

# Russian alphabet

with *Sasha*

## ◆ What will you learn in this lesson? ◆



Hello, Reader! In this lesson you are going to learn all about the Russian alphabet! Russians write with an alphabet called the *Cyrillic script*. You will notice that many Cyrillic letters look similar to Latin letters (we use the *Latin alphabet*), because both alphabets descend from the Greek alphabet.

This lesson will teach you how to *read, pronounce, and write* Russian words! But remember that you must also *study!* Make sure that you always study the Summary and Cyrillic Study Guide (see *Contents* below)! Also make sure you take advantage of the tables posted on pages 17 and 18. If you have a printer, make sure you print them off!!!

I hope you enjoy this special lesson! Remember to *study, study, study!!!*

Пока!

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## ● The Alphabet

<b>Аа</b>	[a] as in "father"	<b>Рр</b>	[r] (trilled, rolled r) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Бб</b>	[b] as in "bed"	<b>Сс</b>	[s] as in "see"
<b>Вв</b>	[v] as in "visit"	<b>Тт</b>	[t] as in "time"
<b>Гг</b>	[g] as in "game"	<b>Уу</b>	[u] as in "moose"
<b>Дд</b>	[d] as in "dog"	<b>Фф</b>	[f] as in "farm"
<b>Ее</b>	[ye] as in "yes"	<b>Хх</b>	[kh] (Scottish English <i>loch</i> ) <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ёё</b>	[yo] as in "yoke"	<b>Цц</b>	[ts] as in "cats"
<b>Жж</b>	[zh] as in "pleasure"	<b>Чч</b>	[ch] as in "cheese"
<b>Зз</b>	[z] as in "zebra"	<b>Шш</b>	[sh] as in "ship"
<b>Ии</b>	[i] as in "meat"	<b>Щщ</b>	[shsh'] (longer, palatalized version of [sh]) <sup>3</sup>
<b>Йй</b>	[y] as in "year"	<b>Ъ</b>	['] <i>the hard sign</i> *
<b>Кк</b>	[k] as in "clock"	<b>Ы</b>	[ɨ] (close to the [i] in <i>hit</i> ) <sup>4</sup>
<b>Лл</b>	[l] as in "lock"	<b>Ь</b>	['] <i>the soft sign</i> *
<b>Мм</b>	[m] as in "mouse"	<b>Ээ</b>	[e] as in "bed"
<b>Нн</b>	[n] as in "no"	<b>Юю</b>	[yu] as in "you"
<b>Оо</b>	[o] as in "goat"	<b>Яя</b>	[ya] as in "yacht"
<b>Пп</b>	[p] as in "pear"		

**Notes:**

\* The hard sign marks a preceding *hard* consonant and the soft sign marks a preceding *soft* consonant. These two letters do not make sounds by themselves. If you don't understand this right now, don't worry — it will be reintroduced later on.

1. **Рр** [r] is pronounced as a trilled r. This is also known as "rolling" your r. It is produced by allowing air to vibrate your tongue against the top of your mouth (in the position of [t]). It is never pronounced with the throat!
2. **Хх** [kh] is pronounced much like English [h], but it is much rougher and stronger. It is pronounced in the same position as [k], but you allow air to flow through, causing friction.
3. **Щщ** [shsh'] sounds a lot like **Шш** [sh], but it is longer (the length of two consonants) and it is *palatalized*. You will learn more about palatalization shortly, but basically you raise your tongue to pronounce [y] at the same time you say the consonant (so you could analyze this sound as [shshy]). It is **not** pronounced as [shch]!
4. **Ы** [ɨ] is a hard letter for Russian learners to master. It is a central vowel, and is pronounced in between [i] and [u]. It is very much like the vowel in the word "hit."

## ● Consonants

Consonants are sounds like [p], [t], [k]. Russian has two different types of consonants: **hard consonants** and **soft consonants**.

Soft consonants are *palatalized*, which means that they are pronounced with a "palatal secondary articulation." This is a linguistic term for something very simple: the middle of the tongue is raised towards the roof of the mouth when you say the consonant. This means that you mix the consonant with a [y]. You may compare Russian soft consonants to consonants followed by [y] in English: pure, beautiful, Tuesday (some dialects).

Soft consonants will be marked with an apostrophe after them: [n']. They are very important to notice, because some words are distinguished only by soft consonants.

