

# 29. Principal Parts

## Lesson in a Nutshell

The principal parts of a verb are the six forms from which all others can be made. They are always listed in this order:

1. Present
2. Future
3. Aorist Active
4. Perfect Active
5. Perfect Middle/Passive
6. Aorist Passive

Remember: All we are doing here is observing the crafty ways that Greek verbs give us their tense, voice, mood, person and number.

We have seen how a regular verb like *λύω* behaves and how certain combinations of vowels contract (lessons 21-24).

We have also learned about oddballs like

- ✓ **Liquid futures and aorists**, which drop the sigma after λ, μ, ν, or ρ (lesson 25).
- ✓ **Second aorists**, which change their stem to show us they are aorists (lesson 26).
- ✓ **Deponents**, which are middle/passive in form but active in meaning (lesson 27).



**enough already!**

Every verb seems to have a mind of its own!

How will we keep this all sorted out?

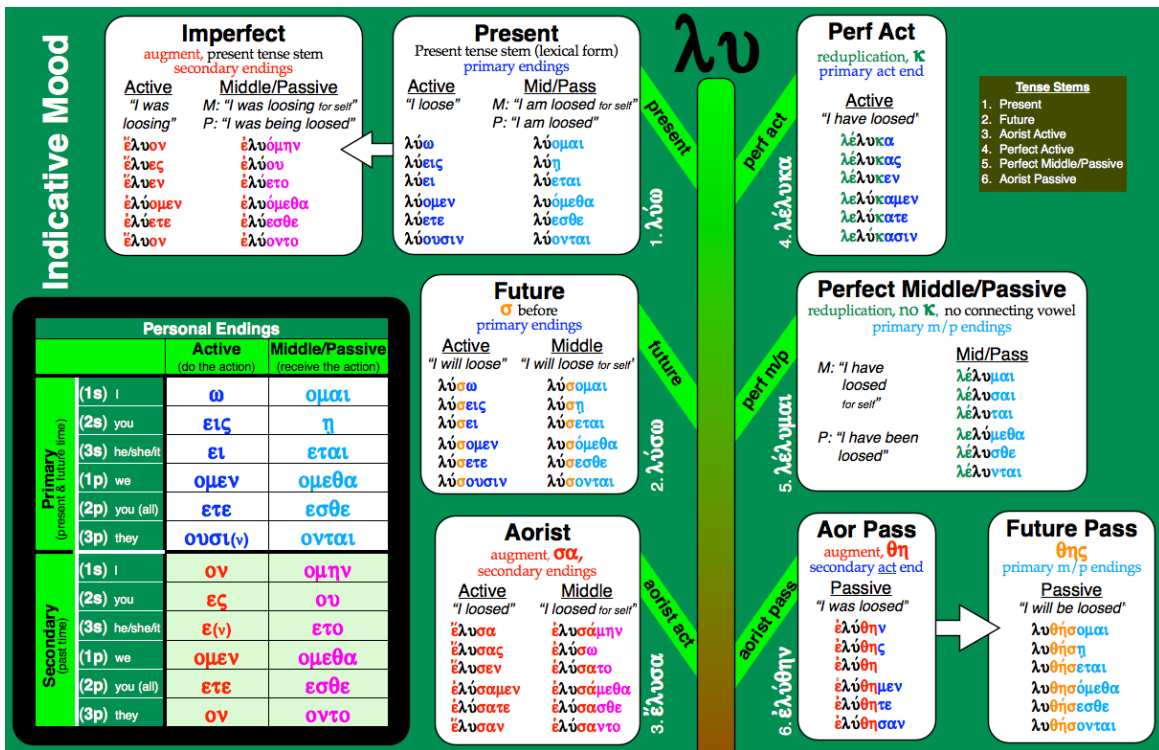
How did you learn the strange quirks of English? By repetition!

Thankfully, in Greek it is not as hard as English. Once we begin reading Greek in earnest, we will learn to see these patterns easily. Context and other clues will help us. Remember, right now we are just laying a foundation.

There is a slick way that each verb can be catalogued that shows us how it behaves in every form.

By learning six forms of any given verb  
(called “principal parts”)  
we will know it inside out.

We already know the principal parts of the verb λύω and have studied the way this marvelously regular verb behaves.



The root of the verb λύω is λυ. Six tense stems branch off from this root.

Observe the vertical words, numbered 1-6. These are the tense stems. They will always be listed in this order.

