

# ESSENTIAL RUSSIAN GRAMMAR

All the grammar really needed for speech and comprehension, without trivia or archaic material, clearly presented with many shortcuts, timesavers... self-study or class use, for a beginner, as a refresher...an ideal supplement to phase study... the most efficient system for adults with limited learning time.

**BRIAN KEMPLE**

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**RUSSIAN**  
GRAMMAR



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BRIAN KEMPLE

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# INTRODUCTION

*Essential Russian Grammar* assumes that you have a limited amount of time at your disposal to study Russian and that your objective is simple everyday communication, both spoken and written. This book, therefore, does not attempt to offer a complete outline of all aspects of Russian grammar, even in a highly condensed version. It does, however, offer a series of aids to help you use more effectively phrases and words that you have already learned. The book will introduce you to the most common structures and forms of Russian and a selected number of the most useful rules.

## HOW TO STUDY *ESSENTIAL RUSSIAN GRAMMAR*

If you have already studied Russian in a conventional manner, this book will serve as a review, and you can use it by glancing through all of it quickly and then selecting those areas on which you wish to concentrate.

If, however, this is your first acquaintance with Russian grammar, the following suggestions may be of help:

1. Before beginning to work your way through this book, master several hundred useful phrases and expressions such as you will find in any good phrase book or in the *Listen & Learn Russian* course. The material in this book will be much more easily understood after you have achieved some simple working knowledge of the language. This book's purpose is to enable you to gain greater fluency once you have learned phrases and expressions, not to teach you to construct sentences from rules and vocabulary.

2. Read through *Essential Russian Grammar* at least once in its entirety. Do not be concerned if some of the material is not immediately clear; what appears to be discouragingly complex on first reading will become much simpler as you progress in your study. The first reading is necessary to acquaint you with the terms and concepts used from the beginning. Learning these will help you improve your comprehension of Russian and use more freely the expressions and words you already know. As you use Russian and hear it spoken, many of its grammatical patterns will become

familiar to you. *Essential Russian Grammar* helps you discover these patterns, and it will be helpful to you as you develop your vocabulary and improve your comprehension.

3. Go back to this book periodically. Sections that at first seem difficult or of doubtful benefit may prove extremely helpful as you progress further.

4. For the most part, *Essential Russian Grammar* follows a logical order, taking up the major divisions of grammar in sequence. You will do best to follow this order. However, you may be one of those who learn best when they study to answer an immediate question or need (e.g., how to form the comparative of adjectives; how to express the future tense; etc.). If you are such a student, turn to the section that interests you at the moment, but read through the entire section and not just an isolated part. Individual remarks, taken out of context, are easily misunderstood and may seriously mislead you.

5. Examples are given for every rule. It will be helpful if you memorize them. If you learn all of the examples in *Essential Russian Grammar*, you will have encountered the basic difficulties of Russian and studied models for their solution.

6. You cannot study Russian or any other language systematically without an understanding of grammar, and the use and understanding of grammatical terms is as essential as a knowledge of certain mechanical terms when you learn to drive a car. If your knowledge of grammatical terms is a little hazy, read the Glossary of Grammatical Terms (page 94) and refer to it whenever necessary.

In Russian, as in any language, there are potentially many ways to express a single idea. Some involve simple constructions, others more difficult ones. Some of the more difficult constructions may well be more sophisticated ways of conveying the thought and ones that you will ultimately wish to master, but during your first experiments in communication in Russian, you can achieve your aim by using a simple construction. Be satisfied at first with the simple.

You should not, however, be afraid of making mistakes. The purpose of this book is not to teach you to speak like a native but to allow you to communicate and be understood. If you pay attention to what you're doing, you will find that eventually you make fewer and fewer errors. Sooner or later you'll be able to review *Essential Russian Grammar* or a more detailed book at a time that is appropriate for polishing your speech.

As you begin to speak Russian, you will be your own best judge of those areas where you need most help. If there is no one with you, you can

practice by speaking mentally to yourself. In the course of the day see how many simple thoughts that you have expressed in English you are able to turn into Russian. This kind of experimental self-testing will give direction to your study of Russian. Remember that your purpose in studying this course is not to pass an examination or receive a certificate, but to communicate with others on a simple but useful level. *Essential Russian Grammar* should not be thought of as the equivalent of a formal course of study at a university. Although it could serve as a useful supplement to such a course, its primary aim is to help adults study on their own. Of course, no self-study or academic course, or even series of courses, will ever be ideally suited to all students. You must rely on and be guided by your own rate of learning and your own requirements and interests.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR VOCABULARY BUILDING

1. Study words and word lists that answer real and immediate personal needs. If you are planning to travel in the near future, your motivation and orientation are clear-cut, and *Listen & Learn Russian* or another good travel phrase book will provide you with the material you need. Select material according to your personal interests and requirements. Even if you do not plan to travel to Russia in the near future, you will probably learn more quickly by imagining yourself in a travel situation.
2. Memorize by association. Phrase books usually give associated word lists. If you use a dictionary, don't memorize words at random but words that are related in some fashion.
3. Study the specialized vocabulary of your profession, business or hobby. For example, if you are interested in mathematics, learn the wide vocabulary in that discipline. You will quickly learn words in your own specialty and a surprising amount will be applicable or transferable to other areas. Although specialized vocabularies may not always be readily available, an active interest and a good dictionary will help you get started.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in *Essential Russian Grammar*:

Acc.	Accusative case
Adj.	Adjective
Anim.	Animate
Dat.	Dative case
Def.	Definition
Fem.	Feminine gender
Gen.	Genitive case
Impf.	Imperfective aspect
Inf.	Infinitive
Instr.	Instrumental case
Int.	Interrogative
Lit.	Literally
Masc.	Masculine gender
Neut.	Neuter gender
Nom.	Nominative case
Pers.	Person
Pf.	Perfective aspect
Pl.	Plural
Prep.	Prepositional case
Rel.	Relative
Sing.	Singular



# PRONUNCIATION

## THE RUSSIAN ALPHABET

Learning the sequence of the 33 letters of the Russian alphabet, given here in upper and lower case, will enable you to use a Russian dictionary. Although the italic forms are not employed in the present volume, they are included here for recognition; they are used in Russian books for emphasis and decoration (like our italics), and they are the basis of Russian handwriting, which is essentially a connected form of printed italics.

REGULAR	ITALIC	PRONUNCIATION
А а	<i>А а</i>	<i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , but cut short
Б б	<i>Б б</i>	<i>b</i> in <i>bed</i> ; <i>p</i> in <i>speak</i> at the end of a word or syllable
В в	<i>В в</i>	<i>v</i> in <i>vote</i> ; <i>f</i> in <i>father</i> at the end of a word or syllable
Г г	<i>Г г</i>	<i>g</i> in <i>goat</i> ; <i>k</i> in <i>skin</i> at the end of a word or syllable
Д д	<i>Д д</i>	<i>d</i> in <i>day</i> ; <i>t</i> in <i>stay</i> at the end of a word or syllable
Е е	<i>Е е</i>	<i>ye</i> in <i>yet</i>
Ё ё	<i>Ё ё</i>	<i>yaw</i> in <i>yawn</i>
Ж ж	<i>Ж ж</i>	<i>s</i> in <i>measure</i>
З з	<i>З з</i>	<i>z</i> in <i>zeal</i>
И и	<i>И и</i>	<i>ee</i> in <i>meet</i> , but cut short
Й й	<i>Й й</i>	<i>y</i> in <i>boy</i> (this letter is found only in diphthongs; see page 2)
К к	<i>К к</i>	<i>k</i> in <i>kite</i>
Л л	<i>Л л</i>	<i>l</i> in <i>let</i>
М м	<i>М м</i>	<i>m</i> in <i>map</i>
Н н	<i>Н н</i>	<i>n</i> in <i>no</i>
О о	<i>О о</i>	<i>aw</i> in <i>law</i> , but cut short
П п	<i>П п</i>	<i>p</i> in <i>pct</i>
Р р	<i>Р р</i>	like the rolled <i>r</i> in Spanish or Italian
С с	<i>С с</i>	<i>s</i> in <i>set</i>
Т т	<i>Т т</i>	<i>t</i> in <i>stay</i>
У у	<i>У у</i>	<i>oo</i> in <i>food</i> , but cut short

Ф ф	Ф ф	<i>f</i> in <i>feed</i>
Х х	Х х	like the German <i>ch</i> in <i>hoch</i>
Ц ц	Ц ц	<i>ts</i> in <i>lets</i>
Ч ч	Ч ч	<i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i>
Ш ш	Ш ш	<i>sh</i> in <i>shall</i>
Щ щ	Щ щ	<i>shch</i> in <i>fresh cheese</i>
Ъ ъ	Ъ ъ	the "hard sign" with no distinct sound; indicates the preceding consonant is hard (see next section, "Vowels and Consonants")
Ы ы	Ы ы	a short <i>i</i> , somewhat as in <i>milk</i>
Ь ь	Ь ь	the "soft sign" with no distinct sound; indicates the preceding consonant is soft (see next section, "Vowels and Consonants")
Э э	Э э	<i>e</i> in <i>let</i>
Ю ю	Ю ю	like the word <i>you</i>
Я я	Я я	<i>ya</i> in <i>yard</i>

## VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

Russian has 10 vowels: а, е, ё, и, о, у, ы, э, ю and я. The semivowel й occurs only in diphthongs, that is (except in a few words), after another vowel. Although it has no distinct sound of its own, its presence does affect the sounds of the vowels with which it is paired.

DIPHTHONG	PRONUNCIATION
ай	like <i>ie</i> in <i>lie</i>
ей	like <i>ya</i> in <i>Yale</i>
ой	like <i>oy</i> in <i>boy</i>
уй	like <i>ooey</i> in <i>phooey</i> (but pronounced as one syllable)

The pronunciation of the two vowels и and ы is relatively unaffected when they are joined with й to form diphthongs. Thus ий is pronounced much like и, and ый much like ы.

Of the 20 Russian consonants, every one except ч and щ is hard when followed by the vowels а, о, у, ы or э, or when it comes at the end of a word. Most hard consonants are pronounced in a similar way to their English counterparts. With the exception of ж, ц and ш, hard consonants can become soft (or palatalized) when followed either by the vowels е, ё, и,

ю or я, or by the soft sign (ь). Soft consonants are pronounced with the middle or forward part of the tongue raised toward the roof of the mouth. The hard sign (ъ) occurs for the most part only after prefixes and before the vowels e, ë, ю and я. It indicates that the preceding consonant is hard.

## STRESS

Stress is more emphatic in Russian than in English. In Russian words of more than one syllable, the stress only falls on one syllable. (Throughout the present book the stressed syllable of a word is indicated by an acute accent [´]. It is not normally indicated in writing.) It is important to recognize stress in Russian because it affects the pronunciation of vowels to an even greater extent than in English. A Russian vowel only has its full value in a stressed syllable; it is "reduced" when unstressed. The most important variations in the pronunciation of vowels in stressed syllables, syllables immediately preceding stressed syllables and unstressed syllables are as follows:

VOWEL	STRESSED	PRECEDING STRESS	UNSTRESSED
o	<i>aw</i> in <i>law</i>	<i>a</i> in <i>father</i>	<i>e</i> in <i>the</i>
e	<i>ye</i> in <i>yet</i>	<i>ee</i> in <i>fee</i> , but cut short	<i>ee</i> in <i>fee</i> , but cut short

The vowels y, и and ы are not greatly affected by variations in stress, although they do become somewhat shorter. The soft vowel я reduces from a *ya* to an *uh* sound in unstressed syllables. The soft vowel ë always retains its full value since it occurs only in stressed syllables.

## WORD ORDER

The structure and word order of a Russian sentence are often extremely close to those of its English counterpart. For instance, there is a word-to-word correspondence in the following long statement:

Я про́дал то ста́рое си́нее крѣсло, кото́рое я купи́л 25 лет  
наза́д.

I sold that old blue chair that I bought 25 years ago.

Like English, Russian word order can be flexible to show emphasis or shades of meaning (e.g., "I'll go home tomorrow" or "Tomorrow I'll go home"). But Russian can be even more flexible than English because the Russian language has a system of declensions whereby special case endings indicate the role that a word is playing in a sentence. (In English, a more rigid word order tends to indicate the role.)

In two important respects, Russian sentences can be even simpler than their English counterparts: (1) Russian has no articles, definite ("the") or indefinite ("a" or "an"). Thus the sentence Она́ хо́чет купи́ть золо́тые часы́ can mean either "She wants to buy *the* gold watch" or "She wants to buy *a* gold watch." In most cases the context of the statement will make the meaning clear. (2) The present tense of the verb "to be" (бы́ть) is almost always omitted.

Весна́ — моё люби́мое вре́мя го́да.

Spring (is) my favorite time of year.

In written Russian, the verb бы́ть is replaced by a dash when separating a subject from a predicate nominative:

Мой о́тец — врач. Моя́ мать — учи́тельница.

My father (is) a doctor. My mother (is) a teacher.

Note, however, that when the subject is a pronoun the dash is usually omitted: он врач ("he is a doctor"), она́ учи́тельница ("she is a teacher").

“THERE IS,” “THERE ARE”

The expression “there is” (or “there are”) has two uses in English: (1) to point to the location of an object that is within view (e.g., “There are your glasses”); or (2) to state the existence of something (e.g., “There are tigers in India”).

To express the first idea, Russian uses the word **вот**, which can mean “there,” “there is,” “there are,” “here,” “here is,” “here are”:

**Вот** мой карандаш.

*There are* (OR: *Here are*) my pencils.

**Вот** автобус.

*Here's* (OR: *There's*) the bus.

To express the second meaning of “there is” (or “there are”), Russian uses the word **есть** in positive statements, and the word **нет** in negative statements:

В комнате **есть** кресло.

*There is* an armchair in the room.

В этом ряду **нет** свободных мест.

In this row *there are no* vacant seats.

## HOW TO FORM QUESTIONS

There are three chief ways in which to form questions in Russian, all similar to English patterns:

1. Many questions are introduced by interrogative words (but note that the subject and verb are not interchanged as in English):

**Когда** он пришёл?

*When* did he come?

**Что** он делает здесь?

*What* is he doing here?

**Куда** она идёт?

*Where* is she going?

The most frequently used interrogative words are: где (“where?”—i.e., “at what place?”); зачём (“for what purpose?”); как (“how?”); какóй (“what kind?”); когда (“when?”); кто (“who?”); куда (“where?”—i.e., “to what place?”); откúда (“from what place?”); почему (“why?”); and что (“what?”).

2. When no interrogative word is used, the word order of the declarative statement can be retained, and the questioning indicated merely by a different intonation of the sentence, as in English:

Он сего́дня пришёл.

He arrived today.

Он сего́дня пришёл?

He arrived today?

3. When the subject and verb are interchanged as in English, the word ли is inserted after the verb (or other word to be emphasized):

Знаёт ли он э́то?

Does he know that?

Придёт ли она́?

Is she coming?

This type of question is often used with the negating word не (“not”) to form polite requests corresponding to English “won’t you,” “wouldn’t you,” “couldn’t you,” etc.:

**Не пойдёте ли** вы со мной?

*Won’t* you go with me?

**Не мо́жете ли** вы нам помо́чь?

*Couldn’t* you help us?



## NEGATION

The Russian word for “no” is **нет**. To negate most statements, insert **не** (“not”) before the word to be negated. As in English, this word will usually be the verb:

**Я не** пойду́ завтра.

I will *not* go tomorrow.

**Я не** сказа́л ему́ э́то.

I did *not* tell him that.

Other elements of a sentence besides the verb can be negated for special emphasis:

**Я не** ему́ сказа́л э́то.

It was *not* to him that I said that.

Э́то **не я** ему́ сказа́л.

It was *not* I who told him that.

Unlike English, which avoids double negatives, Russian keeps the negating particle **не** even when a sentence is negated by a special negative word (e.g., **ничего́**, “nothing”; **никто́**, “no one”; **никогда́**, “never”; **ника́к**, “in no way”):

**Я ничего́** не зна́ю.

I know *nothing*.

**Я ника́к** не могу́.

I cannot *in any way*.

# NOUNS

## GENDER

Russian nouns are either masculine, feminine or neuter in gender. Generally speaking, nouns denoting male persons or animals are masculine in gender, and nouns denoting female persons or animals are feminine in gender. Thus, отец (“father”) and брат (“brother”) are masculine; and мать (“mother”) and сестра (“sister”) are feminine. The gender of a noun can often be determined from the last letter of the word when in the nominative singular (the dictionary form):

1. All nouns ending in a hard consonant or -й, and many nouns ending in -ь, are masculine in gender: стол (“table”), лес (“forest”), зал (“hall”), герой (“hero”), учитель (“teacher”). A few nouns ending in -а or -я and denoting male animate beings are masculine: дядя (“uncle”), мужчина (“man”), дедушка (“grandfather”) and others.

2. Most nouns ending in -а or -я, and all nouns ending in -ия, are feminine: книга (“book”), стена (“wall”), водка (“vodka”), женщина (“woman”), тётя (“aunt”), фамилия (“surname”). Many nouns ending in -ь are feminine: дверь (“door”), ночь (“night”).

3. Nouns ending in -о or -е are neuter: окно (“window”), дерево (“tree”), поле (“field”), здание (“building”). All nouns ending in -мя are neuter: время (“time”), имя (“name”). A few neuter nouns—of non-Russian origin—end in -и or -у: такси (“taxi”), рагу (“ragout”).

## CASE

In the English sentence “Peter sees Paul” it is the (unchangeable) word order alone that shows that “Peter” is the subject (the one who is seeing) and “Paul” is the object (the one who is seen). In more complicated English sentences the relationship between nouns is expressed by using prepositions (i.e., “Peter gives the pencil to Paul”). In Russian the relationships between nouns are indicated by the endings of the nouns, no matter what word order is used. The Russian sentences Пётр видит Пávла and Пávла видит

Пётр both mean (with slightly different emphasis) “Peter sees Paul” because Пётр (“Peter”) is in the nominative case (subject of the verb) and Пávла (“Paul”) is in the accusative case (direct object of the verb). To express “Paul sees Peter,” the nouns would be Пávел and Петра́. Russian uses such case endings to indicate the function of nouns, pronouns and adjectives within a statement. The endings also indicate whether a noun is in the singular or plural: соба́ка (“dog,” in the nominative singular), соба́ки (“dogs,” in the nominative plural). The part of a noun that generally remains constant is called the stem. For “dog” the stem is собак-. There are six cases in Russian: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental and prepositional (or locative).

## NOUN DECLENSION

### The Nominative Singular

The nominative singular is the dictionary form of the noun. It is used when the noun is the subject of the sentence: соба́ка лаёт (“*the dog barks*”). The nominative is also used as the so-called predicate nominative in sentences like “Ivan is a professor,” in which “Ivan” is the subject nominative and “professor” is the predicate nominative. This type of predicate is in the nominative when “to be” is in the present tense, that is, when this verb is not expressed in Russian: Ива́н — профе́ссор.

### The Accusative Singular

**Formation of the Accusative.** In forming the accusative case, masculine nouns fall into two classes. For masculine nouns denoting inanimate objects (things, abstractions) the accusative form is the same as the nominative: стол, лес. For masculine nouns denoting animate objects (persons and animals) the accusative form takes the ending -а or -я. (Note that when case endings, singular and plural, are added to nouns, the nominative singular endings -й and -ь usually drop away.) Thus Ива́н becomes Ива́на; геро́й becomes геро́я; and учи́тель becomes учи́теля.

Feminine nouns take the accusative ending -у if the nominative form ends in -а, and the ending -ю if the nominative ends in -я. If the nominative ends in -ь, there is no change to form the accusative. Thus стена́ becomes стéну; земля́ (“earth”) becomes зéмлю; and дверь remains the same. Стена́ and земля́ are examples of feminine nouns that undergo a shift in stress in the accusative. Other common feminines to which this rule applies

are странá (“country”), рукá (“hand” or “arm”), ногá (“foot” or “leg”), водá (“water”), зимá (“winter”) and душá (“soul”).

All neuter nouns remain in exactly the same form in the accusative singular as in the nominative singular: окнó, дéрево, пóле.

**Use of the Accusative.** The primary use of the accusative is to indicate that the noun in question is the direct object of the verb:

Сейчáс он читáет <b>Тургéнева</b> .	Right now he is reading <i>Turgenev</i> .
Ивáн кúрит <b>папиросу</b> .	Ivan is smoking <i>a cigarette</i> .
Я víжу <b>дéрево</b> .	I see <i>the tree</i> .

The accusative is also used after the prepositions в (“to, into”; во before certain double consonants) and на (“on, to”) when they indicate motion:

Она́ éдет в <b>Москвú</b> .	She is going to <i>Moscow</i> .
Мы éдем на <b>завóд</b> .	We are going to <i>the factory</i> .

### The Genitive Singular

**Formation of the Genitive.** Masculine nouns take the genitive ending -а if the nominative form ends in a consonant, and the ending -я if the nominative ends in -й or -ь. Thus стол becomes столá; лес becomes лéса; герóй becomes герóя; and учíteль becomes учíteля.

Feminine nouns take the genitive ending -и when the nominative form ends in -я or -ь, or when the stem ends in г-, к-, х-, ж-, ч-, ш- or щ-. Otherwise the genitive ending is -ы. Thus Сóня (“Sonia”) becomes Сóни; ночь becomes нóчи; вóдка becomes вóдки; and кóмната (“room”) becomes кóмнаты.

Neuter nouns take the genitive ending -а when the nominative ends in -о, and the ending -я when the nominative ends in -е. Thus окнó becomes окнá; дéрево becomes дéрева; and пóле becomes пóля.

**Use of the Genitive.** The primary purpose of the genitive case when used without a preposition is to show possession. The noun that possesses takes the genitive case and is always placed after the noun possessed. Thus, слáва герóя is the only possible Russian form for either “the glory of the hero” or “the hero’s glory” in English. “Ivan’s field” is пóле Ивáна.

In general, the Russian genitive construction corresponds to English phrases formed with the preposition “of,” even if the relation is not one of possession narrowly understood, but of quality or relation:

кусок <b>хлѣба</b>	a piece of <i>bread</i>
крыша <b>здáния</b>	the roof of <i>the building</i>
карта <b>Амѣрики</b>	a map of <i>America</i>
причина <b>пожáра</b>	the cause of <i>the fire</i>

Note, however, that in a phrase like “the city of Moscow,” Russian considers the second noun to be in apposition to the first (as if the phrase were “the city Moscow”) and thus the second noun will be in the same case as the first.

Another use of the genitive is to convey the meaning “some” or “any” (even if these words are not expressed in English):

Дáйте ему <b>хлѣба</b> .	Give him <i>some bread</i> .
Вы хотíte <b>воды</b> ?	Do you want <i>any water</i> ?

Those familiar with French will recognize this as the so-called partitive construction, and quite similar to sentences like “Donnez-lui *du pain*” and “Voulez-vous *de l'eau*?” A few masculine nouns—such as суп (“soup”), сыр (“cheese”) and чай (“tea”)—take the endings -y or -ю (instead of the normal genitive endings -a or -я) for this partitive use:

Дáйте ему <b>супу</b> .	Give him <i>some soup</i> .
Вы хотíte <b>чаю</b> ?	Do you want <i>some tea</i> ?

The genitive is used after words expressing an indefinite quantity such as много (“much” or “many”), máло (“little” or “few”), скóлько (“how much” or “how many”) and нѣсколько (“several”). When the meaning is “much” or “little” the genitive singular is used:

Скóлько **хлѣба** у вас?  
How much *bread* do you have?

В сѣверной А́фрике óчень máло **воды**.  
In northern Africa there is very little *water*.

The direct object (which is normally in the accusative case) often takes the genitive case in constructions in which the verb is negated. This occurs especially when the direct object is abstract or refers to an entire class of things rather than to a specific object or person:

Мы не хотím <b>войны</b> .	We don't want <i>war</i> .
Я не пью <b>чая</b> . Я не ем <b>сыра</b> .	I don't drink <i>tea</i> . I don't eat <i>cheese</i> .

There are a number of important verbs that govern the genitive case. These include добивáться (“to strive for”), жáждать (“to crave for”), желáть (“to desire”), заслуживáть (“to deserve”) and достигáть (“to achieve”).

