
Introduction

1 The Cyrillic alphabet

(1) The Russian Cyrillic alphabet contains 33 letters, including 20 consonants, 10 vowels, a semi-consonant/semi-vowel (ѣ), a hard sign (ѣ) and a soft sign (ѣ).

(2) There are a number of different systems for transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet. Three of these, that of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), that of the British Standards Institute (BSI) and that of the Library of Congress (LC), whose system is used throughout this *Grammar*, are listed alongside the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the Russian names of the individual letters:

Cyrillic letters	Letter name	ISO	BSI	LC
Аа	[а]	a	a	a
Бб	[бэ]	b	b	b
Вв	[вэ]	v	v	v
Гг	[гэ]	g	g	g
Дд	[дэ]	d	d	d
Ее	[е]	e	e	e
Ёё	[ё]	ë	ë	e
Жж	[жэ]	ž	zh	zh
Зз	[зэ]	z	z	z
Ии	[и]	i	i	i
Йй	[и краткое]	j	й	i
Кк	[ка]	k	k	k
Лл	[эль]	l	l	l

Cyrillic letters	Letter name	ISO	BSI	LC
Мм	[эм]	m	m	m
Нн	[эн]	n	n	n
Оо	[о]	o	o	o
Пп	[пэ]	p	p	p
Рр	[эр]	r	r	r
Сс	[эс]	s	s	s
Тт	[тэ]	t	t	t
Уу	[у]	u	u	u
Фф	[эф]	f	f	f
Хх	[ха]	h/ch	kh	<u>kh</u>
Цц	[цэ]	c	ts	ts
Чч	[че]	č	ch	ch
Шш	[ша]	š	sh	sh
Щщ	[ща]	šč	shch	shch
Ъъ	[твёрдый знак]	”	”	”
Ыы	[ы]	y	ȳ	y
Ьь	[мягкий знак]	,	,	,
Ээ	[э оборóтное]	ě	é	ě
Юю	[ю]	ju	Yu	<u>iu</u>
Яя	[я]	ja	Ya	<u>ia</u>

Note

- (a) Certain letters with diacritics and accents which appear in the standard BSI system (ě for ё, ĭ for й, é for э, ȳ for ы) are used without diacritics and accents here.
- (b) The ligatures used over certain combinations of letters in the standard LC system (ts, iu, ia) are often omitted by other users.
- (c) The endings -ый/-ий are rendered as -ii in names.

2 The international phonetic alphabet (IPA)

The following symbols from the IPA are used in the Introduction for the phonetic transcription of Russian words.

Vowels

i	as in ил	[il]
ɪ	as in пыл	[pɪl]
ɪ	as the first vowel in игла́	[ɪ'gla]
ɪ	as the first vowel in дыра́	[dɪ'ra]

е	as in лес	[ɭes]
е	as in весь	[ʏesɤ]
а	as in рад	[rat]
æ	as in пять	[pætɤ]
л	as the first vowel in один	[ɭ'ɔin]
э	as the first vowel in хорошо	[xəɭɭ'ʃo]
о	as in моx	[mox]
ö	as in тётя	[ʔöʔə]
и	as in бук	[buk]
й	as in ключ	[kɭütɤ]

Semi-consonant/semi-vowel

ј	as in бой	[boj]
---	-----------	-------

Consonants

р	as in пол	[pol]
р̣	as in пёс	[p̣os]
б	as in бак	[bak]
б̣	as in бел	[ḅel]
т	as in том	[tom]
т̣	as in тем	[ṭem]
д	as in дом	[dom]
д̣	as in день	[ḍenɤ]
к	as in как	[kak]
к̣	as in кем	[ḳem]
г	as in гол	[gol]
г̣	as in гид	[g̣it]
ф	as in флора	[ʔflorə]
ф̣	as in фен	[f̣en]
в	as in вот	[vot]
у	as in вино	[ʏi'no]
с	as in сам	[sam]
с̣	as in сев	[ṣef]
з	as in зуб	[zup]
з̣	as in зёбра	[ʔẓebrə]
ш	as in шум	[ɤum]
ж	as in жук	[ʒuk]
х	as in хам	[xam]
х̣	as in химик	[ʔximik]
щ̣	as in щекá	[ɤʔtʔka]
ts	as in цех	[tsex]

tʃ	as in чин	[tʃin]
m	as in мол	[mol]
m̥	as in мел	[m̥el]
n	as in нос	[nos]
n̥	as in нет	[n̥et]
l	as in лак	[lak]
l̥	as in ляг	[l̥ak]
r	as in рак	[rak]
r̥	as in река́	[r̥ɪ'ka]
j	as in яма	[ˈjamə]

Pronunciation

3 Stressed vowels

Russian has ten vowel letters:

а	э	ы	о	у
я	е	и	ё	ю

(1) **А** is pronounced with the mouth opened a little wider than in the pronunciation of ‘a’ in English ‘father’, e.g. зал [zal] ‘hall’.

(2) **Э** is pronounced like ‘e’ in ‘end’, but the mouth is opened a little wider and the tongue is further from the palate than in articulating English ‘e’ in ‘end’, e.g. это [ˈetə] ‘this is’.

(3) **У** is pronounced with the tongue drawn back and the lips rounded and protruding. The sound is similar to but shorter than the vowel in ‘school’, e.g. бук [buk] ‘beech’.

(4) **О** is also pronounced with rounded and protruding lips, but to a lesser extent than in the pronunciation of **у**. The sound is similar to the vowel in English ‘bought’, e.g. бок [bok] ‘side’.

(5) The vowel **ы** is pronounced with the tongue drawn back as in the pronunciation of **у**, but with the lips spread, not rounded or protruding, e.g. сын [sin] ‘son’.

(6) The vowels **я** [ja], **е** [je], **ё** [jo] and **ю** [ju] are ‘iotated’ variants of **а**, **э**, **о** and **у** (i.e. they are pronounced like those vowels preceded by the sound [j]). The vowel **и** resembles ‘ea’ in English ‘cheap’, but is a ‘closer’ sound, that is, the centre of the tongue is nearer to the hard palate in articulation, e.g. мир [m̥ir] ‘world, peace’. After a preposition or other word ending in

a hard consonant, however, stressed initial **н** is pronounced [i]: от Игоря [ʌ'ʲigəɹə], cf. also 4 (4) note.

Note

Vowels can be classified as:

- (a) **back** vowels (pronounced with the back part of the tongue raised towards the back of the palate): **у/ю, о/ё**;
- (b) **central** vowels (pronounced with the central part of the tongue raised towards the central part of the palate): **ы, а/я**;
- (c) **front** vowels (pronounced with the central part of the tongue raised towards the front of the palate): **и, э/е**.

4 Unstressed vowels

(1) Unstressed у, ю, и and ы

The sound of unstressed **у/ю** is similar to that of English 'u' in 'put': ду́га [du'ga] 'arc', юла́ [ju'la] 'top'. Unstressed **и** and **ы** are shorter and pronounced in a more 'relaxed' fashion than their stressed equivalents: игра́ [i'gra] 'game', была́ [bɪ'la] 'was'. Ё does not appear in unstressed position. The other vowels are 'reduced' in unstressed position.

(2) Reduction of о and а

(i) The vowels **о** and **а** are pronounced as [o] and [a] only when they appear in stressed position: дом [dom], зал [zal]. In unstressed position they are reduced, **о** being the vowel most affected by various forms of reduction resulting from its position in relation to the stress.