1. Present
2. Future
3. Aorist Active
4. Perfect Active
5. Perfect Middle/Passive
6. Aorist Passive

λύ

#	Tense Stem	Form	“Recipe”
1	Present	λύω	Present tense stem (lexical form) primary endings
2	Future	λύσω	σ before primary endings
3	Aorist Active	ἔλυσα	augment, σα, secondary endings
4	Perfect Active	λέλυκα	reduplication, κ primary active endings
5	Perfect Middle/Passive	λέλυμαι	reduplication, no κ, no connecting vowel primary middle/passive endings
6	Aorist Passive	ἐλύθην	augment, θη secondary active endings

λύω is our friend because it behaves in a perfectly regular way.

Other verbs do not play so nice — or to be more fair to them,  
they follow different rules.

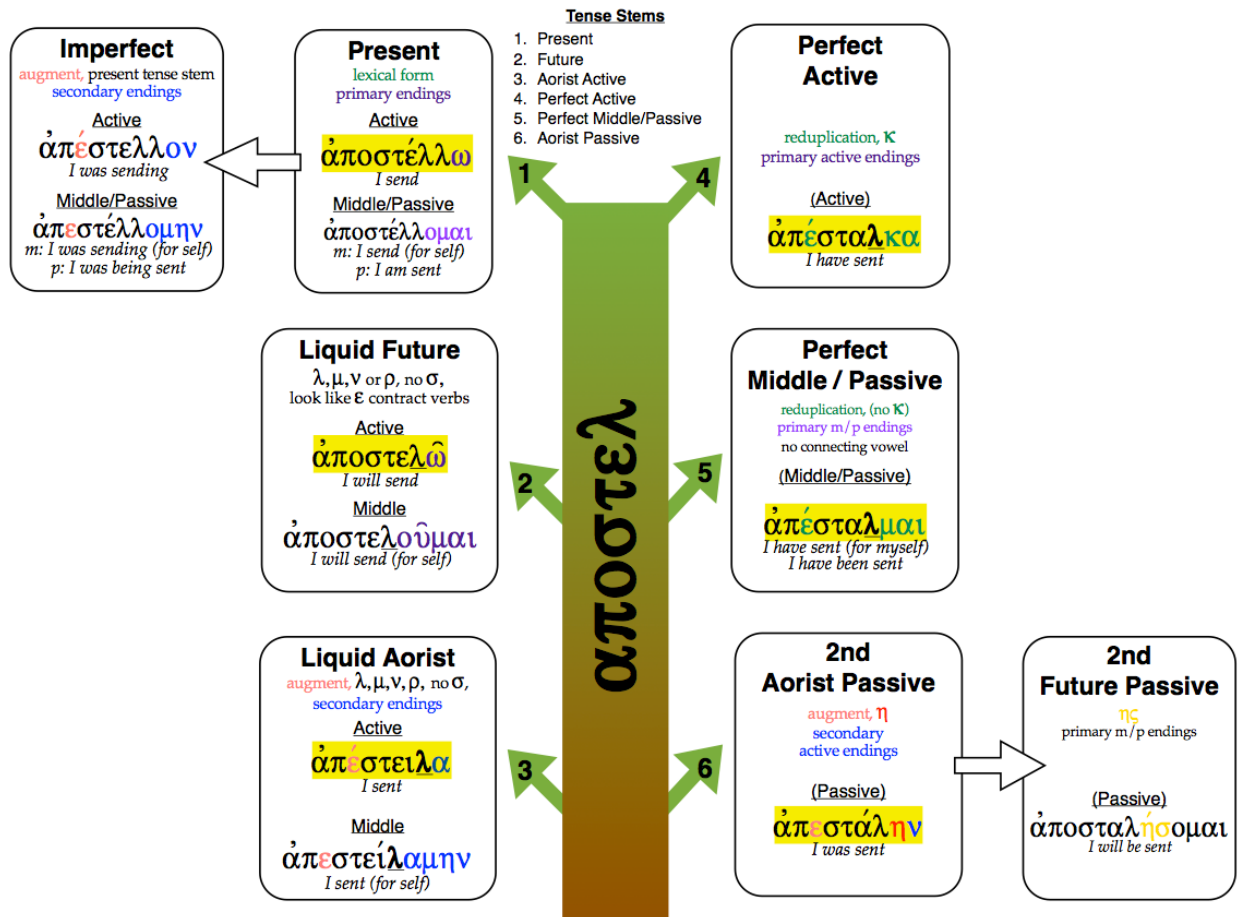
Here are the six principal parts of the verb ἀποστέλλω. Let's take a moment to discuss what is happening in each tense stem.

