

Master Table of the Koine Greek Alphabet

Name	Greek Spelling of Name	Upper ¹ Case Form	Lower ¹ Case Form	Letter Sounds Like... ²	MWPS ³
alpha	ἄλφα	A	α	spa	ä
beta	βῆτα	B	β	vet	v ⁴
gamma	γάμμα	Γ	γ	ghost (gurgly/guttural) yet (in γε γι γει) ⁵ sing (in γγ γκ γξ γχ)	gh y η
delta	δέλτα	Δ	δ	then	th ⁶
epsilon	ἒ ψιλόν	E	ε	end	e
zeta	ζῆτα	Z	ζ	zest	z
eta	ῆτα	H	η	olé	ā
theta	θῆτα	Θ	θ	thin	th
iota	ἰῶτα	I	ι	ski	ē
kappa	κάππα	K	κ	skit (unaspirated - not kit) go (in γκ κ)	k g
lambda	λάμβδα	Λ	λ	let	l
mu	μῦ	M	μ	met	m
nu	νῦ	N	ν	net	n
xi	ξῖ	Ξ	ξ	elks	ks
omicron	ὀ μικρόν	O	ο	go	ō
pi	πί	Π	π	spin (unaspirated - not pin) bet (in μπ)	p b
rho	ῥῶ	P	ρ	rest (trilled)	r
sigma	σίγμα	Σ	σ ζ ⁷	set ⁸	s
tau	ταῦ	T	τ	star (unaspirated - not tar) den (in ντ)	t d
upsilon	Ϝ ψιλόν	Υ	υ	flu (French u in du) ⁹ vet (only in αυ ευ ηυ)	~ü v
phi	φῖ	Φ	φ	photo	f
chi	χῖ	X	χ	loch	k
psi	ψῖ	Ψ	ψ	steps	ps
omega	ὦ μέγα	Ω	ω	go	ō

Koine Greek Digraphs and Vowel Combinations

Digraphs	Sounds Like...	MWPS ³
αι	end (= ε)	e
ει	ski (= ι)	ē
οι	flu (= υ)	~ü
ου	soup	ü
Vowel Combinations	Sounds Like...	MWPS
αυ	lava	äv
ευ	ever	ev
ηυ	nave	āv
υι	flu + ski	ü + ē

In Classical Greek the four digraphs and four vowel combinations listed above were all pronounced as diphthongs. A diphthong is the combination of two vowels, in which the sound begins as one vowel sound and glides toward another vowel sound. The **oi** in **coin** is an example of an English diphthong. In Classical Greek, for example, **αι** sounded somewhat like the **ai** in **aisle** and **ευ** somewhat like the **eu** in **feud**. By the time of Koine Greek these diphthongs had all reduced to simple digraph or vowel sounds.

Most Biblical Greek textbooks still refer to these as diphthongs and teach an Erasmian pronunciation (see page 1) that assigns them diphthong sounds. A few newer textbooks recognize them as digraphs because they teach a reconstructed Koine pronunciation (see page 1). Regardless, they are “vowel pairs” that determine syllabification and affect accentuation. If they have a breathing mark and/or accent mark in a word, the mark is always written over the second vowel in the pair. Note that the second vowel in all of them is **ι** or **υ**.

¹Until about the 9th or 10th century AD, only the upper-case letters or *majuscules* were used in writing. Later, the lower-case letters or *minuscules* were developed and are used in modern printed books. Focus on learning the lower-case letters first.

²Based on historical research, scholars have developed what they believe is a fairly accurate reconstruction of the pronunciation of Koine Greek. One of the best-known reconstructions is by Randall Buth. See his *Notes on the Pronunciation System of Koiné Greek* (<https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Koine-Pronunciation-2012.pdf>). Pronunciation examples based on reconstruction can be found at KoineGreek.com (<https://www.koinegreek.com/pronunciation>) and Greek-Language.com (<https://greek-language.com/Alphabet.html>). The pronunciation system shown on this chart is adapted from a number of sources.

³Merriam-Webster Pronunciation Symbols. For a downloadable PDF document that explains the symbols, go to <https://merriam-webster.com/assets/mw/static/pdf/help/guide-to-pronunciation.pdf>

⁴Some scholars suggest that Beta should be pronounced as the **b** in **bet** when it comes after **μ** (Mu) and **ν** (Nu), i.e., in **μβ** and **νβ**.

⁵Some scholars suggest that the Gamma should also be pronounced as the **y** in **yet** when it comes before **υ** (Upsilon) and **η** (Eta), i.e., in **γυ** and **γη**.

⁶Delta probably did not have the \th\ sound until late in the Hellenistic/Koine stage. But since most reconstructions teach the sound as \th\ rather than \d\, the \th\ pronunciation has been adopted in this course. Some scholars suggest that Delta should be pronounced as the **d** in **den** when it comes after **ν** (Nu), i.e., in **νδ**.

⁷Sigma has two forms. **ς** is called a “final Sigma” and is used only at the end of words. Elsewhere it is written as **σ**.

⁸Some scholars suggest that Sigma should be pronounced as the **z** in **zest** when it comes before **μ** (Mu) and **β** (Beta), i.e., in **σμ** and **σβ**.

⁹Scholars have various opinions about how Upsilon should be pronounced. The exact sound of the letter Upsilon **υ** and the digraph **οι** do not exist in English. This is the most difficult Greek letter sound for English speakers to pronounce. The sound might be equivalent to the German umlaut (ü) or the French **u** as in **du**. The **u** in **flu** is a sufficient approximation of the sound when pronounced with tightly rounded lips and the tongue touching the tops of lower front teeth. It is different from the digraph **ου** which is pronounced with less rounded lips and the tongue further back in the mouth lightly touching, or just behind, the lower front teeth.