

# The *textalpha* package

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## Abstract

The *textalpha* package enables the use of Greek characters in text independent of font encoding or TeX engine.<sup>1</sup> Input is possible via text commands (`\textalpha ... \textOmega`) or Unicode literals<sup>2</sup>.

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## 1 Usage

Load this package in the preamble of your document with

```
\usepackage[<options>]{textalpha}
```

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<sup>1</sup>This document was compiled using 8-bit fonts (font encoding T1). For a version using Unicode fonts, see [textalpha-tu.pdf](#).

<sup>2</sup>Requires *greek-inputenc* or XeTeX/LuaTeX.

to get a unified interface for Greek letters and symbols that works in all text font encodings, with both, Unicode fonts and the *fontspec* package or 8-bit fonts and the *fontenc* package.

See the source of this document [textalpha-doc.tex](#) for a setup and usage example, the literate source of the package [textalpha.sty](#) for the implementation, and [test-tuenc-greek.pdf](#) for Greek with XeTeX/LuaTeX.

## 1.1 Options

### 1.1.1 `normalize-symbols`

Mathematical notation uses variant shapes of some Greek letters as additional symbols. There are separate code points for the symbol variants in Unicode. TeX supports some of the variant shape symbols in mathematical mode ( $\theta|\vartheta$ ,  $\phi|\varphi$ ,  $\pi|\varpi$ ,  $\rho|\varrho$ ,  $\epsilon|\varepsilon$ ) but not in the LGR font encoding used for Greek text in 8-bit TeX. The variations have no syntactic meaning in Greek text and text fonts may use the variant shapes in place of the “regular” ones as a stylistic choice.

The `normalize-symbols` option merges letters and symbols to Greek letters. This way, text copied from external sources can be compiled without errors even if it contains a GREEK SYMBOL ... in place of a GREEK LETTER ...:

The source of this paragraph uses both variants for beta ( $\beta|\beta$ ), theta ( $\vartheta|\theta$ ), phi ( $\varphi|\phi$ ), pi ( $\pi|\pi$ ), kappa ( $\kappa|\kappa$ ), rho ( $\varrho|\rho$ ), Theta ( $\Theta|\Theta$ ), and epsilon ( $\varepsilon|\epsilon$ ).

This option is ignored with Unicode fonts.

**Attention:** Do not use this option in cases where the distinction between the symbol variants may be important (e.g. in a mathematical or scientific context). Try the [alphabet](#) package with the respective characters in mathematical mode or use XeTeX/LuaTeX with Unicode fonts in these cases.

### 1.1.2 `keep-semicolon`

LGR is no [standard text font encoding](#). Latin characters and some other ASCII symbols are mapped to Greek “equivalents” if LGR is the active font encoding. (See [usage.pdf](#) for a description of this Latin-Greek transliteration.)

Special care is required with the question mark characters: The LGR font encoding uses the Latin question mark as input for the *erotimatiko* and maps the semicolon to a middle dot (*ano teleia*). As a result, Unicode-encoded texts that use the semicolon as *erotimatiko* end up with an *ano teleia* in its place! Without special care, only the deprecated character 037E GREEK QUESTION MARK<sup>3</sup> works with both, Xe/LuaTeX and 8-bit TeX.

The `\textsemicolon` command inserts an *erotimatiko* in LGR and a semicolon else (i.e. always a character that looks like a semicolon):

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<sup>3</sup>The Unicode standard provides the code point 037E GREEK QUESTION MARK but says character 003B SEMICOLON and not 037E is the preferred character for a ‘Greek question mark’ (*erotimatiko*).

Latin (T1) a; b, Greek (LGR)  $\alpha$ ;  $\beta$

With the `keep-semicolon` option, character 003B SEMICOLON can be used for the *erotimatiko* also with LGR encoded fonts:

Latin (T1)	Greek (LGR)	question mark character
Tí φήις;	Tí φήις;	037E GREEK QUESTION MARK
Tí φήις;	Tí φήις;	003B SEMICOLON
Tí φήις?	Tí φήις;	003F QUESTION MARK

This option is ignored with Unicode fonts (where the SEMICOLON literal always prints a semicolon character).

## 2 Limitations

If compiling with 8-bit TeX, the internal font encoding switches interfere with other work behind the scenes. Kerning, diacritics and up/down-casing show problems if Greek letters are used without explicit change of the font encoding.