The genitive is also used with a number of prepositions (see page 43) and after numerals (see page 90).

### The Dative Singular

**Formation of the Dative.** Masculine nouns take the dative ending -ю when their nominative form ends in -й or -ь; otherwise, masculine nouns add the ending -у to form the dative. Thus геро́й becomes геро́ю; учи́тель becomes учи́телю; and Ива́н becomes Ива́ну.

Feminine nouns with the nominative endings -а or -я change these endings to -е to form the dative. Feminines ending in -ь in the nominative take the dative ending -и. Those ending in -ия in the nominative change the ending to -ии to form the dative. Thus кни́га becomes кни́ге; Со́ня becomes Со́не; дверь becomes двéри; and па́ртия (“party,” in the political sense) becomes па́ртии.

Neuter nouns with the nominative ending -о change this to -у to form the dative; neuters with the nominative ending -е change this to -ю. Thus де́рево becomes де́реву; and по́ле becomes по́лю.

**Use of the Dative.** The basic use of the dative (when used without a preposition) is to indicate the indirect object. This rule generally applies when the indirect object is a person:

Я дал кни́гу Ива́ну.

I gave the book *to Ivan*.

Кто про́дал Серге́ю э́ту маши́ну?

Who sold *Sergei* that car?

Ка́ждый ме́сяц Ната́ша пи́шет Тама́ре.

Every month *Natasha* writes *to Tamara*.

The dative case is also often used in impersonal constructions: Ива́ну хо́лодно (“Ivan is cold”); Со́не жа́рко (“Sonia is hot”).

Some transitive verbs take a direct object (usually in the accusative) in the dative. The most common such verbs are помога́ть (“to help”), меша́ть (“to hinder”), сове́товать (“to advise”), вреди́ть (“to harm”), напомина́ть (“to remind”), повинова́ться (“to obey”), позво́лять (“to allow”), служи́ть (“to serve”), ве́рить (“to believe”) and завидова́ть (“to envy”):

Кто помога́ет Ива́ну?

Who is helping *Ivan*?

Ива́н меша́ет Со́не чита́ть.

*Ivan* is preventing *Sonia* from reading.

The dative is also used after certain prepositions (see page 44). Note that

nouns that do not denote persons usually require a preposition when they are in the dative.

### The Instrumental Singular

**Formation of the Instrumental.** Masculine nouns take the instrumental ending -ем (or -ём if the ending receives the stress) when the nominative ends in -й or -ь. Those masculine nouns ending in -ж, -ц, -ч, -ш or -щ in the nominative take the ending -ом if the stress is on the last syllable and -ем if it is not. All other masculine nouns take the ending -ом. Thus герóй becomes герóем; учíteль becomes учíteлем; словáрь (“dictionary”) becomes словарём; нож (“knife”) becomes ножóм; товáрищ (“comrade”) becomes товáрищем; and стол becomes столóм.

Feminine nouns ending in -а in the nominative take the ending -ой (or, rarely, -ою) to form the instrumental unless the stem ends in ж-, ц-, ч-, ш- or щ-, in which case the instrumental ending is -ей (or -ею). Feminine nouns ending in -я in the nominative take the ending -ей (or -ею) or -ёй (when the ending receives the stress). Feminine nouns ending in -ь in the nominative add the ending -ью to form the instrumental. Thus вóдка becomes вóдкой; птíца (“bird”) becomes птíцей; Сóня becomes Сóней; земл́я becomes земл́ей; and óсень (“autumn”) becomes óсенью.

Neuter nouns take the instrumental ending -ом if the nominative ends in -о; the ending -ем if the nominative ends in -е; and the ending -ём if the nominative ends in -ё. Thus окнó (“window”) becomes окнóм; пóле becomes пóлем; and ружьё (“gun”) becomes ружьём.

**Use of the Instrumental.** The primary use of the instrumental case (without a preposition) is to indicate the instrument or means by which some action is performed:

Мы поéхали туда **мáшиной**.      We went there *by car*.

Учíteль пíшет на доскé **мéлом**.  
The teacher writes on the board *with chalk*.

Он говорíт **шёпотом**.      He speaks *in a whisper*.

Онí вернóлись домóй **пóлем**.  
They returned home *by way of the field*.

The complement of the verb быть (“to be”), when that verb is in the past or future tense, often takes the instrumental case:

Он был механиком.

He was a mechanic.

Я буду доктором.

I will be a doctor.

When the verb **быть** is used in the past tense to indicate a permanent condition, however, the nominative rather than the instrumental is used. Compare these two sentences:

Пушкин был студентом.

Pushkin was a student. [Temporary]

Пушкин был русский.

Pushkin was a Russian. [Permanent]

Certain Russian verbs are always followed by the instrumental, irrespective of the tense. These include **делаться** ("to become"), **служить** ("to serve [as]"), **заниматься** ("to study"), **интересоваться** ("to be interested in") and **пользоваться** ("to make use of"):

Это может служить хорошим примером.

This can serve as a good example.

Мой брат занимается грамматикой.

My brother is studying grammar.

The instrumental case is also used after certain prepositions (see page 44).

### The Prepositional Singular

The prepositional case is so called because it must always be introduced by a preposition. The most common prepositions used with this case are **в** ("in, at"), **на** ("on, at") and **о** ("about, concerning"). When **о** is followed by a word beginning with a vowel it becomes **об**; thus: **о Соне** ("about Sonia"); **об Америке** ("about America"). When **в** and **о** are followed by words that begin with two or more consonants, they become **во** and **обо**, respectively.

**Formation of the Prepositional.** Masculine nouns take the ending **-е** to form the prepositional. Thus **стол** becomes **столé**; **герой** becomes **герое́**; and **словарь** becomes **словаре́**. A small but important group of masculine nouns, mostly monosyllabic ones, take the ending **-у** in the prepositional case after the prepositions **в** and **на**. Note that this **-у** ending is always stressed. This group of nouns includes **пол** ("floor"), **берег** ("shore"), **мост** ("bridge"), **сад** ("garden"), **лес** ("forest"), **год** ("year"), **угол** ("corner"), **глаз** ("eye"), **час** ("hour"), **шкаф** ("cupboard") and **рот** ("mouth"). Thus:



на полу́	on the floor	в саду́	in the garden
на бере́гу	on the shore	в лесу́	in the forest
на мосту́	on the bridge	в году́	in the year
на углу́	at the corner	во рту́	in the mouth

All these masculine nouns take the normal -e ending after the preposition о (“about, concerning”): о полу́ (“about the floor”); о саду́ (“about the garden”).

Feminine nouns with nominatives ending in -а or -я take the ending -е in the prepositional. Feminines with nominatives ending in -ия, however, take the ending -ии; those with nominatives ending in -ь take the ending -и. (The prepositions given in the following examples are to show usage—different prepositions could be used.) Thus ко́мната becomes в ко́мнате (“in the room”); Со́ня becomes о Со́не (“about Sonia”); па́ртия becomes о па́ртии (“about the party”); and дверь becomes о двéри (“about the door”).

Neuter nouns with the nominative ending in -о take the ending -е in the prepositional. Neuter nouns with the nominative ending in a consonant plus -е remain unchanged for the prepositional case; those with nominatives ending in -ие, however, take the ending -ии. (In the following examples the prepositions о and в are used to show that a noun in the prepositional case must always appear with a preposition, not necessarily о or в.) Thus де́рево becomes о де́реве (“about the tree”); по́ле becomes о по́ле (“about the field”); and зда́ние becomes в зда́нии (“in the building”).

**Use of the Prepositional.** Examples of the prepositional case used with the prepositions о (об), в (во) and на:

Лéкция была́ о Пу́шкине.	The lecture was <i>about Pushkin</i> .
Она́ в ко́мнате.	She is <i>in the room</i> .
Кни́га лежи́т на столе́.	The book is lying <i>on the table</i> .

## NOUN PLURALS

The plural forms of nouns are in general simpler to learn than the singular.

### The Nominative Plural

Most masculine nouns take the ending -ы or -и in the nominative plural. They take the ending -и instead of -ы when the nominative singular ends in

-й or -ь, or in -г, -ж, -к, -х, -ч, -ш or -щ. Thus стол becomes столы́ (“tables”); герой becomes геро́и (“heroes”); автомоби́ль becomes автомоби́ли (“cars”); and товарищ becomes товарищи́ (“comrades”). Some masculine nouns take the nominative plural ending -а or -я (-я if the nominative singular ends in -ь). This group includes some very common words (note that their plural ending is always stressed):

глаз/глаза́	eye/eyes
го́лос/голоса́	voice/voices
го́род/города́	city/cities
до́ктор/доктора́	doctor/doctors
дом/дома́	house/houses
поезд/поезда́	train/trains
профе́ссор/профессора́	professor/professors
учи́тель/учителя́	teacher/teachers

Feminine nouns take the ending -ы or -и in the nominative plural. They take the ending -и instead of -ы when the nominative singular ends in -я or -ь, or when the stem ends in г-, ж-, к-, х-, ч-, ш- or щ-. Thus пти́ца becomes пти́цы (“birds”); па́ртия becomes па́ртии (“parties”); дверь becomes двéри (“doors”); and кни́га becomes кни́ги (“books”).

Neuter nouns take the ending -а in the nominative plural if the nominative singular ends in -о; -я if it ends in -е (except that those neuters ending in -же, -це, -че, -ше or -ще in the singular take the ending -а in the plural). A few neuters take the nominative plural ending -и. Thus окно́ becomes о́кна (“windows”); по́ле becomes поля́ (“fields”); се́рдце (“heart”) becomes се́рдца́ (“hearts”); and я́блоко (“apple”) becomes я́блоки (“apples”).

A large number of feminine and neuter nouns have a stress in the nominative plural that differs from that in the singular. (When the vowel e is involved, an e/ě alternation sometimes occurs.) This change in stress often serves to differentiate the nominative plural from the genitive singular in spoken Russian:

NOM. SING.	GEN. SING.	NOM. PL.
стена́	стены́	сте́ны
жена́	жены́	же́ны
по́ле	поля́	поля́

## The Accusative Plural

For inanimate masculine nouns, the accusative plural is exactly like the nominative plural. Thus стол becomes столы́. For animate masculines (persons and animals), the accusative plural is the same as the genitive plural (see next section).

The accusative plural of inanimate feminine nouns is like the nominative plural. Thus дверь becomes двéри. For animate feminines, the accusative plural is the same as the genitive plural (see next section).

Inanimate neuters in the accusative plural are exactly like the nominative plural. Thus окно́ becomes о́кна; поле́ becomes поля́; се́рдце becomes се́рдца́; and я́блоко becomes я́блоки. The accusative plural of animate neuters is the same as the genitive plural (see next section).

## The Genitive Plural

Masculine nouns generally take the ending -ов in the genitive plural. However, they take the ending -ев if the nominative singular ends in -й or in -ц (if the stress is on the preceding syllable). They take the ending -ей if the nominative singular ends in -ь or in -ж, -ч, -ш or -щ. Thus стол becomes столо́в; геро́й becomes гербе́в; ме́сяц becomes ме́сяцев; учи́тель becomes учите́лей; and това́рищ becomes това́рищей.

The most common feminine nouns—those ending in -а in the nominative singular—take no ending in the genitive plural. Thus стена́ becomes стен; кни́га becomes книг. Those feminines that end in -ь in the nominative singular take the ending -ей in the genitive plural: дверь becomes двере́й. Those that end in -я preceded by a consonant in the nominative singular take the ending -ь in the genitive plural. Thus неде́ля (“week”) becomes неде́ль. Those that end in -я preceded by a vowel in the nominative singular take the ending -й in the genitive plural. Thus па́ртия becomes па́ртий. When the stem ends in a consonant cluster, a vowel is often inserted between the consonants in the genitive plural. Thus ба́бушка (“grandmother”) becomes ба́бушек; сестра́ becomes сесте́р; and зе́мля becomes земе́ль.

Neuter nouns that end in -о in the nominative singular take no ending in the genitive plural: ме́сто (“place”) becomes мест. Here again, a vowel is often inserted between final consonants: окно́ becomes о́кон. Neuters that end in -е (but not -ие) in the nominative singular take the ending -ей in the genitive plural: поле́ becomes полéй. Those that end in -ие in the nominative singular take the ending -ий in the genitive plural: зда́ние becomes зда́ний.

### The Dative Plural

In the dative plural, all nouns end in -ам or -ям. The -ям ending is taken by (1) masculine nouns with nominative singulars ending in -й or -ь; (2) feminine nouns with nominative singulars ending in -я or -ь; and (3) neuter nouns with nominative singulars ending in -е. Thus стол becomes столáм; гербóй becomes гербóям; учíteль becomes учíteлям; стенá becomes стенáм; Сбня becomes Сбням; часть becomes частя́м; окнó becomes окнáм; and полé becomes поля́м.

### The Instrumental Plural

In the instrumental plural, nouns take the ending -ами or -ями. The -ями ending is taken by those nouns that take the -ям ending in the dative plural. Thus стол becomes столáми; гербóй becomes гербóями, etc.

### The Prepositional Plural

In the prepositional plural, nouns take the ending -ах or -ях. The -ях ending is taken by those nouns that take the -ям ending in the dative case and the -ями ending in the instrumental case. Thus стол becomes столáх; гербóй becomes гербóях, etc.

## SPECIAL NOUN DECLENSIONS AND IRREGULAR NOUNS

There are a number of special noun declensions and irregular nouns that do not fall into any of the patterns given thus far. The most important of these subdeclensions and irregularities are shown in Appendix I: Special Noun Declensions and Irregular Nouns (page 87).

### COLLECTIVE NOUNS AND NOUNS WITH ONLY SINGULAR OR ONLY PLURAL FORMS

1. Like English, Russian has a fairly large number of collective nouns, nouns that are grammatically singular although they refer to a group or class: толпá (“crowd”), нарóд (“nation, people,” as in “the Chinese people”), молодёжь (“young people, youth,” as in “the youth of our cities”). Many such nouns in Russian refer to produce: лук (“onions”), карто́фель (“potatoes”), горо́х (“peas”), etc.

2. A number of Russian nouns have plural forms only. Sometimes the plural meaning is obvious and there is an English equivalent: брюки (“trousers”), ножницы (“scissors”), очки (“spectacles”). Some other important plural-only nouns are деньги (“money”), ворота (“gate”), сливки (“cream”), часы (“watch”), сани (“sled”). The accusative, dative and instrumental of these words presents no problem; you will only need to learn the way in which they form the genitive. The genitive of the words listed above: брюк, ножниц, очков, денег, ворот, сливок, часов, саней.

3. Two important plural-only nouns, дети (“children, babies”) and люди (“people,” not in the political sense), have equivalents in the singular that are completely different words. Дети (ACC. детей, GEN. детей, DAT. детям, INSTR. детьмй, PREP. дѣтях) has the singular-number equivalent ребёнок (“child, baby”). Люди (ACC. людей, GEN. людей, DAT. людям, INSTR. людьмй, PREP. людях) has the singular-number equivalent человек (“person, human being”).

# ADJECTIVES

## AGREEMENT OF ADJECTIVES WITH NOUNS

Russian adjectives, like their English equivalents, may precede the noun they modify (e.g., “the tall man,” “the blue car”) or be linked to it by a verb (e.g., “the man is tall,” “the car was blue”). Unlike English adjectives, however, Russian adjectives must agree in gender, number (i.e., singular or plural) and case with the nouns they modify.

## FORMS OF ADJECTIVES

### Hard Adjectives

Most adjectives end in -ый in the masculine nominative singular (the dictionary form for adjectives). Such adjectives are known as hard adjectives. For these adjectives the full declension is as follows (using the model word **но́вый**, “new”):

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	<b>но́вый</b>	<b>но́вая</b>	<b>но́вое</b>	<b>но́вые</b>
ACC.	<b>но́вый</b>	<b>но́вую</b>	<b>но́вое</b>	<b>но́вые</b>
(ANIM.)	<b>но́вого</b>			<b>но́вых</b>
GEN.	<b>но́вого</b>	<b>но́вой</b>	<b>но́вого</b>	<b>но́вых</b>
DAT.	<b>но́вому</b>	<b>но́вой</b>	<b>но́вому</b>	<b>но́вым</b>
INSTR.	<b>но́вым</b>	<b>но́вой</b>	<b>но́вым</b>	<b>но́выми</b>
PREP.	<b>но́вом</b>	<b>но́вой</b>	<b>но́вом</b>	<b>но́вых</b>

1. If they modify animate nouns, masculine adjectives in the accusative singular, and adjectives of all genders in the accusative plural, have the same form as the genitive rather than the form of the nominative.

2. The letter *r* in the masculine and neuter genitive singular ending is pronounced like English *v*.

3. The feminine instrumental singular also possesses the old-fashioned ending -ою (as in *новою*), which appears in older literature.

4. When the stress falls on the last syllable of this class of adjectives, the masculine singular nominative (and inanimate accusative) has the ending -ой instead of -ий. Thus: *больной* ("ill"), *голубой* ("light blue"), *молодой* ("young"). All the other forms of such adjectives are as shown above.

5. When the stem ends in г-, к- or х-, the *ы* of the endings is replaced by *и*. Thus, the adjective *русский* ("Russian") has the masculine and neuter instrumental *русским* and the plural forms: NOM. *русские*, ACC. *русские*, GEN. *русских*, DAT. *русским*, INSTR. *русскими*, PREP. *русских*.

6. When the stem ends in ж-, ч-, ш- or щ-, the *ы* of the endings is replaced by *и*, and the *о* (when not stressed) is replaced by *е*. (Note that only the first *о* in the ending -ого is replaced.) Thus, in the case of *свежий* ("fresh"), the nominative and accusative neuter is *свежее*; the genitive forms are: MASC. & NEUT. *свежего*, FEM. *свежей*; the dative forms are: MASC. & NEUT. *свежему*, FEM. *свежей*; the feminine instrumental is *свежей* (or *свежею*); and the prepositional forms are: MASC. & NEUT. *свежем*, FEM. *свежей*.

### Soft Adjectives

The adjective declension discussed above is the so-called hard declension. The important secondary declension is known as the soft declension. In the soft declension the masculine nominative singular always ends in -ий, and the endings never bear the stress. The declension for soft adjectives is as follows (using the model word *синий*, "dark blue"):

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	<i>синий</i>	<i>синья</i>	<i>синее</i>	<i>синие</i>
ACC.	<i>синий</i>	<i>синюю</i>	<i>синее</i>	<i>синие</i>
(ANIM.)	<i>синего</i>			<i>синих</i>
GEN.	<i>синего</i>	<i>синей</i>	<i>синего</i>	<i>синих</i>
DAT.	<i>синему</i>	<i>синей</i>	<i>синему</i>	<i>синим</i>
INSTR.	<i>синим</i>	<i>синей</i>	<i>синим</i>	<i>синими</i>
PREP.	<i>синем</i>	<i>синей</i>	<i>синем</i>	<i>синих</i>

The feminine instrumental singular has an alternate ending -ею (*синею*).

The possessive adjectives *мой* ("my"), *твой* ("your"), etc., and a

number of other adjectives that partake of the nature of pronouns are discussed in the chapter on pronouns (see page 34).

## USE OF ADJECTIVES

1. The following sentences demonstrate the agreement of adjectives with nouns:

Я видел **чёрного** быка́ и **белую** корову́ в поле.

I saw a *black* bull and a *white* cow in the field.

(dictionary forms: чёрный, here masc. acc. sing. animate, modifying быка́; and белый, here fem. acc. sing., modifying корову́)

Дети́ игра́ют во дворе́ **ста́рого** до́ма.

The children are playing in the yard of the *old* house.

(dictionary form: ста́рый, here masc. gen. sing., modifying до́ма)

Официа́нт по́дал счёт **скупому́** дяде Серге́ю.

The waiter gave the check to *stingy* Uncle Sergei.

(dictionary form: скупой, here masc. dat. sing., modifying дяде)

Учи́тель пи́шет **жёлтым** ме́лом.

The teacher writes with *yellow* chalk.

(dictionary form: жёлтый, here masc. instr. sing., modifying ме́лом)

Контóра Петра́ в **кирпичном** зда́нии на **обра́тной** стороне́  
у́лицы.

Peter's office is in a *brick* building on the *opposite* side of the street.

(dictionary forms: кирпи́чный, here neut. prep. sing., modifying зда́нии; and обра́тный, here fem. prep. sing., modifying стороне́)

У нас се́годня нет **све́жих** фрúктов.

We have no *fresh* fruit today.

(dictionary form: све́жий, here masc. gen. pl., modifying фрúктов)

Украси́ли зал **я́ркими** цветáми.

The hall has been decorated with *bright* flowers.

(dictionary form: я́ркий, here masc. instr. pl., modifying цветáми)

2. Russian adjectives can often be used as substantives—that is, as subjects or objects of a verb on their own account, with no noun expressed. Compare these two sentences:

**Больная́** де́вушка кри́кнула.

The *sick* girl cried out.

**Больная́** кри́кнула.

The *sick woman* (OR: *woman patient*) cried out.



Thus, *скупой* can mean “a miser” as well as “miserly”; *нищий* can mean “a beggar” as well as “beggarly”; etc.

3. Aside from the above kind of substantive use of adjectives, there are several adjectives that for all practical purposes have become nouns, but are still declined like adjectives. Some are masculine, e.g., *рабочий* (“worker”), *плённый* (“prisoner”), *портной* (“tailor”); GEN. SING. *рабочего*, *плённого*, *портного*. Others, including many names of rooms and shops, are feminine, e.g., *гостиная* (“living room”), *ванная* (“bathroom”), *столовая* (“dining room”), *булочная* (“bakery”), *парикмахерская* (“barber shop”), *мастерская* (“workshop, studio”); GEN. SING. *гостиной*, *ванной*, *столовой*, *булочной*, etc.

## SHORT FORMS OF ADJECTIVES

### Formation of the Short Form

So far (if we momentarily disregard the independent use of adjectives as nouns) we have been discussing only adjectives that immediately precede the nouns they modify; this is known as the attributive use of adjectives. But in Russian as in English, adjectives can occur in the predicate after verbs of being: “That book is *useful*,” “These flowers are *beautiful*,” etc. When used predicatively, many Russian adjectives (but never those declined like *синий*) have an optional short form, which naturally exists in the nominative only.

The masculine singular short form is the stem alone; the feminine singular short form ends in -а; the neuter in -о; and the plural for all genders in -ы (or -и if the stem ends in г-, к-, х-, ж-, ч-, ш- or щ-). Thus, the short forms for *красивый* (“beautiful”) are *красив*, *красива*, *красиво*, *красивы*.

When consonants fall together at the end of the stem, a vowel (о, е or ё) is inserted in the masculine short form. Thus, the short forms of *интересный* (“interesting”), *злой* (“evil”) and *умный* (“intelligent”) are:

MASCULINE	FEMININE	NEUTER	PLURAL
интересен	интересна	интересно	интересны
зол	зла	зло	злы
умён	умна́	умно́	умны́

The last example shows that stress is liable to shift in the short form.

## Use of the Short Form

1. In modern spoken Russian, the long form is preferred in the predicate when there is a choice. But in some instances the short form must be used. In general, when a distinction is made, the long form denotes a permanent or intrinsic condition, and the short form denotes a transitory or qualified condition. Compare the following pairs of sentences:

Он бчень **способный**.

He is very *talented*. [In general]

Он бчень **способен** к языкам.

He is very *good* at languages. [A qualified, limited talent]

Её отец **занятой** человек.

Her father is a *busy* man.

Её отец **занят**.

Her father is *busy at the moment*.

2. Some predicative adjectives have different meanings depending on whether they are in the long or the short form. Thus, in the predicate, *правый* means "right" as opposed to "left," whereas *прав*, *правá* means "right" as opposed to "wrong." The long form of *живой* means "lively"; the short form *жив*, *живá* means "alive."

3. Some adjectives are so descriptive of a momentary situation that they are usually in the short form when used predicatively. Examples (given here in the short form): *доволен* ("satisfied"), *благодарен* ("grateful"), *уверен* ("sure, certain"), *голоден* ("hungry"), *счастлив* ("happy, lucky"), *готов* ("ready"), *намéрен* ("of a mind to"), *должен* ("obliged, under the necessity of"):

Я **намéрен** пойти с вами.

