

Intensive Greek I

Accents

There are 3 types of ancient Greek accent:

Acute – ´

Grave – `

Circumflex – ˘

In ancient Greek accent was of pitch, not of stress as in English. An acute accent indicates a rising pitch, a grave a neutral or falling pitch and a circumflex a combined rise and fall. However, while moderating your pitch, you should also stress that particular syllable of the word.

An accent is placed **above a vowel**, or **above the second vowel of a diphthong**:

τεμήριον

ἑταῖρος

If a diphthong with a rough or smooth breathing is accented, an acute or grave accent is placed **to the right of the breathing**, and a circumflex is placed **above the breathing**:

ἄν

ὅλον

οἶκος

If a vowel is capitalised, an accent is placed **before it rather than above it**:

Ἑκτωρ

If the first vowel of a diphthong is capitalised, an accent is placed **above the second vowel**:

Αἴσων

If a diphthong contains an iota adscript, an accent is placed **before the vowel**:

Ἄιδης

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ACCENTS. You are not required to memorise accents for this course. However, it is important that you know about them and what they indicate.

Rules for Accents

Accents will only appear on one of the last three syllables of an ancient Greek word. However, accents are moveable: as a word changes its form, or as it appears in a particular place in a sentence, the accent may change either its type or its location. These changes are limited:

1. The grave accent only appears over the ultima, and only if the ultima is followed by another word.

2. The acute accent only appears on the ultima if the ultima is followed by a punctuation mark that signals a pause, and the ultima may be long or short.

[Every grave accent was originally an acute accent that was forced to change due to the flow of words in the sentence – the importance of pronunciation again!]

3. The acute accent may appear on the penult, but not if the penult is long (either a long vowel or a diphthong) and the ultima is short.

4. The acute accent may appear on the antepenult, but only if the ultima is short.

5. The circumflex may appear on the ultima, but only if the ultima is long (either a long vowel or a diphthong).

6. There will be a circumflex on the penult if the penult is long (either a long vowel or a diphthong) and accented, and the ultima is short.

[The circumflex never appears over a short vowel!]