

9.1: 1) Asking about identity: τίς, τί
 2) Other Interrogatives

Gender of the interrogative τίς, τί. In English we choose "who" or "what" depending on whether we are asking about a person or thing: Who came? What are you eating? The corresponding Greek interrogative has two genders, but these are grammatical, not biological genders, as we know. So the Greek speaker or writer chose τίς, especially as an adjective, to agree with a masculine or feminine noun, even if it were not personal.

Case of the interrogative: In popular American English, the use of the interrogative has been reduced to two cases: Nominative (who?, what?, which?) and Genitive (often avoided too, whose?). Traditionally "who?" had, and continues to have in writing, a special form for the Accusative referring to a person "whom"). The Greek interrogative pronoun or adjective that we have been using only in two forms, τίς (Masculine or Feminine), τί (neuter), was used in all cases except, normally, the Vocative. Its endings are new to you, because they resemble very closely those of the 3rd declension (even though τίς, τί does not technically belong to a noun declension). Here is a paradigm:

	<i>singular</i>		<i>plural</i>	
	<i>masculine & feminine</i>	<i>neuter</i>	<i>masculine & feminine</i>	<i>neuter</i>
<i>nom</i>	τίς;	τί;	τίν-ες;	τίν-α;
<i>gen</i>	τίν-ος;		τίν-ων;	
<i>dat</i>	τίν-ι;		τί-σι(ν)	
<i>acc</i>	τίν-α	τί;	τίν-ας;	τίν-α;

OBSERVATIONS

- a) There are two endings in nominative and Accusative, but one common ending in Genitive and Dative of both numbers.
- b) There is an acute accent falling *always* on the letter **ι**. **Let us remember this.**
- c) We will be able to apply the endings (with some variants, that will be indicated later) when we learn the third declension. Having observed how dental consonants drop before **σ**, you will not be surprised to see that **ν** has dropped in the nominative masculine or feminine singular or the dative plural. The nasal **ν**, of course, is a dental from the point of view of its articulation.
- d) When translating the Greek texts or composing sentences in Greek we need to keep in mind that gender is often an arbitrary grammatical attribute of nonpersonal nouns, and that we must adapt our translation to the patterns of our own language.. It would obviously be wrong to translate, e.g., *τρέπονται εἰς τίνα χώραν;* as "To whom land are they going?" because *χώρα* is feminine in Greek ...

EXAMPLES

a) [τίνες ἐστέ, ὦ νεανίαι;] [ἐκ τίνος χώρας δεῦρο¹ ἦκετε;]
PN V vocative ἐκ+ gen adv V

Who are you, young men? From what / which land have you come² here?

b) [τί μὲν ἐσμεν] [τί δ' οὐκ ἐσμέν;] [σκιᾶς ὄναρ³ ἄνθρωπος.]
PN V PN V gen PN S

What are we? What are we not? Man is the dream of a shadow. [Adapted from Pindar, a lyric poet of the 5th century BCE]

Other interrogative pronouns and adjectives

Greek has several other interrogatives that do not ask, or do not ask only, about identity, but about quality or quantity. In most cases they need to be rendered into English not with one word, but with a periphrasis. For those who know Latin, the corresponding Latin interrogatives, or even their Romance derivatives, will help.

ποιός, ποία, ποῖον asks about quality, characteristics, etc.

ποιός; (= *qualis*? what sort of ... (a masculine noun intended)?

ποία; (= *qualis*? what sort of ... (a feminine noun intended)?

ποῖον; (= *quale*? what kind of thing? something of what sort?

πόσος, πόση, πόσον asks about size or magnitude in the singular, number in the plural

πόσος; (= *quantus*? how large, great, etc. (a masculine noun intended)?)

πόση; (= *quanta*? how large, great, etc. (a feminine noun intended)?)

πόσον; (= *quantum*? something of what size? how much?)

In the plural:

πόσοι, πόσαι, πόσα; (= **how many**?)

A few interrogative adverbs

πῶς; = how?

πότε; = when?

πού; = where?

ποι; = whereto (the old fashioned "whither")?

πόθεν; = wherefrom (the old fashioned "whence")?

NOTES

Note 1: This adverb means "here" denoting direction: = "toward here."

Note 2: The Present tense of the verb ἵκω is equivalent to English "I have come (Present Perfect)."

Note 3: This is a neuter noun of the 3rd declension.