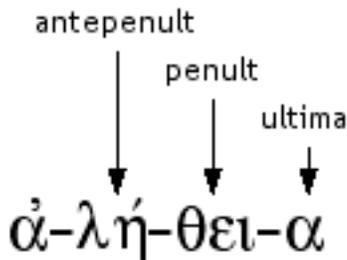


A Guide to Greek Accents

I. Basic Terminology

1. There are three accent marks in Greek: **acute** (´), **circumflex** (ˆ), and **grave** (`).



2. The last three syllables of a Greek word are called: **ultima**, **penult**, and **antepenult**.

3. A syllable is either **long** or **short**, depending on the vowel in the syllable.

- * long vowels: η, ω, and diphthongs (except final αι and οι -- they are considered short for accent purpose)
- * short vowels: ε and ο
- * variable vowels: α, ι, and υ (they can be either long or short)

4. A word with three or more syllables is **polysyllabic**; a **disyllabic** word has two syllables; and a word with only one syllable is **monosyllabic**.

5. You might also encounter these terms:

- * oxytone = a word which has an acute on the ultima, e.g., θεός.
- * paroxytone = a word which has an acute on the penult, e.g., λόγος.
- * proparoxytone = a word which has an acute on the antepenult, e.g., κύριος.
- * perispomenon = a word which has an circumflex on the ultima, e.g., θεοῦ.
- * properispomenon = a word which has an circumflex on the penult, e.g., δοῦλος.
- * barytone = a word whose ultima is unaccented, e.g., λόγος.

II. The Accent Rules

1. Only the last three syllables of a Greek word may be accented.

(This is also known as The Antepenult Rule: A Greek accent cannot fall further from the end of the word than the antepenult.)

2. The acute may fall on all three syllables, the circumflex may fall on ultima and penult, and the grave may fall on ultima only.

(aka The Maximum Accent Sustention Rule: The acute can sustain three syllables, the circumflex can sustain two syllables, and the grave can sustain only one syllable.)

3. The Circumflex Rule: The circumflex can stand over long syllables only, while both the acute and grave can stand over either a long or a short syllable.

4. The Grave Rule: When a word has the acute on the ultima, the acute becomes grave when the word is followed by another word (i.e., when it is not the last word of a clause or sentence). Think of the grave accent as a substitute for the final acute. Ex. θεός is the lexical form, but θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1).

This rule does not apply if that next word is an enclitic (see below) or the interrogative pronoun τίς.

5. The Ultima Rule: Depending on whether the ultima is long or short,

(a) If the ultima is short, any one of the last three syllables can receive an accent. If the accent falls on the antepenult, it must be acute (rule #1). If the accent falls on the penult, it must be circumflex if the penult is long, and acute if short. If the accent falls on the ultima, it is acute or grave (rule #4).

(b) If the ultima is long, only the last two syllables can receive an accent. If the accent falls on the penult, it must be acute. If the accent falls on the ultima, it can be any accent.

Examples:

	If Antepenult is accented	If Penult is accented	If Ultima is accented
If Ultima is short	κύριος	If Penult is long δοῦλος If Penult is short λόγος	θεός θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
If Ultima is long	No Accent Possible (cf. κυρίου)	δούλου λόγου	γραφὴ γραφὴ λέγει. γραφῆς

6. The Noun Accent Rule: Noun accents are **persistent** -- the accents try to stay on the same syllable as the lexical form.

Example: see [Paradigm of λόγος](#).

Additional rules regarding noun accents:

- * In the genitive and dative, if the ultima is accented, it must be a circumflex, e.g., θεοῦ.

- * First declension genitive plural nouns always have a circumflex on the ultima, regardless of where the accent is in the lexical form, e.g., γλωσσαῶν. (This rule applies only to nouns, not adjectives or pronouns.)
- * The vowel length of alpha:
 - The alpha in the ultima of the neuter plural nominative/accusative is always short, e.g., δῶρα.
 - The alpha in the ultima of all first declension plural accusative is always long, e.g., γλώσσαζ.
 - The alpha in the ultima of first declension singular accusative corresponds to its singular nominative, e.g., γλῶσσαν.

7. The Verb Accent Rule: Verb accents are **recessive** -- the accents try to move away from the ultima as far as possible.

Example: see [PAI paradigm of λύω](#). Note that for the singular forms (λύω, λύεις, λύει), the accent is on the penult, but for the plural forms (λύομεν, λύετε, λύουσι), the accent recedes back to the antepenult.

Additional rules regarding verb accents:

- * The accent does not precede the augment in a compound verb, e.g. ἀνέβην (not ἄνεβην), from ἀναβαίνω.
- * The accent of the second aorist infinitive is not recessive, but in the active is placed on the ultima, and in the middle on the penult.

