GR

LANGUAGE COURSE

Greek Alphabet 1

10 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

GREEK ALPHABET 1

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Greek Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · Meet Greek

Το ελληνικό αλφάβητο — Meet Greek

*Modern Greek is written in the **Greek alphabet**, and you already know more of it than you think. The word alphabet itself comes from the first two Greek letters, alpha and beta. Several letters look and sound like English ones, a few look English but say something different, and the rest are new shapes you will pick up three at a time. By the end of this course you will be able to read Greek signs, menus and street names aloud.*

Where the Greek Alphabet Comes From

- **Borrowed, then improved.** The Greeks adopted a script from the Phoenicians, who lived on the eastern Mediterranean coast, and adapted it to their own language. The Greek letter names *alpha* and *beta* come from Phoenician names.
- **The first letters for vowels.** The Phoenician script wrote only consonants. The Greeks used some of the letters they did not need for Greek consonant sounds to write vowels, and that is why Greek is usually described as the first alphabet with letters for both vowels and consonants.
- **The parent of other scripts.** Latin (the alphabet you are reading now) and Cyrillic both descend from Greek. That is why so many letters look familiar.

The Greek Alphabet at a Glance

*The modern Greek alphabet has **24 letters**:*

Kind	How many	What they are
Vowel letters	7	α ε η ι ο υ ω

Kind	How many	What they are
Consonant letters	17	the rest: β γ δ ζ θ κ λ μ ν ξ π ρ σ τ φ χ ψ

Seven vowel letters write only five vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u as in too): several letters share a sound, and you meet that from Chapter 2.

Capitals, small letters and print

*Like English, Greek has capital and small letters, and each letter is shown here as a pair: **Α α**. In this course you learn the **printed** letters, the ones you see on signs, in books and on a screen. Handwriting is not taught here.*

How this course teaches the alphabet

- **Three letters a chapter**, each with its name, a respelling of its sound and a memory hook.
- **Friends first.** Chapters 1 to 3 teach the letters that look and sound as you expect. Chapters 4 and 5 teach the *false friends*, letters that look English but say something else. Chapters 6 to 8 teach the new shapes.
- **Read real words early.** A cumulative *Read it* list uses only letters you have already learned.
- **One more thing at the end.** Chapter 9 covers the accent mark and the punctuation, and Chapter 10 is reading practice. Letter pairs such as *ει* and *ου* wait for Greek Alphabet 2.

Before the First Letters: Two Ideas

1. A letter's name is not its sound

*In English we say the letter double-u and the sound is w. Greek works the same way: every letter has a **name** (such as alpha) and a **sound**. Some names hide a surprise, for example the letter named vita says "v", and you will meet it in Chapter 4. Always learn the sound; the name is only a label.*

2. One accent mark shows the stressed syllable

*Modern Greek uses the **monotonic** system, with **one** accent mark, the **tonos** (a small slanted stroke over a vowel, like an acute accent), which shows which syllable of a word is stressed. Words of more than one syllable carry it; one-syllable words normally do not. Chapter 9 explains it fully. In this course the respellings show the stressed syllable in CAPITALS, so for now just copy them.*

Your First Three Letters — A O T

*These three are **true friends**: they look like English letters and sound close to them. Two of the three are also easy to confuse, so read the warnings below.*

A α

alpha (AL-fah)

like the "a" in *father* ("ah")

Memory hook: the capital A is the English A, and the small α looks like a fish swimming to the right, with its tail on the left. Say "ah" as if the doctor were looking at your throat.

O o

omicron (O-mee-kron)

a clean, short "o", like the "o" in *more* without the glide at the end

Memory hook: the letter is a round O, and the small o is a small round o. Open your mouth into an O and hold it still; do not let it slide into "oh-oo".

T τ

tau (TAHF)

like the "t" in *stop*: a "t" with no puff of breath

Memory hook: the capital T is the English T, a table with one leg. The small τ is the same table with the top bar curling over to the right. Say it without the little puff of air you add in "tea".

Look-Alike Warnings

Ο vs the digit 0: the Greek capital Ο is a letter, not a zero, and it looks the same. **α vs a:** the small α has a tail and is not the English "a"; copy its shape carefully. **τ vs t:** the small τ has no crossbar down the stem, only a curled top. **Names that mislead:** the letter named *tau* sounds like "taf" to a Greek ear, so do not expect a "tow" sound.

Writing and Saying

This course does not teach handwriting, so copy the printed shapes slowly, one at a time, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud each time. Write each pair five times on paper. Say *ah · o · t* out loud, then in a mixed order, until the shapes come without thinking.

Read It — Your First Words

Three letters make very few Greek words, and the three real ones are the Greek word for the. Greek has a separate word for the for each kind of noun, and these three are all you can read so far. Each is one syllable, so none carries a stress mark.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ο	O	the (masculine)	*one letter, one word; used before masculine nouns*
2	το	TO	the (neuter)	*τ + ο: the word you will see most often*
3	τα	TAH	the (neuter plural)	*τ + α: the plural form of το*

You do not need to learn what masculine and neuter mean yet; this is only a reading exercise. The grammar comes in Greek Grammar 1.

Sound practice (not words)

These are not real words, but reading them aloud trains your eyes and your mouth:

ατο · οτα · τατο · οτοτα — AH-to · O-tah · TAH-to · O-to-tah.

Watch Out: One Letter, One Sound

Greek spelling is far more regular than English: a letter you know keeps its sound. The trap is the other direction: several letters share a sound (for example η, ι and υ all say “ee”) although the alphabet has 24 letters. We take them in order of difficulty, so you meet the sharing a little at a time.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the Greek alphabet and Modern Greek letter sounds returned beginners’ guides, but I did not read any page in full. The count of 24 letters, the split into 7 vowel letters and 17 consonant letters and the modern sound values appeared in several of the results; one result gave the modern value of beta as “v” and another listed it as “b”, so I used “v” and flagged the question for Chapter 4. **Not checked against a source:** the history paragraph (the Phoenician origin, the first alphabet with vowels, Latin and Cyrillic descending from Greek: all from general knowledge), the statement that one-syllable words normally carry no tonos, the exact sound of omicron and tau described in English terms (“clean o”, “t without a puff of air”), and the modern letter name of tau being said “taf”. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Let’s Learn, The Greek Alphabet; Preply, Greek alphabet: all 24 letters and their pronunciations; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Remitly, Greek Consonants. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. How many letters does the modern Greek alphabet have, and how many are vowel letters and consonant letters?

▼ Show answer

24 letters: 7 vowel letters (α ε η ι ο υ ω) and 17 consonant letters.

2. Read these aloud: Ο · ΤΟ · Τα

▼ Show answer

Ο · ΤΟ · ΤΑΗ: three forms of the word *the* (masculine, neuter, neuter plural).

3. What is the difference between a letter's name and its sound? Give the name and the sound of T.

▼ Show answer

The name is the label we use for the letter, and the sound is what it says in a word. For T the name is *tau* and the sound is a "t" with no puff of air, as in *stop*.

4. How many accent marks does modern Greek use, and what is it called?

▼ Show answer

One, called the *tonos*. It shows the stressed syllable and is written on words of more than one syllable.

5. Write in Greek letters: *the* (masculine) · *the* (neuter) · *the* (neuter plural). Then read aloud: τατο

▼ Show answer

Ο · ΤΟ · ΤΑ. And ΤΑΤΟ is TAH-to (not a real word, only a reading exercise).

