

Modern Russian Grammar
A PRACTICAL GUIDE

John Dunn and Shamil Khairov



**Modern
RUSSIAN
Grammar**

Routledge Modern Grammars

Series concept and development – Sarah Butler

Other books in the series:

Modern Mandarin Chinese Grammar

Modern Mandarin Chinese Grammar Workbook

Modern German Grammar, Second Edition

Modern German Grammar Workbook, Second Edition

Modern Spanish Grammar, Second Edition

Modern Spanish Grammar Workbook, Second Edition

Modern Italian Grammar, Second Edition

Modern Italian Grammar Workbook, Second Edition

Modern French Grammar, Second Edition

Modern French Grammar Workbook, Second Edition

Modern RUSSIAN Grammar

John Dunn
and Shamil Khairov

First published 2009

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

© 2009 John Dunn and Shamil Khairov

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Dunn, J. A. (John A.), 1949–

Modern Russian Grammar: a practical guide/John Dunn and Shamil Khairov.
p.cm. – (Routledge modern grammars)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Russian language – Grammar. 2. Russian Language – Textbooks for foreign speakers – English. I. Khairov, Shamil. II. Title.

PG2112.D86 2008

491.7'82421–dc22

2008019529

ISBN 0-203-96759-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN: 978-0-415-42289-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-39750-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-96759-1 (ebk)

Contents

Introduction	xi
How to use this book	xiii
Glossary of grammatical terms	xv

Part A Structures

1 Sounds and spelling	3
1.1 The Russian alphabet	3
1.2 Consonants	4
1.3 Vowels	7
1.4 Stress	8
1.5 Spelling rules	10
1.6 Transliteration and transcription	15
2 Nouns	19
2.0 Introduction	19
2.1 Number	19
2.2 Case	20
2.3 Gender	21
2.4 Animacy	23
2.5 The fleeting vowel	25
2.6 Masculine nouns ending in a consonant, -й or -ь	28
2.7 Non-standard endings for masculine nouns ending in a consonant, -й or -ь	32
2.8 Neuter nouns ending in -о, -е, -ё, -мя	36
2.9 Nouns, mostly feminine, ending in -а or -я	39
2.10 Feminine nouns ending in -ь	42
2.11 Non-standard declension types	44
2.12 Declension of surnames	49
2.13 Indeclinable nouns	50
2.14 Abbreviations and acronyms	51
3 Case	54
3.0 Introduction	54
3.1 The nominative	55
3.2 The accusative	56

CONTENTS

3.3	The genitive	56	
3.4	The dative	61	
3.5	The instrumental	66	
3.6	The prepositional	71	
4	Verbs		72
4.0	Introduction	72	
4.1	The infinitive	73	
4.2	Aspects of the verb	73	
4.3	Present tense	77	
4.4	Future tense	79	
4.5	Past tense	80	
4.6	The classification of verbs: productive verb classes	82	
4.7	Unproductive verbs	84	
4.8	Irregular verbs	91	
4.9	The imperative	92	
4.10	The conditional (or subjunctive)	93	
4.11	Gerunds	94	
4.12	Participles	96	
4.13	Transitive, intransitive and reflexive verbs	99	
4.14	Active and passive verbs	102	
5	Aspects of the verb		105
5.0	Introduction	105	
5.1	Situations where there is no choice	106	
5.2	Some general principles	109	
5.3	The specific meaning of the verb	114	
5.4	Single completed actions	118	
5.5	Asking questions	121	
5.6	The imperative	123	
5.7	Negation	124	
5.8	Some practical points	128	
6	Adjectives		131
6.0	Introduction	131	
6.1	Hard adjectives	131	
6.2	Soft adjectives (1)	134	
6.3	Soft adjectives (2)	135	
6.4	Nouns that decline like adjectives	135	
6.5	The short forms of adjectives	137	
6.6	Possessive adjectives	139	
6.7	Indeclinable adjectives	141	
6.8	Comparative and superlative forms	142	
7	Pronouns		148
7.0	Introduction	148	
7.1	Personal pronouns	148	
7.2	Possessive pronouns	153	
7.3	Demonstrative pronouns	157	
7.4	Interrogative pronouns	160	
7.5	Relative pronouns	160	
7.6	Indefinite pronouns	163	

CONTENTS

7.7	Pronouns relating to totality	167	
7.8	Other pronouns	170	
8	Numerals and other quantity words		173
8.1	Cardinal numerals	173	
8.2	Selecting what case to use with cardinal numerals	179	
8.3	Collective numerals	183	
8.4	Ordinal numerals	185	
8.5	Fractions	187	
8.6	Other quantity words	190	
9	Uninflected parts of speech		194
9.0	Introduction	194	
9.1	Adverbs	194	
9.2	Prepositions	202	
9.3	Conjunctions	208	
9.4	Particles	213	
10	Word formation		216
10.0	Introduction	216	
10.1	Formation of nouns	216	
10.2	Formation of adjectives	227	
10.3	Formation of verbs	233	
10.4	Verbal prefixes	236	
11	Agreement		249
11.0	Introduction	249	
11.1	Agreement within the noun phrase	249	
11.2	Agreement between subject and verb	252	

Part B Functions

12	Establishing identity		259
12.0	Introduction	259	
12.1	Russian names	259	
12.2	Foreign names	264	
12.3	Talking about people's ages	265	
12.4	Addresses	268	
12.5	Citizenship and nationality	270	
12.6	Occupations	272	
12.7	Talking about marital status	274	
13	Establishing contact		277
13.1	Formal and informal address	277	
13.2	Greetings	277	
13.3	Making introductions and giving names	282	
13.4	Addressing friends and acquaintances	285	
13.5	Addressing strangers	288	
13.6	Writing letters and telephoning	289	

CONTENTS

14	Being, becoming and possession	293
14.1	Being and becoming	293
14.2	Existence, presence and location	300
14.3	Talking about possession	302
15	Negation	305
15.1	Simple negation	305
15.2	Partial negation	308
15.3	Negative adverbs, negative pronouns and the negative particle <i>ни</i>	309
15.4	The case of the direct object in negative sentences	313
15.5	Negatives of the <i>нечего, некогда</i> type	314
16	Expressing attitudes	317
16.1	Expressing attitudes using suffixes	317
16.2	Likes, dislikes, loves, hates and preferences	322
16.3	Wishes and desires	327
16.4	Expressing opinions	329
16.5	Expressing certainty, uncertainty, possibility or doubt	331
17	Asking questions	335
17.1	Neutral yes/no questions	335
17.2	Asking loaded questions	337
17.3	Asking questions using question words	339
17.4	Rhetorical questions	343
18	Obligation, instructions, requests, advice and permission	346
18.1	Talking about obligation and necessity	346
18.2	Instructions and prohibitions	348
18.3	Making a request	352
18.4	Giving advice	355
18.5	Giving permission	356
19	Using numbers: talking about times, dates and quantities	357
19.0	Introduction	357
19.1	Counting and doing simple arithmetic	357
19.2	Telling the time	360
19.3	Talking about the date	364
19.4	Talking about approximate quantity using numerals	366
19.5	Talking about imprecise quantities using forms other than numerals	369
20	Focus and emphasis	375
20.1	Principles of word order in Russian	375
20.2	Active and passive verbs	380
20.3	Other forms of emphasis	381
20.4	Definite and indefinite	383
21	Establishing contexts and connections	385
21.1	Time	385
21.2	Place	394
21.3	Manner	407

CONTENTS

21.4	Causes and consequences	409
21.5	Conditions	412
21.6	Concessions	416
21.7	Purpose	419
21.8	Reporting the words of others	421
21.9	Comparisons	426
21.10	Indicating context using gerunds	433
22	Coming and going	436
22.0	Introduction	436
22.1	Unidirectional and multidirectional verbs of motion	436
22.2	Prefixed verbs of motion	442
22.3	Verbs of motion used in figurative expressions and idioms	445
22.4	Other issues relating to coming and going	447
23	Communication strategies	451
23.1	Choosing what type of language to use	451
23.2	Constructing a text	455
23.3	Discourse words	458
	Index	461

Introduction

This book is an innovative reference grammar, aimed at meeting the practical needs of English speakers who are learning Russian as a foreign language. It provides the necessary structural and functional information to enable users properly to interpret what they hear and read, and to communicate effectively, both in speech and in writing, in a wide range of situations. Most people who learn Russian start the language at university, and our book is aimed particularly at students in the first two years of a university course. It will, however, also be valuable for more advanced students, as well as for those learning Russian at school or independently. Although not particularly orientated towards ‘business Russian’, the book will be useful for those whose reasons for learning the language are related to business.

