

A diphthong is a combination of an open and close Greek vowel. The term “diphthong” is from the Greek word, δίφθογγος, literally meaning, “two sounds.” Two types of diphthongs occur in Greek, proper and improper diphthongs.

3.3.1 The Eight Proper Diphthongs

Proper diphthongs are two vowels rapidly pronounced together whereby the first vowel glides into the second without interruption. Eight proper diphthongs occur in NTGreek. Four have *iōta* and four have *upsilon* as their second vowel.

Diphthongs arise when the open vowels *alpha*, *epsilon*, *omicron*, and *eta* are immediately followed by the close vowels *iōta* or *upsilon*. There are only two exceptions to this principle. The vowel combination *upsilon* + *iōta* form a diphthong, whereas the vowel combination *eta* + *iōta* never do. Regardless, proper diphthongs always close with *iōta* or *upsilon*.

[Listen](#)

Diphthongs end with iōta	Diphthongs end with upsilon
αι ει οι υι	αυ ευ ηυ ου

3.3.1.1 A Guide in the Pronunciation of the Proper Diphthongs

αι	as in <u>a</u> isle	βαικ,	δαικ,	λαικ,	καιτ
		(bike)	(dike)	(like)	(kite)
ει	as in <u>e</u> ight	βειτ,	πειδ,	τεικ,	δειτ
		(bait)	(paid)	(take)	(date)
οι	as in <u>o</u> il	τοι,	βοι,	οιλ,	τοιλ
		(toy)	(boy)	(oil)	(toil)
υι	as in <u>u</u> ite	υικ,	κυιν,	συιπ,	υιδ
		(weak)	(queen)	(sweep)	(weed)
αυ	as in <u>c</u> ow	αυλ,	δauτ,	tauλ	
		(owl)	(doubt)	(towel)	
ευ	as in <u>f</u> eu <u>d</u>	κευ,	κευτ,	μευλ,	μευτ
		(cue)	(cute)	(mule)	(mute)
ηυ	as in <u>f</u> eu <u>d</u>	κηυ,	κηυτ,	μηυλ,	μηυτ
		(cue)	(cute)	(mule)	(mute)
ου	as in <u>s</u> ou <u>p</u>	σουπ,	δουκ,	κουπ	
		(soup)	(duke)	(coop)	

These vowel combinations constitute the only proper diphthongs. The vowels in other combinations are separately pronounced.

3.3.1.2 Vowel Pairs and the Diaeresis

Some vowel pairs might look like diphthongs but are separate sounds and form separate syllables. The following vowel pairs NEVER form a diphthong in Greek, although they do in English. Therefore, they are to be pronounced separately when encountered (some of these vowel combinations do not occur in Greek).

αε, αο, εα, εε, εο, ιε, οα, οε, οο, υε

When open and close vowel pairs should form a diphthong but do not, a diaeresis consisting of two dots is placed over the second of adjacent vowels. The diaeresis indicates that the vowel pair is pronounced as two separate sounds rather than as a married unit.

For example, the vowel combination αι normally forms a diphthong. But in the instance of αἰδιος, the diaeresis indicates to the reader that the vowel pair's sound is separately pronounced instead of together: α / ἰ / δι / ος. Diaeresis appears over both capital and lower case letters. So, if this same word was written in capital letters, it would appear as ΑἰΔΙΟΣ.

Combinations of the long vowel *ēta* and the short vowel *iōta* (η + ι = ηι), as well as *ōmega* and *iōta* (ω + ι) and *upsilon* (ω + υ = ωυ), NEVER form a diphthong in NTGreek. The second vowel in these instances is always marked with a diaeresis. These vowel combinations occur rarely in NTGreek. A few Greek examples are λωῖς, Λωῖδι, νηι, and Μωῦσης.

The term “dieresis” is a Greek word (διαίρεσις), meaning *division*, *separation*, or *distinction*. Diaeresis may also be spelled as *dieresis*, depending on which dictionary you follow. It is not uncommon to see the diaeresis in Greek proper names and words borrowed from other languages.

A classic example of diaeresis is “naïve,” where the first two vowels are phonetically divided because of the diaeresis (na / ïve [nye-EVE]). The diaeresis over the “i” tells the reader it is separately pronounced as a syllable. In practice, however, many familiar words are no longer written with diaereses, since readers already know how to pronounce them. For example, the diaeresis is usually omitted over the familiar words “coöperate,” “poëm,” and “preëminent.” However, when a writer is concerned that a word might be misread, the solution is usually a hyphen (“co-op,” “re-enter,” “re-ignite”), not a diaeresis.