III. Accents Regarding Contraction, Crasis and Elision

1. If either of the syllables to be contracted had an accent, the contracted syllable has an accent:

- * A contracted antepenult has the acute, e.g., φιλούμενος.
- * A contracted penult has the circumflex when the ultima is short, e.g., φιλοῦμεν; the acute, when the ultima is long, e.g., φιλούντων.
- * A contracted ultima has the circumflex, e.g., φιλῶ.

2. In crasis, the first word (as less important) loses its accent, e.g., κάγώ (= καί + ἐγώ).

3. In elision, oxytone prepositions and conjunctions lose their accent, e.g., δι' ἔμοῦ (Jn 14:6).

IV. Accents Regarding Enclitics and Proclitics

Normally, each Greek word has one accent mark. However, there are certain words that lose their accent. If a word loses its accent to the preceding word (i.e., it is pronounced as part of the preceding word), it is an **enclitic**. If a word loses its accent to the following word, it is a **proclitic**.

Some common enclitics:

- * Indefinite pronoun τις (all forms)
- * Personal pronouns μου and σου (all oblique case forms)
- * Present indicative of εἶμι (all forms except εἶ)
- * Indefinite adverbs ποτε, που, etc.
- * Particles γε, τε, etc.

Some common proclitics:

- * The article ὁ, ἡ, οἱ, αἱ (all the "vowel" forms)
- * Prepositions εἰς, ἐκ (ἐξ), ἐν
- * Conjunctions εἰ, ὥς
- * Negative particle οὐ (οὐκ, οὐχ)

Proclitics give rise to no special rules of accent; they simply have no accent and produce no changes in the accenting of preceding or following words. The enclitics give rise to the following rules:

A. The word before the enclitic:

1. It does not change an acute to grave on the ultima. Ex. πατήρ μου (Jn 6:32, not πατήρ μου).
2. If it has an acute on the antepenult, or a circumflex on the penult, it takes an additional acute on the ultima. Ex. αἶμά μου (Jn 6:55); ὄνοματί μου (Jn 14:13).
3. If it is itself a proclitic or an enclitic, it has an acute on the ultima. Ex. σάρξ μου ἐστίν (Jn 6:51).

B. The enclitic:

1. It retains its accent if it begins or ends a clause. Ex. ἔστιν γεγραμμένον (Jn 6:45).
2. If the preceding word has an acute on the penult, a dissyllabic enclitic retains its accent (to avoid three successive unaccented syllables). Ex. ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν (Jn 5:27). But a monosyllabic enclitic loses its accent. Ex. πατέρα μου (Jn 8:19).

V. Putting It All Together

Note: The Accent Rules do not predict accents, only what accent may be used if a syllable is accented.

The rules above do not tell us whether the accent is λόγος or λογός. So we must start with the lexical form.

“The lexical form provides two crucial pieces of information you must know to describe the accent of any other form of the same word: (1) the particular type of accent (acute or circumflex), and (2) the starting position (antepenult, penult, ultima) of that accent.” (Stevens, p.19)

Accent Determination Procedure:

- Step 1. What is the lexical form?
- Step 2. Is the word a noun or verb?
- Step 3. Is the ultima long or short?
- Step 4. Is there other special consideration?

Examples:

- * ΟΙΚΟΥ - The lexical form is Οἶκος. It is a noun, so the accent will try to stay on the penult. The ultima is long, so the circumflex must change to an acute. Thus, Οἴκου.
- * προφηται - The lexical form is προφήτης. It is a noun, so the accent will try to stay on the penult. The ultima is short (final αι and οι are considered short), and the penult is long, so the accent must be circumflex. Thus, προφήται. Cf. προφήταις, because the ultima is no longer short (not αι, but αις).
- * ανθρωποις - The lexical form is ἄνθρωπος. It is a noun, but the ultima is long (not οι, but οισ), so the accent cannot stay on the antepenult. The long ultima forces the accent to the penult. Thus, ἀνθρώποις.
- * φωνης - The lexical form is φωνή. It is a noun, so the accent will try to stay on the ultima. The ultima is long, so it can be φωνής or φωνῆς. One of the additional noun rules stipulates that if the ultima is accented in the genitive/dative, it must be a circumflex. Thus, φωνῆς.
- * καρδιων - The lexical form is καρδία. It is a noun, but the accent cannot stay on the penult, because all genitive plural forms of the first declension must have the circumflex on the ultima. Thus, καρδιῶν.
- * εγινωσκον - The lexical form is γινώσκω. It is a verb, so the accent will try to recede back to the antepenult. Thus, ἐγίνωσκον.
- * εγινωσκου - The same verb (γινώσκω), but this time the accent cannot recede back to the antepenult, since the ultima is long. Thus, ἐγινώσκου.