

6. Prepositions

Lesson in a Nutshell

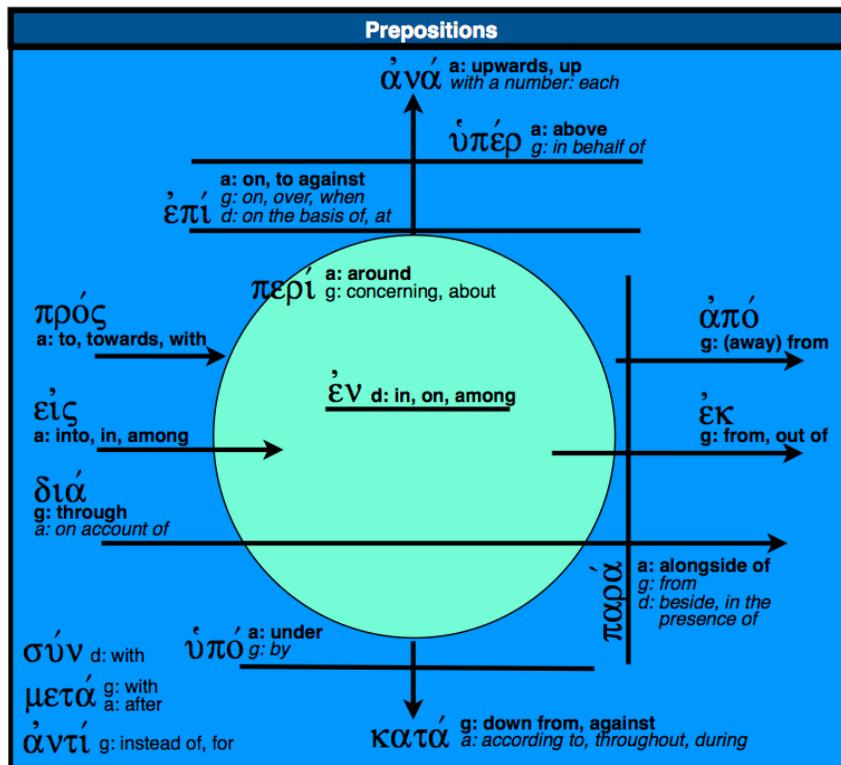
Prepositions place one thing relative to another thing. They do not change form. The meaning of the preposition can vary, depending on the case of its object. Greek prepositions are very flexible in meaning.

Prepositions are the little words that place things relative to other things. As I like to say, they are everything you can do with a box.

You can be in the box
You can walk around the box
You can slide through the box
You can sit under the box
You fly over the box
Etc. Etc.

Prepositions normally stand at the head of prepositional phrases (the underlined words above).

The chart below summarizes the meanings of the most common Greek prepositions. (The bold entries are the spatial ideas.)



Greek prepositions have had an enormous impact on English vocabulary. Paying attention to this may help you to remember them. Here are some examples.

Greek Word	English Cognate
ἐν	inside
διά δι'	diagnosis
παρά παρ'	parallel
εἰς	eisegesis
περί	pericardial
ἐκ ἐξ	extravert
ἀντί	antigravity
ὑπέρ	hyperbole
ἐπί ἐπ' ἐφ'	epicenter
ἀπό	apostasy

One Oddity of Greek Prepositions

The only trick of the Greek preposition is that the meaning of the preposition changes depending on the case of its object. This is nothing like English, so it will take a little effort to grasp. We will explain this when we study nouns. **Do not worry about it** until we get there.

Here is a chart to illustrate how the case of the preposition's object changes its meaning.

Preposition	Object	Translation
μετά	τούτων (genitive case)	with these
μετά	ταῦτα (accusative case)	after these
παρά	ἄνθρωπον (accusative case)	alongside of a man
παρά	ἄνθρωπου (genitive case)	from a man
παρά	ἄνθρωπῳ (dative case)	beside a man

Preposition	Object	Translation
διά	τούτων (genitive case)	through these
διά	ταῦτα (accusative case)	on account of these

Greek prepositions are very fluid. At the risk of overwhelming you, on the next two pages is a chart of the full range of meaning of most of the Greek prepositions. Do not worry about memorizing it! Just be aware of the flexibility of the preposition.

Preposition	used with	Usage	Translation
ἀνά	A	Distributive Spatial	<i>in the midst of up, motion upward (with verbs)</i>
ἀπό	G	Separation Source Cause Partitive Agency	<i>away from from, out of because of of by, from (rare)</i>
διά	G	Agency Means Spatial Temporal	<i>by, through through through through(out), during</i>
	A	Cause Spatial	<i>because of, on account of, for the sake of through (rare)</i>
εἰς	A	Spatial Temporal Purpose Result Reference/Respect Advantage Disadvantage In place of ἐν	<i>into, toward, in for, throughout for, in order to, to so that, with the result that with respect to, with reference to for against (with various nuances)</i>
ἐκ	G	Source Separation Temporal Cause Partitive Means	<i>out of, from away from, from from, from [this point]...on because of of by, from</i>
ἐν	D	Spatial/Sphere Temporal Association Cause Instrumental Reference/Respect Manner Thing Possessed Standard (Dative of Rule) equivalent to εἰς	<i>in in, within, when, while, during with (often close personal relationship) because of by, with with respect to / with reference to with with (in the sense of which possesses) according to the standard of (with verbs of motion)</i>
ἐπί	G	Spatial Temporal Cause	<i>on, upon, at, near in the time of, during on the basis of</i>
	D	Spatial Temporal Cause	<i>on, upon, against, at, near at, at the time of, during on the basis of</i>
	A	Spatial Temporal	<i>on, upon, to, up to, against for, over a period of</i>

κατά	G	Spatial Opposition Source	<i>down from, throughout against from</i>
	A	Standard Spatial Temporal Distributive Purpose Reference/Respect	<i>in accordance with, corresponding to along, through (extension); toward, up to (direction) at, during indicating the division of a greater whole into individual parts for the purpose of with respect to, with reference to</i>
μετά	G	Association/Accompaniment Spatial Manner	<i>with, in company with with, among with (attendant circumstance)</i>
	A	Temporal Spatial	<i>after, behind after, behind (rare)</i>
παρά	G	Source Agency	<i>from from, by</i>
	D	Spatial Sphere Association (= simple dative)	<i>near, beside in the sight of, before (someone) with (someone/something)</i>
	A	Spatial Comparison Opposition	<i>by, alongside of, near, on in comparison to, more than against, contrary to</i>
περί	G	Reference Advantage / Representation	<i>concerning on behalf of, for (=ὑπέρ)</i>
	A	Spatial Temporal Reference/Respect	<i>around, near about, near with regard/reference to</i>
πρό	G	Spatial Temporal Rank/Priority	<i>before, in front of, at before before</i>
πρός	A	Purpose Spatial Temporal Result Opposition Association	<i>for, for the purpose of toward toward, for (duration) so that, with the result that against with, in company with</i>
σύν	D	Accompaniment/Association	<i>with, in association (company) with</i>
ὑπέρ	G	Representation/Advantage Reference/Respect Substitution	<i>on behalf of, for the sake of concerning, with reference to (=περί) in place of, instead of (=ἀντί)</i>
	A	Spatial Comparison	<i>over, above more than, beyond</i>
ὑπό	G	(Ultimate) Agency Intermediate Agency Means	<i>by through (with active verbs) by (rare)</i>
	A	Spatial Subordination	<i>under, below under (the rule of)</i>