(ii) In pre-tonic position or as the unstressed initial letter in a word **о** and **а** are pronounced [ʌ]: пото́м [pʌ'tom] 'afterwards', оди́н [ʌ'dʲin] 'one', паро́м [pʌ'rom] 'ferry', аку́ла [ʌ'kulə] 'shark'. This also applies to pre-tonic prepositions: под мо́рем [pʌ'dm oɹɪm] 'under the sea', над до́мом [nʌ'ddoməm] 'above the house'. The combinations **аа**, **ао**, **оа**, **оо** are pronounced [ʌʌ], e.g. сообразы́ть [sʌʌbrʌ'zʲɪtʲ] 'to comprehend'.

(iii) In pre-pre-tonic position (except as initial letters, see (ii)) or in post-tonic position both vowels are pronounced [ə]: thus парохо́д [pəɹʌ'xot] 'steamer', молодóй [mʌɫʌ'doj] 'young', ра́но [ɹʌnə] 'early', ви́лка [ɪ'vɪlkə] 'fork'. This also applies to prepositions (под водо́й [pədʋʌ'doj] 'under water', над голово́й [nədɣʌɫʌ'voj] 'overhead') and to the initial letters of words governed by prepositions (в оро́роде [vʌɣɹʌ'roɹɪ] 'in the market garden' (cf. оро́род [ʌɣɹʌ'rot] 'market garden')).

Note

- (a) Unstressed **о** is pronounced [o] in a number of words of foreign origin (какáо ‘cocoa’, ráдио ‘radio’, хáос ‘chaos’), with an optional [o] in véто ‘veto’, досьé ‘dossier’, шоссé ‘highway’ and some other words. In certain cases, pronunciation is differentiated stylistically. The pronunciation [ʌ] in words such as поэт ‘poet’ and шоссé ‘highway’, said to be the more colloquial variant, has gained ground in educated speech and is found even in the pronunciation of foreign names such as Шопén [ʃʌ'pɛn]/[ʃo'pɛn] ‘Chopin’, especially where these have gained common currency (e.g. Толья́тти ‘Togliatti’). However, [o] is retained in words where it follows another vowel: трío ‘trio’.
- (b) The vowel **а** is pronounced [ɪ] in pre-tonic position after **ч** and **щ**: thus часы́ [tʃɪ'si] ‘clock’, щадíть [ʃɪ'dɪtʃ] ‘to spare’. The pronunciation of unstressed **а** as [ɪ] after **ж**, **ш** is now limited for many speakers to жалéть [ʒɪ'ɲɛtʃ] ‘to regret’, к сожалéнию [kʰsəʒɪ'ɲɛɲju] ‘unfortunately’ and end-stressed plural oblique cases of лошадь ‘horse’, e.g. gen. pl. лошаде́й [ləʃɪ'dɛj]. **Ца** is pronounced [tsɪ] in the oblique cases of some numerals: двадцатí [dvɛtsɪ'tɕi] ‘twenty’ (gen.).

(3) Reduction of **е** and **я**

- (i) In pre-tonic position both **е** and **я** are pronounced [(j)ɪ]: язы́к [jɪ'zik] ‘language’, перевóд [pɪvɪ'vot] ‘translation’. Thus, разредíть ‘to thin out’ and разрядíть ‘to unload’ have the same pronunciation.
- (ii) In post-tonic position **е** is pronounced [ɪ] (пóле [ˈpoɪ] ‘field’), while **я** is usually pronounced [ə] (ды́ня [ˈdɪɲə] ‘melon’). However, post-tonic **я** is pronounced [ɪ] before a soft consonant (па́мять [ˈpamɪtʃ] ‘memory’) and in non-final post-tonic position (вы́глянул [ˈvɪglɪnul] ‘looked out’).

(4) Reduction of **э**

Э is pronounced [ɪ] in unstressed position (э́тап [ɪ'tap] ‘stage’).

Note

Unstressed initial **и** and **э** and conjunction **и** are pronounced [ɪ] after a preposition or other word ending in a hard consonant (see 3 (6)): в Ита́лию [vɪ'taɭɪju] ‘to Italy’, брат идёт к Ива́ну [bratɪ'ɲot kɪ'vanu] ‘my brother is on his way to see Ivan’, над эква́тором [nɛdɪ'kvatɛrəm] ‘above the equator’. **И** is also pronounced [ɪ] in certain stump compounds, e.g. Госизда́т [gostɪ'zdat] ‘State Publishing House’.

5 Hard and soft consonants

With the exception of **ж**, **ц** and **ш**, which are invariably hard, and **ч** and **щ**, which are invariably soft, all Russian consonants can be pronounced hard or soft.

(1) Hard consonants

(i) A hard consonant is a consonant which appears at the end of a word (e.g. the **м** in **дом** [dom] ‘house’, the **т** in **вот** [vot] ‘here is’) or is followed by **а**, **ы**, **о** or **у** (**э** appears only as an *initial* letter, except in acronyms such as **нэп** ‘NEP’ (New Economic Policy) and rare words such as **сэр** ‘sir’). Thus, the consonants in the words **голова́** [gəɫəˈva] ‘head’, **мы́ло** [ˈmilə] ‘soap’ and **ду́ма** [ˈdumə] ‘thought’ are all hard.

(ii) Most hard consonants, e.g. **б**, **в**, **г**, **з**, **к**, **м**, **п**, **с**, **ф**, are pronounced in similar fashion to their English counterparts, i.e. ‘b’ in ‘bone’, ‘v’ in ‘van’, ‘g’ in ‘gone’, ‘z’ in ‘zone’, ‘c’ in ‘come’, ‘m’ in ‘money’, ‘p’ in ‘pun’, ‘s’ in ‘sun’, ‘f’ in ‘fun’. However, **к** and **п** (and **т**; see (iii)) lack the slight aspiration of ‘k’, ‘p’ and ‘t’.

(iii) In pronouncing the dentals **д** [d], **т** [t] and **н** [n], the tip of the tongue is pressed against the back of the upper teeth in the angle between teeth and gums.

(iv) **Р** is a moderately ‘trilled’ [r]. **Л** is pronounced with the tip of the tongue in the angle between the upper teeth and the gum, and the middle of the tongue curved downwards. The ‘l’ sound in English ‘bubble’ is a good starting-point for the pronunciation of this letter.

(v) **Х** sounds as ‘ch’ in ‘loch’ or German ‘acht’, but is formed a little further forward in the mouth.

(vi) Unlike other consonants, **ж**, **ц** and **ш** are always pronounced hard (see, however, note (b), below). This means in practice that the vowels **е** and **и** are pronounced as **э** and **ы** after **ж**, **ц** and **ш** (**жест** [zest] ‘gesture’, **жир** [zʲɪr] ‘fat’, **цех** [tsɐx] ‘workshop’, **цирк** [tsɪrk] ‘circus’, **шест** [ʃest] ‘pole’, **машина́** [mɐɫˈʃinə] ‘car’) while **ё** is pronounced as **о** after **ж** and **ш** (**жёлоб** [ˈzələp] ‘groove’, **шёлк** [ʃolk] ‘silk’). A soft sign (as in **рожь** [rojʃ] ‘rye’) has no softening effect on the pronunciation of **ж** or **ш**.

Note

(a) Neither a soft sign nor the vowel **ё** can be written after **ц**.

- (b) **Ш** is sounded hard in the loan words парашю́т [pəʁɐʃut] ‘parachute’ and брошю́ра [brɐʃurə] ‘brochure’, while **ж** is pronounced soft in жу́ри [zʲuˈri] ‘jury’.

(2) Soft consonants

(i) A soft consonant is a consonant (other than **ж**, **ц** or **ш**) followed by a soft sign, e.g. **ль** in сталь ‘steel’, or by **я**, **е**, **и**, **ё** or **ю**. Thus, the initial consonants in мя́та [ˈmʲatə] ‘mint’, лес [lʲes] ‘forest’, пил [pʲil] ‘was drinking’, нёбо [ˈnʲobə] ‘palate’ and дю́на [ˈdʲunə] ‘dune’ are all soft.

