

## DATIVE<sup>1</sup>

The dative case inherited three basic uses. See 5.4, Rev2.4.

### 1) INDIRECT DATIVE (= “to or for”)

It shows *to or for whom (or what)* the action of the verb takes place. The strict definition of an indirect object involves a transitive verb in a sentence where the direct object is explicit. When the direct object is not expressed, or if the verb is not transitive, we find a similar dative (sometimes defined as “dative of INTEREST, advantage or disadvantage, or with the Latin term *commodi aut incommodi*.” For practical purposes, in this course we either call these “indirect objects” as well, or “indirect datives.” We may also include them in general categories such as “dative complements of the verb (marked as “dat w/W”) or “dative with an adjective” (“dat w/adj”).

**Examples with verbs:** ταῦτα ἐροῦμεν τοῖς προφήταις. [Mark 4:33] *We will say that to the prophets.*

ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς. [passim] *He spoke to them.*

κρούετε, καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν. [Matthew 7:7] *Knock, and //the door// will be open for you (pl).*

μή μοι θορυβήσητε [Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 20e] *Please, “do not make noise for me” (= do not interrupt).*

A similar function of the dative completes sometimes an adjective, indicating *for whom or what* something is easy, useful, etc.

**Examples with adjectives:** μετὰ γὰρ Θηβαίων τῶν ἡμῖν ἐχθίστων ... ἦκετε. [Thuc 2.71.1] *..for //you come// with our bitterest enemies, the Thebans.*

### 2) DATIVE OF MEANS OR INSTRUMENTAL (= “with, by means of”)

With active or passive verbs, it shows *by means of what* something takes place.

ἔβαλλέ με λίθοις *He kept hitting me with stones* [Lysias, *Speeches* 3.7]

This dative has numerous applications, e.g. the *manner* of the action, its *cause*, an accompanying circumstance, etc., rather than an actual physical means:

καὶ ἀνεφώνησεν κραυγῇ μεγάλῃ [Luke 1: 42] *Then she spoke out with a loud voice.*

### 3) **LOCATIVE DATIVE** (= “in, at”)

τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ θυμιάματος [Luke 1:10] *at the time of the sacrifice*



It is useful to recognize the three functions above as thumbnails, yet it would not be productive to try to assign all the uses of the dative to one or another of these. We will list the most important uses under a general title:

## ***SPECIAL USES OF THE DATIVE***

Some of the verbs that take a direct object in English but govern the dative in Greek belong to semantic groups that we are able to recognize (helping or harming, associating with someone whether in a friendly or a hostile way, etc., etc.) Classifying all these uses of the dative is a self-defeating task. It is best to remember complements that are counter-intuitive for an English speaker as part of vocabulary learning.

- A dative complement is to be expected with **verbs** that have as a preverb a preposition governing the dative

Σύμπραττε σαυτῷ, καὶ συμπράξει σοι ὁ θεός. *Assist yourself, and the god will assist you.*

- Other verbs take the dative for less obvious reasons, e.g. *πείθομαι, ὀργίζομαι, μάχομαι*, etc.  
ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φιλῶ, πείσομαι δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν  
[Plato, *Apology* 29d] *Men of Athens, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you,*  
θεῷ μάχεσθαι δεινὸν ἐστὶ καὶ τύχῃ *It is terrible to oppose the god and fate.*  
ἐμοὶ ὀργίζονται, οὐχ αὐτοῖς. [Plato, *Apology* 23c] *They are angry at me, not at them.*

- The **DATIVE OF POSSESSION**, mostly with linking verbs, highlights to whom something belongs:

ἄλλοις μὲν χρήματά ἐστιν, ἡμῖν δὲ σύμμαχοι ἀγαθοί [Thuc. 1.86]

*Others have riches, we have good allies.*

καὶ ἔσται χαρὰ σοι καὶ ἀγαλλίασις [Luke 1: 14] ...and you will have joy and gladness.

- **DATIVE OF THE AGENT**

*In classical Greek, if the passive verb is in the Perfect or Pluperfect, the dative of the personal agent is preferred to the regular ὑπό + genitive. This is infrequent in koinê Greek.*

τί πέπρακται τοῖς ἄλλοις; *What has been done by the others?*

πολλὰ θεραπεῖαι εὑρήνται τοῖς ἰατροῖς. *Many cures have been found by doctors.*

τοσαῦτά μοι εἰρέσθω. *Let so much be said by me.*

- **DATIVE OF RESPECT** (Compare the accusative of respect)

With verbs, adjectives, and even, as in the following example, with a name used as an appositive:

ἱερεὺς τις ὀνόματι Ζαχαρίας [Luke 1:5] ...a priest, "Zacharias with respect to his name" = named Zacharias.

- **DATIVE WITH PREPOSITIONS.**

Some prepositions govern only the dative; others may be used, as we have seen before, with two or three cases. In these combinations it is clear that the case is mainly responsible for the meaning.

**PREPOSITIONS THAT TAKE ONLY THE DATIVE:** ἐν, σὺν

ἐν τῇ πόλει, in the city; ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως, on the day of judgment

σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσι δύο ληστές [Matthew 15:27] *With him they crucified two robbers.*

**PREPOSITIONS THAT TAKE MORE THAN ONE CASE. With the dative they mean:**

ἐπί + dat = on, upon	(takes also Genitive)
παρά + dat = with, near to	(takes also Accusative and Genitive)
πρός + dat = besides	(takes also Accusative and Genitive)
ὑπό + dat = under	(takes also Accusative and Genitive)

MORE on the DATIVE in Jeffrey A. Rydberg-Cox, *Overview of Greek Syntax in Perseus*: [Dative](#)

TOO MUCH on the DATIVE... but may be useful later on, in Herbert W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges*, in Perseus: [Uses of the Dative](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Without adopting their system of classification of dative functions, I have borrowed some examples and some of their translations from Herbert W. Smyth and Jeffrey A. Rydberg-Cox in Perseus.