

Advice for Learning Krapar

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Acquiring any language requires a significant commitment of time and effort. But when undertaken with good methods, every stage of the journey can be enjoyable.

Experts recommend that rather than devoting a large chunk of time on a single day, to instead devote small chunks of time on a daily basis. See if you are able to find time in your daily schedule to set aside for Krapar. I recommend 30 minutes per day, 3–5 days per week. If that seems daunting at first, start with less frequency and slowly work up.

For learning Krapar, I recommend doing two things simultaneously: (1) read simple or familiar Krapar texts; (2) work through a textbook(s).

(1) There are two good ways to do this.

- a. Method 1: Sit with a Krapar text in a comfortable position and with good lighting and read at length by yourself, silently in your head or aloud. Enjoy what you understand and don't worry about what you don't. It is important for the brain to have extended time in the language without worrying too much about details. The cadence of sentences will work their way into your brain by osmosis and you will pick up many words and phrases by seeing them repeatedly in context. The more time you spend reading Krapar for pleasure without stressing about what you don't understand, the more comfortable you will become in the language.
- b. Method 2: Take a text you want to read in Krapar and get the same text in modern Armenian and/or English. Start with a text you are familiar with, like a portion of the Badarak or a Biblical text. Have them before you side-by-side. Always read the Krapar first *out loud* and see what you can understand. Look to the modern Armenian and/or English to see how it is translated. Then go back to the Krapar and read it *out loud* repeatedly until you can hear and feel the meaning in the original Krapar.

Recommended Texts to start with:

1. Biblical: Gospels, especially John; 1 John; Psalms; OT narrative texts. The language of the Gospel of John and the Epistle of 1 John is simple grammatically (even if the meaning is profound). Narrative texts with dialogue like the Gospels or narrative books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Samuel, Kings, Ruth, Jonah, etc.) are also great because it is easier for a learner to follow a story with dialogue than an abstract treatise. The Psalms can also be enjoyable because they are short, manageable, and familiar.
2. Liturgical: Badarak or the Շարժազիլը. If you do not have a book copy of the Շարժազիլը, you can get the app “Daily Worship” that has the prayer services for every day. [App store link](#). [Google Play link](#).
3. Short texts like those in the *Sayings of the Fathers* are also suitable for beginners since they are compact stories with characters, dialogue, and interesting twists. You also get the gratification of reading a complete text. Go through the table of contents of the large two volumes (esp. vol. 1, p. 413 to the end & vol. 2, pp. 5–505) and pick selections based on a topic that interests you. This can be a great way to read a Krapar text you are unfamiliar with but that is still simple. Look up a few important words in the dictionary if you like. But not too many. If you look up more than 5 words per page, you will probably no longer be

having an enjoyable time. And remember, enjoying the process is the key to making progress.

4. For the daring: the Nareg is challenging but can be a great “goal text.” It is also beautiful and powerful to read even when you don’t understand it. Read it *aloud* to yourself and enjoy the beauty and power of the rhythmic, alliterative language. Or, go back and forth between the Krapar and a modern Armenian/English version via the method mentioned above.
5. To discover new texts in Krapar: There are fifteen centuries of texts in Krapar (5th-19th), and in each session of Krapar and Kini, something new will be introduced. If you want to look for texts on your own, the series Մատենագիտական Հայոց, which aims to publish the texts of all native Armenian authors from the 5th-19th century, is a great place to look. So far, they are up to the eleventh century. You can find high-quality pdfs of some of the volumes at the website of the Matenadaran: <http://www.matenadaran.am/?id=83&lng=3>

(2) In addition to reading Krapar itself, it is helpful to have it explained by means of a textbook. If your modern Armenian is strong, a textbook teaching Krapar in modern Armenian is a great approach. Otherwise, take a textbook that explains Krapar in English. One textbook in modern Armenian and one in English is in the Google Drive and referenced below.

Textbooks & Reference Works

Robert W. Thomson. *An Introduction to Classical Armenian*. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1989, 2nd ed.

This is the standard Classical Armenian textbook for English speakers. The grammatical terminology can be challenging as well as the references to Latin and Greek if one is new to such things. Don't be overwhelmed or get lost in the details. The back of the book has selections from biblical texts and early Armenian writers, as well as a dictionary of all vocabulary words used in the text and readings.

Gregory E. Sterling. *Armenian Paradigms*. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.

This is a handy reference work containing all the paradigms from Thomson's textbook. To be used for referencing/reviewing grammatical charts.

Մարտիրոս Մինասեան. *Գրաբարի Գործնական Դասընթաց*. Անթիլիաս, Լիբանան: Կաթողիկոսութեան Հայոց Մեծի Տանն Կիլիկիոյ, 1976.

This is an excellent Classical Armenian textbook written in Western Armenian. If you know modern Armenian, I recommend using this perhaps in addition to Thomson. In many ways, it can be easier to go from Krapar to modern Armenian and vice versa rather than from Krapar to English. Minassian was a linguist, and so can be very detailed in his explanations. Once again, don't get too lost in the details.

*Many other textbooks and resources can be found on <https://archive.org/>, <https://books.google.com/>, and the National Library of Armenia digital archive: <http://www.flib.sci.am/arm/node/2>

Dictionaries

Rev. Matthias Bedrossian M. M. *New Dictionary Armenian-English*. Venice: S. Lazarus Armenian Academy, 1875-1879.

This is the standard dictionary from Krapar to English. Available in later reprints and free online access on Nayiri.

<http://nayiri.com/imagedDictionaryBrowser.jsp?dictionaryId=16&query=%D4%B1>

Նոր բարձիրք հայկազեան լեզուի. Խմբ. Հ. Գաբրիելի Աւետիքեան, Հ. Խաչատրոյ Սիւրմէլեան, և Հ. Մկրտչի Աւգերեան: 2 հատոր: Վենետիկ: Ի տպարանի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1836-1837.

This is the best Classical Armenian dictionary, prepared by Mekhitarist fathers. Krapar definitions are given in Greek, Latin, Krapar, Western Armenian, and Turkish with explanations in Krapar and many examples of the words used in sentences taken from Krapar texts. It can be challenging if you are new to Krapar. Also available on Nayiri.

<http://nayiri.com/imagedDictionaryBrowser.jsp?dictionaryId=26&pageNumber=23>

* The two dictionaries are also available in a friendly format on this website: <https://calfa.fr/>

- see also the folder “Dictionaries” on the google drive.

Note: For individual questions or to ask about additional resources, contact Jesse.