

1st & 2nd Aorist Active Indicative Tense

0. Introduction

0.1. Basics: The aorist tense is used for past time and portrays perfective aspect (portraying the action as a bounded whole, or in summary fashion without reference to the way it unfolds in time). Mounce sometimes describes the semantics of the aorist as “undefined” aspect. The tense–“stem” that is used for the 1st Aorist is the Aorist Active stem (third principal part). For the Aorist Active Indic., the subject is the agent of the verbal action, and the simple English past is usually an appropriate gloss: “he ate,” “they killed” (not “he was eating” or “they were killing”).

0.2. Two ways to form the Aorist Tense:

0.2.1. English has two main ways to form the Past Tense: (1) Add –d/–ed to the verb. (2) Change the internal vowel of the verb.

Present	Past (Option #1)	Present	Past (Option #2)
lie	lied	come	came
kill	killed	speak	spoke
bake	baked	sing	sang

English verbs follow one pattern or the other to form the past; they don’t use both! Either way, each of the past forms still have the same past-tense semantics (meaning).

0.2.2. Greek likewise has two ways to form the Aorist tense (1st Aorist and 2nd Aorist); each verb will follow one of the patterns but not the other in the Aorist Active Ind. (Again, there is not difference in meaning between 1st and 2nd Aorists; just differences of form.)

1. 1st Aorist Active Indicative

1.1. The components of the form:

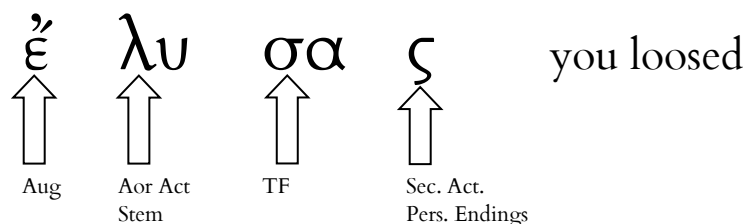
Augment: Since the 1st Aorist is a past-time tense, it is a “secondary” tense and will use an augment immediately preceding the verbal stem. If the verb begins with a consonant, then prefix ε–; if the verb begins with a vowel, then lengthen the initial vowel. (Diphthongs sometimes don’t lengthen the initial vowel.)

Stem: The Greek 1st Aorist tense uses the **Aorist Active Stem**.

Tense formative: σα

Connecting/Thematic Vowel: **none is used** (since the TF ends with a vowel)

Personal Endings: **Secondary Active Personal Endings**



1.2. Charts of 1st Aorist Act Ind with Secondary Active Personal Endings:

	Augment + Aorist Act Stem	Tense Formative	<i>Real</i> Endings	<i>Modified</i> Endings (Mounce)	<i>TF+Resultant</i> Endings
1s	ἐλυ	σα	μ	- [no ending used]	-σα
2s	ἐλυ	σα	ς	ς	-σας
3s	ἐλυ	σα	τ	- [final τ drops; σα > σε + moveable ν]	-σε(ν)
1p	ἐλυ	σα	μεν	μεν	-σαμεν
2p	ἐλυ	σα	τε	τε	-σατε
3p	ἐλυ	σα	ντ	ν [ντ drops final τ]	-σαν

1 st Aor Act Ind	English Gloss	Secondary Active PEs
ἐλυσα	I loosed	-/ν (μ)
ἐλυσας	you loosed	ς
ἐλυσε(ν)	(s)he, it loosed	- (τ)
ἐλύσαμεν	we loosed	μεν
ἐλύσατε	you/y'all loosed	τε
ἐλυσαν	they loosed	ν/σαν (ντ)

2. 2nd Aorist Active Indicative

2.1. The components of the form:

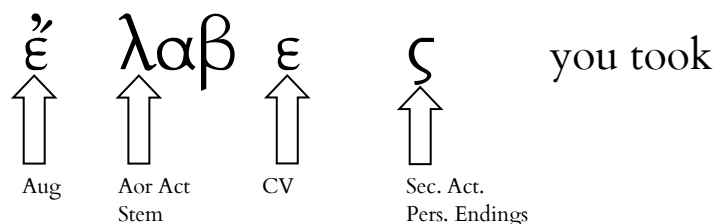
Augment: 2nd Aorists are a past-time tense and so, as a “secondary” tense, they use an augment attached to the front of the verbal stem. If the verb begins with a consonant, then prefix ἐ-; if the verb begins with a vowel, then lengthen the initial vowel. (Diphthongs sometimes don’t lengthen the initial vowel.)

Stem: The Greek 2nd Aorist tense uses the **Aorist Active Stem**.

