

# Writing Greek with the `greek` option of the `babel` package

Apostolos Syropoulos  
366, 28th October Str.  
GR-671 00 Xanthi, GREECE  
e-mail: `apostolo@platon.ee.duth.gr`

October 15, 1997

## Abstract

This document describes the use of the Latin transliteration for Greek that is defined by the LGR font encoding. Today, all modern LaTeX distributions support literal input of Greek, which is the preferred method for new documents. [G. Milde 2013/12/02]

## 1 Overview

The `greek` option of the `babel` package is an attempt to make it possible for someone to write Greek text with LaTeX. The current version of the `greek` option supports the `μονοτονικό` and `πολυτονικό` accentual systems of the Greek language. Moreover, there is now support for Greek numerals. One can produce easily valid Greek numerals both in uppercase and lowercase forms, e.g, `αλγζ` and `ΑΛΖ`. The labels in second and fourth level enumerations are lowercase and uppercase Greek numerals correspondingly.

## 2 Typing Greek Text

By default, TeX understands only 7-bit ASCII characters, so it is not possible to enter directly Greek letters.<sup>1</sup> Instead, someone enters Latin letters which are mapped to their Greek “counterparts” by TeX. The following table shows the transliteration employed:

---

<sup>1</sup>Literal input of Greek characters is possible with XeTeX, LuaTeX, or the `greek-inputenc` LaTeX package. G. Milde, 2013/07/19

α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν
a	b	g	d	e	z	h	j	i	k	l	m	n
ξ	ο	π	ρ	σ	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω	ς	
x	o	p	r	s	t	u	f	q	y	w	c	

Please, note that in order to produce the letter σ in isolation one has to type `sv`. This feature is due to the strong ligature that T<sub>E</sub>X employs. In the “modern” μονοτονικό accentual system only one accent is used—οξεία (acute). In the traditional πολυτονικό accentual system we need more accents and breathing signs. We can produce an accented letter by prefixing the letter with the symbol that denotes the accent, e.g., `>a'erac` produces the word *ἄερας*.<sup>2</sup> Here are the symbols that are recognized:

Accent	Symbol	Example	Output
acute	'	<code>g'ata</code>	γάτα
grave	`	<code>dad`i</code>	δαδι
circumflex	~	<code>ful~hc</code>	φυλῆς
rough breathing	<	<code>&lt;'otan</code>	ὄταν
smooth breathing	>	<code>&gt;'aneu</code>	ἄνευ
subscript		<code>&gt;anate'ih </code>	ἀνατείλη
dieresis	"	<code>qa"ide'uh c</code>	χαΐδεύης

Note that the subscript symbol is placed **after** the letter. The last thing someone must know in order to be able to write normal Greek text is the punctuation marks used in the language:

Punctuation Sign	Symbol	Output
period	.	·
semicolon	;	·
exclamation mark	!	!
comma	,	,
colon	:	:
question mark	?	;
left apostrophe	‘	‘
right apostrophe	’	’
left quotation mark	((	»
right quotation mark	))	»

Using these conventions it is a straightforward exercise to write Greek πολυτονικο text. For example the following excerpt from *Δύσκολος* of Μένανδρος

Τί φής; Ἴδὼν ἐνθέδε παῖδ' ἐλευθέραν  
τὰς πλησίον Νύμφας στεφανοῦσαν, Σώστρατε,  
ἔρῶν ἀπῆλθεσ εὐθύς;

<sup>2</sup>For the technically inclined reader, we must say that T<sub>E</sub>X uses the ligature table of the font in order to determine the character that corresponds to the input character sequence.

can be produced by the following L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X code:

```
T'i f'hic? <Id'wn >enj'ede pa'id'' >eleuj'eran
t'ac plhs'ion N'umfac stefano'usan, S'wstrate,
>er'wn 'ap'hljec e>uj'uc?
```

### 3 Producing Greek Text

Once the Greek language is selected with the command

```
\selectlanguage{greek}
```

whatever we type will be typeset with the Greek fonts. The command `\textlatin` can be used for short passages in some language that uses the Latin alphabet, while the the command `\latintext` changes the base fonts to the ones used by languages that use the Latin alphabet. However, all words will be hyphenated by following the Greek hyphenation rules! Similar commands are available once someone has selected some other language. The commands `\textgreek` and `\greektext` behave exactly like their “latin” counterparts. For example, the word Μίμης has been produced with the command `\textgreek{M'imhc}`. Please note that certain symbols cannot have their expected result for Greek text, unless someone has selected the Greek language, e.g., `~` is such a symbol.

As we have mentioned above this version of the `greek` option of the `babel` package supports the use of Greek numerals. The commands `\greeknumeral` and `\Greeknnumeral` produce the lowercase and the uppercase Greek numeral, e.g.,

Command	Output
<code>\Greeknnumeral{9999}</code>	ϠΛϠϠ
<code>\greeknumeral{9999}</code>	ϠλϠϠ

In order to correctly typeset the greek numerals the greek option file provides the following commands:

Command	Output
<code>\qoppa</code>	Ϡ
<code>\sampi</code>	λ
<code>\stigma</code>	Ϡ

In traditional Greek typography the first paragraph after a header is always indented, contrary to the habit of, say, American typography. This effect can be achieved by using the package `indentfirst`.

Additional greek symbols are available:

Command	Output
<code>\Digamma</code>	Ɔ
<code>\ddigamma</code>	Ɔ
<code>\euro</code>	€
<code>\permill</code>	‰

The package `athnum` provides the command `\athnum`, with which one can produce the so called *Athenian numerals*:

Command	Output
<code>\athnum{1997}</code>	XϠHHHHHϠΔΔΔΔΠΠΠ

The package `grmath` renames the basic log-like functions with their greek counterparts:

Command	Output
<code>\$_sin^{2}x+\cos^{2}x=1\$</code>	$\eta\mu^2 x + \sigma\nu^2 x = 1$