

## Case Usage in Greek

### Vocative Case

Direct Address

### Nominative Case

1. Subject of a finite verb
2. Predicate with a linking verb (eivmi( gi,nomai( etc.)
3. Plural form (sometimes with article) can be used as vocative for direct address

### Genitive Case

1. Possession
2. Object of certain prepositions
3. Personal agency of a passive voice verb with u`po, (subset of above)
4. Subject of a genitive absolute participle
5. Direct object of certain verbs (especially verbs of sense, but not verbs of seeing)
6. Comparison
7. Familial relationship (subset of possession)
8. Price or worth
9. Subjective Genitive: Subject of verbal action in noun whose root is based in a verb
10. Objective Genitive: Direct object of verbal action in noun whose root is based in a verb
11. Time use: Express time frame within which or during which action takes place

### Dative Case

1. Indirect object of a verb
2. Object of certain prepositions
3. Impersonal means or instrument of any verb
4. Advantage/disadvantage
5. Direct object of certain verbs (especially compound verbs)
6. Respect/epexegetical
7. Comparative/Measure of difference (with comparative adjective or adverb)
8. Time use: Express a point in time when action takes place

### **Accusative Case**

1. Direct object of most verbs
2. Object of certain prepositions
3. Subject of an infinitive (when different from the subject of the main verb)
4. Adverbial relationship (neuter accusative singular of an adjective; occasionally nouns)
5. Time: Extent of time that action takes place
6. Place: Extent of place/space over which action takes place.

**Time Uses of the Oblique Cases (All Adverbial Uses)**  
**(Know this for Exam and 4<sup>th</sup> Year Qualifier)**

**1. Genitive = Time frame**

The genitive can be used to establish *the time frame in or during which* a verbal action takes place.

o` Vlhsou/j evleu, setai w`j kle, pthj o|j e; rcetai **nukto,j**)

Jesus will come as a thief who comes **during the night** [literally “within the time frame of the night.”]

evrga, zomai kai. **nukto.j** kai, h`me, raj)

I work both **during the night** and **(during the) day**.

(Note: Here the speaker is not saying that he works for 24 hours, but that he works jobs during both the night and the day.)

**2. Dative = Point in Time**

The dative can be used to establish *the point in time when* a verbal action takes place.

o` Vlhsou/j h; geire **th/| tri, th| h`mera |**)

Jesus arose **on the third day**.

oi` Vloudai/oi ouvkv hvrge, zonto **tw|/ sabba, tw |**)

The Jews did not work **on the Sabbath**.

**3. Accusative = Extent of Time**

The accusative can be used to establish *the extent of time that (or for how long)* a verbal action takes place.

o` Vlhsou/j evnh, steue **h`me, raj tessera, konta** kai. **nu, ktaj tessera, konta**)

Jesus was fasting **for (the extent of) forty days** and **(for) forty nights**.

h` Maria, m evmeine **mh/naj trei/j** evn tw|/ oi; kw| th/j vElisabe, t)

Mary remained **for three months** in the house of Elizabeth.

Related to this same idea, the accusative can also denote *the extent of space for which (or how far)* a verbal action takes place.

h=lqomen **o`do.n** h`me, raj)

We went **a day's way/journey**.

We went as far as a day's way/journey.

**Other Key Uses of the Oblique Cases**  
**(Know this for the Exam and 4<sup>th</sup> Year Qualifier)**

**Genitive Case**

Terminology: When a genitive noun/pronoun is in a relationship with another noun, that is, the noun that it “possesses,” the possessed noun is often called the “head noun.” It is the *head* because in Greek this noun/pronoun (usually) comes before the genitive in a genitive phrase/chain.

**1. Genitive of Relationship:**

Related to the concept of possession, the genitive case is used to show a *familial* relationship between a noun in the genitive [usually a proper noun/a name] and its head noun. Often (but not always) the noun in the genitive is the progenitor (e.g., father or mother) of the head noun/pronoun or a family member with authority/headship/responsibility over the head noun/pronoun (e.g., the husband to the wife).

Si,mwn                      vlwa,nnou              Simon **of John** = Simon *son of John*

evk th/j tou/ Ouvri,ou = from the *woman of Uriah* = from **Uriah's wife** (i.e., Bathsheba)

**2. Genitive of Comparison:**

A noun/pronoun in the genitive case can indicate comparison with another noun/pronoun. This usually happens when the genitive noun follows a comparative adjective. [In this use as in the time use the genitive will not be part of a genitive phrase/chain.]

o` path.r mei,zwn mou, evstin) [The adjective mei,zwn is the comparative of me,gaj.]

The Father is greater **than I [am]**. [Not “The Father is my greater” where mou expresses possession]

ouvci. h` yuch. plei/o,n evstin th/j trofh/j\* [The adjective plei/on is the comparative of po,luj.]

Is not your life worth more **than food**?

**3. Subjective and Objective Genitive:**

There are some nouns that have a verbal idea implicit in their meaning. For example, consider:

pi,stij “faith, belief” to pisteu,w “I believe”

avpoka,luyij “revelation” to avpokalu,ptw “I reveal/uncover”

u`pakoh, “obedience” to u`pakou,w “I obey”

blasfhmi,a “blasphemy” to blasfhme,w “I blaspheme/speak against”

avgapa,ph “love” to avgapa,w “I love”

a;fesij “forgiveness” to avfi,hmi “I forgive”

Whenever such words as these are the head of another noun/pronoun in the genitive case, one of two meanings can often be conveyed:

First, the noun/pronoun in the genitive can sometimes function as the subject of a verbal idea implicit in the head noun. In such a case the genitive is used as a **subjective genitive**, that is, it is the subject of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun.

ti,j h`ma/j cwri,sei avpo. th/j avgapa,phj **tou/ Cristou/**

Who will separate us from the love **of Christ?**

In this sentence genitive *Cristou/* is the subject of the verbal action of *avgapa,w* which is implicit in the noun *avgapa,phj*. Underlying this genitive phrase is the sentence *Cristo.j avgapa|/ h`ma/j* (“Christ loves us”). Thus the phrase “love of Christ” or “Christ’s love” is shorthand for “Christ’s act of loving us” where *Christ* is the subject of the verb *to love* and where the direct object *us* is assumed.

