

12. Verbs / Ρήματα

Verbs are words that state something about the subject of the sentence and may express action, event, or condition. The citation form of the Greek verb is denoted by the 1st person singular of the simple present tense.

The Greek verb can take many different forms which may indicate five properties: person, number, voice, tense and mood. Person is the verb form that expresses the speaker (1st person), the person addressed (2nd person) or the person, animal or thing spoken of (3rd person). Number is the verb form that shows the singularity or the plurality of the subject of the verb. The Greek verb has two numbers, the singular and the plural, and three persons in each number as the English verb but unlike the English verb the person and the number in the Greek verb are included in the ending. Each person either in singular or in plural has a clearly distinguished ending. Therefore, the use of personal pronouns before the verbs is not obligatory in Greek. Nevertheless, personal pronouns may be used for emphatic reasons. The second person plural is also used as the polite form. The other properties of the Greek verb will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

12.1 Active and Passive voice (morphology)

The different forms the Greek verb can take may be divided into two main groups called voices, the active and the medio-passive voice. The **active voice** includes all forms of the verbs whose 1st person singular of the simple present ends in **-ω, -ώ**. The **medio-passive voice** includes all forms of the verbs whose 1st person singular of the simple present ends in **-μαι**.

The table below shows both voices with examples of verbs in the 1st person singular of the simple present:

Active voice (all verb forms of the verbs ending in -ω, -ώ)	Medio-passive voice (all verb forms of the verbs ending in -μαι)
-ω, -ώ	-μαι
γράφω write	λέγομαι be said
αγαπώ love	αγαπιέμαι get loved
ζω live	κοιμούμαι, κοιμάμαι sleep
	κινούμαι move

The Greek verb may be also divided into categories according to the relationship between the action and the subject of the verb. The verb will be characterized as active when the subject of the verb performs the action, as passive when the subject of the verb receives the action of the verb which is performed by another subject and as medium when the subject of the verb performs and at the same time receives the action of the verb.

Most verbs have an active and a medio-passive form, for example:

Active voice	Medio-passive voice
πλένω (wash)	πλένομαι (wash oneself or be washed)
αγαπώ (love)	αγαπιέμαι (be loved)

Notice, however, that there are verbs only in the active voice as ζω (live), τρέχω (run). There are also verbs only in the medio-passive voice, the so-called deponent verbs, which have usually an active meaning, as έρχομαι (come), εργάζομαι (work), δέχομαι (accept, receive).

12.2 Verb conjugations

The Greek verbs can be divided into two groups according to the way they conjugate: Group A, the group of the 1st conjugation and group B, the group of the 2nd conjugation.

Verbs ending in -ω with the stress mark on the second-to-last syllable belong to group A, the group of the 1st conjugation. The medio-passive voice of these verbs ends in -ομαι.

Verbs ending in -ώ (of -άω) with the stress mark on the last syllable belong to the group B, the group of the 2nd conjugation. This group is further divided into two subgroups, B1 and B2, which follow a different conjugation pattern in the present tense. Characteristic of the B1 subgroup is the letter “α” in the endings of the present tense and of the B2 subgroup the letters “ει”. The passive voice of the subgroup B1 and B2 ends respectively in -ιέμαι and -ούμαι or -άμαι. **Notice** that some verbs ending in -ούμαι follow the archaic conjugation pattern. The differences between the subgroups and the verbs following the archaic conjugation will be shown below in the paragraphs where the tenses will be discussed.

There are no rules to determine whether a verb belongs to subgroup B1 or B2, the determination is a question of knowledge and practice. In any case in a good dictionary, it is clear to see whether a verb belongs either to the B1 or to the B2 subgroup as the ending of the second or even the third person of the present tense of the active voice is given after the verb. The same applies for the B2 verbs of the medio-passive voice and the verbs with the archaic conjugation ending in -ούμαι, the second or even the third person of the medio-passive voice is also given (see the table below). **Notice** that certain verbs may belong to both subgroups and that they follow both conjugation patterns as βοηθώ (help), τηλεφωνώ (telephone), φοράω (wear) etc.

The table below shows the verb groups:

Group A, 1st conj.		Group B, 2nd conj.	
-ω	-ομαι	B1	B2
δένω	δένομαι	-ώ(-άς) -ιέμαι αγαπώ αγαπιέμαι	-ώ(-είς) -άμαι of -ούμαι(-άσαι) arc. conj. -ούμαι (-είσαι) μπορώ κοιμάμαι/κοιμούμαι δηγούμαι

12.3 The tenses

Tenses are forms of the verb which show whether the action, the event or condition expressed by the verb is placed in the past, the present or the future. Greek does not use different forms in the present, the past, the present perfect, the past perfect and the future perfect tense in order to express continuity as English does with the present, past, present perfect, past perfect and future perfect continuous. However, continuity in the past and in the future may be expressed in Greek by different morphological forms respectively the Imperfect, “Παρατατικός” and the Future Continuous, “Μέλλοντας διαρκείας”. That being said, the following tenses are used in Greek: the simple present, the imperfect, the simple past, the future continuous, the simple future, the present perfect, the past perfect and the future perfect. It is clear that there are less tenses in Greek than in English.

The function and the formation of the Greek tenses will be discussed in the following paragraphs. First it will be outlined when each tense may be used and then it will be described how to form each tense step by step. The steps may in principle apply to all regular verbs but with the necessary caution as there are certain verbs that may follow a different formation pattern. The formation process is being exemplified by the use of verbs in Greek which clarifies the whole process. The past tense of irregular verbs will be given in a list.