

BASIC GREEK VERB TENSE VOICE MOOD (TVM) COMPARISON DATA SHEET

TENSE:	VOICE:	MOOD:
<p>PAST TENSE: See First Aorist Tense.*</p>	<p>PASSIVE VOICE: The passive voice represents the subject as being the recipient of the action. For, in the sentence, "The boy was hit by the ball, " the boy receives the action.</p>	<p>INDICATIVE MOOD: The indicative mood is a simple statement of fact. If an action occurs, has occurred, or will occur, it will be rendered in the indicative mood.</p>
<p>PERFECT TENSE: The perfect (or past-perfect) tense in Greek corresponds to the perfect tense in English and describes an action that is viewed as having been <i>completed in the past, once for all</i> time, not needing to be repeated.</p>	<p>ACTIVE VOICE: The active voice represents the subject as the doer or performer of the action. e.g., in the sentence, "The boy hit the ball, " the boy performs the action.</p>	<p>IMPERATIVE MOOD: The imperative mood corresponds to the English imperative and expresses a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the order and authority of the one commanding. Thus, Jesus' phrase, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" in Mark 1:15 is not an invitation but an absolute command requiring full obedience on the part of all hearers.</p>
<p>AORIST TENSE, FIRST: (w/out boundaries) The aorist tense is characterized by its emphasis on punctiliar action; that is, the concept of the verb is considered <u>*without regard for past, present, or future time. In most translations, there is no direct or clear English equivalent for this tense, though it is generally rendered as a simple past tense.</u></p> <p>The events described by the aorist tense are classified into several categories by grammarians. The most common of these include a view of the action as having begun from a certain point ("inceptive aorist"), having ended at a certain point ("cumulative aorist"), or merely existing at a certain point ("punctiliar aorist"). The categorization of other cases can be found in Greek reference grammars.</p> <p>The English reader or translator need not concern himself with most of these finer points concerning the aorist tense since, in most cases, they cannot be rendered accurately in English translation, being fine points of Greek exegesis only. In most cases, the common practice of rendering an aorist by a simple English past tense should suffice.</p>	<p>MIDDLE VOICE OR PASSIVE DEPONENT: In almost all cases, the middle or passive deponent forms are translated as being in the active voice.</p>	<p>INFINITIVE MOOD: The Greek infinitive mood, in most cases, corresponds to the English infinitive, which is basically the verb with "to" prefixed as "to believe."</p> <p>Like the English infinitive, the Greek infinitive can be used like a noun phrase ("It is better to live than to die"), as well as to reflect purpose or result ("This was done to fulfill what the prophet said").</p>
<p>AORIST TENSE, SECOND: The "second aorist" tense is identical in meaning and translation to the normal or "first" aorist tense. The only difference is in the form of spelling the words in Greek, and there is no effect upon English translation.</p>		<p>SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD: The subjunctive mood is the mood of possibility and potentiality. The action described may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances. Conditional sentences of the third class are all this type and many commands following conditional purpose clauses, such as those beginning with "hina."</p>
<p>PRESENT TENSE: The present tense represents a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time. In most cases, this corresponds directly with the English present tense.</p>	<p>NO TENSE OR VOICE STATED: In almost all these cases, one can assume that the tense is <i>Present</i> and the voice is <i>Active</i>, especially when the sense is that of a command (Imperative).</p>	<p>PARTICIPLE MOOD: The Greek participle corresponds for the most part to the English participle, reflecting "-ing" or "-ed" being suffixed to the basic verb form. The participle can be used either as a verb or a noun, as in English, and thus is often termed a "verbal noun."</p>
<p>FUTURE TENSE: The future tense corresponds to the English future and indicates the contemplated or certain occurrence of an event that has not yet occurred.</p>		

NUMBER AND PERSON

Before discussing tense, voice, and mood, it is first necessary to have an understanding of person and number.

Person: This is what determines whether the subject is the speaker (first person), is being spoken to (second person) or being spoken about (third person).

Number: This is what determines whether a verb is singular or plural.

		Number	
		Singular	Plural
Person	First	I	We
	Second	You	Y'all
	Third	He, She, it	They

TENSE

Tense plays a very crucial role in the study of New Testament exegesis. Dana and Mantey understood its significance in saying that "no element of the Greek language is of more importance to the student of the New Testament than the matter of tense". **[1]** Tense deals both with time and kind of action. Ancient Greek focused more on the latter of these aspects (that is, kind of action); however, time does play a role in verb tense when the mood is indicative (the four moods are explained below).