Following the pattern of the previous volumes in this series, the book is divided into two parts. Part A (Chapters 1–11) deals with the structure of the language. This is closer to a traditional grammar, in that attention is focused on the grammatical behaviour of the different parts of speech, as well as on issues that are particularly important to Russian grammar, such as the use of the cases, the aspects of the verb and grammatical agreement. Part B, however, is concerned with functions. This relates to the ways in which language is used in particular contexts and situations, and it is these contexts and situations that determine the way in which the information is presented. From a starting point such as asking questions, giving instructions and making requests or talking about causes and consequences, the user is given the necessary grammatical information to allow successful communication to take place.

It has to be said that writing a grammar of Russian presents a number of interesting challenges. The first is that, for English speakers Russian is from the structural point of view a very complex language. It has a rich system of endings and patterns, embellished by numerous exceptions, that, as is often the way with language, tend to affect words that are in common use. This has inevitably influenced the structure of the book, and Part A is rather more substantial than is the case with the other volumes in the series. It also means that it is impossible to avoid using a certain amount of grammatical terminology. Here we have borne in mind that readers will also be using other course materials, and in order to minimise confusion, our use of terminology is fairly traditional for English-language grammars. We have at the same time taken account of the knowledge of grammar likely to be possessed by native speakers of English starting to learn Russian, and grammatical terms are explained either in the Glossary or in the relevant chapter.

It is also the case that for various linguistic and cultural reasons Russian is a language that tends to ‘do things’ differently from English. Even such relatively straightforward

INTRODUCTION

contexts such as addressing friends, acquaintances and strangers, talking about marital status, indicating possession or describing a journey involve using language in ways bearing little resemblance to those that will be familiar to English speakers. It is this consideration that has determined our choice of structures for Part B and, in particular, explains why we have devoted substantial chapters to such questions as establishing identity, establishing contact, and talking about coming and going.

The political, social and economic changes that have taken place in Russia since 1985 have been matched by changes to the language. Fortunately (for us, at least) grammar moves at a much slower pace than does vocabulary, although we have had to contend with the fact that there is now much less agreement about what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘correct’ Russian than used to be the case. We have tried to take due note of linguistic innovations, especially where this is likely to be especially relevant to learners; at the same time, bearing in mind the need for reference grammars to have a certain ‘timeless’ quality, we have steered clear of matters that are likely to be ephemeral (for this reason we give relatively few examples involving prices!). Above all, we have aimed at following the principle that this book is intended to be a practical guide.

There is a long-standing tradition in the writing of Russian textbooks that the material presented should reflect the notion that ‘everything in the garden is rosy’. This can sometimes provoke the reaction of focusing undue attention on the unkempt and weed-choked areas of the linguistic ‘garden’ that have been previously kept hidden. Here too, we have tried to avoid extreme positions. Most of our recommendations and examples belong to a standard and neutral educated register, but where appropriate we have labelled usages as ‘informal’ or ‘formal’: the former are likely to be appropriate in such contexts as conversations between friends or personal letters; the latter would tend to occur in official documents and letters, or be used at meetings or in lectures. With a couple of reasoned exceptions we have avoided extremes of ‘high’ and ‘low’ language and have purposely steered clear of vulgar or obscene forms. Mindful of the fact that for Russian perhaps to a greater extent than for other languages learners are not always expected to produce the same language as native speakers, we have issued, where necessary, ‘health warnings’ about certain usages that will be encountered but which may sound odd, inappropriate or even offensive if uttered by a learner of the language.

Finally, this is a practical guide: we cannot claim to be comprehensive or to have foreseen every eventuality. It will be noticed that many of our recommendations are hedged with words such as ‘normally’ and ‘generally’. What this means is that users should feel free to go ahead and follow these recommendations without trepidation, but should not be unduly surprised and should certainly not be put off if they occasionally encounter something that appears to be a direct contradiction.

Warmest thanks are due to Sarah Butler for her editorial guidance and encouragement during the early stages of writing this book, and to Larisa Stizhko who has read through the text and given us a great many valuable comments on current Russian usage. We would also like to thank the Russian students of Glasgow University who for more than thirty years have acted as unwitting guinea-pigs for much of the material included here, and whose unexpectedly cheerful willingness to engage with the complexities of Russian grammar was a great incentive for us to take up the challenge of writing this book.

John Dunn and Shamil Khairov

How to use this book

Part A of this book is a reference guide to the *structures* of Russian. The individual chapters deal with grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns. There are also chapters devoted to the use of the cases, to aspects of the verb and to grammatical agreement.

Part B is concerned with communicative *functions*, that is, the uses to which language is put. In this part of the book, therefore, each individual chapter is concerned with a specific function, such as establishing identity, talking about being and becoming, or asking questions. This part also includes chapters on focus and emphasis, and on communication strategies.

Each chapter is divided into sections, and in order to allow the material to be presented in portions of manageable size, most of the latter are divided further into subsections. Each chapter, section and subsection has its own heading, as in the following examples:

13 Establishing contact

13.2 Greetings

13.2.2 Informal greetings

In Part A much of the information is presented in the form of grammatical tables or of lists. Where appropriate, in Part A and throughout Part B the grammatical information is illustrated by copious examples, which are more or less complicated according to the type of information being presented. Many of the examples have been taken from actual printed or Internet sources, but these have mostly been adapted to remove extraneous linguistic complexities or obscure references. Where it was thought helpful, notes are used to provide supplementary grammatical or cultural information.

Russian language material is presented in **bold type**, and in the examples key words are highlighted by the use of *italic*. All examples are translated into English, and a literal version is supplied in those instances where the natural English translation is significantly different from the Russian original.

It is impossible to describe a language such as Russian without using a certain amount of grammatical terminology. We have tried as far as possible to use standard terms, and where necessary, we explain the terms used at the point where they first occur. There is in addition a separate Glossary of grammatical terms at the front of the book.

There are three ways of finding out where a specific topic may be located in the book. At the very beginning of the book the Contents lists what can be found in each chapter in the order in which the material is presented. At the end of the book the main Index

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

lists all the topics covered in English alphabetical order, while a separate Index lists key Russian words in Russian alphabetical order (a table of the Russian alphabet is given at the beginning of Chapter 1). Finally, where an explanation or an example touches on a grammatical point covered elsewhere in the book, this is indicated by means of a cross-reference.

We have tried to keep the use of abbreviations to a minimum, but the following English abbreviations are used to indicate the names of the grammatical cases:

nom.	nominative
gen.	genitive
dat.	dative
acc.	accusative
instr.	instrumental
prep.	prepositional

The following *Russian* abbreviations are used for the aspects of the verb, especially in Chapters 4 and 5:

нсв	несовершённый	<i>imperfective</i>
св	совершённый	<i>perfective</i>

The following abbreviations are also used:

sing.	singular
fem.	feminine
masc.	masculine
n.	neuter
pl.	plural

Glossary of grammatical terms

Note: **Bold type** is used to cross-refer to other entries in the Glossary.

Active voice

The category of voice is used to indicate the relationship of **subject** and **object** to the action or state indicated by the **verb**. The **active voice** is used when the **subject** of the **verb** is the performer of the action or the main participant in the state or event; it contrasts with the **passive voice**. *See* 4.14 and 20.2.

Adjective

An adjective is a word that indicates some attribute or quality and is used to qualify a **noun**; examples are **красный** 'red' and **английский** 'English'. Adjectives have distinct sets of endings and normally agree with the nouns they qualify in **number, gender and case**. *See* Chapter 6 and 11.1.

Adverb

Adverbs are mainly used to qualify a **verb**, although they can also qualify **adjectives** or even other **adverbs**. Examples are **быстро** 'quickly', **по-ру́сски** 'in Russian' and **о́чень** 'very'. **Adverbs** never change their endings. *See* 9.1.

Agreement

One of the two factors that determine which endings are put on **nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns and numerals** (*see* also **Government**). The principle of **agreement** is that the endings of certain words are determined by the word either that they qualify or to which they refer. The two contexts where **agreement** is particularly important are within the **noun phrase** and between the **grammatical subject** of a sentence and the **verb**. *See* Chapter 11.

Article

An **article** is a word used with a **noun** to indicate whether it is definite or indefinite. In English the **articles** are 'the' and 'a/an'. Russian has no **articles** and therefore has to resort to other means to indicate whether a noun is definite or indefinite. *See* 20.4.

