

Greek Verb Overview: Forms, Functions, and Vocabulary

The Nature of Greek Verbs

Unlike English, which often requires auxiliary words, Greek verbs are highly inflected and compact, expressing person, number, voice, mood, and tense within a single form (e.g., λύομεν = "we are loosing").

Person and Number

Person refers to the subject of the verb:

- 1st Person — the speaker ("I", "we")
- 2nd Person — the addressee ("you" singular or plural)
- 3rd Person — the subject being spoken about ("he", "she", "it", "they")

Number indicates singular or plural subject.

Voice

Voice shows the relationship between the subject and the action:

- **Active:** Subject performs the action (e.g., ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον — "God loved the world").
- **Middle:** Subject participates in or benefits from the action (e.g., περιζώσεται — "he will dress himself").
- **Passive:** Subject receives the action (e.g., ἡ γυνὴ θεραπεύεται — "The woman is being healed").

Categories of Middle Voice Verbs

- Reflexive: Subject acts upon self (e.g., βλέπομαι — "I see myself")
- Special Interest: Subject benefits from action (e.g., αἰτεῖσθε — "you ask for [yourselves]")
- Reciprocity: Two parties act (e.g., δέχομαι — "I receive")
- Movement: Verbs of motion (e.g., ἔρχομαι — "I come")
- Self-involvement: Verbs of thought/emotion (e.g., βούλομαι — "I wish")
- Passivity: Subject does not control the action (e.g., γίνομαι — "I become")

Mood

Mood indicates the relationship between the verbal action and reality:

- **Indicative:** Asserts fact (e.g., "He went fishing")

- **Subjunctive:** Expresses possibility (e.g., "He might go fishing")
- **Optative:** Expresses wish or hope (e.g., "I wish he would go fishing")
- **Imperative:** Commands or requests (e.g., "Go fishing!")

Tense and Aspect

Tense	Greek Example	Translation	Aspect
Present	λύω	I am loosing / I loose	Imperfective
Imperfect	ἔλυον	I was loosing	Imperfective
Future	λύσω	I will loose	Perfective (future)
Aorist	ἔλυσα	I loosed	Perfective (punctiliar)
Perfect	λέλυκα	I have loosed	Stative
Pluperfect	ἐλελύκειν	I had loosed	Stative

The Present Indicative of εἰμί (To Be)

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	εἰμί (I am)	ἐσμέν (we are)
2nd	εἶ (you are)	ἐστέ (you are)
3rd	ἐστίν (he/she/it is)	εἰσίν (they are)

Note: εἰμί is a copulative verb linking subject to predicate nominative, never a direct object.

Greek Verb Vocabulary

Verbs

εἰμί — I am, exist

ἀκούω — I hear, listen to, obey (acoustics)

γινώσκω — I know, understand, acknowledge (knowledge, Gnostics)

γράφω — I write (graphics)

ἔχω — I have, hold

λέγω — I say, speak (legend)

λαμβάνω — I take, receive

λύω — I loose, destroy

πιστεύω — I believe, have faith/trust in

ἀποκρίνομαι — I answer, reply

γίνομαι — I become, come, exist, am born

έρχομαι — I come, go

πορεύομαι — I go, travel

Particles

ἀλλά — but, yet, nevertheless

ὅτι — that, because