## ἀποστέλ

#	Tense Stem	Form	“Recipe”
1	Present	ἀποστέλλω	Present tense stem (lexical form) primary endings
2	Future	ἀποστελῶ	liquid future drop the σ after λ, μ, ν, ρ primary endings
3	Aorist Active	ἀπέστειλα	liquid aorist augment, drop the σ after λ, μ, ν, ρ, leaving just α, secondary endings
4	Perfect Active	ἀπέσταλκα	reduplication, κ primary active endings
5	Perfect Middle/ Passive	ἀπέσταλμαι	reduplication, no κ, no connecting vowel primary middle/passive endings
6	Aorist Passive	ἀπεσταλην	Second Aorist Passive augment, η secondary active endings

1. The present tense stem adds a λ to the stem. It is normal for the present stem to do odd things. It is actually the least regular.
2. The future tense lacks a σ because of the λ. It is a liquid future.
3. The aorist tense lacks a σ because of the λ. It is a liquid aorist. But where is the augment? It comes between the preposition ἀπο and the verb στέλλω (explained in lesson 27).
4. Why the ε? This is the reduplication. Reduplications are added between the preposition and the noun just as augments were. You may have wondered how to reduplicate a verb that starts with a vowel. It would be odd to duplicate the first vowel and separate it with an ε. (ἀποεοσταλκα). Instead, verbs that begin with vowels do something called a **vocalic reduplication**. These behave very much like augments.
5. Why the ε? This is the reduplication. (See #4.)
6. This is a second aorist passive. All this means is that there is no θ. Instead, there is **only an η**.

Here is a picture of αποστέλλω and its six stems.



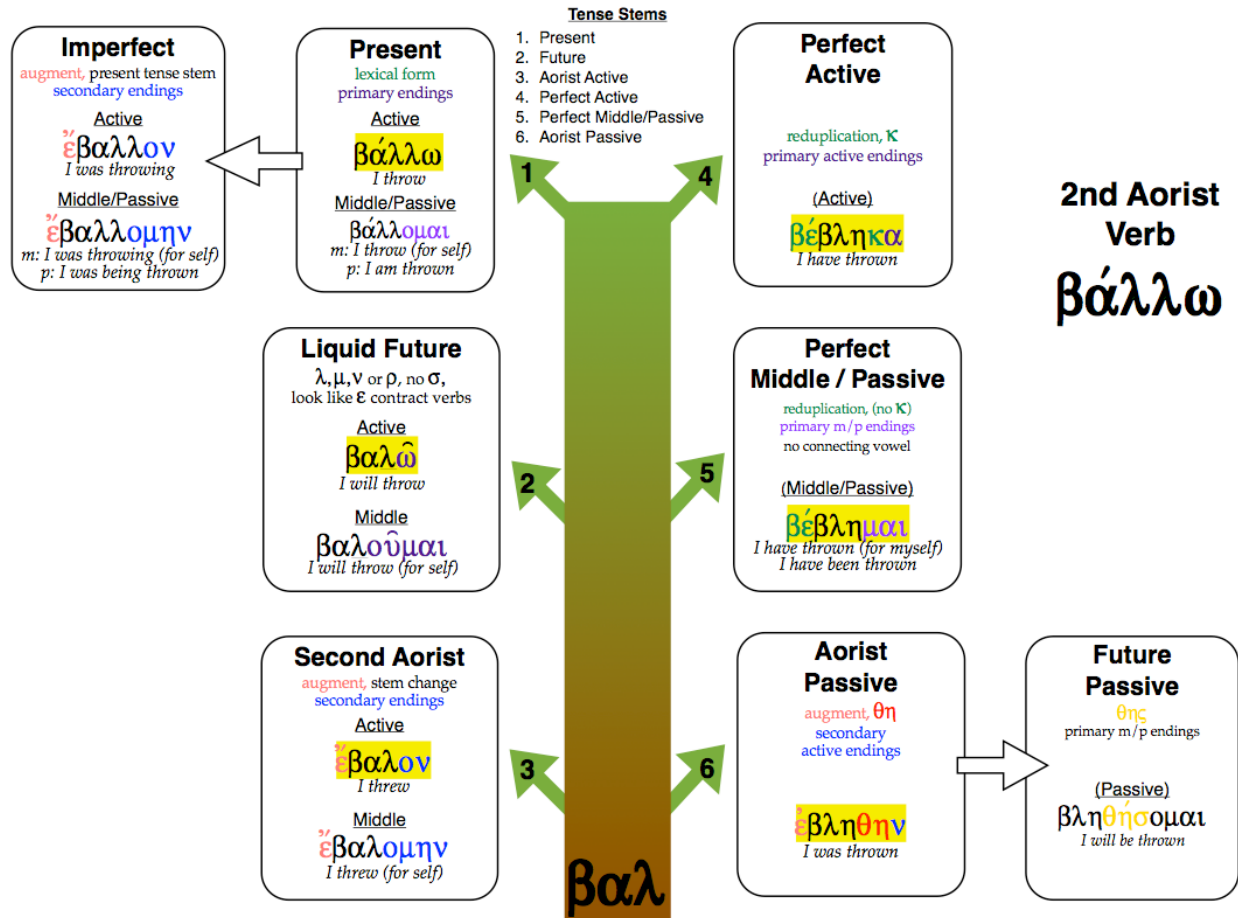
Here are the six principal parts of the second aorist verb βάλλω. (βάλλω is also a liquid future.)