Aspect

A category that refers to the different ways in which the action or state indicated by a verb may be viewed by the speaker. The Russian verb has two **aspects**, imperfective and perfective: in general terms the perfective **aspect** is used when an action or state is considered from the point of view of either one (beginning or end) or both of its boundaries, while the imperfective is used in all other circumstances. Every Russian verb belongs to either the imperfective or the perfective **aspect**, and **aspect** is one of the attributes of a verb given in dictionaries. *See* 4.2 and Chapter 5.

Case

Case refers to the different endings assumed by **nouns, adjectives, pronouns and numerals** as a means of indicating the particular grammatical function that the word concerned fulfils in a sentence. Russian has six **cases**: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental and prepositional. *See Chapters 2 and 3.*

Clause

A clause is a unit that contains a **verb**, but which forms part of a larger sentence. A **main clause** is one that is capable of standing on its own, while a **subordinate clause** is one that must be combined with a **main clause**. A **subordinate clause** is most frequently introduced by a subordinating **conjunction**, although they can also be introduced by a relative **pronoun**. *See 7.5, 9.3 and Chapter 21.*

Comparative

The **comparative** form of an **adjective** or **adverb** is used when comparing different degrees of the quality indicated by the word in question; examples are **быстрее** 'quicker, more quickly' and **громче** 'louder, more loudly'. *See 6.8.1–6.8.3, 9.1.7 and 21.9.1–21.9.6.*

Complement

The **complement** is usually the **noun** or **adjective** that completes a sentence containing a verb such as **быть** 'to be' or **становиться/стать** 'to become'. In Russian the **complement** is sometimes in the nominative **case** and sometimes in the instrumental. *See 14.1.*

Conditional mood.

The conditional is the form of the **verb** that is used in a variety of hypothetical situations, such as conditions incapable of being fulfilled and certain kinds of wishes or requests. It is formed by combining the **particle** **бы** with the past **tense** form of the verb. *See 4.10, 18.4 and 21.5.2.*

Conjugation

Conjugation is the term used for the changes in the endings of **verbs** to reflect **agreement** with the **subject**. It also the term used for the two regular patterns of verb endings in the present and future perfective. *See Chapter 4, especially 4.3 and 4.6–4.8.*

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join two **clauses** together. Two main **clauses** are joined by co-ordinating **conjunctions**, for example **и** 'and' or **но** 'but'. A main **clause** and a subordinate **clause** are joined by subordinating **conjunctions**, such as **если** 'if', **когда** 'when' or **потому что** 'because'. *See 9.3 and Chapter 21.*

Declension

Declension is the term used for the changes in the endings of **nouns, adjectives, pronouns and numerals** to reflect different grammatical functions. *See Chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 8.*

Direct object

The **direct object** of a **verb** denotes the principal person or object affected by the action that the **verb** indicates. In Russian the **direct object** is in the accusative **case**, though after a negated verb it is sometimes in the genitive. *See 3.2 and 15.4.*

Fleeting vowel

This is the term used for a vowel (usually **е**, **о** or **ё**) that occurs in some forms of a word, but not in others. It is particularly important for the **noun declension** system, although examples occur with other parts of speech as well. *See* especially **2.5**, but also **4.5.3**, **4.7.3**, **4.7.13**, **6.5.1**.

Gender

Gender is a system of classifying **nouns**. Russian has **three** genders – masculine, feminine and neuter – and all nouns that can occur in the singular belong to one or other of these genders. There are no gender distinctions in the plural. **Gender** is mainly indicated through the system of **agreement: adjectives**, for example, have separate sets of endings for each of the three **genders**. There is also a very strong correlation between **gender** and **declension** type. *See* **2.3** and **Chapter 11**.

Gerund

Gerund is the term conventionally used in Russian grammar for a form that is at the same time both a part of the **verb** and an **adverb**. The main function of the **gerund** is to form complex sentences, in which a **gerund** is used in place of a **conjunction + verb**. *See* **4.11** and **21.10**.

Government

Government is one of the two factors that determine which endings are put on **nouns**, **adjectives**, **pronouns** and **numerals** (*see* also **Agreement**). **Government** essentially concerns the rules for selecting which **case** to use in different grammatical circumstances. *See* **Chapter 3** and **9.2**.

Grammatical subject *see* **Subject**.

Imperative mood

This is the form of the **verb** used in commands, prohibitions and certain kinds of requests. *See* **4.9** and **Chapter 18**.

Impersonal predicate forms

These fulfil the same function as **verbs**, but unlike ordinary **verbs** they can never be used along with a **grammatical subject** and they do not change their endings. Some **impersonal predicate forms**, such as **хорошо** ‘it is good to’, are part of the **adverb** system, while others, such as **можно** ‘one may; one can’, are words that are used only in this function. *See* **11.2.2**.

Impersonal verbs

Impersonal verbs are those **verbs** that cannot be used with a **grammatical subject**. **Impersonal verbs** occur only in the third person singular (present and future **tenses**) or the neuter singular (past **tense**). *See* **3.4.3** and **11.2.2**.

Infinitive

This is the form under which verbs are listed in dictionaries. It does not change its ending. Infinitives are normally used in conjunction with other **verbs**, although under certain circumstances they can be used on their own in commands and prohibitions. *See* **4.1** and **18.2.2**.

Intransitive verb

This is any **verb** that is not used with a **direct object**. *See 4.13.1.*

Noun

A **noun** is a word denoting a living being, an object or a concept. Examples of **nouns** are **волк** 'wolf', **стол** 'table' or **понятие** 'concept'. **Nouns** denoting living beings or physical objects are called concrete **nouns**, while **nouns** denoting concepts are referred to as abstract **nouns**. **Nouns** that function as the names of people, places or organisations are proper **nouns**; all other nouns are common **nouns**. *See Chapters 2 and 3.*

Noun phrase

Noun phrase is the term used for a **noun** and any accompanying **adjectives**, **pronouns** or **numerals**. The phrase **эти два молодых студента** 'these two young students' is an example of a **noun phrase** that contains all four types of word. *See 11.1.*

Number

Number as a grammatical category is a part of the **noun** system relating to quantity. There are two **numbers**: singular (relating to one person, animal, object or concept) and plural (relating to more than one of any of the above). Most nouns have both singular and plural forms, although some occur only in the singular and some only in the plural. *See 2.1.*

N numeral

The **numeral** in Russian is a distinct part of speech, divided into three sub-groups: cardinal **numerals** (8.1), collective **numerals** (8.3) and ordinal **numerals** (8.4). Each of these has its own set(s) of endings and its own rules for combining with **nouns** and **adjectives**. *See Chapter 8.*

Participle

Participle is the term conventionally used in Russian grammar for a verbal **adjective**, that is, something at the same time both part of the **verb** and an **adjective**. The forms of the participle are described in 4.12; its use is described in 4.14 and 23.1.3.

Particle

Particle is a term used for an additional word providing information that supplements or supports that provided by the main elements of a sentence. Some **particles** have a very specific grammatical or semantic function, while others are used mostly to provide focus and emphasis. *See 9.4 and 20.3.3.*

Passive voice

The category of voice is used to indicate the relationship of **subject** and **object** to the action or state indicated by the **verb**. The **passive** voice is used when the **subject** of a **verb** is affected by the action, rather than performing it. It contrasts with the **active voice**. *See 4.14 and 20.2.*

Person

Person indicates the relationship between the verb and the **grammatical subject** of the sentence. There are three **persons**: the first **person** indicates or includes the speaker, the second **person** indicates or includes the addressee(s); the **third person** indicates the person(s), object(s) or concept(s) being referred to. Since each **person** can be singular or plural (*see Number*), there are six **person** forms in all.

