

AN INTRODUCTION TO VERBS

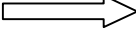


One of the most important considerations in studying the foundational elements of Greek must be given to the verb, that part of speech which affirms either *action* or *state of being*. The component elements of a verb are collectively referred to as its “parsing.” These components are: (1) *Tense*, (2) *Voice*, (3) *Mode* (or *Mood*), (4) *Person*, and (5) *Number*.

The *parsing* of Greek’s basic regular verb λύω— *I am loosing* is: *Present, Active, Indicative, 1st Person, Singular*.

(1) **Tense** conveys “kind” of action and generally, in the Indicative Mode only, the “time” of the action.

- PRESENT tense verb forms convey the idea of progress, action “going on.” A “durative” or “linear” tense whose *continuous* (i.e., “progressive”) force is primary, though not exclusive: *I am loosing*. “Punctiliar” (point action: *I loose*) is secondary.
- FUTURE tense is mainly an indicative mode tense conveying the indefinite, the more or less uncertain future, and utilizing *punctiliar* (point) action: *I will loose*.
- IMPERFECT tense has *continuous* (linear, durative) action “going on” in past time: *I was loosing*. A “sister” tense to the Present tense, in chronological past time, the imperfect utilizes a present stem.
- AORIST tense (1st and 2nd) denotes action “undefined,” simply occurring without reference to progress or completeness, a “fact” of action in past time treated as *punctiliar* (point) action: *I loosed*.
- PERFECT tense is one of *completed* action expressing the present result of action begun in past time, the “finished product” of an action: *I have loosed*. The key distinction when compared with the Aorist is the idea of “result.” (See *Col. 1:11*, two clauses: one with the Aorist tense, signifying a “fact”, one with the Perfect tense, expressing “result”).
- PLUPERFECT tense is the perfect indicative of “past time.” Expresses action *continuing* in past time, up to a state of completion in past time: *I had loosed*.

- (2) **Voice** (*active, middle, or passive*) tells how the action of the verb is related to the subject:

 ACTIVE	 MIDDLE	 PASSIVE
Subject is <i>doing</i> the acting.	Subject is <i>doing</i> the acting <i>with reference to himself</i> .	Subject is <i>being acted upon, receiving</i> the action.

- (3) **Mode** (Mood):

- *Indicative* — declaratives, simple assertions, interrogations
- *Subjunctive* — mildly contingent, hesitating affirmation; mode of probability
- *Imperative* — commands or entreaties; mode of “volition”
- *Optative* — strongly contingent; mode of “possibility,” weaker than the Subjunctive

- (4) **Person** denotes who is acting as the subject. In Greek the personal pronouns (i.e., *I, you, he, she, it, we, you, and they*) are included in the endings of the verb form. The various tenses and modes are formed in various combinations of augments, stems, and “column” endings, denoted in this methodology of learning by a single number: e.g., 1, 3^a (thematic “a”), 2^o (thematic vowel omitted), and so forth.

- (5) **Number** is the “singularity” or “plurality” of the person or persons represented by the verb form, included in the personal “column” endings.

The tense formation chart (including personal “column” endings) found on the successive pages in this section are based on the “parsing” of a given Greek verb as it would be found in its respective *Indicative* Mode tense verb forms (as discussed at the beginning of this section). In parsing a verb form— indicating its *tense, voice, mode, person* and *number*, the following three points, in particular, should be noted:

- (1) Is there an “augment” (letter or combination of letters) at the beginning of the verb form (prefixed to the verb stem and found only in the Indicative Mode)?

- If the verb stem begins with a consonant, the augment prefixed to the stem is “ε” (e.g., λύω [*Present*, active, indicative, 1st person singular] becomes ἔλυον in the *Imperfect*).
- If the verb stem begins with a vowel, the vowel is “lengthened;” commonly found “α” lengthens to “η,” “ε” lengthens to “η,” and “ο” lengthens to “ω.” Hence, ἀκούω (*Present*, active, indicative, 1st person, singular) becomes ἤκουον in the *Imperfect*; ἔρχομαι (*Present*, deponent, indicative, 1st person, singular) becomes ἤρχομην in its *Imperfect* form; and ὁμολογέω (*Present*, active, indicative, 1st person, singular) becomes ὠμολογήσεν (*1st Aorist*, active, indicative, 3rd person, singular).
- Of special note with regard to “compound” verb forms (e.g., ἐκβάλλω), the augment is (still) prefixed to the verb stem, hence ἐκέβαλλον (non-lengthened augment) in its *2nd Aorist* form. (For augmenting exceptions, see: *VERBS: Special Rules, Augments*).

