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Alphabet & Sounds, PART I

OBJECTIVE : Begin learning the letters of the Greek alphabet, so they are recognizable by sound and name.

α Just as you had to learn the letters and sounds of the English alphabet before you could begin reading, you will now have to do the same in Greek. The good news is that the Greek alphabet is even easier to learn than our English alphabet! Many of its 24 letters are very similar (in look and/or sound) to our English letters. If you learn four letters a day, you will have the entire alphabet memorized in only six days.

Begin each day by looking at the four letters you will learn that day. Study the first letter, noticing whether it is similar to any English letters. As you look at it, say its Greek name and the sound it makes. Continue in this way through all four letters. Then cover the names and see if you can name each letter correctly. Once you can name the day's letters, spend some time writing them. Finally, since you will want to keep reviewing the letters until you know all 24, you may find some game or activity suggestions in the appendix section devoted to review that appeal to you.

day 1: *alpha* through *delta*

α	Alpha	/ă/ as in <i>father</i>
β	Beta	/b/
γ	Gamma	/g/ as in <i>get</i> *
δ	Delta	/d/

**two gammas together say "ng"*

You will notice that all four of your letters today have similarities to English letters. Do you see how alpha, beta, and delta look and sound very similar to our English A, B, and D? Gamma, though it does not look much like the letter G, makes the same sound. Notice, though, that the letter gamma always makes the "hard" /g/ sound, never the "soft" /g/ sound (it never makes the /j/ sound that begins our word *giraffe*). Now practice writing the letters you have just learned. As you write each letter, say its name and the sound it makes.

day 2: *epsilon* through *theta*

ε	Epsilon	/ě/ as in <i>elephant</i>
ζ	Zeta	/dz/
η	Eta	/ā/ as in <i>ate</i>
θ	Theta	/th/ as in <i>thing</i>

Although epsilon looks enough like an English E that you probably will never forget its sound, you may find the next three letters more unusual. Remember to study these four letters until you can name them and say their sounds, then go back and see how well you remember the letters you learned yesterday. Can you still name them, write them, and tell what sound they make?

Once again, practice writing and saying the letters.

day 3: *iota* through *mu*

ι	Iota	/ĩ/ as in <i>sit</i> or /ē/*
κ	Kappa	/k/
λ	Lambda	/l/
μ	Mu	/m/

**Iota does not make the English long “i” sound. Its name is pronounced “ee-ota.”*

Here again, you can see that our letters I, K, L, and M are similar in sound and form to these Greek letters.

Practice writing and saying the letters, and don't forget to review the letters from previous days.

day 4: *nu* through *pi*

ν	Nu	/n/
ξ	Xi	/x/
ο	Omicron	/ō/ as in <i>obey</i>
π	Pi	/p/*

**If you have ever come across the symbol π in your math lessons, you are probably accustomed to pronouncing it with the English long “i” sound at the end (“pie”). It should actually be pronounced with a long “e” sound (“pea”).*

The letter nu looks a lot like an English V, though it sounds like an N. Pay special attention to this letter and to the letter xi, as their forms are probably unusual to you.

day 5: Review

Spend some time today reviewing the alphabet through the letter pi. Try reciting the letter names, and then try doing it with your eyes closed!

Here are some words to try pronouncing:

δόξα	λόγον
λάμβδα	γάμμα
κακόν [†]	

As you continue learning the Greek alphabet this week, be sure to review the letters

[†]You will notice that Greek words have many little marks above them. These marks are either accent marks or breathing marks. Students will learn more about breathing marks in Lesson 2, so for now we only need to talk about accents. In Greek, there are three accents. They always go over a vowel, and they are the acute ´, the grave ` , and the circumflex ~ . There are three accents, but they all share the same job, which is to show which syllable is stressed. Pay attention to the accents when pronouncing a word, because they will help you to keep your pronunciation consistent. However, it is not necessary to require that a student who is doing his own writing duplicate the accent in his exercises. There are many rules which govern when each accent is used, and they tend to get complicated.