

Chapter Three

Bases and Nominative Endings

Well, you've learned fifty-four singular noun phrases and fifty-four plural noun phrases. But perhaps that isn't all you've learned about nouns in the first two chapters.

Perhaps even now you've begun to notice some *patterns*. I'll bet that you found some entire rows in which you were able to predict the plural forms based on the singular forms. Right? And then there were other rows where the plurals seemed radically different from the singulars.

So, you may have begun to wonder whether some nouns follow patterns and other nouns are purely arbitrary in their forms. And, reputedly, wise people have often said that wonder is the beginning of learning.

You may also have begun to worry about your capacity for continued memorization. If you've memorized all the singular and plural noun phrases, you've done it by sheer hard work. But you must have realized (at least subconsciously) that there must be thousands of nouns in Greek, and if the only way to learn their plurals is brute memorization, you may have begun to wonder if your memory is up to it—if you will ever finish the march and arrive at your goal of reading real Greek texts.

If you are feeling a bit of despair about the difficulty of developing a reasonable reading vocabulary by sheer brute memorization, honesty requires that I tell you that you probably haven't guessed the half of it. Greek, you see, differs from English, Spanish, and French in that its nouns do not take just two forms. In Greek a noun takes one form when it serves as a subject, a different form when it serves as a direct object, a third form when it serves as a possessive, and two other forms to perform a couple of other functions. These five “forms” are called *cases*, and each case has a singular and a plural form. Those of you who are pretty quick with numbers are probably already formulating the horrified question: *Do you mean that each of the hundreds of Greek nouns that I will need to learn has ten forms?!* Yup. And it's not just the nouns. So do the hundreds of common adjectives that modify them: ten forms, that is, for each gender; thirty forms in all.

You can probably see that even the most disciplined and mnemonically gifted of you will prove unable to learn ten forms for each of the hundreds of Greek nouns and thirty forms for each of the hundreds of adjectives merely by brute memory. If you're going to reach the goal of reading, you'll need to conserve your energy by working smart and not just hard.

Analysis: Concept

In this chapter you will use a process of analysis to begin to see—really *see*—the singular and plural nouns you have memorized. **Analysis** is one of the most basic skills in any intellectual endeavor, the skill of looking at groups of discrete items that are certainly different from one another, yet learning to see common elements that make them comprehensible as categories or groups. Biologists look at bats and whales and finally realize that (different as they are) they share many of the same kinds of organs, which perform similar functions. As shorthand, biologists say that they are both “mammals.” Drivers and car buyers learn that even vehicles as apparently different as a BMW roadster and a cargo truck have many common elements: some sort of engine, transmission, suspension. You can never understand how animals or cars work until you learn to *see* the parts they are made of. And you can never understand how Greek nouns (and adjectives) work until you learn to *see* the parts they are made of.

In this chapter you will learn to analyze Greek nouns (and adjectives) into two parts. Specifically, you will train your eye to see that

every Greek noun consists of two parts: a **base** and a **case ending**.

The **base** tells the core meaning of the word (“soldier,” “bird”).

The **case ending** indicates how the noun form can function in a sentence and specifies whether it is singular or plural. In this chapter we will be analyzing the nouns you have already learned. All of them contain case endings that configure them to serve as *subjects* of sentences. Grammarians call the case endings that form subjects of sentences **nominative case endings**.

So, all the forms that you have learned so far are actually compounds of two elements that say something like “**soldier** / <subject> **just one**” and “**bird** / <subject> **more than one**.”

In a perfectly efficient (and inhumanly boring) linguistic world you might encounter just one nominative singular ending and one nominative plural ending that would be added to every noun (and adjective) base in the entire language. But Greek (amazing as it is) is neither perfectly efficient nor inhumanly boring. It was developed by people who lived in different and isolated places, and so (not surprisingly) it has more than one nominative singular and more than one nominative plural ending. Later in this chapter you will learn the nominative case endings. But first I want to make sure you understand how this process of analysis of nouns works by doing a little analysis of English nouns.

Analyzing English Noun Forms

Let’s think about the formation of English nouns for a minute to illustrate both the general principle we will be working with in Greek and the kinds of complications you will encounter.

Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Each English noun, like each Greek noun, can be analyzed into two components: a common **base** (which is *identical* in its singular and plural forms) and two different **endings** (which distinguish the singular form from the plural form). Most singulars are formed by adding **nothing** ($\emptyset$) to the **base**. Most plurals are formed by adding **s** to the **base**. So, for example, book [**book**/ $\emptyset$], books [**book**/**s**]; dog [**dog**/ $\emptyset$], dogs [**dog**/**s**].

But things are not really that simple—even in English. There are complications.

Complication #1: English has *more than one singular ending and more than one plural ending*.

For reasons rooted in linguistic history, English contains several different plural endings and more than one singular ending. For many nouns the plural ending is /**es** rather than /**s**: box [**box**/ $\emptyset$], boxes [**box**/**es**]; dish [**dish**/ $\emptyset$], dishes [**dish**/**es**]. A few nouns use the German plural ending /**en**: ox [**ox**/ $\emptyset$], oxen [**ox**/**en**]. So, the person learning English cannot learn one simple rule for making plurals: Always add /**s**. Instead, she must learn a more complicated rule: To some kinds of bases, add /**s**; to some other kinds of bases, add /**es**; to a few odd bases, add /**en**.

