

The Translation Map

Where English Bibles sit: **how** they translate (across) and **which Greek New Testament** they translate (down).

	Word for word formal equivalence	Balanced optimal equivalence	Thought for thought functional equivalence	Hebraic voice Messianic Jewish
GREEK TEXT ↓				
Critical Text Earliest manuscripts, weighed verse by verse	NASB LSB ESV RSV NRSV LEB UASV AMP NABRE	BSB CSB HCSB ISV	NIV NET NLT CEB	TLV CJB
Majority Text The reading in most manuscripts (Byzantine)	WEB	MSB		WMB
Textus Receptus The 1500s “Received Text” behind the KJV	KJV NKJV MEV			

BSB the translation Abide quotes **Old Testament:** nearly all follow the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

Past the right edge: paraphrases like The Message; read one as you would a commentary. Placements show tendencies; every translation has some of each.

What’s in your translation toolbox?

NOT COMPETITORS · TOOLS

Keep a Bible you love, and read its preface. For study, keep three or four open from **different columns** of the map (one close to the words, one that carries the flow of thought) and at least one from a **different row**, so you notice when the Greek text itself differs.

The Scholar’s Set

LSB or NASB: close study of words and grammar

CSB or NIV: your reading Bible, to follow the argument

KJV or NKJV: shows where the Textus Receptus differs

NET: translators’ notes explain the hard choices

Devotional & Discipleship Set

ESV or BSB: daily reading and study

NKJV or KJV: keeps the words and idioms; follows the Textus Receptus

NIV: the main idea, after a close reading

NLT: natural English; read it like a commentary

TLV: Jewish names, idioms and setting

AMP: a word’s range of meaning, spelled out

My toolbox

Close to the words

Carries the flow of thought

From another row, or with notes

WHEN TRANSLATIONS DIFFER, ASK WHY

1 · Approach. Word for word or thought for thought.

2 · Interpretation. The same words, read two ways.

3 · Manuscripts. A different Greek or Hebrew text.

4 · English. Our language has changed.

A big difference is a clue: it becomes one of your questions for the passage.

“Therefore, as S. Augustine saith, that variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures.” The King James translators, preface to the 1611 Bible

Bible Translations at a Glance

Each entry: year · who publishes it · the Greek New Testament it translates. Grouped as on the map.

WORD FOR WORD

NASB New American Standard Bible
1971; updated 1995, 2020 · Lockman Foundation · Critical Text

Long valued as one of the most literal English Bibles; revised from the 1901 American Standard Version.

LSB Legacy Standard Bible
2021 · Lockman Foundation, with The Master's Seminary · Critical Text

A NASB revision that renders key words consistently, including "Yahweh" for God's name.

ESV English Standard Version
2001 · Crossway · Critical Text

"Essentially literal"; revised from the 1971 Revised Standard Version.

RSV Revised Standard Version
1952 (New Testament 1946) · National Council of Churches · Critical Text

An authorized revision of the 1901 ASV in the King James tradition.

NRSV New Revised Standard Version
1989; updated 2021 · National Council of Churches · Critical Text

"As literal as possible, as free as necessary"; uses gender-inclusive language.

LEB Lexham English Bible
Logos Bible Software · SBL Greek New Testament

"Fairly literal"; made to be read alongside original-language tools.

UASV Updated American Standard Version
2022 edition · Christian Publishing House · Critical Text

A "literal translation" updating the 1901 ASV.

AMP Amplified Bible
1965; updated 2015 · Lockman Foundation · Critical Text

A literal base text, with synonyms and definitions added in the verse to bring out each word's meaning.

NABRE New American Bible Revised Edition
2011 (New Testament revised 1986) · Confraternity of Christian Doctrine · Critical Text

A Catholic Bible with the deuterocanonical books; its revised New Testament moved toward word for word.

WEB World English Bible
2020 stable text · eBible.org · Majority Text
A public-domain update of the 1901 ASV in everyday spoken English.

KJV King James Version
1611 · public domain in the US · Textus Receptus

The English Bible for some 300 years; some of its words have since changed meaning.

NKJV New King James Version
1982 · Thomas Nelson · Textus Receptus
The KJV's wording modernized; footnotes give the Critical and Majority Text readings.

MEV Modern English Version
2014 · Military Bible Association (Passio) · Textus Receptus

Begun by military chaplains to help troops understand the KJV; word for word in modern English.

BALANCED

BSB Berean Standard Bible
Public domain since 2023 · Berean Bible Translation Committee · Critical Text
"Near the middle" between word for word and thought for thought; free to read and copy; every word linked to the Greek and Hebrew online. Quoted in Abide.

MSB Majority Standard Bible
Public domain since 2023 · Berean Bible Translation Committee · Majority Text
The BSB with its New Testament translated from the Byzantine Majority Text.

CSB Christian Standard Bible
2017 · Holman Bible Publishers · Critical Text
"Optimal equivalence": precision to the original languages balanced with readability. Revised from the HCSB.

HCSB Holman Christian Standard Bible
1999–2009 · Holman Bible Publishers · Critical Text
The CSB's forerunner, and an early "optimal equivalence" translation.

ISV International Standard Version
1995–2014 · ISV Foundation · Critical Text
"Literal-idiomatic," between formal and functional; notes compare the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Hebrew text.

THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT

NIV New International Version
1978; updated 1984, 2011 · Biblica (Zondervan in the US) · Critical Text

Aims for "the optimum combination of transparency to the original documents and ease of understanding"; the 2011 update kept about 95% of the 1984 wording.

NLT New Living Translation
1996; updated 2004, 2015 · Tyndale House · Critical Text

Translates "entire thoughts (rather than just words)" in clear, natural English.

NET New English Translation
2001; second edition 2019 · Biblical Studies Press · Critical Text

More than 60,000 translators' notes explain the hard choices, often giving the more literal wording; free online.

CEB Common English Bible
2011 · Common English Bible · Critical Text
Written for clarity when read aloud, by 120 scholars from 22 faith traditions.

HEBRAIC VOICE

TLV Tree of Life Version
2014 · Tree of Life Bible Society · Critical Text

A "Jewish-friendly voice": Jewish book order and Hebrew names such as Yeshua.

CJB Complete Jewish Bible
1998 · David H. Stern
Hebrew names and Jewish expressions; its Old Testament adapts the 1917 Jewish Publication Society version.

WMB World Messianic Bible
2022 stable text · eBible.org · Majority Text
The WEB with Hebrew names, also called the Hebrew Names Version.

A PARAPHRASE

MSG The Message
1993; complete 2002 · NavPress · Eugene Peterson
Captures "the tone of the text and the original conversational feel." Read it like a commentary.

Critical Text: built by comparing the thousands of manuscripts, giving weight to the earliest (Nestle-Aland, UBS).

Majority Text: follows the reading found in most surviving manuscripts, the Byzantine tradition.

Textus Receptus: the Greek text printed in the 1500s, behind the King James and its successors.