The aspect of a verb correlates with the kind of action. It determines whether the verb's action is punctiliar, linear or perfected. These are described in the following table.

Punctiliar:	•	action that relates to a specific <u>point</u> in time
Linear:	—————	action that is in the progress of occurring
Perfected:	•—RESULTS—	action that is both punctiliar and linear in that it refers to action relating to a point in time, yet has results that are in the progress of occurring

The Present Tense

The present tense can either be continuous/ongoing or undefined. The continuous present is usually translated as "I am loosing" while the undefined is best translated as "I loosen." When the present is used with the indicative mood it denotes present time.

Example: [Rev 3:20](#)

ἰδοὺ ἕστηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν καὶ κρούω

Behold, I stand at the door and knock

The Imperfect Tense

The action of the imperfect tense is very similar to that of the present tense. It represents continuous or recurring action in the past time (when used with the indicative). This is best translated as "I was loosing."

Example: [Mar 4:33](#)

καὶ τοιαύταις παραβολαῖς πολλαῖς
ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον

And with many such parables, He was speaking the word to them

The Aorist Tense

This tense is hardly a tense at all. It describes indefinite or undefined action. The word aoristos derives from an alpha privative (i.e., negation) and the verb horizō (meaning "to bound"), thus meaning "without boundaries". [2] With the indicative mood, it is often best translated as a simple past: "I loosed."

Example: [Jhn 3:16](#)

οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον

For God so **loved** the world

The Future Tense

This tense generally denotes action that will occur in the future. This is best translated as "I will loose."

Example: [1Cr 6:3](#)

οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἀγγέλους κρινοῦμεν;

Do you not know that **we will judge** angels?

The Perfect Tense

Action that has been completed in the past yet has results occurring in the present are expressed by the perfect tense. The perfect is often translated as "I have loosened."

Example: [Jhn 19:22](#)

ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Πιλάτος "Ὁ γέγραφα γέγραφα.

Pilate answered, "That which **I have written, I have written.**"

The Pluperfect Tense

The pluperfect has the same aspect as the perfect, yet its time is farther removed into the past than that of the perfect. Both the completed action and the results of that action occur in the past. It also represents action that is complete and viewed from a point in the past time. [3] The usual translation for the pluperfect is "I had loosened."

Example: [Mar 15:46](#)

ἐν μνημείῳ ἦν λελατομημένον ἐκ πέτρας

In a tomb which **had been hewn** out of the rock

VOICE

Biblical Greek has three voices, active, middle, and passive:

The Active Voice:

This occurs when the action of the verb is being performed by the subject.

The Middle Voice:

When the subject of the verb does action unto itself, or for its own benefit, the middle voice is used.

The Passive Voice:

The passive represents the action of the verb being done unto the subject but not by the subject.

MOOD

There are four moods in Greek. They demonstrate the relationship between the action of the verb and reality. They denote whether the action is factual, potential, wishful, or a command.

The Indicative Mood:

This is the mood of assertion or *presentation* of certainty. [4] The indicative mood is the only one to give designation concerning time (past, present, and future). The majority of all verbs used in the New Testament occur in the indicative mood.

The Subjunctive Mood:

This is the mood of probability or desirability. It, however, has many usages, and this is only a general definition.

The Optative Mood:

The optative has relatively few appearances in the New Testament because—by the time the New Testament was written—the subjunctive has taken over some of the classical usages of it. Some of its usages include a wish/prayer or a potential statement. Mounce states that the optative is two steps away from reality, whereas the subjunctive is only one step away. [5]

The Imperative Mood:

This mood is reserved for the indication of commands.

INFINITIVE

An infinitive is a verbal noun. Neither person nor number are found in the infinitive and it does not have mood designation. It is best translated "to loose."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional information regarding Greek verbs and other grammatical issues, the following books should be of great value:

Beginning Students

- William D. Mounce. *Basics of Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.
- N. Clayton Croy. *A Primer of Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Advanced Students

- Daniel B. Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
- F. Blass and A. Debrunner. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Translated and Revised by Robert W. Funk. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.

NOTES

[1] H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. p. 176

[2] Stephen W. Paine. *Beginning Greek: A Functional Approach*. New York: Oxford UP, 1961. p. 41

[3] H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. p. 178

[4] See Daniel B. Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. p. 448

[5] William D. Mounce. *Basics of Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. p. 325