I *intend* to go with you.

Вы **должны** пойти со мной.

You *must* go with me.

4. The adjective *рад* ("glad") has only short forms: *рад*, *рада*, *радо*, *рады*.

5. One special use of the short form, with adjectives like *великий* ("big") and *мáлый* ("small"), is to denote an excess. Thus:

Эти ботынки мне **велики**.

These shoes are *too big* for me.

Эта ко́мната **малá**.

This room is *too small*.

Note that the words *большой* and *мáленький*, the normal attributive adjectives for "big" and "small," respectively, have no short forms.

## COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES: THE COMPARATIVE

### Formation of the Comparative

1. When an adjective is used attributively, its comparative degree is formed by placing the unchangeable adverb *более* ("more") just before it. Thus: **более красивый** дом ("a more beautiful house"); **более красивые** дома́ ("more beautiful houses"). To express "less," place the unchangeable adverb *мéнее* before the adjective: **мéнее красивый** дом ("a less beautiful house"); **мéнее красивые** дома́ ("less beautiful houses").

2. When an adjective is used without a noun in the predicate after the verb "to be" (even when this verb is not expressed in the Russian), the comparative form with *более* may be used. However, unless the adjective is extremely long, it is more acceptable to form its comparative by dropping its ending and adding the unchangeable ending *-ее*. Thus, *этот дом красивее* is preferable to *этот дом более красивый* to express "this house is more beautiful."

With few exceptions, the word stress in the *-ее* comparative form is on the ending if the adjective has a stem of one or two syllables; otherwise, the stress is the same as in the positive: *умнее* ("more intelligent"), *интереснее* ("more interesting").

3. A considerable number of frequently used adjectives have special predicate comparative forms that display *consonant mutation*. Some of the most common adjectives of this type are:

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE
блízкий ("near")	блiже ("nearer")
высóкий ("high, tall")	выше ("higher, taller")
глубóкий ("deep")	глубже ("deeper")
далёкий ("distant")	дальше ("more distant")
дóлгий ("long," in time)	дóльше ("longer")
дорогóй ("dear, expensive")	дорóже ("dearer")
мягкий ("soft")	мягче ("softer")
тiхий ("quiet")	тiше ("quieter")
ширóкий ("wide")	шире ("wider")

The adjective *стáрый* ("old") has the regular comparative *старе́е* when referring to things and the special comparative *стáрше* when referring to people. Some comparative forms are more irregular than those listed above:

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE
хоро́ший (“good”)	лу́чше (“better”)
плохо́й (“bad”)	хуже (“worse”)

The word **больше** (“bigger, more”) serves as the comparative form of **много** (“much, many”) as well as that of **большой** (“big”). Similarly, **меньше** (“smaller, less”) is the comparative form of both **мало** (“little, few”) and **маленький** (“small”).

Some types of adjectives cannot form comparatives with -ее; these include adjectives ending in -ский, -аный and -яный.

4. A few adjectives in the comparative degree have their own attributive form (in addition to the form with **более**): **лучший** (“better”), **худший** (“worse”), **старший** (“elder,” of persons), **младший** (“younger,” of persons), **большой** (“bigger”), **меньший** (“smaller”). Thus, “the better student” can be expressed in two ways: **более хороший студент** or **лучший студент**. With the exception of **большой** and **меньший**, the above comparatives are really superlatives (“best,” “worst,” “eldest,” etc.) that can be used as attributive comparatives.



### Use of the Comparative

1. In Russian the object of comparison (i.e., “B” in the expression “A is bigger than B”) is either placed in the genitive case or introduced by the conjunction **чем** (preceded by a comma). In some instances, either construction can be used. Thus:

Волга длиннее <b>Невы́</b> .	The Volga is longer <i>than the Neva</i> .
Па́вел ленивее <b>Петра́</b> .	Paul is lazier <i>than Peter</i> .
Волга длиннее, <b>чем</b> Нева́.	The Volga is longer <i>than</i> the Neva.
Па́вел ленивее, <b>чем</b> Пётр.	Paul is lazier <i>than</i> Peter.

The construction with **чем** must be used, however, when the objects compared are not in the nominative case:

Я люблю́ во́ду больше, чем во́дку.  
I like water more than vodka.

Here **во́дку** is in the accusative case just as **во́ду** is, since both these nouns are direct objects of **люблю́**. Also compare the two sentences:

Я люблю́ Тама́ру больше, чем **Ли́за**.  
I like Tamara more than *Liza does*.

Я люблю Тамáру бóльше, чем Лíзу.

I like Tamara more than (*I like*) Liza.

2. The comparative degree is frequently used with various prefixes and adverbs in standard expressions:

Сáша постáрше, чем Кóля.                      Sasha is *a little* older than Kolya.

Егó рабóта станóвилась **всё** лéгче.

His work became *easier and easier*.

Ваш дом большóй, но наш **ещё** бóльше.

Your house is big, but ours is bigger *still*.

Идíte сюда **как мóжно скорéе**.

Come here *as soon as possible*.

**Чем** бóльше, **тем** лúчнее.                      *The more the better.*

Бýло **горáздо** бóльше людéй, чем я ожидáл.

There were *many* more people than I expected.

The adverb *горáздо* may be used to express “much” or “many” with a comparative; it has no other use.

## THE SUPERLATIVE DEGREE

There are two ways in which to form the superlative degree (e.g., “biggest,” “most beautiful”) in Russian. These are the compound superlative and the suffixal superlative:

1. In formal Russian, the compound superlative is formed by placing the unchangeable adverb *наибóлее* (“most”) in front of the positive long form of the adjective:

Мíша **наибóлее** **умный** мáльчик в клáссе.

Misha is *the most intelligent* boy in the class.

In colloquial speech, however, it is more common for the positive form of the adjective to be preceded by *сáмый* (“most”):

Мíша **сáмый** **умный** мáльчик в клáссе.

Misha is *the most intelligent* boy in the class.

Unlike *наибóлее*, however, *сáмый* is an adjective, and must agree in gender, number and case with the adjective it precedes. Thus:

Óльга **сáмая** **умная** дéвушка средí студéнтов.

Olga is *the most intelligent* girl among the students.

Он один из **самых ужасных** тиранов в истории.  
He is one of *the most terrible* tyrants in history.

There are four basic ways in which to express the entire group among which the superlative stands out:

(a) With the genitive:

Он **самый умный** студент **класса**.  
He is the smartest student *of the class*.

(b) With the preposition **в** and the prepositional:

Он **самый умный в классе**.  
He is the smartest *in the class*.

(c) With the preposition **из** (“out of”; *изо* before double consonants) and the genitive plural:

Он **самый умный изо всех студентов**.  
He is the smartest (*out*) *of all the students*.

(d) With the preposition **среди** (“among”) and the genitive plural:

Он **самый умный среди студентов**.  
He is the smartest *among* (OR: *of*) *the students*.

2. A number of Russian adjectives possess another superlative form that is not generally used to make an actual comparison, but to intensify the meaning of the adjective (e.g., “a most beautiful house,” “an extremely beautiful house”). This is the so-called absolute superlative. It is formed by adding the suffix **-ейший** to the stem of the adjective. Unlike **-ее**, this suffix is a fully declinable form. Thus: **красивейший дом** (“a most beautiful house”); **красивейшая девушка** (“an extremely beautiful girl”).

Consonant mutation sometimes occurs in the adjectival stem. When the mutated stem ends in **ж-**, **ч-**, **ш-** or **щ-**, the ending becomes **-айший** and is always stressed. Thus **высбкий** (“high, tall”) becomes **высочайший** (“very high, very tall”).

# ADVERBS

## ADVERBS DERIVED FROM ADJECTIVES

In English, many adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective: quiet, quietly; swift, swiftly. In Russian, adverbs can be formed by adding -о or -е to the stem of adjectives. (Thus adverbs derived from adjectives have the same form as the neuter short form of the adjective.) For hard adjectives, the ending -о is added:

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB IN -о
быстрый (“quick”)	быстро (“quickly”)
красивый (“beautiful”)	красиво (“beautifully”)

For soft adjectives, the ending -е is added to the stem to form the adverb:

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB IN -е
искренний (“sincere”)	искренне (“sincerely”)
крайний (“extreme”)	крайне (“extremely”)

Adjectives ending in -ский have the adverbial ending -и: технический (“technical”), технически (“technically”).

## COMPARISON OF ADVERBS

The comparative degree of adverbs formed from adjectives is exactly like the comparative of the adjectives themselves. Thus: умнее (“more intelligent, more intelligently”); глубже (“deeper, more deeply”).

To form the superlative degree of adverbs, either add **наиболее** before the positive degree, or add a genitive form of the pronoun/adjective **весь** after the comparative degree: **наиболее логически** (“most logically”); **мы знаем лучше всего историю** (“we know history *best*”).

## OTHER ADVERBS

Like English, Russian has numerous independent adverbs that are not formed from adjectives (English examples: “now,” “there,” “onward,” “once”). Most Russian adverbs of this type are unchangeable in form and their use in sentences is basically the same as for English adverbs; they come not so much under the category of grammar as that of vocabulary to be learned. Therefore only a few basic notions and a small number of examples will be given here.

### Adverbs of Time

Adverbs of time include such words as *когда* (“when?”), *тогда* (“then, at that time”), *никогда* (“never”), *сейчас* (“now”), *сегодня\** (“today”), *наконец* (“finally”), *опять* (“again”), *уже* (“already”).

*Когда* and *тогда* exemplify the frequent pairing in Russian of interrogative words beginning with *к-* and demonstratives beginning with *т-*. *Когда*, like other interrogatives, can be turned into an indefinite by adding *-то* or *-нибудь*: *когда-то* (“at some time”). The adverb *никогда* is an example of a negative formed from an interrogative through the addition of the prefix *ни-*.

### Adverbs of Place

Adverbs of place fall into two main categories: those of position, or “place in which,” and those indicating direction or change in location, “place to or from which.” It is important, for example, to distinguish between *где* and *куда*, both of which can be translated as “where?”; *где* means “in which place?” and *куда* means “to which place?” Both *здесь* and *сюда* can be translated as “here”; *здесь* means “in this place” and *сюда* means “to this place.” *Там* means “there, in that place”; *туда* means “there, to that place.”

When preceded by *не*, the demonstrative adverbs *там* and *туда* mean “in the wrong place” and “to the wrong place,” respectively.

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\* The *-г-* in *сегодня* is pronounced like English *v* because it is historically part of the genitive singular ending *-его*.



### Adverbs of Degree

Adverbs of degree include *очень* (“very”), *много* (“much, many, a lot”), *мало* (“little, few”), *совсем* (“completely”), *почти* (“almost”), *слишком* (“too, too much”).

With verbs of wanting and liking, *очень* is used alone to mean “very much”: *Соня очень любит цветы* (“Sonia loves flowers *very much*”). Otherwise *много* is used: *он много работает* (“he works *a lot*”). Of course, *очень* can still modify *много* in such cases: *он очень много работает* (“he works *very hard*”). *Много* and *мало* also serve as adverbs of quantity; as such they are discussed in the next section.

### Adverbs of Quantity

The words *много* (“much, many”), *немного* (“a little, a few”), *мало* (“little, few”), *сколько* (“how much, how many?”), *столько* (“so much, so many”) and *несколько* (“somewhat, several”) can all be used as pure adverbs, but they can also function as pronouns or adjectives.

They are used with the genitive singular of nouns and pronouns to express amount, and with the genitive plural to express number: *много хлеба* (“a lot of bread”), *немного людей* (“a few people”), *мало воды* (“little water”), *сколько друзей* (“how many friends?”), *столько времени* (“so much time”), *несколько товарищей* (“several comrades”).

When followed by singular nouns, these quantity words occur only in the nominative and accusative. When followed by plural nouns, they can occur in the other cases as well; when used in the genitive, dative, instrumental or prepositional, they become adjectives taking the appropriate plural endings:

*У немногих студентов были жалобы.*  
A few students had complaints.

*Многим людям дали хлеб бесплатно.*  
Many people were given bread free of charge.

Related to *много* is the regularly declined plural-only adjective *многие* (it can also be used as a pronoun), which means “many” with an emphasis on the individuals composing the group:

*Многие из новых студентов были совсем незнакомы мне.*  
Many of the new students were completely unfamiliar to me.

### Miscellaneous Adverbs

1. Adverbs of manner include как (“how?”), так (“thus, in this way”) and никак (“in no way”).

2. Тóже and тáкже both mean “also, too, as well,” but тóже introduces a new subject while the predicate stays the same, and тáкже introduces a new predicate while the subject stays the same:

Миха́йл раба́тает режиссёром; Бори́с, **то́же**.

Mikhail is a film director; Boris is, *too*.

Миха́йл раба́тает режиссёром. Он **та́кже** пи́шет.

Mikhail is a film director. He writes, *too*.

3. The instrumental case of certain nouns is used adverbially. Among them are у́тром (“in the morning”), днём (“in the daytime”), весно́й (“in the spring”) and ря́дом (“side by side”). In some instances, this instrumental form is all that remains in the language of an obsolete noun: пешко́м (“on foot”).

4. Some adverbial expressions consist of the preposition по and the dative case of certain adjectives. Examples are: по-пре́жнему (“as before”), по-ра́зному (“in various ways”), по-мо́ему (“in my opinion”).

Similar to this group are the expressions with по-plus-adverb meaning “in (a given language)”: по-ру́сски (“in Russian”), по-англи́йски (“in English”), по-фра́нцу́зски (“in French”), по-неме́цки (“in German”), etc.

5. Many adverbs (historically originating as prepositions-plus-nouns) occur in sense groups based on the following notions: lack of motion, motion toward, motion away from. Some of these groups are:

(a) вдали́ (“in the distance”); вдали́ (“into the distance”); издали́ (“from afar”)

(b) впе́редí (“at a place ahead”); впе́ред (“to the front, forward”); спе́реди (“from up ahead, in the front”)

(c) позади́ (“at the back”); наза́д (“to the back”); сза́ди (“from the back”)

(d) вни́зу (“at a place below”); вниз (“downward”); сни́зу (“from below”)

## PRONOUNS

Many of the words discussed in this chapter have adjectival forms and strictly speaking are pronominal adjectives, but it is convenient and instructive to group them with the pure pronouns to which they are related.

### PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The Russian personal pronouns are я (“I, me”), ты (“you”; this is the singular form, used when speaking to one person, and then only to a close friend or relative, small child or animal), он (“he, him, it”), она (“she, her, it”), оно (“it”), мы (“we, us”), вы (“you”; this is not only the plural form, used when speaking to more than one person, but also the polite form of address to a single individual), and они (“they, them”). Like nouns, pronouns are declined; the cases of pronouns have the same uses as for nouns.

#### SINGULAR

	1ST PERSON	2ND PERSON	3RD PERSON		
			MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.
NOM.	я	ты	он	она́	оно́
ACC.	меня́	тебя́	(н)его́	(н)её	(н)его́
GEN.	меня́	тебя́	(н)его́	(н)её	(н)его́
DAT.	мне	тебе́	(н)ему́	(н)ей	(н)ему́
INSTR.	мно́й	тобо́й	(н)им	(н)ей	(н)им
PREP.	мне	тебе́	не́м	не́й	не́м

#### PLURAL

	1ST PERSON	2ND PERSON	3RD PERSON
NOM.	мы	вы	они́
ACC.	нас	вас	(н)их
GEN.	нас	вас	(н)их

DAT.	нам	вам	(н)им
INSTR.	на́ми	ва́ми	(н)и́ми
PREP.	нас	вас	них

1. When **вы** refers to one person, long-form adjectives modifying it are in the singular, but short-form adjectives are in the plural:

**Вы** очень **сонный** сегодня.

You are very *sleepy* today.

**Вы** **правы**.

You are *right*.

2. The third person singular forms **он**, **она́** and **оно́** refer back to masculine, feminine and neuter nouns, respectively. Thus, **он** and **она́** can both mean “it” as well as “he” and “she,” respectively:

Я купил **новый** костюм. **Он** серый.

I bought a new suit. *It* is gray.

Я купил **новую** шляпу. **Она́** серая.

I bought a new hat. *It* is gray.

3. When the third person pronouns are governed by a preposition, the letter **н-** is added to the beginning: **с ним** (“with him”), **один из них** (“one of them”).

4. To express “— and I,” Russian uses the form **мы с —**. Thus: **мы с братом** (“my brother and I”).

## POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

The possessive pronouns/adjectives (“my, mine,” “your, yours,” etc.) that correspond to **я**, **ты**, **мы** and **вы** are: **мой** (“my, mine”), **твой** (“your, yours,” familiar singular), **наш** (“our, ours”) and **ваш** (“your, yours,” plural or polite singular). **Твой** is declined like **мой**, and **ваш** like **наш**:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	мой	моя́	моё	мои́
ACC.	мой	мою́	моё	мои́
(ANIM.)	моего́			мои́х
GEN.	моего́	моёй	моего́	мои́х
DAT.	моему́	моёй	моему́	мои́м
INSTR.	мои́м	моёй	мои́м	мои́ми
PREP.	моём	моёй	моём	мои́х

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	наш	на́ша	на́ше	на́ши
ACC.	наш	на́шу	на́ше	на́ши
(ANIM.)	на́шего			на́ших
GEN.	на́шего	на́шей	на́шего	на́ших
DAT.	на́шему	на́шей	на́шему	на́шим
INSTR.	на́шим	на́шей	на́шим	на́шими
PREP.	на́шем	на́шей	на́шем	на́ших

1. Possessive adjectives must agree in gender, number and case with the noun they modify (the thing possessed). Thus, for example, "my sister" will be *моя сестра́* whether the speaker ("I") is masculine or feminine.

2. Note, however, that the possessives that correspond to the third person personal pronouns (singular and plural) are unchanging in form. Corresponding to both *он* and *оно́* is *его́* ("his, its"); corresponding to *она́* is *её́* ("her, hers, its"); and corresponding to *они́* is *их* ("their, theirs"). These forms never have a prefixed *н-* when governed by prepositions. The possessive adjective *свой* ("one's own") is discussed on page 39.

*Мы говорим о Москвѣ и её зданіях.*

We are talking about Moscow and *its* buildings.

3. In Russian, possessives are often omitted where used in English:

*Он пи́шет ма́тери.*

He is writing *to (his) mother.*

Nor are possessives used with parts of the body, as in the English "My head hurts." Instead, the construction used is: *У меня́ бо́лит голова́* (LIT.: "By me hurts the head"), or: *У него́ ру́ки замёрзли* ("His hands are cold"; LIT.: "By him the hands froze").

In general, the most common way of expressing possession in Russian is by using the preposition *у* plus the genitive of the noun or pronoun:

*У Ива́на* но́вая шля́па.

*Ivan has* a new hat.

In the above expression, "new hat," which is the direct object in the English construction, is the subject (nominative) in the Russian.

But when the sentence contains some directed action, the possessor of the object that is undergoing the action must be expressed by a noun or pronoun in the dative case:

*Он пожа́л мне ру́ку.*

He shook my hand. [LIT.: He shook *to me* the hand.]

Парикма́хер постри́г ма́льчику во́лосы.

The barber cut the boy's hair. [LIT.: The barber cut *to the boy* the hair.]

## DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

The demonstrative adjectives **э́тот** ("this," PL. "these") and **то́т** ("that," PL. "those") are declined as follows:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	э́тот	э́та	э́то	э́ти
ACC.	э́тот	э́ту	э́то	э́ти
(ANIM.)	э́того			э́тих
GEN.	э́того	э́той	э́того	э́тих
DAT.	э́тому	э́той	э́тому	э́тим
INSTR.	э́тим	э́той	э́тим	э́тими
PREP.	э́том	э́той	э́том	э́тих

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	то́т	та	то	те
ACC.	то́т	ту	то	те
(ANIM.)	то́го			тех
GEN.	то́го	той	то́го	тех
DAT.	то́му	той	то́му	тем
INSTR.	тем	той	тем	те́ми
PREP.	то́м	той	то́м	тех

1. The neuter singular forms — **э́то**, **э́того**, etc., and **то**, **то́го**, etc. — are used as the demonstrative pronouns "this" and "that," respectively. As the introductory word in Russian sentences, **э́то** can refer to people as well as to things: **э́то** мо́я же́на ("this is my wife"). **Э́то** is sometimes the equivalent of English "it" when the "it" refers not to a specific object (in which case **о́н**, **о́на** or **о́но́** is needed) but to a fact or state of affairs:

— Гово́рят, что за́втра бу́дет дождь. — Об **э́том** я ниче́го не слы́шал.

"They say that tomorrow there will be rain." "I didn't hear anything about *it*."

He тот has the meaning of “the wrong —”:

Вы взяли **не ту** книгу.                      You took *the wrong* book.

2. The demonstrative pronominal adjective такой (“such”) is declined regularly: такая девушка (“a girl such as this”), такая красивая девушка (“such a beautiful girl”).

## INTERROGATIVE AND RELATIVE PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

1. The interrogative pronoun кто (“who?”) is always masculine singular, grammatically; что (“what?”) is neuter singular. They are declined as follows:

NOM.	кто	что
ACC.	кого́	что
GEN.	кого́	чего́
DAT.	кому́	чему́
INSTR.	кем	чем
PREP.	ком	чём

Examples of the use of кто and что:

**Кого́** вы видели?

*Whom* did you see?

**Чем** вы пи́шете?

*With what* are you writing?

2. Кто has an adjectival possessive чей (“whose?”), declined as follows:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	чей	чья	чьё	чьи
ACC.	чей	чью	чьё	чьи
(ANIM.)	чьего́			чьих
GEN.	чьего́	чьей	чьего́	чьих
DAT.	чьему́	чьей	чьему́	чьим
INSTR.	чьим	чьей	чьим	чьими
PREP.	чьём	чьей	чьём	чьих

Remember that possessive adjectives must agree in gender, number and case with the thing possessed:

**Чья́** эта книга?

*Whose* book is this?

О **чьей** тётке вы говорите?

About *whose* aunt are you talking?

3. Two other interrogative pronominal adjectives, both declined like regular hard adjectives, are **како́й** (“what kind of?”) and **кото́рый** (“which?”). **Кото́рый** is now limited in use mainly to the expression **кото́рый час?** (“what time is it?”).

4. A number of interrogative pronouns also function as relative pronouns: **кто** (“who”), **что** (“what”), **како́й** (“what”), **чей** (“whose”) and **кото́рый** (“who,” “which,” “that”). **Кото́рый**, which is used very frequently as a relative, is declined regularly, following the pattern of hard adjectives. Its nominative forms are: MASC. **кото́рый**, FEM. **кото́рая**, NEUT. **кото́рое**, PL. **кото́рые**. It must agree in gender and number with the noun (animate or inanimate) to which it refers, but its case is determined by its function in the relative clause:

Вот кни́га, **кото́рую** я чита́л.  
Here is the book *that* I was reading.

Вот де́вушка, **кото́рой** я дал кни́гу.  
There is the girl *to whom* I gave the book.

**Кто** is used as a relative pronoun in reference to a number of pronouns including **тот** (**тот, кто...**, “the one who...”), **те** (**те, кто...**, “those who...”), **никто́** (**никто́, кто...**, “no one who...”) and **все** (**все, кто...**, “everyone who...”).

**Что** is not used as frequently as **кото́рый** when the relative refers back to a noun (instead of a pronoun). It is used for the most part with the pronouns **всё** (“everything”) and **то** (**то, что,** “that which”):

Вы зна́ете всё, **что** я зна́ю.      You know everything *that* I know.

## INDEFINITE AND NEGATIVE PRONOUNS

1. Russian interrogative words in general (and not only pronouns) can be turned into indefinites by adding the unchangeable suffix **-то** or **-нибудь**. Thus, **кто́-то** and **кто́-нибудь** mean “someone, somebody” or “anyone, anybody”; **что́-то** and **что́-нибудь** mean “something” or “anything.” The **кто-** and the **что-** elements are still fully declinable. **Кто́-то** (like all indefinites with **-то**) denotes a clear-cut person whose identity is unknown. **Кто́-нибудь** denotes “anyone at all, anyone in the world”:

— Приходи́л ли **кто́-нибудь**? — **Кто́-то** приходи́л, я не зна́ю **кто**.