(ii) Soft consonants are pronounced with the centre of the tongue raised towards the hard palate, as in articulating **и**, for example. Correct rendering of the vowels **я** [ja], **е** [je], **и** [i], **ё** [jo] and **ю** [ju] will assist in the articulation of the preceding soft consonants. Soft [j] as in то́лько ‘only’ is similar to ‘ll’ in ‘million’, with the tip of the tongue against the teeth-ridge and the front of the tongue pressed against the hard palate.

(iii) Soft consonants may also appear at the end of words, e.g. **нь** and **ть** in топь [topʲ] ‘swamp’ and мать [matʲ] ‘mother’; the final sounds in these words are similar to those of the initial consonants in ‘pure’ and ‘tune’ (standard British English ‘Received Pronunciation’).

(iv) Unlike other consonants, **ч** and **щ** are always pronounced soft. In practice this means that the vowels **а**, **о** and **у** are pronounced as [ja], [jo] and [ju] following these consonants (час ‘hour’, чопо́рный ‘prim’, чугу́н ‘cast iron’, поща́да ‘mercy’, щу́ка ‘pike’).

(v) The consonant **щ** is pronounced as a long soft **ш** [ʃʃ] (e.g. защища́ть [zəʃʃɪˈʃʃætʃ] ‘to defend’); the pronunciation [ʃtʃ] is falling into disuse.

(vi) The double consonants **жч** (мужчи́на ‘man’), **зч** (зака́зчик ‘client’), **сч** (подпи́счик ‘subscriber’) are pronounced like **щ** [ʃʃ]. The pronunciation [ʃtʃ], however, is preferred in prefixed forms such as бесчи́сленный ‘innumerable’, расчлени́ть ‘to dismember’.

(vii) **Жж** and **Зж** may be pronounced either as a double soft **ж** (with the front of the tongue raised towards the hard palate) in words such as во́жжи [ˈvoʒʒɪ] ‘reins’, дро́жжи ‘yeast’, жжёт ‘burns’, жужжа́ть ‘to buzz’, брызжет ‘sprays’, визжа́ть ‘to scream’, е́зжу ‘I travel’, поезжа́й! ‘go!’, по́зже ‘later’, especially in the speech of the older generation, as well as in that of actors and professionally trained announcers, or alternatively as a double hard **ж** [ˈvoʒʒɪ], a pronunciation preferred by very many younger speakers. **Зж** is invariably pronounced as hard [ʒʒ] across the boundary between prefix and stem:

изжѣть ‘to eradicate’. The cluster **жд** in **дождя** ‘of rain’ etc. is pronounced as soft **жж** by some speakers and as [ʒd] by others.

(3) Use of hard and soft consonants to differentiate meaning

Hard and soft consonants may be used to differentiate meaning, cf. **лук** [luk] ‘onions’ and **люк** [luk] ‘hatch’, **мат** [mat] ‘checkmate’ and **мать** [matʲ] ‘mother’ etc.

6 Double palatalization

Some words contain two adjacent soft consonants, a phenomenon known as ‘double palatalization’ or ‘regressive softening’. The following combinations of letters are involved:

(1) [dʲ], [tʲ] and [nʲ] followed by other soft dentals or by [ʃ], [ʒ], [tʃ], [ʃʃ] or [ʒʒ]: **оттепель** [ʲotʲtʲɛpʲɪ] ‘thaw’, **дни** [dʲnʲi] ‘days’, **ко́нчик** [ʲkʲonʲʃʲɪk] ‘tip’, **го́нщик** [ʲgʲonʲʃʲɪk] ‘racer’, **пя́тница** [ʲpʲætʲnʲɪtsə] ‘Friday’, **пе́нсия** [ʲpʲenʲʃʲɪjə] ‘pension’.

(2) [ʃ] or [ʒ] followed by a soft dental, [ʃ], [ʒ] or [ʲ]: **возни́к** [vʲɔʲzʲnʲɪk] ‘arose’, **разде́л** [rʲɔʲzʲdʲɛl] ‘partition’, **здесь** [zʲdʲɛʃ] ‘here’, **снег** [ʃnʲɛk] ‘snow’, **сте́на** [ʃʲtʲiˈna] ‘wall’, **вме́сте** [ʲvmʲɛʃʲtʲi] ‘together’.

Note

In some words, single or double palatalization is possible: **две** [dʲvʲɛ] or [dvʲɛ] ‘two’, **дверь** [dʲvʲerʲ] or [dvʲerʲ] ‘door’, **зверь** [zʲvʲerʲ] or [zvʲerʲ] ‘wild animal’, **пе́тля** [ʲpʲetʲʃə] or [ʲpʲetʲʃə] ‘loop’, **свет** [svʲet] or [ʃvʲet] ‘light’, **след** [slʲet] or [ʃslʲet] ‘trace’, **че́тверть** [ʲtʲfʲetʲvʲɪrʲtʲ] or [ʲtʲfʲetʲvʲɪrʲtʲ] ‘quarter’.

7 Non-palatalization of consonants in some loan words

(1) The consonants **т** and **д** are pronounced hard before **е** in certain loan words and foreign names (**те́рмос** [ʲtʲɛrməs] ‘thermos flask’, **анте́нна** ‘aerial’, **апарте́йд** ‘apartheid’, **ателы́е** ‘workshop’, **бифште́кс** ‘beefsteak’, **бутерб́род** ‘sandwich’, **оте́ль** ‘hotel’, **парте́р** ‘stalls’, **принте́р** ‘printer’, **стенд** ‘stand’), in words with the prefix **интер-** (**Интерне́т** ‘Internet’), **ко́декс** ‘legal code’, **моде́ль** ‘model’, **стюа́рдесса** ‘stewardess’ and in many words with the prefix **де-** (**дегра́дация** ‘degradation’).

(2) Hard **з** has been retained in *безе* ‘meringue’; hard **м** in *консоме* ‘consommé’, *резюме* ‘résumé’; hard **н** in *кашнэ* ‘scarf’, *бизнес* ‘business’, *кибернэтика* ‘cybernetics’, *тоннель* ‘tunnel’, *турнэ* ‘tour’, *фонэтика* ‘phonetics’, *энергия* ‘power’; hard **п** in *купэ* ‘compartment’; hard **р** in *кабарэ* ‘cabaret’, *релэ* ‘relay’; hard **с** in *шоссэ* ‘highway’, *экстрасэнс* ‘a psychic’; and hard **ф** in *кафэ* ‘café’.

Note

A hard consonant is more likely to be retained in foreign loan words immediately preceding the stressed vowel (e.g. *тэnnис* ‘tennis’). Dental consonants (**д, т, н**) are more likely to remain hard than labials (**б, п, м**).

8 Hard sign and soft sign

(1) The hard sign appears only between a hard consonant — usually at the end of a prefix — and a stem beginning **я, е, ё** or **ю**: *отъезд* [ʌ'tjɛst] ‘departure’, *объяснять* ‘to explain’.

(2) A soft sign appearing between a consonant and **я, е, ё** or **ю** indicates that the consonant is soft and that the sound **й** [j] intervenes between consonant and vowel: *семья* [ʂɪ'mjja] ‘family’. See also 5 (2) (i) and (iii).

9 The reflexive suffix -сь/-ся

(1) The pronunciation of **сь** as [ʂ] is widespread: *боюсь* [bʌ'juʂ] ‘I fear’, *боюсь* [bʌ'jaʂ] ‘fearing’ etc.