A diaeresis is also placed over a lone vowel in English to indicate that it is not

silent, as in the proper names “Chloë,” “Eloïse,” “Zoë,” and “Noël.” But again in practice, the diaeresis is suspended because readers already know how to pronounce these common proper names. When the diaeresis is included, the mark mostly serves as idiosyncratic decoration.

3.3.2 Three Improper Diphthongs and the *iōta* Subscript

The second category of diphthongs is the improper diphthongs, and there are three, α, η, and ω. This reduction of a diphthong to a single vowel is called monophthongization. An improper diphthong is a single pure vowel sound.

3.3.2.1 Observations concerning improper diphthongs

An improper diphthong arises when the first vowel is both open and long (*alpha*, *ēta*, *ōmega*) and *iōta* immediately follows. A small subscripted *iōta* is written under the vowel. The *iōta* subscripts are respectively named “*alpha iōta* subscript,” “*ēta iōta* subscript,” and “*ōmega iōta* subscript.”

An *iōta* subscript is a diacritic mark shaped like a small vertical stroke or miniature *iōta* placed below the letter. The subscript is called *hypogegramménē* in Greek, and means “written below.”

The improper diphthongs are phonological long sounds, and therefore distinct from their corresponding short diphthongs αι, ει, and οι. The *iōta* is never pronounced in improper diphthongs. Thus, improper diphthongs’ long vowels retain their phonetic value as if they did not have an *iōta* subscript. Although the *iōta* subscript does not affect the pronunciation of the long vowels of *ēta* and *ōmega*, it does distinguish the variable vowel of *alpha* as long!

Because an *iōta* subscript appears only under a long vowel, a macron is placed both over the English lower and upper case letters “*Ā*, *ā*” when transliterated to differentiate it from the transliterated diphthong. Thus, ΑΙΔΗΣ (αδης) is transliterated into English capital letters as *ĀIDĒS*, and transliterated into lower case letters as *āidēs*, whereas ΑΙΩΝ (αιων) respectively is *AIŌN* and *aiōn*. The *iōta* subscript is an obligatory element of a word’s spelling; therefore it must NEVER be omitted while writing a Greek word in which it occurs or while transliterating a Greek word into English.

Improper diphthongs usually occur in a word’s last syllable as a part of certain inflectional affixes, especially in the Greek dative endings of many nominal forms

as well as in certain verb forms of the subjunctive mood. Much more concerning this aspect of improper diphthongs is discussed in latter lessons.

3.3.2.2 Transliteration Examples of the Improper Diphthongs

When the improper diphthongs α, η and ω are written as capitals, the *iōta* subscript is written on the line as a capital *iōta*, instead of under the capital letter. In these instances, the *iōta* is an *iōta adscript*.

	Greek		English Transliteration	
	Capitals	Lower Case	Capitals	Lower
1.	ΤΗΙ	τη	ΤĒΙ	tēi
2.	ΩΙΔΗΙ	ωδη	ŌIDĒΙ	ōidēi
3.	ΤΩΙ	τω	ΤŌΙ	tōi
4.	ΤΙΜΑΙ	τιμα	TIMĀΙ	timāi
5.	ΗΙΔΕΙ	ηδει	ĒIDEΙ	ēidei
6.	ΑΙΔΗΣ	αδης	ĀIDHS	āidēs
7.	ΛΟΓΩΙ	λογω	LOGŌΙ	logōi
8.	ΕΚΛΕΚΤΗΙ	εκλεκτη	EKLEKTĒΙ	eklektēi
9.	ΔΕΞΙΑΙ	δεξια	DEXIĀΙ	dexiāi

The *iōta* subscript and the *iōta* adscript are useful for distinguishing between the written form, and not pronunciation. During the Classical Era, the *iōta* adscript was written on the line with both capital and small letters. However, between about 100 BC and 1000 AD, it was not written at all and therefore is not found in uncial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.

3.4 Similarities Between Vowels and Diphthongs [Listen](#)

Although Greek vowels and diphthongs are spelled differently, several instances exist where they overlap in pronunciation. Let us examine these occurrences.