“Did *anyone* come by?” “*Somebody* came, (but) I don’t know who.”

Да́йте биле́т **кому́-нибудь** на у́лице.  
Give the ticket *to someone* on the street.



2. The negative pronouns **никто́** (“no one, nobody”) and **ничто́** (“nothing”) are declined as follows:

NOM.	<b>никто́</b>	<b>ничто́</b> OR <b>ничего́</b>
ACC.	<b>никого́</b>	<b>ничего́</b>
GEN.	<b>никого́</b>	<b>ничего́</b>
DAT.	<b>никому́</b>	<b>ничему́</b>
INSTR.	<b>никём</b>	<b>ничём</b>
PREP.	<b>ни о ком</b>	<b>ни о чём</b>

The prepositional is given here with the sample preposition *о* to show that prepositions are placed between the *ни* and the *кто* or *что* element. This is true for other declensional cases as well:

**Ни у кого́** нет денег.                      *Nobody* has any money.

## REFLEXIVE, EMPHATIC, RECIPROCAL AND OTHER PRONOUNS

1. The reflexive pronoun **себя́** (“himself, herself,” etc.) never appears as the subject (nominative) of a sentence or clause; it always refers back to that subject, regardless of gender, person or number:

Она́ счита́ет **себя́** о́чень у́мной.  
She considers *herself* very intelligent.

Мы счита́ем **себя́** о́чень у́мными.  
We consider *ourselves* very intelligent.

**Себя́** is declined like the second person pronoun **ты**: ACC. **себя́**, GEN. **себя́**, DAT. **себе́**, INSTR. **собой**, PREP. **себе́**. Compare the sentences:

Вади́м говори́т о **себе́**.                      Vadim is speaking about *himself*.

Вади́м говори́т о **нём**.  
Vadim is speaking about *him* (someone else).

2. The possessive adjective corresponding to **себя́** is **свой** (“one’s own”), which is declined like **мой**. Compare the sentences:

Ива́н написа́л письмо́ **свое́й** сестре́.  
Ivan wrote a letter to *his (own)* sister.

Ива́н написа́л письмо́ **его́** сестре́.  
Ivan wrote a letter to *his* (someone else’s) sister.

When the subject is in the first or second person (“I,” “we,” “you”), there is a choice between *свой* and the possessives *мой, твой, наш* or *ваш*:

Я *очень люблю мою* (OR: *свою*) собаку.

I love *my* dog very much.

3. *Сам* is an emphatic pronominal adjective corresponding to the “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” etc., in such English phrases as “I myself,” “you yourself,” “he himself,” etc. *Сам* is declined as follows:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	сам	самá	самó	сáми
ACC.	самогó	самú	самó	самíх
GEN.	самогó	самóй	самогó	самíх
DAT.	самомú	самóй	самомú	самím
INSTR.	самím	самóй	самím	самíми
PREP.	самóм	самóй	самóм	самíх

When modifying a noun, *сам* generally precedes it; when modifying a pronoun, it comes after it:

Я *видел самú* королеву в саду.

I saw the Queen *herself* in the garden.

Она *самá* сшила мне эту рубашку.

She *herself* sewed me this shirt.

4. The regularly declined adjective *самый*, which we have already seen used in the superlative degree of adjectives, means “itself,” “the very” or “right” when used on its own — with inanimates only:

Мы доехали до *самого* конца линии.

We rode to *the very* end of the line.

Она была в *самом* бою.

She was *right* in the battle (OR: . . . in *the thick* of the battle).

5. The reciprocal pronoun “each other, one another” is expressed in Russian by *друг друга*, in which the first element remains undeclined while the second (declined like a masculine singular noun) conforms to the necessary case requirements:

Они часто дают *друг другу* подарки.

They often give presents *to each other*.

Мы иногда думаем друг о друге.

We sometimes think of *each other*.

6. The adjective/pronoun *весь* ("all, entire, whole") is declined as follows:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	весь	вся	всѣ	все
ACC.	весь	всю	всѣ	все
(ANIM.)	всего́			всех
GEN.	всего́	всей	всего́	всех
DAT.	всему́	всей	всему́	всем
INSTR.	всем	всей	всем	всѣми
PREP.	всѣм	всей	всѣм	всех

Examples of the use of *весь*:

Городок *весь* в снегу́.

The town is *all* covered with snow.

Во *всѣм* ми́ре тако́го живото́ного нет.

There's no such animal in the *whole* world.

The plural (*все, всех, etc.*) is used pronominally to mean "everyone, everybody"; the neuter singular (*всѣ, всего́, etc.*) is used to mean "everything":

Она́ *всех* знает.

She knows *everyone*.

Они́ *всѣ* знают.

They know *everything*.

## PREPOSITIONS

Russian is exceedingly rich in prepositions. Only the most common ones can be considered here, but the basic concepts underlying the use of prepositions will be covered. Each preposition governs at least one grammatical case; that is, the noun or pronoun following it (its object) must have the appropriate case ending. When learning any new preposition not listed here, be sure to learn which case(s) it governs. Those prepositions that are followed by more than one case have correspondingly different shades of meaning; such prepositions will be discussed after those more closely bound to a single case. The special uses of certain prepositions in telling time are given later in the chapter Telling Time (see page 85).

### PREPOSITIONS USED WITH THE ACCUSATIVE ONLY

Relatively few prepositions are used with the accusative case only. Among them are:

**про** (“about, concerning”)

моря́к сказа́л де́тям **про** сво́й приключе́ния (“the sailor told the children *about* his adventures”); она́ говори́т **про** э́ту кни́гу (“she is speaking *about* this book”)

**сквозь** (“through”)

**сквозь** тумáн (“*through* the fog”); **сквозь** ды́ру (“*through* a hole”)

**че́рез** (“over, across, through, by way of; in, within; every other”)

**че́рез** мост (“*over* the bridge”); **че́рез** стéну (“*through* the wall”); он узна́л о награ́де **че́рез** бра́та (“he learned of the award *through* his brother”); мы поéхали в Ки́ев **че́рез** Москвú (“we went to Kiev *by way of* Moscow”); я верну́сь **че́рез** неде́лю (“I’ll return *in* a week”); они́ссора́лись **че́рез** пять мину́т по́сле его́ возвра́щения (“they quarreled *within* five minutes after his return”); **че́рез** де́нь (“*every other* day”)

**PREPOSITIONS USED WITH THE GENITIVE ONLY**

Prepositions always followed by the genitive, and no other case, include:

**без** (“without”)

**без билéта** (“without a ticket”); **без исклúчéния** (“without exception”); **без интерéса** (“without interest”)

**вмéсто** (“instead of”)

**вмéсто** пиджакá (“instead of a jacket”); **вмéсто** нас (“instead of us”)

**вокрúг** (“round, around, surrounding”)

**вокрúг** двора (“around the yard”); **вокрúг** свéта (“round the world”)

**для** (“for, for the sake of”)

этот ящик **для** писем (“this drawer is for letters”); я сдéлал это **для** вас (“I did this for your sake”); **для** разнообразия (“for a change”)

**до** (“up to [but not including], as far as, until, before”)

**до** сáмых стен крéпости (“up to the very walls of the fortress”); я бúду ждáть **до** утра (“I’ll wait until morning”); **до** войны (“before the war”)

**из** (“out of, from out of, made of”)

он вýшел **из** кóмнаты (“he went out of the room”); **из** любви к рóдине (“out of love for one’s homeland”); стол **из** дéрева (“the table is made of wood”); одíн **из** студéнтов (“one of the students”)

**из-за** (“from behind, from beyond; because of, through”)

**из-за** кустóв (“from behind the bushes”); **из-за** гранíцы (“from abroad” [LIT.: “from beyond the border”]); **из-за** дождя (“because of the rain”); **из-за** неосторóжности (“through carelessness”)

**крóме** (“besides, in addition to, except”)

никтó **крóме** вас (“no one besides you”)

**óколо** (“near, approximately”)

**óколо** теáтра (“near the theater”); **óколо** пятí человек (“around five people”)

**от** (“from, away from”)

он отошёл **от** стѣны (“he moved *away from* the wall”); **от** Москвы до Кіева (“*from* Moscow to Kiev”); он получил письмо **от** сестры (“he received a letter *from* his sister”); **от** начала до конца (“*from* beginning to end”); он покраснел **от** смущения (“he blushed *from* embarrassment”)

**после** (“after, since”)

**после** работы (“*after* work”); **после** Рождества (“*after* Christmas”); **после** его возвращения (“*since* his return”)

**у** (“next to, beside, by; at the home of; in the possession of”)

**у** входа (“*by* the entrance”); я был **у** брата (“I was *at* my brother’s”); **у** моего брата большой дом (“*my brother has* a big house”); **у** меня болит зуб (“I have a toothache” [ЛИТ.: “*by me* aches a tooth”])

## PREPOSITIONS USED WITH THE DATIVE ONLY

Of the prepositions that govern the dative case only, the most important by far is **к**.

**к** (**ко** before certain double consonants; “to, toward”)

идите **к** доске (“go *to* the blackboard”); приходите **к** нам (“come *to see* us; visit us”); письмо **к** сестре (“a letter *to* one’s sister”); она добра **ко** мне (“she’s kind *to* me”)

Two other prepositions governing the dative are благодаря (“thanks to, owing to”): благодаря вам (“*thanks to* you”); and согласно (“according to”): согласно Толстому (“*according to* Tolstoy”).

## PREPOSITIONS USED WITH THE INSTRUMENTAL ONLY

Important prepositions used only with the instrumental case are:

**между\*** (“among, between”)

**между** деревьями (“*among* the trees”); **между** нами (“*between* you and me”); **между** обедом и ужином (“*between* lunch and dinner”); **между** окном и дверью (“*between* the window and the door”)

\* Между occasionally occurs with the accusative; the meaning is the same.

**над** (**на́до** before certain double consonants; “over, above,” whether motion is involved or not)

**над** на́ми летáл самолёт (“a plane flew *over* us”); **над** у́ровнем мóря (“*above* sea level”); он поднялся **на́до** мной по лéстнице (“he climbed *to a place above* me on the ladder”)

**пéред** (**пéредо** before certain double consonants; “before, in front of, prior to”)

**пéред** двéрью (“*in front of* the door”); **пéред** мо́им oтъeздoм (“*just before* my departure”); **пéред** oбéдoм (“before dinner”)

## PREPOSITIONS USED WITH THE PREPOSITIONAL ONLY

The only important preposition used exclusively with the prepositional case is **при**.

**при** (“at the time of, in the presence of, with”)

**при** Стáлине (“*during the* Stalin era”); не говорите так **при** моéй ма́тери! (“don’t talk that way *in front of* my mother!”); **при** уча́стии дете́й (“*with* the children’s participation”)

## PREPOSITIONS USED WITH MORE THAN ONE CASE

**в** (**во** before certain double consonants; WITH ACCUSATIVE: “to, into; per”; WITH PREPOSITIONAL: “in, at”)

ACC.: вчера́ мы пришлi **в** Москвú (“we came *to* Moscow yesterday”); он вошёл **в** кúхню (“he went *into* the kitchen”); три ра́за **в** неде́лю (“three times *per* week”)

PREP.: роди́ться **в** Москвe (“to be born *in* Moscow”); **в** кúхне (“*in* the kitchen”); **в** конто́ре (“*at* the office”); **в** гoрáх (“*in* the mountains”); **в** ста́рости (“*in* one’s old age”); **в** oтчáянии (“*in* despair”)

**за** (WITH NOMINATIVE, together with **что**: “what sort of?”; WITH ACCUSATIVE: “[to a place] behind or beyond; for, in return for; in place of; in”; WITH INSTRUMENTAL: “[at a place] behind or beyond; at; for; after”)

NOM.: **что** э́то **за** безoбpáзие? (“*what sort of* mess is this?”); **что** э́то **за** птíца? (“*what kind of* bird is this?”)

ACC.: онѣ поѣхали **за** границу (“they went abroad” [LIT.: “they went *beyond* the border”]); солнце зашло **за** горизонт (“the sun went *below* the horizon”); машина завернула **за** угол (“the car went *around* the corner”); онѣ сѣли **за** стол (“they sat down *at* the table”); спасибо **за** вашу помощь (“thanks *for* your help”); я буду работать **за** брата (“I’ll work *in place of* my brother”); мы все **за** мир (“we are all *for* peace”); я прочитал книгу **за** одну неделю (“I finished reading the book *in* one week”)

INSTR.: сейчас он **за** границей (“he is now abroad”); солнце уже **за** горизонтом (“the sun is already *below* the horizon”); парикмахерская **за** углом (“the barbershop is *just around* the corner”); у него есть дача **за** городом (“he has a summer house *outside of* town”); онѣ сидѣли **за** столом (“they were sitting *at* the table”); **за** завтраком (“at breakfast”); я зайду **за** вами в полдень (“I’ll come *for* you at noon”); день **за** днём (“day *after* day”)

**на** (WITH ACCUSATIVE: “on[to]; to [instead of *в* with certain nouns]; by; for”; WITH PREPOSITIONAL: “on, at”)

ACC.: он повѣсил картину **на** стѣну (“he hung the picture *on* the wall”); **на** завод, станцию, работу, собрание (“*to* the factory, the station, work, the meeting”); он старше меня **на** пять лет (“he’s five years older than I am” [LIT.: “he’s older than I *by* five years”]); материал **на** платье (“material *for* a dress”); что у нас будет **на** обед? (“what will we have *for* dinner?”)

PREP.: он **на** работе (“he’s *at* work”); картина висит **на** стѣнѣ (“a picture hangs *on* the wall”); мы приѣхали сюда **на** автобусе (“we came here *on* the bus [OR: *by* bus]”)

**о** (**об** before vowels, **обо** before certain double consonants; WITH ACCUSATIVE: “against [in actions of contact]”; WITH PREPOSITIONAL: “about, concerning”)

ACC.: корабль разбился **о** скалы (“the ship broke up *on* the rocks”); опираться **о** дерево (“to lean *against* a tree”)

PREP.: он рассказал нам **о** своём путешествии (“he told us *about* his trip”); мы говорим **о** погоде (“we are talking *about* the weather”)

**по** (WITH ACCUSATIVE: “up to [and including]; apiece, each”; WITH DATIVE: “along, through; according to; on, by, in; apiece,\* each”)

\* When meaning “apiece,” *по* is followed by the accusative when two or more items are distributed to each party; by the dative when only one item is distributed to each party.



ACC.: вода поднялась ему **по** колёни (“the water rose *to* his knees”); с понедельника **по** четвёрг (“from Monday *through* Thursday”); мать раздала детям **по** два яблока (“the mother gave the children two apples *apiece*”); эти карандаши стоят **по** десять копеек (“these pencils cost ten kopecks *each*”)

DAT.: **по** дороге (“*along* the road”); **по** парку (“*through* the park”); **по** истории России (“*throughout* the history of Russia”); **по** плану (“*according to* plan”); **по** телевидению (“*on* television”); ударили его **по** головé (“he was hit *on* the head”); **по** ошибке (“*by* mistake”); **по** почте (“*by* mail”); **по** его мнению (“*in* his opinion”); специалист **по** русской литературе (“a specialist *in* Russian literature”); он работает **по** вечерам (“he works *evenings*”); студенты разъехались **по** домам на каникулы (“the students went *to* their homes for the vacation”—i.e., they dispersed, *each* going to his own home); мать раздала детям **по** одному яблоку (“the mother gave the children one apple *apiece*”)

**под** (**подо** before certain double consonants; WITH ACCUSATIVE: “[to a place] under, below”; WITH INSTRUMENTAL: “[at a place] under, below”)

ACC.: поставьте портфель **под** стол (“put your briefcase *under* the table”)

INSTR.: мальчик спал **под** деревом (“a boy was sleeping *under* a tree”); **под** горой (“*at the bottom of* the hill”); **под** руководством Лёнина (“*under* Lenin’s leadership”)

**с** (**со** before certain double consonants; WITH ACCUSATIVE: “approximately; the size of”; WITH GENITIVE: “from off the top of [with verbs of action]; from [instead of из with certain nouns]; since”; WITH INSTRUMENTAL: “with, together with, and”)

ACC.: мы прожили там **с** месяц (“we spent *about* a month there”); он ростом **с** брата (“he is *about* the same height as his brother”); градины **с** яблоки (“hailstones *the size of* apples”)

GEN.: он взял книгу **со** столá (“he took the book *from* [OR: *off*] the table”); **с** завода, станции, работы, собрания (“*from* the factory, the station, work, the meeting”); сколько **с** меня? (“how much do I owe?” [LIT.: “how much *from* me?”]); **с** русского на английский (“*from* Russian into English”); они здесь **с** понедельника (“they’ve been here *since* Monday”)

INSTR.: она пошла в булочную **со** мной (“she went to the bakery *with* me”); **с** заходом солнца (“*with* the setting of the sun”); хлеб **с** сыром (“bread *and* cheese”)

## INTERRELATION OF PREPOSITIONS IN SENTENCES OF MOTION

It is clear from the above listing that the notion of location in a place, and of various types of motion to and from a place, have much to do with the proper choice of prepositions and the cases they govern. It is convenient to recapitulate some of the relevant prepositions in a grouping that clarifies their interrelation:

LOCATION (ABSENCE OF MOTION)	MOTION TOWARD	MOTION AWAY FROM
<b>в</b> + prepositional “in, at”	<b>в</b> + accusative “into, to”	<b>из</b> + genitive “out of, from”
Он <b>в</b> театре. He is <i>in</i> the theater.	Он пошёл <b>в</b> театр. He went <i>into</i> the theater.	Он вышел <b>из</b> театра. He went <i>out of</i> the theater.
-----		
<b>на</b> + prepositional “on, at”	<b>на</b> + accusative “on(to); to”	<b>с</b> + genitive “off of; from”
Книга <b>на</b> столе. The book is <i>on</i> the table.	Он положил книгу <b>на</b> стол. He put the book <i>on</i> the table.	Он взял книгу <b>с</b> стола. He took the book <i>off</i> the table.
Он <b>на</b> собрании. He is <i>at</i> the meeting.	Он пошёл <b>на</b> собрание. He went <i>to</i> the meeting.	Он пришёл <b>с</b> собрания. He has come <i>from</i> the meeting.
-----		
<b>у</b> + genitive “next to, beside, by”	<b>к</b> + dative “to(ward), up to the side of”	<b>от</b> + genitive “away from the side of”
Он <b>у</b> окна. He is <i>by</i> the window.	Он подошёл <b>к</b> окну. He went up <i>to</i> the window.	Он отошёл <b>от</b> окна. He went away <i>from</i> the window.
Я был <b>у</b> брата. I was <i>at</i> my brother's.	Я пошёл <b>к</b> брату. I went <i>to</i> my brother's.	Я ушёл <b>от</b> брата. I went away <i>from</i> my brother's.
-----		

**за** + instrumental  
“behind, beyond”

**за** + accusative  
“behind, beyond”

**из-за** + genitive  
“from behind, from  
beyond”

Он живёт **за**  
границей.  
He lives abroad.

Он поехал **за**  
границу.  
He went abroad.

Он вернулся **из-за**  
границы.  
He returned *from* abroad.

**под** + instrumental  
“under, below”

**под** + accusative  
“under, below”

**из-под** + genitive  
“out from under”

Ребёнок играл **под**  
столóm.  
The baby played *under*  
the table.

Ребёнок запóлз **под**  
стол.  
The baby crawled *under*  
the table.

Ребёнок вьпóлз **из-под**  
столá.  
The baby crawled *out from*  
*under* the table.

Над (“over, above”) and пéред (“in front of”) are always followed by the instrumental, whether motion is involved or not.

# CONJUNCTIONS

Like English, Russian contains two general types of conjunction: coordinating and subordinating. Only the most common coordinating and subordinating conjunctions are given here together with examples of their use.

## COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

**и** (“and,” linking like parts of speech and compatible ideas)

у меня яблоки **и** апельсины (“I have apples *and* oranges”); он учится читать **и** писать (“he is learning to read *and* write”)

**и ... и** (“both ... and”)

**и** Иван, **и** Михайл будут работать за вас (“*both* Ivan *and* Mikhail will work in place of you”); он говорит **и** по-французски, **и** по-русски (“he speaks *both* French *and* Russian”)

**ни ... ни** (“neither ... nor”)

**ни** Иван, **ни** Михайл не будет работать за вас (“*neither* Ivan *nor* Mikhail will work in place of you”); он не говорит **ни** по-французски, **ни** по-русски (“he speaks *neither* French *nor* Russian”)

**а** (“and, but, whereas,” linking contrasting but not antithetical ideas)

его пальто чёрное, **а** моё серое (“his coat is black *and* mine is gray”); она хочет ждать, **а** я не хочу (“she wants to wait *but* I don’t”)

**но** (“but,” linking incompatible or antithetical ideas)

он был маленький, **но** храбрый (“he was small, *but* brave”); я вам помогу, **но** вы должны сказать мне правду (“I will help you, *but* you must tell me the truth”)

**или** (“or”)

это серебро **или** золото? (“is that silver *or* gold?”)

**или ... или** (“either ... or”)

**или** Иван, **или** Михайл будет работать за вас (“*either Ivan or Mikhail will work in place of you*”)

## SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

**что** (“that,” used after verbs of saying, thinking, believing, etc.)

я знаю, **что** вы съездили за границу (“I know *that* you went abroad”); я думаю, **что** он дома (“I think *that* he is at home”)

**чтобы** (“that,” often unexpressed in English)

(a) With the past tense after verbs of request, command, warning, fearing or doubting:

я попросил, **чтобы** он зашёл ко мне сегодня (“I asked him to stop by today”); прокурор потребовал, **чтобы** обвиняемый признался в преступлении (“the prosecutor demanded *that* the accused admit to his crime”); командир приказал, **чтобы** войска отступили (“the commander ordered the troops to retreat”); я боялся, **чтобы** он не пришёл (“I was *afraid* that he might come”)

(b) As a conjunction of purpose with the meaning “in order to, in order that, so that”: (1) with an infinitive if the subject of the dependent clause is the same as the subject of the main clause; and (2) with the past tense if there is a change of subject. (When serving as a conjunction of purpose, **чтобы** is usually omitted when the main verb is a verb of motion when there is no change of subject.)

они пригласили меня, **чтобы** узнать о моей новой книге (“they invited me *in order to* find out about my new book”); граждане собрались, **чтобы** обсуждать вопрос (“the citizens assembled *in order to* discuss the issue”); я встал, **чтобы** он мог сесть (“I stood up *so that* he could sit down”); он пришёл, **чтобы** вернуть твою книгу (“he came *in order to* return your book”)

**потому что** (“because”)

я счастлив, **потому что** сегодня мой день рождения (“I am happy *because* today is my birthday”)

**из-за того, что** (“because,” with the implication of failure or trouble)

**из-за того, что** вы опоздали, мы не успели на поезд (“*because* you arrived late, we didn't make the train”)

**так как** (“because, since”)

**так как** я знал, что вы рано ложитесь спать, я не звонил (“*since* I knew that you go to bed early, I didn’t telephone”)

**хотя** (“although”)

**хотя** было уже поздно, он решил пойти (“*although* it was already late, he decided to go”)

**как** (“like, as”)

я люблю его **как** сына (“I love him *like* a son”)

**до того, как** (“before”)

**до того, как** он уехал, он позвонил мне (“*before* he left he telephoned me”)

**перед тем, как** (“just before”)

**перед тем, как** он уехал, он позвонил мне (“*just before* he left he telephoned me”)

**после того, как** (“after”)

**после того, как** он вышел из комнаты, она расплакалась (“*after* he left the room she burst into tears”)

**с тех пор, как** (“since”)

говорят, что он очень изменился **с тех пор, как** мы разлучились (“they say that he has changed a lot *since* we parted company”)

**пока ... не** (“until”)

я ничего никому не скажу, **пока** вы не дадите разрешение (“I will not tell anyone anything *until* you give permission”)

**по мере того, как** (“as, in proportion as”)

**по мере того, как** милиционеры приближались, толпа кричала (“*as* the police approached the crowd shouted”)

# VERBS: FORMATION

## TENSE AND ASPECT

The Russian verb system has only three tenses: present, past and future. However, Russian has a categorization of verbs that has almost no parallel in English: nearly every Russian verb is of one of two **aspects**, imperfective or perfective. It takes some time and effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which these two aspects are used, but the most basic and important distinction between them is readily understandable:

Imperfective verbs describe actions without reference to the completion of those actions. They may describe an action in general (“Fish *swim* but people *walk*”), or an action in progress (“She *was reading* when I called”), or a repeated or habitual action (“They *skate* every day”).

