



UNDERSTANDING GREEK VERB MORPHOLOGY

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Verb

- Conveys an action, occurrence, or state of being
- It is the one required unit in an independent clause in Greek.
- **Finite** vs **non-finite** verbs
 - Finite = conjugated
 - Non-finite = infinitives and participles

Non-Finite Verbs

- **Infinitive** = basic form of the verb; “to x”
 - Note: NOT the lemma
 - Complementary use [finish the meaning of a verb]
 - “I like to eat ice cream.”
 - Substantive use = like a noun
 - “To get out of the house is a pleasure.”
- **Participle** = “verbal adjective”
 - “-ing” and some “-ed”
 - Acts substantively, adjectively, or adverbially
 - “Swimming is my favorite exercise.” [substantive]
 - “The watched pot never boils.” [adjectival]
 - “Coming into work late, I could not find a parking place.” [adverbial]

Which are the infinitives? [Xen., *Hell.* 1.1]

After this happened, Tissaphernes came to the Hellespont. When Alcibiades went to visit him with a single trireme, bearing friendly offerings and gifts, Tissaphernes seized him and imprisoned him in Sardis, saying that the King ordered him to make war upon the Athenians. Thirty days later, however, Alcibiades and Mantitheus, who had been taken prisoner in Caria, provided themselves with horses and made their escape from Sardis by night to Clazomenae.

Infinitives

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Which are the Participles?

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Participles

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Person, number, tense, mood, voice =
morphology of a finite verb

FINITE VERBS ARE CONJUGATED



English “to be”

in the present indicative active

Pres Ind Act “to be”	Singular	Plural
1 st person	“I am”	“We are”
2 nd person	“You are”	“You are”
3 rd person	“He/she/it is”	“They are”

Mood

- Simple action, command, potential, or wished-for
- **Indicative** [*James spoke for himself.*]
 - Mood will all be **indicative** for now!
- Imperative [*James, speak for yourself!*]
- Subjunctive [*James might speak for himself, given the opportunity.*]
- Optative [*Would that James could speak for himself!*]

Voice

- Expresses the relationship between the action of the verb and its arguments [necessary elements]
- Active = the subject is the agent of the verb
 - *Themistocles won the election.*
- Passive = The agent [human] is usually expressed by a prepositional phrase [“by x”] or the instrument [thing] is expressed by the dative case.
 - *The election was won by Themistocles; e was killed with a club.*
- Middle = the subject is the agent of the verb, but acts with some special reference to himself/herself
 - *Susan exercises.* [for her own benefit]
 - *Cimon pours a libation.* [for his own benefit]
- Deponent = active meaning but M/P form
- Voice will all be indicative active/deponent for now!

Person

- A grammatical category used to classify word forms according to whether they refer to the speaker(s)/writer(s) (first person), the addressee(s) (second person), or a third party or parties (third person) [OED]
- First person = I or we
- Second person = you [singular or plural]
- Third person = he, she, it, they

Number

- The classification of words according to how many people they refer to
- **Singular** = I, you [sg], he/she/it
- **Plural** = we, you [pl], they
- Dual = two things are acting
 - [fairly rare, so it is unnecessary to memorize these forms]

Tense

- The time at which something is viewed as happening or existing and/or the aspect in relation to the time of the utterance
- Time: before, during, after
- **Aspect** = how an action, event, or state denoted by a verb extends over time
 - Single action completed [Jane walked here.]
 - Single action with on-going results [Jane has walked here.]
 - Habitual/repeated action [Jane walks daily.]
 - Progressive/on-going action [Jane is walking.]

Tense

- Seven tenses in Greek
 - Two are rarely seen Pluperfect and Future Perfect
 - *Two* are fairly sparse: Perfect and Future
 - ***Three*** are mundane and therefore most important:
 - Present, imperfect, aorist
 - We will start with only two: **imperfect and aorist**
- 3rd person singular and 3rd person plural
 - *He/she/it*
 - *They*
- Only indicative: simple statements in independent clauses
- Only active/deponent: the subject is the actor

Imperfect Tense

- Refers to action in the past which is incomplete, in progress/continuous, or repeated/habitual
 - “The army was marching” [not finished/continuous]
 - “Every spring, the army marched against Caria.” [repeated]
- In English we sometimes call this the “past progressive”
- Usually it is safe to translate it with “was” or “were”; sometimes “-ed”

Aorist Tense

- Represents the simple past, or a completed action in the past
 - “He sailed into Ephesus.”
 - “The Great King wept.”
- Usually translated “-ed” or equivalent

What is the morphology of these finite verbs? [Xen., Hell. 1.1.5]

And the Athenians **attacked** him and **did battle**, along the strand near Abydus, from morning till late afternoon. At some points, they **were victorious** and at others they **were defeated**, when Alcibiades **sailed** into the Hellespont to their support with eighteen ships.