The pronunciations suggested for η and ει are identical. The pronunciation of the diphthong ει and η are the same in μεινητε. In addition, the improper diphthong η is pronounced the same. The examples below are actual single and multi-syllable Greek words.

δει, δη, τη, λειπει, λειπη, ηδει, ηδει, ηδη, ηκει

The pronunciations suggested for the two proper diphthongs ευ and ηυ make them indistinguishable. This difficulty may be avoided by giving a true diphthongal sound to each diphthong as illustrated below.

ΕΥ may be pronounced as the “e” in *met* + “u” as in *rude* (= eyyou)

ΗΥ may be pronounced as the “e” in *obey* + “u” as in *rude* (= ayyou)

Moreover, there will be a tendency to confuse these diphthongs with the pronunciation of *upsilon*. A distinction between these will come with practice. There is also possible confusion when pronouncing υ and ου. It will be helpful to remember that *upsilon* is pronounced with the lips closely rounded while attempting to say the “ee” in “*beet*” or “*geese*”. It will be helpful to remember the following examples and exaggerate the distinctions between the diphthong ου and the vowel υ. The two Greek words below are single syllables.

υυυ υουυ

3.4.1 Practice proper and improper diphthongs

All proper and improper diphthongs are represented below. Vowels that share identical phonetic sounds are included with their respective diphthong.

Three consonants not yet discussed are used in several of these examples to make this exercise as complete as possible. These consonants are θ (*thēta*), ξ (*xsī*), and χ (*chī*). The diphthong ηυ is seldom encountered in NTGreek and only occurs at the beginning of words.

[Listen](#)

α, α δοξα, Σατανα, Σατανα, αληθεια, αληθεια

[Listen](#)

αι και, ναι, παις, καιω, αιων, παιδια

[Listen](#)

ει, η, η δει, ειπον, λειπει, ειδης, εικη, τη

[Listen](#)

ου ουκ, ουδε, που, πους, δουλος, ιδου

[Listen](#)

οι οικος, λοιπος, ποιμην, τοις, πολλοι

[Listen](#)

αυ εμαυτου, αυγης, αυλη, αυτος, Δαυιδ

[Listen](#)

ευ πιστευω, ψευδος, ευλογεω, λευκος

[Listen](#)

ηυ ηυξησα, ηυχοντο, ηυχομην, ηυξανεν

[Listen](#)

υι λελυκκια, συνειδυιης

[Listen](#)

ω, ω Κως, τω, πως, λογω, λεγω, παιδων

3.4.2 Practice vowel and diphthongs phonetic distinctions

[Listen](#)

ε, η, η δε, δη, εμη, εμην, μετεβη

[Listen](#)

α, ο αιωνας, μαλλον, σαββατον

[Listen](#)

ο, ω, ω λογος, λογων, λογω

[Listen](#)

α, ο, ω κατανοεω, Σαδωκ, κωμος

[Listen](#)

υ, ευ γευση, εσπευδεν, εσυρον

[Listen](#)

υ, ου νυν, νουν, μυλου, λυουσιν

[Listen](#)

υ, ευ, ου Ευβουλος, εσπευδεν, ενδυμα

[Listen](#)

α, ο, ου, ω συμβαντων, λογουμεν, λογω

[Listen](#)

ε, η, η, ει μεινητε, λεγητε, εμεινεν, εισηει

[Listen](#)

ευ, η, η, αι ευ, ης, γευσηται, κτιση

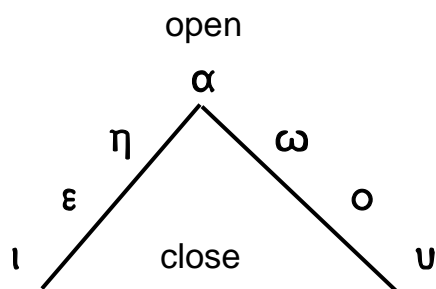
3.5 Vowel and Diphthong Comparison Guide

All the Greek vowels and diphthongs have been introduced. This section of the lesson is devoted to showing their phonemic similarities.

3.5.1 Single Vowels

Single vowels are the independent and indispensable sounds in speech in both English and Greek. A vowel can be independently pronounced, whereas a consonant can be only pronounced with a vowel.

Single vowels are classified according to their phonetic value whether they are open or closed in pronouncing them. The mouth is most open in pronouncing *alpha*, less open pronouncing *ēta* and *omikron*, and least open in pronouncing *iōta* and *upsilon*. The degree of openness between the single vowels may be illustrated by the following vowel pyramid.