Perfective verbs describe actions that have been or will be completed (“She *has read* the book”; “She *will read* the book”).

Thus, in Russian, verbs almost always come in pairs, a given verb in English being represented by two verbs in Russian to meet the two aspect requirements. For example, to correspond to the English “to read,” Russian has both the imperfective verb читать (implying “to read in general, to read habitually, to be reading”) and the perfective verb прочитать (implying “to read through, to finish reading”). In this case, it is a prefix (про-) that indicates the difference; sometimes it is a change in the stem (different vowel or inserted syllable); sometimes two completely different verbs are used.

## THE INFINITIVE

The form in which Russian verbs are entered into dictionaries is the infinitive, corresponding to the English “to stroll,” “to be,” etc. Most verbs have infinitives ending in -ть. In general, the infinitive is used in much the same way as in English:

Я люблю гулять по парку. I love *to stroll* through the park.

Быть или не быть, вот в чём вопрос.

*To be* or not *to be*, that is the question. [From Pasternak’s translation of *Hamlet*.]

## THE PRESENT TENSE

Imperfective verbs have three separate tenses: present, past and future. Since the present tense by its nature can never describe a completed action, and completed action is the hallmark of the perfective aspect, perfective verbs have only two separate tenses: past and future. The Russian present tense corresponds to all the different English constructions denoting present time: "he reads," "he is reading," "he does read."

In the present tense, the overwhelming majority of Russian verbs have a different ending for each of the personal pronouns. These endings are added to the stem after dropping the -ть of the infinitive (and often the vowel preceding the -ть). There are two chief sets of these personal endings. In Conjugation I, e is the characteristic vowel of the endings, appearing in the forms for ты, он (or она́ or онó), мы and вы. In Conjugation II, the characteristic vowel in the corresponding endings is и. Our model verb for Conjugation I will be the imperfective verb читать ("to read"); for Conjugation II, the imperfective verb говорить ("to speak"):

### CONJUGATION I

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
1ST PERS.	я чита́ю	I read	мы чита́ем	we read
2ND PERS.	ты чита́ешь	you read	вы чита́ете	you read
3RD PERS.	он чита́ет	he reads	они́ чита́ют	they read

### CONJUGATION II

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
1ST PERS.	я говорю́	I speak	мы говорим	we speak
2ND PERS.	ты говори́шь	you speak	вы говори́те	you speak
3RD PERS.	он говори́т	he speaks	они́ говори́т	they speak

1. When the verb stem ends in ж-, ц-, ч-, ш- or щ-, the -ю ending of the first person singular becomes -у and the -ят ending of the third person plural becomes -ат. Thus, for the imperfective Conjugation II verb точить ("to sharpen"), the first person singular is точу́ and the third person plural is то́чат.

2. Remember that the third person singular is the form to use with any of the third person singular personal pronouns (он, она́ or онó).

3. Every Russian verb in the present tense will conform to one of three possible stress patterns: (1) the stress will be on the stem throughout (as for чита́ть); (2) the stress will be on the endings throughout (as for



говори́ть); or (3) there will be shifting stress. In the shifting stress pattern, the stress falls on the ending of the first person singular, then shifts to the stem for all other persons. Thus, the present tense of *точи́ть* is: *точу́, то́чишь, то́чит, то́чим, то́чите, то́чат*.

When the stress falls on the endings throughout in Conjugation I, those endings then become: *-ý, -ёшь, -ёт, -ём, -ёте, -ýт*. Thus, the imperfective verb *нести́* ("to carry") has the present tense: *несу́, несёшь, несёт, несём, несёте, несут*.

4. We have already seen consonant mutation at work in the comparative degree of adjectives: *тихий* ("quiet")/*тише* ("quieter"). It may also take place in the present tense of verbs; when it occurs, it does so in a systematic and predictable way. In Conjugation I it affects every form; in Conjugation II, only the first person singular. Thus, the imperfective Conjugation I verb *писа́ть* ("to write") drops the *a* as well as the *ть* of the infinitive before adding the personal endings; the *c* at the end of the stem mutates into *ш*; and we get the present tense: *пишу́, пишешь, пишет, пишем, пишете, пишут*. The imperfective Conjugation II verb *сиде́ть* ("to sit") has the stem *сид-* and the *д* mutates to *ж* in the first person singular, giving: *сижу́, сиди́шь, сиди́т, сиди́м, сиди́те, сидя́т*. Among the most common patterns of mutation of consonants or consonant clusters at the end of verb stems are: (1) *г, д* and *з* may mutate to *ж*; (2) *с, к, т* and *ц* may mutate to *ч*; (3) *х* may mutate to *ш*; and (4) *ск* and *ст* may mutate to *щ*. Additional examples: *указа́ть* ("to show")/*укажу́, ука́жешь*, etc.; *пла́кать* ("to cry, weep")/*пла́чу, пла́чешь*, etc.; *иска́ть* ("to look for, seek")/*ищу́, ищешь*, etc.; *грусти́ть* ("to grieve, mourn")/*грущу́, грусти́шь*, etc.

It will be noted that, by keeping in mind the rules about the distribution of stress and of mutated consonants within the present tense, you can conjugate any verb in that tense if you know the first and second person singular forms in addition to the infinitive. For instance, from *писа́ть/пишу́, пишешь* one learns that the stem ends with the *c*, which is mutated into *ш*; that the verb belongs to Conjugation I (because the vowel of the ending is *e* and because the mutation extends beyond the first person singular; and that the stress is a shifting one. From this point on, there will be no need to give the full present conjugation of verbs (unless they have further irregularities), but merely give these three forms.

5. In verbs with stems ending in *б-, в-, м-, п-* or *ф-*, the letter *л* is inserted between the stem and the present tense endings (in all forms, for Conjugation I; in the first person singular, for Conjugation II). All such verbs have shifting stress. Examples: *люби́ть* ("to love, like")/*люблю́, люби́шь*; *лови́ть* ("to catch")/*ловлю́, лови́шь*; *дрема́ть* ("to doze")/*дремлю́, дремлешь*; *утопи́ть* ("to drown")/*утоплю́, утопи́шь*.

## PATTERNS OF PRESENT TENSE CONJUGATION

In the following arrangement of Russian verbs by their present tense, each group is represented by one or more typical verbs shown in the infinitive and in the first and second persons singular (more forms given where necessary). Remember that rules of consonant mutation and stress may account for specific differences within each group. Mutation can only come into play where a mutable consonant immediately precedes the personal endings.

### Infinitives Ending in -ать

All verbs with infinitives ending in -ать are Conjugation I except for those in group 7.

1. Читáть (“to read”)/чита́ю, чита́ешь is one of thousands of verbs in which the stem is the infinitive minus the -ть.

2. Писáть (“to write”)/пишú, пишешь is one of about 60 verbs in which -ать is dropped to find the stem, and there is a mutation wherever possible. All verbs formed on the root -казáть (basic meaning: “to show, to tell”) are in this group, as well as such common verbs as двíгать (“to move”), искáть (“to seek”), пла́кать (“to cry”), прýтáть (“to hide”) and рéзáть (“to cut”).

3. Another group of verbs that drop -ать begin with consonant clusters; e.g.: ждáть (“to wait”)/жду, ждёшь; врáть (“to tell lies”)/вру, врёшь. In some cases a vowel is inserted between the stem consonants, and there is stress on the personal endings; e.g.: брать (“to take”)/ беру́, берёшь; зва́ть (“to call”)/зову́, зовёшь.

4. Трéбовáть (“to demand”)/требую́, требуешь is one of thousands of verbs in which the stem is formed by dropping the -овáть and inserting y before the personal endings. Many loan words from other languages are formed in this way; e.g.: ликвидíровать (“to liquidate”)/ликвидíрую, ликвидíруешь. When the infinitive ending is -евáть, the inserted vowel is ю, as in воевáть (“to wage war”)/вою́ю, вою́ешь, unless this is precluded by the nature of the preceding consonant, such as the ч in ночевáть (“to spend the night”)/ночúю, ночúешь.

5. A small category consists of verbs built on the roots -давáть (basic meaning: “to give”), -знавáть (basic meaning: “to know”) and -ставáть (basic meaning: “to stand, to stay”). The pattern in this group is to drop the -вáть before adding the personal endings: давáть (“to give”)/даю́, даёшь.

6. Some verbs have *н* inserted before the personal endings. Sometimes the *а* of the infinitive ending is retained: *встать* (“to get up”)/*вста́ну*, *вста́нешь*. Sometimes it is not: *нача́ть* (“to begin”)/*нача́ну*, *нача́нешь*.

7. Only about 30 verbs ending in *-ать* are Conjugation II. In these verbs, for which the *-ать* is dropped, the stem usually ends in *ж-*, *ч-*, *ш-* or *щ-*. Examples: *дрожа́ть* (“to tremble”)/*дрожа́у*, *дрожа́ишь*; *держа́ть* (“to hold”)/*держа́у*, *держа́ишь*. The verb *бежа́ть* (“to run”) has the irregular conjugation *бегу́*, *бежи́шь*, *бежи́т*, *бежи́м*, *бежи́те*, *бегу́т*. The verb *спать* (“to sleep”) is conjugated *сплю*, *спи́шь*, etc. The verb *гна́ть* (“to drive animals”) and the verbs derived from it by means of prefixes, such as *догна́ть* (“to catch up with”), have an inserted *о*: *гоню́*, *го́нишь*.

### Infinitives Ending in *-ять*

Infinitives ending in *-ять* are all Conjugation I except for *боя́ться* (“to fear”) and *стоя́ть* (“to stand”).

1. For most of these verbs, the *-ять* is dropped, leaving a stem that ends in a vowel; e.g.: *се́ять* (“to sow”)/*се́ю*, *се́ешь*.

2. When the *-ять* is preceded by *н*, the *-ять* is dropped and *им* is inserted before the personal endings: *сня́ть* (“to take off”)/*снима́у*, *снима́ешь*; *обня́ть* (“to embrace”)/*обнима́у*, *обнима́ешь*. Somewhat irregular verbs in this group are *приня́ть* (“to take, to accept”)/*прима́у*, *прима́ешь*; *поя́нить* (“to understand”)/*поима́у*, *поима́ешь*; and *зая́нить* (“to borrow”)/*займа́у*, *займа́ешь*.

### Infinitives Ending in *-ить*

1. *Говори́ть* (“to speak”)/*говори́ю*, *говори́шь* is one of thousands of verbs in which the stem is the infinitive minus the *-ить* and the first person singular mutates where possible.

2. A small subgroup has an inserted *ь* and Conjugation I endings; e.g.: *бита́* (“to beat”)/*бью́*, *бьёшь*, *бьёт*, *бьём*; *бьёте*, *бьют*. Other important verbs in this group are *пита́* (“to drink”), *лита́* (“to pour”), *шита́* (“to sew”) and *вита́* (“to wind”).

3. The verb *жита́* (“to live”) conjugates *живу́*, *живёшь*, *живёт*, *живём*, *живёте*, *живу́т*. The verb *брита́* (“to shave”) conjugates *брею́*, *бреёшь*, etc.

### Infinitives Ending in -еть

1. In one group, of Conjugation I, only the -ть is dropped: уметь (“to be able, to know how”)/умею, умёешь.
2. In another group, of Conjugation II, the -еть is dropped, leaving a stem that ends in a consonant; e.g.: видеть (“to see”)/вижу, видишь; лететь (“to fly”)/лечу, летíшь.
3. When the full infinitive ending is -ереть, that whole ending is dropped and р is inserted before the stressed Conjugation I personal endings: умереть (“to die”)/умрú, умрёшь. When a prefix causes an uncomfortable consonant cluster, о is inserted after it: стереть (“to wipe, to clean”)/сотрú, сотрёшь; отпереть (“to unlock”)/отопрú, отопрёшь.
4. The verb петь (“to sing”) conjugates пою, поёшь, поёт, поём, поёте, поют. The verb одеть (“to clothe”) conjugates одéну, одéнешь, etc.

### Infinitives Ending in -оть

Verbs with infinitives ending in -оть are Conjugation I. The -оть is dropped; e.g.: бороться\* (“to fight”)/борюсь, бóрешься. The verb молотъ (“to grind”) has a change in its stem vowel: мелю́, мéлешь.

### Infinitives Ending in -ыть

Verbs with infinitives ending in -ыть are Conjugation I. The -ыть is dropped and a stressed о is inserted before the personal endings: мыть (“to wash”)/мою́, моёшь; открыть (“to open”)/открóю, открёшь. The verb плыть (“to swim”) conjugates плыву́, плывёшь, etc.

### Infinitives Ending in -уть

Verbs with infinitives ending in -уть are Conjugation I. The -ть is dropped: дуть (“to blow”)/дую́, дуёшь. When the -уть is preceded by н (-нуть verbs are almost always perfectives), the -уть is dropped and the first person singular ends in -у even when unstressed: исчезнуть (“to disappear”)/исчэзну́, исчэзнешь.

\* The significance of the verbal suffixes -ся and -сь is explained on page 64.

### Infinitives Ending in Other Than Vowel-Plus-ть

1. **идти** (“to walk, to go on foot”) is conjugated **иду́, идёшь**, etc. **Прийти́** (“to arrive, to come on foot”) conjugates **приду́, придёшь**. **Пойти́** (“to go”) gives **пойду́, пойдёшь**.

2. In verbs with infinitives ending in **-сти** or **-сть** (they are Conjugation I, with stressed endings), the **с** is the end of the stem and usually mutates into **д** or **т** (sometimes **б**) before the personal endings are added; e.g.: **вести́** (“to lead”)/**веду́, ведёшь**; **плести́** (“to weave”)/**плету́, плетёшь**; **украсть** (“to steal”)/**украду́, украдёшь**; **грести́** (“to row, to rake”)/**гребу́, гребёшь**. The verb **сесть** (“to sit down”) has a change in its stem vowel: **сяду́, сядёшь**. Two verbs in which the **с** is not mutated are **нести́** (“to carry”)/**несу́, несёшь** and **трясти́** (“to shake”)/**трясу́, трясешь**.

3. In verbs with infinitives ending in **-зти́** or **-зть** (Conjugation I, stressed endings), the **з** is the end of the stem but there is no mutation: **везти́** (“to haul”)/**везу́, везёшь**.

4. In verbs with infinitives ending in **-чь** (Conjugation I), the **-чь** is dropped and a **г** or **к** is inserted that is subject to mutation (into **ж** and **ч**, respectively) in the second and third persons singular and the first and second persons plural; e.g.: **мочь** (“to be able”)/**могу́, можешь**, **может**, **можем**, **можете**, **могут**; **печь** (“to bake”)/**пеку́, печёшь**, **печёт**, **печём**, **печёте**, **пеку́т**. The verb **лечь** (“to lie down”) has a change in its stem vowel: **лягу́, ляжешь**, etc.

### Some Additional Irregular Verbs

Six important additional irregular verbs are: **дать** (“to give”)/**дам, дашь**, **даст**, **дадим**, **дадите**, **дадут**; **есть** (“to eat”)/**ем, ешь, ест**, **едим**, **едите**, **едят**; **ехать** (“to go by conveyance”)/**еду́, едешь**, etc.; **взять** (“to take”)/**возьму́, возьмёшь**, etc.; **прочесть** (“to read through”)/**прочту́, прочтёшь**, etc.; **хотеть** (“to want, to like”)—which has a Conjugation I singular and a Conjugation II plural—**хочу́, хочешь**, **хочет**, **хотим**, **хотите**, **хотят**.

## THE IMPERATIVE OR COMMAND FORM

The imperative form of verbs, used to make commands or requests (e.g., “Come here!” “Read this book!”), is closely connected to the present tense conjugation pattern of the verb.

1. When the second person singular form of the present tense has a vowel just before the personal ending -ешь or -ёшь, then the imperative is formed by dropping that ending and adding -й or -йте. (The ending -й gives the familiar singular command form, corresponding to the personal pronoun ты; the ending -йте gives the familiar plural command form, but also the polite form singular or plural, corresponding to the personal pronoun вы. Note, however, that normally no subject pronoun is used with the imperative itself.)

Thus, using the same model verbs as in the preceding section on conjugation patterns, we get:

INFINITIVE	2ND PERS. SING.	IMPERATIVE	
		FAMILIAR SING.	POLITE OR PL.
чита́ть ("to read")	чита́ешь	чита́й	чита́йте
тре́бовать ("to demand")	тре́буешь	тре́буй	тре́буйте
се́ять ("to sow")	се́ешь	се́й	се́йте
бри́ть ("to shave")	бри́ешь	бри́й	бри́йте
пе́ть ("to sing")	пе́ешь	пой	по́йте
мы́ть ("to wash")	мо́ешь	мой	мо́йте
ду́ть ("to blow")	ду́ешь	дуй	ду́йте

2. When the personal endings of the present tense are preceded by a consonant, the choice of imperative endings depends on the stress pattern of that conjugation. (a) When the present tense stress falls on any ending at all (the first person singular is a good indicator for this), drop the personal ending of the third person plural (-ут, -ят or -ют) and add -й (familiar) or -йте (polite). (b) When the present tense stress falls on the stem throughout, drop the third person plural ending and add -ь (familiar) or -ьте (polite). (c) When the personal endings of the present tense are preceded by two consonants, the imperative endings are -и and -ите, regardless of present tense stress.

Referring again to the model verbs in the conjugation section:

INFINITIVE	1ST PERS. SING.	3RD PERS. PL.	IMPERATIVE	
			FAMILIAR SING.	POLITE OR PL.
(a) писа́ть ("to write")	пишу́	пишут	пиши́	пиши́те
бра́ть ("to take")	беру́	беру́т	бери́	бери́те
бежа́ть ("to run")	бежу́	бежу́т	беги́	бегите́
гна́ть ("to drive animals")	гоню́	гоня́т	гони́	гони́те
снять ("to take off")	сниму́	снима́т	сними́	сними́те

говорить ("to speak")	говори́ю	говори́ят	говори́	говори́те
жить ("to live")	живу́	живу́т	живи́	живи́те
лететь ("to fly")	лечу́	летя́т	лети́	лети́те
бороться ("to fight")	бори́юсь	бори́ются	бори́сь	бори́тесь
плыть ("to swim")	плыву́	плыву́т	плыви́	плыви́те
идти ("to walk")	иду́	иду́т	иди́	иди́те
вести ("to lead")	веду́	веду́т	веди́	веди́те
везти ("to haul")	везу́	везу́т	вези́	вези́те
печь ("to bake")	пеку́	пеку́т	пеки́	пеки́те
(b) встать ("to get up")	вста́ну	вста́нут	встань	встаньте
оде́ть ("to clothe")	оде́ну	оде́нут	оде́нь	оде́ньте
(c) ждать ("to wait")	жду	ждут	жди	жди́те
спать ("to sleep")	сплю	спят	спи	спи́те
уме́реть ("to die")	умру́	умру́т	умри́	умри́те
исчезну́ть ("to disappear")	исчезну́	исчезну́т	исчезни́	исчезните
взять ("to take")	возьму́	возьму́т	возьми́	возьми́те
проче́сть ("to read through")	прочту́	прочту́т	прочти́	прочти́те

3. Still referring to the model verbs of the conjugation section: there are irregularities in the group -дава́ть (-знава́ть, -става́ть), which forms the imperative as -дава́й, -дава́йте, etc.; and in the group би́ть (пи́ть, ли́ть, etc.), which forms the imperative as бе́й, бе́йте, etc.

The verb да́ть ("to give") has the imperative дай, да́йте; the verb е́сть has the imperative ешь, е́шьте. The imperfective verb бы́ть ("to be"; not in the section on the present tense because its present tense is no longer expressed in modern Russian\*) has the imperative бу́дь, бу́дьте.

4. The expression "let's" (as in "let's go!"), sometimes referred to as the first-person imperative, is most often conveyed in Russian by the first person plural form of the present tense (which is then not preceded by the pronoun мы): пойдём ("let's go!"). The suffix -те may be added if more politeness is desired: пойдёмте.

The expression "let him" (or "her," "it" or "them"; as in "let him come!"), sometimes referred to as the third-person imperative, is conveyed by the word пусть (or пуска́й) plus the third person ending (singular or plural as the situation demands) of the present tense: пусть он приде́т (or пуска́й он приде́т, "let him come!"); пусть пойду́т, е́сли хотя́т ("let them go if they want").

\* Есть ("is"), not to be confused with the infinitive есть ("to eat"), is a relic of the present tense of бы́ть; it is often used with the meaning "there is, there are": е́сть то́лько о́дин спо́соб егó убе́дить ("there is only one way to persuade him").

## THE PAST TENSE

The Russian past tense corresponds to all the English constructions denoting past time: "he wrote," "he did write," "he was writing," "he used to write," "he (would) often write," "he had written," "he had been writing." It is formed the same way for both perfective and imperfective verbs. For most verbs, the -ть is dropped from the infinitive and the ending -л, -ла, -ло or -ли is added.

1. These endings of the past tense, unlike those of the present, do not correspond to *persons* (first, second, third) but to the *gender* and *number* of the verb's subject. Thus—using the verb писать ("to write")—писал is the form used whenever the subject is a masculine singular, whether it is "I" (a male speaking), "you" (ты; a male being familiarly addressed), "he" or a masculine singular noun; писала is the form used whenever the corresponding subjects are female or feminine (я, ты, она or a feminine singular noun); писалю when they are neuter. The form писали is used for all plurals, regardless of gender, and for the pronoun вы (whether familiar plural, polite singular or polite plural).

2. The past tense exhibits fewer variations and irregularities than the present, but the following should be noted:

(a) In the verb group with infinitives ending in -е́ть (уме́ть, "to die"; тере́ть, "to rub"; отпере́ть, "to unlock"; etc.), the -е́ть is dropped before adding the past endings; the masculine singular has no -л (in monosyllables, the e before the p becomes è): уме́ть/уме́, умерла́, уме́рло, уме́рли; тере́ть/те́р, те́рла, те́рло, те́рли; отпере́ть/отпер, отперла́, отперло, отперли.

(b) Among verbs with infinitives ending in -нуть, most (e.g., крик-нуть, "to shout") are regular (крикнул, крикнула, крикнуло, крикнули), while a few (e.g., исче́знуть, "to disappear") have the pattern исче́з, исче́зла, исче́зло, исче́зли.

(c) In most of the verb group with infinitives ending in -сти or -сть (вести́, укра́сть, сесть, etc.), that whole ending is dropped before adding the past endings: вести́/вёл, велá, велó, вели́; укра́сть/укра́л, укра́ла, укра́ло, укра́ли; сесть/сел, се́ла, се́ло, се́ли.

In two verbs, нести́ and трясти́, the c of the infinitive is not dropped, and the masculine singular has no -л: нести́/нёс, несла́, неслó, несли́; трясти́/тряс, трясла́, тряслó, трясли́.

(d) In the verb group with infinitives ending in -зти́ or -зть (e.g., везти́), the з is retained and the masculine singular has no -л: везти́/вёз, везла́, везло́, везли́.

(e) In the verb group with infinitives ending in -чь (мочь, печь, лечь, etc.), the -чь is dropped and the г or к that appeared in the first person



singular and third person plural of the present tense reappears here, too. The masculine singular has no -л, and in monosyllables e becomes ě: мочь/мог, могла́, могло́, могли́; печь/пёк, пекла́, пекло́, пекли́; лечь/лёг, легла́, легло́, легли́.

(f) The verb идти́ and the verbs derived from it by prefixes (e.g., прийти́) form their past tense from a completely different root: идти́/шёл, шла, шло, шли; прийти́/пришёл, пришла́, пришло́, пришли́.

The past tense of грести́ is грёб, гребла́, гребло́, гребли́.

