
-μι verbs
(athematic verbs)

I. Quick Overview and Reassurance

*Quick definition: Verbs that differ from -ω verbs in the forms from principal part #1
(plus four very special verbs—the “Big Four”—that also differ in forms from principal part #3)*

*Subjunctive and optative forms are **more or less** borrowed from -ω verbs. So these verbs mainly show their true colors as athematic verbs in the:*

Present indicative (and imperative)

Present infinitive & participle

[and for the Big Four:] Aorist active/middle indicative (and imperative)

Aorist active/middle infinitive & participle

It sounds (and at first glance looks) horrible. But in fact the endings on these forms are nothing too radically new:

	Active		Middle (and Continuous Mid./Pass.)	
Primary (pres. indic.)	-μι	-μεν	-μαι	-μεθα
	-ς	-τε	-σαι	-σθε
	-σι(ν)	-ᾶσι(ν)	-ται	-νται
Secondary (impf., aor. Indic.)	-ν	-μεν	-μην	-μεθα
	-ς	-τε	-σο	-σθε
	-	-σαν	-το	-ντο

*The whole right column consists simply of the **universal** middle endings, which you know. The active secondary endings are the same as those used in root aorist active (ἔβην, ἔγνων) and aorist passive (ἐπαύθην, ἐπλήγην). So the key “new endings” you need to learn are the active primary ones (in boldface). (If you remember the forms we’ve used from δείκνυμι or δίδωμι, then only the 3rd pl. -ασι ending is truly new.)*

II. What does “athematic” mean?

Most of the verb endings we’ve learned so far are **thematic** endings, because they begin with a thematic (“inserted,” from τίθημι, *put, place*) vowel. The thematic vowel is the “linking vowel” we commonly refer to when we divide most of our verb paradigms into

-ο/ε- forms (present, imperfect, future active/middle,
second aorist active/middle)
and -α- forms (first aorist active/middle)

The perfect active also has thematic endings (-α- in perfect, -ε- in pluperfect [in the singular, actually a contraction: -ε- + perfect -α- endings]).

In contrast, **athematic** endings have no thematic vowel. They take the ending that comes *after* a thematic vowel elsewhere (for example, -μεν, -τε, -μεθα, -σθε) and add them *directly* to a stem. Examples we’ve seen previously:

1. The perfect middle/passive. Example verb: γράφω. The endings are added directly to the reduplicated stem γε-γραφ-

pf. indic.	γέ-γραμ-μαι	γε-γράμ-μεθα	etc.
ppf. indic.	ἔ-γέ-γραπ-το	ἔ-γε-γράμ-μεθα	etc.
pf. inf./ppl.	γε-γράφ-θαι	γε-γραμ-μένος	etc.

Unless the stem happened to end in a vowel (πέ-παυ-μαι), this involved the collision of consonants. In fact, if you ever see one of these athematic endings added directly to a consonant (e.g. εἴμαρ-το), you can be sure it’s a pf./ppf. mid./pass.!

2. Root aorists & aorist passives. These take the secondary active athematic endings given on the previous page (yes, in the case of the aorist passive, that’s weird – aorist passives are the *only* passive forms that use active endings instead of the universal middle endings). Here we’re always adding the athematic endings to a vowel, because either:

- a. (root aorist) The verbal root itself ends in a vowel. For example, the roots γνω-/γνο- “know” and βη-/βα- “go”:

ἔ-γνω-ν	ἔ-γνω-σαν	γνο-ντ-ας (ppl.)	etc.
ἔ-βη-τε	βῆ-ναι (inf.)	βά-ντ-ων (ppl.)	etc.

- b. (aorist passive) The forms are made with a suffix (in this case usually -θη-/-θε-, sometimes just -η-/-ε-) that ends in a vowel:

ἔ-παύ-θη-ν	παυ-θη-ναι	παυθέ-ντ-ων (imv./ppl.)	etc.
ἔ-πλήγ-η-ς	ἔ-πλήγ-η-	πλήγ-η-θι (imv.)	etc.

→ This #2 pattern (stem ending in vowel + athematic ending) is the one we will see with -μι verbs. Note the existence of alternate short and long versions of these stems (βη-/βα-, πληγ-η-/πληγ-ε-). These will play a more important role with -μι verbs.

→ Within pattern #2, “regular” -μι verbs will be like #2b (they are formed with the addition of a suffix before the ending, for example δείκ-νυ-μεν), whereas the “Big Four” special verbs will be like #2a (their verbal roots include a vowel, and the endings are added directly, for example δίδω-σι, where the 3rd sg. ending is added to a reduplicated form of the root δω-/δο-, “give”)

III. Enough preliminaries—let me at those -μι verbs!

A -μι verb form is constructed from the standard parts:
[augment if past indic.] + [stem] + [ending]

IIIA. GENERAL STEM PRINCIPLES; INDICATIVE FORMS

What [ending]?

