

The Greek alphabet

Greek letters are commonly used as variable names in mathematics. The purpose of this assignment is to give you some familiarity with the Greek alphabet so that you become more comfortable with use of Greek letters.

Note that the pronunciation given below is one commonly used by mathematicians.

| Lower case | Upper case | Latin equivalent | Name | Pronunciation |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------------|---------|---------------|
| α | A | a | alpha | AL-fuh |
| β | B | b | beta | BAY-tuh |
| γ | Γ | g | gamma | GAM-uh |
| δ | Δ | d | delta | DEL-tuh |
| ϵ or ε | E | e | epsilon | EP-sil-on |
| ζ | Z | z | zeta | ZAY-tuh |
| η | H | \hat{e} | eta | AY-tuh |
| θ | Θ | th | theta | THAY-tuh |
| ι | I | i | iota | eye-OH-tuh |
| κ | K | k | kappa | KAP-uh |
| λ | Λ | l | lambda | LAM-duh |
| μ | M | m | mu | MYOO |
| ν | N | n | nu | NOO |
| ξ | Ξ | ks | xi | KS-EYE |
| \omicron | O | o | omicron | OM-i-KRON |
| π | Π | p | pi | PIE |
| ρ or ϱ | P | r | rho | ROW |
| σ or ς | Σ | s | sigma | SIG-muh |
| τ | T | t | tau | TAU |
| υ | Y | u | upsilon | OOP-si-LON |
| ϕ or φ | Φ | f | phi | FEE |
| χ | X | ch | chi | K-EYE |
| ψ | Ψ | ps | psi | SIGH |
| ω | Ω | \hat{o} | omega | oh-MAY-guh |

Exercise 1: Write out the lower case Greek alphabet. Pronounce the name of each letter aloud as you write it.

Exercise 2: Many words in English have a Greek origin. Following is a list of Greek words. Try to translate each into English by transliterating Greek letters to Latin equivalents and then sounding out the result. A few notes: The form ς is commonly used for a sigma at the end of a word. The font below is typical of what would be used for printed Greek. The font in the table above is typical of what would be used for Greek letters in mathematics. Most accents are omitted below with the exception of the last two in which the initial accent indicates the word begins with an “h” sound.

| | | | |
|------------|---------|----------|-------------|
| αποστροφή | ασθμα | δραμα | χαπακτηρ |
| μητροπολις | γενεσις | πανθηρ | ιπποποταμος |
| ισοσκελης | κρατηρ | ασβεστος | υποθεσις |