

35. Present Participles

Lesson in a Nutshell

Present participles are based on the present tense stem.

- Active voice will contain **ντ** or **ουσα**. They follow the 3-1-3 pattern.
- Middle/passive voice will contain **μεν**. They follow the 2-1-2 pattern.

Present participles convey ongoing aspect.

In this chapter, we will learn how to recognize and translate present participles. Let's begin with recognition.

How To Parse a Present Participle

Present Participles					
active ντ, ουσα, ντ 3-1-3			middle/ passive μενο, μενη, μενο 2-1-2		
M (3)	F (1)	N (3)	M (2)	F (1)	N (2)
λύων	λύουσα	λύων	λυόμενος	λυομένη	λυόμενον
λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος	λυομένου	λυομένης	λυομένου
λύοντι	λυούση	λύοντι	λυομένω	λυομένη	λυομένω
λύοντα	λύουσαν	λύων	λυόμενον	λυομένην	λυόμενον
λύοντες	λύουσαι	λύοντα	λυόμενοι	λυόμεναι	λύομενα
λύόντων	λυουσῶν	λύόντων	λυομένων	λυομένων	λυομένων
λύουσιν	λυούσαις	λύουσιν	λυομένοις	λυομέναις	λυομένοις
λύοντας	λύουσας	λύοντα	λυομένους	λυομένας	λύομενα

I know that when you first look at this table it makes you want to run for the hills screaming.

There is no need for such drastic measures!

You already know everything!

Tense and voice, case, number and gender, remember?

Tense	Voice	Participle	Case	Number	Gender
P resent A orist Pe R fect	A ctive M iddle P assive	P articiple	N ominative G enitive D ative A ccusative	S ingular P lural	M asculine F eminine N euter

Let's learn how to recognize each of these pieces of the participle. Then we will put them into play.

Tense

Present tense is recognized the same way it always is. The clue is that **there is no clue**. Since we learn the present tense when we learn the verb, the present tense stem will be there smiling at you, shouting "Hey! I'm present tense!"

Voice

This is easier than you might think. Notice that the middle/passive forms all have **μεν** after the connecting vowel. This is a sure sign that a participle is middle or passive. It's worth repeating:

μεν

in the middle

is a sure sign that you're looking at a
middle/passive participle.

By process of elimination, if the participle lacks **μεν**, you can assume it is active. But that is a backwards way to identify an active participle. Here is the positive approach.

Active participles all have either **ντ** or **ουσα/η**. Of the two, **ντ** is more common. So here is how to spot an active participle.

ντ and **ουσα/η**

are dead giveaways
that you are looking at an
active participle.

Case, Number, Gender

We find the case, number and gender exactly as we would expect — by the case endings. As we learned in the last lesson, since the participles are adjectival they have to be able to take on 24 forms.

Do you remember [the 2-1-2 pattern of declension](#)? It is the most common way that adjectives decline. The article, for example, follows this pattern. It means the adjective follows:

- ➔ Second declension in the masculine gender
- ➔ First declension in the feminine gender, and
- ➔ Second declension in the neuter gender

Then, there was [the 3-1-3 pattern of declension](#). The adjective [πάς](#) followed this pattern. It followed:

- ➔ Third declension in the masculine gender
- ➔ First declension in the feminine gender, and
- ➔ Third declension in the neuter gender

We have seen it all before. You should be nodding off on me!

If you remember these patterns, you will have no problem with participles. If not, you might want to go back and re-watch videos 12 and 13.

Here's the rule:

[Present active participles follow the 3-1-3 pattern of declension.](#)

[Present, Middle/Passive participles follow the 2-1-2 pattern of declension.](#)

To illustrate...

Comparison of the present active participle and **πάς**

active ντ, ουσα, ντ 3-1-3		
M (3)	F (1)	N (3)
λύων	λύουσα	λύον
λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος
λύοντι	λυούση	λύοντι
λύοντα	λύουσαν	λύον
λύοντες	λύουσαι	λύοντα
λυόντων	λυουσῶν	λυόντων
λύουσιν	λυούσαις	λύουσιν
λύοντας	λύουσας	λύοντα

24 forms of πάς (3-1-3)			
	3 masc	1 fem	3 neut
N	πάς	πάσα	πάν
G	παντος	πασης	παντος
D	παντι	παση	παντι
A	παντα	πασαν	παν
N	παντες	πασαι	παντα
G	παντων	πασων	παντων
D	πασιν	πασαις	πασιν
A	παντας	πασας	παντα

You will want to note the nominative, singular, masculine form (ων, shaded yellow in the chart above). This is an exception to the rule, but we are used to nominative forms being odd.

