

Modern Greek, Beginners I

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Handout 2

Letter Combinations

ει, οι	i
αι	e
αυ	af or av
ευ	ef or ev
μπ	b
ντ	d
γκ, γγ	g
τσ	ts
τζ	dz

Note 1: Some times we want to write two vowels together but not pronounce them as one. There are two ways to indicate that the letters must be pronounced separately. The first way is when the first letter of the combination is accented. Take for instance the english word bacon. In Greek, it is pronounced [beykon] and it is written thus: μπέικον. If the accent was on the ί (μπείκον) then the word would be pronounced [bikon]. If the second vowel is accented or if neither vowel is accented, we indicate that the two vowels are pronounced separately with the following diacritics:

For example

παίζω	[pezo] I play
παιδί	[pedhi] child
παίδι	[paidhi] rib
λαϊκή	[laiki] farmers' market

Note 2: The pronunciation of depends on the quality of the sound that follows. If the following sound is a voiceless sound then the pronunciation is [af or ef], because [f] is voiceless. If the following sound is voiced then the pronunciation is [av or ev] because [v] is voiced.

Practice

αυτοκίνητο, αυλή, ευχαριστώ, εύκολο, αυγό, σταυρός, ευωδιά
car, yard, thank you, easy, egg, cross, fragrance

The verb 'to be'

Despite the fact that this verb is used very commonly, it has a peculiar conjugation (that's what we call the system for changing the form of a verb). The conjugation of Greek verbs has two numbers and three persons.

	Singular (one person)	
1st	είμαι	I am
2nd	είσαι	you are
3rd	είναι	she, he, it is
	Plural (many people)	
1st	είμαστε	we are
2nd	είστε / είσατε	you are
3rd	είναι	they are

It is good to know these terms to avoid confusion. 'Second person plural of the verb *to be*' is definitely είστε whereas 'you are' can be είστε or είσαι.

Your homeworks will encourage you to learn this system.

Phrase of the day

Με δουλεύεις; Are you kidding me? (Literally, are you working me?)