

Chapter Four

Genitive Case

Case Endings: Concept

This chapter will begin a process of stretching your conception of how languages work with nouns to produce somewhat larger *semantic chunks* (i.e., chunks of meaning or thought). In English this task is accomplished by word order and by using additional words to build phrases. I'll talk about word order in a subsequent chapter. For now, let's consider phrases.

Consider the English word "Homer." It calls to mind a certain person but doesn't tell us anything more precise than that image. We can use a few simple words, though, to produce some rather more precise thoughts: "from Homer," "for Homer," "Hey, Homer!" In English, adding meanings like these requires that we use additional words.

Imagine, though, a different kind of noun system in which ideas like these were communicated not by using an additional word, but by altering the form of the noun. Imagine, for example, that English had an **ending**, which when added to a **noun** meant "**belonging to**" whoever the **noun** was. We might schematize such a structure as follows:

The **girl/singular possessive ending** means "**belonging to** the **girl**";

The **girl/plural possessive ending** means "**belonging to** the **girls**."

English does, in fact, have endings of this sort—the **'s** and **s'**. In explaining our possessive endings (singular and plural) to a foreigner, we might write

The **boy's** = the **boy/belonging to <singular>** = belonging to the boy.

The **boys'** = the **boy/belonging to <plural>** = belonging to the boys.

Greek has several different endings that are structurally analogous to the English possessive endings. You have already learned the endings that mean <subject of sentence>. For example,

παῖς [παῖδ/ς], the **boy/subject of sentence <singular>** and

παῖδες [παῖδ/ες], the **boy/subject of sentence <plural>**.

Those endings are called nominative case endings, and a noun form that contains nominative case endings is said to be in the **nominative case**.

A noun **case ending**, then, is a sound that adds to a base an indication of how the noun functions in its sentence. Every Greek noun is "in" some case, i.e., contains a case marker. For the purpose of analysis (and only for this purpose), we will often show nouns merely as bases, but in the actual Greek language there is no such thing as a noun that is *just* a base. *Every noun consists of* **base** + **case ending**.

Genitive Case: Concept

In this chapter you will learn how to put nouns “in” the genitive case. Adding genitive endings to a Greek noun has a semantic effect similar to adding possessive endings to English nouns.

Though we call the English forms “possessives,” they indicate far more than just “belonging to.” When we say “Homer’s *Iliad*,” we don’t mean the “*Iliad* that Homer owned,” but the one that he composed. When we speak of “John Kennedy’s assassination,” we do not mean the assassination that he owned, but the one that happened to him.

In a similar way, the genitive endings that you will learn in this chapter can add the meaning of “**belonging to** <singular or plural>” to a noun, but they can also add several other notions. One way to conceptualize the structure and meaning of the genitive in Greek is as follows.

boy/**genitive singular ending** = boy <of> = “**of** (the) boy”

boy/**genitive plural ending** = boys <of> = “**of** (the) boys”

What the genitive of means

Of can have any of the following senses:

1. **Possession**. “The palace *of the king*” means “the palace the king owns.”
2. **Place** of origin or residence. “Richard *of England*” means Richard, “who comes from or resides in England.”
3. **Patronymic**: “Jesus *of Joseph*” means “Jesus the son of Joseph.”
4. **Composition**: A “rod *of iron*” is a rod “made of iron.”
5. **Genitive of the whole**: The whole to which a part belongs. A piece *of pie*; one *of the students*; some *of the people*.
6. **Subjective** and **Objective**: Either the subject or the object of certain nouns indicating actions. “The hatred *of the criminal*” may mean either “the hatred which the criminal feels for others” (subjective) or “the hatred which other people feel for the criminal” (objective).
7. **Time during which**: There is an archaic English usage which parallels the use of the genitive in Greek time phrases. “I like to walk through the woods *of a spring morning*” meant “during that kind of time which spring mornings are.”

The Radical (=root) Sense of the Genitive Case.

All these uses of the genitive case arise from a radical notion of “from”—in the sense of *separation* or *origin*. That is why so many of the uses of the genitive can be translated with the English “of,” which also suggests origin. It is also why the genitive marker felt right for using with prepositions that mean things like “out of” and “away from.”