(2) The suffix **-ся** is usually pronounced [ʂə] in the infinitive (*мьться* ‘to wash’) and the present tense (*мóется* ‘he/she washes’), though an alternative soft pronunciation [ʂə] is also found in the second-person singular and first-person plural.

(3) [ʂə] is preferred in participles (*смеющийся* [ʂə] ‘laughing’), the imperative (*не смейся* ‘don’t laugh’) and the past tense (*он смеялся* ‘he was laughing’) — except for forms in **-ссия** or **-зся** (*пáссия* [ˈpassə] ‘was grazing’).

10 Effect of a soft consonant on a vowel in the preceding syllable

(1) **Э** and **е** are pronounced [ɛ] and [jɛ] in stressed position when followed by a hard consonant (e.g. *это* [ˈɛtə] ‘this is’, *лес* [lɛs] ‘forest’),

but as [e] and [je] (similar to French ‘e acute’ [é]) when followed by a soft consonant (e.g. эти [‘etʲɪ] ‘these’, весь [vʲesʲ] ‘all’).

(2) **Я** is pronounced as [æ], **ё** as [ö] and **ю** as [ü] preceding a soft consonant: мяч [mʲætʃ] ‘ball’, тётя [‘tʲötʲə] ‘aunt’, ключ [klʲütʃ] ‘key’.

(3) **А, о** and **ы** are also affected as the tongue is raised closer to the palate in anticipation of a following soft consonant (e.g. мать ‘mother’, ночь ‘night’, пыль ‘dust’, where **а, о** and **ы** are pronounced as if followed by a much-reduced **и** sound).

11 Voiced and unvoiced consonants

(1) Some consonants are pronounced with vibration of the vocal cords (‘voiced’ consonants), and others without such vibration (‘unvoiced’ consonants).

(2) There are six pairs of voiced and unvoiced equivalents:

Voiced	Unvoiced
б	п
г	к
з	с
д	т
в	ф
ж	ш

The eight other consonants include the unvoiced **ц, х, ч, ш** and the voiced sonants **л, р, м, н**.

(3) **Б, г, з, д, в, ж** are pronounced as their unvoiced counterparts when they appear in final position or before a final soft sign.

лоб ‘forehead’	is pronounced [lop]
луг ‘meadow’	is pronounced [luk]
раз ‘time’	is pronounced [ras]
сад ‘garden’	is pronounced [sat]
лев ‘lion’	is pronounced [ʲef]
муж ‘husband’	is pronounced [muʃ]

(4) When a voiced and an unvoiced consonant appear side by side, the first assimilates to the second. Thus, voiced consonant + unvoiced

consonant are both pronounced unvoiced, while unvoiced consonant + voiced consonant are both pronounced voiced.

(i) **Voiced + unvoiced (both pronounced unvoiced)**

гу́бка	‘sponge’	is pronounced [ˈgʊpkə]
загс	‘registry office’	is pronounced [zaks]
рэ́зко	‘sharply’	is pronounced [ˈrʲeskə]
ло́дка	‘boat’	is pronounced [ˈlotkə]
вхо́дит	‘goes in’	is pronounced [ˈfxodʲɪt]
ло́жка	‘spoon’	is pronounced [ˈlʲof kə]

Note

- (a) Devoicing also takes place on the boundary between preposition and noun or adjective: в ко́мнате [ˈfkomnətʲ] ‘in the room’, под сто́лом [pəf stɐˈlom] ‘under the table’.
- (b) The devoicing of a final consonant may in turn cause the devoicing of the consonant which precedes it: визг [visk] ‘scream’, дрозд [drost] ‘thrush’.
- (c) Г is pronounced as [x] in лёгкий ‘light, easy’, легче ‘easier’, мягкий ‘soft’ and мягче ‘softer’, as well as in Бог ‘God’ (only in the singular nominative case, however). The initial consonant in Госпо́ди! ‘Lord!’ is now usually pronounced as [g], though [h] is still heard. The noun бухра́лтер ‘book-keeper’ is the only word in which хг is pronounced as [h].

(ii) **Unvoiced + voiced (both pronounced voiced)**

футбо́л	‘football’	is pronounced [fuˈdbol]
к до́му	‘towards the house’	is pronounced [ˈgˈdomu]
про́сьба	‘request’	is pronounced [ˈprozʲbə]
та́кже	‘also’	is pronounced [ˈtagʲʲɪ]
машбу́ро	‘typing pool’	is pronounced [mazʲʲuˈro]

Note

- (a) The voicing of consonants also occurs at the boundary between words, especially when the second word is a particle or other unstressed form: Я спа́с бы егó [ˈspazʲ bʲɪ] ‘I would have saved him’. Ц is voiced as [dz] in such circumstances (Оте́ц бы́л до́ма [ɐˈtʲedzʲ bʲɪl] ‘Father was in’) and ч as [dʒ] (до́чь бы́ла [dodʒʲ bʲɪˈla] ‘the daughter was’).
- (b) В has no voicing effect on a preceding unvoiced consonant, e.g. тво́й [tvoj] ‘your’.

12 The pronunciation of -чн-

(1) **-чн-** is pronounced [ʃn] in certain words (конечно [кə'ɲɛʃnə] 'of course', нарочно 'on purpose', очечник 'spectacle case', прачечная 'laundry', скучно 'boring', яичница 'fried eggs'), as well as in the patronymics Ильинична 'Il'ichna', Саввична 'Savvichna' and Никитична 'Nikitichna'.

(2) However, the pronunciation [tʃn] is used in more 'learned' words such as алчный ['altʃntʃ] 'greedy', античный 'ancient', добавочный 'additional' and конечный 'ultimate'.

(3) **-чн-** is pronounced either as [ʃn] or [tʃn] in булочная 'bakery' and молочная 'dairy'. Коричневый 'brown' is pronounced with [tʃn].

Note

Ч is also pronounced [ʃ] in что 'that' and чтобы 'in order to'.

13 Consonants omitted in pronunciation

In some groups of three or more consonants one is omitted in pronunciation. Thus, the first **в** is not pronounced in здравствуйте! 'hallo!', чувство 'feeling' (however, it **is** pronounced in девственный 'virgin' and нравственный 'moral'), **д** is not pronounced in звёздный 'starry', ландшафт 'landscape', поздно 'late', праздник 'festival' or сердце 'heart' (however, it **is** pronounced in бездна 'abyss'), **л** is not pronounced in солнце 'sun' (however, it **is** pronounced in солнечный 'solar') and **т** is not pronounced in грустный 'sad', известный 'well-known', лестный 'flattering', местный 'local', окрестность 'vicinity', частный 'private' and счастливый 'happy' (however, the first **т** in постлать 'to spread' **is** pronounced).

14 The pronunciation of double consonants

Double consonants are pronounced as two letters across the boundary between prefix and stem, e.g. оттащить [tt] 'to drag away'. When a double consonant appears within a stem, practice varies, cf. грамматика [m] 'grammar', группа [pp or p] 'group'. A single consonant is pronounced in final position: грамм [m] 'gram', грипп [p] 'influenza'.

15 Stress

(1) Stress in Russian is ‘free’, that is, in some words it falls on the initial syllable (дóлго ‘for a long time’), in others on a medial syllable (до́рога ‘road’) and in others on the final syllable (каранда́ш ‘pencil’). The vowel *ë* is *always* stressed.

(2) A change in stress may indicate a change in meaning: о́рган ‘organ of the body’, оpraн ‘organ’ (musical instrument). A few words have alternative stress without a change in meaning: твopóг (the commoner form)/твóрог ‘cottage cheese’.

(3) For stress patterns in individual parts of speech see nouns (57, 60, 62, 63 (4)), adjectives (164, 165), verbs (219, 223, 228, 232, 341, 343, 345, 350, 369) and prepositions (405).

