

The ancient Greeks originally had a number system like the Romans, but in the 4th century BC, they started using this system. It was a number system closer to Arabic numbers (our own number system). Instead of counting I, II, III like the Egyptians or the Romans, they had different symbols for 1, 2, 3 up to 9, just like us. However, they did not use the same symbols to represent numbers greater than 9. They had a new set of symbols for 10, 20, 30, and so on, and yet another set for 100, 200, 300. This has the disadvantage, like so many of the ancient counting systems, that you eventually ran out of symbols !

The symbols that the Greeks used were their letters. They are listed below with their sounds. Unfortunately, this method of counting needs 27 letters, and there were only 24 in the classical Greek alphabet. This meant that the Greeks had to find 3 extra symbols for the missing numbers of 6, 90 and 900. They used 3 archaic letters, which used to be in the alphabet but had been dropped as they were no longer required. The Greeks did not have a zero. They didn't need one. If you don't have any tens value, then you don't use one of the tens letters.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
α	β	γ	δ	ε	Ϝ	ζ	η	θ
<i>alpha</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>gamma</i>	<i>delta</i>	<i>epsilon</i>	<i>digamma</i>	<i>zeta</i>	<i>eta</i>	<i>Theta</i>
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο	π	Ϟ
<i>iota</i>	<i>kappa</i>	<i>lambda</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>xi</i>	<i>omicron</i>	<i>pi</i>	<i>Kopa</i>
100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900
ρ	σ	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω	Ϡ
<i>rho</i>	<i>sigma</i>	<i>tau</i>	<i>upsilon</i>	<i>phi</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>psi</i>	<i>omega</i>	<i>Sampi</i>

1. Write down the following Greek numbers in English (can you make a comment) :

τ ι δ | χ ξ Ϝ | σ ε | ω θ

2. Write down the following numbers in the Greek number system :

One hundred and twenty three / Two hundred and twenty four / Three hundred and forty five / Four hundred and fifty six / Five hundred and sixty six / Six hundred and seventy eight / Seven hundred and eighty nine