Introduction to Greek Accentuation

Preliminaries:

a. A Greek word has as many syllables as it has vowels and diphthongs.
b. A syllable is considered long if it contains a long vowel (ᾱ, ι, υ, η, ω, not α, ε, ο) or diphthong (αι, αυ, ει, ευ, ηυ, οι, ου, υι) but:
c. The diphthongs αι and οι are considered short for the purposes of accentuation when (and only when) they occur at the end of a word.

Acute (΄): over any vowel or diphthong on any of the last three syllables. If the last syllable is long, the acute can fall only on the last two syllables. Examples: καλός, δαίµων, ἄνθρωπος.

Circumflex (῀): only over long vowels and diphthongs, and only on the last two syllables. If the final syllable is long, a circumflex cannot be used on the preceding syllable (λέων, δαίµων). A circumflex is required for the long syllable of words ending in the sequence long – short (νῆσος ταύτα). Examples: γῆ, θεό, δόρον, τόυτο.

Grave (`): on the last syllable only, over any vowel or diphthong. The grave always replaces the acute on the final syllable, except when the word is the last word of a clause or sentence, or when the word is followed by an enclitic. Examples: τὸν ἄνδρα, τὴν τύχην, οἱ θεοὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

Note that the final Greek accent is influenced by the quantity of the final syllable.

1. Verbs

The accent of verbs is in general recessive, that is, the accent is thrown as far back as the quantity of the last syllable permits.

Thus: λύω, λύεις, λύει, λύο, µεν, λύετε, λύουσι

Ελυόµην, σπεύδε

Contracted verbs are only apparent exceptions, for the circumflex is used where possible to show, in effect, the fact of contraction.

Thus: φιλέ – ω > φιλόδ, φιλέ – οµεν > φιλοµεν
φιλέ – εις > φιλείς, φιλέ – ετε > φιλείτε
φιλέ – ει > φιλεί, φιλέ – ωυσι > φιλούσι

An important exception is the enclitic εἰµι, which shows unusual accentuation. (If you’re curious about enclitics, look at the reference grammar, p. 285 of your Athenaze text.) Another important exception is the odd imperative ἔλθῃ (which you’ll later come to recognize as the aorist imperative).
Worksheet:
Accentuation of verbs

ἐκβανει
λεγει
φερει
αίρει
σπευδω
ἐλαυνω
λαμβανει
λαμβανε
φερει
φερε
σπευδει
σπευδε
ἐλκετε
ἀροτρευετε
πονει  (contract verb!)
καλει  (contract verb!)
φιλει  (contract verb!)