3. There are three possible stress patterns in the past tense: (a) stem stress in all four forms; (b) stress on the last syllable (when more than one) in all four forms; and (c) end stress in the feminine singular and stem stress in the other three forms. Examples: (a) говори́ть/говори́л, говори́ла, говори́ло, говори́ли; (b) нести́/нёс, несла́, несло́, несли́; (c) пить/пил, пила́, пило́, пи́ли.

Type (b) is frequent in verbs with infinitives that do not end in a vowel-plus-ть. Type (c) is typical of the group of verbs that begin with consonant clusters and have infinitives ending in -ать (ждать, врать, брать, звать, etc.); the group with infinitives ending in -нять (снять, принять, etc.); and the group бить, пить, лить, etc.

## THE FUTURE TENSE

### The Future Tense of Perfective Verbs

The future tense of perfective verbs, which have no present tense, is formed in *exactly* the same way as the present tense of imperfective verbs. Thus, the Russian present tense in fact serves as a present/future tense: я пишу́ [IMPF.] письмо́ (“I *am* writing a letter”); я напишу́ [PF.] письмо́ (“I *shall* write a letter”); он чита́ет [IMPF.] кни́гу (“he *is* reading the book”); он прочита́ет [PF.] кни́гу (“he *will* read the book”).

### The Future Tense of Imperfective Verbs

Imperfective verbs have a separate compound future tense. This consists merely of the future tense of the verb быть (“to be”)—бу́ду, бу́дешь, бу́дет, бу́дем, бу́дете, бу́дут—plus the infinitive of the imperfective verb in question. Thus: я бу́ду чита́ть кни́гу (“I *will* be reading the book”); мы бу́дем писа́ть письмо́ (“we *shall* be writing the letter,” “we *shall* be writing the letter”). There are no exceptions to this formation.

Naturally, the future tense of **быть** can be used independently to mean “will be”: **завтра я буду дома** (“tomorrow I *will be* at home”).

## THE SUFFIX **-СЯ**; PASSIVE, REFLEXIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS

1. The invariable suffix **-ся** (**-сь** after vowels), which causes no change in the conjugation of the main part of the verb, can do one of three things to a verb to which it is attached:

(a) It can make the verb passive (in this situation, the subject of the **-ся** verb is normally inanimate). Thus: **строить** (“to build, construct, erect”); **строиться** (“to be built, constructed, erected”).

**Инженеры строят** новое здание.

The engineers *are constructing* a new building.

Новое здание **строится** инженерами.

The new building *is being constructed* by the engineers.

As seen in **инженерами**, the agent of the action is in the instrumental case.

(b) It can make the verb reflexive. (In this situation, the subject of the **-ся** verb is almost always animate.) Thus: **одевать** (“to clothe, to dress someone else”), **одеваться** (“to dress [oneself], to get dressed”); **мыть** (“to wash [something or someone]”), **мыться** (“to wash [oneself], to get washed”).

Мать **одевает** мальчика.

The mother *is dressing* the little boy.

Мальчик **одевается**.

The little boy *is dressing* (himself).

Лена **посмотрелась** в зеркало.

Lena *looked at herself* in the mirror.

Sometimes the action indicated by **-ся** is reciprocal (expressing “each other”) rather than reflexive:

Он **часто встречаются**.

They often *meet* (each other).

Он **видятся** каждый день.

They *see each other* every day.

(c) It can make the verb intransitive. (In this situation, the subject is generally animate, but not always.) Thus: **кончить** (“to complete”), **кончиться** (“to [come to an] end”); **возвращать** (“to return [something]”), **возвращаться** (“to return [to a place]”).

Я **кончил** работу в пять часов.

I *finished* work at five o'clock.



## IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

1. There are a number of impersonal verbs in Russian that have only a third person singular form in the present tense. They usually refer to climatic conditions or other natural phenomena: светáет (“it is getting light”); смеркáется (“it is getting dark”). In the past tense, the neuter form is used: смеркáлось (“it was getting dark”).

2. Some reflexive verbs can be used impersonally to express a physical state or feeling; they take the dative of the person to whom the action refers. The verb хотётся (“to want”) is frequently used in this way:

Мне хóчется есть.

I feel hungry.

Ему́ хóчется пить.

He feels thirsty.

Бра́ту не рабóтается.

My brother doesn't feel like working.

Мне не спíтся.

I don't feel sleepy.

3. Another important kind of impersonal construction that also involves the dative case is formed with the neuter short form of the adjective: мне хóдно (“I am cold”); бра́ту жа́рко (“my brother is hot”); ему́ скúчно (“he is bored”).

4. There are a number of impersonal constructions expressing success or chance; here the person affected by the action is in the dative:

Мне удалóсь достáть билéт на «Лебедíное óзеро».

I succeeded in getting a ticket to “Swan Lake.”

Бра́ту довелóсь поговори́ть с ним по телефóну.

My brother had occasion to talk to him on the telephone.

Бра́ту не везёт в кáрты.

My brother has no luck at cards.

5. The third person plural of a verb can be used (without the pronoun они́) in impersonal constructions. The unspecified agent of the verbal action is equivalent to the English “they,” “one” or “people.” It can often be rendered in English by a passive:

Говоря́т, что за́втра дождь пойдёт.

They say that it will rain tomorrow.

Его́ посла́ли на фронт.

They sent him [OR: He was sent] to the front.

## EXPRESSING OBLIGATION, NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITY

1. Obligation is expressed in the present tense by using **должен** ("must, ought, have to") followed by an infinitive (e.g., **я должен читать эту книгу**, "I must read this book"). **Должен** must agree in gender and number with its subject; its forms are: MASC. **должен**, FEM. **должна́**, NEUT. **должно́**, PL. **должны́**. (Note that when the pronoun **я** or **ты** refers to a feminine subject then the form **должна́** is used.) Thus:

Сего́дня она́ **должна́** раба́тать.

Today she must work.

Сего́дня мы **должны́** раба́тать.

Today we must work.

In forming the past and future tenses, **должен** is used together with the appropriate form of the past or future tense of **быть** and the infinitive of the main verb:

Вчера́ я **должна́** **была́** раба́тать.

Yesterday I had to work.

За́втра они́ **должны́** **будут** раба́тать.

Tomorrow they will have to work.

2. Necessity is expressed in the present tense by using **нужно** or **на́до** ("it is necessary") followed by the infinitive (e.g., **нужно поехать́ туда́**, "it is necessary to go there"). In the past tense, **нужно** (or **на́до**) is used with **было́** and an infinitive; in the future tense it is used with **будет** and an infinitive:

Вчера́ **нужно** **было́** поеха́ть туда́.

Yesterday it was necessary to go there.

За́втра **нужно** **будет** поеха́ть туда́.

Tomorrow it will be necessary to go there.

Note the following difference in negative constructions between **нужно** and **на́до**:

Не **нужно** **идти́** **домой́**.

It is not necessary to go home.

Не **на́до** **идти́** **домой́**.

You should not go home.

3. **Можно** is used to express possibility or permission; **нельзя́** to express impossibility or prohibition:

Можно решить задачу.	It is possible to solve the problem.
Здесь можно играть.	One may play here.
Нельзя согласиться с вами.	It is impossible to agree with you.
Здесь нельзя курить.	It is not permitted to smoke here.

Both **можно** and **нельзя** form the past and future tenses with **было** and **будет** in the same way as **нужно**.

## VERBS OF MOTION

In Russian there are 14 kinds of motion that are each expressed by two separate imperfective verbs. These imperfective pairs are: **ходить/идти** ("to go," on foot); **ездить/ехать** ("to travel"); **бегать/бежать** ("to run"); **летать/лететь** ("to fly"); **плавать/плыть** ("to swim, float"); **носить/нести** ("to carry"); **водить/вести** ("to lead"); **возить/везти** ("to convey, transport"); **лазить/лезть** ("to climb"); **гонять/гнать** ("to drive, chase"); **тащить/тащить** ("to drag"); **ползать/ползти** ("to crawl"); **катать/катить** ("to roll"); **бродить/бродить** ("to wander").

The first verb in each of the above pairs indicates habitual movement, movement in more than one direction, movement in general. Thus:

Птицы **летают**, рыба **плавает**, люди **ходят**.  
Birds *fly*, fish *swim*, people *walk*.

Я люблю **ездить** на машине. I love *to ride* in the car.

The second verb in each of the above pairs indicates motion in one, often stipulated, direction, usually on one specific occasion:

Она **летит** в Москву. She *is flying* to Moscow.

Когда я **шёл** в школу, я купил газету.  
When I *was on my way* to school, I stopped to buy a newspaper.

The perfective aspect of verbs of motion is formed by adding the prefix **по-** to the second verb of each pair (e.g., **пойти** [the contracted form of **по+идти**], **поехать**, **полететь**, etc.). This prefix does not alter the imperfective meaning of the verb other than to imply the initiation of the action. Thus **он пошёл** means "he went," "he set out."

Compounded verbs of motion can be created to express direction by adding the appropriate prefix: (1) to the first verb in each of the pairs, thus creating an imperfective verb (e.g., **приходить**, "to arrive"; **входить**, "to enter"; **вылетать**, "to fly off"); or (2) to the second verb in each of the pairs, thus creating a perfective verb (e.g., **прийти**, "to arrive"; **войти**, "to enter"; **вылететь**, "to fly off").

## THE CONDITIONAL

The conditional mood expresses an action that might have taken place, that might be taking place or that might take place in the future. It is formed simply by using the past tense of the verb, imperfective or perfective, and the particle **бы** (sometimes **б** after a vowel). Thus: **я пошёл бы** ("I would go"). Note, however, that this construction can express not only the present conditional but the past and future conditional as well. Thus **я пошёл бы** can also mean "I would have gone" or "I would go (tomorrow)." **Бы** usually follows the verb, but can be placed elsewhere for emphasis: **я бы пошёл** ("I would go").

In a conditional sentence in which the main verb is in the conditional, the dependent clause is introduced by **если бы** and a verb in the past tense:

**Если бы я не был так занят, я пошёл бы.**

If I were not so busy I would go.

**Если бы дождь пошёл, мы отменили бы матч.**

If it were to rain we would cancel the game.

In a conditional sentence in which no genuine hypothesis is implied, then both clauses are in the indicative:

**Если пойдёт дождь, мы отменим матч.**

If it rains we will cancel the game.

## PARTICIPLES

### Active Participles

Russian active participles are verbal adjectives, having the form of verbs but with adjectival endings (e.g., "The man *sitting* there is my friend," "The fire *burning* in the fields was started by accident"). Like adjectives, they are fully declinable and must agree in gender, number and case with the modified noun. There are two kinds of active participle in Russian: present and past. Present active participles can be formed only from imperfective verbs; past active participles can be formed from imperfective or perfective verbs.

**The Present Active Participle.** The present active participle is formed by taking the third person plural of the present tense of an imperfective verb, dropping the final **-т** of the personal ending and adding the adjectival

ending: MASC. -щий, FEM. -щая, NEUT. -щее, PL. -щие. Thus the nominative forms of the present active participle of читать (third person plural читают) are читающий, читающая, читающее and читающие.

Present active participles are declined like those hard adjectives with stem ending in щ-. When a present active participle is formed from a verb with the -ся or -сь ending, the participle always takes -ся throughout: стрóиться (“to be built”)/стрóящийся, стрóящаяся, стрóящееся, стрóящиеся. The stress in present active participles is usually the same as for the third person plural of the present tense.

The present active participle is used like an adjective to modify a noun; most often it is placed after the modified noun and replaces an entire relative clause. It is used when that clause would also be in the present tense if expressed. (It is important to note that Russian participles are never used as a complement to the verb “to be” as in English constructions such as “I am seeing,” “we are doing.”)

Мужчина, идущий по улице, мой отец.

The man (*who is*) going down the street is my father.

Я не знаю мужчину, говорящего с моим соседом.

I don't know the man (*who is*) talking to my neighbor.

**The Past Active Participle.** The past active participle is formed by taking the masculine singular of the past tense of the verb (imperfective or perfective), dropping the final -л (if there is one) and adding -вший (-вшая, etc.). Thus the nominative forms of the past active participle of читать (masc. sing. past читал) are: MASC. читавший, FEM. читавшая, NEUT. читавшее, PL. читавшие; for the perfective verb прочитать (masc. sing. past прочитал) the forms are: MASC. прочитавший, FEM. прочитавшая, etc. The past active participle of reflexive verbs always ends in -ся.

The past active participle, which is declined and used like the present participle, usually replaces a relative clause that would be in the past tense if expressed:

Я продал билет мужчине, стоявшему на углу.

I sold the ticket to the man (*who was*) standing on the corner.

Many active participles are also used as adjectives or nouns: блестящий (“brilliant”), соответствующий (“appropriate”), курящий (“a smoker”), начинающий (“a beginner”), бывший (“former”), сумасшедший (“a madman”), уцелевший (“a survivor”).



## Passive Participles

Like active participles, passive participles are also verbal adjectives (e.g., “The book *being read* is by Tolstoy,” “The car *being driven* by my sister was green”). They are formed from verbs taking adjectival endings. Like adjectives, they are fully declinable and can be used attributively in the long form or predicatively in the short form. There are two kinds of passive participle: present and past. The present passive participle can only be formed from imperfective verbs; the past passive participle is for the most part formed from perfective verbs.

**The Present Passive Participle.** The present passive participle is formed by taking the first person plural of the present tense of a transitive imperfective verb and adding the adjectival ending: MASC. -ый, FEM. -ая, NEUT. -ое, PL. -ые. Thus the nominative forms of the present passive participle of читать (first person plural чита́ем) are чита́емый, чита́емая, чита́емое, чита́емые. The only exceptions to this rule for forming the participle are: (1) verbs with infinitives ending -ава́ть, which take the participle form -ава́емый, not -аёмый, (e.g., дава́ть/дава́емый); and (2) a few verbs with first person plurals ending in -ём, in which the ё changes to о in the participle (e.g., ве́сти/ведо́мый).

The stress in the participle is usually the same as in the first person plural of the present tense.

Many common verbs do not have any present passive participle; these include: (1) verbs with infinitives ending in -е́реть, -зть, -оть, -сть, -уть and -чь; and (2) many monosyllabic verbs (e.g., би́ть, бра́ть, е́сть, жда́ть, зва́ть, зна́ть, ли́ть, мы́ть, пи́ть, пе́ть).

The present active participle is declined like an adjective ending in -ый (e.g., краси́вый). The short form of the participle is the same as the short form of the adjective except that the stress remains the same as in the long form. Thus the short form of the present passive participle formed from читать is чита́ем, чита́ема, чита́емо, чита́емы, etc. The present passive participle, which is used infrequently, can precede or follow the noun modified, and replaces a relative clause:

Кни́га, чита́емая студéнтами, о́чень скучна́.

The book (*that is*) *being read* by the students is very dull.

**The Past Passive Participle.** The past passive participle is more widely used than the present passive participle. It is formed in one of two ways: (1) with the suffix -т-; or (2) with the suffix -нн-.

1. Only a few verbs form their past passive participles with the -т- suffix. The participle is formed by replacing the infinitive ending -ть with the following endings: MASC. -тый, FEM. -тая, NEUT. -тое, PL. -тые. Verbs that form their past passive participle in this way include:

(a) Verbs with infinitives ending in -уть, -ыть, -оть or -ереть. Thus покинуть ("to abandon"), забыть ("to forget"), смолоть ("to grind") and запереть ("to lock") have the masculine nominative participle forms покинутый, забытый, смолотый and запертый (note that the second e is dropped in verbs ending in -ереть).

(b) Monosyllabic verbs (and their prefixed compounds) with infinitives ending in -ить or -еть. Thus одеть and убить have the past passive participle forms одётый and убитый.

(c) All verbs that introduce an н or м in the present tense conjugation. Thus взять, занять ("to crumple") and начать have the past passive participle forms взятый, занятый and начатый.

The short form of these participles resembles the short form of the adjective. Thus for одеть, the short forms of the nominative are: MASC. одёт, FEM. одёта, NEUT. одёто, PL. одёты.

2. The vast majority of verbs form their past passive participle with the -нн- suffix. They take the participle endings: MASC. -нный, FEM. -нная, NEUT. -нное, PL. -нные. Verbs that belong to this group include:

(a) Conjugation I verbs with infinitives ending in -ать or -ять. These verbs replace the -ть of the infinitive with the ending -нный, (-нная, etc.) to form the participle. Thus прочитать and потерять have the past passive participle forms прочитанный and потерянный.

(b) Conjugation I verbs with infinitives ending in -сти or -ти. These verbs replace the -y of the first person singular of the present tense with the ending -ённый. Thus привести (first person singular приведу) and принести (first person singular принесу) have the past passive participle forms приведённый and принесённый.

(c) Conjugation I verbs with infinitives ending in -чь. These verbs replace the -ёшь of the second person singular of the present tense with the ending -ённый. Thus сжечь (second person singular сожжёшь) has the past passive participle сожжённый.

(d) Conjugation II verbs with infinitives ending in -ить or -еть. These verbs replace the -y or -ю of the first person singular of the present tense with -ённый (or -енный). Thus купить (first person singular куплю) and решить (first person singular решу) have the past passive participle forms купленный and решённый.

The short form of participles ending in -нный differs from the usual adjectival short form in that it drops one н. Thus the short form of прочитанный is прочитан, прочитана, прочитано, прочитаны.

There are no straightforward guidelines to stress in the past passive participles. Only a rudimentary analysis can be provided here:

(a) In verbs with infinitives ending in -уть, -оть or -ереть, and in verbs like начать, the stress in the participle moves one syllable back from its position in the infinitive (e.g., начать/начатый).

(b) In verbs with a past passive participle ending in -анный or -янный the stress falls on the syllable preceding the -а- or -я- of the ending (e.g., прочитанный, потёранный).

(c) In Conjugation II verbs with a past passive participle ending in -енный or -ённый the stress is the same as in the second person singular of the present tense. Thus: купленный (second person singular купишь); решённый (second person singular решишь).

The past passive participle can be used to replace a relative clause as an attribute of a noun (with which it must agree in gender, case and number). Used attributively, the participle must be in the long form.

Этот мост, **построенный** инженерами, очень крепкий.

This bridge (*that was*) *built* by the engineers is very strong.

The past passive participle can also be used (in the short form only) as a complement to the verb быть:

Мой брат был **убит** во время войны.

My brother was *killed* during the war.

## GERUNDS

Russian gerunds are verbal adverbs corresponding to English verbal forms ending in “-ing” (e.g., “reading,” “writing,” “walking”), but are distinguished from participles in that they never describe nouns; instead they describe actions. For instance, in the sentence “She sits reading,” the word “reading” would be rendered in Russian by the gerund читая. There are two kinds of gerund in Russian: present gerund and past gerund. Both present and past gerunds are indeclinable.

### Formation of the Present Gerund

The present gerund is formed by taking the present tense stem of an imperfective verb and adding the ending -я (or -а if the stem ends in ж-, ч-,

ш- or щ-. Thus the present gerunds of читать and дышать (“to breathe”) are читая (“reading”) and дыша (“breathing”). Verbs with infinitives ending in -авать are the only exception to the above rule; they take the ending -авая (e.g., давая, “giving”). The present gerund of reflexive verbs always takes the reflexive ending -сь (e.g., смеясь, “laughing”). Stress in the present gerund is the same as in the first person singular of the present tense.

Many Russian verbs do not have a present gerund. These include: (a) the common verbs бежать, бить, врать, гнить, есть, ехать, ждать, лезть, лить, петь, писать, пить, слать, хотеть, шить; (b) verbs ending in -ереть; (c) verbs ending in -нуть.

### Formation of the Past Gerund

The past gerund is formed almost exclusively from perfective verbs. Perfective verbs with a masculine singular past tense ending in -л drop the -л and add the ending -в (or sometimes -вши) to form the past gerund. Thus the past gerunds of the perfective verbs прочитать and поговорить are прочитав (“having read”) and поговорив (“having said”). Reflexive verbs take the ending -вшись (e.g., вернувшись, “having returned”). For verbs with no -л in the masculine singular past tense, the past gerund is formed by adding the ending -ши to the masculine singular form of the past tense. Thus the past gerunds of принести (masc. sing. past принёс) and вылезть (masc. sing. past вылез) are принёсши (“having brought”) and вылезши (“having climbed out”). The forms ending in -ши are not common and are usually replaced by a present gerund formed from the perfective verb.

### Use of the Gerund

Gerunds are used to describe an action or to modify a previous verb; they cannot be used as participles to describe a noun. Thus the gerund replaces a clause consisting of a verb and conjunction. The sentence “she sits *and* reads” can be rendered using a present gerund as она сидит, читая.

The present gerund is used to describe an action that occurs at the same time as the action expressed by the main verb, irrespective of the tense (past, present, future) or aspect of that verb:

**Смеясь и улыбаясь**, дети слушают басню.

*Laughing and smiling*, the children listen to the fable.

**Смеясь и улыбаясь**, дети слúшали басню.

*Laughing and smiling*, the children listened to the fable.

The past gerund is usually used to express an action that precedes the action expressed by the main verb, irrespective of the tense or aspect of that verb:

**Напíвшись**, путешественники нáчали рассказывать о своих приключёниях.

*Having drunk their fill*, the travelers began to relate their adventures.

There are a number of gerunds that have taken on the value of prepositions and adverbs. These include **благодаря** + dat. ("thanks to"), **исключая** + gen. ("except for, excluding"), **кончая** + instr. ("ending with"), **начиная с** + gen. ("beginning with"), **несмотря на** + acc. ("in spite of, despite"), **мóлча** ("silently"), **нехóтя** ("unwillingly").

## VERBAL PREFIXES

Prefixes are an important element of numerous Russian verbs, imperfective as well as perfective. Except when the only use of a prefix is to transform an imperfective into a perfective (e.g., **читать** into **прочитáть**), it usually has a specific meaning or set of meanings that alter the basic meaning of the verb accordingly. In the following list of common prefixes, it will be obvious how many correspond to prepositions, often with exactly the same meanings (these prefixes also occur on many nouns and adjectives with similar connotations).

PREFIX	VERB WITHOUT PREFIX	VERB WITH PREFIX
<b>в-</b> (во-; "into")	<b>ходить</b> ("to go")	<b>входить</b> ("to enter")
<b>вз-</b> (воз-, вс-; "upward")	<b>лететь</b> ("to fly")	<b>взлететь</b> ("to fly up, take off")
<b>вы-</b> ("out of")	<b>водить</b> ("to lead")	<b>выводить</b> ("to lead out")
<b>до-</b> ("up to, to the end")	<b>читать</b> ("to read")	<b>дочитáть</b> ("to read up to [a certain point]")
<b>за-</b> ("behind, beyond"; beginning of an action; filling up)	<b>пустить</b> ("to let go")	<b>запустить</b> ("to launch")
	<b>молчать</b> ("to be silent")	<b>замолчать</b> ("to fall silent")
	<b>строить</b> ("to build")	<b>застроить</b> ("to build up [an area]")
<b>из-</b> (ис-; "out; completely")	<b>брать</b> ("to take")	<b>избрать</b> ("to pick out, choose")
	<b>писать</b> ("to write")	<b>исписать</b> ("to cover with writing")

на- ("on, onto; a lot")	падать ("to fall")	нападать ("to fall upon, attack")
	пить ("to drink")	напиться ("to drink a lot")
над- ("over")	писать ("to write")	надписать ("to superscribe, endorse")
		объехать ("to detour")
о- (об-; "around, about")	ехать ("to drive")	отходить ("to move away from")
от- (ото-; "away from; back")	ходить ("to go")	отдавать ("to give back")
	давать ("to give")	пережить ("to experience")
пере- ("across, through; again; over and above")	жить ("to live")	перечитать ("to reread")
	читать ("to read")	перевыполнять ("to overfulfill")
	выполнять ("to fulfill")	посидеть ("to sit for a while")
по- ("for a while"; beginning of an action)	сидеть ("to sit")	полюбить ("to start to love")
	любить ("to love")	поддержать ("to support")
под- ("under; toward")	держать ("to hold")	подходить ("to approach")
	ходить ("to go")	предсказать ("to foretell")
пред- ("pre-")	сказать ("to tell")	приходить ("to arrive")
при- ("coming to; getting used to")	ходить ("to go")	проходить ("to pass by")
про- ("through, by, past")	ходить ("to go")	
раз- ("apart; un-")	бить ("to hit")	разбить ("to break into bits")
	любить ("to love")	разлюбить ("to cease to love")
с- (со-; "downward; off")	ходить ("to go")	сходить ("to come down, go off")
у- ("away from")	брать ("to take")	убрать ("to take away")

When certain prefixes are added to verbs in conjunction with the suffix -ся, special connotations are generated:

1. When the verb has the prefix до- and the suffix -ся, the implication is successful completion of the basic meaning: звонить ("to call up"), дозвониться ("to reach by telephone, to complete the call").

