Rules for Accenting Greek Nouns

There are 3 types of accent in Greek:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ´ | Acute may appear on: | last 3 syllables |
| ` | Grave: | only on last syllable |
| ˜ | Circumflex: | last 2 syllables |

General rules:

1. When a word is accented on the last syllable with an acute, this will change to a grave in a Greek sentence, unless it is the last word in a sentence. This is the only use of the grave accent.

2. If the last syllable is long, an acute cannot appear on the third to last syllable, nor can a circumflex appear on the second to last syllable.

One can tell whether the last syllable is long by examining the vowel. All diphthongs are long (except as noted in 8. below); η and ω are always long; ε and o are always short; α, ι, and υ may be long or short. Most nouns end in a consonant, long vowel or diphthong (a vowel with an iota subscript is always long because it is actually an old diphthong), so you will not often have to decide whether α, ι, and υ are long or short. The quantities of α in the 1st declension are noted below. Otherwise consult a good dictionary.

3. Accented words have names in the old grammars which you will occasionally hear:

| Acute on the | last: | oxytonon | ἀρετή |
|---|---|---|---|
| | second to last: | paroxytonon | φίλος |
| | third to last: | proparoxytonon | ἀλήθεια |
| Grave on the | last: | barytonon | ἀρετὴ |
| Circumflex on the last: | | perispomenon | ἀρετῆς |
| | second to last: | properispomenon | χεῖρα |

Specific rules for nouns:

4. Noun accents are persistent, i.e., they will remain where they are and as they appear in the nominative case until and unless some rule below applies.

5. In the 1st declension, the genitive plural always circumflexes on the last syllable.

6. In the 1st and 2nd declensions, if a word is accented on the last syllable, this will become a circumflex in the genitive and dative, singular and plural.

7. In the 3rd declension -- the Rule of Monosyllables: a one syllable word will accent on the last syllable in the genitive and dative, singular and plural. Also, α and ι are short.

8. In the 1st declension, the quantity of the last syllable is as follows:

| Sing. | | | | Plural | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nom. | -α | short | | Nom. | -αι | short |
| | Gen. | -ας | long | | Gen. | -ῶν | long |
| | Dat. | -ᾳ | long | | Dat. | -αις | long |
| | Acc. | -αν | short | | Acc. | -ας | long |