

Chapter 5

The Noun and Article: Genitive and Dative Cases (Second Declension Masculine) / Genitive of Possession / Indirect Object / Prepositions with the Genitive Case / Prepositions with the Dative Case

THE GENITIVE AND DATIVE CASES: Chapter 3 introduced the nominative and accusative cases of the noun along with some basic uses of those two cases. This chapter takes up the other two main cases: the *genitive* and the *dative*.

GENITIVE: There are *many possible uses* for the genitive case. We will look at two of them in this chapter and add others later on. In many of the uses, the noun in the genitive case is modifying another noun (called the “head noun”). This means that it gives some sort of information about the head noun which specifies or limits it in some way. Many of these uses can be translated into English with the preposition “of,” e.g., “man of sorrows,” “half of my kingdom,” and “jar of wine.” In order to identify the specific genitive use, the translator or exegete must consider *what kind of modifying information the noun in the genitive case conveys*. Another way to say this is that one must consider *the relationship of one noun to the other*. One of the most common uses of the genitive case is the *genitive of possession* (also called the *possessive genitive*); the noun (or pronoun) in the genitive case “possesses” the head noun. The possessive genitive answers the question “Whose?” in regard to the head noun.

The genitive singular ending is *-ου*. The genitive plural ending is *-ων*.

ὁ οἶκος τοῦ φίλου the house of the friend / the friend's house
τὸν οἶκον τῶν φίλων the house of the friends / the friends' house

NOTES:

(1) When a noun referring to a person or a part of the body is modified by a word in the genitive case, the idea of possession is not strictly literal. One does not “possess” one’s foot or one’s friend. For this reason, grammarians sometimes subdivide this category in various ways. Such situations, however, are still under the broad umbrella category of the possessive genitive and are best identified as such (at least for now).

(2) Be sure you know where the apostrophe goes in English possessives!

(3) A very common word arrangement in Greek is to put modifying information, in this case the genitive noun, between the noun it modifies and that noun’s article. This does not change the translation and does not appear to have any particular significance, although it can help a writer make completely clear which noun a given genitive modifies.

οἱ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ φίλοι

ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός

DATIVE: The dative case also has *many possible functions*. One of the most common is to express the *indirect object* of the verb, i.e., the indirect recipient or beneficiary of the action of the verb, the one in whose interest the action of the verb is performed. This is often translated with the English “to” or “for”: “He gave the book to me.” It is also possible to translate the indirect object without the “to” or “for”: “He gave me the book.” In the latter example, one must distinguish carefully between what is actually given (the book) and the one who benefits from the action (me).

The dative singular ending is $-\omega$. The dative plural ending is $-\omicron\iota\varsigma$.

λέγει τῷ φίλῳ. He is speaking to his friend.

ἄρτον ἀγοράζομεν τοῖς ὄχλοις. We are buying bread for the crowds.

NOTES:

(1) Both the noun and the article in the dative singular have an *iota subscript* under the *omega*. Remember that this is part of the correct word spelling, though it does not affect pronunciation.

(2) With the verb λέγω either the indirect object dative or the preposition πρὸς (with its object in the accusative case) can be used. The indirect object dative is more common. A direct object of some kind (“words,” “thoughts,” etc.) is generally understood but frequently not expressed with λέγω.

(3) The “of” which is sometimes used to translate the genitive case and the “to” and “for” used to translate the dative are *added by the translator to express the ideas conveyed by these cases*. When asked to identify such nouns, you should say “genitive of possession” / “possessive genitive” or “indirect object.” **Only identify the noun as “object of the preposition” if there is a Greek preposition involved.** This means that when you are asked for the function of nouns you must look at the Greek, not at your English translation.

DECLENSION: Whereas a listing of verb forms in a certain order is called a verb *conjugation*, a listing of noun forms in a certain order is called a noun *declension*. (We “conjugate” verbs and “decline” nouns.) We now have eight possible forms for the nouns learned so far. Here is the standard arrangement (declension) of these noun forms and the corresponding definite articles.

NOTE: With the exception of the nominative forms, which are proclitics, the definite article follows the accent pattern of a noun with the accent on the last syllable.

PREPOSITIONS: Just as some Greek prepositions are followed by an object in the accusative case, others are followed by an object in the genitive case. Two such prepositions are ἀπό (“from,” “away from”) and ἐκ (“from,” “out of”).

ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου from / away from the house

ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ from / out of the sky / heaven

Note that ἐκ has an alternate form ἐξ which is used when the following word begins with a vowel.

Still other prepositions are followed by an object in the dative case. Two of the most common are ἐν (“in”) and σὺν (“with”).

ἐν τῷ ναῷ in the temple

σὺν τοῖς διακόνοις with the servants

NOTE: The correct identification of the noun following *any Greek preposition* is “object of the preposition.” (Later on we will see prepositional phrases used to express ideas which can also be expressed by the case alone. At that time, correct identifications will be explained.)

VOCABULARY

When nouns are listed in a lexicon, the following three items are given: (1) the full form of the nominative singular, (2) the *ending* of the genitive singular, and (3) some indication of the gender (in this case the letter “m.”). The reason for listing all three of these items will become more obvious as we learn more about nouns.

ἄνθρωπος, -ου, m. – person, man; mankind [anthropology]

θάνατος, -ου, m. – death [thanatopsis]

κύριος, -ου, m. – lord, master; Lord

ἥλιος, -ου, m. – sun [heliocentric]

διάκονος, -ου, m. – servant, minister; deacon [deacon]

διδάσκαλος, -ου, m. – teacher [didactic]

οἶκος, -ου, m. – house [economy]

οἶνος, -ου, m. – wine [oenophile]

δοῦλος, -ου, m. – slave, servant

ἀπό (preposition with genitive) – from, away from [apotropaic]

ἐκ / ἐξ (preposition with genitive) – from, out of [exodus]

ἐν (preposition with dative) – in [energy] (Also appears in compounds as “em,”
e.g. empathy.)

σύν (preposition with dative) – with [synchronize] (Also “sym” [symphony] or
“syl” [syllogism].)

VOCABULARY NOTES:

(1) The noun ἄνθρωπος in the singular can refer to a specific “man” or “person” or it can be translated as “man” meaning “mankind” or “humanity,” as in the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου – “the Son of Man.” In the plural it is best translated as “people” or “men.”

(2) When the definite article appears with *abstract nouns* such as θάνατος, it is sometimes translated and sometimes not. When the reference is to a specific death, the article is usually translated (e.g., “the death of our friend”). When the reference is to the concept in general, the article is not used in English (e.g., “fear of death”).

PREPARING FOR THE QUIZ:

(1) You should know the *names of the two new cases* and *two ways in which each can be used*.

(2) You should know all the *correct terminology* for identifying case uses.

(3) You should consider *starting lists* to keep track of case uses and cases used as the objects of prepositions.

(4) You should be aware of certain *characteristics of Greek* in terms of specific vocabulary definitions and uses of the definite article.

(5) Remember that since this is a “noun chapter,” your verb information to date stays the same (present and imperfect active indicative).