There are even a few words with strange singular forms in English. For a person learning English, it probably makes sense to analyze the singulars and plurals of *cactus* and *octopus* as *cactus* [**cact**/**us**], *cacti* [**cact**/**i**]; *octopus* [**octop**/**us**], *octopi* [**octop**/**i**]. And then there is *criterion*, which seems to be analyzed: *criterion* [**criteri**/**on**], *criteria* [**criteri**/**a**]. So, English contains a few nouns that use a singular ending other than / $\emptyset$ and quite a few nouns that use a plural other than /**s** or /**es**.

Complication #2: Sometimes when an ending is added, *the base undergoes some change*: *city*, *cities*; *calf*, *calves*.

You can see that these changes (which might seem daunting to someone learning English as a second language) are really rather simple.

I assume (though I don't know) that the base of *city* is best understood as **citi**/ and that we spell the singular *city* with a *y* merely because we don't like to end words in *i*. So, the *i* disappears and is replaced by a *y*. In the analytical notation of this book: *city* [**citi**^y/ $\emptyset$]. The *i* is printed in grey because it disappears. The *y* is printed as a ^{superscript} because it is an alteration rather than part of the original **base**.

Similarly, we might analyze *children* as [**child**^r/**en**]. For purposes of learning English, that analysis would explain that the *r* (for some reason) slipped in when the plural ending /**en** was added to the base **child**/. (That analysis prevents us from thinking that maybe we need to learn yet another English plural ending: /**ren**.)

Such plurals as *calves*, *wolves*, and *lives* arise because the *f* of the singular “hardens” or “roughens” into a *v*. If this book were teaching English rather than Greek, I would have to decide how to analyze those forms. I might choose [**wolf**^v/**es**]: The *f* disappears and the *v* replaces it. More likely, though, I would prefer to emphasize that the *v* is not some radically different sound that *replaces* the *f*. In fact, it *is* an *f* sound, just a bit roughened up. So, I might invent a sign for “roughened up.”

Perhaps I would underline the *f*: **wolf**/**es** would mean that the plural ending **/es** is added and the *f* is “roughened up” to a *v* sound.

So, in English as in Greek we could analyze nouns into two parts: [**base/singular ending**]; or [**base/plural ending**]. We could tell people learning English that both parts of a noun say something: The base states the core meaning of the word [**wolf, ox, house**]; the ending states either “**just one**” or “**more than one**.”

Since English nouns have only two forms, though, and since the singular of the vast majority of English nouns is identical to the base (The singular ending is **ø**), there’s little point in teaching students to analyze English. In English it’s more efficient to teach students to add the plural ending to the singular form, which works fine in all but a handful of situations.

In Greek, though, most singular forms are not identical to the base, and there are ten forms (not two) to learn for each noun. So, Greek noun forms cannot be learned in the simple way that people learn English noun forms. I am convinced that the easiest, most efficient, and easiest method of learning and understanding Greek noun forms is by using the kind of analysis I have illustrated above.

Analyzing Greek Noun Forms

*This text requires you to think of every noun (and adjective) you will ever encounter as consisting of two parts: a **base**; and the **case ending** necessary to turn that base into one of the 10 forms the noun has. To help you learn this skill I will frequently show a noun’s analysis in square brackets. The analysis will always consists of two parts [**base/case ending**] and will use the following notational conventions.*

- **ø**. As in most English singulars, the ending for some Greek forms is **Nothing**.
- **Lengthening** of a vowel is indicated by underlining. In English the final *f* of the base of words like *calf roughens up* to a *v* when the plural ending is added. In a similar way, α, ε, and ο of Greek bases sometimes change: α and ε change to η; ο changes to ω. Grammarians call those changes *lengthenings*. In this text, to explain that an ω is a *lengthened* ο or an η is a *lengthened* α or ε, the analysis shows the original unlengthened vowel marked with an underline: ω [**ο**]; η [**α**, **ε**].
- **Loss of a sound** is indicated by gray font. For various reasons sounds sometimes disappeared from Greek words. In the analyses I show the original, predictable components [**base/ending**] of words. If the form being analyzed has lost an original sound, I print the lost sound in gray. In various parts of the American South, the word *store* might reasonably be spelled *sto* because the *r* has effectively been lost. If written English actually contained the word *sto*, I might analyze it as [**store**/**ø**]. (The silent *e* seems also to represent a sound that was once pronounced, but has disappeared.)
- **Changes of sound** are printed as superscripts. When one sound changes to another, I print the original sound in gray because it has disappeared and the new sound in superscript—just as in my

analysis of city [citi^y/ø] above.

So, armed with these notational conventions, you are ready to see—really *see*—the two parts of all the singular and plural nouns you have learned and what they mean. Remember, *each of those nouns really consists of two parts, and each part says something*. (1) A single identical **base**, common to both singular and plural forms, specifies the fundamental meaning of the noun. (2) Two different **nominative case endings** indicate that the noun is the subject of its sentence and specify whether it is “just one” [singular] or “more than one” [plural]. Once you learn the endings you will be able to partially understand words even if you have never seen them before. You know perfectly well, for example, that *persifectories* must mean “*more than one persifectory*” even though you have no idea (I hope) what a *persifectory* is. In Greek, as in English, you can understand what the **ending** tells you even when you encounter a words whose **base** you do not know.