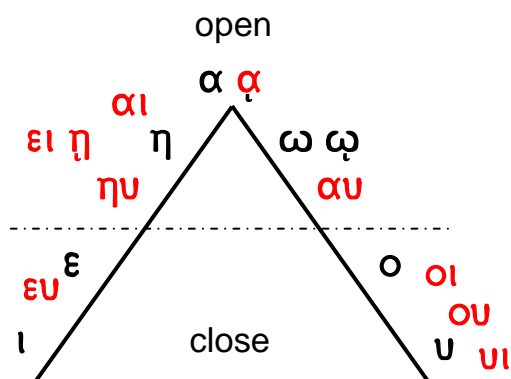
As one moves up the vowel pyramid, the openness of the mouth increases. The mouth is most open while pronouncing *alpha*. The vowels across from one another are pronounced with the same degree of openness. From *alpha* to *iōta*, and from *alpha* to *upsilon*, the elevation of the tongue gradually increases. As the vowels are pronounced on the right-hand side, moving from *alpha* to *upsilon*, the rounding of the lips becomes more prominent.

Of course, single vowels do not always occur alone in syllables. A vowel combines many times with another vowel and forms a diphthong.

3.5.2 Diphthongs

Eight proper diphthongs and three improper diphthongs occur in NTGreek. If two vowels can combine to form a diphthong, they usually do. However, not every instance of two consecutive vowels constitutes a diphthong.

When diphthongs' phonemic values are compared to the degree of openness of the mouth with single vowels, there is notable overlap. Several diphthongs are pronounced identically to a single long vowel. The tongue sharply drops for all vowels and diphthongs below the dotted line compared to those above the line.



3.6 Final Seven Consonants

The remaining seven consonants are now discussed that are somewhat different than the previously discussed ten consonants.

3.6.1 Compound Consonants

Three consonants are considered as compound sounds because their phonetic sounds are a compound sound consisting of a consonant + *sigma*.

The three compound consonants are *zēta*, *xsī*, and *psī*. *Zēta* is phonetical equivalent to δ + σ, *xsī* to κ + σ, and *psī* to π + σ.

3.6.1.1 Zēta

Zēta is pronounced with a “z” sound as the “z” in “zebra” when it begins a word, and its compound sound “ds” as in “adds” in its medial position. The difference aids the consonant’s pronunciation depending on its position in a word, whether initial or medial.

[Listen](#)

ζη, ζω, ζων, ζωη, βαδιζω, βαπτιζω

3.6.1.2 Xsī and Psī

Xsī and *Psī* initial and medial consonants do not phonically sound different.

[Listen](#)

ξι, ψι, ξυλον, βλεψαι, ψευδος, διψαω, αξιος

3.6.2 Aspirated Consonants

An aspirated consonant is pronounced with air accompanying or following the consonant. This may seem a contradiction of terms, since consonants are usually thought of as the stoppage of air, and not “breathy”. To a degree, this is true. However, the air is only partially blocked with *thēta*, *rhō*, *phī*, and *chī*.

Rhō aspirates when it begins a word, but not within a word. *Rhō* may be compared to the English “p” wherein aspirated in “pit” but not as the “p” in “tip.” Aspiration is usually signaled by the letter “h” (*i.e.*, “horse”, “house”, “rhapsody”) in English.

The English spelling of the alphabetical names of the Greek consonants lends a reminder which ones are aspirated.

Θ θ = thēta Ρ ρ = rhō Φ φ = phī Χ χ = chī

All of the above consonants' spellings share an aspirated "h" sound and are the only ones that do. *Rhō* probably had lost most of its aspiration by New Testament times and was probably never aspirated within a word, but trilled by the tip of the tongue as in Modern Greek.

[Listen](#)

θητα, ρω, φι, χι

[Listen](#)

θερμος, θεος, εθος, καθως, ληθη, μηθεν, θηλυς

[Listen](#)

ρακα, Ρησα, ρησις, πληρης, Κορε, ροδον, ροπη

[Listen](#)

φως, φυω, φρικη, Φρυξ, σοφια, προφητις

[Listen](#)

χαλκος, χαιρω, εχω, Σιχαρ, ραχη, βροχη

Pay strict attention between the pronunciation of *kappa* and *chī*. The breath is not entirely cut off with *chī* as with *kappa*, and the emission of breath should produce only a strong "h" sound.

