

Verbs and the Recessive Accent:

In the case of most Greek verbs, “recessive accentuation” determines which syllable will receive the accent. As a general rule of thumb, the accent on a Greek verb form will fall as far back from the ultima as the rules allow. There are three rules:

1. If a verb form has three or more syllables, and the ultima of the word contains a single short vowel, the accent “recedes” to the antepenult:

δίδοτε

In this situation, the accent can recede only to the last short vowel sound of antepenult, so the accent on an antepenult always appears as an acute (“/”), regardless of the length of vowel in this syllable:

δώσετε (= δοόσετε)

2. If a verb form has three or more syllables, and the ultima of the word contains a single long vowel, the accent “recedes” to the penult:

διδότω

In this situation, the accent can recede only to the last short vowel sound of penult, so the accent on an antepenult always appears as an acute (“/”), regardless of the length of vowel in this syllable:

παραδώσω (= παραδοόσω)

3. If a verb form has only two syllables, the penult always receives the accent. This accent may be an acute or circumflex, depending upon the following three situations:

- a. If the penult syllable is short, it always receives an acute accent, regardless of the length of the ultima:

δότε

δότη (= δότηο)

- b. If both the penult and ultima vowels are long, then the penult receives an acute accent:

λύω (= λυύω); λύεις (= λυύεις)

(note: the upsilon of this particular verb is long by nature)

- c. If the penult vowel is long and the ultima vowel is short, the penult receives a circumflex accent:

λύε (= λύυε); δῶρον (= δόορον)

Note:

Several forms of the infinitive mood tend to resist the “recessive accentuation” rules followed by all other moods of a Greek verb. It is best simply to memorize the accents and their placement for each infinitive form as they are encountered during the semester.

Enclitic Accents and εἰμί and φημί:

The rules for accenting enclitic words are as follows:

1. If an enclitic has one or two syllables, and the preceding word has an acute accent on its antepenult, the preceding word adds an acute accent on its last syllable, and the enclitic form of receives no accent.

Ἕλληνές ἐσμεν. (= Ἕλληνέσεσμεν)

“We are Greeks.”

2. Similarly, if an enclitic has one or two syllables, and the preceding word has a circumflex accent on its penult, the preceding word again adds an acute accent on its last syllable, and the enclitic form of receives no accent.

παῖδές ἐσμεν. (= παῖδέσεσμεν)

“We are children.”

3. If an enclitic has two syllables, and the preceding word has an acute accent on the penult, then the enclitic retains its own accent on its ultima. If the enclitic has one syllable, then it receives no accent.

φίλοι ἐσμέν.

“We are friends.”

λέγεις τε καὶ γράφεις

“You speak and you write.”

4. If an enclitic has one or two syllables, and the preceding word has any accent on the ultima, then the enclitic receives no accent. Sometimes, however, Greek will accent the ultima of a two syllable enclitic if the enclitic ends a sentence or clause.

ἄλωτοί ἐσμεν καὶ ὁρῶντες αὐτούς.

“We are captured and seeing them.”

NOTE: Sometimes a Greek will accent ἐστί recessively: ἔστί.

This can be to emphasize that something exists or serve as the equivalent of “there is...”

ἔστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια: “The Truth exists.”

οὐκ ἔστιν: “No there isn’t!”