

Greek Grammar and English Grammar

Similarities and differences

English grammar is a starting point, but be prepared for these kinds of differences in Greek grammar:

| | English | Greek |
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| Verbs | <p>Usually minimal changes in form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I lead, you lead, he leads <p>Some irregular verbs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am, you are, he is <p>Need subject to differentiate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing alone “lead” could mean I, you, we, they | <p>Predictable changes in forms:</p> <p>λύ<u>ω</u>, λύ<u>εις</u>, λύ<u>ει</u></p> <p>Subject is “built-in” to the verb form; pronouns are not usually used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> λύω can only mean “I lead” with or without an explicit noun or pronoun. |
| Nouns | <p>Rarely change form:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> He bears fruit. (direct object) The fruit abides. (subject) From the fruit. (object of preposition) | <p>Regularly change <u>form</u> depending on <u>use</u> in sentence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> φέρει καρ<u>πὸν</u> ὁ καρ<u>πὸς</u> μένη ἀπὸ γὰρ τοῦ καρ<u>ποῦ</u> |
| Articles | <p>Two articles:</p> <p>“The” is the definite article. “The house” refers to some specific house.</p> <p>“A” is the indefinite article. “A house” might refer to houses in general or any particular house. (Sometimes changes form before a noun, as in “An article”)</p> <p>Definite article never changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The brother. The sister. The spirit. | <p>One article, the definite article. ο ἀδελφός is “the brother”</p> <p>No indefinite article. ἀδελφός could be “a brother” or simply “brother” depending on context.</p> <p>Definite article changes form to match noun it defines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ο ἀδελφός (M) τ<u>ην</u> ἀδελ<u>φή</u> (F) τ<u>ο</u> πνεύ<u>μα</u> (N) |
| Adjectives | <p>Usually placed before the noun they modify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The good brother <p>Seldom change form:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The good brother. The good sister. The good spirit. | <p>Can be in different positions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ο καλός ἀδελφός ο ἀδελφός καλός ο ἀδελφός ο καλός <p>Change form to match the gender, number (singular or plural) and use (or “case”) of the noun:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ο καλός ἀδελφός (M) τ<u>ην</u> καλή ἀδελ<u>φή</u> (F) τ<u>ο</u> καλό πνεύ<u>μα</u> (N) |

| | English | Greek |
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| Prepositions | Define relationships, such as Location – Through Samaria Other – Through the prophet | Similar use in Greek διὰ τῆς Σαμαρείας διὰ τοῦ προφήτου Prepositions may also be used to intensify verbs: βλέπω – I see διαβλέπω – I see clearly |
| Pronouns | Substitute for nouns (I, you, they, he, she, it, etc.). The noun which the pronoun represents is called the “antecedent” of the pronoun. Noun or pronoun needed to define subject of verb. “ see ” by itself can mean “I see ” or “you see ” or “they see ” etc. | Change form to match the gender, number (singular or plural) and use (or “case”) of the antecedent. May or may not be used, since it is included in the verb form: βλέπω – I see βλέπεις – you (singular) see βλέπετε – you (plural) see βλέπουν – they see Sometimes pronoun may be included for clarity or emphasis” εγώ βλέπω – I see σύ βλέπεις – you (singular) see ὑμεῖς βλέπετε – you (plural) see αυτοί βλέπουν – they see (Note a clear distinction between singular and plural “you” unlike English.) |
| Word order | Fairly rigid: Subject, verb, object Adjectives before nouns Etc. Unusual word orders can be confusing or simply nonsense. “The boy drove the car with red hair” | Very flexible. Word order can be used for emphasis. Since the various forms and uses have to match, words can be in almost any order (which can be confusing to English readers). Without trying to make up Greek for the “red hair” example, the sentence could have “red hair” match the grammar of “the boy” (and not of “the car”) to emphasize that attribute of the driver. |
| Punctuation | Period – end of sentence “.” Comma – pause in thought “,” Colon – break in thought “:” Question mark – question “?” | Probably not used in the original manuscripts; added in translation Period – “.” Comma – “,” Colon – “:” (above line) Question mark – “?” like a semicolon |
| Capitalization | Beginning of sentences, names, etc. | Probably not used in the original manuscripts; added in translation |
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