Chapter 4. Genitive Case

Genitive nouns are used to answer many prepositions

Prepositions are strange little words. They are very like adverbs in that they usually tell *where* (English prepositions of this sort include *on, in, to, from, under, over*) or when (*before, after*). They differ from adverbs, however, in that the preposition (unlike the adverb) cannot stand alone. We cannot say merely, “He is walking *from*.” The very use of the preposition *from* solicits the question, “From *where*?” “He is walking *from town*,” we must say, or “*from school*” or “*from his friend’s house*.” Prepositions *must be answered by a noun*. Indeed, they are called *pre-positions* because they are always positioned *in front of* a noun. To say “They come **from** the **city**” in Greek you will need to use the preposition **ἀπό** and complete the phrase with **πόλι/** or **ἄστυ^ε/** + the **genitive singular ending**. To say “they come **from** the **cities**” you will need to use **ἀπό** and complete the phrase with **πόλι/** or **ἄστυ^ε/** + the **genitive plural ending**. *When genitives answer prepositions, do not translate the genitive ending as “of.”* Instead, read them as “answering” the implicit question suggested by the preposition: “from *where*?”; “from Athens.” (Grammarians often call the noun that “answers” the preposition the **object of the preposition**.)

Prepositions answered by a genitive noun

These phrases all consist of a preposition “answered” by a genitive noun. I’ll explain the forms later. For now, simply learn the prepositions, note that they are answered by genitive nouns, and understand how they are translated.

ἐκ (ἐξ before vowels) = **out of**.

ἐκ τῆς πόλιος or **ἐξ** ἄστεος = **out of** the city.

(Greek often omitted *the* from prepositional phrases, though English has no such custom.)

ἀπό (ἀπ’ or ἀφ’ before vowels) = **from**.

ἀπό τῶν Ἀθηνέων = **from** the Athens; **ἀφ’** ὁδοῦ = **from** the road

διὰ (δι’ before vowels) = **through, by means of**.

διὰ τῆς πυλῆς = **through** the gate; **δι’** ἐσόδου = **through** the entrance

περί = **about, around**.

περὶ τῆς μάχης = **about** the battle

Analyzing Genitives: Principles

It’s time to learn the **genitive endings** and in the process enjoy the benefits of having learned **bases** and categories (rows and genders). If you have really learned the information in *Chapter Three*, you can learn to form virtually all Greek genitives in about five minutes.

As you see below, there are three genitive singular endings and only one genitive plural ending. Though neuter nouns take special endings in the nominative case, they do not in the genitive. Neuters and non-neuters have the same genitive endings.

Principle #1: Genitive Singulars

- a. 1st-Declension (α/) Feminines: The genitive singular marker is **ς**.
- b. 1st-Declension Masculines and all 2nd-Declensions (ο/): The genitive singular marker is (effectively) **υ**.
- c. All 3rd-Declensions: The genitive singular marker is **ος**.

Principle #2: Genitive Plurals

All: The genitive plural marker is **ων**.

It should take you less than five minutes to think through what these principles mean and to memorize them.

Analyzing Genitives: Details

Now we'll work through each row of pattern nouns, comparing the relevant principle to the actual forms in the charts that follow, observing whether any complications occur when the principle is implemented on a specific kind of base. Don't just read this section. Study it, constantly referring to the charts that follow to make sure you really understand how each of the 54 genitives is formed.

Principle #1: Genitive Singulars

Principle #1a: Genitive Singulars of 1st Declension Feminines add **ς**

Rows 1 and 2: Feminines with bases ending in long α/: The α lengthens to η (just as it did in the nominative singular).

Row 3: Feminines with bases ending in short α/: The α lengthens to η (though it did not lengthen in the nominative singular).

Principle #1b: Genitive Singulars of 1st-Declension Masculines and all 2nd-Declension Nouns add **υ**.

Row 4: Masculines of the 1st declension.

If these nouns made their genitive singular as other 1st-declension nouns do, their genitive singulars would be identical to their nominative singulars: e.g., ναύτης [ναύτᾱ/ς]. To avoid such ambiguity of form and meaning, Greeks simply borrowed the final ο/υ sound of 2nd-declension genitives, adding the **υ** ending and effectively replacing the final α of the 1st-declension base with the ο of the 2nd declension: e.g., ναύτου [ναυτᾱ^ο/υ]. This borrowing of the ο-sound explains why genitive singulars of these nouns end in ο/υ, not α/υ.

Rows 5-7: All 2nd-declension nouns.

In fact, the original genitive singulars of 2nd-declension nouns was -ο/ιο. In time this form shortened to ο/ο, and by the time most classical texts were written, the form had further condensed to ο/υ.

Principle #1c: Genitive Singulars of all 3rd-Declension Nouns add *ος*.

Rows 8-15: bases ending in dentals, palatals, gutturals, *ν*, *ρ*, and *ι*.

