Accentuation in Greek: A Few Fix-Points

Terminology for syllables:

Final syllable of a word: ultimate

2nd syllable from the end: penultimate

3rd syllable from the end: antepenultimate

These terms are Latin: *paene* (=> pen) means 'almost', and *ante* means 'before', so the antepenultimate is simply 'the one before the almost last one'.

Recessive accent:

Many words will pull the accent as far as possible towards the beginning of the word. This is called a 'recessive' accent. It applies to:

Nearly all finite verb forms; παιδεύω

Many base forms of nouns and adjectives; ἄνθρωπος

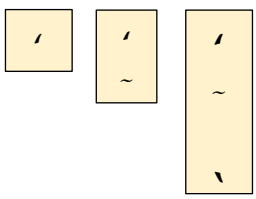
Accent placement:

1. **Diphtongs:**

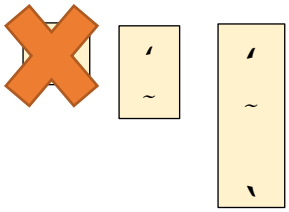
- The accent must be placed on the second vowel of the diphtong, e.g. βασιλεύς - ναῦς – δηλοῖ
- The two diphtongs αι and οι count as short – unless when they are optative endings.

2. **Accent position in word:**

These are the possible positions of accents in each word, counting syllables from the end of the word:



If the final syllable of the word is *long* <u>or</u> consist of a *diphtong* (but cf. above), options become more limited:



For words where the accent would normally fall on the penultimate (2nd from the end) syllable and where the penultimate is long and the ultimate (final syllable) short, we must use the circumflex: *e.g.* τὸν τροπωτῆρα.

3. **Persistence**:

In general, accent of nouns and adjectives in inflected cases fall on the same syllable as the base accent in the nominative form, e.g.:

> ὁ διδάσκαλος does not change in the accusative => τὸν διδάσκαλον

However, if we change to genitive plural (ending in -ων and thus having a long ultimate), the accent needs to move according to the rule above:

> ὁ διδάσκαλος => τῶν διδασκάλων

The persistence rule is the reason why it is important to learn the accentuation of new vocab even as you learn the meaning of the new word.