

# SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING GREEK

## GREEK 101: Introduction to Ancient Greek

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To learn Greek, you need **commitment and serenity**. Apathy and its consort, panic, are your enemies. We will proceed at a steady, manageable pace, and it important to stay current with your assignments. It is impossible to cram and difficult to catch up in a language course. **Be patient:** Sometimes you will want to hurry through the material. This will only lead to greater frustration in the future. Keep telling yourself that the material makes sense, and that you can do it. **Be positive:** If you are having difficulties, don't complain that the ancient Greeks have reached beyond the grave to make your life miserable with their grammar, conjugations, and such; **relax**, take a deep breath or take a break. Return refreshed and approach your work patiently. **Ask classmates for help, visit the TA during their drop in hour, email me a quick question, or see me during office hours or after class.**

Budget *at least* three solid hours for each homework assignment (that's only nine hours per week). A strongly recommended approach is to work for shorter amounts of time *every day*. Only consider an activity complete when you (and your group members) understand it, not when you've reached its end.

### Some 'dos' and 'don'ts':

- Attending and participating in every class is very important to success in learning Greek. Experience has shown that students who are faithful participants do better than those who miss classes. If you miss class, see me as soon as possible.
- Doing all assignments for every class thoroughly and completely is also a predictor of success. It is impossible just to come to class and listen to the right answers and thus "learn" the material. Doing it yourself (and making and correcting your own mistakes) is vital to the process of creating an integrated body of knowledge that will benefit you for the duration of the course and the rest of your life.
- Don't write transliterations of Greek words to help with pronunciation. Remember, the letters of the Greek alphabet are not an encoded form of English, but the building blocks of a beautiful, powerful language. Become comfortable with the pronunciations right away. From the first week, you should practice the alphabet, and know the vowels, diphthongs, breathings, and accentuation. Don't be afraid that you will sound funny: say everything out loud.
- Don't write translations of Greek sentences in the textbook and preferably not at all. You are training your eye and mind to be accustomed to reading Greek and thinking Greek; not reading English and somehow relating it to the "funny-looking" letters next to it. You should feel free to write notes to yourself, and underline and highlight important items, but refrain from writing translations of sentences. It's a crutch that's hard to throw away.
- Do explore Ancient Greek culture and take advantage of the resources of college: namely your trusty professor, your classmates, your library, and the Internet. Even if Greek and Classics are not your first loves, ancient literature, history, and culture are so vast and diverse that there is much of interest for every intellectually curious student. Majoring in biology? Aristotle pioneered the classification of animals. Politics? The very word is Greek. Medicine? There's a reason doctors still take the Hippocratic Oath. Physics? The Greeks invented the scientific method, the theory of atoms, steam power, and much more. In nearly every discipline the Greeks, either alone or mediated through the Romans, exert a profound influence. Embrace your education. Expand your mind!

# SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING GREEK USING *ATHENAZE*

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Each chapter of *Athenaze* is divided into two sections,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , with each focused on the continuing story of Dicaeopolis, our (mostly) friendly Athenian farmer, and his family. Before each reading is a list of new vocabulary words, and after each reading is a discussion of new grammar and exercises related to learning new lessons and reinforcing those from previous chapters.

As the course proceeds, you will have to determine how you best learn Greek, but here is how I recommend preparing for class:

1. Read over the new vocabulary words for the new reading. Make a flash card for each new word. Run through the flash cards until you feel comfortable with the new vocabulary.
2. Read the new paragraphs aloud, preferably in a small group. Don't try to translate, just listen to the sound of the words.
3. Try to read through the paragraphs – again out loud, but this time understanding what the paragraph is saying. Don't worry too much about grammatical constructions that you haven't seen before, make a note of them, but focus on reading the passage and understanding its general sense.
4. Turn to the explanation of new grammar. Read through it carefully. If there are new forms to learn, memorize them.
5. Make sure you've memorized new forms by taking out a blank sheet of paper and writing them out from memory. Say the words out loud when you write them. No, really. This is how I learned Greek. It's quite effective.
6. Now go back and read the assigned paragraphs closely, paying special attention to the new grammatical constructions or forms. As I explained above, it is better that you *not* write your translation, but feel free to make notes and write down questions about the Greek you encounter in the reading.
7. Spend ~15 minutes with your flash cards memorizing new vocabulary. Have your partners quiz you on new (and old!) words and forms.
8. Prepare and write out the exercises for the next class.

In general, if you sit and focus, each day's assignment should take about 2-3 hours. If it is taking longer than that, please let me know. It is a great idea to split this time between two days.