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Ancient Greek I
A 21st Century Approach

Cover image: Athenian Fragmentary votive sculpture of Dionysus (?) Greek Ashmolean Museum. Photograph by Mary Harrsch, CC BY-SA. Cover design by Anna Gatti.

Module 6
Endings Create Meaning

Greek Cases

In the next module the noun and pronoun case system is presented in detail. For now, know that there are five cases in Greek: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and vocative or, ordered differently, nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, and vocative. Americans teaching ancient Greek use the latter order. Those teaching in other parts of the world tend to use the former. So as to reach both audiences, this text adopts both conventions, presenting NAGDV first, and NGDAV second. Each case has specific functions associated with it. In this module, three cases (nominative, accusative, dative) and their functions (subject, object, indirect object) are introduced.

In English, Word Order Creates Meaning

In English, meaning is created by two main things: word order and prepositional phrases. Word order enables us to understand who acts and whom or what receives the action.

Key: bold = **subject** of the verb

underlined = <u>object</u> of the verb

italics = *verb*

( ) = indirect object

Consider this sentence:

The woman *sees* <u>the man</u>.

The **woman**, the sentence's subject, performs the action of the verb, **sees. The man**, the sentence's object, receives the action of the verb, **sees**.

If we change the order of the words,

> **The man** *sees* <u>the woman</u>.

we change the meaning of the sentence.

In the above, three items of complexity are present: subject, verb, object. In the below a fourth item is added, an indirect object.

In the sentence,

> **I** *give* (her) <u>money</u>

I, the sentence's subject, performs the action of the verb, **give**. **Money**, the sentence's object, receives the action of the verb, **give**. **Her**, the sentence's indirect object, indirectly receives the action of the verb **give**. Word order determines who gives what to whom. If we change the order of the words,

> Give money I her

we no longer have a meaningful sentence.

In Greek, Endings Create Meaning

In Greek, meaning is created by two main things: word endings and prepositional phrases. Word order still has a role to play in creating meaning but, again, word endings, much more than word order, determine meaning. Endings tell us who acts and who or what receives the action.

In this sentence,

> **ἡ γυνὴ** <u>τὸν ἄνδρα</u> *ὁράει*,
> *The woman sees the man*,

ἡ γυνή is the subject. Greek indicates the subject by the nominative case ending **-η**. The nominative case is the case that Greeks used in order to tell who or what performs the action of a verb or has the action of the verb performed upon it. **τὸν ἄνδρα** is the object of the verb—it directly receives the action of the verb. Greek indicates object by the accusative case ending **-α**. The accusative case is the case that Greek uses to tell who or what receives the action of a verb.

If we change the order of the words,

1. <u>τὸν ἄνδρα</u> *ὁράει* **ἡ γυνή**,

2. *ὁράει* **ἡ γυνὴ** <u>τὸν ἄνδρα</u>,

3. <u>τὸν ἄνδρα</u> **ἡ γυνὴ** *ὁράει*,

the meaning remains the same because **case ending**, not word order, determines meaning.

As already noted, the above sentence has three pieces of grammatical complexity: subject, verb, direct object. In what follows we add a fourth, the indirect object.

In the sentences,

> **ἡ γυνὴ** <u>χρήματα</u> (αὐτῷ) *δίδωσι,*
> *The woman gives him money,*

and

> **ἡ γυνὴ** <u>χρήματα</u> (αὐτῇ) *δίδωσι,*
> *The woman gives her money,*

ἡ γυνή is the subject. Greek indicates subject by the nominative case ending **-η**. **χρήματα** is the object of the verb—it directly receives the verb's action. Greek indicates object by the accusative case ending **-α**. In the first sentence **αὐτῷ** is the indirect object and in the second **αὐτῇ** is the indirect object. Greek indicates indirect object by using the dative case endings **-ω** and **-η**. Again if we change the order of the words,

> <u>χρήματα</u> **ἡ γυνὴ** *δίδωσι* (αὐτῷ),
> *the woman gives him money,*

and

> (αὐτῇ) *δίδωσι* **ἡ γυνὴ** <u>χρήματα</u>,
> *the woman gives her money,*

the meaning remains the same because case ending, not word order, determines meaning.

Practice Writing in Greek. Using the vocabulary from the nouns and verbs, compose the below sentences in ancient Greek. For nouns and pronouns be sure to use the correct case. Nominative case endings are bolded; accusative endings are underlined and dative endings are highlighted. Check your answers with those in the Answer Key.