Tense formative: none is used

Connecting/Thematic Vowel: ο/ε (ο before μ/ν; ε everywhere else)

Personal Endings: Secondary Active Personal Endings



2.2. Charts of 2nd Aorist Act Ind with Secondary Active Personal Endings:

	Augment + Aorist Act Stem	Connecting (Thematic) Vowel	<i>Real</i> Endings	<i>Modified</i> Endings (Mounce)	<i>Resultant</i> Endings
1s	ἐλάβ	ο	μ	ν [μ > ν ¹]	-ον
2s	ἐλάβ	ε	ς	ς	-ες
3s	ἐλάβ	ε	τ	- [final τ drops; moveable ν]	-ε(ν)
1p	ἐλάβ	ο	μεν	μεν	-ομεν
2p	ἐλάβ	ε	τε	τε	-ετε
3p	ἐλάβ	ο	ντ	ν [ντ drops final τ]	-ον

2 nd Aor Act Ind	English Gloss	Secondary Active PEs
ἐλάβον	I took	-ν (μ)
ἐλάβες	you took	ς
ἐλάβε(ν)	(s)he, it took	- (τ)
ἐλάβομεν	we took	μεν
ἐλάβετε	you/y'all took	τε
ἐλάβον	they took	ν/σαν (ντ)

3. How to Tell If An Aor Act Verb Will Be 1st or 2nd Aorist?

3.1. Consult the Principal Parts of the verb in the vocab list or the principal parts list.²

3.2. Check the third form/column for the Aorist Active Ind form. Does it occur with the TF -σα-? If so, which Aorist pattern does it follow? _____. Does it occur with CV (ο/ε) instead of TF (σα)? If so, which Aorist pattern does it follow? _____

3.3. Consider the following verbs. Which Aorist pattern do they follow in the Aor Act Ind?

¹ Remember: Gk words can only end with “sinner” letters: vowels, σ, ν, ρ. Since μ is not a “sinner,” it switches to the nearest similar letter (μ and ν are both nasals!).

² A verb can be found in the “vocab list” of either the new chapter “Vocabulary” list, or in the textbook’s “Glossary” or “Lexicon” in the Appendix. These usually list the verb’s principal parts. As well, many textbooks usually provide in the Appendix a list of frequently occurring verbs plus their principal parts. Have your instructor show you where these are located in your textbook.

Eng. Gloss	Pres Act Ind	Fut Act Ind	Aor Act Ind	Pft Act Ind	Pft M-P Ind	Aor Pass Ind
(to hear)	ἀκούω	ἀκούσω	ἤκουσα	ἀκήκοα	–	ἠκούσθην
(to come/go)	ἔρχομαι	ἐλεύσομαι	ἦλθον	ἐλήλυθα	–	–
(to find)	εὕρισκω	εὕρήσω	εὔρον	εὔρηκα	–	εὐρέθην
(to have)	ἔχω	ἔξω	ἔσχον	ἔσχηκα	–	–
(to say)	λέγω	ἐρῶ	εἶπον	εἶρηκα	εἴρημαι	ἐρρέθην
(to believe)	πιστεύω	πιστεύσω	ἐπίστευσα	πεπίστευκα	πεπίστευμαι	ἐπίστεύθην

3.4. How do you determine the Aor Act stem?

4. The Square of Stops & 1st Aorist TFs

In Greek, sometimes consonants undergo changes when they come into contact with other consonants. This happens in English. For ex., the prefix *in-* indicates negation, and we see it in a word like *inability*, meaning “no ability.” But when we add *in-* to a word that begins with the letter “m,” *in-* changes to *im-*: in+mobile should become *immobile*, but it actually becomes *immobile*. In+resistible should become *inresistible*, but it actually becomes *irresistible*. So, consonants in English, as in Greek, misbehave! But, there is some predictability to many of the sound changes, and below I outline some important ones for you that relate to 1st Aorist Active verbs.

4.1. Labials + ζ > ψ. The labial consonants are π, β, φ, and so:

π + ζ > ψ
β + ζ > ψ
φ + ζ > ψ

4.2. Velars + ζ > ξ. The velar consonants are κ, γ, χ, and so:

κ + ζ > ξ
γ + ζ > ξ
χ + ζ > ξ

4.3. Dentals + ζ > ζ. Unlike the two above, the result of joining these letters does not produce a letter with a double sound (ψ = ps, ξ = ks). Rather, the dental letter drops before the sigma. The dental consonants are τ, δ, θ, and so:

τ + ζ > ζ
δ + ζ > ζ
θ + ζ > ζ

4.4. Note, #'s 4.1–3 above are part of Noun Rule # 7, the Square of Stops.

	Voiceless Stops	Voiced Stops	Voiceless Fricatives ³
Labials	π	β	φ
Velars	κ	γ	χ
Dentals	τ	δ	θ

Here's the chart with the additional column of what these become when sigma is added:

	Voiceless Stops	Voiced Stops	Voiceless Fricatives	+ σ
Labials	π	β	φ	ψ
Velars	κ	γ	χ	ξ
Dentals	τ	δ	θ	σ

4.5. So what happens when we have an Aorist stem that ends with a stop + σα?

ἔβλεπ + σα	>	ἔβλεψα	(πς > ψ)	I saw
ἔγραφ + σα	>	ἔγραψα	(φς > ψ)	I wrote
ἐδίωκ + σα	>	ἐδίωξα	(κς > ξ)	I pursued/persecuted
ἐβάπτισδ + σα	>	ἐβάπτισα	(δς > σ)	I baptized
ἔπειθ + σα	>	ἔπεισα	(θς > σ)	I persuaded

5. Final Odds and Ends

5.1. Transitive versus Intransitive verbs: the former take DOs, the latter do not. Look at the list of verbs above under 3.3. and identify one transitive and one intransitive verb.

5.2. Lexical forms: In Greek, the lexical form is always the Pres Act Ind 1s form of the verb. So, in effect, when you learn any verb, you've already learned its Present tense form. In addition, Column 1 in your Principal Parts charts will always be the lexical form (Pres Act).

³ Mounce and some older grammars use 'aspirate' for this, but 'fricative' is the more accurate linguistic term here.