Analyzing Nominatives: Principles

Your first task is to learn four general principles for analyzing nominatives: one for non-neuter singulars, and one for neuter singulars; one for non-neuter plurals, and one for neuter plurals. (Remember: a noun is masculine if it uses the words *ὁ* and *οἱ* to mean *the*; a noun is feminine if it uses the words *ἡ* and *αἱ* to mean *the*; a noun is neuter if it uses the words *τό* and *τά* to mean *the*.) You will need to memorize these principles.

Principle #1: Non-Neuter (Masculine & Feminine) Nominative Singulars

a. Bases ending in α/.

The case ending for feminines is **ο** (Nothing).

The case ending for masculines is **ς**.

b. Bases ending in anything other than α/.

The case ending is the **ς** sound for both masculines and feminines.

Principle #2: Neuter Nominative Singulars

a. Bases ending in ο/. The case ending is **υ**.

b. All other bases. The case ending is **ο**.

Principle #3: Non-Neuter Nominative Plurals

a. Bases ending in α/ or ο/. The case ending is **ι**.

b. All others. The case ending is **ες**.

Principle #4: Neuter Nominative Plurals

All bases: The case ending is always **α**.

Analyzing Nominatives: Details

Now you need to see how these principles can enable you to understand the singular and plural noun forms you have memorized. In the pages that follow we will work row-by-row through the practice nouns. Study these analyses *actively*. Refer constantly to the charts later in this chapter to make sure that you really understand how the principles of nominative formation work out in each form you have learned.

Principle #1: Masculine and Feminine Nominative Singulars

Principle 1a: Non-neuters whose bases end in α/

The nominative singular case ending for feminines is *ø*; for masculines, *ς*.

Rows 1 and 2 consist of *feminine* nouns whose bases end in *long α*: *ᾱ*/. The case ending is *ø*.

A minor complication occurs in nouns of this type: The *ᾱ* of the base lengthens to *η* in all singular forms. So, as you review the nouns (and, later, adjectives) in these rows, you should train yourself to see the final *η* of each word as merely the (lengthened) *long α*/ of the base (-*ᾱ*/*ø*).

Row 3 consists of *feminine* nouns whose bases end in *short α*: *ᾶ*/. The case ending is *ø*.

Short α does *not* lengthen in any of the singular forms. The nominative singular of each of these nouns is merely the noun base, with *ø* added (-*ᾶ*/*ø*).

You cannot predict which *α*-base nouns end in alphas that were pronounced “long” and which, “short” (though you may notice that *short α tends to be preceded by an s-sound or a double consonant sound*). By far the majority of alpha-base nouns contain long alphas and follow the pattern of *Rows 1 and 2*. As you encounter new nouns, you will know that a base ends in short alpha if its nominative singular ends in *α* rather than *η*.

Row 4 consists of *masculine* nouns whose bases end in *α*/ (usually if not always *ᾱ*/). The nominative singular case ending for all masculines whose bases end in *α*/ is *ς* (rather than *ø*). The final long *ᾱ*/ of the base lengthens for masculines as for feminines. As you study the nouns in this row, train your eyes to see the final -*ης* of each singular as *ᾱ*/*ς*.

Principle 1b: Non-neuters whose bases do not end in α/

The nominative singular case ending is the *ς* sound.

Rows 5 and 6 consist of masculine and feminine nouns whose bases end in *ο*/.

Most of these nouns are masculine (as in *Row 5*). Relatively few are feminine (as those in *Row 6*). All of them make their singulars simply by adding the *ς* singular marker. Study the nouns in these rows and train your eyes to see the final -*ος* of each singular as *ο*/*ς*.

Let's skip **Row 7**, which consists entirely of neuters, because *Principle #1* explains only non-neuters. We will skip **Row 9** for the same reason. For those rows see *Principle #2* below.

Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Row 8: Masculine and feminine nouns whose bases end in dentals.

Dentals are the 3 sounds that are made by hitting the tongue against the teeth: τ, δ, and θ. *Whenever a dental is followed by a ς, the dental disappears in both pronunciation and spelling.*

Study the nouns in this row, noting that each of the plural forms contains a dental that is absent from the singular form. In each case you should imagine that far back in history people pronounced the entire singular form, including the dental. Then, at some point before our written texts begin, Greek speakers gradually softened the pronunciation of dentals before sigma so much that the dentals finally disappeared altogether. Train yourself to see each singular form as the **base** (including the dental), followed by the nominative singular marker ς, which caused the dental to disappear. So, for example, παῖς [παῖδ/ς].

When you encounter a new nominative singular word of this sort, you will not know for certain whether its base contains a (now absent) dental. But, when you encounter the nominative *plural* form, you will immediately see not only *that* the base ends in a dental, but also *which* of the three dentals it ends in: ἔρωτες; παῖδες; ὄρνιθες.

Row 10: Non-neuter nouns whose bases end in palatals.

Palatals are the 3 sounds that are made by contacting the palate with the tongue: κ, γ, and χ. When a palatal is followed by the ς sound, the resulting sound combinations—κς, γς, χς—are all *spelled* ξ.