(2) What kind of “stem” does the verb form have?

- The *Present* stem is found by dropping the “ω” from the end of the lexical form. Therefore, the *Present* stem of λύω is λυ-. The present stem is also used to build the *Imperfect* tense. The *Future* and *1st Aorist* stems are formed by adding “σ” to the end of the present stem (hence, “λυσ-”).
- *2nd Aorist* stems, meanwhile, are quite “irregular,” requiring some memory work of principal parts of verbs.
- *Perfect* and *Pluperfect* tenses verb stems both involve “reduplication” of the present stem’s initial consonant followed by “ε,” which serves as a prefix to the verb stem, and the “κ” added as a suffix for the *Perfect* active voice forms; “κει” is added as a suffix for the *Pluperfect* active, hence “λελυκ- ” and “λελυκει- ,” respectively. (For more on differences and similarities between tenses, see: *VERBS: Principal Parts Chart*).

(3) Finally, what personal “column” endings are used with the verb form (i.e., what numbered endings are characteristic of the respective verb forms?

Consulting the personal endings (p. 9), note that the columns numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 should be considered the basic personal endings from which all other columns of *Indicative Mode* endings are derived. Therefore, these basic column endings should be mastered. In achieving that goal, **students should pay particular attention to the way these columns are numbered, since their numbering, and their vertical layout, help to show commonality between the groups of endings.** Keeping in mind the four basic columns of endings (1, 2, 3, and 4, noted above), "column" 2⁰ is so designated because the "thematic vowel" (the first letter of each ending in column 2) is omitted in 2⁰. Hence, "0" = a "zeroed out" thematic vowel wherever it is used in the endings system. Following the same methodology, as a valuable aid to memorization, column 3^α signifies that a thematic "α" has, in most "persons," replaced the thematic vowel originally present in column 3. Here "α" = *Aorist*, a valuable parsing "clue" for tense identification. The same methodology holds for columns 3^o, 4^α and 4^o. (Of course, the *μ-1* column applies specifically to the formation of "*Mt-Verbs*" taken up later in the section on *Verbs*).

In noting the relationships that exist between the columns of personal endings, observe that:

- (1) Column 1 is used with the *Active* voice in the "primary" tenses (*Present* and *Future*).
- (3) Correspondingly, column 2 (and its variation, 2^o) is used in the *Middle* and *Passive* voices of the same tenses. Meanwhile, column 3 (and its derivatives 3^α and 3^o) is used in forming the *Active* voice in the remaining "secondary" tenses. Column 4 (or one of its derivatives, 4^α or 4^o) appears in the *Middle* and *Passive* voices.

The important guiding "rule" to remember here is:

Odd numbered column endings (columns 1, 3 and derivatives) **always appear in the *Active* voice.** **Even numbered endings** (columns 2, 4 and derivatives) **always appear in the *Middle* and *Passive* voices.**

The single exception to this rule is that *Aorist Passive* voice forms *always* utilize endings that are *Active* in "form" (hence 3^o in the 1st and 2nd *Aorist Passive Indicative*).

Also, in comparing relationships between columns of personal endings, note the following:

- (1) From column 1 to column 3, note the change to *-ov* in the 1st Person Singular and 3rd Person Plural; the “*v*” dropped out of the 2nd and 3rd Person Singular endings; the *-ομεν* and *-ετε* “carry over” in the 1st and 2nd Person Plural, respectively.
- (2) The *-σο* ending (2nd person singular) in column 4^o truly does have relationship with the corresponding *-ov* ending of column 4, since *ov* is derived from *οσο*, following the omission of the *σ*, with the resulting contraction of *ο + ο* becoming *ov*.

Look for other relationships that exist between the personal “column” endings, both in the formation of tenses chart, and on the chart of column endings that follows. **This is the methodological system that will be utilized in learning all modes (moods) of Greek verbal formations.**