[Listen](#)

[Listen](#)

ρακα -- ραχη

κρισιν -- χρησιν

3.7 Types of Greek Letters from Ancient to Modern

The earliest forms of the Greek letters were the capitals. The form of these capitals is called majuscule. The shapes of these letters were square. Each majuscule letter is characterized by angularity and straight lines.

Later the majuscule letters were modified to a more rounded shape. These rounded Greek capitals are called uncials. The uncial letter is a simplified form of the majuscule and can be easily identified (except uncial sigma, which is **Ϛ**) in nearly every instance. Uncial letters are more readily inscribed with a pen on parchment or papyrus. In general, majuscules are older than uncials, and both are older than the minuscule.

The lower case letters are called minuscules. They are imitations of forms used in cursive (connected and flowing) writing. These letters led to the displacement of the uncials.

From the fourth century BC until the eighth or ninth century AD, the types of the Greek letters changed incrementally. More

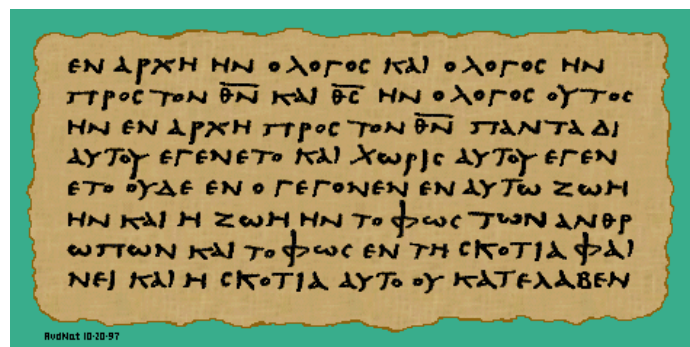
Above are the first five verses of John's Gospel, written in an early Greek uncial script. Abbreviations are indicated by a line drawn above the letters.

than one style was in use during any period of time, and the transition from one style to a new one always lasted at least one generation.

All Greek biblical manuscripts before the tenth century A.D. were written in either majuscules or uncials. The Greek letters were never divided into separate words, but were run together with no intervening punctuation.

Editorial devices were introduced with the invention of the printing press. Capital letters begin proper names and sentences in most modern editions of the Greek New Testament. However, some editions do not begin each sentence with a capital letter, but only the first sentence of each paragraph, with sentences within paragraphs beginning with small letters.

Below is a chart which depicts various uncial scripts. Details concerning the different manuscripts used in the chart follow on the next page.



Letter	Rose tta Stone	P ⁶⁶	Ⲛ	Β	Α	Δ ^{ea}	Ν	Λ ^e	Ε ^e	Θ	Σ
Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α	Α
Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β	Β
Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ
Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε	Ε
Ζ		Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ	Ζ
Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η	Η
Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ	Θ
Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι	Ι
Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ	Κ
Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ	Λ
Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ	Μ
Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν	Ν
Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ	Ξ
Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο	Ο
Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π	Π
Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ
Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ	Σ
Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ	Τ
Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ
Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ	Φ
Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ	Ψ
Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω

Description of the manuscripts in the above table:

- The Rosetta Stone: Inscription from 196 BC. Although not written in an uncial script, the stone was carved in an engraved style.
- P⁶⁶: Second century AD. Probably the oldest substantial New Testament papyrus in a good calligraphy style.
- Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ): Fourth century AD.
- Codex Vaticanus (B): Fourth century AD.
- Codex Alexandrinus (A): Fifth century AD. Style is more detailed than previous manuscripts.

- Codex Bezae (D^{ea}): Fifth or sixth century AD.
- Codex Petropolitanus (N): Sixth century AD. Uncials were written with large silver letters (with some gold) on purple parchment.
- Codex Regius (L^e): Eighth century AD.
- Codex Basiliensis (E^e): Eighth century AD.
- Codex Koridethi (Θ): About ninth century AD.
- Codex S (S): This codex is a very late uncial manuscript, and the only one dated (March 5, 949).

The following uncial letters were easily confused when manuscripts were copied. Every manuscript was hand-copied prior to the printing press. Sometimes, copyists accidentally confused letters and introduced errors into a text.