Coming Up in Chapter 2

You know the first three friends. Next come three more: **E I K**. They are friends again, though I looks like a capital I and says "ee". With six letters you can read more, including your first real words, such as Τι ("what") and Κατί ("something").

Περισσότεροι φίλοι — More Friends

*In Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 1 you learned **A O T**. This chapter adds three more friends, **E I K**, and with six letters you can read your first real Greek words. It also shows you the stress mark, the tonos, in use, because most of the words you can now read have more than one syllable.*

Your Next Three Letters — E I K

*E and K look just like English letters and sound close to them. **I** looks like a capital I, and it says "ee" — one of the sounds you will meet again and again.*

Ε ε

epsilon (EP-see-lon)

like the "e" in *pen*

Memory hook: the capital E is the English E, three arms reaching out. The small ε is a backwards 3, or a capital E with its spine worn away. Say "eh" as if you were unsure.

Ι ι

iota (YO-tah)

like the "ee" in *machine*, but short: "ee"

Memory hook: the capital I is a plain stick, like a capital I, and the small ι is a small stick with *no dot*. It says "ee", so think of a stick figure squeaking "eek!".

Κ κ

kappa (KAH-pah)

like the "k" in *make*: a plain "k"

Memory hook: the capital K is the English K, and the small κ is the same K made smaller and rounder. It says "k", as you expect.

Look-Alike Warnings

I ι: the capital looks like a capital I (and a lower-case L), and the small ι has no dot, so it is not the English "i". **ε:** the small ε is not a number 3, and it is not the English "e" either; it faces the other way. **κ vs k:** the small κ looks like a small English k, but it is a Greek letter, and both say the same sound for now. **The name of I:** the letter is called *iota* and the name starts with a "y", but the letter itself says "ee" and nothing else.

A First Look at the Tonos

*Many of the words below have a small slanted mark over one vowel, like καΐ. This is the **tonos**, the single accent mark of modern Greek. It tells you **which syllable to stress**: say that syllable louder and longer. In κάτι the mark is over the α, so the stress is on the first syllable: KAH-tee. The respellings show the same thing in CAPITALS. Chapter 9 explains the tonos fully.*

- **The mark goes on the vowel** of the stressed syllable, so you can see where the stress falls.
- **One-syllable words** such as Τι and Κι normally have no mark, because there is only one syllable to stress.
- Do not worry about writing it yet. Just notice it, and say that syllable with more force.

Read It — Your First Real Words

These words use only the six letters A O T E I K. Say each one aloud, with the respelling.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	Τι	TEE	what	*one syllable, so no tonos; a question word you will use constantly*
2	Κι	KEE	and	*a short form of "and" used before a vowel*
3	Οτί	O-tee	that (as in *I know that…*)	*stress on the first syllable (ό)*
4	καΐ	KAH-tee	something	*four letters: κ, α, τ and ι*
5	κοτα	KO-tah	hen	*the first noun: a hen, as in the coop*
6	κατά	kah-TAH	during, towards	*stress on the second syllable (ά): same letters as the word before it, different stress*
7	εκτο	EK-to	sixth (neuter)	*two consonants side by side, one after the other: κ then τ*

Words 3 to 7 all have more than one syllable, so each carries a tonos that shows the stress.

Sound practice (not words)

These are not words, but they exercise the new letters in new positions: **ετι · κεκι · τικο · οκετα** *— EH-tee · KEH-kee · TEE-ko · o-KEH-tah.*

> **Watch Out: Do Not Say "Eye"**
>
> English speakers often read I as the English "eye" or as "ih". In Greek it is always a clean "ee". Keep it short and bright, and read **τι** as TEE, not "tie" and not "tih".

> **Not Yet Verified**
>
> A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern names and sounds of epsilon, iota and kappa returned beginners' guides; I did not read any page in full. The names *έψιλον*, *γιώτα* and *κάπα* and the sounds "e as in pen", "ee" and "k" were consistent across the results. **Not checked against a source:** that Greek κ has no puff of breath, which none of the results stated (Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 1 makes the same claim for τ, so check both); one result said κ is made further forward in the mouth before ι and ε, which is a detail this course does not teach; the meanings and spellings of the seven words (checked from general knowledge, not against a dictionary); and that κι is used before a vowel. Please check these before relying on them.

> **Sources for This Chapter**
>
> Search results (2026-11-17): Fluent in 3 Months, Greek alphabet; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Wikiversity, Greek Language/Alphabet; Preply, Greek alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

E says "eh" (as in *pen*), I says "ee" and K says "k".

2. Read these aloud: τι · κι · κατί · κοτα

▼ Show answer

TEE · KEE · KAH-tee · KO-tah (“what”, “and”, “something”, “hen”).

3. The words κοτα and κατά use similar letters. What tells you how to say each?

▼ Show answer

The letters differ (ο and α swap places), and each carries a tonos that shows the stress: KO-tah has it on the first syllable (κοτα), and kah-TAH has it on the second (κατά).

4. What does the tonos show, and which words in this chapter do *not* carry one?

▼ Show answer

It shows which syllable is stressed. The one-syllable words τι and κι do not carry one, because there is nothing to choose between.

5. Write in Greek letters: *what* · *hen* · *something* (copy the accent marks).

▼ Show answer

τι · κοτα · κατί

Coming Up in Chapter 3

You know six letters. Next come three more: **M N Z**. All three look like English letters and sound close to them; the surprises start in Chapter 4. With nine letters you can read names and more words, including the Greek for *mum*, μαμά.

Ακόμα φίλοι — Still Friends

*Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 2 gave you **E I K**. This chapter finishes the friends with **M N Z**. After it you will know nine letters, enough to read real words such as μαμά́ and ματί, and from Chapter 4 the letters stop being so friendly.*

Your Next Three Letters — M N Z

*The capitals look like English letters and sound like them. The small letters are where to be careful: the small **ν** looks like an English v, and it says "n".*

M μ

mu (MEE)

like the "m" in *mum*

Memory hook: the capital M is the English M, two mountains. The small μ looks like an English u with a long tail on the left, and it still says "m". Say "mmm" as if something tasted good.

N ν

nu (NEE)

like the "n" in *no*

Memory hook: the capital N is the English N. The small ν looks like a v, but it says "n"; remember it as an N that has been squashed, so *the v-shaped letter is the n*. Never read it as "v".

Z ζ

zeta (ZEE-tah)

like the "z" in *zoo*

Memory hook: the capital Z is the English Z. The small ζ is a Z with a curly hook at the top and a tail at the bottom, like a Z drawn in one swirl. It buzzes like a bee, "zzz".

Look-Alike Warnings

ν vs v: the small ν is an *n*. The Greek letter that says "v" is a different one, β (Chapter 4). **μ vs u:** the small μ has a tail on the left; it is not a u. **ζ vs ξ:** both small letters have a curl and a tail; ζ is the one that says "z" and ξ (Chapter 8) is a different letter, so give ζ a close look. **Names:** in modern Greek, μ is named *mee* and ν is named *nee*; the names are not the sounds, so keep to the sounds.

Writing and Saying

Copy each pair five times, capital then small, saying the sound as you write. Then say *m · n · z* aloud, and read them mixed up, checking that you say "n" for ν every time.

