

Recognizing Verb Tenses

Although it is easy to identify a verb tense by looking it up in an analytical lexicon or text, there are a few basic clues which identify a great number of the PRESENT, IMPERFECT, AORIST, PERFECT, and FUTURE tenses by simple observation.

In our lessons you will recall that we stated that a simple Greek verb had a verb stem and an ending. In addition, various prefixes (letters added to the beginning) and suffixes (letters added to the end) are added to the stem before the personal or subject ending to show the tense. The following chart is a helpful way to identify the tense of many active indicative Greek verbs:

PRESENT			(verb stem)		+ (ending)
IMPERFECT		€ +	(verb stem)		+ (ending)
AORIST*		€ +	(verb stem)	+ σ	+ (ending)
	or	€ +	(new verb stem)		
PERFECT	(duplicate of initial + consonant)**	€ +	(verb stem)	+ κ	+ (ending)
FUTURE			(verb stem)	+ σ	+ (ending)

* The AORIST tense can be formed in two ways, by the addition of a prefix and a suffix (called the 1st aorist) and by a prefix and a modification of the stem (called the 2nd aorist). These are not different tenses but alternate ways of forming the aorist tense.

** In the PERFECT tense, if the verb stem begins with a consonant, that consonant is repeated before the €.

NOTE: If a verb begins with a preposition, it is a compound verb. The prefix or consonant doubling will begin after the prepositional part of the verb.