**мат** [mat] "bad language"

**мят** [m'at] "mint, GENITIVE PL."

**нос** [nos] "nose"

**нёс** [n'os] "(he) carried"

**мать** [mat'] "mother"

**мять** [m'at'] "to wrinkle"

Soft consonants can come at the end of a word (compare **мат-мать**). When they come at the end of a word they are marked by the *soft sign* (**ь**). You will learn more about the hard and soft signs later :).

—  
Now that we've learned about soft consonants, it's time to learn that some consonants are always hard and some consonants are always soft!

**Consonants that are always hard**

**Жж Шш Цц**

[zh] [sh] [ts]

**жить** [zhít'] "to live"

**шесть** [shest'] "six"

**царь** [tsar'] "czar"

**Consonants that are always soft**

**Чч Щщ Йй**

[ch] [shsh'] [y]

**чай** [chay] "tea"

**щи** [shsh'i] "cabbage soup"

**йога** [yóga] "yoga"

These six consonants are special. The rest of the consonants may be hard *or* soft (continued on the next page...)

The following consonants may be hard or soft:

	<b>Бб</b>	<b>Вв</b>	<b>Гг</b>	<b>Дд</b>	<b>Зз</b>
<i>hard</i>	b	v	g	d	z
<i>soft</i>	b'	v'	g'	d'	z'
	<b>Кк</b>	<b>Лл</b>	<b>Мм</b>	<b>Нн</b>	<b>Пп</b>
<i>hard</i>	k	l	m	n	p
<i>soft</i>	k'	l'	m'	n'	p'
	<b>Рр</b>	<b>Сс</b>	<b>Тт</b>	<b>Фф</b>	<b>Хх</b>
<i>hard</i>	r	s	t	f	kh
<i>soft</i>	r'	s'	t'	f'	kh'

**быть** [bit'] "to be"

**бить** [b'it] "to beat"

**тот** [tot] "that"

**лук** [luk] "onion"

**люк** [l'uk] "hatch"

**тётя** [t'ót'a] "aunt"

### ● Voicing

When voiced consonants (e.g. [b]) come at the end of a word, or before a voiceless consonant (e.g. [p]) - they lose their voice. So they become their unvoiced counterparts.

<b>б</b> [b]	→	<b>п</b> [p]	<b>хлеб</b> [khl'ep] "bread"
<b>в</b> [v]	→	<b>ф</b> [f]	<b>любовь</b> [l'ubóf'] "love"
<b>г</b> [g]	→	<b>к</b> [k]	<b>друг</b> [druk] "friend"
<b>д</b> [d]	→	<b>т</b> [t]	<b>вóдка</b> [vótka] "vodka"
<b>ж</b> [zh]	→	<b>ш</b> [sh]	<b>лóжка</b> [lóshka] "spoon"
<b>з</b> [z]	→	<b>с</b> [s]	<b>óбраз</b> [óbras] "image"

When *unvoiced* consonants come before a voiced consonant - they become voiced. This does not apply to **в** [v]. It has no effect on the consonants that come before it.

**вокзál** [vagzál] "station" (к > г)

**прóсьба** [próz'ba] "request" (с > з)

**твой** [tvoy] "your" (NO CHANGE)

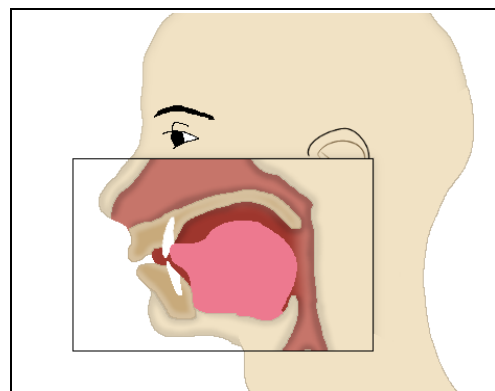
**свой** [svoy] "one's own" (NO CHANGE)

Furthermore, these rules apply across word boundaries: Как делá? [kag d'ilá] "How are you?"

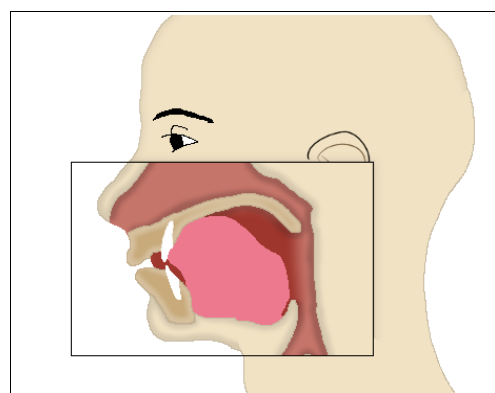
### Запóмните!

