

# GREEK SCRIPT



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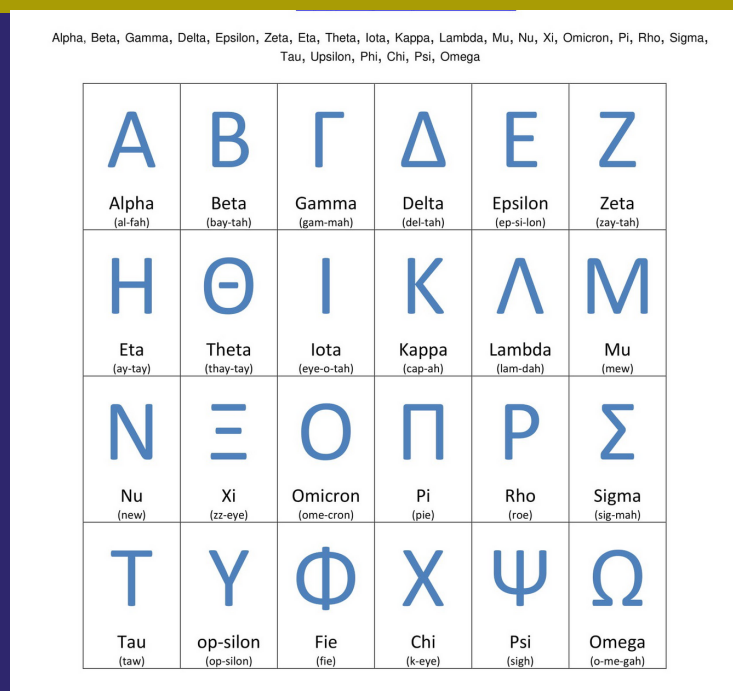
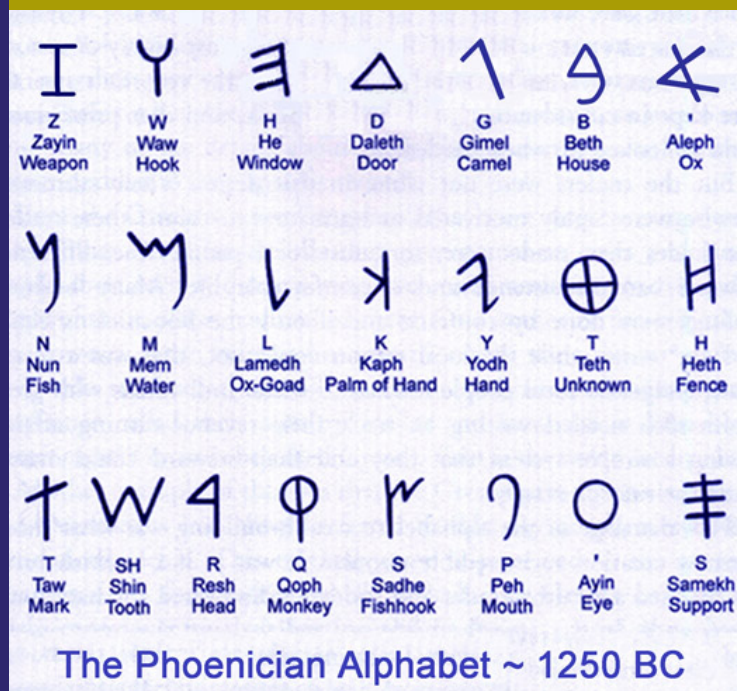


## INTRODUCTION

Before the Greek dark ages, Greek was written in Mycenae script known as Linear B. However, the Mycenean civilization had fallen, and the script disappeared along with it. After the disappearance of Linear B came the Greek dark ages. Lasting from 1200 BCE to 1050 BCE, this was a period with no written records. Around 1000 BCE, the Greeks began to engage in international trade, but did not rush into adopting the innovations of the Phoenicians or Near Eastern cultures. The Greeks felt no obligation to the Near Eastern and wanted to forge their own path. Writing is so conservative in its influences that once an individual knows how to read and write it is virtually impossible to think of doing it any other way. The collapse of civilizations allowed the Greeks to make a fresh start and invent the first alphabet. They would go on to enjoy cultural achievements in art, democracy, philosophy and literature.

## CREATION

Trading with the Phoenicians, the Greeks began adapting from the Phoenician script to their own needs. Like Hebrew & Arabic, the Phoenician script was an abjad and only had consonants notated. This was a major issue for Greeks, because for their Indo-European language, they needed a way to notate vowels to ensure accuracy and legibility. Thus, they had to make a series of changes to the Phoenician writing system. The Greeks started out by dropping the signs that had no consonantal equivalent in their language. They repurposed many of these consonant signs for vowel signs – A (alpha), E (epsilon), H (eta), I (iota), O (omicron), Y (upsilon) and Ω (omega). Overtime, from the 8th century to the 5th century BCE, the alphabet would undergo various reforms. From the reforms, new letters were installed, Σ (sigma), Φ (phi), Χ (chi) and Ψ (psi). After all the final touches, the Greek alphabet has 24 signs (Note: there are 49 signs, when lowercase signs are included; Σ (sigma) has two lowercase signs: σ and ς). The result was the world's first fully phonemic alphabet which represented both consonant and vowel sounds.

