

Tips on translating for beginners

Just before the exam, read through some Greek. Take a passage that you know and just read it through a number of times. Make this the last thing before going into the exam room. This helps you get your mind into the script, the language and the word order. It is a much better last minute thing to do than learning or revising word lists. You should have done that earlier.

- If the passage has a title, **READ THE TITLE**. Get all the clues from it that you possibly can. It may tell you vital things, like the relationship of people to each other or the order of events. In the case of a Biblical passage it might trigger off your memories of the English version.
- **READ THE PASSAGE THROUGH**. Do this **several times**. Each time you do this you will get a little closer to the meaning. Trust me. It does work!
- **Start working through the passage, sentence by sentence and clause by clause**. Look at any vocabulary given to you - sometimes people panic and don't notice this: don't make this mistake! Vocabulary help is a free lunch - don't leave it on the table!
- **Find the verbs**. Look at the endings. Identify which are the likely subjects of the verbs. If you've got 3rd person singular or plural endings, be on the look out for separate subjects. If you have 1st person or second person endings the subject will almost certainly be in the verb (there may be a personal pronoun like ἐγώ, ὑμεῖς or σὺ attached for emphasis).
- **Remember that the definite article helps enormously**. If you have ὁ, ἡ, οἱ or αἱ preceding a noun it is almost certainly shouting "Look at me! Look at me! I'm nominative! I'm the subject!" Where you have verbs of being or becoming etc. look for the **complements**. They will also be nominative.
- Suspect anything with -ομενος etc. or -σσομενος etc. endings of being a **participle**.
- Mark the **preposition phrases** and the **little fixed words** that don't change their form.
- Identify **direct objects** (accusatives) and any **indirect objects** (dative) - once again use the definite article to help you with this.
- **Don't be fooled by the word order** - look at the endings to deduce what job the words are doing in the sentence - remember that you may have to "hold" on to a word or phrase before its relationship to the rest becomes clear. NT Greek has a habit of putting early in the sentence the word which the writer wished to emphasise, and often this will be the verb. Where you end up with gaps because you don't know the meaning of words, but you can work out where they fit into the structure of the sentence, be prepared to make an intelligent guess. Try and use the whole context of the passage to help with this.