Doubled Letters

Greek spells some words with a doubled consonant, such as Άννα *(Anna). Greek does not say the letter twice:* νν *says a single "n", just as in English Anna. You will see this more as the alphabet grows, and a note of it appears in Chapter 10.*

Read It — Real Words

With nine letters — A O T E I K M N Z — these are real Greek words. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	αν	AN	if	*one syllable, so no tonos*
2	ένα	EH-nah	one (neuter)	*the number one, before a neuter noun; stress on the first syllable*
3	μονό	MO-no	only	*μ + ο + ν + ο*
4	μετά	meh-TAH	after	*stress on the last syllable*
5	νότα	NO-tah	note (in music)	*looks like the English word, and says the same*
6	ματί	MAH-tee	eye	*remember Chapter 2: ι says "ee"*
7	μαμά	mah-MAH	mum	*stress on the last syllable, unlike the Russian mama*
8	Άννα	AH-nah	Anna (a name)	*νν says a single "n"; names start with a capital, as in English*

The letter ζ does not appear in these words, because the common Greek words that use ζ also need letters you have not met. You will read it in Chapter 5, in the word ρυζι *("rice").*

Sound practice (not words)

These are not real words, but they let you practise ζ and ν: ζα · ζε · ζι · ζο · νεζα · μιζο *— ZAH · ZEH · ZEE · ZO · NEH-zah · MEE-zo.*

> **Watch Out: A Silent Trap**
>
> Two letters in a row can sometimes mean something different from what each says alone. You have already met the first case: *νν* says a single "n". A few other pairs change the sound completely, such as *ει* and *ου*. They are the subject of Greek Alphabet 2, so for now only read the real words above, which have been chosen to avoid them.

> **Not Yet Verified**
>
> A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern names and sounds of mu, nu and zeta did **not** return a source that covered these three letters directly, and I did not read any page in full. The names *mee*, *nee* and *ZEE-tah*, the sounds "m", "n" and "z", and the shapes are from general knowledge. **Not checked against a source:** the letter names, the meanings and stress of the eight words (*μετά*, *ένα* and the rest), the claim that *νν* says a single "n", the claim that no common word with ζ is readable with the nine letters, and the "stress on the last syllable" remark about *μαμά*. Please check these before relying on them.

> **Sources for This Chapter**
>
> Search results (2026-11-17), none of which was confirmed for these three letters: Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet; Remitly, Greek Consonants; greek-language.com, Grammar 01; Preply, Greek alphabet.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

M says “m”, N says “n” and Z says “z”.

2. Which small letter looks like an English v, and what does it really say?

▼ Show answer

The small ν. It says “n”, not “v”.

3. Read these aloud: αν · μονο · ματι · μαμά

▼ Show answer

AN · MO-no · MAH-tee · mah-MAH (“if”, “only”, “eye”, “mum”).

4. How is the doubled *νν* in Άννα said?

▼ Show answer

As a single “n”: AH-nah.

5. Write in Greek letters: *mum* · *one* · *after* (copy the accent marks). Then say them.

▼ Show answer

μαμά· ένα · μετά — mah-MAH · EH-nah · meh-TAH.

Coming Up in Chapter 4

You know nine letters, all friends. Now the tricks begin with the **false friends**: **Β Η Ρ** look like English B, H and P, but say “v”, “ee” and “r”. Read slowly and trust the sound, not the shape.

Ψεύτικοι φίλοι — False Friends 1

Until now every letter looked and sounded like its English twin. In this chapter that stops. ***B H P*** *look exactly like the English letters B, H and P, and they say* ***something else****. They are called false friends: the shape is a trap, and you must trust the sound you learn, not the look. It is the biggest hurdle of the course, so go slowly.*

Your Next Three Letters — B H P

B β

vita (VEE-tah)

like the "v" in *vine*, **not** "b"

Memory hook: the capital B looks like a B, but remember the name: *VEE*-tah, a *V* sound. In English the name of the letter is *beta*; in Greek it is *vita*, and the sound follows the Greek name. The small β has a tail that drops below the line.

H η

ita (EE-tah)

like the "ee" in *meet*

Memory hook: the capital H looks like an H, a ladder, but it says "ee", the same sound as ι from Chapter 2. The small η looks like an n with its right leg dropped below the line; it is not an n.

P ρ

ro (ROH)

an "r", as in *road*; say it with the tip of the tongue

Memory hook: the capital P looks like a P, but it is an *R*. Think of P as "Pretending to be R". The small ρ is a round p with a stem that goes below the line, and it also says "r".

Look-Alike Warnings

B: a B that says "v". **H:** an H that says "ee", so η and ι (Chapter 2) now share a sound. **P:** a P that says "r". **Small letters:** η is not n, and ν (Chapter 3) is not v; ρ is not p; β is not b. Check each small letter every time you read it for the next few weeks, because the eye wants to read English.

Two Letters, One Sound

From this chapter on, **η and ι say the same sound, "ee"**. This is normal in Greek: seven vowel letters write only five vowel sounds, as Chapter 1 said. When you hear "ee" you cannot tell by ear whether it is η or ι, and you learn the spelling with each word, as you do for English *meet* and *meat*. Chapter 5 adds a third letter that also says "ee".

Read It — Real Words

With twelve letters — A O T E I K M N Z B H P — you can read all of these. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	μερά	MEH-rah	day	*ρ says "r"*
2	νερο΄	neh-ROH	water	*stress on the last syllable*
3	τρένο	TREH-no	train	*τρ: two consonants in a row*
4	κρεμα	KREH-mah	cream	*looks like the English word*
5	βημα	VEE-mah	step	*β says "v" and η says "ee"*
6	ήταν	EE-tahn	was, were	*η says "ee"; a very common word*
7	μητερα	mee-TEH-rah	mother	*three syllables, stress on the second*
8	Βικη	VEE-kee	Vicky (a name)	*β = v, ι = ee, η = ee*

A Greek ρ is made with the tip of the tongue, closer to a Spanish or Italian "r" than the English one.

Sound practice (not words)

To drill the three false friends together: βα · βη · ρα · ρε · βαρη · ηρε *— VAH · VEE · RAH · REH · VAH-ree · EE-reh.*

Watch Out: Do Not Read English

The most common mistake in this chapter is to read βήμα as "BAYMA" or μητέρα as "mah-ter-a". If a word seems to say something familiar, stop and read it letter by letter: β is v, η is ee, ρ is r.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern sounds of beta, eta and rho returned beginners' guides; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed that β is now "v" in Modern Greek (with the modern name *βήτα*, *vita*), that η says "ee" (shared with ι and υ) and that ρ is an "r", and several warned about the same false friends (η, ν, ρ, χ, ω). **Not checked against a source:** that Greek ρ is made with the tip of the tongue and is close to a Spanish or Italian r (none of the results described it); the letter names *ita* and *ro*; and the meanings, stress and spelling of the eight words, including the name *Βίκη*. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Fluent in 3 Months, Greek alphabet; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Wikiversity, Greek Language/Alphabet; Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

B says "v", H says "ee" and P says "r".

2. Which two letters now share the sound "ee"?

▼ Show answer

η and ι. (A third, υ, joins them in Chapter 5.)

3. Read these aloud: μερά · νερό · τρένο · βήμα

▼ Show answer

MEH-rah · neh-ROH · TREH-no · VEE-mah (“day”, “water”, “train”, “step”).

4. The small letters η, ν and ρ look like English n, v and p. Say what each really is.

▼ Show answer

η says “ee” (it only looks like n), ν says “n” (it only looks like v) and ρ says “r” (it only looks like p).