Α Δ Λ	Α Δ Λ
Ε Θ Ο Σ	Ε Θ Ο Σ
Ι Κ	Ι Σ Κ
Γ Τ	Γ Τ
Η Π Τ ΤΤ	Η Η Π Τ ΤΤ
Μ Λ Λ	Μ Λ Λ

The uncial style had a long and distinguished history, extending over a period of about fifteen hundred years. By the time of the tenth century AD, however, the style of uncial writing had deteriorated. It had lost the grace of the earlier specimens. Sometimes uncials were written with a marked slope to the right, and sometimes the strokes were heavy and appear cumbersome.

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.



3

Study Guide Sight and Sounds of Greek Words (Module A) Phonology (Part 3)

Introduction to Greek letters' phonetic pronunciation was presented in this lesson. Some of the terms used to define these concepts were perhaps new. However, as with any new discipline or area of work, new concepts are important to master to be competent and successful. Learning NTGreek is no different.

Technical terms relating to language study may be at first intimidating. A good way to become further acquainted with these concepts is Google them or consult a multi-volume dictionary.

The terms below were introduced in Lesson Three. Further explanations and examples are cited in several instances. The definitions should be understood, for they will be used in subsequent lessons. Mastery of them will come with usage, and usage with practice. They are reviewed in order in which they were introduced in this lesson.

- **Phonics:** method of learning correlation between written letters and their sound combinations in a language. Most American school children were introduced to phonics while learning the many different ways letters are pronounced in words. Consider the different pronunciations of the English vowel “o” in the following words: “hot”; “open”; “order”; “oil”; “out”; and “broad”. How would anyone know how to properly pronounce without help the sound “sh” in “ocean,” “machine,” “special,” “sure,” “conscience,” “tension,” “issue,” and “nation?” Phonics is a valuable method to learn the various phonetic sounds of vowels and consonants in both English and Greek.
- **Consonant:** the partial or total blockage of air while forming a sound. This stoppage of air in the oral cavity distinguishes consonants from vowels. The hindering of breath is accomplished with the tongue, teeth, lips and/or constriction in the throat. There are not any silent consonants in Greek.
- **Vowel:** unobstructed passage of breath with no audible friction through the oral cavity while forming a letter sound. This unobstructed passage of air in the oral cavity distinguishes vowels from consonants. The vocal cords generally vibrate. The Greek vowels are produced by modification of the shape of the oral cavity by movements of the tongue and lips.

- **Proper diphthong:** a vowel sound made of two identifiable vowel sounds that are adjunct. All Greek proper diphthongs are a combination of an open and a close vowel. There are only two exceptions: the vowel combination υ + ι forms a diphthong, while the vowel combination η + ι never does. Diphthongs may appear anywhere in a word.
- **Diaeresis:** two dots (¨) placed over the second of two adjacent vowels to indicate that it is a separate syllable.

αγαθοποιῖα, διῖστημι, διῦλιζω, Λωῖδι
 (α-γᾱ-θο-ποι-ῖ-α) (δι-ῖ-στη-μι) (δι-ῦ-λι-ζω) (λω-ῖ-δι)

Diaeresis also distinguishes the combination of open and close vowels that do not form a proper diphthong, but pronounced as two separate sounds.

αῖδιος, Σεμεῖν, χοῖκοι, οσφυῖ, πραῦς
 (α-ῖ-δι-ος) (Σε-με-ῖν) (χο-ῖ-κοι) (ο-σφυ-ῖ) (πρα-ῦς)

- **Improper diphthong:** an open and long vowel with a small *iōta* written under the vowel: α, η, ω. These diphthongs are never dissolved into their constituent elements (αῖ, ηῖ, ωῖ) and are treated as simple and long vowels.
- ***iōta* Subscript:** a diminutive *iōta* written below the open and long vowels of α, η, and ω. It does not have any phonetic value, nor does it affect the sound of the open and long vowel.
- ***iōta* Adscript:** *iōta* written on the line when α, η, and ω are written as capitals, as in ΑΙ, ΗΙ, and ΩΙ.

νικᾱ = ΝΙΚΑΙ παντηη = ΠΑΝΤΗΙ λογω = ΛΟΓΩΙ

- **Compound consonant:** a consonant wherein its phonetic sound is a composite of a consonant + sigma. The three Greek compound consonants are Ζ ζ = δσ, Ξ ξ = κσ, and Ψ ψ = πσ. The significance of these compound consonants will become evident in later lessons.
- **Aspirated Consonant:** a consonant pronounced with air accompanying or following the consonant. The four aspirated Greek consonants are Θ θ, Ρ ρ, Φ φ, and Χ χ.
- **Majuscule:** the earliest form of Greek letters. They were large square letters and all their forms were capitals. The majuscule letters were written together without breaks between words.