Prefix

Prefix is a form, usually of one or two syllables, that is attached to the beginning of a word in order to supply additional information relating to grammar or meaning. Russian has a rich range of **prefixes** that can be attached to **verbs** to convey various meanings or nuances. *See 10.4.*

Preposition

Prepositions are words placed before **nouns** or **noun phrases** to provide additional information about the meaning and function of the noun. Each **preposition** is followed by a **noun** in a particular **case** (part of **government**); some **prepositions** can be followed by more than one **case**, depending on their precise meaning in the particular context in which they are used. *See 9.2.*

Productive verb classes

Productive verb classes are those classes of verbs to which newly formed **verbs** can in principle be added. The majority of Russian **verbs** belong to one of the four classes of **productive verbs**. *See 4.6.*

Pronoun

Pronouns are either words used in place of **nouns** or words that serve to qualify **nouns**, usually in a rather more general way than **adjectives**. **Pronouns** are divided into several categories, including personal **pronouns** (e.g. **мы** 'we'), possessive **pronouns** (e.g. **наш** 'our'), demonstrative **pronouns** (e.g. **этот** 'this'), interrogative **pronouns** (e.g. **что?** 'what?'), relative **pronouns** (e.g. **который** 'who', 'which', 'that') and indefinite **pronouns** (e.g. **кто-то** 'someone'). *See Chapter 7.*

Reflexive verb

Although **reflexive verbs** do serve certain other functions as well, the main purpose of making a verb **reflexive** is to transform a **transitive verb** into one that is **intransitive**. **Reflexive verbs** are indicated by the presence of the **suffix -ся** (-сь after a vowel) in all forms of the **verb**. *See 14.3.2.*

Subject

The **subject** of a sentence denotes the person, animal or object that performs the action or is the main participant in the event indicated by the **verb** (**active voice**); in the **passive voice** the **subject** denotes the person, animal or object affected by the action. Russian distinguishes between the **grammatical subject**, which is always in the nominative **case**, and the logical **subject**, which is used with the **infinitive** or with **impersonal verbs** and **predicate forms**, and which is in some other **case**, usually the dative. *See 3.1, 3.4.3 and 11.2.2.*

Suffix

This is a form, usually of one or two syllables, which is attached to the end of a word in order to supply additional information relating to grammar or meaning. Russian has a rich range of **suffixes** that can be attached to **nouns** to convey various meanings or nuances. *See 10.1.*

Superlative

The **superlative** is the form of an **adjective** or an **adverb** that is used to indicate the highest possible degree of quality concerned, for example, **самый высокий** '(the) highest' or **громче всех** 'loudest (of all)'. *See 6.8.4, 6.8.5 and 9.1.7.*

Tense

Tense is the category of the **verb** that relates to time. Russian has a simple system of three **tenses**: present, future and past. *See 4.3–4.5.*

Transitive verb

Transitive verb is a **verb** that is used with a **direct object**. *See 14.13.1.*

Uninflected parts of speech

Uninflected parts of speech are those that never change their endings. The principal **uninflected parts of speech** are **adverbs**, **conjunctions**, **particles** and **prepositions**. *See Chapter 9.*

Unproductive verb classes

Unproductive verb classes are those to which no new **verbs** can be added. Although many **unproductive verb classes** contain very few **verbs**, there are many **verbs** in common use that belong to one or other of these classes. *See 4.7.*

Verbs

Verbs are words that denote an action or a state. Examples include **быть**, ‘to be’, **делать** ‘to do’ and **читать**, ‘to read’. *See Chapter 4.*

Verbs of motion

Verbs of motion are a special group of **verbs** that have meanings related to movement in one form or another. These verbs have certain special characteristics, the most important being that they come in pairs: one member denotes motion in one direction, while the other denotes motion in more than one direction or in no specific direction. *See Chapter 22.*

Vvódnye slová

Vvódnye slová or ‘introductory words’ are a special group of words and phrases that normally come at or near the beginning of a sentence and that are separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma. They provide extra information that in one way or another qualifies what is said in the rest of the sentence. *See 23.2.1.*

Part A

Structures

1

Sounds and spelling

1.1 The Russian alphabet

Russian is written in the *Cyrillic* alphabet. This consists of 33 letters: 21 letters represent consonant sounds; 10 letters are used to express vowel sounds, and 2 letters – the soft sign **ь** and the hard sign **ъ** – have no sound value of their own.

Unlike English, Russian does not use combinations of letters for denoting a single sound.

<i>Letters in alphabetical order</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Letter name</i>
А а	as in <u>f</u> ather (but shorter)	а (a)
Б б	as in <u>b</u> oss	бэ (be)
В в	as in <u>v</u> ast	вэ (ve)
Г г	as in <u>g</u> um	гэ (ge)
Д д	as in <u>d</u> ark	дэ (de)
Е е	as in <u>y</u> ellow or <u>ch</u> eck	е (ye)
Ё ё	as in <u>y</u> ogurt or <u>ch</u> ocolate	ё (yo)
Ж ж	as the s in <u>plea</u> sure	жэ (zhe)
З з	as in <u>z</u> one	зэ (ze)
И и	as in <u>e</u> ast (but shorter)	и (i)
Й й	as in <u>y</u> es or <u>bo</u> y	и краткое ‘short и’
К к	as in <u>c</u> up	ка (ka)
Л л	as in <u>l</u> uck	эль (el)
М м	as in <u>m</u> other	эм (em)
Н н	as in <u>n</u> one	эн (en)
О о	as in <u>m</u> ock or <u>ta</u> ught (but shorter)	о (o)
П п	as in <u>p</u> ark	пэ (pe)
Р р	as the Scottish rolled <u>r</u> in <u>r</u> ock	эр (er)
С с	as in <u>s</u> un	эс (es)
Т т	as in <u>t</u> all	тэ (te)
У у	as in <u>m</u> oon (but shorter)	у (u)
Ф ф	as in <u>f</u> all	эф (ef)
Х х	as in Scottish <u>l</u> o <u>ch</u>	ха (kha)
Ц ц	as in <u>n</u> uts	цэ (tse)
Ч ч	a in <u>ch</u> ess	че (che)
Ш ш	as in <u>sh</u> ark	ша (sha)
Щ щ	as in <u>fr</u> esh <u>sh</u> eets	ща (shsha)
Ъ ъ	no sound value	твёрдый знак ‘hard sign’

<i>Letters in alphabetical order</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Letter name</i>
Ы ы	no exact English equivalent; approximately as in thin	Ы (y)
Ь ь	no sound value	мягкий знак 'soft sign'
Э э	as in <u>e</u> gg	Э (eh)
Ю ю	as in <u>y</u> ou or <u>t</u> una	Ю (yu)
Я я	as in <u>y</u> ard	Я (ya)

The precise difference between the pronunciation of **и** and **ы** is explained in 1.3.1. The exact pronunciation of most letters is partly determined by the neighbouring letters in the word or sentence (see 1.2.1 and 1.3.1).

1.2 Consonants

1.2.1 Hard and soft consonants

Most Russian consonant sounds have two pronunciations, which are conventionally described as *hard* and *soft*. The distinguishing feature of soft consonants is that they are *palatalised* – that is, they are pronounced with the middle part of the tongue raised towards the hard palate.

For more on the pronunciation of soft consonants, see 1.2.3.

Whether a consonant is hard or soft in Russian is important because it can serve to distinguish between two otherwise identical words: **был** (hard **б**, hard **л**) 'was', **быль** (hard **б**, soft **л**) 'true story', **бил** (soft **б**, hard **л**) past tense of 'hit' or 'beat'; **мат** (hard **м**, hard **т**) 'checkmate', **мать** (hard **м**, soft **т**) 'mother', **мят** (soft **м**, hard **т**) 'crumpled', **мять** (soft **м**, soft **т**) 'to crumple'.

Not all consonants form hard/soft pairs. The sounds represented by the letters **ж**, **ц**, **ш** are always hard, while those represented by **ч**, **щ** and **й** are always soft.

1.2.2. The pronunciation of hard consonants

Most hard consonants are pronounced in a similar or identical fashion to their English equivalents, as indicated in the table in 1.1. The following, however, require a more detailed explanation.

The hard **л** is pronounced with the tongue resting against the top teeth. It sounds like the English 'l' in words such as 'film', 'table'.

To pronounce **ж** and **ш**, the middle of the tongue is drawn down to the bottom of the mouth, while the tip of the tongue points upwards towards the area behind the top teeth.

Hard **д**, **н** and **т** are pronounced with the tip of the tongue resting against the back of the top teeth.

Hard **к**, **п** and **т** are pronounced without the slight aspiration (expulsion of a breath of air) that usually accompanies the equivalent sounds in English.

1.2.3 The pronunciation of soft consonants

Soft or palatalised consonants can be heard in English in the way that many (though not all) English speakers pronounce the initial consonants in words such as ‘due’, ‘new’ and ‘Tuesday’. In Russian, however, the consonants **б, в, г, д, з, к, л, м, н, п, р, с, т, ф, х** are all capable of being palatalised, while **ч** and **щ** are *always* palatalised. The distinguishing feature of palatalised consonants is that the middle part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate (the middle part of the top of the mouth). The perception is often of a slight [y] sound pronounced together with the consonant, but some care should be taken not to exaggerate this effect, since in Russian there is a clear distinction between a palatalised consonant and a consonant followed by y:

обѣд [ob'ed] ‘dinner’ ~ **объѣдки** [ob'yedk'i] ‘[food] leftovers’.