5. Write in Greek letters: *mother* · *cream* · *was* (copy the accent marks). Then say them.

▼ Show answer

μητέρα · κρεμά · ήταν — mee-TEH-rah · KREH-mah · EE-tahn.

Coming Up in Chapter 5

Three more false friends and one friend: **Υ Χ Π**. Υ looks like a Y and also says “ee”; Χ looks like an X and says a rough “kh”; Π is the “pi” you know from maths, and it says “p”.

Ψεύτικοι φίλοι 2 — False Friends 2

*Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 4 gave you the first three false friends. This chapter adds **Υ Χ Π**: two more look-alikes and one letter you may know from maths. After it you will know fifteen letters, and ζ will finally appear in a real word.*

Your Next Three Letters — Υ Χ Π

Υ υ

ypsilon (EEP-see-lon)

like the "ee" in *meet*, the same as η and ι

Memory hook: the capital Υ looks like a Y, and the small υ looks like a u, but both say "ee". Think of a smiling mouth, *u*, that spreads into "eee" for a photograph.

Χ χ

chi (KHEE)

a rough, throaty "kh", like the "ch" in Scottish *loch*

Memory hook: the capital Χ looks like an X, but never say "ks". It is a breath scraped across the back of the throat, like clearing your throat softly. The small χ is a small x with a longer left leg.

Π π

pi (PEE)

like the "p" in *spin*: a plain "p"

Memory hook: the capital Π is the pi of mathematics, a gate or doorway, and it says "p". The small π is a Π with a bar on top and two short legs, the shape of a table. Do not confuse it with ρ, the "p-shaped" letter from Chapter 4, which says "r".

Look-Alike Warnings

υ vs u: the small υ is not a u, and it says "ee". **Χ vs X:** says "kh", never "ks". (The letter that says "ks" is ξ, Chapter 8.) **π vs n, η and ν:** π has a flat bar on top, η has a curved shoulder and a long leg, and ν is a v-shape; read each one slowly. **Π vs P:** Π looks like a gate and says "p", while P looks like a P and says "r".

Three Letters, One Sound

Now **η, ι and υ all say "ee"**. You will see this in the words below: πιήα, μυήη and ρυζι all have an "ee" spelled with a different letter. Learn the spelling with each word, as you do for English *meet* and *meat*.

Pairs to Avoid for Now

Two letters in a row can change a sound completely, and that includes the letters you now know. In particular, **μπ** does not say "mp" and **ου** does not say "o-ee" or "o-u". They have their own sounds, taught in Greek Alphabet 2. The words below have been chosen to avoid them.

Read It — Real Words

With fifteen letters — A O T E I K M N Z B H P Y X Π — you can read all of these. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	πριν	PREEN	before	*one syllable, so no tonos*
2	πιήα	PEE-tah	pie, pita bread	*the word is the same as the English pita*
3	ποτέ	po-TEH	never, ever	*stress on the last syllable*
4	τιήοτα	TEE-po-tah	nothing, anything	*three syllables, stress on the first*
5	ρυζι	REE-zee	rice	*your first word with ζ*
6	μυήη	MEE-tee	nose	*υ and η both say "ee"*
7	χερί	KHEH-ree	hand	*χ is the throaty "kh"*
8	χαρτί	khar-TEE	paper	*stress on the last syllable*

The respelling "kh" stands for the throaty sound of χ, not for a "k" followed by an "h".

Sound practice (not words)

Drill the new letters in new places: **πα · πε · χα · χο · υκα · πυχο** *— PAH · PEH · KHAH · KHO · EE-kah · PEE-kho.*

Watch Out: Never "Ks"

The commonest slip in this chapter is to read X as "ks" (the letter x in *box*) or as "ch" in *chip*. In Greek it is always the throaty "kh". Practise it by saying the German name *Bach* or the Scottish *loch*.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern sounds of upsilon, chi and pi returned beginners' guides and some classical-Greek pages; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed that Modern Greek υ says "ee" (shared with η and ι) and that χ is a throaty "kh", as in *loch* (one result gave /x/), and the modern name *ýψιλον* was given. **Not checked against a source:** the sound and name of π, which the results did not cover; my remark that χ is softer before ε and ι (not taught here); the letter name *chi* said "khee"; and the meanings, stress and spelling of the eight words. One classical-Greek page described χ as "k plus a puff of air", which is the ancient value, not the modern one this course teaches. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Fluent in 3 Months, Greek alphabet; Hellenike, The Greek alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

Y says "ee", X says a throaty "kh" and Π says "p".

2. Which three letters now say "ee"?

▼ Show answer

η, ι and υ.

3. Read these aloud: πιτ́α · ρυζι · χερ́ι · χαρτι΄

▼ Show answer

PEE-tah · REE-zee · KHEH-ree · khar-TEE (“pie”, “rice”, “hand”, “paper”).

4. What is the difference between Π and P?

▼ Show answer

Π looks like a gate and says “p”; P looks like an English P and says “r”.

5. Write in Greek letters: *nose* · *rice* · *nothing* (copy the accent marks). Then say them.

▼ Show answer

μυτ́η · ρυζι · τιπ́οτα — MEE-tee · REE-zee · TEE-po-tah.

Coming Up in Chapter 6

The false friends are done. Now come new shapes with sounds you already know: **Γ Δ Λ**, the gamma, delta and lambda of science and maths. Their sounds are the soft “gh” of γ, the “th” of *this* for δ, and the plain “l” of λ.

Νέα σχήματα — New Shapes 1

*The false friends are behind you. From here the letters look different from English ones, so there is no look-alike to trip you up, only new shapes to learn. Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 6 teaches **Γ Δ Λ**: gamma, delta and lambda, which you may know from maths and science. After it you will know eighteen letters.*

Your Next Three Letters — Γ Δ Λ

Γ γ

gamma (GHAH-mah)

a soft "gh" before α and ο, but a "y" (as in *yes*) before ε, ι, η and υ

Memory hook: the capital Γ is an upside-down L, a hook hanging from a ceiling. The small γ looks like a y or a bird in flight. The sound is a soft rumble in the throat, like a gentle growl or a gargle without the water.

Δ δ

delta (DHEL-tah)

like the "th" in *this* (the voiced "th")

Memory hook: the capital Δ is a triangle, as at the mouth of a river (a delta). The small δ looks like a number 6 that has been tipped over, with a loop at the bottom. Put your tongue between your teeth and hum, "dhhh", as in *this* and *that*.

Λ λ

lambda (LAHM-dhah)

like the "l" in *lamp*

Memory hook: the capital Λ is an upside-down V, like a roof or the "A" with no crossbar. The small λ is a leaning stick with a short leg, the shape of a person running. It says a plain "l".

Two Sounds for One Letter: Gamma

Gamma is the first letter that changes its sound depending on the vowel after it. Learn two rules:

If γ is followed by…	It says…	Example
α or ο	**a soft “gh”**	γατάκι (GHAH-tah)
ε, ι, η or υ	**a “y” sound**	γη (YEE)

In this book, “gh” stands for the soft rumbling sound, not for a hard English “g” as in go. Other cases (γ before another γ or before κ, and γ before consonants) are taught in Greek Alphabet 2.