(Remember!)

Soft consonants are *palatalized*, which means they are pronounced with the middle of the tongue raised to the roof of the mouth. This makes the consonant sound like it is mixed with [y].



Tongue position of Russian hard [t]: т



Tongue position of Russian soft [t']: ть

## ● Vowels

There are five vowels in Russian: [a e i o u]. Russian has *ten* letters to write vowels. These are divided into two different classes: (1) *vowels used after hard consonants* and (2) *vowels used after soft consonants*.

**(1) Hard vowels**

**а** [a] as in "father"  
**э** [e] as in "bed"  
**ы** [ɨ] as in "hit"  
**о** [o] as in "goat"  
**у** [u] as in "moose"

**(2) Soft vowels**

**я** [ya] as in "yacht"  
**е** [ye] as in "yes"  
**и** [i] as in "meet"  
**ё** [yo] as in "yoke"\*  
**ю** [yu] as in "you"

**Не забудьте!**

(Don't forget!)

The *hard vowels*: **а э ы о у** come after **hard** consonants and the *soft vowels*: **я е и ё ю** come after **soft** consonants!

\*ё appears in stressed syllables only!  
 It is never unstressed!!

When soft vowels come after a consonant, they lose their preceding [y] sound and palatalize (*soften*) the consonant before them: **мясо** [m'ása] "meat". However, soft vowels have no effect on hard-only consonants. Therefore, **жить** "to live" is pronounced with [ɨ] instead of the written [i]: [zhɨt']; and **шесть** "six" is pronounced with a [e] without palatalizing the [sh]: [shest'].

After a vowel or at the beginning of a word, soft vowels are pronounced with a strong [y] sound before them (except for и which is simply [i]): **я знаю** [ya znáyu] "I know."

Below are some example words. Study and practice them. Then continue to the next section: "Vowel Reduction."

**ма́ма** [máma] "mom"**два** [dva] "two"**это́** [éta] "it is"**шесть** [shest'] "six"**ты** [tɨ] "you"**быть** [bɨt'] "to be"**во́дка** [vótka] "vodka"**во́семь** [vós'im'] "eight"**лук** [luk] "onion"**стул** [stul] "chair"**я** [ya] "I"**мясо** [m'asa] "meat"**есть** [yest'] "there is"**семь** [s'em'] "seven"**и́ли** [íl'i] "or"**бить** [b'it'] "to beat"**всё** [fs'o] "everything"**ю́г** [yuk] "south"**люк** [l'uk] "hatch"

## ● Vowel reduction

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Some vowels are reduced in unstressed syllables. Stressed syllables are marked with an acute accent in this lesson (i.e. **á**). The vowel **ě** is always stressed!

### A and O

The vowels **a** and **o** merge in unstressed syllables, where they both sound like [a]. The exact transcription of the sound is [ə] and it is pronounced as "**arena**" [ə́rínə] (example: **ма́ма** [ˈmamə] "mom"). The vowel is more centralized when directly before unstressed syllables: [e] (example: **молоко́** [mələˈko] "milk").

However, for simplicity, we will transcribe unstressed **a** and **o** as simply [a].

**молоко́** [malakó] "milk"

**пиво́** [píva] "beer"

**окно́** [aknó] "window"

**хорошо́** [kharashó] "good"

Some words of foreign origin do not reduce final **o**: **ра́дио** [rád'io] "radio"; **сте́рео** [st'ér'io] "stereo."

### E and И

The vowels **e** and **и** merge in unstressed syllables. They are both pronounced like [i]. The exact pronunciation is [ɪ] (as in "little") after soft consonants; and [ɨ] (more centralized than [ɪ]) after hard consonants. But for simplicity, we will just write [i] and [ɨ].

**еда́** [yídá] "food"

**женá** [zhɨná] "woman"

**по́ле** [pól'i] "field"

**телефо́н** [t'íl'ifón] "telephone"

**мили́ция** [m'íl'ítsɨya] "police"

Unstressed **e** is usually pronounced as [a] at the end of a word after **ж ш ц**, but it may also be pronounced as [ɨ] in a few words: **ра́ньше** [rán'shɨ] "earlier."

### Я

When unstressed, **я** is pronounced as [i] in most places...but not at the end of a word. Note that this applies to **a** when it follows soft consonants.

