

Ancient Greek Grammar: Temporal Clauses with ἕως and πρὶν

ἕως (μέχρι, ἄκρι, ἔσπε) “as long as, until; in expectation that”

coextensive main & temporal clauses = ‘as long as’ (ongoing aspect)

non-coextensive main & temporal clauses = ‘until’ (point-in-time aspect)

past indicative introducing ἕως + aorist indicative = *until*

ἐμαχόμεν ἕως ἐνίκησα.

‘I kept fighting *until* I won.’

past indicative introducing ἕως + imperfect indicative = *as long as*

ἐμαχόμεν ἕως ἐνίκων.

‘I kept fighting *as long as* I was winning.’

present indicative introducing ἕως + ἄν & subjv [cf. Pres. Gen. condition] = *as long as, until*

μαχόμεθα ἕως ἄν νικήσωμεν.

‘We fight *until* we win’ [usually aorist subjunctive]

μαχόμεθα ἕως ἄν νικῶμεν.

‘We fight *as long as* we’re winning.’ [usually pres. subjv.]

past indicative introducing ἕως + optative [NO ἄν; cf. Past Gen.] = ‘in expectation that’

ἐμαχόμεθα ἕως νικήσαιμεν.

‘We kept fighting *in the expectation that* we would win.’

future indicative introducing ἕως + ἄν & subjv [cf. FMV] = *until, as long as*

μαχοῦμαι ἕως ἄν νικήσωμεν. ‘I’ll fight *until* we win.’

μαχοῦμαι ἕως ἄν νικῶμεν. ‘I’ll fight *as long as* we’re winning.’

πρὶν ‘before, until’

affirmative main clause introducing πρὶν + infinitive (+ subj acc.) = *before*

ἀγγελεῖ τὴν νίκην πρὶν κήρυκα ἐλθεῖν.

‘He’ll announce the victory *before* a herald comes.’

ἤγγειλε τὴν νίκην πρὶν ἀπελθεῖν.

‘He announced the victory *before* leaving/he left.’

negative main clause introducing πρὶν + finite verb = *until* (same constructions as ἕως)

οὐ ἤγγειλε τὴν νίκην πρὶν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἀφίκετο.

‘He did not announce the victory *until* he reached the city.’

οὐ ἀγγέλλει πρὶν ἄν ὁ κήρυξ ἀφίκηται.

‘He doesn’t report *until* the herald arrives.’

οὐ ἀγγελεῖ τὴν νίκην πρὶν ἄν τὴν πόλιν ἀφίκηται.

‘He will not announce the victory *until* he reaches the city.’

οὐ ἠθέλομεν μάχεσθαι πρὶν ἄν ἀφίκοιντο.

‘We were unwilling to fight *until* they (should, were to) arrive.’

NOTE: Archaic grammar doesn’t follow these rules with πρὶν (e.g. *Iliad* 1.98).