The rule applies without complication to virtually all nouns in these categories.

You will observe a couple of minor complications in **Row 12** (*-ρ*/). They result from factors other than simply adding the **case ending** to the **base**. A very few bases that end in *-ρ*/ shifted their accent to the last syllable in the genitive singular (and some other forms). For example, *μητερ/ός* from the base *μήτερ*/. The shift of accent, along with the rolled *ρ* de-emphasized the *ε* so much that it was ultimately lost altogether: *μητρός* [*μητερ/ός*]. Try pronouncing the form with the de-emphasized *ε*, and you will see how natural its loss was. Grammarians say that the *ε* was lost by **syncopation** (“pruning”).

Rows 16-18: bases ending in *υ*, *φ*, and *εσ*

These words all experience some change of base in forming their genitive singulars. The good news is that *the change is exactly the same as the one you encountered in their nominative plurals*. So, to form their genitive singulars, begin with the *nominative plural*, remove the nominative plural ending **εσ** (non-neuter) or **α** (neuter) and replace it with the genitive singular ending **ος**. For example, to form the genitive singular of the base *βασιληφ*/, just remember the nominative plural *βασιληεσ* (*βασιληφ/εσ*), remove the case ending **εσ** from the actual nominative plural form (not the analysis), and append the genitive ending: *βασιληος* [*βασιληφ/ος*]. Be sure to understand that this shortcut works because the same linguistic principles operative in the nominative plurals are at work in the genitive singular. In digamma-base nouns (*Row 17*), for example, the genitive ending, like the nominative plural ending, begins with a vowel, causing the digamma of the base to be lost without a trace because it was between vowels (intervocalic).

Principle #2: All Genitive Plurals: add *ων*

Rows 1-4: All 1st-declension nouns. The final **α** of the base changes to *ε*. So, these genitive plurals end in *-έ/ων* [*άέ/ων*]. So, for example, *πυλέων* [*πυλάέ/ων*].

Rows 5-8: All 2nd-declension nouns. The final **ο** of the base disappears when the ending is added [*-ο/ων*]: *άνθρωπων* [*άνθρωπο/ων*]; *δώρων* [*δώρο/ων*].

Rows 9-15: All 3rd-declension nouns *except* those in *υ*, *φ*, and *εσ*. The ending */ων* is added without complication to nouns in these categories. In **Row 10** the base *θριχ*/ is affected by Grassmann’s Law, just as it is in the nominative plural.

Rows 16-18: 3rd-declension nouns in *υ*, *φ*, and *εσ*. These words all experience some change of base in forming their genitive plurals. As in the genitive singular, *the change is exactly the same as what you encountered in their nominative plurals* (and genitive singulars). So, to form their genitive plurals, begin with the nominative plural, remove the nominative plural ending **εσ** or **α**, and replace it with the genitive plural ending **ων**: *βασιληεσ* [*βασιληφ/εσ*]; *βασιληων* [*βασιληφ/ων*]. The same linguistic principles at work in the nominative plural are also operative in the genitive plurals.

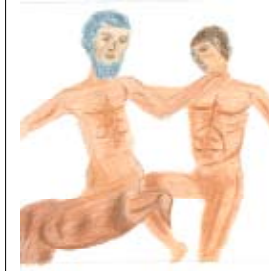
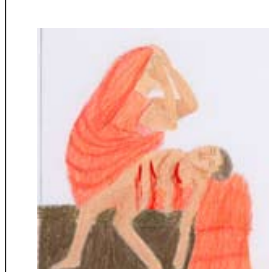
Genitive Forms of Practice Nouns

The charts that follow show the genitive singular and plural forms of all the practice nouns. Make sure that you learn to recognize the two parts of each noun form: **base** and **genitive** (singular or plural) **case ending**.

As you can see, all forms of the definite article (*the*) and the demonstrative adjectives (*this* and *that*) follow the pattern of 1st- and 2nd-declension nouns. These words are very common. Make sure you understand them.

Understand clearly that the words *this*, *that*, and *the* must be in the same gender, case, and number as the noun they modify. That is, they must **agree** (in gender, case, and number) with the noun they describe.