**язы́к** [yízɨk] "language"

**часы́** [chisɨ] "watch"

**де́сять** [d'és'it'] "ten"

**Росси́я** [rass'íya] "Russia"

**по́ля** [pól'a] "field GENITIVE SG."

**хоро́шая** [kharóshaya] "good (feminine)"

## ● Hard and soft signs

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There are two letters in the Russian alphabet which have no sound by themselves. These are the *hard* and *soft* signs. They modify the consonants before them.

The soft sign (ь) indicates that a preceding consonant is *soft*: **день** [d'en'] "day."

The hard sign (ъ) indicates that a preceding consonant is *hard*, however it is only ever needed before a soft vowel. This means that the consonant before the hard sign *isn't* palatalized.

A great example of the hard sign in use is the word **съесть** [syest'] "to eat, *perfective*", it is different from **сесть** [s'est'] "to sit down, *perfective*". In **съесть** the first **с** is *hard*, but in **сесть** the first **с** is *soft*.

## ● Stress

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Stress is important in Russian, because some words can be distinguished only by stress. For example compare **писа́ть** "to write" with **пи́сать** "to pee."

I have been marking stressed syllables with acute accents (i.e. **á**). This is customary among Russian language learning materials, but it isn't in normal, everyday writing. So, you have to remember the stress of every new word that you learn.

There is no way to guess stress! Stress may fall on the first, second, or third syllable!

**де́вочка** "girl" (first syllable)

**хоро́ший** "good" (second syllable)

**хорошо́** "good" (third syllable)

The letter **ë** is always stressed! In normal Russian writing it is simply written as **e** unless it is needed to clarify things (i.e. the difference between **все** "all" and **всё** "everything").

### Запо́мните!

(Remember!)

The hard and soft signs do not make sounds. They modify the letters that come before them. The soft sign makes consonants *soft*, and the hard sign makes consonants *hard*.

Since we have hard and soft vowels too, there is no need for a soft sign to occur anywhere but at the end of a word. So instead of writing "царья" we write: **царя** (of the czar).

Sometimes a soft sign occurs before a soft vowel. This simply indicates a double softening (i.e. *soft consonant* along with a [y] sound): **счастье** [shsh'ast'yì] "happiness."



## ● Writing irregularities

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There are a few irregularities in Russian spelling that must be remembered!

**г** is pronounced as [v] in some words (**сего́дня** [s'ivódn'a] "today") and in the adjective endings **-ого** and **-его**.

**жч, сч, зч** are pronounced as **щ** [shsh']: **мужчи́на** [mushsh'ína] "man"; **сча́стье** [shsh'ást'ye] "happiness."

**вств** combinations are pronounced as [stv]: **Здра́вствуйте** [zdrástvuyt'e] "hello"; **чу́ство** [chústva] "feeling."

**д** isn't pronounced in **се́рдце** "heart": [s'értsa]

**л** isn't pronounced in **со́лнце** "sun": [sóntsa]

## ● Spelling rules

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There are three major spelling rules in Russian that you must get acquainted with.

- 1 Write **и** instead of **ы** after **г, к, х, ж, ч, ш, щ**

**кни́ги** "books" (NOT **книгы**)  
**ру́сский** "Russian" (NOT **ру́сский**)

- 2 Write **е** instead of *unstressed о* after **ж, ц, ч, ш, щ**

**хоро́шего** "good GENITIVE MASC *adj*" (NOT **хоро́шого**)  
 BUT: **хорошо́** "good *adverb*"

- 3 Write **а/у** instead of **я/ю** after **г, к, х, ж, ц, ч, ш, щ**

**я учу́** "I study" (NOT **учю́**)  
**они́ учат** "they study" (NOT **учят**)

### Tip

If you still don't understand aspects of reading and speaking Russian, please don't worry. *No one* expects you to fully grasp everything by reading one lesson. BUT, even if you have unanswered questions, continue reading the rest of this lesson!

When it comes time to do the exercises, use your scores to determine what to study! (That means if you don't know the answer to a question, go back to the section that covers it and *read!*)

## ● Summary

Below is a summary of what you have learned. Review the points below and make sure you know everything! :) If you are still learning individual letters, refer to the next section!

