

Nouns and the Persistent Accent

For most Greek nouns (and adjectives), PERSISTENT ACCENT rules determine which syllable will receive the accent.

The NOMINATIVE SINGULAR of each noun has a particular vowel or diphthong that receives the accent. Where this accented vowel or diphthong is found – antepenult, penult, or ultima – is a matter of spelling, and must be memorized. For example, the accent is “born” on the *alpha* of ἄρχων, but on the *omega* of ἡγεμόνων. As a general principle, the accent on all the other INFLECTED forms of a noun tries to remain, or PERSIST, on the same vowel or diphthong on which it is found in nominative singular, unless forced to change position or accent type.

There are five general PERSISTENT ACCENT rules.

Rule 1:

When the accent is on the penult, it stays there. If penult is long, the accent is a circumflex with short ultima, acute with long ultima.

e.g.	αἰών	αἰῶνες
	αἰῶνος	αἰώνων
	αἰῶνι	αἰῶσι(ν)
	αἰῶνα	αἰῶνας

If penult is short, the accent remains acute throughout all forms.

e.g.	βιβλίον	βιβλία
	βιβλίου	βιβλίων
	βιβλίῳ	βιβλίοις
	βιβλίον	βιβλία

Note that the rule for accents that fall on the penult is IDENTICAL to that of VERBS with only TWO SYLLABLES!

Rule 2:

When the accent is on the antepenult, it must be acute. If the ultima becomes long (e.g., genitive plural -ων), the accent moves to penult.

e.g.	ἄρχων	ἄρχοντες
	ἄρχοντος	ἄρχόντων
	ἄρχοντι	ἄρχουσι
	ἄρχοντα	ἄρχοντας

Note that the rule for accents that fall on the antepenult is IDENTICAL to that of VERBS with THREE or MORE SYLLABLES!

Rule 3:

In the 3rd Declension, when the accent falls on a MONOSYLLABIC nominative singular noun, the accent usually moves to the ULTIMA of the genitive and dative cases, singular and plural. In these situations, the accent on the ultima is ACUTE over short vowels (e.g. -ός,), and circumflex over long (e.g. -ῶν).

e.g.	πούς	πόδες
	ποδός	ποδῶν
	ποδί	ποσί(ν)
	πόδα	πόδας

Rule 4:

In the 1st and 2nd Declensions, when the accent falls on the ULTIMA, a CIRCUMFLEX is used on genitive and dative, singular and plural; an ACUTE accent falls on the nominative and accusative, singular and plural.

e.g.	ἀρετή	ἀρεταί
	ἀρετῆς	ἀρετῶν
	ἀρετῇ	ἀρεταῖς
	ἀρετήν	ἀρετάς

e.g.	ὁδός	ὁδοί
	ὁδοῦ	ὁδῶν
	ὁδῶ	ὁδοῖς
	ὁδόν	ὁδούς

Note that the rule for accents that fall on the ultima is SIMILAR to that of DEFINITE ARTICLES.

Rule 5:

In the 1st Declension, the genitive plural is accented with a circumflex on the ultima: -ῶν. This rule applies regardless of where the original accent falls.

e.g.	δίκη	δίκαι
	δίκης	δικῶν
	δίκη	δίκαις
	δίκην	δίκας