Case Ending:	**Nominative Ending**	**Function**
	-α, -η, -ος	use for the subject of the verb
	Dative Ending	**Function**
	-η, -ι, -ω	use for the indirect object of the verb
	Accusative Ending	**Function**
	<u>-α</u> <u>-ην</u>, <u>-ον</u>	use for the object of the verb

Verbs

*ἄγει *leads*	***γράφει** *writes*
*δίδωσι *gives*	***ὁράει** *sees*
*ἔχει *holds*	***πείθει** *persuades*
*καλέει *calls*	***πέμπει** *sends*
*λαμβάνει *takes*	***ποιέει** *does, makes*
*κελεύει *commands*	***φέρει** *carries*

Nouns and Pronouns

Nominative Case	Dative Case	Accusative Case	English Equivalent
*ἄνθρωπ**ος**	ἀνθρώπῳ	ἄνθρωπον	*human, person*
*ἥδε	τῇδε	τήνδε	*she, her, hers*
*βί**ος**	βίῳ	βίον	*life*
*γυν**ή**	γυναικί	γυναῖκα	*woman, wife*
*θε**ός**	θεῷ	θεόν	*god, goddess*
*ἵππ**ος**	ἵππῳ	ἵππον	*horse*
*νόμ**ος**	νόμῳ	νόμον	*law, custom*
*ὅδε	τῷδε	τόνδε	*he, him, his*
*φίλ**ος**	φίλῳ	φίλον	*friend*
*χρόν**ος**	χρόνῳ	χρόνον	*time*
*χρήματ**α**	χρήμασι (ν)	χρήματα	*money*

1. The asterisk indicates the top 250 most frequently occurring vocabulary, which you are to memorize.
2. The letter nu in **χρήμασι (ν)** is a nu-movable. It may be added to the ending when the following word begins with a vowel or at the end of clauses or verses. Otherwise it is left off.

Using the vocabulary found above, translate the sentences into ancient Greek. There is no Greek equivalent for the English **a** and so leave **a** untranslated in the below. Check your answers with those in the Answer Key.

1. A person leads a horse.
2. Custom persuades man.
3. God gives him money.
4. He gives her money.
5. A woman sees a horse.

6. A person makes a god for him.
7. A horse carries her.
8. God gives her a friend.
9. A person calls a horse.
10. Time writes custom.

Practice Making Up Your Own Sentences

Using the above words, try writing sentences in Greek. Be creative and don't worry about making a mistake.

Epic Poetry

The Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh*, dated to c. 2000 BCE, tells the story in Akkhadian of the historical king of Uruk, Gilgamesh, and his companion, Enkidu. It is the first recorded literature that exists and concerns Gilgamesh's unsuccessful quest to obtain immortality. Epic poetry also flourished in Greece. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, believed to have been composed by Homer, record historical and fictional events that date to 3100 years ago, c. 1100 BCE. The epics were originally transmitted orally and first written down around 750 BCE, the same time that their possible author, Homer, lived. The ancient Greek epics tell the tale of two heroes, Akhilleus and Odysseus, and are organized around a central thesis. The *Iliad* concerns Akhilleus' wrath and the destruction it caused when the Greeks fought at Troy so as to take back for Menelaos his wife Helen. The *Odyssey* explores Odysseus' quest to return home after the fall of Troy and to reassert himself as king of Ithaka. The Greeks believed that both epics were largely true accounts of what they viewed as the ancient past. Today we believe that the epics are mostly fiction, though they include many non-fictional places, people, and events. The epics (and other poetry) were sung by bards and accompanied by a musical instrument, such as the phorminx or lyre. For more information and to hear what the words and music may have sounded like, visit this site:

Georg Danek and Stefan Hagel

"In the course of the last years, we have developed a technique of singing the Homeric epics, which is appropriate for the primarily oral tradition from which these poems emerge. The Homeric bard sang his songs to the four-stringed phorminx, improvising his four-note melody at the same time as he improvised his text, which was unique in every performance. His monotonous melody, far from interpreting the text, served only as a medium to transport the words and to catch the listeners' attention by their intrinsic rhythm.

> Our theory is not to be understood as the exact reconstruction of a given melody, but as an approach to the technique the Homeric singers used to accommodate melodic principles to the demands of the individual verse, guided by the accentual structure and sentence-intonation of the Ancient Greek language as well as by metrical structures."

To listen to Stefan Hagel singing the *Iliad*, follow this link:

> Stefan Hagel Singing the Iliad.[1]

Homer, Ὅμηρος, c. 750 BCE Homer is conventionally credited with the composition of the epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, although today many scholars believe that the poems were composed by the different people. Homer sung his poems to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, the four-stringed phorminx (**φόρμιγξ**). In the poems Homer speaks of the past and of his own modern day, referring to it regularly. When telling the story of the heroes Akhilleus and Odysseus, he refers to the events of their lives as having taken place in ancient times. Like many things, time—and our conception of it—is relative. Of the many accounts of Homer's life the most common is that he was a blind bard from Ionia—blindness being associated with excellence in the poetic craft. Of him not much else is known and less is certain. Time veils what we know of Homer.