1. Stress is important in Russian because some words may be distinguished only by stress (COMPARE **мыкá** [muká] "flour" WITH **мыка** [múka] "torture"). There is no way to guess stress, it may occur on any syllable and shift as the word adds endings!
2. Russian has two different types of consonants: hard and soft. Soft consonants are *palatalized*, which means that the middle of the tongue is raised towards the roof of the mouth. This causes soft consonants to sound like they are closely followed by a [y] sound. They are close to the [y] clusters in the English words *pure* and *beautiful* (but the [y] sound is mixed, it doesn't just follow). Compare: **мат** "bad language, *hard [t]*" with **мать** "mother, *soft [t]*."
3. There are six consonants which are either *always hard* or *always soft*. <ж ш ц> are always hard, and <ч щ й> are always soft. This means that *soft vowels* have no effect on preceding hard-only consonants and *hard vowels* have no effect on preceding soft-only consonants. Examples: **шесть** [shest'] "six" (pronounced without palatalization) BUT **день** [d'en'] "day".
4. Voiced consonants are devoiced at the end of a word or before voiceless consonants, example: **друг** [druk] "friend"; **ложка** [lóshka] "spoon.". Voiceless consonants are voiced before voiced consonants, example: **про́сьба** [próz'ba] "request." This does not apply to [v], which has no effect on preceding consonants: **твой** [tvoy] "your."
5. There are ten written vowels that come in two types: *hard* and *soft*. Hard vowels (а э ы о у) come after hard consonants, while soft vowels (я е и ё ю) come after soft consonants. Remember that these vowels may come after consonants that are *always hard* or *always soft*, and they have no effect on those consonants. Soft vowels are pronounced with a [y] before them at the beginning of a word or after a vowel: **Росси́я** [rassíya] "Russia"; **я знаю** [ya znáyu] "I know."
6. <ë> is always stressed. In normal Russian texts, it is often simply written as <e> unless it is needed to distinguish meaning (compare **все** with **всё**).
7. <a> and <o> merge to [a] in unstressed syllables. Examples: **молоко́** [malakó] "milk"; **пиво́** [píva] "beer." This phenomenon is called *аканье* (аканье).

## STUDY TASK

**Don't worry** if you are still struggling with a certain aspect! You cannot expect to fully grasp the Russian alphabet by reading one lesson! Please read this entire section and then continue on to the **Cyrillic Study Guide!**

Once you finish the Cyrillic Study Guide, try out the Exercises! Then study, study, study!!!

**8.** <е> and <и> merge to [i] in unstressed syllables, but remember that [i] is pronounced as [i̯] after hard consonants! Examples: **телефо́н** [t'íl'ifón] "telephone"; **же́на** [zhíná] "wife." This phonemenon is called *ikanье* (иканье).

**9.** <я> is pronounced as [i] in unstressed syllables, but is pronounced as [ya] at the end of a word. It may be written as <а> after some consonants (SEE SPELLING RULES). Examples: **язы́к** [yízík] "language"; **де́сять** [d'és'it'] "ten"; **часы́** [chisí] "watch"; **ВУТ Росси́я** [rassíya] "Russia"; **по́ля** [pól'a] "field GENITIVE SG."

**10.** The soft sign is used to mark a preceding soft consonant. It is not needed before hard vowels, and when it occurs with a hard vowel it is deleted and the hard vowel becomes soft: **ца́рь** [tsar'] "czar" + **а** [a] "genitive ending" = **ца́ря** NOT **ца́рья**. Sometimes the soft sign occurs before soft vowels, in which it simply marks a double softening: **сча́стье** [shsh'ást'yi] "happiness."

**11.** The hard sign is used to mark a preceding hard consonant. It only occurs before soft vowels: **сѣсть** [syest'] "to eat, *perfective*" COMPARE WITH **сесть** [s'est'] "to sit down, *perfective*." Notice that the **с** in **сѣсть** is hard, while the **с** in **сесть** is soft.

**12.** <г> may be pronounced as [v] in some words, especially the adjective endings -ого and -его. Example: **его́** [yivó] "him, his"; **сего́дня** [s'ivódn'a] "today"; **хоро́шего** [kharóshiva] "good, MASC ACC/GEN."

**13.** Remember the three Russian spelling rules! 1) Write <и> instead of <ы> after <г к х ж ч ш щ>, 2) Write <е> instead of unstressed <о> after <ж ц ч ш щ>, 3) Write <а/у> instead of <я/ю> after <г к х ж ц ч ш щ>.

