Getting Started with Prepositions
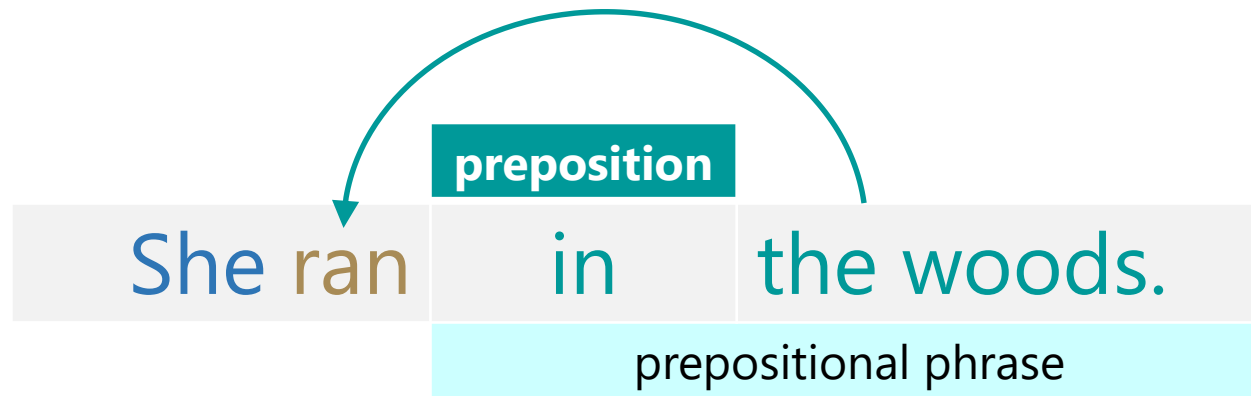
Little Words with a Big Impact

A lesson for the *Paideia* web-app
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What Are Prepositions?

- Prepositions introduce phrases that modify a verbal idea
  - In English we use prepositions all the time
    - in, to, with, beside, etc.
  - Prepositions never work alone
    - the following words go with the preposition as a prepositional phrase

preposition
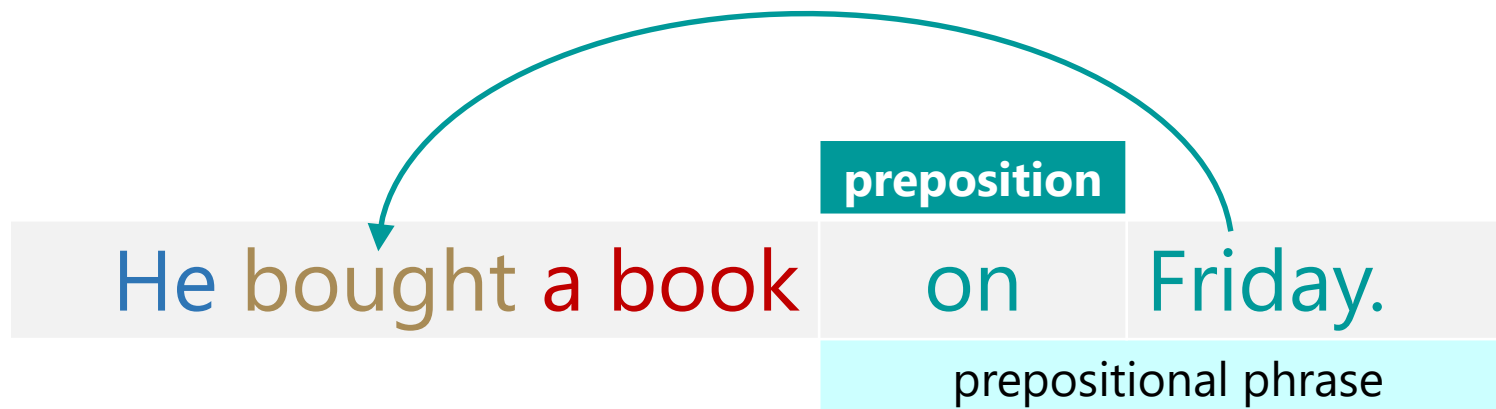
She ran in the woods.

prepositional phrase

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		preposition	
He	bought a book	on	Friday.
		prepositional phrase	

Greek Prepositions

- Greek can use the dative case for much of this
  - Dative phrases modify verbal ideas
- Prepositions are slowly replacing cases in Hellenistic Greek
  - Process largely complete in modern Greek

Which Words Go with the Preposition?

- The rest of the phrase follows right after the preposition
  - Word order isn't flexible here

- Each preposition puts its phrase in a particular case
  - Case doesn't carry its usual meaning
  - Just marks the words that are part of the prepositional phrase

