

The Imperfect Tense

Imperfective Aspect in Past Time

A lesson for the *Paideia* web-app
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Two Perspectives on the Past

- **Aorist tense**
 - In the indicative mood, indicates past time with augment (ἐ)
 - simple aspect
- **Imperfect tense**
 - indicates past time with augment (ἐ)
 - imperfective aspect (like present tense)



Forms of the Imperfect

- Closely related to the present tense
 - Really just a way of adding past time to a present tense verb
- Present tense stem
 - No stem change
- No extra tense marker
 - Past time indicated just by augment and endings
- But endings like the 2nd aorist
 - "Secondary" personal endings



Parts of an Imperfect Active Verb

Augment	Stem	Tense marker	Conn. vowel	Personal Ending	Complete form
ἐ	λυ	-	ο	ν	ἐλυον
ἐ	λυ	-	ε	τε	ἐλυετε



Primary Active Personal Endings

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	-	-μεν
2 nd person	-ς	-τε
3 rd person	-ι	-νσι



Secondary Active Personal Endings

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	-ν	-μεν
2 nd person	-ς	-τε
3 rd person	-(ν)	-ν



Imperfect Active Examples

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	ἐλ ^ν υον*	ἐλ ^ν υομεν
2 nd person	ἐλ ^ν υες	ἐλ ^ν υετε
3 rd person	ἐλ ^ν υε(ν)	ἐλ ^ν υον*

* Notice that the 1st person singular and 3rd person plural endings are the same.



Imperfect Active Examples

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	ἐλϋον*	ἐλϋομεν
2 nd person	ἐλϋες	ἐλϋετε
3 rd person	ἐλϋε(ν)	ἐλϋον*

* Notice that the 1st person singular and 3rd person plural endings are the same.



Parts of an Imperfect Middle/Passive Verb

Augment	Stem	Tense marker	Conn. vowel	Personal Ending	Complete form
ἐ	λυ	-	ο	μην	ἐλυομην
ἐ	λυ	-	ε	σθε	ἐλυεσθε



Primary Middle/Passive Endings

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	-μαι	-μεθα
2 nd person	-σαι	-σθε
3 rd person	-ται	-νται



Secondary Middle/Passive Endings

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	-μην	-μεθα
2 nd person	-σο	-σθε
3 rd person	-το	-ντο



Imperfect Middle/Passive Examples

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	ἐλυομην	ἐλυομεθα
2 nd person	ἐλυου	ἐλυεσθε
3 rd person	ἐλυετο	ἐλυοντο



Imperfect Middle/Passive Examples

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	ἐλυομην	ἐλυομεθα
2 nd person	ἐλυου	ἐλυεσθε
3 rd person	ἐλυετο	ἐλυοντο



The Meaning of the Imperfect Tense

- Same “Imperfective” aspect as the present tense
 - A close-up view of the action
 - Focus on how the action is “extended”
- Can be “extended” in different ways

	έβλεπον	έλεγετο
Continuous	I was seeing	It was being said
Inceptive	I began to see	It began to be said
Iterative	I saw repeatedly	It was said repeatedly
Habitual	I usually saw I often saw	It was usually said It was often said



Keep Learning

- You can learn more about the imperfect tense here:
 - Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*
 - Imperfect Tense, 21.1—21.23 (pp. 183—190)