The chart on page 1 shows clearly what ending should be used for all indicative forms.

What [stem]?

This is where the short/long alternation comes in. Use the long version for **active singular indicative** forms. Use the short version for all other forms (**active plural** and **all middle or middle/passive or non-indicative** forms).

What [stem]? (Part 2)

The “Big Four” have athematic forms, not only in the present, but also in the aorist. Of course we have to use different stems to distinguish continuous from aorist forms! The “Big Four” use their pure root forms for the **aorist** (δω-/δο- “give”) and a reduplicated version for the **continuous** (δι-δω-/δι-δο- “give”). (Note that this reduplication is with ι, versus the perfect reduplication with ε.)

Okay, show me the stems!

		LONG (act. sg. ind.)	SHORT (all other)	
“Regular -μι verbs”	continuous	δεικ-νῦ-	δεικ-νϋ-	“show”
“The Big Four”	continuous	τι-θη-	τι-θε-	“put, place”
		ἰ-η- (<σι-ση-)	ἰ-ε-	“cast, release”
		ἰ-στη- (<σι-στη-)	ἰ-στα-	“stand”
		δι-δω-	δι-δο-	“give”
	aorist	[θη- (κ)]	θε-	“put, place”
		[ἦ- (κ)]	ἔ-	“cast, release”
[δω- (κ)]		δο-	“give”	

→ Why the bracketed forms and kappas? τίθημι, ἵημι, and δίδωμι **in the singular only** use regular first aorist forms, not athematic forms: ἔθηκα ας ε(ν), ἤκα ας ε, ἔδωκα ας ε.

→ Note that there is not actually a spelling difference between the long and short versions of “regular” -μι verb stems. I show you ϋ vs. ῦ just to illustrate the analogy with the “Big Four.”

→ What about the aorist of ἵστημι? ἵστημι **does not follow the -μι verb pattern in the aorist** (e.g. no short vs. long or singular vs. plural stems). It has two sets of aorist forms: transitive (“I stood [something]”) and intransitive (“I stood [myself]”).

Both of these aorists follow patterns learned previously:

transitive aorist of ἵστημι =	ἔστησα	regular first (-α-) aorist
intrans. aorist of ἵστημι =	ἔστην	regular root aorist like ἔβην

Put it all together & show me the indicative forms!

Now have a look at the top six rows of both columns on:

p. 198 p. 214 p. 215 p. 217 (first 2 cols.) p. 218

Make sure you can see that the principles stated above are operating regularly, except for these seven exceptions:

p. 214 imperf. ἐτίθεις, ἐτίθει as if from thematic τιθέω
p. 215 imperf. ἴεις, ἴει as if from thematic ἰέω
p. 218 imperf. ἐδίδουν, -ουσ, -ου as if from thematic διδῶ

And one minor point: Two of the “Big Four” contract in the 3rd pl. pres. act. (ἰστᾶσι, ἰᾶσι).

IIIB. What about the other “pure athematic” forms (imperative, infinitive, participle)?

Imperative: Perfectly regular addition of the active endings—
2nd sg. contin. -ε [contracts] 3rd sg. -τω 2nd pl. -τε 3rd pl. -τω
2nd sg. aorist -ς

and the middle/passive endings—
2nd sg. contin. -σο [uncontr.] 3rd sg. -σθω 2nd pl. -σθε 3rd pl. -σθων
2nd sg. aorist -ου [contracted]

→ Make sure you can see these principles working on those same 5 pages!

Participles: Regular application of the active stem -ντ- (with A-group fem.) and middle/passive endings -μενος η ον. If the active forms look odd:

- review root aorists (p. 120), and
- pay especial attention to the masc. nom. sg. forms.

Infinitives: Active -ναι (aorist -εναι) and middle/passive -σθαι.
→ The aorist act. infinitives θεῖναι, εἶναι, δοῦναι are, exceptionally, **thematic**.

IIIC. What about the (not so “pure”) subjunctives and optatives?

-μι verbs borrow these forms from -ω verbs, so they’re mostly familiar.

For example, the subj./opt. of δείκνυμι are 100% as if from thematic δεικνύω.

- Note that δίδωμι’s O-stem influences the subjunctives (e.g. -ως, -ω, -ωτε).
- The “Big Four” have athematic optatives (root + ι: compare optative of εἰμί).
- Root aorists have subjunctive and optative forms just like the “Big Four” (Lesson 52, p. 211, which we skipped).
- And oddly enough, contracted -ω verbs (-έω, -άω, -όω) also make their optatives very much like δίδωμι: φιλοίην etc., τιμώην etc. (Lesson 51, pp. 206-208, which we skipped).