8.2a: Primary and secondary middle-passive endings

In the Greek verbal system there are **three voices: *Active, Passive, and Middle.*** The concepts of Active and Passive voices in Greek are counterparts of those in English. The concept of the middle voice will be explained fully in <u>ee8.3</u> Here I just present it in order to contrast it with the other two voices. A Greek verb in the middle voice expresses an action which, in one way or another, is related to the interests of the subject. The following ideas can be expressed with Greek middle verbs: The boy exercises or trains (himself, rather than train others), You get angry, No one obeys, etc.

***WARNING: Deponent verbs* should not be interpreted in this manner, they use "middle" endings arbitrarily.**

New endings? Primary and secondary? Why call them "Middle-Passive"?

The good news is: you know the primary endings already, because εἰμί takes them in its Future ἔσομαι These are "**primary**" endings (used for "**non-past**" tenses, present and future). The secondary middle or middle-passive endings will be new. "**Secondary**" endings are those that are applied to **past** tenses. Let us review these primary endings as we apply them to the Active Present and obtain a Middle-Passive Present. To transform this tense from Active to Middle-Passive all we have to change are the endings. This chart shows the two sets of endings side by side.
I am calling the endings that we are about to study "Middle-Passive" because, while not all verbs are conjugated in the middle voice and only transitive verbs have a passive conjugation, the Present and Imperfect of Middle and Passive are identical. Only the context and its syntax allow us to distinguish Middle from Passive, if they both exist. After you learn the forms, you will see in a few examples that there are some sure-proof clues.

PRESENT TENSE: ACTIVE AND MIDDLE-PASSIVE COMPARED

present stem	+ active endings	= present active	present stem	+middle-passive endings	= present middle	=present passive (same forms)
λυ–	ω	λύ–ω	λυ–	ο–μαι	λύ–ο–μαι	λύ–ο–μαι
λυ–	εις	λύ–εις	λυ–	ῃ or ει	λύ–ῃ or λύ–ει	λύ–ῃ or λύ–ει
λυ–	ει	λύ–ει	λυ–	ε–ται	λύ–ε–ται	λύ–ε–ται
λυ–	ο–μεν	λύ–ο–μεν	λυ–	ο–μεθα	λυ–ό–μεθα	λυ–ό–μεθα
λυ–	ε–τε	λύ–ε–τε	λυ–	ε–σθε	λύ–ε–σθε	λύ–ε–σθε
λυ–	ουσιν	λύ–ουσιν	λυ–	ο–νται	λύ–ο–νται	λύ–ο–νται

IMPERFECT TENSE: ACTIVE AND MIDDLE-PASSIVE COMPARED

augment	present stem	= present active	augment	present stem	+middle-passive endings	= present middle	=present passive (same forms)
ἔ–	λυ–	ἔ–λυ–ον	ἔ–	λυ–	μην	ἐ–λυ–ό–μην	ἐ–λυ–ό–μην
ἔ–	λυ–	ἔ–λυ–ες	ἔ–	λυ–	ου[1]	ἐ–λύ–ου	ἐ–λύ–ου
ἔ–	λυ–	ἔ–λυ–ε	ἔ–	λυ–	ε–το	ἐ–λύ–ε–το	ἐ–λύ–ε–το
ἐ–	λυ–	ἐ–λύ–ο–μεν	ἐ–	λυ–	ο–μεθα	ἐ–λυ–ό–μεθα	ἐ–λυ–ό–μεθα
ἐ–	λυ–	ἐ–λύ–ε–τε	ἐ–	λυ–	ε–σθε	ἐ–λύ–ε–σθε	ἐ–λύ–ε–σθε
ἔ–	λυ–	ἔ–λυ–ον	ἔ–	λυ–	ο–ντο	ἐ–λύ–ο–ντο	ἐ–λύ–ο–ντο

Note 1: The Middle-Passive personal ending of the 2nd person singular used to be −σο, but σ between two short vowels, as is often the case, was dropped. The resulting sequence, ε + ο, contracted into ου . We will discuss later how vowels, under certain circumstances, became "contracted," resulting in a single long sound, in ancient Greek.