

ΠΙΣΤΟΥΤΗ ΝΩΩ The 1st Lesson

1.1 Nouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing or abstract idea. For example: *Peter, bicycle, Alexandria* and *truth* are all nouns. Coptic nouns are classified by:

- **number** – they can be singular (*s.*) or plural (*pl.*) like in English
- **gender** – singular nouns can also be either masculine (*m.*) or feminine (*f.*) like in French

1.2 Indefinite articles

Indefinite articles are used to denote a noun that is not specified. For example, when we talk of ‘a cat’, we are referring to any cat. Coptic has two forms of the indefinite article, which are attached directly to the beginning of the noun:

- the **singular** ΟΥ-, which is used for both masculine and feminine nouns and is translated into English as “a” or “an”
- the **plural** ρΑΝ-, which is often left untranslated in English but approximates to “some”

ΟΥ-

a, an

ΡΑΝ-

some

ΟΥϫΩΜ	a book	ΡΑΝϫΩΜ	(some) books
ΟΥΤΟΤΟ	a chair	ΡΑΝΤΟΤΟ	(some) chairs
ΟΥΚΑΩ	a pen	ΡΑΝΚΑΩ	(some) pens
ΟΥΩΩ	a lesson	ΡΑΝΩΩ	(some) lessons
ΟΥΑϫΠ	a hour	ΡΑΝΑϫΠ	(some) hours

1.3 Definite articles

Definite articles are used to refer to a specified noun. For example, when we speak of ‘the dog’, we are referring to a particular dog. English has only one definite article - “the”, which remains the same regardless of the noun it defines. However, Coptic has seven different forms, which are attached directly to the beginning of its noun.

The Coptic definite article depends on the number, gender, type of noun and the letter it begins with. It is important to use the correct definite article because unlike English, in Coptic most nouns remain unchanged whether they are singular or plural and so the article provides a lot of information about the noun.

This might sound complicated but it really isn’t if you bear in mind these simple rules (Figure 1). To choose the appropriate definite article for a noun you should ask yourself:

- **What is the number of the noun?** If it is plural then the article must be NI-^* . But if it is singular then you should ask
- **What is the gender of the noun?** If it is masculine then the article can be NI- , ἰ- or ῥ- . If it is feminine then the article can be ἡ- , ἑ- or ἑ- . To decide which one is appropriate ask
- **Is the noun 'strong' or 'weak'?** The weak definite article is less precise than the strong definite article. For example, πῖς "the son" (using the strong article) refers to a particular son but ὁ υἱός "the Son" (using the weak article) refers to a son that is well known to the reader, that is, Jesus Christ. The weak definite article is most often used in religious contexts. The strong definite articles are NI- (*m.*) or ἡ- (*f.*). But the weak definite article can be ἰ- or ῥ- (*m.*), or ἡ- or ἑ- (*f.*) depending on the first letter of the noun it defines. To choose the appropriate article you should ask.
- **Does the noun begin with a *Bilminour* letter?** The articles ῥ- (*m.*) and ἑ- (*f.*) are used instead of ἰ- (*m.*) and ἡ- (*f.*) if the noun it defines begins with the letters Β Λ Μ Ν Ρ and sometimes Ι and ΟΥ - the *Bilminour* letters. The reason that there are two forms is to make pronunciation of the article and its noun easier just like in English the choice of *a* or *an* is made depending on whether the noun begins with a consonant or vowel sound.

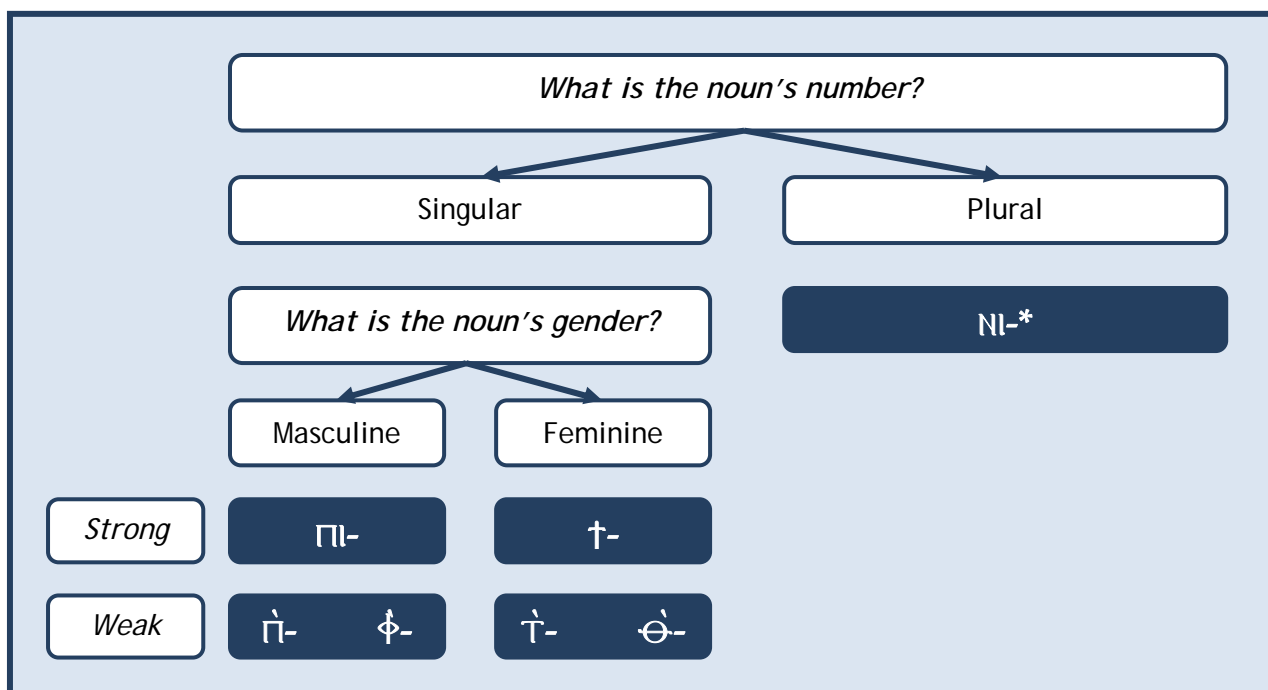


Figure 1. Choosing the appropriate definite article.

▪ Singular masculine

NI- the ἰ- the ῥ- the

πῖς	the man	ἡ γῆ	the earth	ὁ πατήρ	the father
ὁ παῖς	the boy	ὁ οἶκος	the house	ὁ θεός	(the) God

* There are actually two plural definite articles: NI- and NEN- . NI- is used in majority of cases, but is used in a genitive construction. For example, NENKAI ὁ παῖς "the pens of the boy".

ΝΟΤΡΙ ΕΪΟΟΥ	good day
ΝΟΤΡΙ ΕΪΩΡΕ	good night
ΟΥΧΑΙ	good bye ("be in good health")
ΝΕΜ	and, with

Exercise 1

Translate the following into Coptic.

1. the man and the woman	10. the brothers and the sisters
2. the brother and the sister	11. the fathers and the mothers
3. the boy and the girl	12. the women and the men
4. the father and the mother	13. the boys and the girls
5. the father and the son	14. the kings and the queens
6. Heaven and the earth	15. the heavens and the earth
7. the house and the room	16. the rooms and the doors
8. the room and the door	17. pens and clocks
9. the table and the chair	18. women and men

Lessons to Simplify Coptic Grammar
 The 1st Lesson
 ΑΜΒΡΟΣΕ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ for ΠΙΣΑΧΟ
<http://sites.google.com/site/pisakho/pransh>
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