Other examples:

u`pakoh. **u`mw/n**

**Your** obedience = **Your** act of obeying

Concealed is the sentence *u`phkou,sate @tini#* (“You obeyed [someone]”).

h` blasfhmi,a **tou/ laou/**

The blasphemy **of the people** = **The people’s** act of blaspheming.

Concealed is the sentence *o` lao.j blasfhmei/j @tina#* )  
 (“The people blasphemed/spoke against [someone].”

Second, the noun/pronoun in the genitive can sometimes function as the direct object of a verbal idea implicit in the head noun. In such a case the genitive is used as an **objective genitive**, that is, it is the direct object of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun.

h` de. blasfhmi,a **tou/ pneu,matoj ouvkv avfeqh,setai)**

But the blasphemy **of the Spirit** will not be forgiven.

Here it is not the Spirit who is blaspheming (subjective genitive), but that someone else is blaspheming or speaking against the Spirit. In this case the genitive noun *pneu,matoj* is the direct object of the verb *blasfeme,w* implicit in the noun *blasfhmi,a*. Concealed is the sentence *blasfemei/ @tij# eivj to. pneu/ma* (“[Someone] is blaspheming against the Spirit”)

Another example:

h` a;fesij **tw/n** a`martiw/n

The forgiveness **of sins** = The act of someone forgiving sins

Concealed is the sentence a;fhke @tij# ta.j a`marti,aj (“[Someone] forgave the sins”).

As you might guess, there are some places in the New Testament where you will find a genitive noun/pronoun with a head noun that expresses a verbal idea where both the subjective and the objective ideas could make sense. Readers/interpreters then may (and do) disagree about whether the genitive in some of these constructions is to be understood as subjective or objective.

Some examples:

h` pi,stij **tou/**                      **vlhsou/ Cristou/**

The faith **of Jesus Christ**

Is this a subjective genitive that refers to Jesus’ faith or His faithfulness (“the act of Jesus Christ believing” or “the act of Jesus being faithful”)? Some read it this way. Or is this an objective genitive that refers to our faith in Jesus Christ (“the act of our believing in Jesus Christ”). Some read it this way. How you decide to read this genitive construction will then affect to some degree how you read, interpret, and translate passages such as Galatians 2:15-16.

h` avpoka,luyij **tou/**                      **vlhsou/ Cristou**

The revelation **of Jesus Christ**

Is this a subjective genitive that refers to Jesus making a revelation (“the act of Jesus Christ revealing something to someone”)? Or is this an objective genitive that refers to Jesus being revealed (“The act of someone revealing Jesus Christ to someone else”)? Some read it as a subjective genitive in Revelation 1:1, but then as an objective genitive in Galatians 1:12.

In Greek you will frequently find verbally based nouns in these kinds of genitive constructions. One very key question to be considered while interpreting these constructions is whether the genitive noun/pronoun is the subject or the direct object of the verbal idea that is implicit in the head noun/pronoun.

## Dative Case

### Dative of Respect/Reference (*aka* the Epexegetical/Explaining Dative)

A noun in the dative case can be used to indicate in what respect some other word is true or in what respect a verbal action has been carried out. In this case the dative noun functions in a way that is epexegetical, explaining in what way the noun or adjective is to be understood.

maka,rioi oi` kaqaroi. **th|/ kardi,a|**)

Blessed are the pure **with respect to the heart** [or “**in heart**”].

[In what way are these people pure? They are pure with respect to their hearts.]

avpeqa,nomen **th|/ a`marti,a|**)

We died **with respect to sin** [or “**to sin**”].

[In what way did we die? We died with respect to sin.]

ai` evkkhlsi,ai evstereou/nto **th|/ pi,stei**)

The churches were growing **with respect to faith** [or “**in faith**”].

[In what way were the churches growing? They were growing in faith.]

## Accusative Case

### Adverbial Accusative

Neuter singular adjectives can be used as adverbs. In such cases the meaning of the word shifts from the meaning of the adjective to the meaning of a corresponding adverb.

zhtei/te de. **prw/ton** th.n basilei,an tou/ qeou/)

But seek **first** the kingdom of God.

[Here the neuter singular of the adjective prw/toj( h( on (“first”) is used as an adverb to modify the verb zhtei/te and not some noun.]

**to. loipo.n**( avdelfoi, mou( cai,rete evn kuri,w|)

**Finally**, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

[Here the neuter singular of the adjective loipo,j( h,( o,n (“remaining”) is used as an adverb. To. loipo,n (note the article with the adjective) is a somewhat common adverbial construction that has the meaning of “finally.”]

The noun dwrea,( a/j (“gift”) can also be used as an adverb when it is in the accusative singular. As an adverb, dwrea,n has the meaning “freely” in the sense of “as a gift” and “without charge.”

dedikaiw,meqa **dwrea.n** th/| ca,rity auvtou)

We (have been and as a result) are justified **freely** by His grace.