● Cyrillic Study Guide

So you have read this entire lesson...right? Well, I hope you have :). Now it's time to brush up on what you have learned and get everything *memorized!*

Memorizing what you have learned might seem like a daunting task, but it's really not all that hard. All you have to do is remember 33 letters. That is nothing like the poor Japanese learners! They have to learn dozens of kana and THOUSANDS of kanji!! So compared to that, the Russian alphabet is *nothing!* It's pie! ;)

The key to learning something new quickly is to stay motivated and study often. You must constantly drill yourself on your problem areas. Study the Russian alphabet and determine your weak points. Single out the letters that are giving you problems and study them every chance you get.

I like to divide the Russian alphabet into three groups based on difficulty. There are the **easy** letters, the **tricky** letters, and the **hard** letters. This study guide divides the Russian alphabet into those three areas of difficulty, and helps you brush up on them. Study this page along with the tables on pages 17 and 18.

1 The **easy** letters are five letters that look and sound almost exactly like their English look-a-likes.

LETTER	а	к	м	о	т
SOUND	[a] as in "father"	[k] as in "clock"	[m] as in "mouse"	[o] as in "window"	[t] as in "time"
EXAMPLE	МАТЬ [mat'] "mother"	кто [kto] "who"	мышь [mish'] "mouse"	окно́ [akno'] "window"	там [tam] "there"

📘 Memorization Tips

The Russian alphabet won't just drill itself into your memory! You must motivate yourself to *study, study, study!*

1. Read this entire lesson and completely read the Cyrillic Study Guide.
2. Go to page 17 and print off the table to study.
3. Go to page 18 and print off the blank table to test yourself.
4. Cross out letters you have mastered, and circle those you have trouble remembering.
5. Continue studying the letters you have circled.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until you have mastered the alphabet!

2 The **tricky** letters are letters that look like some English letters, but represent different sounds!

LETTER	б	в	е	ë	з	и	й
WHY?	looks like the number six	looks like the letter B	looks like the letter E	looks like the letter E with two dots (umlaut)	looks like the number 3	looks like a backwards letter N	looks like a backwards letter N with a mark over it
SOUND	[b] as in "bed"	[v] as in "visit"	[ye] as in "yes"	[yo] as in "yoke"	[z] as in "zebra"	[i] as in "meet"	[y] as in "year"
EXAMPLE	<b>бар</b> [bar] "bar"	<b>вот</b> [vot] "there is/here is"	<b>нет</b> [n'et] "no"	<b>всë</b> [fs'o] "everything"	<b>зáвтра</b> [záftra] "tomorrow"	<b>и́ли</b> [í'l'i] "or"	<b>чай</b> [chay] "tea"
LETTER	н	р	с	у	х	я	
WHY?	looks like the letter H	looks like the letter P	looks like the letter C	looks like the letter Y	looks like the letter X	looks like a backwards letter R	
SOUND	[n] as in "nose"	[r] (trilled, rolled r)	[s] as in "see"	[u] as in "moose"	[kh] (Scottish English <i>loch</i> )	[ya] as in "yacht"	
EXAMPLE	<b>нос</b> [nos] "nose"	<b>Росси́я</b> [ráss'iya] "Russia"	<b>семь</b> [s'em'] "seven"	<b>муж</b> [mush] "husband"	<b>хорошо́</b> [kharashó] "good"	<b>я́блоко</b> [yáblaka] "apple"	

The hard letters are continued on the next page...

3 The **hard** letters are letters that do not look familiar at all!

LETTER	Г	Д	Ж	Л	П
HELP	think of Greek <i>gamma</i>	think of the word <b>да</b> "yes"	just remember it sticks out like a sore thumb! [zh]!	think of Greek <i>lambda</i>	think of the word <b>хип-хоп</b> "hip-hop"!
SOUND	[g] as in " <b>g</b> ame"	[d] as in " <b>d</b> og"	[zh] as in "pleasure"	[l] as in " <b>l</b> ock"	[p] as in " <b>p</b> aper"
EXAMPLE	<b>год</b> [got] "year"	<b>день</b> [d'en'] "day"	<b>жизнь</b> [zhizn'] "life"	<b>лук</b> [luk] "onion"	<b>птица</b> [ptítsa] "bird"
LETTER	Ф	Ц	Ч	Ш	Щ
HELP	think of Greek <i>phi</i> , or remember <b>флаг</b> "flag"	remember <b>царь</b> [tsar] "czar; tsar"!	remember <b>чай</b> [chay] "tea"!	remember the word <b>шампанское</b> [shampánskoyi] "champagne"	just remember it's a longer, soft <b>ш</b>
SOUND	[f] as in " <b>f</b> lag"	[ts] as in "cat <b>s</b> "	[ch] as in " <b>ch</b> urch"	[sh] as in " <b>sh</b> ip"	[shsh'] (longer, soft version of [sh])
EXAMPLE	<b>флаг</b> [flak] "flag"	<b>цветок</b> [tsv'itók] "flower"	<b>чёрный</b> [chorniý] "black"	<b>шесть</b> [shest'] "six"	<b>щи</b> [shsh'i] "cabbage soup"
LETTER	Ъ	Ы	Ь	Э	Ю
HELP	try to associate the tail on the top of this letter with <i>hardness</i>	remember it contains a little <i>ι</i> , the only letter that does!	remember to keep this separate from the hard sign!	think of it simply as a backwards <e>!	associate this letter with the word <b>you</b> !
SOUND	<i>the hard sign</i>	[ɨ] (close to the [i] in "hit")	<i>the soft sign</i>	[e] as in " <b>bed</b> "	[yu] as in " <b>you</b> "
EXAMPLE	<b>съесть</b> [syest'] "to eat, PERFECTIVE"	<b>мы</b> [mɨ] "we"	<b>мать</b> [mat'] "mother"	<b>это</b> [éta] "this/that/it is"	<b>южный</b> [júzhniý] "southern"