These problems can be avoided by use of *babel* and the correct language setting (greek), an explicit font encoding switch (e.g. wrapping the Greek text in `\ensuregreek`<sup>4</sup>, or XeTeX/LuaTeX with Unicode fonts.

### 2.1 Kerning

With pdfTeX and 8-bit fonts, no kerning occurs between Greek characters in non-Greek text due to the internal font encoding switch: compare ΑΥΑ (LGR) to ΑΥΑ (T1).

Compiling with LuaTeX provides kerning also on font encoding boundaries.

### 2.2 Diacritics

Accent macros do not work with Unicode literals as base character under 8-bit TeX engines. Use the Latin transliteration or LICR commands.

Composition of diacritics (like `\accdasia\acctonos` or `\<\'`) fails in other font encodings. Long names (like `\accdasiaoixia`) work.

With LGR and TU, pre-composed glyphs are chosen if available. In other font encodings, accent macros do not select pre-composed characters. The difference is a sub-optimal placement of the accent and becomes obvious if you drag-and-drop text from the PDF version of this document.:

ǎǎǎǎ (LGR) vs. ǎ (T1).

Greek diacritics (except the dialytika) are placed before capital letters in Titlecase and dropped in UPPERCASE:

á ê í ñ ð ò ð Á Ē Ī Ḥ ˆO ˆΥ ˆΩ  
A E Ī H O Υ Ω A E Ī H O Υ Ω

With the new `\MakeUppercase` implementation (since 2022/06), Greek upcasing rules are only applied if the text language is set to Greek with Babel (and still need some fixes for LICR input).

<sup>4</sup>The `\ensuregreek` macro ensures the argument is set in a font encoding supporting Greek.



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F
370	◦	◦	◦	◦	´	´	◦	◦			´	◦	◦	◦	;	
380					´	´	´A	·	´E	´H	´I		´O		´Υ	´Ω
390	ι	A	B	Γ	Δ	E	Z	H	Θ	I	K	Λ	M	N	Ξ	O
3A0	Π	P		Σ	T	Υ	Φ	X	Ψ	Ω	Ϊ	Ϋ	ά	έ	ή	ί
3B0	ύ	α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο
3C0	π	ρ	ς	σ	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω	ϊ	ϋ	ό	ύ	ώ	
3D0	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	Ϙ	ϙ	Ϡ	ϡ	Ϣ	ϣ	Ϥ	ϥ
3E0	λ	λ	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
3F0	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Table 1: Greek and Coptic Unicode Block, input as literal Unicode characters in T1 font encoding (legend: ◦ glyph missing in LGR).

In LGR, the Latin letter `s` and the command `\textautosigma` print the “normal” sigma if followed by another letter and the final sigma if followed by space or punctuation. This is implemented via the font ligature mechanism and works only in LGR:  $\sigma\varsigma$  (LGR) vs.  $\varsigma\varsigma$  (T1).

The upper case of both sigma variants is `\textSigma`, the lower case of Sigma is `\textautosigma`.

Test: (Unicode literal and `\text...` commands in LGR)

original:  $\sigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma$

MakeUppercase:  $\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma\Sigma$

MakeLowercase:  $\sigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\sigma\varsigma\sigma\varsigma$

TODO: With the new MakeLowercase, a literal  $\Sigma$  is converted according to its position :) but the macro `\textSigma` is converted to a final sigma also in the middle of a word (at least with language English).

### 3.2 Greek Unicode characters in non-Greek text

With the `textalpha` package, `greek-inputenc` and input encoding `utf8`, Greek Unicode characters can be used in text with any font encoding. See Tables 1 and 2.

Kerning is preserved if the active font encoding supports Greek:  $A\Upsilon A$

Combined Diacritics work  $\xi$ , diacritics (except diaeresis) are dropped with MakeUppercase ( $\mu\acute{\alpha}\iota\sigma\tau\rho\varsigma \mapsto \text{ΜΑΪΣΤΡΟΣ}$ ).

### 3.3 PDF strings

With `textalpha` and `greek-inputenc`, there are two options to get Greek letters in PDF strings: LICR macros and literal Unicode input.

#### 3.3.1 $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ , $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ and $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$

The subsection title above uses: LICR macros, Unicode input and the LGR transliteration for the Greek word  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ . Check the table of contents