## βαλ

#	Tense Stem	Form	“Recipe”
1	Present	βάλλω	Present tense stem (lexical form) primary endings
2	Future	βαλῶ	<i>liquid future</i> drop the σ after λ, μ ν, ρ primary endings
3	Aorist Active	ἔβαλον	<i>second aorist</i> augment, stem change, secondary endings
4	Perfect Active	βέβληκα	reduplication, κ primary active endings
5	Perfect Middle/ Passive	βέβλημαι	reduplication, no κ, no connecting vowel primary middle/passive endings
6	Aorist Passive	ἔβληθην	augment, θη secondary active endings

1. The present tense stem adds a λ to the stem. It is normal for the present form to do odd things to the stem. It is actually the least regular stem!
2. The future tense lacks a σ because of the λ. It is a liquid future.
3. Second aorist. In this case, the stem change is very small (drops a λ).
4. Strange in that the α disappears and an η is inserted before the endings. An oddball! But if you remember that the consonants carry the meaning and don't get freaked out about vowels dancing around a bit, you can recognize all the clues and see what is going on. Remember the *shapes*.
5. (same explanation as #4)
6. (same explanation as #5)

Here is a picture of βάλλω and its six stems.



In the [Vocabulary Whacker](#), I have included every verb with its principal parts. Here is an excerpt. Spend some time looking up and down the columns until you can spot the patterns. Don't worry yet about the **μί** verbs.

### Contract Verbs

Root	Present	Future	Aorist	Perf Act	Perf M/P	Aor Pass
αγαπα	ἀγαπάω I love	ἀγαπήσω	ἠγάπησα	ἠγάπηκα	ἠγάπημαι	ἀγαπήθην
αγ	ἄγω I lead	ἄξω	ἤγαγον	--	ἤγμαι	ἤχθην
αρ	ἄιρω I take up, take away	ἄρῶ	ἤρα	ἤρκα	ἤρμαι	ἤρθην
αιτε	αἰτέω I ask	αἰτήσω	ἤτησα	ἤτηκα	ἤτημαι	--
ακαλουθε	ἀκολουθέω I follow	ἀκολουθήσω	ἠκολούθησα	ἠκολούθηκα	--	--
ακου	ἀκούω I hear	ἀκούσω	ἤκουσα	ἠκήκοα	--	ἠκούσθην
αναβα	ἀναβαίνω I go up	ἀναβήσομαι	ἀνέβην	ἀναβέβηκα	--	--
ανιστα	ἀνίστημι I rise, cause to rise	ἀναστήσω	ἀνέστησα	ἀνέστηκα	ἀνέστημαι	ἀνεστάθην
ανοιγ	ἀνοίγω I open	--	ἀνέωξα	--	--	ἀνεώχθην
αποερχ	ἀπέρχομαι I depart	ἀπελεύσομαι	ἀπῆλθον	ἀπελήλυθα	--	--
αποθαν	ἀποθνήσκω I die	ἀποθανοῦμαι	ἀπέθανον	--	--	--
αποκριν	ἀποκρίνομαι I answer	--	ἀπεκρινάμην	--	--	ἀπεκρίθην
αποκτεν	ἀποκτείνω I kill	ἀποκτενῶ	ἀπέκτεινα	--	--	ἀπεκτάνθην

etc!

Go to the [Vocabulary Whacker](#) to see the principal parts of every verb used used in the New Testament more than 50 times.