> **Look-Alike Warnings**
>
> **γ vs y and ν:** the small γ has a tail that drops below the line, like a y, and says “gh” or “y”; do not read it as an English y, as in *yes*, every time. **δ vs 6:** the small δ is tipped like a 6 and is a letter, not a number. **Λ vs Δ vs α:** Λ is an open roof and Δ is a closed triangle. **Λ vs ∧:** the capital Λ is the maths symbol for “and”, and in Greek it says “l”.

Read It — Real Words

With eighteen letters — A O T E I K M N Z B H P Y X Π Γ Δ Λ — you can read all of these. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	γατάκι	GHAH-tah	cat	*γ before α says “gh”*
2	γάλα	GHAH-lah	milk	*γ and λ in one word*
3	γη	YEE	earth, land	*γ before η says “y”; one syllable, so no tonos*
4	δεν	DHEN	not	*the word that makes a Greek verb negative*
5	δέκα	DHEH-kah	ten	*δ is the soft “th”, as in this*

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
6	δυό	DHEE-o	two	*υ says "ee"*
7	λιγό	LEE-gho	a little	*γ before o says "gh"*
8	αγαπη	ah-GHAH-pee	love	*stress on the second syllable*

Sound practice (not words)

Drill the three new letters: γα · γε · δα · δι · λα · λο · γαδελο *— GHAH · YEH · DHAH · DHEE · LAH · LO · ghah-DHEH-lo.*

Watch Out: Do Not Say "D" or "G"

The two biggest slips are to read δ as a hard English "d" (so δεκα becomes "DEKA") and γ as a hard "g" (so γατα becomes "GATA"). Greek has no hard "d" or "g" for these letters: δ is always the soft "th" and γ is always "gh" or "y". (The hard sounds are written with letter pairs, which come in Greek Alphabet 2.)

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern sounds of gamma, delta and lambda returned beginners' guides; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed on the main facts: γ is a soft, voiced sound before α and ο, and a "y" sound before the "e" and "ee" sounds; δ is the voiced "th" of *this* (one result said it is softer than English); λ is a plain "l". **Not checked against a source:** the letter names as said (*GHAH-mah*, *DHEL-tah*, *LAHM-dhah*); that the "y" sound of γ applies before η and υ as well as ε and ι (results listed ε and ι, and "the e and ee sounds"); the English comparison "a gargle without the water"; and the meanings, stress and spelling of the eight words. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Fluent in 3 Months, Greek alphabet; Vaia, Greek letter sounds; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

Γ says a soft “gh” (or “y” before ε, ι, η, υ), Δ says the “th” of *this* and Λ says “l”.

2. How is γ said in γατα and in γη?

▼ Show answer

In γατα it is followed by α, so it says a soft “gh” (GHAH-tah). In γη it is followed by η, so it says “y” (YEE).

3. Read these aloud: γαλα · δεκα · δυο · λιγο

▼ Show answer

GHAH-lah · DHEH-kah · DHEE-o · LEE-gho (“milk”, “ten”, “two”, “a little”).

4. Is the Greek δ a hard “d”? What is its sound?

▼ Show answer

No. δ is the soft, voiced “th” of *this* and *that*.

5. Write in Greek letters: *cat* · *love* · *not* (copy the accent marks). Then say them.

▼ Show answer

γατα · αγαπη · δεν — GHAH-tah · ah-GHAH-pee · DHEN.

Coming Up in Chapter 7

Three more new shapes: **Θ Φ Σ**. Θ says the “th” of *thin*, Φ says “f”, and Σ is the letter that has a special form at the end of a word (σ becomes ς).

Νέα σχήματα 2 — New Shapes 2

*Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 6 taught gamma, delta and lambda. This chapter teaches **Θ Φ Σ**: theta, phi and sigma, the letters of theatre, photo and sigma. Sigma has two small forms, one for the middle of a word and one for the end, and that is the main new idea. After this chapter you will know twenty-one letters, and with them you can read the names of Athens and Greece.*

Your Next Three Letters — Θ Φ Σ

Θ θ

thita (THEE-tah)

like the "th" in *thin* (the unvoiced "th")

Memory hook: the capital Θ is a circle with a bar across the middle, like an eye looking straight ahead. The small θ is an egg with a bar. Put your tongue between your teeth and blow, "thhh", as in *think* and *thank*.

Φ φ

fi (FEE)

like the "f" in *fish*

Memory hook: the capital Φ is a circle with a line through it, like a coin standing on a pole. The small φ is a loop on a stick. It says "f", so think of *f*ish on a pole. It is the sound of English *ph* in *photo*.

Σ σ ς

sigma (SEEGH-mah)

like the "s" in *sun*

Memory hook: the capital Σ is a zigzag, like a sideways M, and it says "s". The small σ looks like an o with a flag on top, and it is used at the start or in the middle of a word. At the *end* of a word the small letter changes to **ς**, which looks like a small tailed c or a snake.

Two Small Forms of Sigma

Form	Where it is used	Example
Σ	capital, at the start of a name or sentence	Σοφιά (soh-FEE-ah), a name
σ	start or middle of a word	σαλατα, σημέρα
ς	only at the end of a word	φιλος

Both small forms say the same "s". A classic mistake is to write σ at the end of a word. Always use ς for the last letter, and σ everywhere else.

Look-Alike Warnings

σ vs ο: the small σ has a short flag on top, and the small ο is a plain round o. Look closely, because the two are easy to mix up. **ς vs the number 5 or the letter c:** ς is a letter, and it only ever comes at the end of a word. **θ vs ο:** θ is an egg with a bar, not a zero. **Φ vs Ø:** Φ has the line going right through the circle, in both capital and small forms. **φ vs ψ:** the next chapter has ψ, a different letter; check the shapes then.

Careful with Σ

In some words σ sounds more like "z" when a voiced consonant follows it, for example in σμ. This course keeps to the plain "s" and chooses words without that case; Greek Alphabet 2 takes it further.

Read It — Real Words

With twenty-one letters — Α Ο Τ Ε Ι Κ Μ Ν Ζ Β Η Ρ Υ Χ Π Γ Δ Λ Θ Φ Σ — you can read all of these. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	φετά	FEH-tah	feta (the cheese)	*φ says "f"*
2	φιλός	FEE-los	friend (male)	*ς at the end of the word*
3	σαλατά	sah-LAH-tah	salad	*σ at the start*
4	πατατά	pah-TAH-tah	potato	*stress on the second syllable*
5	θαλασσα	THAH-lah-sah	sea	*σσ says one "s", as the νν of Chapter 3 said one "n"*
6	σήμερα	SEE-meh-rah	today	*η says "ee"*
7	Αθηνά	ah-THEE-nah	Athens	*capital A, because it is a name*
8	Ελλαδα	eh-LAH-dhah	Greece	*λλ says one "l"; δ says "th" as in this*

Greeks call their country Ελλαδα (Hellas), not "Greece".

Sound practice (not words)

Drill the new letters, including the ending: θα · θι · φα · φο · σα · σε · θεφος — THAH · THEE · FAH · FO · SAH · SEH · THEH-fos.

> **Watch Out: Do Not Mix Up θ and δ**
>
> Greek has *two* "th" sounds, and you now know both. θ is the unvoiced "th" of *thin* (Αθήνα), and δ is the voiced "th" of *this* (Ελλάδα). To tell them apart, put a finger on your throat: it buzzes for δ and stays quiet for θ.

