

# The Greek Alphabet

by Dan Trygg

In Koinē Greek, there were twenty-four letters in the alphabet (ἄλφα-βητα).

Capital	Form		Name Greek	Transliteration English	Sound English Approximations	Greek Examples
	Small					
A	α	ἄλφα	alpha	a	abyss	ἄ-βυσ-σος
B	β	βῆτα	bēta	b	bible	βι-βλί-ον
Γ	γ	γάμμα	gamma	g	graph	γρα-φή
Δ	δ	δέλτα	delta	d	demon	δαί-μων
E	ε	ἕ ψιλόν	epsilon	e	despot	δεσ-πό-της
Z	ζ	ζῆτα	zēta	z	zeal	ζῆ-λος
H	η	ἦτα	ēta	ē	alleluia	ἄλ-λη-λου-ία
Θ	θ	θῆτα	thēta	th	theology	θε-ός
I	ι	ιώτα	iōta	i	idiot	ἴ-δι-ος
K	κ	κάππα	kappa	k	camel	κά-μη-λος
Λ	λ	λάμβδα	lambda	l	logical	λο-γι-κός
M	μ	μῦ	mu	m	mother	μή-τηρ
N	ν	νῦ	nu	n	anti	ἄν-τί
Ξ	ξ	ξί	xi or ksi	ks	axiom	ἄ-ξί-ω-μα
O	ο	ὀ μικρόν	omicron	o	apology	ἄ-πο-λο-γί-α
Π	π	πί	pi	p	poet	ποι-η-τής
P	ρ	ῥῶ	rhō	r	rhetoric	ῥη-τωρ
Σ	σ [ς]	σίγμα	sigma	s	skiff	σκά-φη
T	τ	ταῦ	tau	t	topography	τό-πος
Υ	υ	ὕ ψιλόν	upsilon	u	German: ü	τύ-πος
Φ	φ	φί	phi	ph	phone	φω-νή
X	χ	χί	chi	ch	chasm	χάσ-μα
Ψ	ψ	ψί	psi	ps	apse	ἄ-ψίς
Ω	ω	ὦ μέγα	ōmega	ō	ode	ὦ-δή

When γ is followed by γ, κ, ξ, or χ, it sounds like, and is transliterated as an “n”, e.g., γγ = ng; γκ = nk; γξ = nks; and, γχ = nch.

Greek does not have an “h”, but it does have a way to represent the sound. Instead of a separate letter, Greek employs **breathing marks** over all words beginning with a vowel, and words which begin with the letter rhō (ρ). The rough breathing mark ῀ represents the “h” sound. When a vowel (or the letter rhō [ρ]) has this mark over it, start the sound with an “h” sound. Also be sure to represent the sound with an “h” in your transliteration. If a vowel has a smooth breathing mark ῁ over it, say the vowel without an “h” sound. There will be no “h” represented in the transliteration. There are also three **accent marks**, acute (´), grave (`), and circumflex (˘). These represent no sound, other than emphasis. At the beginning of words, breathing marks will sometimes be combined with accent marks, e.g., ῀, ῁, ῂ, ῃ, ῄ, ῅, or ῆ.

Greek also has **diphthongs**. These are vowels that combine together to form one sound.

αι = ai as in <u>ais</u> le	αυ = au as in <u>sauerkraut</u>
ει = ei as in <u>ei</u> ght	ευ = eu as in <u>feud</u>
οι = oi as in <u>oi</u> l	ηυ = eu as in <u>eulogy</u>
υι = ui as in <u>sui</u> te	ου = ou as in <u>group</u>