(4) Secondary stress (a weaker stress marked here with a grave accent [`]) is found in some compounds, e.g. машиностро́ение ‘engineering’ (in fast speech, however, the word is pronounced with one full stress only: машиностро́ение). Secondary stress is particularly common in words with foreign prefixes: антикомму́низм ‘anti-communism’, ко́нтрмэры ‘counter-measures’, тра́нсатланти́ческий ‘transatlantic’, у́льтракорóткий ‘ultra-short’; also in words with the prefix свёрх-: свёрху́рочные ‘overtime’; in technical terms: морóзостóйчивый ‘frost-proof’; in compounds where there is a polysyllabic gap between the natural stresses in the components: вре́мяпpепровожде́ние ‘past-time’; and in compounds consisting of a truncated word and a full word: го́сударстве́ный бю́джет ‘state budget’. The use of secondary stresses is sometimes optional, varying with speaker and speech mode. Generally speaking, the newer a compound word is, the more likely a secondary stress (e.g. кинoсценáрий ‘film script’). Tertiary stresses are found in some compounds: а́втомóтоклyб ‘car and motor-cycle club’.

(5) Some primary-stressed adverbs take secondary stress when used as prepositions: вну́три/вну́три ‘inside’, вóзле/вóзле ‘near’, вокрyг/вокрyг ‘around’, мýмо/мýмо ‘past’, о́коло/о́коло ‘close (to)’, пóсле/пóсле ‘after’.

Note

Stresses are marked in a Russian text only:

- (a) to resolve ambiguity, cf. Я знаю, что он говорит ‘I know that he is speaking’ and Я знаю, чтó он говорит ‘I know what he is saying’, большáя часть ‘a large part’, бóльшая часть ‘a larger part’;

- (b) to denote archaic pronunciations (e.g. библио́тека for contemporary библиотéка ‘library’);
- (c) in rendering certain professional words, non-Russian words, dialect and slang words;
- (d) in verse, where normal stress is sometimes distorted in the interests of rhythm.

Orthography

16 Spelling rules

Spelling rule 1

ы is replaced by **и**, **я** by **а** and **ю** by **у** after **ж, ч, ш, щ** and **г, к, х**:

нога́, ‘leg’, gen. sing. **ноги́**

молча́ть, ‘to be silent’, first-person sing. **молчу́**, third-person pl.

молча́т

Note

Exceptions are found in some non-Russian words and names: брошю́ра ‘brochure’, Кызылкúм ‘Kyzylkum Desert’, Кя́хта ‘Kiakhta’.

Spelling rule 2

о is replaced by **е** in unstressed position after **ж, ч, ш, щ, ц**:

не́мец ‘German’, instr. sing. **не́мцем**, gen. pl. **не́мцев**

Spelling rule 3

Initial **и** is replaced by **ы** following a prefix ending in a consonant:

impf. **игра́ть**/pf. **сыгра́ть** ‘to play’

интерéсный ‘interesting’, **небезынтерéсный** ‘not uninteresting’ (for exceptions see 28 (3)(c))

Spelling rule 4

The prefixes **без-/бес-**; **вз-, воз-/вс-, вос-**; **из-/ис-**; **раз-/рас-** are spelt with **з** before voiced consonants, voiced sonants or vowels and with **с** before unvoiced consonants: **беззúбый** ‘toothless’ but **бесконéчный** ‘infinite’; **взлетáть** ‘to take off’ but **всходíть** ‘to rise’; **избíть** ‘to beat up’ but **испíть** ‘to sup’; **разобра́ть** ‘to dismantle’ but **расцепíть** ‘to uncouple’.

Spelling rule 5

Prefixes ending in a consonant (e.g. **под-, от-, раз-, с-**) are spelt **подо-, ото-, разо-, со-**:

(i) In compounds of **-йти** (**подойти** ‘to approach’, **подошёл** ‘I approached’ etc.) (see **333** (2)).

(ii) Before consonant + **ь** (**сошью** ‘I shall sew’) (see **234** (5)).

(iii) Before certain consonant clusters (**разогнать** ‘to disperse’) (see **234** (1–4)).

Note

For spelling rules relating to prepositions see **404**.

17 Use of capital and small letters in titles and names

(1) In the names or titles of most posts, institutions, organizations, books, newspapers and journals, wars, festivals etc., *only the first word* is spelt with a capital letter: Всемирная федерация профсоюзов ‘World Federation of Trade Unions’, Европейский союз ‘European Union’, Министёрство транспорта ‘Ministry of Transport’, Московский государственный университет ‘Moscow State University’, Политехнический музей ‘Polytechnical Museum’, Российская академия наук ‘Russian Academy of Sciences’, Тверской муниципальный суд ‘Tver’ Municipal Court, Художественный театр ‘Arts Theatre’, «Война и мир» ‘War and Peace’, Нью-Йорк таймс ‘New York Times’, Семилетняя война ‘Seven Years’ War’ (but Великая Отечественная война ‘Great Patriotic War’), Новый год ‘New Year’, Первое мая ‘May Day’, Нобелевская премия ‘Nobel Prize’.

Note

Any word spelt with a capital letter in its own right retains the capital in extended titles: Государственный академический **Большой** театр ‘The State Academic Bolshoi Theatre’.

(2) In geographical names, the names of administrative areas, local features and so on, the generic terms are spelt with a *small* letter and the descriptive words with a *capital*: озеро Байкал ‘Lake Baikal’, Белое море ‘the White Sea’, пустыня Гоби ‘the Gobi Desert’, мыс Доброй Надежды ‘the Cape of Good Hope’, тропик Рака ‘the Tropic of Cancer’, Северный Ледовитый океан ‘the Arctic Ocean’, полуостров

Таймы́р ‘the Taimyr Peninsula’, Ю́жный по́люс ‘the South Pole’, Тве́рская́ у́лица ‘Tverskaia Street’, Зи́мний дво́рец ‘the Winter Palace’, Исаа́киевский собо́р ‘St Isaac’s Cathedral’, Кра́сная пло́щадь ‘Red Square’, Ми́нский автомоби́льный заво́д ‘Minsk Car Factory’.

Note

Generic terms are spelt with a *capital* letter, however, if used in a non-literal sense: Зо́лотый Ро́г ‘the Golden Horn’ (a bay), О́гненная́ Зе́мля ‘Tierra del Fuego’ (an archipelago).

(3) Some titles consist of words, all of which have *capital* letters. These include the names of exalted governmental institutions and organizations, as well as a number of international bodies (and certain geographical names, e.g. Бе́лый Ни́л ‘the White Nile’, Да́льний Во́сток ‘the Far East’, Но́вая Зе́мля ‘Novaia Zemlia’): Генера́льная Ассамбле́я ОО́Н ‘the General Assembly of the UN’, Ме́ждународный Кра́сный Крест ‘the International Red Cross’, Со́вет Федера́ции ‘the Council of the Federation’, including, as a rule, the names of states: Объеди́нные Ара́бские Эмира́ты ‘the United Arab Emirates’, Респу́блика Тата́рста́н ‘the Republic of Tatarstan’, Росси́йская Федера́ция ‘the Russian Federation’, Со́ветский Сою́з ‘the Soviet Union’, Соеди́ненное Коро́левство ‘the United Kingdom’, Соеди́ненные Шта́ты Аме́рики ‘the United States of America’.

Note

(a) Госуда́рственная ду́ма *or* Госуда́рственная Ду́ма ‘the State Duma’.

(b) Па́ртия ‘party’ is not usually spelt with a capital letter: Коммуни́стическая па́ртия Росси́йской Федера́ции [КПРФ] ‘Communist Party of the Russian Federation’, Либе́ра́льно-демократи́ческая па́ртия Росси́и [ЛДПР] ‘the Russian Liberal Democratic Party’.