NOTE In transcriptions, the sign ' is used to indicate a palatalised consonant.

For the use of the hard sign (ъ) to indicate the presence of the sound [y] see 1.3.2.

The palatalised consonant **щ** is pronounced as a long soft ‘sh’ sound, as in the English sequence ‘fresh sheets’, but without the slight pause between the words. An alternative pronunciation, shch, as in ‘Ashchurch’, is recommended in older text books, but is now falling into disuse.

1.2.4 The representation of hard and soft consonants in writing

The letters **б, в, г, д, з, к, л, м, н, п, р, с, т, ф, х** are used to represent both hard and soft consonants. The hardness or softness is not denoted by the letters themselves, but is indicated by the letter that immediately follows them (or by the absence of a following letter).

The consonants **б, в, г, д, з, к, л, м, н, п, р, с, т, ф, х** are pronounced *hard* when they:

- (a) occur at the very end of a word:

хóдит ‘he goes (on foot)’, **глаз** ‘eye’, **спорт** ‘sport’;

- (b) when they are followed immediately by another consonant:

глаз ‘eye’, **знать** ‘to know’, **спорт** ‘sport’;

- (c) when they are followed by one of the vowel letters from the group **а, о, у, э, ы**:

да ‘yes’, **хóдит** ‘he goes [on foot]’, **рука́** ‘hand’, ‘arm’, **сэр** ‘sir’, **ты** ‘you’.

The consonants **б, в, г, д, з, к, л, м, н, п, р, с, т, ф, х** are pronounced *soft* when they are followed by either:

- (a) the *soft* sign (ь):

ло́шадь ‘horse’, **возьму́** ‘I will take’, **фильм** ‘film’, **кровать** ‘bed’;

- (b) one of the vowel letters from the group **е, ё, и, ю, я**:

бе́лый ‘white’, **те́тя** ‘aunt’, **ви́за** ‘visa’, **плюс** ‘plus’, **мя́со** ‘meat’.

1.2.5 Voiced and unvoiced consonants

The letters **б, в, г, д, ж, з** normally denote *voiced* consonants – that is, consonants pronounced with a vibration of the vocal cords. The *unvoiced* consonants corresponding to these are indicated respectively by the letters **п, ф, к, т, ш, с**. Voiced consonants are normally *devoiced* – that is, pronounced like their unvoiced counterparts when they occur either at the end of a word or before *another unvoiced consonant*. This change in pronunciation, which can occur across a boundary between two words, is not usually reflected in the spelling:

зуб [p] ‘tooth’, **лев** [f] ‘lion’, **флаг** [k] ‘flag’, **год** [t] ‘year’, **муж** [sh] ‘husband’, **глаз** (s) ‘eye’;

NOTE: **Бог** ‘God’ is pronounced [bokh].

тру́бка [p] ‘pipe’, **все** [f] ‘all’, **но́гти** [k] ‘nails’, **во́дка** [t] ‘vodka’, **му́жской** [sh] ‘masculine’, **ска́зка** [s] ‘fairy tale’, **в парк** [f] ‘to the park’, **из теа́тра** [s] ‘from the theatre’, **над сто́лом** [t] ‘above the table’, **му́ж сестры́** [sh] ‘sister’s husband’, **снег чи́ст** [k] ‘the snow is clean’.

Unvoiced consonants are pronounced like the corresponding *voiced* consonant when they occur before a *voiced* consonant:

сбить [z] ‘to knock down’, **к дру́гу** [g] ‘to a friend’, **наш дом** [zh] ‘our house’, **отбро́сы** [d] ‘garbage’.

NOTE: Unvoiced consonants are *not* voiced when they occur before **в**: **отве́т** [t] ‘answer’.

1.2.6 Consonant clusters

When two or more consonants come together, the pronunciation of the resulting cluster may differ from the sum of the original components.

<i>Spelled</i>	<i>Pronounced</i>
чт	шт in что ‘what’ and чтобы ‘in order to’, otherwise чт : по́чта ‘post office’, почти́ ‘almost’
чн	шн in certain everyday words: конéчно ‘of course’, ску́чно ‘boring’ (adv.) яйчи́ца ‘fried eggs’, and also in female patronymics: Ники́тична , Ильи́нична For more on patronymics see 12.1.2. Otherwise чн : начни́ ‘start!’, очну́ться ‘to come to oneself’, ве́чный ‘eternal’, бесконéчный ‘infinite, endless’
лн	н in со́лнце ‘sun’ Otherwise лн : солнечный ‘sunny’, по́лный ‘full’
гк	хк : лёгкий ‘light’, ‘easy’, мягкий ‘soft’
стн	сн : че́стный ‘honest’, ме́стный ‘local’
зн	зн : звёздный ‘star’ (adj.), поздно́ ‘late’ (adv.)
жж	a long ж : э́зжу ‘I go’, ‘I travel’, сжа́ть ‘to grip’
сж	
зч	щ : перевозчи́к ‘carrier’

<i>Spelled</i>	<i>Pronounced</i>
сч	щ : in the root -чит/чёт- : считать ‘to count’, ‘to consider’, расчёт ‘calculation’; also in счастье ‘happiness’; otherwise щч : исчезать ‘to disappear’
жч	щ : мужчина ‘man’; перебёжчик ‘deserter’
сш	a long ш : сшить ‘to sew (together)’, бесшумный ‘noiseless’, без шума
зш	‘without noise’
ться	ща : мыться ‘to wash oneself’, улыбаться ‘to smile’, моются ‘they
тся	wash themselves’, улыбаются ‘they smile’

NOTE: The greeting **здравствуйте** ‘hello’ is pronounced as **здравствуй** in formal language, but more informally as **здрасьте**.

1.3 Vowels

1.3.1 Russian vowel sounds and letters

To indicate the six Russian vowel sounds, ten letters are used: **а, е, ё, и, о, у, ы, э, ю, я**.

The pronunciation of the vowels is indicated in the table in 1.1. Russian vowels are pronounced as ‘pure’ vowels with the tongue remaining in a constant position; they do not have the ‘diphthong’ quality that vowels generally have in most English pronunciations.

For changes to the pronunciation of vowels in unstressed syllables, *see* 1.4.

The vowel ‘о’ is an *open* sound – that is, it is closer to the vowel in ‘all’ or ‘taught’, than to the vowel in ‘hope’.

The vowel **ы** has no direct equivalent in English, although it is not unlike the vowel in the word ‘bit’ as pronounced by some Scottish speakers. It is a vowel half-way between the ‘ee’ in *feel* and the ‘oo’ in *fool*, and a close approximation can be achieved by spreading the lips for the ‘ee’ sound and then moving the tongue towards the back of the mouth.

1.3.2 The pronunciation of я, е, ё, ю

Four of the letters indicating *vowels* (**я, е, ё, ю**) have two pronunciations, depending on what comes immediately before them. If this is a *consonant*, they are pronounced as the vowels ‘а’, ‘е’, ‘о’, ‘у’ respectively; at the same time they also indicate that the preceding consonant is *soft*:

мясо [m’a..] ‘meat’, **тело** [t’e..] ‘body’, **всё** [fs’o] ‘everything’,
меню [..n’u] ‘menu’.

If they (a) occur at the beginning of a word, (b) come immediately after another vowel or (c) come immediately after the soft sign (ь) or the hard sign (ъ), the letters **я, е, ё, ю** express not one, but two sounds: their normal vowel sound preceded by the sound

[y] – i.e. [ya], [ye], [yo], [yu] respectively:

я́щик [yashshik] ‘box’, **е́ду** [yedu] ‘I am going [by transport]’, **е́лка** [yolka] ‘Christmas tree’, **ю́г** [yuk] ‘south’;

ше́я [sheya] ‘neck’, **уе́ду** [uyedu] ‘I shall go away’, **да́ёт** [dayot] ‘s/he gives’, **мою́** [moyu] ‘I wash’;

ста́тья [stat'ya] ‘article’ **до́сье** [dos'ye] ‘dossier’, **ле́ёт** [l'yot] ‘s/he pours’, **пью́** [p'yu] ‘I drink’; **разъясни́ть** [..zyas..] ‘to clarify’, **съе́зд** [syest] ‘congress’.

NOTES

- (i) When **и**, occurs after a vowel or at the beginning of a word, it is usually pronounced without the preceding (y):

наи́вный [na-iv..] ‘naive’, **кле́ит** [kle-it] ‘s/he glues’, **и́мя** [im'a] ‘name’.