Comparison of the present, middle/passive participle and the article

middle passive μενο, μενη, μενο 2-1-2		
M (2)	F (1)	N (2)
λυόμενος	λυομένη	λυόμενον
λυομένου	λυομένης	λυομένου
λυομένω	λυομένη	λυομένω
λυόμενον	λυομένην	λυόμενον
λυόμενοι	λυόμεναι	λυόμενα
λυομένων	λυομένων	λυομένων
λυομένοις	λυομέναις	λυομένοις
λυομένους	λυομένας	λυόμενα

The Article				
		M (2)	F (1)	N (2)
Singular	Nominative "the"	ὁ	ἡ	τό
	Genitive "of the"	τοῦ	τῆς	τοῦ
	Dative "to the"	τῷ	τῇ	τῷ
	Accusative the	τόν	τήν	τό
Plural	Nominative "the"	οἱ	αἱ	τά
	Genitive "of the"	τῶν	τῶν	τῶν
	Dative "to the"	τοῖς	ταῖς	τοῖς
	Accusative "the"	τούς	τάς	τά

The bottom line: If you understand how the 2-1-2 and 3-1-3 adjective behaves, you can easily tell the case, number, and gender of a participle.

Let's Practice

Here are a few examples to demonstrate.

ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟΜΈΝΗΝ
(being believed)

Let's break it into pieces to examine it.

ΠΙΣΤΕΥ Ο ΜΈΝ ΗΝ

- ➔ The stem has not changed from what we learned (πιστεύ). It is present tense.
- ➔ It contains μέν so it is either middle or passive voice. (ο is the connecting vowel.)
- ➔ ην is the accusative, singular feminine noun ending.

So to parse πιστευομένην we simply describe it as a present, middle/passive participle, accusative, singular, feminine.

One more for good measure.

ΚΑΤΑΒΑΪΝΟΝΤΑ
(going down)

Let's break it into pieces.

ΚΑΤΑΒΑΪΝ Ο ΝΤ Α

- ➔ The stem has not changed from what we learned (καταβαιν). It is present tense.
- ➔ It contains ντ so it is active voice. (ο is the connecting vowel.)
- ➔ α is the nominative or accusative, plural neuter noun ending for the third declension.

So to parse καταβαίνοντα we simply describe it as a present, active participle, nominative or accusative, plural, neuter.

That is how you parse a present participle.

Now let's look at some participles in sentences.

How To Use The Present Participle

Adjectival Participle

Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

Behold the lamb * of God taking away the sin of the world.

αἴρων is a present, active participle, nominative, singular, masculine.

- ★ αἴρων is adjectival. It modifies ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.
- ★ Often with Greek adjectival participles, you have to add some words to smooth things out. Usually this is translated, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” It is better English. But the present force of the participle gets lost.
- ★ The case, number and gender of the participle match the case, number and gender of the noun being modified (ὁ ἀμνὸς).
- ★ The underlined words are the participial phrase.
- ★ **IMPORTANT:** The adjectival participle almost always has the article.

Substantival Participle

οἱ πιστεύοντες σωθήσονται.

The believing (ones) will be saved.

πιστεύοντες is a present, active participle, nominative, plural, masculine.

- ★ πιστεύοντες is substantival. It does not modify anything. I put “ones” in parentheses. Often with Greek substantivals you have to add the implied subject in your English translation.
- ★ The case, number and gender match the plural subject. (Those who will be saved.)
- ★ The underlined words are the participial phrase.
- ★ **IMPORTANT:** The substantival participle almost always has the article.

Adverbial Participle

ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν συναγωγῇ διδάσκων ἐν Καφαρναούμ.
these (things) he said in the synagogue teaching in Capernaum.

διδάσκων is a present, active participle, nominative, singular, masculine.

- ★ διδάσκων is adverbial. It tells us more about εἶπεν.
- ★ The case, number and gender match the “he” in “he said.”
- ★ The underlined words are the participial phrase.
- ★ **IMPORTANT:** The adverbial participle **never** has the article.

The best way — the only way — to learn these is to meet a bunch of them in context. Try your hand at translating the sentences in the workbook.

Do not become discouraged if you find these difficult. You will get the hang of it!