(4) Unofficial titles, the names of foreign parliaments and some other titles consist of words, all of which are spelt with a *small* letter: моско́вский аэропо́рт ‘Moscow Airport’ (cf. official titles, now also used colloquially, e.g. аэропо́рт Вну́ково ‘Vnukovo Airport’), па́ртия большеви́ков ‘the Bolshevik Party’ (cf. official Росси́йская социалдемократи́ческая рабо́чая па́ртия (большеви́ков) ‘Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (of Bolsheviks)’), пала́та о́бщин ‘House of Commons’, бундеста́г ‘the Bundestag’, сейм ‘the Sejm’.

(5) Nouns denoting nationality, town of origin etc., are also spelt with a *small* letter (англича́нин ‘Englishman’, москвич ‘Muscovite’), as are

the corresponding adjectives (английский ‘English’, москóвский ‘Moscow’), except where they form part of a title (Английский банк ‘the Bank of England’, Москóвский цирк ‘Moscow Circus’). This principle is also applied to the names of months, thus март ‘March’, октя́брь ‘October’, октя́брьский ‘October’ (adj.), but 8 Ма́рта ‘8 March’ (International Women’s Day), Октя́брь/Октя́брьская револю́ция ‘the October Revolution’; and to days of the week, thus пя́тница ‘Friday’, but Страстна́я Пя́тница ‘Good Friday’.

(6) The words земл́я ‘land’, луна́ ‘moon’, со́лнце ‘sun’ are spelt with capitals when they denote heavenly bodies: Земл́я ‘the Earth’, Лунá ‘the Moon’, Солнце́ ‘the Sun’.

(7) (i) Names of deities are spelt with capital letters: Аллáх ‘Allah’, Бор ‘God’, Бра́хма ‘Brahma’, Шíва ‘Shiva’.

Note

Of heathen gods, one of a number of gods, or figuratively, бор is spelt with a *small* letter: бог Аполло́н ‘the god Apollo’, бо́же мой! ‘my God!’ In certain contexts, however, a capital is possible:

“Как хорошо́ — сказа́ла жена́, ме́дленно натягивая на себя шёлковое одея́ло. — Сла́ва **Бо́гу**, сла́ва **Бо́гу** . . .” (Nabokov) ““That is good,” said his wife, slowly drawing a silken blanket about her. “Thank God, thank God . . .”

(ii) Capitals are also used for religious festivals: Па́сха ‘Easter’, Рожде́ство ‘Christmas’, holders of exalted ecclesiastical offices: Святе́йший Патриа́рх Москóвский и все́я Руси́ ‘His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia’, Па́па Ри́мский ‘The Pope’, and sacred texts: Би́блия ‘the Bible’, Корáн ‘the Koran’, То́ра ‘the Torah’, Талму́д ‘the Talmud’, Ве́ды ‘the Vedas’.

Division of Words

18 Division into syllables

(1) Each syllable in a Russian word contains a vowel and, in most cases, consonants peripheral to it, e.g. па́спорт.

(2) Russian distinguishes ‘open’ syllables, which end in a vowel (го-ло-ва́) from ‘closed’ syllables, which end in a consonant (нос).

(3) The principles of syllabic division are different in English and Russian, cf. E doc-tor/R dó-ктор, E her-o/R ге-ро́й. Russian non-initial syllables are formed on the basis of an ascending level of ‘sonority’, vowels being the most sonorous letters, the voiced sonants (**р, л, м, н**) the next most sonorous and noise-consonants (the other sixteen consonants) the least sonorous.

(4) In practice, this means that the **syllable boundary** occurs either:

(i) **between a vowel and a following consonant**: со-ло́-ма, сте-пнóй, ка́-ска, ко-стю́м, ста-ле-ва́р, стра-на́, о-тбо́р-сить, вра-жда́ etc.;

or:

(ii) **between a sonant and a following consonant** (including another sonant): су́м-ка, кон-ве́рт, боль-шо́й, ка́р-та, вол-на́, че́р-ный, кар-ма́н.

Note

Non-initial syllables cannot begin with the sequence sonant + noise-consonant (this sequence is possible, however, in an *initial* syllable, e.g. **мш**й-стый). Note, however, the sequences sonant + sonant (во-**л**ный), consonant + consonant (ме-**ст**о) and noise-consonant + sonant (ме-**тл**а). The syllabic boundary may occur *before* or *between* two sonants (ка-**р**ма́н or кар-ма́н, во-**л**на́ or вол-на́).

Syllabic division in a text

Я встал и на-де́л паль-то́. Же-на́ ре-ши́-ла, что я по-ше́л за си-га-ре́-та-ми, и ве-ле́-ла не су-ту́-ли-ться при хо-дьбе́. О-на́ ска-за́-ла, что ко-гда́ я хо-жу́, то ны-ря́-ю вниз го-ло-во́й, как при-стя-жна́-я ло́-шадь. Е-щё о-на́ ска-за́-ла, что я всё вре́-мя смо-трю́ вниз, бу́-дто хо-чу́ най-ти́ на а-сфа́ль-те мо-не́-тку (Tokareva).

19 Splitting a word at the end of a line

(1) Two basic criteria are observed in splitting a word at the end of a line:

(i) Syllabic division: го-ло-ва́ or голо-ва́.

(ii) Word structure: it is desirable, for example, not to disrupt monosyllabic prefixes etc. (**под-бежа́ть, со-гла́сен**) (cf. **пе-рево́д** and note that the rule does not apply when a prefix is no longer perceived as such: **ра́-зум, разо-ря́ть**).

(2) A word is normally split **after a vowel**: го́-род, го́-лоден or го́ло-ден, ребя́-та or пе-б́ята. Sometimes this involves splitting a two-vowel sequence: **чита́-ете**.

(3) A sequence of **two or more consonants** may also be split: ме́д-ленно, ро́д-ственники, проб-ле́ма, и́стин-ный etc.

(4) Other conventions include the following:

(i) A hard or soft sign must not be separated from the preceding consonant (**подь-э́зд**, **боль-шо́й**) and **й** must not be separated from the preceding vowel (**вой-на́**).

(ii) A single vowel should not appear at the end of a line or be carried over onto the next: **аги-та́ция** (*not* *а-гита́ция or *агита́ци-я).

(iii) Two identical consonants appearing between vowels should be split: **жуж-жа́ть**, **ма́с-са**, **ко́н-ный**.

(iv) A monosyllabic component of a stump compound should not be split (**спе́цодéжда**); nor should abbreviations (**ОО́Н**, **и т.д.**).

(5) Some words can be split in different ways, e.g. **се-стра́**, **сес-тра́** or **сест-ра́**.

Punctuation

20 Introductory comments

Rules of punctuation are, in general, more rigorously applied in Russian than in English. Differences of usage between the two languages relate in particular to the comma (especially in separating principal from subordinate clauses), the dash and the punctuation of direct speech.

21 The full stop, exclamation mark and question mark

Usage of the full stop, exclamation mark and question mark is comparable in the two languages:

Лю́ди и́щут сча́стья в любви́.
Кака́я прекра́сная пого́да!
Куда́ вы и́дёте?

‘People seek happiness in love.’
‘What magnificent weather!’
‘Where are you going?’

Note

- (a) There is a tendency to use exclamation marks more frequently in Russian than in English.
- (b) An exclamation mark may appear in the middle of a sentence: Так мне было плохо, **так горько и постыло!** — хуже всякой болезни (Rasputin) ‘I felt so bad, so bitter and wretched! — it was worse than any illness’.
- (c) Exclamation marks are also used in commands expressed other than by a grammatical imperative: **Молчать!** ‘Shut up!’, **За мной!** ‘Follow me!’, **Вста́ли!** ‘On your feet!’
- (d) An exclamation mark enclosed in parentheses (!) may be used to indicate irony or indignation.
- (e) Exclamation and question marks may appear together for special emphasis: **Да что же это такое?!** ‘Now what’s all this?!’