Study the nouns in this row, noting that the plural form reveals which of the three palatals has combined with the ς (**nominative singular marker**) to form the distinctive ξ. Train yourself to analyze that ξ into the **base** (which ends in the palatal visible in the plural) + the **nominative singular marker ς**. So, for example, σφῖγξ [σφίγγ/ς].

When you encounter a new nominative singular word of this sort, you will know for certain from the ξ ending that its base ends in a palatal, though you won't know which of the three palatals it contains. When you encounter the nominative *plural* form, though, you will immediately see which of the three palatals the base ends in: κύλικες; σφῖγγες; τρίχες.

Row 11: Non-neuters whose bases end in labials.

Labials are the 3 sounds that are made by contacting the lips with the tongue: π, β, φ. When a labial is followed by the ς sound, the resulting sound combination—πς, βς, φς—is *spelled* ψ.

Study the nouns in this row, noting that the plural form reveals which of the three labials has combined with the ς (**nominative singular marker**) to form the distinctive ψ. Train yourself to analyze that ψ into the **base** (which ends in the labial visible in the plural) + the **nominative singular marker ς**. So, for example, κύκλωψ [κύκλωπ/ς].

When you encounter a new nominative singular word of this sort, you will know for certain from the ψ ending that its base ends in a labial, though you won't know which of the three labials it contains. When you encounter the nominative *plural* form, though, you will immediately see which of the three labials the base ends in: κύκλωπες; γύπες; χέρνιβες.

Three major sound (and spelling) changes involving σ

It might be useful to summarize the sound and spelling changes of the last three rows, changes which result *whenever* (not just in nominative singular nouns, but literally *whenever*) a consonantal stop (a dental, palatal, or labial) is followed by σ.

	Unvoiced	Voiced	Aspirate	+ σ
Dental	τ	δ	θ	ς
Palatal	κ	γ	χ	ξ
Labial	π	β	φ	ψ

Rows 12 and 13: Bases ending in ν/ or ρ/.

Probably very early speakers of Greek tried to form nominative singulars of nouns with these bases by adding the normal ending ς. If they did, they quickly collided with a competing principle in Greek linguistics: *Greek systematically avoids the sound combinations νς and ρς*. Virtually always when the normal rules of formation dictate that these two sounds *should* come together, one of the two sounds is lost. By studying the singular forms of these nouns, you can see the historical outcome of this collision: In singular forms of bases ending in ν/ the ς is almost always the sound that is lost (as in λιμήν [λιμέν/ς]), though (as illustrated by ῥίς [ρίν/ς]) sometimes the ν is lost. In the singular forms of bases ending in ρ, the ς is always lost.

You should note a complication in pronunciation and spelling that results from this lost sound: If the vowel preceding the ν or ρ was short (most noticeably: α, ε, or ο), that vowel lengthens. This phenomenon is called **compensatory lengthening**. All it means is this: When a short vowel is followed by two consonants, the resulting syllable takes *longer* to pronounce than if it contained just one consonant. (Say aloud the English phrase “an ant,” and you will see that you take about twice as *long* to pronounce the word “ant” as the word “an.”) So, far back in Greek linguistic prehistory, if people actually said things like λιμένς, the last syllable (ενς) was *long*—and needed to remain that way in traditional poems and songs unless the meter was to be broken. So, when people gave up pronouncing the ς, they continued to pronounce the syllable as long. When writing was introduced, because people *heard* the syllable as long, they *wrote* the long vowel that they heard—η. That is the story told by the analysis: λιμήν [λιμέ^νς]. The complete base of these nouns (including the **original vowel**) is always visible in the nominative plural: ῥήτορες; λιμένες; μήτερες.

Row 14: Bases ending in ντ/.

These bases experience the changes you have observed in *both* Row 8 and Row 13. When the ς is added, the dental (τ) disappears. Then, either the ς or the ν disappears, and a final short vowel of the base undergoes compensatory lengthening. You should expect the following results of adding ς to a base ending in ντ/, depending on the vowel that precedes the ντ:

$$\text{οντ/}\varsigma \rightarrow \text{ων} [\text{ov}\tau/\varsigma] \quad \text{αντ/}\varsigma \rightarrow \text{ας} [\text{ā}\nu\tau/\varsigma] \quad \text{εντ/}\varsigma \rightarrow \text{εις} [\text{ē}'\nu\tau/\varsigma]$$

Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Rows 15 and 16: Bases ending in *ι/* or *υ/*.

All non-neuter nouns with these bases add the singular marker *ς* without complication.

Row 17: Bases ending in *Ϝ/*.

Study the nouns in this row. If you were to look only at their singulars, you would think that their bases end in *υ/*. Look at their plurals, though. If you take off the */ες* plural marker, the bases all appear to end in *η/* or *ο/*. The fundamental principle of this chapter, however, is that *all forms of all nouns are really formed from the very same base—even if they appear to be formed from different bases*. And so, it cannot be the case that the singulars are made from bases ending in *υ/* but the plurals of the same nouns are made from bases ending in *η/* or *ο/*. If they had different bases, they wouldn't be the same nouns.