2. With the prefix за- and the suffix -ся, the implication is excessive action that causes a loss of control: мечтать ("to daydream"), замечтаться ("to become lost in daydreams").

3. With the prefix на- and the suffix -ся, the implication is action done to satiety: пить (“to drink”), **напиться** (“to drink one’s fill”).
4. With the prefix о- and the suffix -ся, the implication is the incorrect performance of the verb action: ступать (“to take a step”), **оступаться** (“to stumble”).
5. With the prefix раз- and the suffix -ся, the implication is sudden, intense action: гореть (“to burn”), **разгореться** (“to blaze up suddenly”).
6. With the prefix с- and the suffix -ся, the implication is convergence on a single point: брать (“to take”), **собраться** (“to assemble”).

## VERBS: ASPECT

We have already seen that most Russian verbs occur in imperfective/perfective aspectual pairs, distinguished by prefixing, difference in conjugational endings or alteration in the stem; sometimes two completely different verbs are used to form the pair. We have also seen that, in simplest terms, imperfective verbs describe uncompleted actions, and perfective verbs describe actions that have been or will be completed. It is now time to elaborate on the use of the two aspects. It should be borne in mind that, in any verb pair, the role played by aspect is closely connected with the kind of action denoted. Of course, there are many subtle rules of aspect that cannot be given here. Mastery of all the niceties of aspect requires long personal experience of the language. (In this chapter, whenever aspectual pairs are separated by a slash [/], the imperfective precedes the perfective.)

### BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IMPERFECTIVE AND PERFECTIVE

#### 1. Imperfective verbs denote:

(a) Generic action (no reference to a specific performance of the action):

Недávно я научился **плавать**.                      Not long ago I learned *to swim*.

(b) Action in progress (any tense):

Сейчас он **разговаривает** с тётей.  
Right now he *is talking* with his aunt.

Она **читала** книгу, когда я вошёл в комнату.  
She *was reading* a book when I entered the room.

Я **буду работать** всю ночь над этим.  
I *will be working* all night on this.

(c) Repeated or habitual action (any tense):

Каждое утро он **пьёт** кофе.                      Every morning he *drinks* coffee.

В детстве я часто **ездил** верхом.  
In my childhood I often *rode* on horseback.



С **этих** пор я **ра́но** **бúду** **вставáть**.

From now on I *will get up* early.

The imperfective is also used in questions when one wants to know merely whether or not an action took place, or who is responsible for an action that has taken place:

**Вы читáли** «Мёртвые дúши»?      Have you *read* “Dead Souls”?

One subtle use of the imperfective (of certain verbs, in the past tense only) is to show that a given action was done and then undone—for instance, that a window was opened and then closed again:

**Кто открывáл** [IMPF.] окнó?

Who *opened* the window (and then closed it again)?

**Кто открыл** [PF.] окнó?

Who *opened* the window (and left it open)?

2. Perfective verbs delimit the action. They denote:

(a) Action that is carried through from beginning to end:

**Я прочитáл** **эту** кнйгу за три недели.

I *read through* this book in three weeks.

(b) A single, instantaneous action:

**Учйтель удáрил** по столу́.

The teacher *gave a rap* on his desk.

(c) The very beginning of an action:

**Дёвочка закричáла**, когда́ она́ увидела́ медведя́.

The girl *began to shriek* when she caught sight of the bear.

(d) Action performed for a short while:

**Он посидёл** и **почитáл**.

He *sat for a while* and *read a bit*.

When a specific action is to be completed, even though it is to be repeated in a series, as in “*Write this word a hundred times*,” the perfective is used (i.e., *напишйте*, not *пишйте*) because the idea of the completion of the action is the stronger element.

## ASPECT AND NEGATION

1. When an action is being completely negated, an imperfective verb is used (even when the positive action would be in the perfective aspect):

## POSITIVE:

Я вам совету́ю **написа́ть** [PF.] ему́.

I advise you *to write* to him.

## NEGATIVE:

Я вам совету́ю не **писа́ть** [IMPF.] ему́.

I advise you not *to write* to him.

This is because the action in general is being denied, prevented or negated. When the negated verb is perfective, the implication is that the action was undertaken but never completed:

Я **не чита́л** [IMPF.] э́ту кни́гу.

*I haven't read* that book (at all).

Я **не прочита́л** [PF.] э́ту кни́гу.

*I haven't read* that book *through*.

2. If the degree of negation is not total, the attitude of the speaker is a determining factor as to which aspect is used. If the action being denied or negated was never expected to happen, the imperfective is used:

Я **не получа́л** письма́ сего́дня.

*I didn't get* any letter today [but wasn't expecting one].

If the negated action is still expected to take place, either aspect can be used:

Я ещё **не получа́л/получи́л** све́дений.

*I have not yet received* news [but I expect some].

If an action was expected, but never took place, the perfective is used:

Я долго́ ждал, но он так и **не пришёл**.

I waited a long time but he *didn't come*.

If the absence of an action continues for some time, the imperfective is used:

Мы давно́ **не виделись**.

*We haven't seen each other* for some time.

All of the above situations shed light on a basic distinction between the two aspects: the imperfective verb is more general than the perfective. Accordingly, its negation is more sweeping and far-reaching. Perfective verbs always refer to a specific situation or set of conditions.

## ASPECT OF INFINITIVES AND IMPERATIVES

1. There are instances when infinitives must be of a particular aspect. They must be imperfective:

(a) After verbs of beginning, continuing and ceasing (because those very verbs already provide the limitation of the action):

Вчера она начала **читать** «Идиота».  
Yesterday she started *to read* "The Idiot."

(b) After verbs of learning and becoming accustomed (because the reference is to the action of the infinitive in general):

Он привык **исполнять** свои обещания.  
He is accustomed *to keep* his promises.

After perfective verbs that refer to a single instance, the infinitive must be perfective:

Я забыл **оставить** ключ на столе.  
I forgot *to leave* the key on the table.

When the main verb of the sentence is imperfective, the infinitive can be of either aspect:

Я всегда забываю **оставлять/оставить** ключ на столе.  
I always forget *to leave* the key on the table.

2. The imperative, like the verb in general, uses the perfective when referring to a single, defined action. Thus, "open the window!" is normally **откройте окно!** The use of the imperfective here would express exasperated impatience: **открывайте уже** ("get a move on and open it!"). However, verbs of invitation are usually in the imperfective and the perfective would be considered rude. Thus: **садитесь!** ("have a seat!"), **входите!** ("come in!"), **приходите!** ("come over!"), etc., are all imperfectives.

In negative imperatives, the imperfective is normally used even if a single, instantaneous action is being referred to: **не пойте эту песню!** ("don't sing that song!"). When the negative perfective is used, it is with the connotation "be careful not to . . . in order to avoid bad consequences." Thus: **не забудьте!** ("don't forget!").

## STRUCTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN IMPERFECTIVES AND PERFECTIVES

1. Some of the structural differences between imperfective and perfective verbs have already been mentioned. The perfective verb may have a prefix that the imperfective does not have: **читать/прочитать** ("to read"), **писать/написать** ("to write"), **шить/сшить** ("to sew"), etc. The vowels of the endings may differ: **кончать/кóнчить** ("to finish"), **умень-**

ш<sup>а</sup>ть/уменьшить (“to decrease”), реш<sup>а</sup>ть/решить (“to decide”). But there are numerous other variations in these structural differences between the two aspects, and until one has learned enough pairs to recognize patterns, there is no reliable way of predicting the structure of a given verb’s counterpart.

Generally speaking, the two members of an imperfective/perfective verb pair differ in meaning solely with regard to aspect. Thus, пис<sup>а</sup>ть and напис<sup>а</sup>ть, its perfective partner, both have the basic meaning “to write.” But, as we have seen, prefixes can change the basic meaning: перепис<sup>а</sup>ть (“to rewrite”), выпис<sup>а</sup>ть (“to delete”), подпис<sup>а</sup>ть (“to sign”), пропи<sup>с</sup>ать (“to prescribe”), etc. This type of verb—formed by the addition of prefixes directly to the original verb—is always perfective, and the differences in meaning between those with the same base is derived solely from the prefixes.

2. (a) Since these newly formed prefixed verbs are perfective, they must have imperfective counterparts that retain the meaningful prefixes. The changes that distinguish the aspects must thus appear in the endings, in the main stems or in both. For example, the imperfective corresponding to перепис<sup>а</sup>ть is переписыв<sup>а</sup>ть; the imperfective corresponding to переч<sup>и</sup>тать (“to reread”) is перечитыв<sup>а</sup>ть. The other -пис<sup>а</sup>ть and -чит<sup>а</sup>ть verbs do the same. These are just some of the verbs in which the imperfective differs from the perfective by having -ыв- inserted into it. Examples of other possible structural relations follow:

(b) The element -ва- inserted in the imperfective: одева<sup>т</sup>ь/одеть (“to dress”), открыв<sup>а</sup>ть/открыть (“to open”), отстаив<sup>а</sup>ть/отстать (“to fall behind”).

(c) The element -ин- inserted in the imperfective: начин<sup>а</sup>ть/начать (“to begin”).

(d) The vowel -и- or -ы- inserted in the imperfective: избир<sup>а</sup>ть/избр<sup>а</sup>ть (“to choose”), посыла<sup>т</sup>ь/посл<sup>а</sup>ть (“to send”).

(e) The alternation of -ать (or -ять) in the imperfective with -ить in the perfective infinitive (with consequent alternation of personal endings between Conjugation I and Conjugation II): броса<sup>т</sup>ь/бро<sup>с</sup>ить (“to throw”; an instance of a verb pair in which neither has a prefix), получа<sup>т</sup>ь/получ<sup>и</sup>ть (“to receive”), измен<sup>я</sup>ть/измен<sup>и</sup>ть (“to change”), исполня<sup>т</sup>ь/исполн<sup>и</sup>ть (“to fulfill”).

(f) In some instances of the -ять/-ить alternation, -л- is also inserted in the imperfective. (This is analogous to the -л- inserted in the first person singular—люблю—of such verbs as люб<sup>и</sup>ть.) Thus: представля<sup>т</sup>ь/представ<sup>и</sup>ть (“to introduce”).

(g) Other types of consonant mutation may occur in the -ать/-ить pairs: отвеча<sup>т</sup>ь/ответ<sup>и</sup>ть (“to answer”), прекра<sup>щ</sup>ать/прекрат<sup>и</sup>ть (“to

discontinue”), проща́ться/прости́ться (“to say goodbye”), пригла́шать/пригласи́ть (“to invite”).

(h) In some verbs, the -ать/-ить alternation is combined with the insertion in the imperfective of -ыв- or -ив- (sometimes also involving the insertion of -л-, consonant mutation and/or an a/o alternation in stem vowels): остано́вливать/останови́ть (“to stop”), сосре́доточи-вать/ сосре́доточи́ть (“to concentrate”), спра́шивать/спроси́ть (“to ask”).

(i) Another alternation, -ать/-нуть, can involve consonant mutation and changes in the stem vowel: стиха́ть/сти́хнуть (“to become quiet”), крича́ть/кри́кнуть (“to shout, cry out”), отды́хаться/отдохну́ть (“to rest”). With almost no exceptions, -нуть verbs indicate that the action takes place instantaneously and just once; thus, кри́кнуть means “to utter a single shout or cry.”

(j) The perfective -нять verbs have -нима́ть imperfectives: снима́ть/снять (“to take away”).

3. To generalize about identifying a given verb as being imperfective or perfective:

(a) When one verb in an aspectual pair has a prefix and the other does not, the prefixed one is almost always perfective. When both verbs have prefixes, the longer of the two is likely to be the imperfective.

(b) Verbs with infinitives ending in -ывать, -вать or -ать tend to be imperfective, and those ending in -ить are often perfective.

(c) When there is an alternation between a and o in the stem of a verb pair, the one with the a is likely to be imperfective and the one with the o perfective.

4. In addition to all the above-mentioned instances of structural alternations between imperfective and perfective verbs, there are a number of pairs in which the verbs are totally different. These include: брать/взять (“to take”), лови́ть/пойма́ть (“to catch”), класть/положи́ть (“to place, put”), говори́ть/сказа́ть (“to speak, say, tell”).

When prefixes are added to the verbs, the tendency is for only one form out of the unprefix pair to be used as the base of both the imperfective and the perfective of the new prefixed pair (structural changes of the above-mentioned types are also involved). The member of the unprefix pair that is usually chosen is the imperfective one. Thus, the prefixed verbs formed from the брать/взять pair are отбира́ть/отобрати́ть (“to take away”), набира́ть/набра́ть (“to gather”), etc. A prefixed verb formed from the лови́ть/пойма́ть pair is ула́вливать/улови́ть (“to seize, grasp”). On the other hand, the класть/положи́ть pair retains both forms, in the appropriate aspects, when prefixes are added: укла́дывать/уложи́ть

(“to pack, put away”), отклады́вать/отложи́ть (“to postpone”), etc. The говори́ть/сказа́ть pair forms new prefixed verbs with the same form as the base of both imperfective and perfective, but some of the new prefixed verbs use говори́ть and some use сказа́ть. Thus: уговáривать/уговори́ть (“to persuade”), отговáривать/отговори́ть (“to dissuade”); выскáзывать/высказа́ть (“to express”), рассказывать/рассказа́ть (“to relate”).

## ASPECTIVAL PAIRS OF AN ATTEMPT/SUCCEED NATURE

Although the two members of aspectival pairs generally have the same meaning (except with regard to aspect), there are a number of important verbs whose imperfectives indicate an attempt to achieve a certain goal, and whose perfectives denote the successful attainment of the goal or completion of the action. Examples are:

### IMPERFECTIVE

буди́ть (“to try to awaken”)  
 добива́ться (“to try to obtain”)  
 доказы́вать (“to try to prove”)  
 лови́ть (“to try to catch”)  
 объясня́ть (“to try to explain”)  
 реша́ть (“to try to solve”)  
 убежда́ть (“to try to convince”)  
 уговáривать (“to try to persuade”)

### PERFECTIVE

разбуди́ть (“to awaken”)  
 доби́ться (“to obtain”)  
 доказáть (“to prove”)  
 пойма́ть (“to catch”)  
 объясни́ть (“to explain”)  
 реши́ть (“to solve”)  
 убеди́ть (“to convince”)  
 уговори́ть (“to persuade”)

Examples of usage:

Мили́ция до́лго **лови́ла** его́ и в конце́ конце́в **пойма́ла**.

The police *tried to catch* him for a long time and finally *did (catch)* him.

Она́ **буди́ла** и **будила́**, но не **разбудила́** его́.

She *tried and tried (to wake)* him, but she *couldn't wake* him up.

Since perfectives have no present tense, the imperfectives of these verb pairs can be used to denote success in the present:

Ка́ждое утро́ мать его́ **буди́т**.

His mother *wakes* him *up* every morning.

## TELLING TIME

There are two ways in which to ask "What time is it?" in Russian: *Како́рый час?* or, colloquially, *Ско́лько вре́мени?* The answer, when indicating a time on the hour, is expressed using cardinal numbers and the word *час* (*час* is in the genitive singular when preceded by *два*, "two"; *три*, "three"; or *четы́ре* "four"; in the genitive plural when preceded by the other numbers): *два часа́* ("two o'clock"), *три часа́* ("three o'clock"), *пять часо́в* ("five o'clock"). "One o'clock" is simply *час*.

Half hours are expressed using *полови́на* ("half") and the genitive masculine singular of the ordinal of the following hour: *полови́на тре́тьего* ("half past two"), *полови́на четвёртого* ("half past three").

"Quarter past" is expressed using *че́тверть* and the genitive masculine singular of the ordinal of the following hour: *че́тверть тре́тьего* ("quarter past two"), *че́тверть четвёртого* ("quarter past three").

Minutes past the hour are expressed using cardinal numbers plus *мину́та* (in the genitive, singular or plural) and the genitive masculine singular of the ordinal of the following hour for the hour: *пять мину́т одиннадцатого* ("five minutes past ten"), *два́дцать мину́т шесто́го* ("twenty minutes past five").

Minutes to the hour are expressed using the preposition *без* plus the number of minutes (in the genitive) and the nominative of the cardinal number for the hour: *без десяти́ шесть* ("ten to six"), *без че́тверти пять* ("quarter to five").

To express "at [a given hour]" the preposition *в* is used with the accusative of the hour: *в час* ("at one o'clock"), *в три часа́* ("at three o'clock"). Note that *в* is not used with *без*; thus *без десяти́ шесть* can mean "ten to six" or "at ten to six" as the context requires.

## USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

Listed below are some useful expressions that have not appeared in the main body of this grammar:

Пожáлуйста.	Please.
Спасíбо.	Thank you.
Мóжет быть.	Perhaps.
Здрáвствуй(те).	How do you do?
До свидáния.	Good-bye.
Дóброе úтро.	Good morning.
Дóбрый вéчер.	Good evening.
Спокóйной нóчи.	Good night.
Поздравляю.	Congratulations.
Как вы поживáете?	How are you?
Óчень хорошó, а как вы?	Very well, and you?
Хорошó.	All right.
Извинíte.	Excuse me.
Óчень приятно.	Pleased to meet you.
Как вáше íмя?	What is your (first) name?
Моё íмя...	My name is...
Как вáша фамíлия?	What is your surname?
Вы говорíte по-англíйски?	Do you speak English?
Пожáлуйста, говорíte мéдленнее.	Please speak more slowly.
Как по-рúсски...?	What is Russian for...?
Я не понимáю.	I don't understand.
Скóлько это стóит?	How much does this cost?
Я хочú есть/пить.	I am hungry/thirsty.



# APPENDIX I: SPECIAL NOUN DECLENSIONS AND IRREGULAR NOUNS

## MASCULINE NOUNS

1. The word брат (“brother”) has the following plural: NOM. братья, ACC. братьев, GEN. братьев, DAT. братьям, INSTR. братьями, PREP. братьях. Similarly declined in the plural (except that, as inanimates, their accusative is like their nominative, not like their genitive) are стул (“chair”) and лист (“leaf”). (Note that when лист means “sheet of paper” it has the regular plural: NOM. листы́, GEN. листов, etc.)

2. The word муж (“husband”) has the plural: NOM. мужья́, ACC. мужей, GEN. мужей, DAT. мужья́м, INSTR. мужья́ми, PREP. мужья́х. The word князь (“prince”) is declined in the same way in the plural, as is друг (“friend”), except that the г of друг changes to з: князья́, князей, etc.; друзья́, друзей, etc. Similar is сын (“son”), except that -ов- is inserted between stem and endings: сыновья́, сыновей, etc.

3. A few masculine nouns have a genitive plural that is the same as the nominative singular: глаз (“eye”), солдат (“soldier”), сапог (“boot”), ботинок (“shoe”), чулок (“stocking”), человек (“person”), раз (“time,” as in “one more time”). There is a shift in stress in волос (“hair,” nom. sing.)/волос (gen. pl.).

4. In both singular and plural, the word путь (“way, road”) is declined like the feminine nouns that end in -ь: NOM. путь, GEN. пути́, etc., except that the stress is always on the endings and the instrumental singular is путём.

5. A small group of masculine nouns, usually referring to a national or social group of people, end in -анин or -янин in the nominative singular. The singular is always regular: гражданин (“citizen”), гражданину, граждани́на, etc.; крестья́нин (“peasant”), крестья́нину, крестья́нина, etc. The plural of гражданин is: NOM. гра́ждане, ACC. гра́ждан, GEN. гра́ждан, DAT. гра́жданам, INSTR. гра́жданами, PREP. гра́жданах. The plural of крестья́нин is: NOM. крестья́не, ACC. крестья́н, GEN. крестья́н, DAT. крестья́нам, INSTR. крестья́нами, PREP. крестья́-

янах. Declined like граждáнин (aside from stress) are such words as христиáнин (“Christian”) and персиáнин (“Persian”). Declined like крестья́нин (aside from stress) are армя́нин (“Armenian”) and славя́нин (“Slav”). The feminine counterparts of -анин/-янин masculines—such as граждáнка (“woman citizen”) and крестья́нка (“peasant woman”)—are regular in declension.

6. Nouns with nominative singulars ending in -онок or -ёнок denote the young of human beings or animals: ребёнок (“baby, child”), котёнок (“kitten”), медвежонок (“bear cub”), etc. They are regular in the singular: NOM. котёнок, ACC. котёнка, GEN. котёнка, DAT. котёнку, INSTR. котёнком, PREP. котёнке. They have the plural pattern: NOM. котя́та, ACC. котя́т, GEN. котя́т, DAT. котя́там, INSTR. котя́тами, PREP. котя́тах. Exception: щенóк (“puppy”), with the plural щенки́, щенко́в, etc.

## FEMININE NOUNS

1. The word ма́ть (“mother”) is declined:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
NOM.	ма́ть	ма́тери
ACC.	ма́ть	матерéй
GEN.	ма́тери	матерéй
DAT.	ма́тери	матеря́м
INSTR.	ма́терью	матеря́ми
PREP.	ма́тери	матеря́х

The word дочь (“daughter”) is declined in the same way—дочь, дочь, дочери, etc.—except for the instrumental plural, which is дочерьми́.

2. Though most feminines with nominative singulars ending in -я preceded by a consonant have a genitive plural ending in -ь (неде́ля/неде́ль), the genitive plural of -ня feminines usually ends in -ен: пе́сня (“song”), GEN. PL. пе́сен. However, дере́вня (“countryside”) and ку́хня (“kitchen”) are regular, the genitive plurals being деревéнь and ку́хонь.

## NEUTER NOUNS

1. The small but important group of neuters with nominative singulars ending in -мя (e.g., вре́мя, “time”) are declined as follows:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
NOM.	врѣмя	временá
ACC.	врѣмя	временá
GEN.	врѣмени	временѣн
DAT.	врѣмени	временáм
INSTR.	врѣменем	временáми
PREP.	врѣмени	временáх

Others in this group are брѣмя (“burden”), знáмя (“banner”), íмя (“name”), плáмя (“flame”), плѣмя (“tribe”) and сѣмя (“seed”). The only one that deviates at all in declension is знáмя, which has the plural: NOM. знамѣна, ACC. знамѣна, GEN. знамѣн, DAT. знамѣнам, INSTR. знамѣнами, PREP. знамѣнах.

2. The word чúdo (“miracle, wonder”) has the plural: NOM. чудесá, ACC. чудесá, GEN. чудѣс, DAT. чудесáм, INSTR. чудесáми, PREP. чудесáх. Declined in the same way is нѣбо (“sky”), which means “heavens” in the plural: NOM. небесá, ACC. небесá, GEN. небѣс, etc.

3. A number of neuters have other irregularities in the plural; only a few common ones are mentioned here. The word дѣрево (“tree”) has the plural: NOM. дерѣвья, ACC. дерѣвья, GEN. дерѣвьев, DAT. дерѣвьям, INSTR. дерѣвьями, PREP. дерѣвьях. Declined like дѣрево are крылó (“wing”)—крылья, крьлья, крьльев, etc.—and перó (“feather”)—пѣрья, пѣрья, пѣрьев, etc. The word яблоко (“apple”) is irregular only in the nominative and accusative plural: яблоки. The words плáтьѣ (“dress”) and облако (“cloud”) are irregular in the genitive plural only: плáтьев, облаков. The word колѣно (“knee”) has the plural: колѣни, колѣни, колѣней, etc. The word ўхо (“ear”) has the plural: ўши, ўши, ушѣй, etc.