There you have it. Remember the memorization tips and remember the tables on pages 17 and 18.

● Exercises (answers on next page)

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**The tricky letters**

1. **в** is pronounced as \_\_\_\_.  
[b]            [v]            [p]
2. **ж** is pronounced as \_\_\_\_.  
[z]            [sh]            [zh]
3. **и** is pronounced as \_\_\_\_.  
[n]            [i]            [y]
4. **р** is pronounced as \_\_\_\_.  
[p]            [b]            [r]
5. **с** is pronounced as \_\_\_\_.  
[k]            [s]            [sh]

**Pronunciation Practice**

Speak the following words.

6. жить
7. молоко
8. мать
9. кто
10. шесть
11. два
12. всё
13. девочка
14. язык
15. русский

**Spelling mistakes**

Identify and correct the mistakes (if any) in the words below.

16. ма́льчики
17. большо́й
18. я могу́
19. хоро́ший
20. они́ ды́шат

● Answers

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1. **в** is pronounced as [v].
2. **ж** is pronounced as [zh].
3. **и** is pronounced as [i].
4. **р** is pronounced as [r].
5. **с** is pronounced as [s].
6. [zhít']
7. [malakó]
8. [mat']
9. [kto]
10. [shest']
11. [dva]
12. [fs'o]
13. [d'évachka]
14. [yizík]
15. [rússk'iy]
16. мальчики
17. *no mistakes*
18. я могу
19. хороший
20. они дышат



<b>Аа</b> [a] as in "father"	<b>Бб</b> [b] as in "big"	<b>Вв</b> [v] as in "visit"	<b>Гг</b> [g] as in "game"	<b>Дд</b> [d] as in "dog"
<b>Ее</b> [ye] as in "yes"	<b>Ёё</b> [yo] as in "yoke"	<b>Жж</b> [zh] as in "pleasure"	<b>Зз</b> [z] as in "zebra"	<b>Ии</b> [i] as in "meet"
<b>Йй</b> [y] as in "yoga"	<b>Кк</b> [k] as in "cat"	<b>Лл</b> [l] as in "lock"	<b>Мм</b> [m] as in "mom"	<b>Нн</b> [n] as in "nose"
<b>Оо</b> [o] as in "rope"	<b>Пп</b> [p] as in "pear"	<b>Рр</b> [r] trilled (rolled) r	<b>Сс</b> [s] as in "sand"	<b>Тт</b> [t] as in "time"
<b>Уу</b> [u] as in "moose"	<b>Фф</b> [f] as in "flag"	<b>Хх</b> [kh] as in Scottish English "loch"	<b>Цц</b> [ts] as in "cats"	<b>Чч</b> [ch] as in "church"
<b>Шш</b> [sh] as in "ship"	<b>Щщ</b> [shsh'] longer, palatalized version of [sh]	<b>Ъ</b> <i>hard sign</i>	<b>Ы</b> [ɨ] close to the [i] in "hit"	<b>Ь</b> <i>soft sign</i>
<b>Ээ</b> [e] as in "bed"	<b>Юю</b> [yu] as in "you"	<b>Яя</b> [ya] as in "yacht"		