> **Not Yet Verified**

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern sounds of theta, phi and sigma returned beginners' guides; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed that Modern Greek θ is the "th" of *think*, φ is "f", and that ς is the form used only at the end of a word and says the same "s" as σ. **Not checked against a source:** the letter names as said (*THEE-tah*, *FEE*, *SEEGH-mah*); my remark that σ can sound like "z" before a voiced consonant (from general knowledge only); that σσ and λλ each say a single sound; the meanings, stress and spelling of the eight words; and the finger-on-throat test. Some sources had garbled characters at the place where ς appeared, so check the shape of ς against a clean source. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): greek-language.com, Grammar 01; Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; RemNote, Greek alphabet study guide; Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

Θ says the "th" of *thin*, Φ says "f" and Σ says "s".

2. When is the small sigma written ς, and when σ?

▼ Show answer

ς is used only at the end of a word; σ is used at the start and in the middle. Both say "s".

3. Read these aloud: φετάα · φιλος · σημέρα · θαλασσα

▼ Show answer

FEH-tah · FEE-los · SEE-meh-rah · THAH-lah-sah ("feta", "friend", "today", "sea").

4. What is the difference between θ and δ?

▼ Show answer

θ is the unvoiced “th” of *thin*; δ is the voiced “th” of *this*.

5. Read the two names aloud, then say which letters are doubled: Αθηνά · Ελλαδα

▼ Show answer

ah-THEE-nah · eh-LAH-dhah. In Ελλαδα the λ is doubled (λλ), and it says a single “l”.

Coming Up in Chapter 8

The last three letters: **Ξ Ψ Ω**. Ξ says “ks”, Ψ says “ps”, and Ω is the second letter for “o” (it sounds exactly like ο). Then you will know all 24 letters.

Τα τελευταία τρία — The Last Three

Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 7 left you with twenty-one letters. This chapter teaches the last three, ***Ξ Ψ Ω****, and then puts all* ***24 letters*** *on one page. After it you know the whole alphabet, and the two chapters that follow are about the accent mark and reading practice.*

Your Last Three Letters — Ξ Ψ Ω

Ξ ξ

ksi (KSEE)

like the "x" in *box*: "ks"

Memory hook: the capital Ξ is three horizontal bars, like a stack of three logs, and it says "ks". The small ξ is a curly letter with a hook at the top and the bottom, like a ζ with an extra curl. Say "ks" as in *fox*.

Ψ ψ

psi (PSEE)

like the "ps" in *lips*: "ps"

Memory hook: the capital Ψ is a trident, the weapon of the sea god Poseidon, and it says "ps". The small ψ is a trident with a rounded cup. Say "ps" as the sound at the end of *lips*, but at the start of a word.

Ω ω

omega (oh-MEH-ghah)

the same clean "o" as o

Memory hook: the capital Ω is a horseshoe, and the small ω looks like a w, but it says "o", exactly as o does. Omega means "big o" and omicron means "little o", but today you cannot hear the difference.

Look-Alike Warnings

ω vs w: the small ω is not a w, and it says "o". **ω vs o:** both say "o", so learn the spelling with each word. **ξ vs ζ:** both are curly; ξ has two curls and says "ks", and ζ has one curl and a tail and says "z". **ψ vs φ:** ψ is a trident and says "ps", and φ is a loop on a stick and says "f". **Ξ vs E:** the capital Ξ has three full bars and no spine, so it is not an E.

Two Letters, One Sound — Again

Besides η, ι and υ (all “ee”), **ο and ω both say “o”**. Seven vowel letters (α ε η ι ο υ ω) write five vowel sounds: *ah, eh, ee, o* and the “oo” sound, which a pair of letters makes (ου), taught in Greek Alphabet 2.

All 24 Letters

Here is the whole alphabet in its own order. The last column says where you met the letter.

#	LETTER	NAME	SOUND	CHAPTER
1	A α	alpha	ah	*1*
2	B β	vita	v	*4*
3	Γ γ	gamma	gh (y before ε ι η υ)	*6*
4	Δ δ	delta	dh (th as in *this*)	*6*
5	E ε	epsilon	eh	*2*
6	Z ζ	zeta	z	*3*
7	H η	ita	ee	*4*
8	Θ θ	thita	th (as in *thin*)	*7*
9	I ι	iota	ee	*2*
10	K κ	kappa	k	*2*
11	Λ λ	lambda	l	*6*
12	M μ	mu	m	*3*
13	N ν	nu	n	*3*

#	LETTER	NAME	SOUND	CHAPTER
14	Ξ ξ	ksi	ks	*8*
15	Ο ο	omicron	o	*1*
16	Π π	pi	p	*5*
17	Ρ ρ	ro	r	*4*
18	Σ σ ς	sigma	s	*7*
19	Τ τ	tau	t	*1*
20	Υ υ	ypsilon	ee	*5*
21	Φ φ	fi	f	*7*
22	Χ χ	chi	kh	*5*
23	Ψ ψ	psi	ps	*8*
24	Ω ω	omega	o	*8*

Count the vowel letters: α ε η ι ο υ ω is seven, and the other seventeen are consonant letters, as Chapter 1 said.

Read It — Real Words

Now you can read any Greek word letter by letter, though a few letter pairs (taught in Greek Alphabet 2) still change their sounds. These eight words use the three new letters. Read each aloud, with the stress on the CAPITAL syllable.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ξερώ	KSEH-ro	I know	*ξ says "ks", ω says "o"*

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
2	ξανά	ksah-NAH	again	*stress on the last syllable*
3	ψάρι	PSAH-ree	fish	*ψ says "ps" at the start of a word*
4	ψωμί	pso-MEE	bread	*ψ and ω side by side*
5	ώρα	O-rah	hour, time	*ω at the start of a word*
6	τώρα	TO-rah	now	*ώρα with τ in front*
7	ζωή	zo-EE	life	*ζ, ω and η: "z", "o", "ee"*
8	ωκεανός	o-keh-ah-NOS	ocean	*four syllables, stress on the last*

Sound practice (not words)

Drill the last three letters: ξα · ξι · ψα · ψε · ωτα · ξυψω *— KSAH · KSEE · PSAH · PSEH · O-tah · KSEE-pso.*

Watch Out: Say Both Letters

English never starts a word with "ks" or "ps" (we say *psalm* and *xylophone* as "sam" and "zy-").

Greek does: say ψάρι as PSAH-ree, with both sounds, and ξέρω as KSEH-ro. It takes practice, so say them slowly, then faster.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the modern sounds of xi, psi and omega returned beginners' guides; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed that Modern Greek ξ is "ks", ψ is "ps" and ω is the same "o" as ο, and that the alphabet has 24 letters. **Not checked against a source:** the letter names as said (*KSEE*, *PSEE*, *oh-MEH-ghah*); the English comparison for starting a word with "ks" and "ps"; the Poseidon trident link (a memory aid, not a fact about the letter); the meanings, stress and spelling of the eight words; and every letter name in the all-letters table. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Polyglot Club, Greek Letters and Pronunciation; Hellenike, The Greek alphabet; Preply, Greek alphabet; Let's Learn, The Greek Alphabet. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three letters did you learn in this chapter, and what sound does each make?

▼ Show answer

Ξ says "ks", Ψ says "ps" and Ω says "o", the same as ο.

2. Which letters now say "ee", and which say "o"?

▼ Show answer

η, ι and υ say "ee"; ο and ω say "o".