In fact, linguists much smarter than I long ago discovered that all these bases originally ended in a *w*-sound, which is represented in Greek by *Ϝ* (digamma). You may remember from *Chapter One* that *Ϝ* was neither included in the alphabet nor heard as a distinct sound in most Greek dialects. The digamma sound was always either lost entirely (as happened in the plurals of these words), or blended with another vowel and spelled as a diphthong (as happened in the singulars of these words). In the singulars of these words the *Ϝ* blended with the preceding vowel, producing sounds that could have been written *ηϜς* and *οϜς* if their local alphabets had contained the *Ϝ*. Since most local alphabets did not, Greeks represented the sound with the letters available. Do you hear that *ης* and *ους* actually do a good job of representing the sounds *ηϜς* and *οϜς*?

Study these words until you can properly analyze each of the singulars: for example, βασιλή^{Ϝς}).

Row 18: Bases ending in *-εσ/*.

Almost all non-neuter words of this sort are proper names of men. The only common non-neuter word I know of in this category that is not a man's name is the word *τριήρης*, which is feminine because it is a type of ship (and ships are always feminine in Greek).

At first glance, the non-neuter bases of Row 18 nouns appear to end in *η* [*τριήρης*] while the plurals appear to be formed from a base ending in *ε* [*τριήρε/ες*]. But, since singulars and plurals cannot really be formed from different bases, we know that something strange is at work in these words.

In fact, all Row 18 nouns are formed from bases ending in *εσ/*. So, all the non-neuter singulars in this row might better have been spelled ending in *εσς*. But, if you think about it, the first writers of Greek had no reason to write two *s*'s. When you say a word like “actress,” do you hear two *s*'s? No. The Greeks, though, did hear the syllable *εσς* as lasting a bit longer than simple *εσ/*—long enough to say two *s*'s instead of one. They represented that additional length by spelling the vowel *η* instead of *ε*. So, in each of these non-neuter singulars the final syllable *εσς* is spelled *ης* [*εσς*].

Principle #2: Neuter Nominative Singulars

Principle 2a: Neuters whose bases end in o/

The nominative singular case ending is **ν**.

Row 8: Neuters of bases ending in **ο/**.

The singulars of these nouns are formed simply by adding the singular marker **ν** to the base. Nothing weird happens. Study the singular forms of these nouns and train yourself to analyze their ending -ov as **-ο/ν**.

Principle 2b: Neuters whose bases do not end in ο/

The nominative singular case ending is **ο**.

Row 10: Neuter nouns whose bases end in a dental.

As you will see when you learn the analysis of the plural forms of this row, all the words in this row are formed from bases ending in **ματ/**. To form the nominative singulars of these bases, **ο** (nothing) was added to the base, which should have made all these singulars end in **-ματ**. As it happens, though, *Greek words never end in τ*. When they would, the **τ** is simply dropped. So the analysis of all these singulars is as follows: **-μα [-ματ/ο]**.

Row 12: Bases ending in **ρ/**.

This row includes one neuter, **πῦρ** [**πύρ/ο**].

Row 15: Neuter nouns whose bases end in **υ/**.

This row includes one neuter, and it follows the principle with no complications: **ἄστυ** [**ἄστυ/ο**].

Row 18: Neuters of bases ending in **-εσ/**.

These nouns are formed just like the such non-neuters as **Σωκράτης** and **τρίηρης** except that they are neuter (and so add **ο** rather than **ς**). If these neuter singulars were formed without complication, we should expect them to end in **-εσ [-εσ/ο]**. For some reason, though, the Greeks chose to strengthen the final vowel from **ε** to **ο**. Linguists call such changes of vowel type—not mere lengthening as from short **ε** (**ε**) to long **ε** (**η**)—but complete change of sound (as from **ε** to **ο**) **vowel gradation**. The neuter singulars of all bases ending in **-εσ/** are complicated by a *change from e-grade to o-grade*. In the analysis, I put the **ε** in grey (because it disappears) and the new letter **ο** in superscript: **ξίφος** [**ξίφ^ες/ο**]. Be sure to notice that *the ς is not a cases ending, but part of the base*.

Principle #3: Non-Neuter Nominative Plurals

Principle 3a: Non-Neuters whose bases end in α/ or ο/

The nominative plural case ending is **ι**.

Rows 1-7: All non-neuter bases ending in **α/** or **ο/**.

The plurals of these nouns are formed by adding **ι** to the base. No complications occur. So, all these plurals end in **-αι** or **-οι**. Study all the plurals in these rows, observing how obvious and regular the analyses of the plurals are.

Principle 3b: Non-neuters whose bases do not end in α/ or ο/

The nominative plural case ending is ες.

Rows 9-14: Bases ending in dentals, palatals, gutturals, υ, ρ, and ι.

The nominative plurals of all these nouns are formed without complication by adding ες to the base. Again, study each plural, noticing how obvious the bases are once the nominative plural ending is removed. Be sure to notice *why* the plurals are less complicated than the singulars: The singulars add (or try to add) ς, which causes complications when it follows virtually any consonant. The ες ending, by contrast, causes no such complications. Obviously, *the nominative plural is almost always a better starting place than the nominative singular for identifying the base.*

Row 16: Bases ending in υ/.