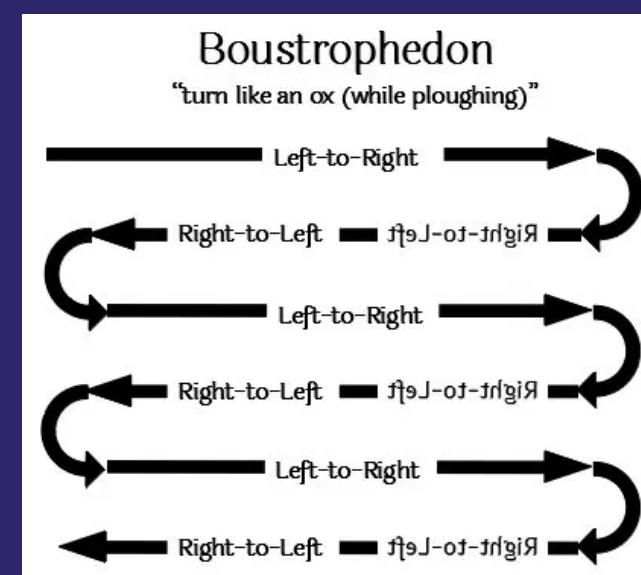


TIMELINE						
Mycenaean Civilization thrives.	Writing in Linear B (an adaption of the Minoan Linear A).	Writing lost in Bronze Age Collapse & Fall of Mycenaean Civilization.	Greeks return to civilization & re-engage in trading.	Greeks adapt writing (again) from the Phoenicians.	Etruscan alphabet adapted from Euboean Greek, then Latin from Etruscan.	Use of Boustrophedon, until left to right become the preferred writing direction.
1500 BC	1450 BC	1200 BC TO 1050 BC	1000 BC	800 BC	700 BC	600 BC TO 500 BC
Athens unifies the Greek alphabet into one official writing system.	Minuscule Alphabet development.	Greek becomes the language of Christianity in eastern part of Roman Empire.	Creation of Gothic alphabet, a descendant of the Greek alphabet.	Development of Cyrillic alphabet, a descendant of the Greek alphabet.	Greek script still used today. In America, signs are used in mathematics & college with Greek Life.	
403 BC	AROUND 398 BC	AD 330	AD 410	AD 862 TO AD 884	PRESENT TIME	

## INFLUENCE

Once the script had been created, it spread along the trade routes. The first people to adapt the Greeks' alphabet were the Etruscans in Italy. After the fall of the Etruscan civilization and its writing script, the Etruscans were absorbed by the Romans who had drawn from the Etruscan alphabet already. In the first centuries AD Greeks had become the language of Christianity in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. The creation of the Coptic alphabet would be the result of this. Later, the Gothic alphabet would draw inspiration from the Greek alphabet for the purpose of translating the Bible. Meanwhile, Armenia and Georgia's alphabets would be created loosely off the Greeks to make the Christian texts more accessible for their people. The other major alphabet to develop was the Cyrillic alphabet, which would become the official script of the Slavonic Orthodox Church, being used to bring the Christian faith to the Slavic people. Today, the Cyrillic script is used in Slavic countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia as well as Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and more. Thus, Greek alphabet has had monumental influence on the development of numerous alphabets around the world.

## INNOVATIONS



### Minuscule Alphabet

An innovation from the Byzantine times was the minuscule alphabet, or lowercase letters. In ancient Greek times, Greek was written entirely in capital letters and it was also difficult to read for the lack of word spacing, punctuation and capitalization. Initially, the development of the minuscule letters was due to the experimentation in letter shapes, it would lead to the development of two alphabets: capitals and minuscules. The capitals were used for titles or marginal comments, but the capitalization and lowercasing of sentences and of proper names within a text did not occur until modern times. Nonetheless, the incorporation of the minuscule alphabet made learning the script slightly easier. Moreover, it was just a simple experimentation of letter shapes that would later become a step in the direction of grammar.

### Boustrophēdon

As the Greek script took off and spread along the trading routes, new innovations came to fruition. During this time, the Greeks had been experimenting with the direction of writing. Some people wrote from right to left, while others wrote from left to right. Another way was bidirectional writing, also known as boustrophēdon. Boustrophēdon is Greek for “to turn like oxen.” This method is writing alternate lines in opposite directions. So, one line goes from left to right and the next from right to left. For many years, the Greeks had been experimenting with a variety of directional writing to see which one they preferred. Eventually, left to right became the preferred method.

### Works Cited:

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