Chapter 4. Genitive Case

Row 1	Ἀθήνα/	κεφαλά/	μάχα/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Long α bases)			
S: -ης [ᾱ/ς]	τῆς Ἀθῆνης	ταύτης τῆς κεφαλῆς	ἐκείνης τῆς μάχης
Pl: -ῶν [ᾱ̃/ων]	τῶν Ἀθηνέων	τούτων τῶν κεφαλῶν	ἐκείνων τῶν μαχέων
Row 2	κιθάρα/	θύρα/	ἀδικία/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Long α bases)			
S: -ης [ᾱ/ς]	ταύτης τῆς κιθάρης	τῆς θύρης	ἀδικίης
Pl: -ῶν [ᾱ̃/ων]	τοῦτων τῶν κιθαρέων	τῶν θυρέων	ἀδικέων
Row 3	ἄμαξα/	τράπεζα/	μούσα/
1 st -Declension Feminine (Short α bases)			
S: -ης [ᾶ/ς]	ἐκείνης τῆς ἀμάξης	τραπέζης	τῆς μουσῆς
Pl: -ῶν [ᾶ̃/ων]	ἐκείνων τῶν ἀμαξέων	τραπεζέων	τῶν μουσέων

Greek Before Christmas

Row 4	ναύτα/	στρατιώτα/	νεανία/
1 st -Declension Masculine			
S: -ου [α ^ο /v]	τούτου τοῦ ναύτου	τοῦ στρατιώτου	νεανίου
Pl: -ῶν [ά ^ε /wv]	τούτων τῶν ναυτέων	τῶν στρατιωτέων	νεανιέων
Row 5	θεό/	ἄνθρωπο/	δοῦλο/
2 nd -Declension Masculine			
S: -ου [ο/v]	ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ	τοῦ ἀνθρώπου	τούτου τοῦ δούλου
Pl: -ων [ο/wv]	ἐκείνων τῶν θεῶν	τῶν ἀνθρώπων	τούτων τῶν δούλων
Row 6	θεό/	ὁδό/	ἔσοδο/
2 nd -Declension Feminine			
S: -ου [ο/v]	ταύτης τῆς θεοῦ	ὁδοῦ	τῆς ἐσόδου
Pl: -ων [ο/wv]	τούτων τῶν θεῶν	ὁδῶν	τῶν ἐσόδων

Chapter 4. Genitive Case

Row 7	δῶρο/	στάδιο/	πρόσωπο/
2 nd -Declension Neuter			
S: -ου [ο/υ]	τούτου τοῦ δώρου	τοῦ σταδίου	ἐκείνου τοῦ προσώπου
Pl: -ων [ο/ων]	τούτων τῶν δώρων	τῶν σταδίων	ἐκείνων τῶν προσώπων
Row 8	ἔρωτ/	παῖδ/	ὄρνιθ/
3 rd -Declension Dentals (-δ/, -τ/, -θ/) Non-neuter			
S: -τ,δ,θ/ος	τοῦ ἔρωτος	τούτου τοῦ παιδός	ταύτης τῆς ὀρνίθος
Pl: -τ,δ,θ/ων	τῶν ἐρώτων	τούτων τῶν παίδων	τούτων τῶν ὀρνίθων
Row 9	σώματ/	γράμματ/	ἄγαλματ/
3 rd -Declension Dentals (-ματ/) Neuter			
S: -ματ/ος	ἐκείνου τοῦ σώματος	τούτου τοῦ γράμματος	ἀγάλματος
Pl: -ματ/ων	ἐκείνων τῶν σωμάτων	τούτων τῶν γραμμάτων	ἀγαλμάτων

Greek Before Christmas

Row 10	κύλικ/	σφίγγ/	θριχ/
3 rd -Declension Palatals (-κ/, -γ/, -χ/)			
S: -κ, γ, χ/ος	ταύτης τῆς κύλικος	τῆς σφίγγος	ἐκείνης τῆς θριχός
Pl: -κ, γ, χ/ων	τούτων τῶν κυλίκων	τῶν σφιγγῶν	ἐκείνων τῶν θριχῶν
Row 11	κύκλωπ/	γύπ/	χέρνιβ/
3 rd -Declension Labials (-π/, -β/, -φ/)			
S: -π, β, φ/ος	τοῦ κύκλωπος	γυπός	ταύτης τῆς χέρνιβος
Pl: -π, β, φ/ων	τῶν κυκλώπων	γυπῶν	τούτων τῶν χερνίβων
Row 12	ρήτορ/	μήτερ/	πύρ/
3 rd -Declension -ρ/			
S: -ρ/ος	ἐκείνου τοῦ ῥήτορος	ταύτης τῆς μητρός	τούτου τοῦ πυρός
Pl: -ρ/ων	ἐκείνων τῶν ῥητόρων	τούτων τῶν μητέρων	τούτων τῶν πυρῶν

