

# Pennington's Overview of Participles

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## Introduction

Participles are very important, and at the same time potentially confusing. They are important because nearly one out of every four verbs (about 24%) in the GNT is participial in form. Further, there is a significant degree of flexibility in how one interprets participles that can make a big difference in interpretation. Participles are potentially confusing because there are many different forms of participles yet one must be able to parse them well to translate easily. Nevertheless, the paradigms do follow regular patterns.

I hope that what follows will serve to give you a simple overview of the forms and meaning of participles.

## Nature of Participles

Participles in Greek (and English) are *verbal adjectives*. This means that participles have elements of both verbs and adjectives. The verbal elements of a participle are tense (Present; Aorist; Perfect) and voice (Active; Middle; Passive). The adjectival elements are case (nom; acc; gen; dat), gender (m, f, n) and number (sing; plural). Participles do *not* have person (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>). The mood is “participle.”

So when parsing a participle, please give:	e.g.	λύοντος
- Lexical Form of the verb		λύω
- Tense		Present
- Voice		Active
- Mood		Participle
- Case		Genitive
- Gender		Masculine
- Number		Singular
- Lexical Meaning of the verb		to loose

Think of a participle as a hybrid (or more skeptically, a mutation) of a verb that has taken on some of the characteristics of an adjective. Any verb can take participial forms.

Part of the flexibility of participles is that they are rather “Jekyll and Hedish” – they can function in a sentence as either a verb or an adjective (or noun = an adjective used substantively). More on this below under Meaning.

There are two main issues to get clear when thinking about participles – Morphology (form) and Meaning.

## Morphology

The good news is that all participles follow the three noun/adj declensions we have learned already. The only other things to know to recognize the form of a participle are some telltale tense indicators (like  $\sigma$  for Aorists, etc.). Remember – because participles are non-indicative in mood (in fact, like infinitives they are “in-finite” – they have no person) they will never have an augment!

## Participial Forms By Tense

### PRESENT

#### Active

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λύων	λύουσα	λύων	λύοντες	λύουσαι	λύοντα
Gen	λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος	λύόντων	λυουσῶν	λύόντων
Dat	λύοντι	λυούσῃ	λύοντι	λύουσιν	λυούσαις	λύουσιν
Acc	λύοντα	λυούσαν	λύων	λύοντας	λυούσας	λύοντα

#### Notes:

- Just like a typical 3-1-3 adjective (masc-3<sup>rd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-3<sup>rd</sup> decl.)
- Remember the feminine singular is of the hybrid form because the stem ends in σ
- Remember the normal 3<sup>rd</sup> declension changes that occur in the dative plural
- Remember the normal contractions that will occur with contract verbs – e.g. φιλοῦντα
- Second Aorist Active verbs will also use this paradigm (cf. Imperfect) – e.g. βαλῶν
- The participle of εἶμι is the endings of this paradigm

#### Middle/Passive (including middle-only [“deponent”] verbs)

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λυόμενος	λυομένη	λυόμενον	λυόμενοι	λυόμεναι	λυόμενα
Gen	λυομένου	λυομένης	λυομένου	λυομένων	λυομένων	λυομένων
Dat	λυομένῳ	λυομένῃ	λυομένῳ	λυομένοις	λυομέναις	λυομένοις
Acc	λυόμενον	λυομένην	λυόμενον	λυομένους	λυομένας	λυόμενα

#### Notes:

- Endings are just like a typical 2-1-2 adjective (masc-2<sup>nd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-2<sup>nd</sup> decl.)
- Remember “men in the middle”
- Verbs that are middle-only in the present will follow this paradigm for participles
- This paradigm is very similar to that of the Aorist Middle and the Perfect Middle/Passive

## AORIST

### Active

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λύσας	λύσασα	λύσαν	λύσαντες	λύσασαι	λύσαντα
Gen	λύσαντος	λυσάσης	λύσαντος	λυσάντων	λυσασῶν	λυσάντων
Dat	λύσαντι	λυσάσῃ	λύσαντι	λύσασιν	λυσάσαις	λύσασιν
Acc	λύσαντα	λύσασαν	λύσαν	λύσαντας	λυσάσας	λύσαντα

Notes:

- Just like a typical 3-1-3 adjective (masc-3<sup>rd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-3<sup>rd</sup> decl.)
- The endings are the same as πας, πασα, παν
- Remember the feminine singular is of the hybrid form because the stem ends in σ
- Remember the normal 3<sup>rd</sup> declension changes that occur in the dative plural
- Remember that “liquid” stems will lack the sigma – e.g. μείναντες
- Remember that contract verbs will lengthen before the sigma – e.g. φιλήσας

