

# Beginning NT Greek - Chapter 5-6:

## English & Greek Grammar Terms

### A. Introduction

Before beginning to understand another language, it is necessary that you have firmly in mind the characteristics of your own language. Both English and Greek belong to the Indo-European family of languages, and there are many affinities between them, especially in vocabulary. There are also some noticeable differences. The most apparent is the fact that Greek is more highly "inflected" than English. This means that in Greek, the *relationships between words* are shown more extensively by *changes in the forms of the words themselves* (prefixes, endings, etc.), whereas in English, these relationships are indicated by the *relative positions of the words in the sentence*.

Following are some words which have survived from a period when the English language had more inflectional forms:

1. **Personal Pronouns:** ("I", "you", "he", etc.) change their forms to show their relationships, or *function* in a sentence. E.g., subject: "he"; possession: "his"; object: "him". In Greek these three pronouns would be in the Nominative, Genitive and Accusative "Cases", respectively. (Note: "case" shows the *function* of a noun, pronoun, or adjective.)
2. **Possessive of Nouns:** (things) is most often shown by a word-ending, such as, 's; e.g., "farmer" → "farmer's". Note: "Farmer's" is not a plural - it merely states possession. We may say: "the farmer's horse" or "the horse of the farmer". Either way, we are indicating a possession, and the Possessive Case in English is called the Genitive Case in Greek.
3. **Plurals of Nouns** may be formed by adding -s (e.g., "boy" → "boys") or by changing the "y" to an "i" and adding *-es* (e.g., "fly" → "flies"). Certain other words may form their plurals by making *internal vowel changes* (e.g., "man" → "men", "child" → "children", "ox" → "oxen").
4. **Verbs** (action words) undergo changes which correspond to the changes in their personal subjects (e.g., "I ring", "he rings"). NOTE: the "s" in this example does not denote a plural; i.e., if you were speaking about a "wedding ring", the "ring" here is a **noun** and its plural would naturally be "rings". This similarity in appearance between the **verb** "to ring" and the **noun** "ring" is a common feature, unfortunately for foreign speakers, of the English language. In Greek, nouns derived from verbs would have an unambiguous form, different from the verb form.

A *change in time* is also indicated by the spelling of verbs (e.g., "I walk", Present Time; "I walked", Past Time) or with a *change in the kind of action* (e.g., "I walk", Simple Action; "I am walking", Continuing Action).

5. Some *verbs* indicate their change in Time by using internal vowel or consonant changes (e.g., "sing", "sang", "sung"; "stand", "stood").
6. The *verb "to be"* is the most irregular of all (e.g., "I am", "you are", "he is", etc.). The survivals of sixteenth century English preserve even more of such forms (e.g., "I am", "thou art", "ye are"; "I walk", "thou walkest", "he walketh", etc.). Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible are excellent examples. Every educated Christian should be thoroughly familiar with the language forms of the King James (Authorized) Version.

When studying New Testament Greek, one must be prepared to pay the closest attention to every detail of each word. This is no more than is asked in any other language course.

The two principal types of inflected words are **nouns** (often called "Substantives") and **verbs**.

## B. Substantives

**Nouns:** (“Substantives”) *names* of things and places; if they are used in place of a noun, they are **pronouns** (e.g., “I”, “you”, “he”, “we”, “they”). Substantives that *describe* things named are most commonly called **adjectives** (e.g., “large”, “yellow”, “wooden”). The simplest forms of descriptive words are the **articles**: “the” = Definite Article, and “a” (or “an”) = Indefinite Article. *Note:* no Indefinite Article exists in Greek. Descriptive words that are formed from verbs are called **participles** (e.g., “the *blessed* man” = “the man who is *blessed*”).

Substantives may show three kinds of variation: **gender, case, number**. In English these are often to be inferred and are not indicated by changes in the forms of the words. The Genders: **masculine, feminine, neuter**. In language, one studies “Grammatical Gender”. An object may or may not correspond to its “Natural Gender”. Examples in Greek: “man” is Masculine, “woman” is Feminine, but “child” is Neuter; other more arbitrary examples: “place” is Masculine, “love” is Feminine, and “law” is Neuter.

“Number” indicates Singular (one) or Plural (many). “Case” indicates the particular relationship of a word to the other words (= the function of the word) in the sentence. The **English** language uses three cases:

1. **Subjective** case indicates the person, place, thing or other word about which a sentence says something. In short: it is the *subject* (e.g., “I am going to the store.”). In Greek, “I” is in the **nominative** Case.
2. **Possessive** case indicates *possession* or some close relationship (e.g., “The *girl’s* dress is red.”). This may also be shown by using “of” (e.g., “The dress *of the girl* is red.”). In Greek, “girl’s” is in the **genitive** Case.
3. **Objective** case indicates the *object* of some action or thought (e.g., “The car struck *the man*.”). In Greek, “the man” is in the **accusative** Case.

