

- Q-01. Ablaut grades
- In Proto-Indo-European, the basic, inherent vowel of most syllables was a short *e*.
- Ablaut is the name of the process whereby this short *e* changed, becoming short *o*, long *ē*, long *ō* or sometimes disappearing entirely to leave no vowel at all.

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Thus, ablaut turned short e into the following sounds:

zero	short	long
∅	e	ē
	o	ō

- Ablaut grades
- If a syllable had a short *e*, it is said to be in the "e-grade" or "full grade". When it had no vowel, it is said to be in the "zero grade". Syllables with long vowels are said to be in "lengthened grade". (When the *e*-grade or the *o*-grade is referred to, the short vowel forms are meant.)

- Ablaut grades in Greek

Ablaut grade	PIE (reconstruction)	Greek	(Greek transliterated)	Translation
e-grade or full grade	*ph ₂ -tér-m̥	πα-τέρ-α	pa-tér-a	"father" (noun, accusative)
lengthened e-grade	*ph ₂ -tér	πα-τήρ	pa-tér	"father" (noun, nominative)
zero-grade	*ph ₂ -tr-és	πα-τρ-ός	pa-tr-ós	"father's" (noun, genitive)
o-grade	*h ₃ -péh ₂ -tor-m̥	ἀ-πά-τορ-α	a-pá-tor-a	"fatherless" (adjective, accusative)
lengthened o-grade	*h ₃ -péh ₂ -tōr	ἀ-πά-τωρ	a-pá-tōr	"fatherless" (adjective, nominative)

- Ablaut grades

In this unusually neat example, the following can be seen:

- A switch to the zero-grade when the word stress moves to the following syllable.
- A switch to the o-grade when the word stress moves to the preceding syllable.
- A lengthening of the vowel when the syllable is in word-final position.

- Ablaut grades

In PIE, there were already ablaut differences within the paradigms of verbs and nouns.

These **were not** the main markers of grammatical form, since the inflection system served this purpose, but they must have been significant secondary markers.

In the daughter languages, these came to be important markers of grammatical distinctions. The vowel change in the Germanic strong verb, for example, is the direct descendant of that seen in the Indo-European verb paradigm.

- Ablaut grades: Examples in modern English are the following:

Infinitive	Preterit	Past participle
sing	sang	sung
give	gave	given
strive	strove	striven
break	broke	broken