After the soft sign (**ь**), however, the [y] is usually pronounced:

ста́тьи́ [stat'yi] ‘articles’.

- (ii) In the examples given in this section, the function of the hard and soft signs is to indicate the presence of the sound [y] between a consonant and a vowel. This is the sole function of the hard sign in present-day Russian.

In certain names and in foreign words the combination of **й** with **я**, **е**, **о** or even **и** is possible:

Ма́йя ‘Maya’ (female name), **пара́но́йя** ‘paranoia’, **майо́р** ‘major’ (military rank), **Йе́мен** ‘Yemen’, **Нью-Йо́рк** ‘New York’, **йо́га** ‘yoga’, **йогу́рт** ‘yogurt’.

1.4 Stress

1.4.0 Introduction

Each Russian word normally has *one stressed* syllable. This syllable is pronounced with greater emphasis, and the vowel in the stressed syllable is longer than other vowels. Stress in Russian is described as being both free and mobile – that is it can fall on *any* syllable in a word and can fall on *different* syllables in different forms of the same word. This principle is illustrated by the following forms of the word **голова́** ‘head’:

голова́:	nom. sing.
го́лову:	acc. sing.
на́ голову:	acc. sing. after the preposition на
голо́в:	gen. pl.

For more on the grammatical terms, see 2.2.

For the rules of stress with prepositions, see 9.2.7.

1.4.1 The importance of stress

The position of the stressed syllable is important for two reasons. The first is that sometimes two otherwise identical words are distinguished only by the place of the stress:

му́ка ‘torment’, **мука́** ‘flour’
до́ма ‘at home’, **дома́** ‘houses’.

The second is that the pronunciation of many vowels depends on whether they appear in a stressed or an unstressed syllable. This question is discussed in detail in 1.4.3.

1.4.2 The marking of stress

Russian stress is normally marked in textbooks and dictionaries, but is indicated in ordinary text only when it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings (as in the examples quoted in 1.4.1.). The normal means of indicating stress is the *acute accent* (').

In this book, with the exception of a few examples (e.g. in 1.6) which are intended to reproduce as closely as possible the appearance of a normal printed text, stress is indicated throughout by means of the acute accent.

Because the letter ё is used only in stressed syllables, stress is not indicated separately for words containing this letter.

For more on the use of ё only in stressed syllables see 1.5.1.

Stress is not normally indicated for words of only one syllable. Where stress is indicated on a word of one syllable – for example, the negative particle **не** and certain prepositions – it indicates that this syllable carries the stress for the following word as well. An example is the phrase **на́** голову, quoted in 1.4.0.

Occasionally, a word will be found with two stress marks. This means that there are alternative stresses: for example, **роди́лась** ‘she was born’, means that both **роди́лась** and **роди́лась** are possible.

1.4.3 Reduction of unstressed vowels.

When unstressed, the vowels **о**, **а/я**, **е/э** are significantly *reduced* – that is, they become shorter, but also change their quality. The symbols **α** and **ə** are used below to denote different levels of vowels reduction: **α** stands for a sound similar to **а**, but shorter and less distinct, like the vowel in the ‘Mac (Mc)’ prefix of certain Scottish surnames, or the first vowel in ‘candelabra’; **ə** stands for a short neutral vowel similar to the second and the final vowels in ‘candelabra’.

1.4.4 Unstressed а and о

Unstressed **а** and **о** are pronounced as **α** when they occur either in the syllable *immediately before* the stressed syllable or at the *very beginning* of a word:

да́рю [dα-] ‘I give’, **а́фрика́нец** [αf-] ‘African’, **хо́дить** [khα-] ‘to go (on foot)’, **отказа́ться** [αt-] ‘to refuse’.

Unstressed **а** and **о** are pronounced as **ə** when they occur either two or more syllables before the stressed syllable or in any syllable that comes *after* the stress:

да́рови́тый [dər-] ‘gifted’, **вы́дать** [-dət] ‘to give out’, **хо́довой** [khəd-] ‘marketable, popular’, **вы́ход** [-khət] ‘exit’.

1.4.5 Unstressed е and я; unstressed э

Unstressed **е** and **я** are pronounced as a shorter version of **і** when they occur in any syllable *before* the stressed syllable:

се́мьсо́т [s'im-] 'seven hundred', **пя́тьсо́т** [p'it-] 'five hundred', **семи́ле́тний** [s'i-] 'seven years old', **пя́тьдеся́т** [p'i-] 'fifty'.

Unstressed **е** and **я** are pronounced as **э** when they occur in any syllable that comes *after* the stress:

во́семь [-s'əm'] 'eight', **па́мять** [-m'ət'] 'memory'.

Unstressed **э**, which occurs only at the beginning of a word, is normally pronounced as a shorter version of **і**:

эква́тор [ikv-] 'equator', **эго́ист** [ig-] 'egoist', **эколо́гия** [ik-] 'ecology'.

1.4.6 Other unstressed vowels

The vowels **и**, **ы**, **у/ю** in unstressed positions are shorter than when they are stressed, but any change in quality is negligible.

1.4.7 Stress units of more than one word

Sometimes a single stress unit is made up of more than one word. This is most commonly the case when nouns are used with prepositions or when a word is preceded or followed by an unstressed particle. In such cases the rules of vowel reduction apply to the stress unit as a whole:

за те́бя [zət'-] 'for you', **че́рез де́нь** [chiri'rizd'-] 'after a day', **ка́кие-то́** [-tə] 'some (pl.)', **прине́си-ка́** [-kə] 'bring!', **не зна́ешь ли?** [n'iz-] 'don't you know?', **под го́ру** [-gəru] 'downhill'.

1.4.8 Secondary stress

Stress units containing a preposition with more than one syllable as well as many compound words may have a weaker *secondary stress*. This is usually indicated by a *grave accent* (`):

Во́зле до́ма 'near the house', **по́сле ма́тча** 'after the match', **ли́терату́роведе́ние** 'literary science', **га́ла-ко́нцер́т** 'gala concert', **те́лесери́ал** 'TV serial', **мо́розоусто́йчи́вый** 'frost resistant'.

Secondary stress, where it occurs, always *precedes* the main stress.

1.5 Spelling rules

1.5.0 Introduction

Russian spelling is not, strictly speaking, 'phonetic' (as is sometimes claimed), but it is much more predictable than English spelling, and in general there is a reasonably close relationship between spelling and pronunciation. Nevertheless, there are some specific peculiarities which it is useful to bear in mind. These rules are particularly important

for determining the spelling of the endings that are attached to *nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals and verbs*.

1.5.1 Use of the letter ё

As was noted in 1.4.2, the letter ё occurs only in *stressed* syllables. In *unstressed* syllables it is replaced by е:

вошёл 'he went in', but **вышёл** 'he went out'; **вёл** 'he led', but **вела** 'she led'.

In addition, the letter ё is used consistently only in textbooks, dictionaries and books written for children. Elsewhere it is usually replaced by the letter е. This means, for example, that the following words will appear in print as:

ее 'her', **еще** 'still, more', **принес** 'he brought', **легкий** 'light, easy', **мед** 'honey'.

They should, however, be read as:

её, ещё, принёс, лёгкий, мёд.

In dictionaries and other lists arranged alphabetically, е and ё are usually treated as being the same letter.

1.5.2 Spelling after ш, ж, ч, щ, ц

As was pointed out in 1.2.4, one of the functions of the vowel letters is to indicate the hardness or softness of the preceding consonant. Since, however, the consonants **ш, ж, ц** are *always hard* and **ч, щ** are *always soft*, this function becomes redundant, and the choice of vowel letter to follow these consonants is determined instead by special rules.

The letters **ю** and **я** do not occur after these consonants; instead, **у** and **а** are used:

варю́ 'I boil', but **спешу́** 'I hurry', **ви́жу** 'I see', **лечу́** 'I am flying', **пу́щу** 'I will let'.
варя́ 'boiling', but **спеша́** 'hurrying', **тревóжа** 'worrying', **мо́лча** 'in silence', **морща́** 'wrinkling'.

For more on these verb forms, see 4.6.4, 4.7.15 and 4.11.

Exceptions to this spelling rule are found in a few words of foreign origin:

парашю́т 'parachute', **жю́ри** 'jury'.

The letter **ы** does not occur after **ш, ж, ч, щ**; instead **и** is used:

сто́лы 'tables', but **карандаши́** 'pencils', **ножи́** 'knives', **врачи́** 'doctors', **товари́щи** 'comrades'.

For more on these noun forms, see 2.6.1 and 2.6.2.