Other substantive (noun, pronoun, adjective) relationships in English are shown by the use of the **prepositions**. Highly inflected languages, such as Greek, German, etc. also use prepositions, but more characteristically they indicate such relationships through **case forms** or **case endings**. There are only *five* unique Case Endings in Greek, but there are *eight* different *cases*:

1. **Nominative:** Use this case as the subject of a sentence (e.g., “*I* am leaving.”).
2. **Genitive:** When you wish to show possession (e.g. “The shirt *of the boy* is red.”).
3. **Ablative:** “Whence” Case, origin, derivation, source (e.g. “The man came *from the city*.”). The preposition “from” is called in to strengthen the Ablative idea.
4. **Locative:** “In” or “at” indicates place where or time when (e.g., “We met *in Santa Cruz* at two o’clock.”).
5. **Instrumental:** “By” or “with” indicates the means used to accomplish something (e.g., “They harvested either *by hand* or *with a machine*.”).

**Associative Instrumental:** (e.g., “He walked *with me* with a cane.”). The first “with” is Associative, the second “with” is purely Instrumental.

6. **Dative:** “To” or “for” indicates personal interest or the “indirect object” (e.g., “Send the check *to me*”, or “Send me the check”). Fortunately we have no new name for this case in Greek -- it is also *dative*.

7. **Accusative:** This is the case of the direct object (e.g., "The car hit *the man*.").
8. **Vocative:** Another use of substantives is "Direct Address". Some grammarians do not like to think of this as a case, but inasmuch as it has separate case forms (case endings) in Greek, it should be noted (e.g., "*Peter*, pass the bread." or "*Our Father* who art in heaven, ... give us this day our daily bread ...").

**C. Verbs**

**Verbs** are called "Transitive" when they take an object (e.g., "The car struck *the man*."), and "Intransitive" when they do not take an object (e.g., "I stand"). The verb together with the words which (grammatically) follow it are known as the **predicate**. Some verbs form an "Incomplete Predicate" without the addition of a "Complement" (e.g., "They seem *to know* ..." -- "They seem" is incomplete without the complement "to know"). The most common verb of this type is "to be": except when it means "to exist", this verb requires a "Predicate Complement" (just like "=" in an equation requires a number before and after it). Another such verb like this is "to become" (e.g., "He became *flesh*...").

Verbs may be modified in five different ways. In English, some of these changes are shown by "Helping (or Auxiliary) words"; sometimes, as we have noted, the verb itself is changed (inflected). These modifications are complex in English, and they must be understood before you attempt to analyze another language.

1. **Person:** The verb indicates the viewpoint expressed: the reporter ("I", "we"), the one reported to ("you"), or the one reported about ("he", "she", "it", "they").
2. **Number:** The person(s) expressed may be Singular ("I", "thou", "you", "he", "she", "it") or Plural ("we", "ye", "you", "they").
3. **Tense:** Indicates when (*Time*) and how (*Action*) the activity of the verb occurs:

**Time:** In English we are conditioned to the concepts of Past, Present & Future, which we often equate with "Tense". These ideas are present in Greek "Tense", but are really only secondary to the type of "Action" below.

**Action:** The primary consideration of Greek Tense. Each "Time" above may show that an action is (a) *Simple* (Punctiliar) - without set limit, not concerned with duration or completion; (b) *Continuing* (Durative) - ongoing, repeated; or © *Resultant* (Completed) - action completed in past with present results. We can diagram these as:

(a) Simple = \* (b) Continuing = ↔ © Resultant = \*→

The distinction between (a) and (b) above may be remembered as the difference between a "photo" (taken at a point in time) and a "movie" (taken over a period of time). © may be thought of as a "three-dimensional" picture, taken at a point in time, but having the *resulting* qualities of a living scene. The following table shows the relationship between Time and kind of Action:

Time ↓	← Type of Action →		
	Simple	Continuing	Resultant
Past	I sang	I was singing	I had sung
Present	I sing	I am singing	I have sung
Future	I will sing	I will be singing	I will have sung

4. **Voice:** The verb indicates that the subject is either acting upon something or is being acted upon by something. Voice describes the relationship of the subject to the action: (a) Active Voice ("I see [someone]"), (b) Middle Voice ("I see myself"), sometimes called Reflexive, and © Passive Voice ("I am seen"). You should know these basic distinctions.
5. **Mood:** The Mood expresses the *degree of factuality* in a given sentence, i.e, the *speaker's attitude* (or "mood") about what he is saying. The Mood of factual statements or questions is INDICATIVE. A verb that gives a command is called the *imperative mood* ("Eat your spinach!"). In English the *subjunctive mood* usually expresses an idea contrary to fact ("If I *were* you..."). Of course I am not you, therefore I indicate the impossibility by using the Subjunctive. (Notice that in the *indicative mood*, e.g., "*I were* a carpenter" doesn't make sense.)

The *infinitive* is a verb-form that can function as a noun. It is easily spotted in English by the preposition "to" ("to see", "to eat", etc.). Greek Infinitives have special forms, and you will learn them while learning verbs. An Infinitive may be used as a subject, i.e., may function as a noun (e.g., "*To run* is hard work.").