

The transliteration of Greek into English is sometimes confusing, because it is variable. For most letters the equivalence is easy:

alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = **a**  
 beta ( $\beta$ ) = **b**  
 gamma ( $\gamma$ ) = **g**  
 theta ( $\theta$ ) = **th**  
 phi ( $\phi$ ) = **ph**  
 psi ( $\psi$ ) = **ps**, and so forth.

But because Greek words have come into English by direct coinage (scientific terms) and also by historical inheritance, from Latin via French and/or English, there are areas where alternatives exist.

Diphthong **ai** ( $\alpha\iota$ ) in modern derivatives is usually **ae** (via Latin) or **e** (via late Latin) (*archaeology*, *archeology*), but **ai** appears in some direct transliterations (*aition*, *Phaiakia*).

Double **gamma** ( $\gamma\gamma$ ) is usually transliterated as **ng** (via Latin), because this is closer to the pronunciation (*angel*).

**Epsilon-iota** ( $\epsilon\iota$ ) often becomes **i** (via Latin), but also may appear in a more direct transcription as **ei** (note *pirate* and *empirical* in English, both from stem  $\piειρ-$ ; *Peisistratos*, *Peisistratus*, *Pisistratus*).

**Eta** ( $\eta$ ) is sometimes shown as **e** (same as epsilon ( $\epsilon$ )), but for precision it may also be rendered as **ê** or **ē** (eta is a long vowel, epsilon a short one) (*psyche*, *psychê*, *psychē*).

**Kappa** ( $\kappa$ ) is sometimes **k** (*Sophokles*, *Phaiakia*), but very often **c** (via Latin, where c originally had only a hard pronunciation; but in English the c will often be pronounced soft) (*Sophocles*, *Phaeacia* [with soft c]).

**Xi** ( $\xi$ ) is usually **x** (*axiom*), but sometimes rendered as **ks**.

Diphthong **oi** ( $\omicron\iota$ ) is sometimes **oi** (*Koine*), more commonly **oe** (via Latin) or **e** (via late Latin) (*oenology/enology*, *oestrus/estrus*).

**Rho** ( $\rho$ ) is usually just **r** (*arthritis*), but when it begins a word is it rendered **rh** (*rhythm*) and when doubled it is **rrh** (*pyrrhic victory*, *diarrhea*), since initial rho and the second in a pair of rhos were aspirated in ancient Greek.

**Upsilon** ( $\upsilon$ ) by itself is usually **y** (via Latin and French) (*psyche*, *sympathetic*, *Dionysos*), but sometimes **u** (*Dionusos*).

Diphthongs **au** ( $\alpha\upsilon$ ) and **eu** ( $\epsilon\upsilon$ ) are rendered with both letters (*nautical*, *euphemism*), but diphthong **ou** ( $\omicron\upsilon$ ) is commonly rendered with **u** alone (if y is being used for upsilon), via Latin (*Epicurus*, *Thucydides*); but sometimes in more direct transcription by **ou** (*kouros*).

**Chi** ( $\chi$ ) is most often transliterated as **ch** (*psychology*), but occasionally as **kh** (*Akhilleus*).

**Omega** ( $\omega$ ) is sometimes shown as **o** (same as omicron ( $\omicron$ )), but for precision it may also be rendered as **ô** or **ō** (omega is a long vowel, omicron is a short one) (*sophrosyne*, *sôphrosynê*, *sôphrosynē*).

#### DEALING WITH PROPER NAMES

Greek-to-English dictionaries are usually very sparing in the inclusion of proper names and proper adjectives, so students need to become familiar with how to transliterate them into English.

Many proper names have been Latinized before conversion into English, and therefore the ending of names is often adjusted to a Latin scheme. Greek nouns ending in **-os** usually become Latin nouns in **-us**; Greek nouns in **-ov** become Latin **-um**; Greek nouns in **-η** often become nouns in **-a**. Hence, you will see variations like the following:

Dionysos, Dionusos, Dionysus  
 Hêra, Hêrê

Athêna, Athênê  
 Cyprus, Cypros, Kypros, Kupros  
 (also with a common noun: symposium, symposion)

Note also that the purist transliteration of the famous philosopher's name would be Platon (Platōn), but the Latinate version adopted by English is so familiar that one almost always sees Plato. Similarly, Thucydides is so well established in English that most people find it very offputting to see a more genuinely Greek version like Thoukudides or Thoukydides. Consistency is simply not possible. For instance, when speaking of the fourth-century BCE Syracusan Δίων, it is common to use the form Dion, but the Greek historian of the Roman empire is usually referred to by the Latinized name Dio Cassius or Cassius Dio.

The key skill the student must acquire is recognizing what the nominative of a proper name is when presented with an oblique case, because it is the nominative that needs to be transliterated. Masculine names commonly end in *-os*, *-as*, *-ης* (either first declension with gen. *-ου*, or third declension with gen. *-ους*), *-ευσ*, *-ων* (gen. in *-ωνος* or *-οντος* or with contraction *-ῶντος*). Feminine names usually end in *-α*, *-η*, *-ις*, *-ω*. Here are some examples of proper names, mainly from the readings in *Introduction to Attic Greek*.

Ἄδραστος	Adrastos, Adrastus
Δάμνιππος	Damnippus, Damnippus
Δέξιππος	Dexippos, Dexippus
Εὐφίλητος	Euphiletus, Euphiletos
Ἐρασινίδης	Erasinides
Ἐρατοσθένης	Eratosthenes
Ἐπιμηθεύς	Epimetheus
Ἑκατόνυμος	Hekatonymos, Hecatonymus
Εὐρυσθεύς	Eurystheus
Ἡρακλῆς	Herakles, Heracles
Ἑρμῆς	Hermes
Ἥφαιστος	Hephaistos, Hephaestus
Θέογνις	Theognis
Θράσυλλος	Thrasyllos, Thrasyllus
Ξενοφῶν	Xenophon
Πολυνείκης	Polyneices, Polynices, Polyneikes
Τιμοκρέων	Timokreon, Timocreon
Ἀσπασία	Aspasia
Ξανθίππη	Xanthippe
Θαΐς	Thais
Σαπφώ	Sappho

Ethnic and topographic proper adjectives are usually turned into English with the suffix **-ian/-an**.

Ἀθηναῖος	Athenian
Κορίνθιος	Corinthian
Πελοποννήσιοι	Peloponnesians
Ῥόδιος	Rhodian
Κοτυωρίται	Cotyoritans (or Cotyoritans?)
Σινωπεῖς	Sinopeans
(sing. Σινωπεύς)	