- **Uncial:** the modified majuscule capital Greek letters that later became rounded in shape. The uncial letters were written together without breaks between words.
- **Minuscule:** extremely small Greek letters (compared to majuscule and uncial letters) that were neither majuscule nor uncial in form. Their forms resemble cursive writing wherein the letters were connected and flowing. Minuscule style developed at the close of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century. The script could be written more rapidly as well as more compactly, thus saving both time and parchment.

Exercise One: Short Answer. Briefly answer the following questions.

1. What constitutes a consonant letter sound?
2. Which ten Greek consonants are phonetically equivalent to ten English consonants? Fill in the spaces below with the appropriate Greek or English small letter.

Greek:	β		δ			μ	ν	π	σ/ς	
English:		g		k	l		n			t

3. Define what constitutes a vowel letter sound.
4. List the seven Greek vowels, giving both their small and capital forms together.
5. Which two Greek vowels are always considered short?

6. Which two Greek vowels are always considered long?
7. Which three Greek vowels may be either long or short?
8. Fill in the chart below with the appropriate long or short vowel. Be sure to include both the capital and small letters.

Always long:	, ,
Always short:	, Ο ο
May be long or short:	, ,

9. Circle the short vowel corresponding to Η η.

Α α, Ε ε, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ, Ω ω

10. Circle the short vowel corresponding to Ω ω.

Α α, Ε ε, Η η, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ

11. Which Greek vowels are open and close? What constitutes an open and a close vowel?
12. What constitutes a proper Greek diphthong?
13. Circle all the Greek proper diphthongs below.
αε, αι, αο, εα, ει, εο, ιε, οα, οι, οο, υι, αυ, ευ, ηυ, ου
14. What constitutes an improper Greek diphthong?

15. What are the three improper Greek diphthongs?

16. What is a diaeresis and when is it used?

17. Which two Greek diphthongs are pronounced like the long vowel Η η?

18. Which Greek diphthong is pronounced identical to the long vowel Α α?

19. Which Greek long vowel sound is identical to the improper diphthong ω ω?

20. What constitutes a Greek compound consonant? What are the three Greek compound consonants? Be sure to include their compound phonetic equivalents.

21. What constitutes a Greek aspirated consonant? Which four Greek letters are aspirated? What is their common denominator when spelling these letters in English?

Exercise Two: True or False

1. *Lambda* is equivalent in sound to the English “l”. True False
2. *Sigma* is always equivalent in sound to the English “z”. True False
3. Every Greek letter’s phonetic value is derived from the opening sound of its alphabetical name. True False
4. The two Greek vowels, *epsilon* and *iota* are always pronounced short.
True False
5. The two Greek vowels, *eta* and *omega* are always pronounced long.
True False
6. *Omikron* is the long form for *omega*. True False
7. *Alpha* is the long form for *eta*. True False
8. The three variable vowels are *alpha*, *iota*, and *omikron*. True False
9. At least six Greek vowels are classified as “open”. True False
10. A proper diphthong is a combination of two “open” vowels. True False
11. *Ei* is considered a proper diphthong. True False
12. *Hi* is considered a proper diphthong. True False
13. The vowel combination, *εε*, is a proper diphthong. True False
14. The vowel combination, *οο*, is a proper diphthong. True False
15. There are three improper diphthongs in Greek. True False
16. The reduction of a diphthong to a single vowel is called monophthongization.
True False
17. The *iota* subscript may be associated with *omikron*. True False

18. The *iōta* adscript is associated with the Greek capitals. True False
19. Improper diphthongs may or may not be long in pronunciation. True False
20. The *iōta* subscript does not affect the pronunciation of η or ω. True False
21. The *iōta* subscript and the *iōta* adscript are useful for distinguishing between the written form, but not pronunciation. True False
22. The pronunciations suggested for η and εἰ are identical. True False
23. A compound consonant is one that is a consonant + *sigma*. True False
24. A Greek aspirated consonant is pronounced with air accompanying or following the consonant. True False
25. Aspiration is usually signaled by the letter “h” in English. True False
26. The four aspirated Greek consonants are Θ θ, Π ρ, Φ φ, and Χ χ.
True False
27. The earliest forms of the Greek letters were the capital letters. True False
28. Minuscule letters came before uncial letters. True False
29. There are no inscriptions of John’s Gospel written with the uncial script.
True False
30. Majuscule letters came before the uncial letters. True False
31. The uncial style extended over one thousand years. True False