3. Read these aloud: ψάρι · ψωμί· ξέρω · τώρα

▼ Show answer

PSAH-ree · pso-MEE · KSEH-ro · TO-rah ("fish", "bread", "I know", "now").

4. Which letter in the alphabet looks like a w but says "o", and which looks like a v but says "n"?

▼ Show answer

The small ω looks like a w and says "o"; the small ν looks like a v and says "n".

5. Write in Greek letters: *fish* · *life* · *ocean* (copy the accent marks). Then say them.

▼ Show answer

ψάρι · ζωή· ωκεανός — PSAH-ree · zo-EE · o-keh-ah-NOS.

Coming Up in Chapter 9

You know all 24 letters. Chapter 9 turns to the accent mark, the **tonos**, which shows the stressed syllable, and to the Greek punctuation marks, including the **question mark** that looks like a semicolon (;) and the raised dot (·).

Τόνος και στίξη — Stress and Punctuation

You know all 24 letters, and you have been reading the little accent mark since Greek Alphabet 1 Chapter 2 without a proper explanation. This chapter gives it one. It also teaches the two punctuation marks that look different from English: the Greek question mark and the raised dot. Then you can read a short exchange, and capital-letter signs, from start to finish.

The Tonos: One Accent Mark

*Modern Greek is written in the **monotonic** system, which has **one** accent mark, the **tonos** (τόνος, "tone"). It is a small slanted stroke over a vowel, like the acute accent in French, and it shows **which syllable of a word is stressed**. The old system used several marks (the grave, the circumflex and the breathing marks); the monotonic system keeps only the tonos, and it has been the official standard since 1982.*

The mark	Where	Example
ά έ ή ί ό ύ ώ	on the vowel of the stressed syllable: α έ ή ί ο ύ ώ	γατά (GHAH-tah)

Only a vowel carries the mark, never a consonant. The mark tells you which vowel to say louder and longer.

Three rules to learn

- **Words of two or more syllables carry the mark**, on the vowel of the stressed syllable. ποτέ and πότε have exactly the same letters and different stress, and the mark is what separates them: PO-teh, po-TEH.
- **One-syllable words normally carry no mark**, because there is only one syllable to stress: τι, δεν, πριν.
- **A few one-syllable words do carry it**, to tell them apart from another word with the same letters (see the next section).

Capital letters

When a word starts with a capital and a stressed vowel, the tonos is written to the left of the capital, as in Άννα and Έλα. In text printed entirely in capitals, such as signs, the tonos is usually left off, as the signs below show.

When Stress Changes the Meaning

Because the mark shows the stress, two words can have the same letters and mean different things.

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ποτέ	PO-teh	when	*stress on the first syllable*
2	πότε	po-TEH	never, ever	*stress on the last syllable*
3	ή	EE	or	*a one-syllable word that does carry the mark*
4	η	EE	the (feminine)	*the same sound, but no mark, so the eye tells them apart*
5	πως	POS	how (in a question)	*another one-syllable word with a mark*

The pair ή / η is the commonest example of a one-syllable word that is marked to keep it apart from a look-alike.

Two Punctuation Marks That Look Different

#	MARK	LOOKS LIKE	WORKS AS	EXAMPLE
1	;	an English semicolon	the Greek **question mark**	Ποτέ; (When?)
2	·	a dot raised to the middle of the line	the Greek **semicolon** or **colon** (a pause)	Ξερώ· ξερώ.

The full stop, the comma, the exclamation mark and the colon are the same as in English. Greek also uses the guillemets « » for quotations.

> **Look-Alike Warning**
>
> A Greek ; asks a question, so a sentence ending in ; is a question, not an unfinished thought. The raised dot · is easy to miss in small print, so look for a tiny dot in the middle of the line.

Read It — Short Reading

A mini-dialogue

Read these four lines aloud, using the stress marks. Question marks tell you when to raise your voice.

#	GREEK	RESPELLING	ENGLISH
1	Ποτέ;	PO-teh?	When?
2	Τωρα.	TO-rah.	Now.
3	Πόσο;	PO-so?	How much?
4	Δεκα.	DHEH-kah.	Ten.

Signs in capitals

*On shop and road signs Greek is usually written in capitals with no tonos. In capitals there is only one form of sigma, **Σ**, so the final ς of φιλος becomes the same Σ as the first letter of σαλατα.*

#	ON THE SIGN	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	WRITTEN IN LOWER CASE
1	ΑΘΗΝΑ	ah-THEE-nah	Athens	*Αθηνά*
2	ΕΛΛΑΔΑ	eh-LAH-dhah	Greece	*Ελλαδα*
3	ΨΩΜΙ	pso-MEE	bread	*ψωμί*
4	ΓΑΛΑ	GHAH-lah	milk	*γαλα*
5	ΝΕΡΟ	neh-ROH	water	*νερό*
6	ΦΕΤΑ	FEH-tah	feta	*φετα*
7	ΦΙΛΟΣ	FEE-los	friend	*φιλος*

Stress in longer words

Divide each word into syllables, then say the marked one louder. Each has a vowel for every syllable.

#	WORD	SYLLABLES	STRESSED
1	μητερά	μη · τέ · ρα	*the second: mee-TEH-rah*
2	αγαπή	α · γά · πη	*the second: ah-GHAH-pee*
3	τιπότα	τί · πο · τα	*the first: TEE-po-tah*
4	ωκεανός	ω · κε · α · νός	*the last: o-keh-ah-NOS*

Watch Out: Do Not Skip the Mark

A mark is not decoration. If you say ποτέ as PO-teh you have said “when” and not “never”. Look at the mark first, then the letters.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the monotonic system and Greek punctuation returned learner sites and a few reference pages; I did not read any page in full. The results agreed on: one accent mark, the tonos, since 1982 (one learning site gave 1976, so the date is uncertain); that monosyllables generally have no mark and that ή is marked to tell it from η; that πώς (how, in a question) is marked, while πως meaning "that" is not (not taught here); and that the Greek question mark looks like a semicolon and a raised dot serves as a semicolon or colon. **Not checked against a source:** that all-capital signs usually drop the tonos (from general knowledge); that the tonos goes to the left of a capital (one source only); that guillemets are the standard quotation marks; the meanings, stress and spelling of the words and signs, and the exact usage of the raised dot in the example *Ξέρω· ξέρω* (a reading drill, not a real sentence). One source argued that the rule on unstressed monosyllables is not always followed. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Greek Notes, Diacritics: the monotonic system; GreekPod101, Greek alphabet made easy: punctuation; Sublearn, Stress marks (tonos); Bill Mounce, Greek punctuation and syllabification. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. What does the tonos show, and where is it written?

▼ Show answer

It shows the stressed syllable. It is written over the vowel of that syllable, and only words of two or more syllables normally carry it.

2. Read these aloud and say what each means: πότε · ποτέ

▼ Show answer

PO-teh ("when") and po-TEH ("never, ever"). Only the stress differs.

3. What does ; mean in Greek, and what does · do?

▼ Show answer

The ; is the question mark. The raised dot · works as a semicolon or colon (a pause).

4. Read these signs aloud, then write the first one in lower case with its accent: ΑΘΗΝΑ · ΨΩΜΙ · ΦΙΛΟΣ

▼ Show answer

ah-THEE-nah · pso-MEE · FEE-los. ΑΘΗΝΑ in lower case is Αθηνά, with the tonos over the η.