22 The comma: introductory comments

The comma is more frequently used in Russian than in English. In extreme examples a series of commas in a Russian sentence may have no English equivalents at all:

Мака́ренко пи́шет, что де́ти, кото́рые уме́ют труди́ться, уважа́ют труд дру́гих люде́й, стре́мятся прийт́и на по́мощь тем, кто в э́той по́мощи нужда́ется (Beliakova)

‘Makarenko writes that children who know how to work respect the labour of other people and strive to come to the assistance of those who need it’

23 Uses of the comma

Correspondence with English usage

Commas are used, in Russian *and* English, to perform the following functions:

- (1) To separate:
 - (i) **two or more adjectives** which define one noun:

Он шёл по **тёмной, грязной, шумной** улице
‘He was walking down the dark, dirty, noisy street’
 - (ii) **two or more adverbs** qualifying one verb:

Мёдленно, мучительно он встал с постёли
'Slowly, painfully he rose from the bed'

- (2) To separate **items in a list**:

Пла́та за **кварти́ру, электр́чество, газ** составляет о́коло 20
рублёй (Beliakova)
'The rent, electricity and gas bills amount to about 20 roubles'

- (3) To mark off words and phrases which stand **in apposition**:

Валенти́на Терешко́ва, рабо́чая дево́нка из старинного
тексти́льного городка́, ста́ла пе́рвой же́нщиной-космона́втом
'Valentina Tereshkova, a working girl from an ancient textile town,
became the first woman in space'

- (4) To mark off words which serve to **define and specify**:

Зда́ние де́тского са́да двухэта́жное, **с большо́ими све́тлыми
о́кнами, с вера́ндами** для дневно́го сна (Beliakova)
'The building of the kindergarten is two-storey, with large light win-
dows and verandas for a daytime nap'

- (5) After **да** 'yes' and **нет** 'no':

Да, я согла́сен с ва́ми/**Нет**, я не согла́сен
'Yes, I agree with you/No, I don't agree'

- (6) In **addressing people**:

Здра́вствуйте, Ива́н Ива́нович!
'Hallo, Ivan Ivanovich!'

- (7) After **interjections**:

— **Ой**, как неуда́чно. Вче́ра упáл йли сего́дня? (Rasputin)
'Oh, what bad luck. Did you fall over yesterday or today?'

- (8) Between **repeated words**:

Ничего́, ничего́, утеша́л он себя́, са́мое тру́дное позади́ (Abramov)
'Never mind, never mind, he consoled himself, the worst is over'

- (9) To mark off **participial phrases**:

По равни́не, **освещённой по́здним со́лнцем**, скака́л табу́н ди́ких
лошаде́й
'Over the plain, (which was) illuminated by the late sun, galloped a
herd of wild horses'

(10) To mark off **gerundial phrases**:

Я молчал, **не зная**, что делать (Rasputin)
 ‘I was silent, not knowing what to do’

Note

In English, ‘and’ is often used as an alternative to a comma before the final element in enumerations and when two or more adjectives qualify a single noun or two adverbs a single verb (cf. (1) and (2) above).

Differences in usage between Russian and English

Russian *requires* the use of a comma in the following contexts, where usage in English is optional or inconsistent:

- (1) Between clauses linked by **co-ordinating conjunctions** (see 454 (2) (i) and 455–457):

О́ля зна́ет бу́квы, **но** я по́ка помога́ю ей чита́ть (Beliakova)
 ‘Olia knows the letters, but for the time being I help her to read’

Note

- (a) While a comma *always* appears before **но** (except when it is the first word in a sentence), the insertion of a comma before English ‘but’ depends largely on the length of the pause required by the context, cf. ‘He is young but experienced’ and ‘He is young, but everyone trusts him’.
- (b) A comma is used between clauses linked by **и** if the clauses have different subjects (Но волк был мёртв, **и** его́ сейча́с никто́ не боя́лся (Abramov) ‘But the wolf was dead, and no one was afraid of him any more’), but not if they have the same subject (Разожгли́ костёр **и** сварили́ грибной суп (Beliakova) ‘They lit a fire and made mushroom soup’). In such contexts **и** may be replaced by a comma: Два́ дня он **не пил, не ел** (= не пил **и** не ел) (Abramov) ‘For two days he did not drink or eat’.
- (2) Between clauses linked by the conjunctions **и . . . и** ‘both . . . and’, **ни . . . ни** ‘neither . . . nor’, **или . . . или** ‘either . . . or’, **то . . . то** ‘now . . . now’:

На ве́чере выступали́ **и** ма́льчики, **и** де́вочки
 ‘Both boys and girls performed at the party’

Нельзя́ **ни** споко́йно прочита́ть, **ни** сосре́доточе́ться (Beliakova)
 ‘You can neither do a little quiet reading, nor concentrate’

Э́то **или** соба́ка, **или** волк
 ‘That is either a dog or a wolf’

Она **то** смеётся, **то** плачет
'Now she laughs, now she weeps'

(3) Between a **principal** and a **subordinate clause** (see 458–467):

Я знаю, **что** конец будет не скоро
'I know the end is still some way off'

Мы не отдавали детей в ясли, **хотя** такая возможность была
(Beliakova)

'We didn't put the children into a day-nursery, even though we had the opportunity to do so'

Денис стал с нетерпением ждать лета, **чтобы** поехать с бабушкой к Чёрному морю

'Denis waited impatiently for the summer, in order to go with his grandmother to the Black Sea'

Он работал бы, **если бы** мог
'He would work if he could'

Она уходит, **потому что** она опаздывает
'She is leaving because she is late'

Note

The appearance of a comma between **потому** and **что** in Мы победим потому, что мы сильнее throws the element of cause into sharper relief: 'We shall win because we are stronger' (i.e. and for no other reason). This effect can be intensified by distancing **потому** from **что** (**Потому** мы победим, **что** мы сильнее), or by the addition of **лишь**, **только** or other intensifying words before **потому**.

(4) To separate **main from relative clauses** (see 123):

Я посещал город, **в котором** (где) провёл детство
'I was visiting the town in which (where) I had spent my childhood'

Note

English distinguishes *relative* clauses (which are marked off by commas) — 'Cats (i.e. *all* cats), who have excellent night vision, are nocturnal predators' — from *adjective* clauses (which are *not* marked off by commas): 'Cats (i.e. only *those* cats) who have no tails are called Manx cats'. In Russian, however, both types of clause are marked off with commas.