<b>Аа</b>	<b>Бб</b>	<b>Вв</b>	<b>Гг</b>	<b>Дд</b>
<b>Ее</b>	<b>Ёё</b>	<b>Жж</b>	<b>Зз</b>	<b>Ии</b>
<b>Йй</b>	<b>Кк</b>	<b>Лл</b>	<b>Мм</b>	<b>Нн</b>
<b>Оо</b>	<b>Пп</b>	<b>Рр</b>	<b>Сс</b>	<b>Тт</b>
<b>Уу</b>	<b>Фф</b>	<b>Хх</b>	<b>Цц</b>	<b>Чч</b>
<b>Шш</b>	<b>Щщ</b>	<b>ъ</b>	<b>ы</b>	<b>ь</b>
<b>Ээ</b>	<b>Юю</b>	<b>Яя</b>		

## ● Handwriting

Russians have their own handwritten form of writing, just like English speakers! But in Russia, handwriting is more common than printing (which seems to be the opposite here in modern America). This means that it is essential to learn how to write in Russian, because you will use it if you ever plan on using the Russian that you learn! :) Be warned, many Russian letters look different in their handwritten forms, so handwriting isn't something that will be learned overnight!

*Aa*    **Aa**

*Бб*    **Бб**

-The lowercase handwritten <б> looks kind of like a lowercase English <d>. It does not connect with other letters!

*борщ*    **борщ** "borsch"

*Вв*    **Вв**

-This letter is easy because it is almost exactly like the English handwritten <Bb>.

*всё*    **всё** "everything"

*Гг*    **Гг**

-This letter is fairly simple. It looks like this in its Italic form: *g*.

*где*    **где** "where"

*Дд*    **Дд**

-This letter looks like two English handwritten forms! The capital form <Д> is written like English <D> and the lowercase form <д> is written like an English <g>. Most fonts have an old-fashioned Italic form that mirrors the English <d>: *ð*.

*Ее*    **Ее**

Ë ë    Ё ё

Ж ж    ЖЖ

-This letter can be tricky to write. It is written in one simple stroke, but has three steps:

*Ж Ж Ж*

З з    ЗЗ

-This letter is fairly simple, because it looks like the handwritten lowercase English <z>.

И и    ИИ

-This letter looks like English <u>, so it's pretty easy. Its Italic form also looks like a <u>: *и*.

*иди* **иди!** "go!"

Й й    ЙЙ

К к    КК

Л л    ЛЛ

-The initial tail on the beginning of this letter is essential so it isn't confused with other letters!

*или* **или** "or"

М м    ММ

-The initial tail on the beginning of this letter is essential. You must also make sure it cannot be confused with handwritten <т> (continue reading).

*мама* **мама** "mom"

Нн НН

Оо Оо

-If this letter comes before <л> or <м>, do not join them together:

*дом* **ДОМ** "house"

Пп ПП

-This letter looks like a lowercase <n> in its handwritten and Italic forms: *n*.

Рр РР

Сс СС

Тт ТТ

-Note that this letter is very different from its print form. It looks like a lowercase English <m> in its Italic and handwritten forms: *m*. Some Russians "cross their T's" by adding a line over this letter, however they are a minority. Another small minority simply writes a cursive <т> that mimics the printed form.

*кто* **КТО** "who"

Уу УУ

Фф ФФ

*X x*    **Xx**

*Ц ц*    **Цц**

-You must make sure that this letter's small tail is much shorter than that of a handwritten <y> (to avoid confusion).

*царь*    **царь** "czar"

*Ч ч*    **Чч**

-You must make sure that this letter is not confused with a handwritten <г>.

*чай*    **чай** "tea"

*Ш ш*    **Шш**

-Many Russians put a bar below this letter to make it clearly distinct from a lowercase <и> (*и*).

*хорошо*    **хорошо** "good"

*хорошо*

*Щ щ*    **Щщ**

-You must make sure that this letter has a small tail, just like <ц>.

*щи*    **щи** "cabbage soup"

*Ъ*    **Ъ**

-This letter never comes at the beginning of a word, so it has no capital form.

*Ы*    **Ы**

-This letter never comes at the beginning of a word, so it has no capital form. You must make sure you write this letter in one stroke.

*сын*    **сын** "son"

б Ъ

-This letter never comes at the beginning of a word, so it has no capital form. You must make sure this letter is half the height of handwritten <в>, to avoid confusion.

Э э ЭЭ

Ю ю ЮЮ

Я я ЯЯ

-Just like <л> and <м>, this letter must always have an initial tail.

*земля* **земля** "earth"