

Aorist tense worksheet

[this worksheet accompanies the video by Simon Costello on the 1st and 2nd / weak and strong aorist]

The aorist is the equivalent of the simple past tense in English. In English, that tense is usually formed by adding -ed to the end of the word: e.g. 'I play' becomes 'I played'; however, there are a large number of English verbs that do not follow this rule, but instead use a different form from that used in the present tense. Sometimes the difference is only small (e.g. 'I run' becomes 'I ran'); sometimes it is very significant (e.g. 'I go' becomes 'I went').

The situation for the aorist tense in Greek is very similar. There are two ways to form the aorist, the second of which involves changing the stem.

The first aorist

The first aorist (sometimes called the weak aorist) is formed by adding an epsilon augment to the start of the verb stem, as in the imperfect tense, and adding a sigma to the end of the stem, as in the future tense. When a verb stem ends in a consonant, adding the sigma can lead to a spelling change:

$\pi/\varphi = \psi$
 $\kappa/\gamma = \xi$
 $\zeta/\theta = \sigma$

The first aorist has its own set of endings. They are very similar to those of the imperfect tense. The key marker is that the majority of the endings contain an alpha (α):

1st person singular	I	-α
2nd person singular	you	-ας
3rd person singular	he/she/it	-ε(ν)
1st person plural	we	-αμεν
2nd person plural	you	-ατε
3rd person plural	they	-αν

With all these elements in place, the first aorist is very simple to spot:

παύ-ω → ἔ-παυ-σ-α = 'I stopped'
ἀκούω → ἤ-κου-σ-α = 'I heard'
διώκω → ἐ-δίω-ξ-α = 'I chased'
ἐλπίζω → ἤ-λιπ-σ-α = 'I hoped'

Practising the forms of the first aorist

Translate into English:

1. ἐπαύσαμεν
2. ἐδακρύσατε
3. ἔγραψεν
4. ἤκουσα
5. ἔπαυσαν
6. ἐδίωξε
7. ἤλπισας
8. ἔγραψαν

Translate into Greek:

1. They cried
2. We heard
3. I chased
4. You (ρ) wrote
5. She stopped
6. We hoped
7. You (s) cried
8. You (ρ) stopped

First aorist practice sentences

1. ἡ Ἥρα τῶν γυναικῶν ἤκουσεν.
(Vocabulary: γυναικῶν – genitive plural of γυνή, 'woman', a third declension noun; ἀκούω can take a genitive instead of an accusative when a person or persons is being referred to)
2. ἄρα τὰς ἐπιστολάς ἔγραψας;
3. τοῦς ἐλέφαντας ἐφυλάξαμεν.
(Vocabulary: ἐλέφαντας – accusative plural of ἐλέφας, 'elephant', a third declension noun)
4. ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς τὸν Ἔκτορα ἐδίωξεν.
(Vocabulary: Ἔκτορα – accusative singular, third declension noun)
5. τὰς βίβλους οὐκ ἔκλεψα.
(Vocabulary: κλέπτω – steal)

Second aorist

The second aorist (sometimes called the strong aorist) involves a change to the stem from the present tense stem. Sometimes the change is quite small; sometimes it is quite significant; sometimes the aorist stem is very different from the present tense stem:

βάλλω → ἔ-**βαλ**-ον = I threw
λαμβάνω → ἔ-**λαβ**-ον = I took
τρέχω → ἔ-**δραμ**-ον = I ran

The same rules about adding the augment apply to the second aorist. The second aorist uses the same set of endings as the imperfect tense:

1st person singular	I	-ΟΝ
2nd person singular	you	-ΕΣ
3rd person singular	he/she/it	-Ε(ν)
1st person plural	we	-ΟΜΕΝ
2nd person plural	you	-ΕΤΕ
3rd person plural	they	-ΟΝ

The second aorist stem will make it clear that the verb is aorist rather than the imperfect.