Exercise Three: Multiple Choice

1. Which letter below is pronounced identically to ω?
 - a. η
 - b. ο
 - c. ω
 - d. α

2. What sounds are the independent and indispensable sounds in speech?

- a. consonants
- b. vowels
- c. accents marks
- d. breathing marks

3. Examples of Greek epichorical alphabets are:

- a. Argos and Corinth
- b. Koiné and Gothic
- c. Modern and Ionia
- d. boustrophedon

4. Which alphabet is the first known phonetic alphabet?

- a. Phoenician
- b. Greek
- c. Cyrillic
- d. Hebrew

5. Modern Greek contains how many alphabetical letters?

- a. twenty-four
- b. twenty-eight
- c. twenty-seven
- d. twenty-one

6. Which one of the following Greek letters sounds like the “p” in “party”?

- a. φ
- b. Π
- c. P
- d. θ

7. Which one of the following Greek letters sounds like the “k” in “kin”?

- a. χ
- b. Δ
- c. Θ
- d. κ

8. Which one of the following letters is an aspirate consonant?

- a. δ
- b. P
- c. ξ
- d. Z

9. Which one of the following letters is a compound consonant?

- | | |
|------|------|
| a. δ | c. ξ |
| b. Ϙ | d. β |

10. Which example is an illustration of monophthongization?

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| a. αυ | c. αι |
| b. α | d. α |

11. Which example is an illustration of an improper diphthong?

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| a. αυ | c. αι |
| b. α | d. α |

12. Which example is an illustration of an *iōta* adscript?

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| a. τω = ΤΩΙ | c. Αχαια |
| b. τιμω = ΤΙΜΑ | d. η = ει |

13. Which example is an illustration of a proper diphthong?

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| a. οα | c. υι |
| b. αε | d. οο |

14. When α, η and ω are written as capitals (Α, Η, Ω) the *iota* subscript is written where in respect to the letter?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. after on the line | c. before the capital letter |
| b. under the capital letter | d. none of these |

15. An example of diaeresis is found in which word?

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| a. κύριος | c. ΑΧΑΪΑ |
| b. ημεῖς | d. εαυτω̂ |

Exercise Four: Write the Greek alphabetical letters from memory. Write both the capital and small Greek letters in their alphabetical order.

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 Five: Transposition of capital letters. Transpose all the following Greek capital letters into their corresponding small letters.

- | | | | |
|----------|-------|------------|-------|
| 1. ΚΑΛΩΝ | _____ | 8. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ | _____ |
| 2. ΓΑΜΜΑ | _____ | 9. ΝΕΚΡΟΙ | _____ |
| 3. ΑΛΦΑ | _____ | 10. ΓΡΑΦΑΣ | _____ |
| 4. ΔΕΛΤΑ | _____ | 11. ΗΙΔΕΙ | _____ |
| 5. ΩΜΕΓΑ | _____ | 12. ΤΗΙ | _____ |
| 6. ΖΗΤΑ | _____ | 13. ΔΟΞΑ | _____ |
| 7. ΠΑΣΙΝ | _____ | 14. ΔΑΥΙΔ | _____ |

Exercise Six: Transposition of small letters. Transpose all the following Greek small letters into their corresponding capital letters.

1. τη _____
2. τω λογω _____
3. νυι δε χριστος _____
4. κρινομενοι δε υπο κυριου _____
5. παλιν ουν επηρωτησεν _____
6. αδης _____
7. λεγει αυτω σιμων πετρος _____
8. η τοις πτωχοις _____
9. ο λογος ην προς τον θεον _____
10. και το φως εν τη σκοτια _____
11. εν αυτω ζωη ην _____
12. εξ αιματων ουδε εκ θεληματος _____
13. γαρ ευχαριστιαν _____
14. νυκτος και ημερας _____
15. ημεις δε αδελφοι _____
16. διο μηκετι στεγοντες _____
17. δια του χριστου _____
18. των δεξιων _____