- The preposition itself never changes form
  - Always plays the same role in a clause
  - Though a final vowel might be truncated and/or aspirated
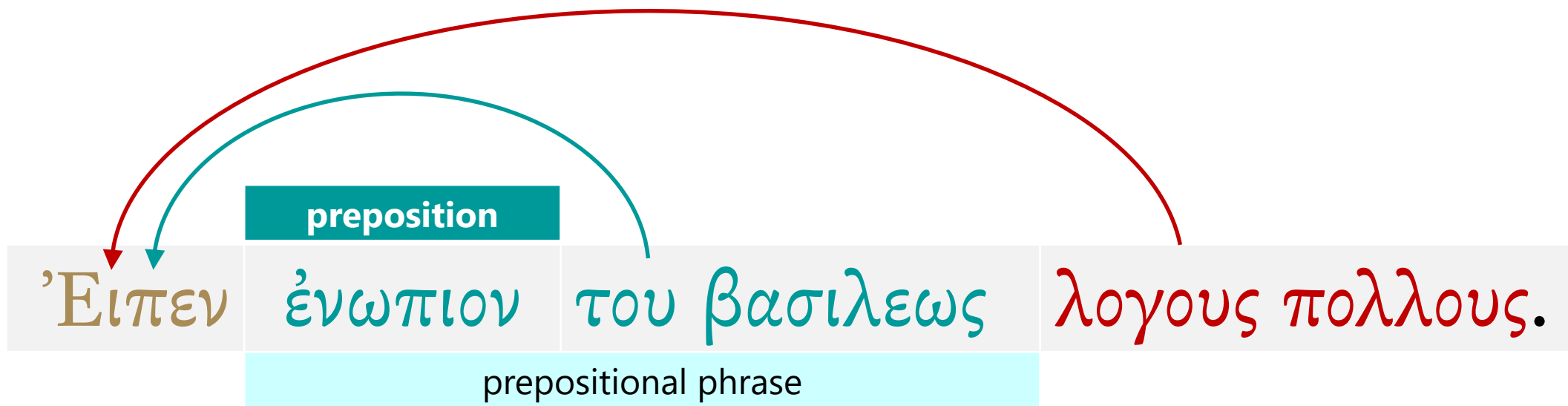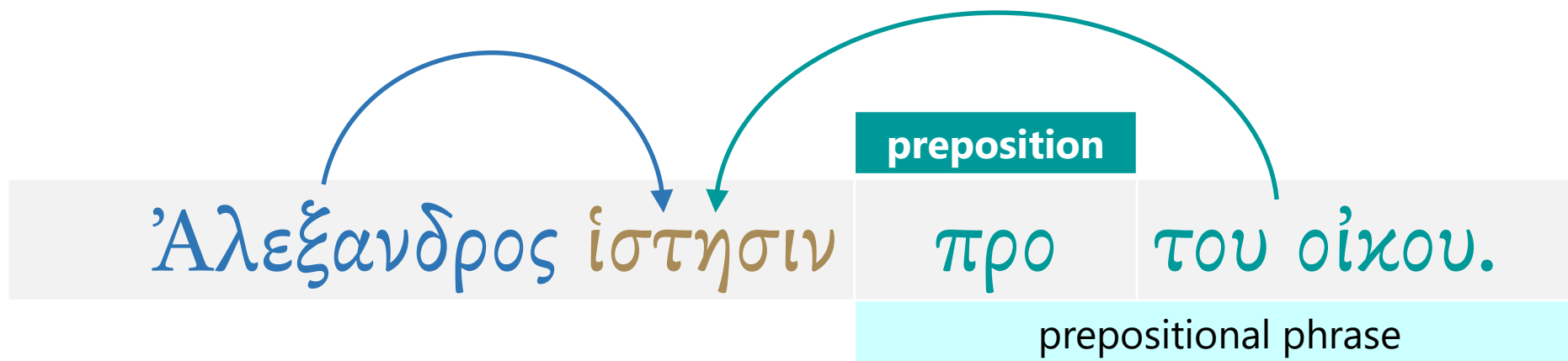   - ἀπο -> ἀπ' -> ἀφ'
    - παρα -> παρ'

Prepositions Followed by the Genitive Case

ἐκ	+ gen. phrase	"from, out of, away from…"
ἀπο	+ gen. phrase	"from, away from…"
ἀντι	+ gen. phrase	"opposite, facing; instead of, in return for…"
προ	+ gen. phrase	"in front of, before, ahead of…"
ὀπισω	+ gen. phrase	"behind, after…"
χωρις	+ gen. phrase	"without, apart from…"
ἐμπροσθεν	+ gen. phrase	"in front of, in the presence of, before…"
ἐνωπιον	+ gen. phrase	"in front of, in the presence of, before…"

Examples of Genitive Prepositional Phrases

Ἀλεξανδρος ἱστησιν **preposition** προ του οἰκου.

prepositional phrase

Ἐιπεν **preposition** ἐνωπιον του βασιλεως λογους πολλους.

prepositional phrase

Prepositions with the Dative or Accusative

ἐν	+ dat. phrase	"in; into…"
συν	+ dat. phrase	"from, away from…"
εἰς	+ acc. phrase	"into, toward; in…"

preposition

Συν   αὐτης τῳ ἀδελφῳ   Σοφια πορευεται.

prepositional phrase

Prepositions with Multiple Cases

- Case doesn't do its usual job in a prepositional phrase
  - Simply show which words are part of the prepositional phrase
- Some prepositions can be followed by more than one case
  - These prepositions have more than one meaning
  - The case acts like a switch, "turning on" one of those meanings

δια	+ gen. phrase	"through, by"
	+ acc. phrase	"because of, on account of"

Keep Learning

- You can learn more about Greek prepositions and prepositional phrases here:
  - Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (3rd edition)
    - Prepositions 8.1-8.8 (pp. 56-58), 8.16-8.17 (pp. 60-61), 9.14 (p. 68)
  - Wallace, *Basics of New Testament Syntax* (1st edition)
    - "Prepositions," pp. 160-73

(!) Mounce introduces prepositions in a different order than we do, so be prepared to see prepositions you haven't been introduced to yet in this lesson.