This category is tricky because in the prehistory of the language there were apparently two different kinds of υ. The first kind was stable and always remained υ. The second kind was unstable. I call it a **shape-shifting υ**. The shape-shifting υ effectively changed to an ε in the nominative plural. For example, the singular πέλεκυς [πέλεκυ^ε/ς] reveals its base as a shape-shifter in its plural form: πελέκεες [πελέκυ^ε/ες]. In this book I distinguish bases with shape-shifting υ's by following the υ with a superscript ε: πέλεκυ^ε/. (In any given form either the υ or the ε will prevail. In the analysis I will print the sound that does not prevail in grey because it has disappeared.) You cannot know merely by looking at a nominative singular form whether the υ of a given υ-base noun is stable or shape-shifting. You can identify shape-shifting υ's from their nominative plural forms, which will end in -εες.

Row 17: Bases ending in ϕ/.

When the ες is added, the ϕ always disappears, resulting in either ηες [ηϕ/ες] or οες [οϕ/ες]. Grammarians refer to the common disappearance of digamma between vowels as the **Loss of Intervocalic Digamma**. Study the nouns in this row, comparing singular and plural forms, reminding yourself that *all forms of any given noun are made from the same base*, and working to understand how neatly these difficult forms can be explained once we hypothesize that their bases originally ended in ϕ.

Row 18: Bases ending in εσ/.

When the ες is added, the final σ of the base always disappears, resulting in -εες [εσ/ες].

The loss of sigma between vowels (particularly short vowels) that has occurred in the plurals of Row 18 is one example of a widespread tendency of Greek pronunciation to repress σ between vowels. Grammarians refer to the common disappearance of sigma between vowels as the **Loss of Intervocalic Sigma**.

Principle #4: Neuter Nominative Plurals *The nominative plural case marker is always α.*

Row 8: Bases ending in ο/.

When the α is added, the ο/ of the base *always* disappears as in δῶρα [δῶρ^ο/α]. The loss of ο before α occurs *only* in making these neuter plurals. It is *not* a regular feature of Greek pronunciation.

Row 9: Bases ending in ματ/. All nouns whose bases end in -ματ/ are neuter.

The nominative plural case ending α is added without complication. Study all the singulars and plurals in this row, noting how the analysis of such a plural as σώματα (σώματ/α) points the way to understanding how the singular took its current form from the same base: σῶμα (σώματ/ο).

Row 12: Bases ending in ρ/.

This row includes one neuter, πῦρ [πύρ/ο]. Its nominative plural is πυρά [πυρ/α].

Row 15: Bases ending in υ/.

This row includes one neuter, ἄστυ. The υ of its base is, as it happens, a shape-shifting υ, as you can see from its nominative plural: ἄστεα [ἄστυ^ε/α].

Row 18: Bases ending in εσ/.

The σ disappears (as intervocalic sigma) after the α is added. So, the plurals of all these nouns end in εα [εσ/α].

Nominative forms of practice nouns

The charts that follow show not only the nominative singular and plural forms of all the practice nouns, but also the analyses of those forms. Make sure that you learn to analyze every singular and every plural into its components: **base** and **nominative** (singular or plural) **case ending**.

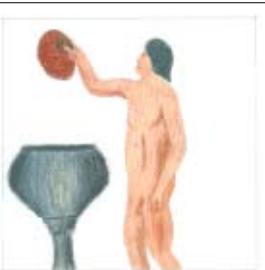
As you will see in this and future chapters, most forms of the **definite article** (“the”) and the **demonstrative adjectives** (“this” and “that”) follow the pattern of α/ and ο/-base nouns. As you encounter the various forms of these adjectives, try to analyze them back to bases of that sort. You will discover a few oddities, but generally they work just like nouns whose bases end in α/ (Rows 1-4) and ο/ (Rows 5-7).

Remember that the words “the,” “this,” and “that” must be in the same gender, case, and number as the nouns they modify. This is what grammarians mean when they say that these (and all other adjectives) must **agree** with their nouns.

Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Row 1	Ἀθήνα/	κεφαλά/	μάχα/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Long α bases)			
s: -η [ā/ō]	ἡ Ἀθήνη	αὕτη ἡ κεφαλή	ἐκείνη ἡ μάχη
Pl: -αι [ā/ī]	αἱ Ἀθῆναι	αὗται αἱ κεφαλαί	ἐκεῖναι αἱ μάχαι
Row 2	κιθάρα/	θύρα/	ἀδικία/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Long α bases)			
s: -η [ā/ō]	αὕτη ἡ κιθάρη	ἐκείνη ἡ θύρη	ἡ ἀδικίη
Pl: -αι [ā/ī]	αὗται αἱ κιθάραι	ἐκεῖναι αἱ θύραι	αἱ ἀδικίαι
Row 3	ἄμαξα/	τράπεζα/	μούσα/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Short α bases)			
s: -α [ă/ō]	ἐκείνη ἡ ἄμαξα	ἡ τράπεζα	αὕτη ἡ μουσα
Pl: -αι [ă/ī]	ἐκεῖναι αἱ ἄμαξαι	αἱ τράπεζαι	αὗται αἱ μουσαι