The letter **ы** is normally used after **ц**, but **и** occurs in some words of foreign origin and in some surnames:

цыплёнок 'chicken', **отцы́** 'fathers', but **цирк** 'circus', **Ельцин** 'El'tsin'.

NOTE

When **и** is used after **ш, ж** or **ц**, it is pronounced as if it were **ы**.

The letter **о** is used after **ш, ж, ч, щ, ц** only in stressed syllables; elsewhere **е** is used. This can be illustrated by the instrumental singular forms of the following nouns:

карандаш 'pencil' – **карандашом**, *but* **душ** 'shower' – **душом**
нож 'knife' – **ножом**, *but* **муж** 'husband' – **мужем**
врач 'doctor' – **врачом**, *but* **матч** '(football) match' – **матчем**
борщ 'borshch' – **борщом**, *but* **товарищ** 'comrade' – **товарищем**

For more on these endings *see* 2.6.1 and 2.6.2.

Exceptions to this rule are found in a few words of foreign origin and in a few surnames:

шоколад 'chocolate', **жокей** 'jockey', **Шостакович** 'Shostakovich'.

1.5.3 Use of **е** and **э**

The letter **э** is found mostly at the beginning of a word in foreign borrowings and foreign proper names:

эгоист 'egoist', **экономист** 'economist', **экология** 'ecology', **Эмма** 'Emma', **Эдинбург** 'Edinburgh'.

The letter **э** occurs in a small number of native Russian words such as:

это 'this (is)', **этот** 'this', **эх** 'oh'.

The letter **э** is used after a consonant in only a small number of Russian words of foreign origin and in the transcription of some foreign proper names:

мэр 'mayor', **сэр** 'sir', **рэп** 'rap (music)'; **Блэр** 'Blair', **Тэтчер** 'Thatcher'.

For the use of **э** to transcribe English **a**, *see* 1.6.5.

Elsewhere the letter **е** is used even after hard consonants. This sequence occurs only in words recently borrowed from foreign languages and in native Russian words after the consonants **ш, ж, ц**:

стюардесса 'stewardess', **регби** 'rugby', **Сент-Луис** 'Saint-Louis', **темп** 'pace', **женщина** 'woman', **шея** 'neck', **цель** 'aim'.

1.5.4 Use of **и** after **к, г, х**

The letter **ы** does not occur after the consonants **к, г, х**; instead **и** is used:

столы 'tables', *but* **ящики** 'boxes', **мозги** 'brains', **духи** 'perfume'.

1.5.5 The ending **-го (во)**

The ending **-го** is pronounced as [vo] when it occurs in the *genitive singular masculine* and *neuter* ending of *adjectives, pronouns* and *certain numeral forms*, such as **один**:

он 'he'	его [yivo]
тот 'that'	того [tavo]
кто 'who?'	кого [kavo]
что 'what?'	чего [chivo]
новый 'new'	нового [novəvə]
хороший 'good'	хорошего [kharoshəvə]

сѣний ' (dark) blue'	сѣнего [s'in'əvə]
трѣтѣий 'third'	трѣтьегѣго [tr'et'yəvə]
один 'one'	одногѣо [adnavo]

For more on these endings, *see* **Chapters 6, 7 and 8.**

The same discrepancy between pronunciation and spelling is found in the word **сегодѣня** (s'ivodn'ə) 'today'.

1.5.6 The spelling of certain prefixes

Normally the spelling of affixes remains unchanged regardless of the way in which pronunciation is affected by surrounding consonants. The prefixes **бѣз-**, **вз-**, **воз-**, **из-** and **раз-** form, however, an exception, since they are spelled **бѣс-**, **вѣс-**, **вос-**, **ис-**, **рас-** when they occur before an *unvoiced* consonant (**к**, **п**, **с**, **т**, **ф**, **ц**, **ч**, **ш**, **щ**):

бѣздѣумный 'thoughtless', *but бѣсѣстрастный* 'passionless';
вздрѣмнѣть 'to take a nap', *but вѣскипятѣть* 'to boil';
возрѣдѣть 'to revive', *but вѣспитѣть* 'to bring up';
издѣть 'to publish', *but испрѣвить* 'to correct';
разбѣдѣть 'to wake', *but расѣсыпать* 'to scatter'.

1.5.7 Use of capital letters

Capital letters in Russian are used in much the same way as they are in English. There are, however, some important differences that it is useful to note. In particular capital letters are not normally used in Russian for:

The first person singular pronoun **я** 'I':

Трудно повѣрить, но завтра я уже буду в Москвѣ.
 It's hard to believe it, but tomorrow I'll already be in Moscow.

Days of the week and names of months:

Я, навѣрное, приѣду в четвѣрг.
 I'll probably arrive on Thursday.

В июле и в августѣ здѣсь бывѣает ѣчень жарко.
 In July and August it can get very hot here.

Adjectives derived from names of countries and nouns denoting nationalities and the inhabitants of towns and cities:

В университетѣ я изучѣл англѣйскую литературу.
 At university I studied English literature.

В наѣшей гостѣнице много русских, но крѣме нас, кѣжется, нет никаких англѣчан.
 There are a lot of Russians in our hotel, but apart from us there don't seem to be any other English people.

Как и многѣе москвичѣ, онѣ рѣдко пользовѣлись своѣей машинѣй в чертѣ города.
 Like many Muscovites, they rarely used their car within the city limits.

For more on adjectives and nouns denoting nationality, *see* **10.1.8, 10.1.9 and 12.5.**

On the other hand it is customary in letters to use a capital letter for the second person pronouns **Вы** 'you' and **Ваш** 'your' when they are used as *polite singular* forms:

Жаль, что в Вашем письме Вы не рассказали о Вашей поездке в Китай.

It's a pity that in your letter you didn't tell me anything about your trip to China.

With titles and names of organisations and institutions of various sorts, books, plays, television programmes and the like, it is usual to use a capital letter only for the first word:

Министёрство культу́ры

'The Ministry of Culture'

Моско́вский госуда́рственный университе́т

'Moscow State University'

Большо́й теа́тр

'The Bolshoi Theatre'

«Незави́симая га́зета»

Nezavisimaia gazeta (the name of a newspaper)

«Кто хо́чет стать миллио́нером?»

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

Но́вый год

'New Year'

With geographical names, generic terms such as **мо́ре** 'sea' and **у́лица** 'street' are normally spelled with a small letter:

Чёрное мо́ре

The Black Sea

о́зеро Байка́л

Lake Baikal

у́лица Тве́рская

Tverskaia Street

Кра́сная пло́щадь

Red Square

It is normal to spell with a capital letter all words that form the names of countries, major geographical regions, international organisations and certain titles that are deemed worthy of particular respect:

Росси́йская Федера́ция

The Russian Federation

Се́верная Ирла́ндия

Northern Ireland

Восто́чная Сиби́рь

Eastern Siberia

Да́льний Восто́к

The Far East

Европе́йский Сою́з

The European Union

Госуда́рственная Ду́ма Росси́йской Федера́ции
The State Duma of the Russian Federation

День Побе́ды
Victory Day (9 May)

1.5.8 Use of inverted commas

The most common form of inverted commas used in print in Russian is «...». In handwriting these usually take the form of „...“. In general inverted commas are used more frequently in Russian than in English. In addition to titles of books, films, plays, newspapers, and so on (where italics are often used in English), inverted commas tend to be used for names of companies, rock bands, sports teams, brand names and even the names of the Moscow underground stations:

Лу́чше, коне́чно, чита́ть «Войну́ и мир» в оригина́ле.
It's better, of course, to read *War and Peace* in the original.

За́втра в киноте́атре «Иллюзио́н» пока́зывают филь́м «Броненосе́ц Потёмкин».
Tomorrow they're showing *Battleship Potemkin* in the *Illuzion* cinema.

Весно́й про́шлого го́да петербу́ргский футбо́льный клуб «Зе́нит» факти́чески переше́л под контро́ль компани́ «Га́зпром».
In the spring of last year Zenit, the St Petersburg football team was effectively taken over by Gazprom.

В шестидеся́тые го́ды «Битлз» бы́ли о́чень популя́рными в Советско́м Сою́зе, хотя́ их пла́стинки там не продава́лись.
In the 1960s the Beatles were very popular in the Soviet Union, although their records were not on sale there.

Ресто́ран «Пе́кин» нахо́дится недале́ко от метро́ «Маяко́вская».
The Peking restaurant is near the Mayakovskaia underground station.

On inverted commas in direct speech, see 21.8.1.

For the rules for declining words and phrases in inverted commas, see 11.1.3.