5. Read the dialogue aloud from memory: Ποτέ; Τώρα. Πόσο; Δεκά.

▼ Show answer

PO-teh? TO-rah. PO-so? DHEH-kah. (“When? Now. How much? Ten.”)

Coming Up in Chapter 10

The last chapter puts everything together: real words, names, signs and a short text using all 24 letters, a recap of the whole course, and a look at what Greek Alphabet 2 will add (the letter pairs, such as **ου** and **ει**).

Διαβάζουμε — Reading Practice

*This is the last chapter, and it has no new letters. You know all 24, the tonos and the two punctuation marks, so the job now is to **read**: place names, a café menu, signs, and a short text of your own. Read everything aloud, slowly, and check the stress mark first. Every word below uses only the letters and rules you have already learned.*

Two Reminders Before You Read

Reminder	What to do
Doubled letters	A doubled consonant says a single sound: **νν** (Ἄννα), **σσ** (θαλ̓ασσα, Θεσσαλονικ́η), **λλ** (Ελλαδα).
Look at the small letters	ν is n, ρ is r, η is ee, υ is ee, ω is o, χ is kh, β is v, π is p. Read the

Reminder	What to do
	sound, not the shape.

Read It — Places

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	Αθήνα	ah-THEE-nah	Athens	*θ is the "th" of thin*
2	Θεσσαλονίκη	theh-sah-lo-NEE-kee	Thessaloniki	*five syllables; σσ says one "s"*
3	Κρήτη	KREE-tee	Crete	*η says "ee"*
4	Ρόδος	RO-dhos	Rhodes	*δ is the "th" of this*
5	Κύπρος	KEE-pros	Cyprus	*υ says "ee"*
6	Ακρόπολη	ah-KRO-po-lee	Acropolis	*stress on the second syllable*

Read It — At the Café

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	καφές	kah-FEHS	coffee	*ς at the end of the word*
2	κρασί	krah-SEE	wine	*stress on the last syllable*
3	ζαχαρη	ZAH-khah-ree	sugar	*ζ and χ in one word*
4	ταβερνα	tah-VEHR-nah	taverna (traditional restaurant)	*β says "v"*
5	ταξί	tak-SEE	taxi	*ξ says "ks"*

#	WORD	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	NOTE
6	μετρο΄	meh-TRO	metro	*stress on the last syllable*

Read It — Signs in Capitals

Signs are written in capitals with no tonos, so you must know the word, or work out the stress from the lower-case form shown here.

#	ON THE SIGN	RESPELLING	ENGLISH	LOWER CASE
1	ΤΑΞΙ	tak-SEE	taxi	*ταξι΄*
2	ΜΕΤΡΟ	meh-TRO	metro	*μετρο΄*
3	ΚΑΦΕΣ	kah-FEHS	coffee	*καφές*
4	ΤΑΒΕΡΝΑ	tah-VEHR-nah	taverna	*ταβέρνα*
5	ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΗ	ah-KRO-po-lee	Acropolis	*Ακρόπολη*
6	ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ	theh-sah-lo-NEE-kee	Thessaloniki	*Θεσσαλονίκη*

A Short Text

Here is your first connected Greek, built from words you already know, with two new little words (την, στην) that you can read letter by letter. Read it aloud first, then check the English.

Reading text

Ξέρω την Αθήνα.

KSEH-ro teen ah-THEE-nah.

I know Athens.

Τωρά θελῶ νερο, ψωμί, φετά, σαλατά.

TO-rah THEH-lo neh-ROH, pso-MEE, FEH-tah, sah-LAH-tah.

Now I want water, bread, feta, salad.

Η μητερά ήταν στην Αθήνα· ο φίλος ήταν στην Ελλάδα.

ee mee-TEH-rah EE-tahn steen ah-THEE-nah; o FEE-los EE-tahn steen eh-LAH-dhah.

Mother was in Athens; the friend was in Greece.

Ποτέ; Σήμερα.

PO-teh? SEE-meh-rah.

When? Today.

The third line uses the raised dot · (here shown as a pause, like a semicolon). The text uses most of the alphabet, not all 24 letters, and a few letters (such as β, υ and χ) appear in the word lists above instead.

Not Yet Verified

A web search run on 2026-11-17 for the café, transport and place words found food and transport words (*καφές*, *κρασί*, *ταβέρνα*, *ταξί*, *μετρό*) in travel-phrase sites; I did not read any page in full. One result stressed *κρασί* differently from another, so check it. **Not found in any result:** Θεσσαλονίκη, Ακρόπολη and Κρήτη, and the other place and word forms. **Not checked against a source:** all the stress marks and respellings above, the grammar of the short text (*την*, *στην*, *η μητέρα*, *ο φίλος*, *θέλω*), the meanings, and the claim that signs are written in capitals without the tonos. Please check these before relying on them.

Sources for This Chapter

Search results (2026-11-17): Greek Trip Planner, Basic Greek words for travellers; Preply, Greek travel phrases; Polyglot Club, Common foods and drinks; Athens Tourism, Useful Greek words. Only the titles and short summaries in the search results were used.

Try It Yourself — Πρακτική

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these aloud: Κρητή · Κυπρος · Ροδος

▼ Show answer

KREE-tee · KEE-pros · RO-dhos (Crete, Cyprus, Rhodes).

2. Read these signs: ΤΑΞΙ · ΜΕΤΡΟ · ΚΑΦΕΣ

▼ Show answer

tak-SEE · meh-TRO · kah-FEHS (taxi, metro, coffee).

3. Write in Greek letters: *now* · *bread* · *water* · *today* (copy the accent marks).

▼ Show answer

τώρα · ψωμί · νερό · σήμερα

4. Read Θεσσαλονίκη syllable by syllable and say which letters are doubled.

▼ Show answer

θε · σα · λο · νί · κη: theh-sah-lo-NEE-kee. The σ is doubled (σσ), and it says a single "s".

5. Read the first two lines of the short text aloud, then give them in English.

▼ Show answer

KSEH-ro teen ah-THEE-nah. TO-rah THEH-lo neh-ROH, pso-MEE, FEH-tah, sah-LAH-tah. "I know Athens. Now I want water, bread, feta, salad."

Recap of the Whole Course

Chapters	What you learned
1 to 3	The friends: A O T, E I K, M N Z

Chapters	What you learned
4 and 5	The false friends: Β Η Ρ, Υ Χ Π (and η, ι, υ all say “ee”)
6 to 8	The new shapes: Γ Δ Λ, Θ Φ Σ (σ and ς), Ξ Ψ Ω (and ο, ω both say “o”)
9	The tonos, one-syllable words, the

Chapters	What you learned
	question mark ; and the raised dot ·
10	Reading real words, names, signs and a short text

Course Complete

You have finished **Greek Alphabet 1**. You can read the 24 capital and small letters, the final sigma ς, the tonos and the Greek question mark, and you can read single letters and ordinary words aloud. You can read a Greek street sign, a menu and a short text, you know which letters are false friends, and you know which sounds are shared by more than one letter (ee and o).

What Greek Alphabet 2 Will Add

Greek Alphabet 2 takes the next step with **letter pairs**: the vowel pairs (**ει οι υι αι ου αυ ευ**) and consonant pairs (**μπ ντ γκ τσ τζ**), how γ and χ change before front vowels, the diaeresis, handwriting, and more spelling and reading practice. After that come the Basic Conversation courses, where you start to speak.