### Middle

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λυσάμενος	λυσαμένη	λυσάμενον	λυσάμενοι	λυσάμεναι	λυσάμενα
Gen	λυσαμένου	λυσαμένης	λυσαμένου	λυσαμένων	λυσαμένων	λυσαμένων
Dat	λυσαμένῳ	λυσαμένῃ	λυσαμένῳ	λυσαμένοις	λυσαμέναις	λυσαμένοις
Acc	λυσάμενον	λυσαμένην	λυσάμενον	λυσαμένους	λυσαμένας	λυσάμενα

Notes:

- Endings are just like a typical 2-1-2 adjective (masc-2<sup>nd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-2<sup>nd</sup> decl.)
- Remember “men in the middle”
- Remember no augment because non-indicative mood
- Verbs that are deponent in the Aorist will follow this paradigm for participles
- This paradigm is very identical to the Present Middle/Pass with the addition of the σα-
- Remember that there is a separate paradigm for Aorist Middles and Aorist Passives.

### Passive

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λυθείς	λυθείσα	λυθέν	λυθέντες	λυθείσαι	λυθέντα
Gen	λυθέντος	λυθείσης	λυθέντος	λυθέντων	λυθεισῶν	λυθέντων
Dat	λυθέντι	λυθείσῃ	λυθέντι	λυθείσιν	λυθείσαις	λυθείσιν
Acc	λυθέντα	λυθείσαν	λυθέν	λυθέντας	λυθείσας	λυθέντα

Notes:

- Just like a typical 3-1-3 adjective (masc-3<sup>rd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-3<sup>rd</sup> decl.)
- Remember the typical θ that indicates Aorist Passive
- Remember no augment because non-indicative mood
- Remember that there is a separate paradigm for Aorist Middles and Aorist Passives.
- Remember the Second Aorist Passives will drop the θ – e.g. γραφείς

## PERFECT

### Active

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λελυκώς	λελυκυῖα	λελυκός	λελυκότες	λελυκυῖαι	λελυκότα
Gen	λελυκότος	λελυκυίας	λελυκότος	λελυκότων	λελυκυῖων	λελυκότων
Dat	λελυκότι	λελυκυίᾳ	λελυκότι	λελυκόσιν	λελυκυίαις	λελυκόσιν
Acc	λελυκότα	λελυκυῖαν	λελυκός	λελυκότας	λελυκυίας	λελυκότα

Notes:

- Just like a typical 3-1-3 adjective (masc-3<sup>rd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-3<sup>rd</sup> decl.)
- Typical reduplication that indicates Perfect (verbs beginning with vowels with seem to lengthen)
- Typical κ that indicates Perfect

### Middle/Passive

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Nom	λελυμένος	λελυμένη	λελυμένον	λελυμένοι	λελυμέναι	λελυμένα
Gen	λελυμένου	λελυμένης	λελυμένου	λελυμένων	λελυμένων	λελυμένων
Dat	λελυμένῳ	λελυμένηῃ	λελυμένῳ	λελυμένοις	λελυμέναις	λελυμένοις
Acc	λελυμένον	λελυμένην	λελυμένον	λελυμένους	λελυμένας	λελυμένα

Notes:

- Endings are just like a typical 2-1-2 adjective (masc-2<sup>nd</sup> declension; fem-1<sup>st</sup> decl.; neut-2<sup>nd</sup> decl.)
- Remember “men in the middle”
- Verbs that are deponent in the perfect will follow this paradigm for participles
- This paradigm is identical to the Present Middle/Passive with two exceptions – reduplication on the front; and the ο before the μεν is missing.
- Also like the Present, the Middle and Passive forms are identical

### Meaning

There are two matters to mention under the topic of the meaning of participles. The first is simply that there is a great deal of flexibility in the translation and interpretation of participles. Like the genitive case (and maybe even more) there are a bewildering number of quite different options for translating a participle. The ‘art’ of translation (as well as the ‘treason’) comes to play very much with participles. This semantic flexibility manifests itself in that participles can function adjectivally (including substantively) as well as verbally. In the first instance, a Greek participle can function like an attributive adjective, in a predicate nominative construction, or as a substantive. When functioning verbally, participles can communicate a variety of syntactical relationships, including temporal, manner, means, cause, condition, concession, purpose, result, or function as attendant circumstance, periphrastic, redundant, imperatively, or in a genitive absolute construction. It is important to spend some time in a good intermediate grammar textbook such as Wallace to familiarize yourself with these options.

The other issue related to the meaning of participles concerns their “relative time.” Typically it has been taught that participles communicate time relative to the action of the main verb. Thus, present participles are action contemporaneous with the action of the main verb, while aorist and perfect participles communicate action preceding the action of the main verb (unless the main verb is itself an aorist; see Wallace). As with all such grammatical “rules”, this formulation has much to commend it but also many exceptions and potential problems. Another theory based on word order has been put forward by Stanley Porter. Overall, the most important thing to remember is that “context is king.” Context is the ultimate determiner in such interpretive decisions.