(5) To mark off **parenthetical words**:

во-первых/во-вторых	'in the first place/in the second place'
допустим 'let us assume'	напримёр 'for example'

ка́жется	‘it seems’	пожа́луйста	‘please’
конечно́	‘of course’	по-мо́ему	‘in my opinion’
к сожа́лению	‘unfortunately’	ска́жем	‘let us say’
ме́жду про́чим	‘incidentally’	с одной, друго́й	‘on the one, the
мо́жет быть	‘perhaps’	стороны́	other hand’
наве́рное	‘probably’		

Он, **должно́ быть**, ушёл
‘He must have left’

Нам, **конечно́**, удоб́нее, что де́ти сидят ти́хо (Beliakova)
‘Of course, it’s more convenient for us if the children are sitting quietly’

Не спорь, **пожа́луйста**, со мной, я зна́ю (Rasputin)
‘Please don’t argue with me, I know best’

Он сказа́л, что, **к сожа́лению**, нам приде́тся иди́ти без него́
‘He said that unfortunately we would have to go without him’

(6) In **comparisons**:

Он ла́зит по дере́вьям, **как обезья́на**
‘He scrambles about in the trees like a monkey’

Кто́-то научи́л своего́ малы́ша пла́вать **ра́ньше, чем** тот стал ходи́ть
(Beliakova)
‘Someone taught his baby to swim before he could walk’

Он спал беспробу́дным сном, **бу́дто** его́ ничто́ не трево́жило
‘He was sound asleep, as though without a care in the world’

24 The colon. The semicolon. The dash

The colon

The colon is used to perform the following functions:

(1) To **introduce a list**, in which case the colon is usually preceded by a generic term:

Моя семья́ состоит из четырёх челове́к: **мой муж Ви́ктор, две́е дете́й и я** (Beliakova)
‘My family consists of four people: my husband Victor, the two children and myself’

(2) To introduce a statement which **elaborates on, supplements or indicates the cause** of the statement which precedes the colon:

И тут их ожида́ла но́вая беда́: **оте́ц пропа́л** (Abramov)
 ‘And now a new misfortune awaited them: father had disappeared’

В нау́ке всегда́ должна́ быть то́чность: **ка́ждому нау́чному те́рмину должнó соотве́тствовать одно́ поня́тие** (Vvedenskaia)
 ‘There should always be accuracy in science: a single concept should correspond to each scientific term’

У́тром я со стра́хом смотре́л на себя́ в зе́ркало: **нос вспух, под ле́вым гла́зом синя́к** (Rasputin)
 ‘In the morning I gazed at myself in the mirror in horror: my nose had swollen up, there was a bruise under my left eye’

(3) To **introduce direct speech, thought or other communication**:

В кинофи́льме «Дожи́вём до понеде́льника» подро́сток пи́шет: **«Сча́стье — э́то когда́ тебя́ понима́ют!»** (Kovaleva)
 ‘In the film *We’ll survive till Monday* a teenager writes, “Happiness is when people understand you!”’

(4) To introduce a **quotation**:

По́мните, в «Евге́нии Оне́гине»:
 Привы́чка свы́ше нам дана́:
 За́мена сча́стию она́
 ‘Do you remember, in *Evgenii Onegin*:
 “Habit is granted us from on high:
 It is a substitute for happiness”’

The semicolon

The semicolon is used to **separate extensive clauses** which are **not linked by conjunctions**, especially if each clause is itself broken up by commas:

В Ленингра́де все хот́ят посмотре́ть на легенда́рную «Аврору́», побыва́ть в пу́шкинских места́х, в многочи́сленных дворца́х; в Улья́новске познако́миться с места́ми, где жил и уч́ился В. И. Ле́нин; в На́бережных Челна́х прое́хать по о́гро́мному молодóму го́роду, посмотре́ть Кама́з (Vvedenskaia)
 ‘In Leningrad everyone wants to see the legendary “Aurora”, visit places associated with Pushkin, the numerous palaces; in Ul’ianovsk to get to know the places where V. I. Lenin lived and worked; and in

Naberezhnye Chelny to drive through the enormous new town, see the Kamaz truck factory’

Note

In 1991 Ленинград ‘Leningrad’ reverted to Санкт-Петербург ‘St Petersburg’ and Ульяновск ‘Ul’ianovsk’ to Симбирск ‘Simbirsk’.

The dash

The dash is extremely widespread in Russian. It not only has a number of specific uses of its own but in some contexts substitutes for other punctuation marks, in particular the comma, the colon and parentheses.

(1) Specific uses of the dash.

(i) It separates **subject noun** from **predicate noun**, replacing the verb ‘to be’:

Мой отец — преподаватель вуза, а мама — врач (Beliakova)
‘My father is a college lecturer, and my mother is a doctor’

Самое глубокое озеро мира — это пресноводный красавец Байкал (Vvedenskaia)
‘The deepest lake in the world is the beautiful fresh-water Lake Baikal’

Note

(a) The subject may sometimes be an **infinitive**:

Самое тяжёлое при прощании — не оглядываться (Ogonek)
‘The hardest thing on parting is not to look back’

(b) The dash is not normally used to replace the verb ‘to be’ when the subject is a pronoun: Он водолаз ‘He is a diver’.

(ii) In elliptical statements it replaces a word, usually a verb, which is ‘understood’:

Студент смотрел на профессора, профессор — на студента (Shukshin)
‘The student was looking at the professor, and the professor (was looking) at the student’

(2) The dash is also used as a substitute for:

(i) The comma (when, for example, introducing an unexpected turn of events or sharp contrast):

Она сделала ещё попытку посадить меня за стол — **напрáсно**
(=, **но напрáсно**) (Rasputin)
‘She made another attempt to seat me at the table, but in vain’

Note

Generally speaking, the dash indicates a *more pronounced pause* than the comma, for example, in expressing apposition: Со мной был грузинский чай — моё единственное удовольствие (=, моё единственное удовольствие) ‘I had with me some Georgian tea, my only pleasure’.

(ii) The colon:

(a) in introducing an **enumeration**, following a generic term:

Иногда клуб приглашает гостей — **учёных, педагогов, врачей**
(Beliakova)
‘Sometimes the club invites guests — scientists, teachers and doctors’

(b) in **elucidating** a statement:

В Таджикистане гражданская война — бегут в Россию таджики
(Solzhenitsyn)
‘There is a civil war in Tadjikistan, (and so) Tadjiks flee into Russia’

(iii) Parentheses:

На территории Российской Федерации — **не забывайте о том, что она занимает одну седьмую часть всей суши Земли!** — тысячи рек и речушек
‘On the territory of the Russian Federation (do not forget that it occupies one-seventh of the Earth’s surface!) there are thousands of rivers and streams’

25 The punctuation of direct speech

(1) If the introductory verb *precedes* the direct speech, the verb is followed by a *colon*, and the direct speech *either*

(i) appears on a new line, preceded by a *dash*:

Я промямлил:
— **Правда** (Rasputin)
“‘It is true,’ I mumbled’

(ii) *or* runs on after the colon and is enclosed in *guillemets* (« »):

Сам хозяин ра́за два крича́л с крыльца́: «Эй, кто там?»

‘The master himself shouted a couple of times from the porch,
“Hey, who’s there?”’

(2) If, however, the verb *follows* the direct speech, the latter is flanked by *dashes*:

— Усну́л, — услужливо отве́тила Сима (Rasputin)

“‘He’s fallen asleep,” answered Sima obligingly’

(3) A **conversation** may be rendered as follows:

— Я знаю́, почему́ ты все ещё живёшь со мно́й. Сказа́ть?

— Ну, почему́?

— Да просто́ лень тебе́ купи́ть раскла́душку. (S. Dovlatov)

“‘I know why you still live with me. Shall I tell you?’

“Well, why?”

“You’re just too lazy to buy a camp bed.”’

Note

- (a) A full stop, comma, semicolon or dash *follow* inverted commas.
- (b) Quotes within quotes may be distinguished as follows: «Кре́йсер “Аврора́” стоя́л на я́коре» ‘The cruiser “Aurora” lay at anchor’.
- (c) In cursive script, inverted commas are rendered as follows: «Приве́т!» ‘Greetings!’

26 Suspension points (многоточие)

Suspension points (. . .) indicate one of the following.

(1) **Hesitation:**

— Проигрываешь, наве́рное?

— Нет, **вы . . . выигрываю́** (Rasputin)

“‘I suppose you lose?’

“No, I – I win”’

(2) An **unfinished statement:**

Зна́ть бы нам, чем э́то всё ко́нчится . . . (Rasputin)

‘Had we but known how it would all end . . .’