Module 6 Practice Reading Aloud. Practice reading this excerpt of the *Odyssey*, Book 19. 535–550. Read the excerpt a few times, paying attention to the sound each syllable makes and trying to hear the rhythm of the words.

> ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι τὸν ὄνειρον ὑπόκριναι καὶ ἄκουσον.
> χῆνές μοι κατὰ οἶκον ἐείκοσι πυρὸν ἔδουσιν
> ἐξ ὕδατος, καί τέ σφιν ἰαίνομαι εἰσορόωσα·
> ἐλθὼν δ᾽ ἐξ ὄρεος μέγας αἰετὸς ἀγκυλοχείλης
> πᾶσι κατ᾽ αὐχένας ἦξε καὶ ἔκτανεν· οἱ δ᾽ ἐκέχυντο
> ἀθρόοι ἐν μεγάροις, ὁ δ᾽ ἐς αἰθέρα δῖαν ἀέρθη.
> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ κλαῖον καὶ ἐκώκυον ἔν περ ὀνείρῳ,
> ἀμφὶ δ᾽ ἔμ᾽ ἠγερέθοντο ἐϋπλοκαμῖδες Ἀχαιαί,
> οἴκτρ᾽ ὀλοφυρομένην ὅ μοι αἰετὸς ἔκτανε χῆνας.
> ἂψ δ᾽ ἐλθὼν κατ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἕζετ᾽ ἐπὶ προὔχοντι μελάθρῳ,
> φωνῇ δὲ βροτέῃ κατερήτυε φώνησέν τε·
>
> «θάρσει, Ἰκαρίου κούρη τηλεκλειτοῖο·
> οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ᾽ ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν, ὅ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται.
> χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις

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1   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAZg9aGbEU8&t=88s.

ἦα πάρος, νῦν αὖτε τεὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα,
ὃς πᾶσι μνηστῆρσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσω.»

Verse Translation

Guest, interpret my dream, listen closely, please.
Twenty house-fed geese of mine are eating grain inside.
Fresh from swimming they came, bringing joy, and I admire them.
From afar a large beaked mountain eagle enters,
breaks their necks, and kills them all, a heap of bodies,
Piled in our hall. He then flies into the bright sky.
Still asleep I weep and caterwaul in dreams alive, and
Altogether 'round me stand long-haired Akhaians. And I
Sob—alas for me—my dead geese killed by eagle's might.
Turning back he perches massive in our hall and
Ends my tears, his human voice proclaiming clearly,

"Courage, daughter, born of famed Ikarios. No
Dream was this but real, an act that shall occur. These
Geese are suitors; I, no more an eagle, bird of
Prey, am come, your husband once again returned. A
Dreadful foul and fateful death I throw upon them all."

To hear me read, followed by Stefan Hagel's expert reading with a pitch accent, follow the link below:

Odyssey Book 19. 535–550.[2]

Etymology Corner VI by Dr. E. Del Chrol

Technical Terms 2

Orthography, Module 1. Orthography refers to the correct way of writing a word, and in Greek it's not just a matter of getting the letters in the right order but we need to include accents and breathing for some vowels. Orthography comes from the Greek **ὀρθός** *straight, correct, right* (did you get braces from the **orthodontist**, *correct tooth doctor*?) and **γραφία** *drawing, writing* (like **calligraphy** is *beautiful writing*, **oceanography** is *writing about the ocean*, and **graffiti** is *writing* on a wall or surface in a public place).

What to Study and Do 6. Before moving on to the next module, make sure that you have learned that Greek indicates the subject, the person or thing that performs the

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2   https://loom.com/share/d2ab14e469a34546929bf3ce02d5cfad.

action of a verb or has the action performed upon her, by using a nominative case ending; that Greek indicates the object, the person or thing that receives the action of the verb, by using an accusative case ending; and that Greek indicates the indirect object, the person or thing indirectly involved in the action of the verb, by using the dative case ending. You should now have a good understanding of the two ways that English creates meaning (word order and prepositional phrases) and the two ways that Greek creates meaning (endings and prepositional phrases).

Learning Tip 6: Let What You Know Help with What You Do Not Know. You are acquiring an understanding of how English and Greek create meaning in similar and different ways. Use your knowledge of English to assist you in acquiring your knowledge of Greek. As you identify parts of speech and determine their function, your understanding of this book's content (definitions, endings, and vocabulary) and its concepts (how Greek creates meaning) increases. Learning the content and concepts of this course requires focused effort on your part. Apply this strategy to other aspects of life, building from what you know to what you do not.