Some common second aorists

Present tense	Aorist (stem underlined)	Meaning
λαμβάνω	ἔ <u>λαβ</u> ον	I take
ἀποθνήσκω	ἀπέ <u>θαν</u> ον	I die
βάλλω	ἔ <u>βαλ</u> ον	I throw
λέγω	εἶ <u>πον</u>	I say/speak
ἄγω	ἤ <u>γαγ</u> ον (ἄγαγ-)	I lead
τρέχω	ἔ <u>δραμ</u> ον	I run
ἐσθίω	ἔ <u>φαγ</u> ον	I eat
μανθάνω	ἔ <u>μαθ</u> ον	I learn

Most textbooks and grammars give lists of important second aorist stems.

A lot of English words derived from Greek verbs are formed from the second aorist stem (e.g. mathematics is derived from the aorist stem of μανθάνω).

Practising the forms of the second aorist

Translate into English:

1. ἐλάβομεν
2. ἐφάγετε
3. ἤγαγεν
4. ἔδραμες
5. ἀπέθανον
6. εἶπετε
7. ἔβαλε
8. εἰσήγαγον

Translate into Greek:

1. She learned
2. They took
3. You (s) ate
4. We threw
5. You (p) died
6. You (s) ate
7. I ran in
8. He ate

Second aorist practice sentences

1. ἡ Κλεοπάτρα τὸν οἶνον ἔλαβεν.
2. ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἐμάθομεν.
(Vocabulary: ἀγορά – marketplace)
3. ὁ Σωκράτης τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις εἶπεν.
4. ἄρα τοὺς παῖδας εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εἰσήγαγες;
5. ὁ λέων τὸν καμήλον ἔφαγεν.
(Vocabulary: καμήλος – camel)

Answers are given in the video and at the end of the worksheet.

Augmenting compound verbs

Many Greek verbs are formed by adding a preposition to the front of a verb:

εισβάλλω = I throw in

If a compound verb is in the imperfect or aorist tense, the augment comes **after** the prefix:

εἰςέβαλον = I threw in

Sometimes this leads to the vowel at the end of the prefix being lost:

ἀποβάλλω → ἀπέβαλον

Practising the forms of the first aorist: answer key

Translate into English:

1. ἐπαύσαμεν = we stopped
2. ἐδακρύσατε = you (p) cried
3. ἔγραψεν = he/she wrote
4. ἤκουσα = I heard
5. ἔπαυσαν = they stopped
6. ἐδίωξε = he /she chased
7. ἤλπισας = you (s) hoped
8. ἔγραψαν = they wrote

Translate into Greek:

1. They cried = ἐδάκρυσαν
2. We heard = ἠκούσαμεν
3. I chased = ἐδίωξα
4. You (p) wrote = ἐγράψατε
5. She stopped = ἔπαυσε
6. We hoped = ἠλπίσαμεν
7. You (s) cried = ἐδάκρυσας
8. You (p) stopped = ἐπαύσατε

First aorist practice sentences: answer key

1. Hera heard the women.
2. Did you (s) write the letters?
3. We guarded the elephants.
4. Achilles chased Hector.
5. I did not steal the books.

Practising the forms of the second aorist: answer key

Translate into English:

1. ἐλάβομεν = we took
2. ἐφάγετε = you (p) ate
3. ἤγαγεν = he/she led
4. ἔδραμες = you (s) ran
5. ἀπέθανον = I /they died
6. εἶπετε = you (p) said
7. ἔβαλε = he/she threw
8. εἰσήγαγον = I/they led

Translate into Greek:

1. She learned = ἔμαθε(ν)
2. They took = ἔλαβον
3. You (s) ate = ἔφαγες
4. We threw = ἐβάλομεν
5. You (p) died = ἀπεθάνετε
6. You (s) ate = ἔφαγες
7. I ran in = εἰσέδραμον
8. He ate = ἔφαγε(ν)

Second aorist practice sentences: answer key

1. Cleopatra took the wine.
2. We learned in the market.
3. Socrates spoke to the Athenians.
4. Did you lead the children into the house?
5. The lion ate the camel.