

11.3: 1) The third declension. An overview

2) Consonant stems ending in **λ** or **ϝ**

You learned the endings of **τίς, τί** in 9.1. This is basically the same set of endings that you will find now in the third declension (even though the interrogative pronoun / adjective is not considered to belong to the third declension).

	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
<i>nominative</i>	-ς *	-ες
<i>genitive</i>	-ος	-ων
<i>dative</i>	-ι	-σι(ν)
<i>accusative</i>	-α *	-ας

*In the cases marked with an asterisk, some nouns of the third declension are different: in the Nominative, they may have no ending, and in the accusative, they may take **ν** instead of **α**.

While the stems of the 1st declension typically end in the vowel **α / η**, and those of the 2nd declension in **ο**, stems of the 3rd declension may end a) in a variety of consonants or b) in the vowels **ι** or **υ**. To avoid confusion when learning the 3rd declension it is important to divide it, in the first place, into these two groups. The stems ending in consonants will prove to be different enough to warrant a further division into subtypes corresponding to their phonetic differences. You may want to review the classification of consonants in 2.2. Here is an overview of the consonantal stems you will encounter in the third declension. We will spread their study and practice over several lessons. If you are curious about the contrast between the stem in the Nominative and the general stem, check the footnotes.

CONSONANTAL STEMS end in:

Types of consonants	"General" stems shown in the Genitive	Nominative	mark of the Nom	Citation
Liquids: λ ρ	ῥητορ-ος	ῥήτωρ	long vowel	ὁ ῥήτωρ, ῥήτορος
Dental stops : τ δ θ	ἐλπιδ-ος	ἐλπιδ-ς > ἐλπίς ¹	+ ς	ἡ ἐλπίς, ἐλπίδος
	πραγματ-ος	πραῖγμα ²	(neuter) no mark	τὸ πραῖγμα, πράγματος
and the dental nasal ν	αἰων-ος	αἰών	no mark: the vowel is long throughout	ὁ αἰών, αἰῶνος
	δαιμον-ος	δαίμων	long vowel	ὁ δαίμων, δαίμονος
Labial stops : π β φ	κλωπ-ος	κλώψ	+ ς	ὁ κλώψ, κλωπός
Palatal stops : κ γ χ	φαλαγγ-ος	φάλαγξ	+ ς	ἡ φάλαγξ, φάλαγγος
The group ντ	λεοντ-ος	λέων ²	long vowel	ὁ λέων, λέοντος
Sibilant : σ	γενεσ-ος > ε-ος > γενους	γένος ³	different vowel	τὸ γένος, γένους

LIQUID STEMS

It is easy to decline **ὁ ῥήτωρ, ῥήτορος** (orator, politician) or **ἡ ἅλς, ἅλός**⁴, because **λ** and **ῥ** undergo no change when they are followed by **σ**. One important trait of third declension nouns must be kept in mind: when the stem in the nominative differs from its form in the genitive, it is the latter form of the stem that serves as general stem, i.e. is the basis for all the other cases.

I decline here **ὁ ῥήτωρ** in combination with the adjective **κακός, κακή, κακόν**, to illustrate the fact that the noun and the adjective follow each its own declension.

	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
<i>nominative</i>	ὁ κακὸς ῥήτωρ	οἱ κακοὶ ῥήτορες
<i>genitive</i>	τοῦ κακοῦ ῥήτορος	τῶν κακῶν ῥητόρων
<i>dative</i>	τῷ κακῷ ῥήτορι	τοῖς κακοῖς ῥήτορσι(ν)
<i>accusative</i>	τὸν κακὸν ῥήτορα	τοὺς κακοὺς ῥήτορας

There is a small group of nouns whose stem ends in **ῥ** that will require some attention later, not because of consonantal changes but because their internal vowel changes. At this time I list them so you will avoid declining them incorrectly. They are the names of kin (**πατήρ** = father, **μήτηρ** = mother, **θυγάτηρ** = daughter, and **ἀνὴρ** = man).

NOTES

- 1) Dentals drop before **σ**.
- 2) **τ** at the end of a word is dropped
- 3) The general stem **γενεσ-** contrasts with the Nominative **γένος**. This is called "gradation of the vowel."
- 4) In Classical Greek **ὁ ἅλς, ἅλός** = salt; **ἡ ἅλς, ἅλός** = the sea. *Koinê* Greek has the neuter **τὸ ἅλα, ἅλατος**.