

The Greek Alphabet

<http://www.ibiblio.org/koine/greek/lessons/alphabet.html> had a web page that lists greek pronunciation. I wanted to make a Unicode version. The unicode will not be as portable as the inline image that they include on their page, I admit.

This table gives the Greek letters, their names, equivalent English letters, and tips for pronouncing those letters which are pronounced differently from the equivalent English letters.

Table Font:

A	α	alpha	a	f ather
B	β	beta	b	
Γ	γ	gamma	g	
Δ	δ	delta	d	
E	ε	epsilon	e	e nd
Z	ζ	zêta	z	
H	η	êta	ê	h ey
Θ	θ	thêta	th	t hick
I	ι	iota	i	i t
K	κ	kappa	k	
Λ	λ	lambda	l	
M	μ	mu	m	
N	ν	nu	n	
Ξ	ξ	xi	ks	b ox
O	ο	omikron	o	o ff
Π	π	pi	p	
P	ρ	rho	r	
Σ	σ, ς	sigma	s	s ay
T	τ	tau	t	
Υ	υ	upsilon	u	u t
Φ	φ	phi	f	
X	χ	chi	ch	B ach
Ψ	ψ	psi	ps	

Ω ω omega ô grow

Sigma (σ, ς): There are two forms for the letter Sigma. When written at the end of a word, it is written like this: ς. If it occurs anywhere else, it is written like this: σ.

Upsilon (υ): In the above table, we suggest that you pronounce this letter like "u" in "put". The preferred pronunciation is actually more like the German "ü" as in "Brücke", or like the French "u" as in "tu". If you do not speak German or French, don't worry about it, just pronounce it the way the table suggests.

Xi (χ): This is the same sound as "ch" in "Bach", which does not sound like "ch" in "chair". The same sound occurs in the Scottish "Loch", as in "Loch Lomond", or the German "ach!".

Footnote 1: Other pronunciation schemes

To be fair, we should mention that there are several different ways to pronounce Greek. We are teaching the Erasmian pronunciation for now. At some point in the future, we may add pages to teach some of the other pronunciations. Here are the main ways that Greek is pronounced:

- **Erasmian pronunciation.** This is the pronunciation used here, and is probably based on the pronunciation used by a Renaissance scholar named Erasmus, who was the main force behind the first printed copies of the Greek New Testament. The Erasmian pronunciation is probably different from the way Greek was pronounced at the time of the New Testament, but it is widespread among scholars, and it has the advantage that every letter is pronounced, which makes it easy to grasp the spelling of words.
- **Modern Greek pronunciation.** This is the way Greek is pronounced today in Greece. Some people prefer to teach this pronunciation for New Testament Greek as well. I initially learned the modern Greek pronunciation, but had difficulty learning to spell words, so I switched to the Erasmian. Modern Greek pronunciation is probably more similar to New Testament Greek pronunciation than Erasmian is, but not identical.
- **Reconstructed New Testament Greek pronunciation.** There are some scholarly books which attempt to reconstruct the original pronunciation of New Testament Greek, and they have reached the point that there seems to be fairly widespread agreement on the original pronunciation. As far as I know, nobody ever teaches this pronunciation. Incidentally, since there was a large variety of Greek dialects, there was no single way to pronounce Greek even in the New Testament era.
- **Fraternity, Physics, and Calculus pronunciation.** This is the way your physics teacher spoke Greek, and he learned this pronunciation in his fraternity. Next time you hear a physics teacher pronounce Greek, laugh and look superior.