

12.5a: *The Horror of Hiatus. Contracted verbs*

Hiatus is the gap between two vowels: the Greeks disliked it. That is why, as you have seen, they cut ("elided") a final vowel before a word beginning with a vowel (oh, those apostrophes all over the place...): δὲ ἐγώ becomes δ' ἐγώ, ἐλπίδα ἔχει becomes ἐλπιδ' ἔχει, etc.). If a verbal stem ends in a vowel and is followed (as is the case in the present and imperfect) by the thematic or linking vowel, the hiatus is avoided: the vowels are contracted. Learning the results of these contractions makes the study of Greek grammar much easier.

We start with one group of verbs, those that have a stem ending in ε . An example is πονέ-ω = to toil. First I list the results of contracting ε with the sounds it encounters in the endings of present and imperfect, both active and middle-passive. The rules can be efficiently simplified as follows:

ε + ε > ει

ε + ο > ου

ε + long sound (long vowel or diphthong: η, ω, ου, ει > that long sound (long vowel or diphthong: η, ω, ου, ει)

Let us conjugate πονέ-ω = toil in the active voice, and αἰρέ-ο-μαι = choose, in the middle. To learn these contractions *make them yourself before looking at the resulting form.*

ACTIVE VOICE

<i>present</i>	<i>imperfect</i>
πονέω > πονῶ	ἐπόνε-ον > ἐπόνουν
πονέ-εις > εἶς	ἐπόνε-ες > ἐπόνεις
πονέ-ει > εἶ	ἐπόνε-ε > ἐπόνει
πονέ-ο-μεν > πονοῦμεν	ἐπονέ-ο-μεν > ἐπονοῦμεν
πονέ-ε-τε > πονεῖτε	ἐπονέ-ε-τε > ἐπονείτε
πονέ-ουσι(ν) > πονοῦσι(ν)	ἐπόνε-ον > ἐπόνουν
<i>present infinitive</i>	πονέ-εν ¹ > πονεῖν
<i>present imperative</i>	2nd sg : πόνε-ε > πόνει 3rd sg : πονε-έ-τω > πονείτω 2nd pl: πονέ-ε-τε > πονεῖτε 3rd pl : πονε-ό-ντων > πονούντων

¹ **Note:** This is not a mistake! the original ending that was an element in the contraction was actually -εν, not -ειν.

MIDDLE / PASSIVE VOICE

<i>present</i>	<i>imperfect</i>
αίρέ-ο-μαι > αἰρου̐μαι	ἤρε-ό-μην
αίρέ-η or αίρέ-ει > αἰρῆ or αἰρεῖ	ἤρέ-ου > ἤρου
αίρέ-ε-ται > αἰρεῖται	ἤρέ-ε-το > ἤρεῖτο
αίρε-ό-μεθα > αἰρούμεθα	ἤρε-ό-μεθα > ἤρούμεθα
αίρέ-ε-σθε > αἰρεῖσθε	ἤρέ-ε-σθε > ἤρεῖσθε
αίρέ-ο-νται > αἰροῦνται	ἤρέ-ο-ντο > ἤροῦντο
<i>present infinitive</i>	αἰρέ-ε-σθαι > αἰρεῖσθαι
<i>present imperative</i>	<p>2nd sg: αἰρέ-ου > αἰροῦ</p> <p>3rd sg: αίρε-έ-σθω > αἰρεῖσθω</p> <p>2nd pl: αίρέ-ε-σθε > αἰρεῖσθε</p> <p>3rd pl: αίρε-έ-σθων > αἰρεῖσθων</p>