

Supplementary Worksheet B, Unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026

GREEK NOUNS

Greek nouns are also divided into three genders: masculine, feminine

Masculine nouns

Most masculine nouns end in **-os** in the nominative singular and form the plural by changing the **-os** to **-oi**. Greek masculine nouns ending in **-is**

entered English via Latin and so have the Latinized singular form of **-us** and plural form of **-i**.

bronchus → *bronchi* [Greek *bronchos* (windpipe) → *bronchoi*]
canthus → *canthi* [Greek *kanthos* (corner of the eye) → *kanthoi*]
carpus → *carpi* [Greek *karpos* (wrist) → *karpoi*]
gyrus → *gyri* [Greek *gyros* (ring, circle) → *gyroi*]
isthmus → *isthmi* [Greek *isthmos* (neck, narrow passage) → *isthmoi*]
oesophagus → *oesophagi* [Greek *oisophagos* (gullet) → *oisophagoi*]
pylorus → *pylori* [Greek *pylōros* (gate-keeper, pylorus) → *pylōroi*]
tarsus → *tarsi* [Greek *tarsos* (flat of the foot, ankle, edge of the eye and its lashes) → *tarsoi*]
thalamus → *thalami* [Greek *thalamos* (inner room, bedroom) → *thalamoi*]
thrombus → *thrombi* [Greek *thrombos* (lump, clot) → *thromboi*]
thymus → *thymi* [Greek *thymos* (wart, thymus gland) → *thymoi*]

but note

nephros → *nephroi* [Greek *nephros* (kidney) → *nephroi*]

Feminine nouns

Most feminine nouns end in either **-ē** or **-a** in the nominative singular and form the nominative plural by changing the **-ē** or **-a** ending to **-ai**. In English, Greek feminine nouns ending in **-ē** have usually entered the language via Latin and so have the Latinized singular form of **-a** and plural form of **-ae**. Greek feminine nouns ending in **-a** have also usually entered the language via Latin and so also have the Latinized singular form of **-a** and plural form of **-ae**.

chorda → *chordae* [Greek *chordē* (gut, gut string) → *chordai*]
theca → *thecae* [Greek *thēkē* (case, sheath) → *thēkai*]
zona → *zonae* [Greek *zōnē* (belt, girdle, shingles) → *zōnai*]
glossa → *glossae* [Greek *glōssa* (tongue) → *glōssai*]
pleura → *pleurae* [Greek *pleura* (rib, side) → *pleurai*]
trachea → *tracheae* [Greek *tracheia* (rough (windpipe)) → *tracheiai*]

but note

raphe → *raphae* [Greek *rhapḗ* (seam, suture, stitching, sewing) → *rhapḗai*]

Neuter nouns

Most neuter nouns end in **-on** in the nominative singular and form the nominative plural by changing the **-on** to **-a**.



Some of these Greek neuter nouns ending in **-on** in the nominative singular, however, entered English via Latinized forms:

ischium → *ischia* [Greek *ischion* (hip joint) → *ischia*]
sternum → *sterna* [Greek *sternon* (chest, breast, breastbone) → *sterna*]
tympanum → *tympana* [Greek *tympanon* (kettledrum) → *tympana*]

Other groups of nouns

As with Latin there are many Greek nouns, of all three genders, that do not fit into the above categories but form various subgroups. Most have come via Latin and consequently have a Latinized spelling in English. The most common Greek nouns in medical terminology are:

thorax → *thoraces* [Greek *thōrax* (breastplate, trunk, chest) → *thōrakes*]
calyx → *calyces* [Greek *kalyx* (husk, cup of a flower) → *kalykes*]
coccyx → *coccyges* [Greek *kokkyx* (cuckoo, coccyx) → *kokkyges*]
phalanx → *phalanges* [Greek *phalanx* (troop formation, bone or toe) → *phalanges*]
meninx → *meninges* [Greek *mēninx* (membrane) → *mēninges*]
salpinx → *salpinges* [Greek *salpinx* (trumpet) → *salpinges*]
larynx → *larynges* [Greek *larynx* (larynx) → *larynges*]
pharynx → *pharynges* [Greek *pharynx* (throat) → *pharynges*]
oedema → *oedemata* [Greek *oidēma* (swelling, tumour) → *oidēmata*]
carcinoma → *carcinomata* [Greek *karkinōma* (cancer) → *karkinōmata*]
soma → *somata* [Greek *sōma* (body) → *sōmata*]
stroma → *stromata* [Greek *strōma* (mattress, bed) → *strōmata*]
zygoma → *zygomata* [Greek *zygōma* (bolt, bar, zygomatic arc) → *zygōmata*]
stoma → *stomata* [Greek *stoma* (mouth) → *stomata*]
trauma → *traumata* [Greek *trauma* (wound) → *traumata*]

Greek nouns ending in **-sis** have entered English via Latin and form their Latinized forms in Latin:

cyesis → *cyeses* [Greek *kyēsis* (conception, pregnancy) → *kyēses*]
ectasis → *ectases* [Greek *ektasis* (stretching out, extension) → *ektaseis*]
paresis → *pareses* [Greek *paresis* (releasing, relaxing) → *pareseis*]
sepsis → *sepses* [Greek *sēpsis* (putrefaction, decay) → *sēpseis*]

(excerpt from Brooks Katie, 2007:
Classical Roots for Medics
Chambers Harrap Pub Ltd)