

GUIDELINES FOR PARSING VERB FORMS

Frequently you will be asked to “parse” a Greek verb form. This means that you will need to identify all the grammatical identifying features of the form. The ability to parse verb forms is critical to correctly translating and exegeting any passage of the Greek NT. All Greek verb forms are in one of these “finite” moods: indicative, imperative, subjunctive, or optative; or else they are participles or infinitives. There are distinct methods of parsing for finite verbs, for participles, and for infinitives. For convenience’s sake, it is expedient for the student to parse all verb forms in the order given here.

Common to all parsings

All parsings begin with the same first three items: tense, voice, and mood (technically, participles and infinitives are not usually called “moods,” but for parsing purposes, it is handy to think of them in this way).

<i>Possible Tenses</i>	<i>Possible Voices</i>	<i>Possible Moods</i>
Present (pres.)	Active (act.)	Indicative (ind.)
Future (fut.)	Middle (mid.)	Imperative (impv.)
Imperfect (impf.)	Passive (pas.)	Subjunctive (subj.)
Aorist (aor.)		Optative (opt.)
Perfect (pf.)		Participle (pt.)
Pluperfect (plpf.)		Infinitive (inf.)

Thus, some examples would be parsings that begin in the following ways:

- pres. act. ind.
- aor. mid. subj.
- aor. act. pt.
- impf. pas. ind.
- pf. pas. pt.
- pres. mid. impv.

Finite verbs

Verb forms in the NT most commonly are finite verbs (indicative, subjunctive, imperative, or optative mood). These verbs will have personal endings showing person and number.

Possible Persons	Possible Numbers
1 st	Singular (s.)
2 nd	Plural (pl.)
3 rd	

When parsing a finite verb form, first list the tense, voice, and mood, then list the person and number. This is followed by the vocabulary form of the verb and its brief definition. Thus, there are seven parts to a finite verb parsing. Here are some examples (the parsings are spaced so that they are easier to compare; normally the line has no spaces):

- λύει – pres. act. indic., 3rd s., λύω loose
- βλέομεν – pres. act. indic., 1st pl., βλέπω see
- εἶπεν – aor. act. indic., 3rd s., λέγω say
- λίπεσθε – aor. mid. impv., 2nd pl., λείπω leave
- πιστεύσωμεν – aor. act. subj., 1st pl., πιστεύω believe

Participles

Participles are very common in the NT. They are “verbal adjectives” in the sense that they have features in common with adjectives, including adjectival endings. Participles are found usually in the present or aorist tenses. The ending on a participle will show its gender, number, and case.

Possible Genders	Possible Numbers	Possible Cases
Masculine (m.)	Singular (s.)	Nominative (nom.)
Feminine (f.)	Plural (pl.)	Genitive (gen.)
Neuter (n.)		Dative (dat.)
		Accusative (acc.)
		Vocative (voc.)

To parse a participle form, first, as usual, list the tense, voice, and mood [participle]. Then list the gender, number, and case of the ending; then list the vocabulary form and its brief definition. Thus there are a total of eight parts to the parsing of a participle form. Here are some examples:

- λύοντος – pres. act. pt., m. s. gen., λύω loose
- πορευομένοις – pres. mid. pt., m. pl. dat., πορεύομαι go
- ἐλθόντος – aor. act. pt., m. s. gen., ἐρχομαι come, go
- διωκόμεναι – pres. pas. pt., f. pl. nom., διώκω persecute

Infinitives

Infinitives are sometimes called verbal nouns, since they often act as nouns. As participles, infinitives usually are found in the present or aorist tenses. Unlike finite verbs and participles, infinitives have no personal or other endings. This makes them easier to parse. Simply list the tense, voice, and mood [infinitive]; then list the vocabulary form and brief definition. Thus, infinitive parsings have only five parts. Here are some examples:

- ἔχειν – pres. act. inf., ἔχω have
- εἶναι – pres. act. inf., εἰμί be
- λυθῆναι – aor. pas. inf., λύω loose
- ἀπελθεῖν – aor. act. inf., ἀπέρχομαι go away