Greek Before Christmas

Row 4	ναύτα/	στρατιώτα/	νεανία/
1 st -Declension Masculine			
S: -ης [ᾱ/ς]	ὁ ναύτης	οὗτος ὁ στρατιώτης	ἐκεῖνος ὁ νεανίης
Pl: -αι [α/ι]	οἱ ναῦται	οὗτοι οἱ στρατιῶται	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ νεανίαι
Row 5	θεό/	ἄνθρωπο/	δοῦλο/
2 nd -Declension Masculine			
S: -ος [ο/ς]	οὗτος ὁ θεός	ὁ ἄνθρωπος	ἐκεῖνος ὁ δοῦλος
Pl: -α [ο/ι]	οὗτοι οἱ θεοί	οἱ ἄνθρωποι	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ δοῦλοι
Row 6	θεό/	ὁδό/	ἔσοδο/
2 nd -Declension Feminine			
S: -ος [ο/ς]	αὕτη ἡ θεός	ἐκείνη ἡ ὁδός	ἡ ἔσοδος
Pl: -οι [ο/ι]	αὗται αἱ θεοί	ἐκεῖναι αἱ ὁδοί	αἱ ἔσοδοι

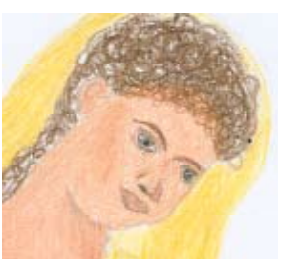
Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Row 7	δῶρο/	στάδιο/	πρόσωπο/
2 nd -Declension Neuter			
s: -ον [ο/ν]	τὸ δῶρον	τοῦτο τὸ στάδιον	ἐκεῖνο τὸ πρόσωπον
Pl: -α [ο/α]	τὰ δῶρα	ταῦτα τὰ στάδια	ἐκεῖνα τὰ πρόσωπα
Row 8	ἔρωτ/	παίδ/	ὄρνιθ/
3 rd -Declension Dentals (-δ/, -τ/, -θ/) Non-neuter			
s: -ς [δ,τ,θ/ς]	ὁ ἔρωρ	ἐκεῖνος ὁ παῖς	αὕτη ἡ ὄρνις
Pl: -ες [δ,τ,θ/ες]	οἱ ἔρωτες	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ παῖδες	αὗται αἱ ὄρνιθες
Row 9	σῶματ/	γράμματ/	ἄγαματ/
3 rd -Declension Dentals (-ματ/) Neuter			
s: -μα [ματ/ο]	τοῦτο τὸ σῶμα	ἐκεῖνο τὸ γράμμα	τοῦτο τὸ ἄγαμα
Pl: -ματ/α	ταῦτα τὰ σώματα	ἐκεῖνα τὰ γράμματα	ταῦτα τὰ ἀγάλματα

Greek Before Christmas

Row 10	κύλικ/	σφίγγ/	θρίχ/
3 rd -Declension Palatals (-κ/, -γ/, -χ/)			
S: -ξ [κ,γ,χ/ς]	αὕτη ἡ κύλιξ	ἐκείνη ἡ σφίγξ	ἡ θρίξ
Pl: -ες [κ,γ,χ/ες]	αὗται αἱ κύλικες	ἐκαῖναι αἱ σφίγγες	αἱ τρίχες
Row 11	κύκλωπ/	γύπ/	χέρνιβ/
3 rd -Declension Labials (-π/, -β/, -φ/)			
S: -ψ [π,β,φ/ς]	ὁ κύκλώψ	οὗτος ὁ γύψ	ἐκείνη ἡ χέρνιψ
Pl: -ες [π,β,φ/ες]	οἱ κύκλωπες	οὗτοι οἱ γύπες	ἐκεῖναι αἱ χέρνιβες
Row 12	ῥήτορ/	μήτερ/	πύρ/
3 rd -Declension -ρ/			
S: - _ρ/ς, - ρ/ο	οὗτος ὁ ῥήτωρ	αὕτη ἡ μήτηρ	τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ
Pl: -ρ/ες, -ρ/α	οὗτοι οἱ ῥήτορες	αὗται αἱ μήτερες	ταῦτα τὰ πυρά

Chapter 3. Bases and Nominative Endings

Row 13	Ἀμαζόν/	λιμέν/	ρίν/
3 rd -Declension -v/			
S: - _v/ς, - _v/ς	αὕτη ἡ Ἀμαζών	ἐκεῖνος ὁ λιμήν	αὕτη ἡ ρίς
Pl: -v/ες	αὗται αἱ Ἀμαζόνες	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ λιμένες	αὗται αἱ ρίνες
Row 14	γέροντ/	ἐλέφαντ/	πρέποντ/
3 rd -Declension -vτ/ <u>Non-Neuter S:</u> -ovτ/ς → -ων -avτ/ς → -ᾶς -ε'vτ/ς → -εις <u>Neuter Sing:</u> οντ/, αντ/, εντ/ο			
S: - _vτ/ς	ἐκεῖνος ὁ γέρων	οὗτος ὁ ἐλέφας	τὸ πρέπον
Pl: -vτ/ες, -vτ/α	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ γέροντες	οὗτοι οἱ ἐλέφαντες	τὰ πρέποντα
Row 15	ἄκρόπολι/	βάσι/	ὄψι/
3 rd -Declension -l/			
S: - l/ς	ἡ ἀκρόπολις	ἐκείνη ἡ βάση	αὕτη ἡ ὄψις
Pl: -l/ες	αἱ ἀκροπόλεις	ἐκεῖναι αἱ βάσεις	αὗται αἱ ὄψεις