## APPENDIX II: DECLENSION OF NUMERALS

### CARDINAL NUMERALS

1. **Одін** (“one”) must agree in gender, number and case with the noun it precedes; a noun modified by **одін** is always in the singular unless it is a plural-only noun. The nominative forms of **одін** are: MASC. **одін**, FEM. **одна́**, NEUT. **одно́**, PL. **одні́**. (The **-и-** appears only in the nominative singular.) Thus: **одін стол** (“one table”); **одна́ кні́га** (“one book”); **одно́ окно́** (“one window”); **одні́ часы́** (“one clock”). **Одін** declines like **э́тот**, except that the stress is on the ending.

**Одін** can also have the meaning “alone”: **я одін** (OR: **одна́**) **знаю́** (“I alone know”); **о́ні при́шли одні́** (“they came alone”).

2. **Два** (“two”) has two forms in the nominative and inanimate accusative: MASC. & NEUT. **два**, FEM. **две**. Both **три** (“three”) and **четы́ре** (“four”) have only one nominative form. They are declined thus:

NOM.	два (две)	три	четы́ре
ACC.	два (две)	три	четы́ре
(ANIM.)	двух	трёх	четырёх
GEN.	двух	трёх	четырёх
DAT.	двум	трём	четырёх
INSTR.	двумя́	тремя́	четырьмя́
PREP.	двух	трёх	четырёх

These three numerals, when in the nominative or accusative (except when referring to human beings), are followed by nouns in the genitive singular. Thus: **два столá** (“two tables”); **две кні́ги** (“two books”); **три соба́ки** (“three dogs”). In the accusative, when referring to human beings (but not animals), and in the other cases the noun takes the same case as the numeral and is in the plural.

3. **О́ба** (“both”) has two gender-indicating forms: MASC. & NEUT. **о́ба**, FEM. **о́бе**. **О́ба** is declined thus:

	MASC. & NEUT.	FEM.
NOM.	оба	обе
ACC.	оба	обе
(ANIM.)	обоих	обеих
GEN.	обоих	обеих
DAT.	обоим	обеим
INSTR.	обоими	обеими
PREP.	обоих	обеих

Оба (обе) follows the same rules as those governing два (две).

4. Пять (“five”) is declined: NOM./ACC. пять, GEN./DAT./PREP. пяти́, INSTR. пятью́. Шесть (“six”) through двадцать (“twenty”), and три́дцать (“thirty”) are declined like пять. (Note, however, that the -e- in во́семь [“eight”] is replaced by -ь- in the genitive, dative and prepositional cases.) All these numerals follow the same rules as those for два, except that they are followed by the genitive plural when in the nominative and accusative. The nominative and accusative of all numerals from 5–999 are followed by the genitive plural.

5. Compound numerals are formed as in English, except that no hyphen or conjunction is used. Thus: два́дцать че́тыре (“twenty-four”). Nouns modified by compound numerals are governed by the last element.

6. Со́рок (“forty”) has an accusative form identical to the nominative. In all the other cases it takes the ending -а (со́рока́). Де́вяно́сто (“ninety”) and сто (“hundred”) are both declined like со́рок. Thus their genitives are де́вяно́ста and ста́.

7. In each of the numerals from пятьдеся́т (“fifty”) to во́семьдеся́т (“eighty”) both elements decline. Thus пятьдеся́т declines: NOM./ACC. пятьдеся́т, GEN./DAT./PREP. пяти́десяти, INSTR. пятью́десятью.

8. Both elements decline in the numerals двéсти (“two hundred”) through де́вятисо́т (“nine hundred”); note that the сто element is declined as a plural:

NOM.	двéсти	три́ста	пятьсо́т
ACC.	двéсти	три́ста	пятьсо́т
GEN.	двухсо́т	трéхсо́т	пятисо́т
DAT.	двумста́м	трёмста́м	пятиста́м
INSTR.	двумяста́ми	тремяста́ми	пятьюста́ми
PREP.	двухста́х	трéхста́х	пятиста́х

9. Ты́сяча (“thousand”) and миллио́н (“million”) are both declined like nouns (but note that ты́сяча has the instrumental ты́сячью). They are followed by a noun in the genitive plural.

### ORDINAL NUMERALS

Ordinal numerals (e.g., пе́рвый, “first”; второ́й, “second”; тре́тий, “third”) are declined like hard adjectives ending in -ый or -ой and, like adjectives, must agree in gender, number and case with the modified noun. Thus: в пе́рвом до́ме (“in the first house”). Note, however, the special declension of тре́тий:

	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	NEUT.	ALL GENDERS
NOM.	тре́тий	тре́тья	тре́тье	тре́тьи
ACC.	тре́тий	тре́тью	тре́тье	тре́тьи
(ANIM.)	тре́тьего			тре́тьих
GEN.	тре́тьего	тре́тьей	тре́тьего	тре́тьих
DAT.	тре́тьему	тре́тьей	тре́тьему	тре́тьим
INSTR.	тре́тьим	тре́тьей	тре́тьим	тре́тьими
PREP.	тре́тьем	тре́тьей	тре́тьем	тре́тьих

## APPENDIX III: DECLENSION OF NAMES

1. Russian first names (e.g., *Ива́н, Со́ня*) and patronymics (e.g., *Ива́нович, Ива́новна*) are declined like nouns.

2. Russian surnames ending in *-ев, ёв, -ин, -ов* or *-ын* are declined partly like nouns and partly like adjectives. Their full declension (using the model name *Петро́в*) is as follows:

	SINGULAR		PLURAL
	MASC.	FEM.	MASC. & FEM.
NOM.	Петро́в	Петро́ва	Петро́вы
ACC.	Петро́ва	Петро́ву	Петро́вых
GEN.	Петро́ва	Петро́вой	Петро́вых
DAT.	Петро́ву	Петро́вой	Петро́вым
INSTR.	Петро́вым	Петро́вой	Петро́выми
PREP.	Петро́ве	Петро́вой	Петро́вых

Surnames ending in *-ский* are declined like adjectives; those ending in *-ко* are usually not declined; those ending in *-аго, -яго, -ово, -их, -ых* and stressed *-ко́* do not decline.

# A GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

E. F. BLEILER

This section is intended to refresh your memory of grammatical terms or to clear up difficulties you may have had in understanding them. Before you work through the grammar, you should have a reasonably clear idea what the parts of speech and parts of a sentence are. This is not for reasons of pedantry, but simply because it is easier to talk about grammar if we agree upon terms. Grammatical terminology is as necessary to the study of grammar as the names of automobile parts are to garagemen.

This list is not exhaustive, and the definitions do not pretend to be complete, or to settle points of interpretation that grammarians have been disputing for the past several hundred years. It is a working analysis rather than a scholarly investigation. The definitions given, however, represent most typical American usage, and should serve for basic use.

## The Parts of Speech

English words can be divided into eight important groups: nouns, adjectives, articles, verbs, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions. The boundaries between one group of words and another are sometimes vague and ill-felt in English, but a good dictionary, like the Webster Collegiate, can help you make decisions in questionable cases. Always bear in mind, however, that the way a word is used in a sentence may be just as important as the nature of the word itself in deciding what part of speech the word is.

**Nouns.** *Nouns are the words for things of all sorts, whether these things are real objects that you can see, or ideas, or places, or qualities or groups or more abstract things. Examples of words that are nouns are cat, vase, door, shrub, wheat, university, mercy, intelligence, ocean, plumber, pleasure, society, army. If you are in doubt whether a given word is a noun, try putting the word "my," or "this" or "large" (or some other adjective) in front of it. If it makes sense in the sentence the chances are that the word in question is a noun. [All the words in italics in this paragraph are nouns.]*



**Adjectives.** Adjectives are the words that delimit or give you *specific* information about the *various* nouns in a sentence. They tell you size, color, weight, pleasantness and many *other* qualities. *Such* words as *big, expensive, terrible, insipid, hot, delightful, ruddy, informative* are all *clear* adjectives. If you are in *any* doubt whether a *certain* word is an adjective, add “-er” to it, or put the word “more” or “too” in front of it. If it makes *good* sense in the sentence, and does not end in “-ly,” the chances are that it is an adjective. (Pronoun-adjectives will be described under pronouns.) [The adjectives in the *above* sentences are in italics.]

**Articles.** There are only two kinds of articles in English, and they are easy to remember. The definite article is “the” and the indefinite article is “a” or “an.”

**Verbs.** Verbs *are* the words that *tell* what action, or condition or relationship *is going on*. Such words as *was, is, jumps, achieved, keeps, buys, sells, has finished, run, will have, may, should pay, indicates* are all verb forms. *Observe* that a verb *can be composed* of more than one word, as *will have* and *should pay*, above; these *are called* compound verbs. As a rough guide for verbs, *try adding* “-ed” to the word you *are wondering* about, or *taking off* an “-ed” that *is already* there. If it *makes* sense, the chances *are* that it is a verb. (This *does not always work*, since the so-called strong or irregular verbs *make forms by changing* their middle vowels, like *spring, sprang, sprung*.) [Verbs in this paragraph *are* in italics.]

**Adverbs.** An adverb is a word that supplies additional information about a verb, an adjective or another adverb. It *usually* indicates time, or manner, or place or degree. It tells you *how, or when, or where* or to what degree things are happening. Such words as *now, then, there, not, anywhere, never, somehow, always, very* and most words ending in “-ly” are *ordinarily* adverbs. [Italicized words are adverbs.]

**Pronouns.** Pronouns are related to nouns, and take their place. (Some grammars and dictionaries group pronouns and nouns together as substantives.) *They* mention persons, or objects of any sort without actually giving their names.

There are several different kinds of pronouns. (1) Personal pronouns: by a grammatical convention *I, we, me, mine, us, ours* are called first person pronouns, since *they* refer to the speaker; *you* and *yours* are called second person pronouns, since *they* refer to the person addressed; and *he, him, his, she, her, hers, they, them, theirs* are called third person pronouns, since *they* refer to the things or persons discussed. (2) Demonstrative pronouns: *this, that, these, those*. (3) Interrogative, or question, pronouns: *who, whom, what, whose, which*. (4) Relative pronouns, or pronouns *that* refer back to

something already mentioned: *who, whom, that, which*. (5) Others: *some, any, anyone, no one, other, whichever, none*, etc.

Pronouns are difficult for *us*, since our categories are not as clear as in some other languages, and *we* use the same words for *what* foreign-language speakers see as different situations. First, our interrogative and relative pronouns overlap, and must be separated in translation. The easiest way is to observe whether a question is involved in the sentence. Examples: “*Which* [int.] do you like?” “The hotel, *which* [rel.] was not far from the airport, had a restaurant.” “*Who* [int.] is there?” “I don’t know *who* [int.] was there.” “The porter *who* [rel.] took our bags was Number 2132.” *This* may seem to be a trivial difference to an English speaker, but in some languages *it* is very important.

Secondly, there is an overlap between pronouns and adjectives. In some cases the word “*this*,” for example, is a pronoun; in other cases *it* is an adjective. *This* also holds true for *his, its, her, any, none, other, some, that, these, those* and many other words. Note whether the word in question stands alone or is associated with another word. Examples: “*This* [pronoun] is mine.” “*This* [adj.] taxi has no springs.” Watch out for the word “*that*,” which can be a pronoun or an adjective or a conjunction. And remember that “*my*,” “*your*,” “*our*” and “*their*” are always adjectives. [All pronouns in this section are in italics.]

**Prepositions.** Prepositions are the little words that introduce phrases that tell *about* condition, time, place, manner, association, degree and similar topics. Such words as *with, in, beside, under, of, to, about, for* and *upon* are prepositions. In English prepositions and adverbs overlap, but, as you will see by checking *in* your dictionary, there are usually differences of meaning *between* the two uses. [Prepositions *in* this paragraph are designated by italics.]

**Conjunctions.** Conjunctions are joining-words. They enable you to link words *or* groups of words into larger units, *and* to build compound *or* complex sentences out of simple sentence units. Such words as *and, but, although, or, unless* are typical conjunctions. *Although* most conjunctions are easy enough to identify, the word “*that*” should be watched closely to see *that* it is not a pronoun *or* an adjective. [Conjunctions italicized.]

## Words About Verbs

Verbs are responsible for most of the terminology in this short grammar. The basic terms are:

**Conjugation.** In many languages verbs fall into natural groups, according to the way they make their forms. These groupings are called conjugations,

and are an aid to learning grammatical structure. Though it may seem difficult at first to speak of First and Second Conjugations, these are simply short ways of saying that verbs belonging to these classes make their forms according to certain consistent rules, which you can memorize.

**Infinitive.** This is the basic form that most dictionaries give for verbs in most languages, and in most languages it serves as the basis for classifying verbs. In English (with a very few exceptions) it has no special form. To find the infinitive for any English verb, just fill in this sentence: "I like to . . . . . (walk, run, jump, swim, carry, disappear, etc.)." The infinitive in English is usually preceded by the word "to."

**Tense.** This is simply a formal way of saying "time." In English we think of time as being broken into three great segments: past, present and future. Our verbs are assigned forms to indicate this division, and are further subdivided for shades of meaning. We subdivide the present time into the present (I walk) and present progressive (I am walking); the past into the simple past (I walked), progressive past (I was walking), perfect or present perfect (I have walked), past perfect or pluperfect (I had walked); and future into simple future (I shall walk) and future progressive (I shall be walking). These are the most common English tenses.

**Present Participles, Progressive (Continuous) Tenses.** In English the present participle always ends in *-ing*. It can be used as a noun or an adjective in some situations, but its chief use is in *forming* the so-called progressive or continuous tenses. These are made by *putting* appropriate forms of the verb "to be" before a present participle. "To walk" [an infinitive], for example, has the present progressive: I am *walking*, you are *walking*, he is *walking*, etc.; past progressive, I was *walking*, you were *walking*, and so on. [Present participles are in italics.]

**Past Participles, Perfect Tenses.** The past participle in English is not *formed* as regularly as is the present participle. Sometimes it is *constructed* by adding "-ed" or "-d" to the present tense, as *walked, jumped, looked, received*; but there are many verbs where it is *formed* less regularly: *seen, been, swum, chosen, brought*. To find it, simply fill-out the sentence "I have . . . . .," putting in the verb form that your ear tells you is right for the particular verb. If you speak grammatically, you will have the past participle.

Past participles are sometimes used as adjectives: "Don't cry over *spilt* milk." Their most important use, however, is to form the system of verb tenses that are *called* the perfect tenses: present perfect (or perfect), past perfect (or pluperfect), etc. In English the present perfect tense is *formed* with the present tense of "to have" and the past participle of a verb: I have

walked, you have *run*, he has *begun*, etc. The past perfect is *formed*, similarly, with the past tense of "to have" and the past participle: I had *walked*, you had *run*, he had *begun*. Most of the languages you are likely to study have similar systems of perfect tenses, though they may not be *formed* in exactly the same way as in English. [Past participles are in italics.]

**Auxiliary Verbs.** Auxiliary verbs are special words that are used to help other verbs make their forms. In English, for example, we use forms of the verb "to have" to make our perfect tenses: I *have* seen, you *had* come, he *has* been, etc. We also use *shall* or *will* to make our future tenses: I *shall* pay, you *will* see, etc. French, German, Greek and Italian also make use of auxiliary verbs, but although the general concept is present, the use of auxiliaries differs very much from one language to another, and you *must* learn the practice for each language. [Auxiliary verbs are in italics.]

**Reflexive.** This term, which sounds more difficult than it really is, simply means that the verb flexes back upon the noun or pronoun that is its subject. In modern English the reflexive pronoun always has "-self" on its end, and we do not use the construction very frequently. In other languages, however, reflexive forms may be used more frequently, and in ways that do not seem very logical to an English speaker. Examples of English reflexive sentences: "He washes himself." "He seated himself at the table."

**Passive.** In some languages, like Latin, there is a strong feeling that an action or thing that is taking place can be expressed in two different ways. One can say, A does-something-to B, which is "active"; or B is-having-something-done-to-him by A, which is "passive." We do not have a strong feeling for this classification of experience in English, but the following examples should indicate the difference between an active and a passive verb: Active: "John is building a house." Passive: "A house is being built by John." Active: "The steamer carried the cotton to England." Passive: "The cotton was carried by the steamer to England." Bear in mind that the formation of passive verbs and the situations where they can be used vary enormously from language to language. This is one situation where you usually cannot translate English word for word into another language and make sense.

**Impersonal Verbs.** In English there are some verbs that do not have an ordinary subject, and do not refer to persons. They are always used with the pronoun "it," which does not refer to anything specifically, but simply serves to fill out the verb forms. Examples: "It is snowing." "It hailed last night." "It seems to me that you are wrong." "It has been raining." "It won't do."

## Words About Nouns

**Declensions.** In some languages nouns fall into natural groups according to the way they make their forms. These groupings are called declensions, and making the various forms for any noun, pronoun or adjective is called declining it.

Declensions are simply an aid to learning grammatical structure. Although it may seem difficult to speak of First Declension, Second, Third and Fourth, these are simply short ways of saying that nouns belonging to these classes make their forms according to certain consistent rules, which you can memorize. In English we do not have to worry about declensions, since almost all nouns make their possessive and plural in the same way. In other languages, however, declensions may be much more complex.

**Agreement.** In some languages, where nouns or adjectives or articles are declined, or have gender endings, it is necessary that the adjective or article be in the same case or gender or number as the noun it goes with (modifies). This is called agreement.

This may be illustrated from Spanish, where articles and adjectives have to agree with nouns in gender and number:

una casa	one white	dos casas	two white
blanca	house	blancas	houses
un libro	one white	dos libros	two white
blanco	book	blancos	books

Here *una* is feminine singular and has the ending *-a* because it agrees with the feminine singular noun *casa*; *blanca* has the ending *-a* because it agrees with the feminine singular noun *casa*. *Blanco*, on the other hand, and *un* are masculine singular because *libro* is masculine singular.

**Gender.** Gender should not be confused with actual sex. In many languages nouns are arbitrarily assigned a gender (masculine or feminine, or masculine or feminine or neuter), and this need not correspond to sex. You simply have to learn the pattern of the language you are studying in order to become familiar with its use of gender.

**Case.** The idea of case is often very difficult for an English-speaker to grasp, since we do not use case very much. Perhaps the best way to understand how case works is to step behind words themselves, into the ideas that words express. If you look at a sentence like "Mr. Brown is paying the waiter," you can see that three basic ideas are involved: Mr. Brown, the waiter and the act of payment. The problem that every language has is to show how these ideas are to be related, or how words are to be interlocked to form sentences.

Surprisingly enough, there are only three ways of putting pointers on words to make your meaning clear, so that your listener knows who is doing what to whom. These ways are: (1) word order; (2) additional words; (3) alteration of the word (which for nouns, pronouns and adjectives is called case).

Word order, or the place of individual words in a sentence, is very important in English. For us, "Mr. Brown is paying the waiter" is entirely different in meaning from "The waiter is paying Mr. Brown." This may seem so obvious that it need not be mentioned, but in some languages, like Latin, you can shift the positions of the words and come out with the same meaning for the sentence, apart from shifts of emphasis.

Adding other elements, to make meanings clear, is also commonly used in English. We have a whole range of words like "to," "from," "with," "in," "out," "of," and so on, that show relationships. "Mr. Jones introduced Mr. Smith to the Captain" is unambiguous because of the word "to."

Case is not as important in English as it is in some languages, but we do use case in a few limited forms. We add an *'s* to nouns to form a possessive; we add a similar *-s* to form the plural for most nouns; and we add (in spelling, though there is no sound change involved) an *-'* to indicate a possessive plural. In pronouns, sometimes we add endings, as in the words "who," "whose" and "whom." Sometimes we use different forms, as in "I," "mine," "me"; "he," "his," "him"; "we," "ours" and "us."

When you use case, as you can see, you know much more about individual words than if you do not have case. When you see the word "whom" you automatically recognize that it cannot be the subject of a sentence, but must be the object of a verb or a preposition. When you see the word "ship's," you know that it means "belonging to a ship" or "originating from a ship."

If you assume that endings can be added to nouns or pronouns or adjectives to form cases, it is not too far a logical leap to see that certain forms or endings are always used in the same circumstances. A preposition, for example, may always be followed by a noun or pronoun with the same ending; a direct object may always have a certain ending; or possession may always be indicated by the same ending. If you classify and tabulate endings and their uses, you will arrive at individual cases.

### Miscellaneous Terms

**Comparative, Superlative.** These two terms are used with adjectives and adverbs. They indicate the degree of strength within the meaning of the word. "Faster," "better," "earlier," "newer," "more rapid," "more

detailed," "more suitable" are examples of the comparative in adjectives, while "more rapidly," "more recently," "more suitably" are comparatives for adverbs. In most cases, as you have seen, the comparative uses "-er" or "more" for an adjective, and "more" for an adverb. Superlatives are those forms that end in "-est" or have "most" prefixed before them for adjectives, and "most" prefixed for adverbs: "most intelligent," "earliest," "most rapidly," "most suitably."

### The Parts of the Sentence

**Subject, Predicate.** In grammar *every complete sentence* contains two basic parts, the subject and the predicate. *The subject*, if we state the terms most simply, is the thing, person or activity talked about. *It* can be a noun, a pronoun, or something *that* serves as a noun. A *subject* would include, in a typical case, a noun, the articles or adjectives *that* are associated with it and perhaps phrases. Note that in complex sentences, *each part* may have its own subject. [*The subjects of the sentences and clauses above* have been italicized.]

The predicate *talks about the subject*. In a formal sentence the predicate *includes a verb, its adverbs, predicate adjectives, phrases and objects*—whatever happens to be present. A predicate adjective is an adjective that happens to be in the predicate after a form of the verb "to be." Example: "Apples are red." [Predicates are in italics.]

In the following simple sentences subjects are in italics, predicates in italics and underlined. "*Green apples are bad for your digestion.*" "*When I go to Russia, I always stop in Novgorod.*" "*The man with the handbag is traveling to Moscow.*"

**Direct and Indirect Objects.** Some verbs (called transitive verbs) take direct and/or indirect objects in their predicates; other verbs (called intransitive verbs) do not take objects of any sort. In English, except for pronouns, objects do not have any special forms, but in languages such as Russian, which have case forms or more pronoun forms than English, objects can be troublesome.

The direct object is the person, thing, quality or matter that the verb directs *its action* upon. It can be a pronoun, or a noun, perhaps accompanied by an article and/or adjectives. The direct object always directly follows *its verb*, except when there is also an indirect object present, which comes between the verb and the object. Prepositions do not go before direct objects. Examples: "The cook threw *green onions* into the stew." "The border guards will want to see *your passport* tomorrow."

“Give it to me.” “Please give me *a glass of red wine.*” [We have placed *direct objects* in this paragraph in italics.]

The indirect object, as grammars will tell *you*, is the person or thing for or to whom the action is taking place. It can be a pronoun or a noun with or without article and adjectives. In most cases the words “to” or “for” can be inserted before it, if not already there. Examples: “Please tell *me* the time.” “I wrote *her* a letter from Pskov.” “We sent *Mr. Chernyshev* ten rubles.” “We gave *the most energetic guide* a large tip.” [Indirect objects in this paragraph are in italics.]

**Clauses: Independent, Dependent, Relative.** Clauses are the largest components/*that go to make up sentences.*/ Each clause, in classical grammar, is a combination of subject and predicate./*If a sentence has one subject and one predicate,*/it is a one-clause sentence./*If it has two or more subjects and predicates,*/it is a sentence of two or more clauses./

There are two kinds of clauses: independent (principal) and dependent (subordinate) clauses./ An independent clause can stand alone;/it can form a logical, complete sentence./ A dependent clause is a clause/*that cannot stand alone;*/it must have another clause with it to complete it./

A sentence containing a single clause is called a simple sentence./ A sentence with two or more clauses may be either a complex or a compound sentence./ A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses,/and/these independent clauses are joined together with “and,” “or” or “but.”/ A complex sentence is a sentence/*that contains both independent and dependent clauses.*/

A relative clause is a clause/*that begins with a relative pronoun: who, whom, that, which.*/ It is by definition a dependent clause,/since it cannot stand by itself./

[Each clause in this section has been isolated by slashes./Dependent clauses have been placed in italics;/independent clauses have not been marked./]



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