

Romanization of Greek

Romanization of Greek is the representation of Greek language texts, that are usually written in the Greek alphabet, with the Latin alphabet, or a system for doing so. There are several methods for the romanization of Greek, especially depending on whether the language written with Greek letters is Ancient Greek or Modern Greek and whether a phonetic transcription or a graphemic transliteration is intended.

The conventional rendering of classical Greek names in English originates in the way Latin represented Greek loanwords in antiquity. The κ is replaced with c, the diphthongs αι and οι are rendered as ae and oe (or æ, œ); and ει and ου are simplified to i and u. In modern scholarly transliteration of Ancient Greek, κ will instead be rendered as k, and the vowel combinations αι, οι, ει, ου as ai, oi, ei, ou respectively. The letters θ and φ are generally rendered as th and ph; χ as either ch or kh; and word-initial ρ as rh.

For Modern Greek, there are multiple different transcription conventions. They differ widely, depending on their purpose, on how close they stay to the conventional letter correspondences of Ancient Greek–based transcription systems, and to what degree they attempt either an exact letter-by-letter transliteration or rather a phonetically based transcription. Standardized formal transcription systems have been defined by the International Organization for Standardization (as ISO 843), by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, by the Library of Congress, and others.

The different systems can create confusion. For example, the word Ἅγιος or in polytonic script Ἄγιος ("Holy", "Saint"), common inter alia in many place names, may be variously rendered as Agios, Ayios, or Aghios, or Hagios (feminine forms: Agia, Ayia, or Aghia, or Hagia).^[1]

Transliteration tables

The following tables list several transliteration schemes from the Greek alphabet to the Latin alphabet.

Greek	Ancient			Modern			Greeklish ^[2]					
	Classical	Scientific	Beta code	ISO 843	BGN/PCGN	UN/ELOT	Iconic	Spelling	Simple phonetic	English phonetic	Key-board	Byzantine
Α α	a	a, ā	A	a			a					
Β β	b		B	v			b	v		b		
Γ γ	g		G	g	g / y ^[3]	g	y	g		g/gh	g	
Δ δ	d		D	d	dh / d ^[4]	d	d					
Ε ε	e		E	e			e					
Ζ ζ	z		Z	z			z					
Η η	e	ē	H	ī	i		h		i	e	h	
Θ θ	th		Q	th			8 / 9	th		u		
Ι ι	i	i, ī	I	i			i					
Κ κ	c	k	K	k			k		k / c		k	
Λ λ	l		L	l			l					
Μ μ	m		M	m			m					

N ν	n	N	n			N ν	n				
Ξ ξ	x	C	x			3		ks / x		j	
O ο	o	O	o			o					
Π π	p	P	p			p					
Ρ ρ	r, rh ^[5]	R	r			r					
Σ σ ζ	s	S	s	s ^[6]	s	s / 6	s	s / ss	s	c	
T τ	t	T	t			t					
Υ υ	y, u, ū	U	y	i	y	y / u	i	y / u / i	y		
Φ φ	ph	F	f			f		f / ph	f		
Χ χ	ch, kh	X	ch	kh	ch	x	h	ch	x		
Ψ ψ	ps	Y	ps			y	ps		c		
Ω ω	o, ō	W	ō	o		w	o		v		

[1] "Rough Guide to the Dodecanese & East Aegean islands" by Marc Dubin, insert in p. vi (<http://books.google.com/books?id=fJ3gVGqB1uQC&pg=PP8&dq=ayios+agios#v=onepage&q=ayios+agios&f=false>)

[2] The use of 'Greeklish' (here: writing Greek in the Latin alphabet) has risen enormously with the advent of SMS, email, online chatting, and other digital media, where Greek fonts are not always readily available.

Examples:

- θέλω → *thelo* or "8elo" or "thelw"
- ξανά → *ksana* or *xana*
- ψυχή → *psyhi* or "yuhi" etc

[3] before αι, ε, ει, η, ι, οι, υ, υι.

[4] between ν and ρ.

[5] with rough breathing.

[6] sometimes doubled between vowels (ex. Larissa).

Vowel digraphs^[1]

Greek	Ancient			Modern			Greeklish
	Classical	Scientific	Beta code	ISO 843	BGN/PCGN	UN/ELOT	
αι	ae	ai	AI	ai	e	ai	ai / e
αυ	au		AU	au	av	av, ^[2] af ^[3]	ay, au, af, av
ει	i / e	ei	EI	ei	i	ei	ei / i
ευ	eu		EU	eu	ev	ev, ef	ey, eu, ef, ev
ηυ	eu	ēu	HU	īy	iv	iv / if	hy / hu / if / iv
οι	oe	oi	OI	oi	i	oi	oi / i
ου	u / o	ou	OU	ou	u	ou	ou / u
υι	ui / yi	ui	UI	yi	i	yi	yi / gi / i

[1] except when there is a diaeresis (¨) on the second vowel

[2] before β, γ, δ, ζ, λ, μ, ν, ρ and vowels.

[3] before θ, κ, ξ, π, σ, τ, φ, χ, ψ and at the end of a word.

Greek	Ancient			Modern			Greeklish
	Classical	Scientific	Beta code	ISO 843	BGN/PCGN	UN/ELOT	
γγ	ng		GG	gg	ng		gg / gk / ng / nk
γξ	nx		GC	gx	nx		gks / gx / nks / nx
γκ	nc	nk	GK	gk	g, ^[1] ng ^[2]	gk	g, gk / nk
γχ	nch	nkh	GX	gch	nkh	nch	gx / gch / nx / nch
μπ	mp		MP	mp	b / mb	b, mp	b, mp / mb
ντ	nt		NT	nt	d, nd	nt	d, nt / nd

⊢Consonant digraphs

Greek	Ancient			Name
	Classical	Scientific	Beta code	
ϵ	h ^[3]		(rough breathing, δασεῖα
Ϸ	none)	smooth breathing, ψιλῆ
ι̇	(i)		l	iota subscript, ὑπογεγραμμένη ^[4]

⊢Modifiers (only in Ancient Greek)

[1] at the beginning of a word.

[2] in the middle of a word.

[3] on vowel: h before the vowel; on ρ: rh.

[4] under long vowels.

Greek	Ancient			
	Classical	Scientific	Beta code	
Ϝ ϝ	–	w	V	digamma
Ϻ	–	ś	#711	san
Ϟ	–	q	#3	qoppa
Ϡ	–	š	#5	sampi

⊢Archaic letters

Diacritics

The traditional polytonic orthography of Greek uses several distinct diacritic signs to render what was originally the pitch accent of Ancient Greek, and the presence or absence of word-initial *h*. In 1982, monotonic orthography was officially introduced for modern Greek. The only diacritics that remain are the acute accent (indicating stress) and the diaeresis (indicating that two consecutive vowels should not be combined). The acute accent and the diaeresis are kept in both the BGN/PCGN and the UN/ELOT romanization systems. There is one exception: in the vowel combinations *αυ*, *ευ* and *ηυ* the accent moves from the *υ* (that becomes *v* or *f*) to the preceding vowel.

References

- Transliteration of Non-Roman Scripts (<http://transliteration.eki.ee/>), a collection of writing systems and transliteration tables, by Thomas T. Pedersen. Includes PDF reference charts for many languages' transliteration systems.
 - The Working Group on Romanization Systems (<http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>) of the United Nations.
 - Transliteration chart (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/greek.pdf>) of the Library of Congress.
 - Scientific transliteration is described in the Ancient and Medieval Greek transliteration chart (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/greeka.pdf>) of the Library of Congress
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