Chapter 4. Genitive Case

Row 13	Ἀμαζόν/	λιμέν/	ρίν/
3 rd -Declension -v/			
S: -v/ος	ταύτης τῆς Ἀμαζόνας	ἐκείνου τοῦ λιμένος	τῆς ρίνος
Pl: -v/ων	τούτων τῶν Ἀμαζόνων	ἐκείνων τῶν λιμένων	τῶν ρινῶν
Row 14	γέροντ/	ἐλέφαντ/	πρέποντ/
3 rd -Declension -vτ/			
S: -vτ/ος	ἐκείνου τοῦ γέροντος	τούτου τοῦ ἐλέφαντος	τοῦ πρέποντος
Pl: -vτ/ων	ἐκείνων τῶν γερόντων	τούτων τῶν ἐλεφάντων	τῶν πρεπόντων
Row 15	ἀκρόπολι/	βάσι/	ὄψι/
3 rd -Declension -ι/			
S: -ι/ος	τῆς ἀκροπόλιος	βάσιος	ταύτης τῆς ὀψιος
Pl: -ι/ων	τῶν ἀκροπολίων	βασίων	τούτων τῶν ὀσίων

Greek Before Christmas

Row 16	νέκυ/	πέλεκυ ^ε /	ἄστυ ^ε /
3 rd -Declension -υ/, -υ ^ε /			
S: -υ/ος, υ ^ε /ος	τούτου τοῦ νέκυος	τούτου τοῦ πελέκεος	τούτου τοῦ ἄστεος
Pl: -υ/ων, υ ^ε /ων	τούτων τῶν νεκύων	τούτων τῶν πελεκέων	τούτων τῶν ἀστέων
Row 17	βασιλήϝ/	νήϝ/	βόϝ/
3 rd -Declension Digamma -ϝ/			
S: -ηϝ/ος, οϝ/ος	τοῦ βασιλῆος	νήος	ἐκείνου τοῦ βοός
Pl: ῆϝ/ων, όϝ/ων	τῶν βασιλῆων	νηῶν	ἐκείνων τῶν βοῶν
Row 18	Σώκρατες/	τριήρες/	ξίφος/
3 rd -Declension -ες/			
S: -ες/ος	τοῦ Σωκράτεος	ταύτης τῆς τριήρεος	ἐκείνου τοῦ ξίφεος
Pl: ἑς/ων	τῶν Σωκρατέων	τούτων τῶν τριηρέων	ἐκείνων τῶν ξιφέων

Chapter 4. Genitive Case

Two notes about accents:

- You will notice that accents on the antepenult (3rd syllable from the end) move to the penult (2nd syllable from the end) when the genitive ending is **ου** or **ων**. This shift of accent is not unique to the genitive case, but is an example of a general principle in Greek. In general, if the final syllable is long (as both those endings are), the accent cannot fall on the antepenult. Consider *ἄνθρωπο*/. The accent on the base indicates that the accent will fall on the antepenult *unless* a long ultima (final syllable) pulls the accent to the penult. This principle of accentuation explains why the two nominatives (*ἄνθρωπος*, *ἄνθρωποι*) are accented on the antepenult, but both genitives are accented on the penult (*ἀνθρώπου*, *ἀνθρώπων*).

Syllables formed with the following vowels are long: *ᾱ*, *η*, *ῶ*, *ω*. Syllables *ending in* the two diphthongs *αι* and *οι* are short. Syllables containing *non-terminal* *αι* and *οι* and other diphthongs in any position are long.

- For 3rd-declension bases of only one syllable the accent shifts from the base to the case ending in the genitive case (and, as you will learn *Chapter 9*, in the dative case). For example, *παιδός* and *παιδῶν* from *παῖδ*/ (Row 8), *σφιγγός* and *σφιγγῶν* from *σφίγγ*/ *τριχός* and *τριχῶν* from *θρίχ*/ (Row 9), *γυπός* and *γυπῶν* from *γύπ*/ (Row 11) and several others.

What now?

Make sure you have memorized the four genitive case endings, that you can accurately analyze the genitive singulars and plurals of all 54 practice nouns, and that you understand the change in *meaning* that is produced by putting a genitive case ending onto a noun base.

Also, take a few minutes to review the nominatives (both singular and plural). When you do, I think you will see more clearly than you may have before that the complexities in the nominative singular forms are all the result of adding (or trying to add) the **ς** case ending. Sound combinations that include *σ* are frequently problematic in Greek.

Keep drilling, making lists of problems, and asking for clarification from your instructor and fellow students.