- *Attacked*
 - = 3rd pl aor ind act
- *Did battle*
 - = 3rd pl aor ind act
- *Were victorious; were defeated*
 - 3rd pl impf ind act
- *Sailed*
 - = 3rd sg aor ind act

What is the morphology of these finite verbs? [Xen., Hell. 1.1.30]

Those who had associated with Hermocrates **felt** exceedingly the loss of his care and enthusiasm and democratic spirit. For he **used to gather** them every day in the morning and at evening to his own tent, where he **communicated** to them whatever he was planning to say or to do.

- *Felt*
 - = 3rd pl aor ind act
- *Used to gather*
 - = 3rd sg impf ind act [habitual]
- *Communicated*
 - 3rd sg impf ind act

How do you know what form you are looking at?

- Morphological analyzer in Alpheios, Perseus, or Arethusa/Perseids (trees)
 - You need to know enough to be able to make decisions or check for mistakes
- Look them up in a lexicon, textbook, or grammar book
- Memorize the most common forms
 - Understand the process by which we arrive at these forms

Most Common Verbs

- There are 137 verbs that occur more than 20x in Xenophon's *Hellenika*.
- Accompanying chart [selection of 35 of those verbs]
 - Gets us through the chapters in the first unit
- **Lemma** = the lexicon entry

Verbs have six “principal parts”

- They give us the stems for every conjugated form
- 1st person singular **present** indicative **active** [LEMMA]
- -- -- future -- --
- -- -- **aorist** -- --
- -- -- perfect -- --
- -- -- perfect -- middle
- -- -- aorist -- passive

Examples of Principal Parts

- θύω, θύσω, ἔθυσα, τέθυκα, τέθυμαι, ἐτύθην [sacrifice]
- πέμπω, πέμψω, ἔπεμψα, πέπομφα, πέπεμμαι, ἐπέμφθην [send]
- ἄρχω, ἄρξω, ἤρξα, ἤρχα, ἤργμαι, ἤρχθην [begin/rule]
- ἔχω, ἔξω/σχήσω, ἔσχον, ἔσχηκα, ἔσχημαι, --- [have/hold]
- λαμβάνω, λήψομαι, ἔλαβον, εἴληφα, εἴλημμαι, ἐλήφθην [take]
- ἔρχομαι, ἐλεύσομαι, ἤλθον, ἐλήλυθα, ---, --- [come/arrive]

12 Regular verbs

- ἀποκτείνω *I kill*
- ἄρχω *I begin/rule*
- βαίνω *I march, go*
- ἤκω *I come, am present*
- θύω *I sacrifice*
- λέγω *I say, collect*

- μένω *I remain*
- πέμπω *I send*
- πλέω *I sail*
- πράσσω *I make/do*
- στρατεύω *I wage war*
- τάττω *I array, station*

8 contract verbs

- ἀδικέω *I do wrong*
- αἰρέω *I take*
- ἀποχωρέω *I retreat*
- βοηθέω *I help*
- νικάω *I conquer*
- ποιέω *I make/do*
- πολεμέω *I fight a war*
- φοβέω *I am afraid*

6 verbs with a “2nd aorist” form

- ἄγω *I lead*
- ἔχω *I hold*
- λαμβάνω *I take*
- φεύγω *I flee*
- βάλλω *I throw*
- ἀποθνήσκω *I die*

5 Deponent Verbs

[various aorists]

- Identified as “Present Indicative Middle”
- ἀφικνέομαι *I arrive*
- γίγνομαι *I become*
- ἔρχομαι *I come*
- ἡγέομαι *I lead*
- μάχομαι *I fight*

4 –MI Verbs

- είμί *I am*
- ίστημι *I stand, set up*
- δίδωμι *I give*
- ἀπόλλυμι *I kill*

