

## Remedial practice on noun/adjective agreement<sup>1</sup>

### FIRST STEP: GENDER OF NOUNS IN GREEK

The first issue that makes this agreement difficult for an English speaker is the fact that all nouns, not just those that refer to biological creatures, have gender. It is easy to understand that a living being, human or animal, is either male or female. But in Greek as in Latin as in languages in the same family or in derived sub-families assign a gender to words that mean river, year, technology, war, feather, regret, toil, disease, etc., etc., etc. Which gender? The language chooses from three, not just two, genders: masculine, feminine, neuter. With few exceptions, you cannot tell from the meaning. The words in the above haphazard list have these genders: river, war, toil, are masculine; technology, regret, and disease, are feminine; year, feather, end or goal, are neuter. The conclusion is unavoidable: grammatical gender is (most of the time) not representative of biological gender or any other objective trait of the referent of a noun.

How to discover the grammatical gender of a noun? Well, that is not difficult, especially at this point in your study of Greek (I mean, if you are studying the first semester) because **almost always the form of the noun reveals its gender**. As always, there are exceptions. The noun's form is what places it in one of the two declensions that you are studying in this course, the first and the second. As you know if you know at least lesson 3, to identify to which declension a noun belongs one needs to know two cases, typically **nominative** and **genitive**.

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<sup>1</sup> These observations apply both to adjectives modifying a noun directly, as attributes, and to predicative adjectives, e.g. used as predicate nominatives with a linking verb, as well as to any other function where an adjective refers to a noun.

**FIRST STEP: PRACTICE**

Place each of the following nouns in the declension or declension and subgroup where it belongs, then identify its gender. When you have finished, check with Key 1. Do not look up the vocabulary as you do this, because I identify genders by giving the article after the citation of each noun.

Citation	Declension and subgroup, if applicable	Gender
<i>MODEL: δόξα, ης</i>	<i>1st declension, impure alpha</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
δένδρον, ου		
χρόνος, ου		
συμβουλία, ας		
ψυχή, ῆς		
ἀθλητής, οῦ		
τύραννος, ου		
ταμίας, ου		
ἀρετή, ῆς		
θάλασσα, ης		
ἄργυρος, ου		

## SECOND STEP: GENDER ENDINGS IN ADJECTIVES

Again, the reference to adjectives will be limited to the type of adjectives you encounter in the first semester. I call them "Type I" adjectives. They typically have three endings, since they must accommodate nouns of the three genders. The gender of each ending is easily recognizable, because each follows a noun as its model. The masculine follows the 2nd declension masculine, the feminine follows the first declension, the neuter follows the 2nd declension neuter.

**νέος** is the masculine form of this adjective; it declines like **φίλος**, masculine noun of the 2nd declension

**νέα** is the feminine form of this adjective; it declines like **χαρά**, feminine noun of the 1st declension

**νέον** is the neuter form of this adjective; it declines like **δῶρον**, neuter noun of the 2nd declension

With a different ending for the feminine,<sup>2</sup>

**ὀρθός** is the masculine form of this adjective; it declines like **φίλος**, masculine noun of the 2nd declension

**ὀρθή** is the feminine form of this adjective; it declines like **κόρη**, feminine noun of the 1st declension

**ὀρθόν** is the neuter form of this adjective; it declines like **δῶρον**, neuter noun of the 2nd declension

Adjectives are cited, rather than with Nom and Gen, in the nominative singular, in all the genders they have. Some adjectives offer only two sets of endings, rather than three. These adjectives can be recognized, even before seeing their citation, because they are compound words:

**ἀθάνατος, ἀθάνατος, ἀθάνατον**

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<sup>2</sup> Later you will learn how to predict, looking at the masculine only, which ending, **-α** or **-η**, the feminine will take. For now take the adjectives as they are cited, in the three genders of the nominative singular: either **-ος -α -ον** or **-ος -η -ον**

**SECOND STEP: PRACTICE**

Write in the **THIRD** column the nominative singular of the adjective indicated for each noun. Do not place them together, because to make them really agree they must also have the same case and number. In this step we are choosing the column from which we will take an adjective for each noun. When you have finished, check with Key 2.

<i>Citation of the noun</i>	<i>Adjective to apply</i>	<i>Indicate the gender and the column of the adjective agreeing in gender</i>
<b>MODEL:</b> δόξης	κακός, ή, όν	<b>Feminine:</b> κακή
δένδροις	μακρός, ά, όν	
χρόνου	παλαιός, ά, όν	
συμβουλία	καλός, ή, όν	
ψυχήν	ήμέτερος, α, ου	
άθλητήν	κλεινός, ή, όν	
τύραννοι	ανάξιος, ανάξιος, ανάξιον	
ταμίου <sup>3</sup>	πιστός, ή, όν <sup>4</sup>	
άρετάς	δαυμαστός, ή, όν	
θαλάσσας	Έλληνικός, ή, όν <sup>5</sup>	
άργύρου <sup>6</sup>	όλίγος, η, ου <sup>7</sup>	

<sup>3</sup> ταμίας, ου = administrator, manager

<sup>4</sup> = reliable

<sup>5</sup> = Greek

**THIRD STEP: MAKE THE ADJECTIVE AGREE WITH ITS NOUN!**

Fill the blank with the appropriate gender, number, and case, of the adjective corresponding to each noun in previous charts. Translate the complete phrase.

*Noun + Adjective*

*Translation*

δένδροις \_\_\_\_\_

χρόνου \_\_\_\_\_

συμβουλία \_\_\_\_\_

ψυχήν \_\_\_\_\_

ἀθλητήν \_\_\_\_\_

τύραννοι \_\_\_\_\_

ταμίου \_\_\_\_\_

ἀρετάς \_\_\_\_\_

θαλάσσας \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>6</sup> ἄργυρος, ου = silver, i.e. money

<sup>7</sup> = small, scarce