Greek Before Christmas

Row 16	νέκυ/	πέλεκυ ^ε /	ἄστυ ^ε /
3 rd -Declension -υ/, -υ ^ε /			
S: -υ/ς, -υ/θ	ἐκεῖνος ὁ νέκυς	οὗτος ὁ πέλεκυς	ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἄστυ
Pl: -υ/ες, -υ ^ε /ες, α	ἐκεῖνοι οἱ νέκυες	οὗτοι οἱ πελέκεες	ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἄστυα
Row 17	βασιλήϝ/	νήϝ/	βόϝ/
3 rd -Declension Digamma -ϝ/			
S: -ηυ/ς, ου/ς	ὁ βασιλεὺς	αὕτη ἡ νηὺς	οὗτος ὁ βόϝς
Pl: -η/ες, ο/ες	οἱ βασιλεῖς	αὗται αἱ νῆες	οὗτοι οἱ βόες
Row 18	Σώκρατες/	τριήρες/	ξίφες/
3 rd -Declension -ες/			
S: -εϝ/ς, -ε ^ο ϝ/θ	ὁ Σωκράτης	ἐκείνη ἡ τριήρης	τοῦτο τὸ ξίφος
Pl: -εϝ/ες, -εϝ/α	οἱ Σωκράτες	ἐκεῖναι αἱ τριήρεις	ταῦτα τὰ ξίφια

Important Terms

This is a handy place to pull together a few important grammatical terms. You have seen some of them before. Others are introduced here for the first time. They are all part of the normal vocabulary of Greek scholars worldwide. So, take a few minutes and learn them.

Declensions.

From ancient times students of Greek have found it useful to divide Greek nouns into three categories, distinguished by the final letter of their bases. Roman teachers of Greek called these categories “declensions,” and the name has stuck. So, modern grammarians refer to all nouns whose bases end in *α*/ by the imaginative designation First Declension; those whose bases end in *ο*/ as Second Declension; and those whose bases end in anything other than *α*/ or *ο*/ as Third Declension.

This terminology allows us to restate some of our principles more handily.

The Four Principles of Nominative Case Endings Restated

- 1) Non-neuter nominative singulars
 - 1st-declension feminines: *ο*
 - All others: *ς*
- 2) Non-neuter nominative plurals
 - 1st and 2nd declensions, both masculine and feminine: *ι*
 - 3rd declension: *ες*
- 3) Neuter nominative singulars
 - 2nd-declension: *υ*
 - 3rd declension: *ο*
- 4) Neuter nominative plurals
 - All: *α*

Loss of Intervocalic Sigma and Intervocalic Digamma.

A sigma between vowels (especially if one is an *ε*) tended to disappear, and a digamma between vowels always disappeared in pronunciation and spelling. You observed this phenomenon in the plurals of *Rows 17* and *18*.

Compensatory Lengthening.

When an earlier form contains the pattern *short vowel—consonant—consonant* and one of the two consonants is lost for some reason, the vowel tends to lengthen, resulting in the pattern *long vowel—consonant*. The reason for this is that the short vowel followed by two consonants actually took longer to pronounce than a short vowel followed by one consonant would have. The double consonant made the syllable *long* even though the vowel was *short*. As the language evolved and

one of the consonants ceased to be pronounced, *the syllable continued to be pronounced as long* so as not to foul up the meters of traditional poems and songs. When the language came to be written down, scribes captured that long sound by using a long vowel (such as η or ω). Grammarians speak of this lengthening of the vowel to compensate for the loss of one (or more) consonants as *Compensatory Lengthening*. You saw compensatory lengthening in the non-neuter singulars of Rows 12, 13, 14, and 18. You will encounter it often in Greek.

Grassmann's Law.

You must have wondered how τριχῆς came to be the plural of the base θριχ/ [Row 10]. The explanation involves a general observation about Greek pronunciation, which grammarians commonly refer to as Grassmann's Law (because a linguist named Grassmann first explained it).

It happens that Greek of the historic periods detests the sound of successive syllables beginning with sounds called aspirates. **Aspirates** are sounds that end in something like an "h" sound. In Greek they include the rough breath (', *h*), theta (θ, *th*), chi (χ, *kh* or *ch*), and phi (φ, *ph*). The point is simple: Greeks hated sounds like φεφν (They changed it to πεφν) and θεθε (They changed it to τεθε). Grammarians say that they **dissimilated** (i.e., made different) initial aspirates of successive syllables. I.e., one of the aspirates had to lose its aspiration ("h.")

So, the Greeks refused to say *threekhes* (θριχῆς), pronouncing it *trikhes* (τριχῆς) instead.

What now?

The material in this chapter will serve as a foundation for your understanding of the entire noun/adjective system. Don't be satisfied with merely reading the chapter. You've got to learn the material in it. Study each of the fifty-four nouns one-by-one not merely to memorize the analysis of each word, but to learn how to *see* the **base** and **ending** of each noun through the lens of the principles that govern the formation of nominative nouns. Keep in mind that these eighteen rows of nouns will function as examples of virtually every noun and adjective that you will encounter in Greek.

This is probably *the* most important chapter in this book. Get with your buddies and make sure you all understand the analyses and can do them. As you encounter difficulties, make a written list, and ask about those difficulties in class.