1.6 Transliteration and transcription

1.6.0 Introduction

In circumstances where it is either impossible or undesirable to reproduce Russian words in their original form, it is necessary to resort to *transliteration* or *transcription*. Transliteration means the substitution of Russian letters by their nearest English equivalents in such a way as to allow the reader to reconstruct the spelling of the Russian original. *Transcription* means the use of English letters to reproduce the sounds of the Russian original; its purpose is to enable the reader to reconstruct the pronunciation of the Russian original.

Except in special circumstances – for example, in guides to the pronunciation of Russian (as in the earlier sections of this chapter) – Russian is reproduced in English by means

of transliteration. It is recommended that learners of the language adopt a standard system of transliteration and try to use it as consistently as possible.

1.6.1 The Library of Congress system of transliteration

Until quite recently there were several systems of transliteration in common use, but since the 1980s what is known as the *Library of Congress* system has gradually come to be adopted for most purposes throughout the English-speaking world. It is this system that is used wherever transliterated forms appear in this book.

Library of Congress system: Table of transliteration

<i>Russian letter</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>Russian letter</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>Russian letter</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>
а	a	к	k	х	kh
б	b	л	l	ц	ts
в	v	м	m	ч	ch
г	g	н	n	ш	sh
д	d	о	o	щ	shch
е	e	п	p	ъ	"
ё	ë	р	r	ы	y
ж	zh	с	s	ь	'
з	z	т	t	э	è
и	i	у	u	ю	iu
й	i	ф	f	я	ia

NOTES

- (i) Where the letter *e* is used instead of *ë*, it is usually transliterated as **e**; therefore, **Горбачёв** would be transliterated as **Gorbachëv**, but **Горбачев** would be **Gorbachev**.
- (ii) The Library of Congress system has a number of ambiguities. The most important is that the same letter, **i**, is used for both **и** and **й**, so that both **бой** and **бон** are transliterated as **boi**.

For the use of the letter *e* in place of *ë*, see 1.5.1.

1.6.2 Examples of transliteration using the Library of Congress system

The following examples illustrate the Library of Congress system of transliteration:

Дмитрий Анатольевич Медведев	Dmitrii Anatol'evich Medvedev
Борис Николаевич Ельцин	Boris Nikolaevich El'tsin
Хрущёв	Khrushchëv
Толстой	Tolstoi
Достоевский	Dostoevskii
Чехов	Chekhov
Горький	Gor'kii
Маяковский	Maiakovskii
Татьяна	Tat'iana
Анастасия	Anastasiia
Владивосток	Vladivostok

Ярославль
Нижний Новгород
съезд
сестра
сёстры

Iaroslavl'
Nizhnii Novgorod
s''ezd
sestra
sëstry

1.6.3 Exceptions to the Library of Congress system

In some circumstances – for example, in formal academic writing – it is desirable to follow the Library of Congress system as closely and as consistently as possible. Elsewhere, however, some departures from the system may be admissible or even preferable.

In cases where non-standard characters are impossible or are not wanted **ѐ** can be replaced by **е** or **о**, and the character **'**, used to transliterate **ь**, can be omitted:

Горбачёв would be transliterated as **Gorbachev** or **Gorbachov**.

Горький would be transliterated as **Gorkii**.

With proper names it is sometimes desirable to use an English spelling that represents the pronunciation more closely than does the Library of Congress transliteration. In such cases:

Ельцин might be represented as **Yeltsin**.

Ярославль might be represented as **Yaroslavl**.

Some Russian proper names have an English spelling that has become generally accepted:

Чайковский (the composer) is almost invariably known in English as Tchaikovsky; this spelling is based on a nineteenth-century French transliteration.

1.6.4 The representation of English forms in Russian

Because of the complex and often eccentric relationship between spelling and pronunciation in English, *transliteration* does not really work for representing English words in Russian, and instead a system closer to *transcription* is normally used. There are, however, some points to note:

- 1 The model of pronunciation used is that of a British film actor of the 1930s. What this means is that **a** is often rendered by **е** or **э**, and **u** is often rendered by **a**.
- 2 Those who devise the transcription may not be aware of all of the eccentricities of English spelling and may therefore not reflect the exact pronunciation – for example, the name ‘Neil’ is often rendered as **Нейл**.
- 3 There may well be variations and inconsistencies. For example, forms used in some official documents, such as visas, may sometimes be closer to a transliteration than those encountered elsewhere.

The following conventions are used for letters indicating sounds that do not occur in Russian:

h (except when silent) is rendered by **г** or **х**
j (and the **g** as in **gem**) are rendered by **дж**
th (as in **think**) is rendered by **т**
th (as in **this**) is rendered by **т** or **з**

w is rendered by в or y

NOTES

- (i) The use of r for English 'h' is now rather old-fashioned and tends to be restricted to proper names that are well established, such as **Гарольд** for 'Harold'.
- (ii) English 'l', when it occurs at the end of a word or before a consonant, is often rendered by **ль**.
- (iii) English double letters tend to be rendered by double letters in Russian.

1.6.5

Examples of English names in Russian

Winston Churchill	Уинстон Черчилль	Sarah Butler	Сара Батлер
John Dunn	Джон Данн	Tony Blair	Тони Блэр
Harry Potter	Гарри Поттер	Anthony	Антони or Энтони
Frank	Фрэнк	Heather	Хезер or Хизер
Aberdeen	Абердин	Blackpool	Блэкпул
Bradford	Брадфорд	Edinburgh	Эдинбург
Glasgow	Глазго	Dublin	Дублин
New York	Иью-Йорк	Seattle	Сиэтл
Washington	Вашингтон	Perth	Перт
<i>(The) Times</i>	«Таймс»		

2

Nouns

2.0 Introduction

The Russian noun contains the following categories.

Number (2.1). This is a category that relates to quantity. Russian, like English, has two numbers: *singular* and *plural*.

Case (2.2). This category refers to different endings assumed by certain parts of speech as a means of indicating the particular grammatical function that the part of speech fulfils in a sentence. English (although only in certain pronouns) can distinguish three cases: a *subject* case ('he'), an *object* case ('him') and a *possessive* case ('his'); Russian *nouns, adjectives, pronouns* and *numerals* have six cases: *nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental* and *prepositional*.

Gender (2.3). This category is essentially a means of classifying nouns, although there is some link between *grammatical* and *biological* gender. Russian distinguishes three genders: *masculine, feminine* and *neuter*, although there are no distinctions of gender in the plural.

Animacy (2.4). In some circumstances Russian distinguishes between *animate* nouns, which refer to persons or animals, and *inanimate* nouns (all others).

2.1 Number

2.1.1 Singular and plural

The *singular* is used to denote *one* person, animal, object or concept, while the *plural* is used to indicate *more than one* of any of the above. Most nouns have both singular and plural forms.

2.1.2 Nouns that occur only in the singular

There are quite a few nouns which in Russian are used only in the *singular*. Those that require particular attention are the ones for which the normal English equivalent can occur either in the singular or in the plural. Such nouns include:

Certain *abstract* nouns:

борьба́	struggle	ра́зница	difference
---------	----------	----------	------------

The names of certain vegetables, berries and fruit, for example:

горо́х	peas	лу́к	onion(s)
морко́вь	carrot(s)	карто́фель, карто́шка	potatoes
изю́м	raisins	клу́бника	strawberries
мали́на	raspberries	виногра́д	grape(s)

NOTE The word **карто́шка** is characteristic of informal language.

Some nouns that fit into neither of the above categories:

ложь	lie
ору́жие	weapons
пла́мя	flame

2.1.3 Nouns used only in the plural

Some nouns that occur only in the *plural* denote objects that can be thought of as being made up of paired elements:

брю́ки	trousers
штаны́	trousers
трусы́, тру́сики	(under)pants, knickers
шо́рты	shorts
пла́вки	swimming trunks
ко́лготки	tights
но́жницы	scissors
щипцы́	tongs, pincers, tweezers

Other nouns that occur only in the plural are, however, less easy to explain:

дро́ва	firewood
дро́жди	yeast
обои́	wallpaper
по́минки	wake (for the dead)
са́ни	sledge
сли́вки	cream
су́тки	day, period of 24 hours
счё́ты	abacus
че́рнила	ink
щи́	type of cabbage soup

2.2 Case

2.2.1 The six cases

Although, as was noted above, English has the remains of a case system, the Russian system is much more complicated. Russian has six cases: *nominative*, *genitive*, *dative*, *accusative*, *instrumental* and *prepositional*. These names are for the most part arbitrary, and each case has in practice a wide range of functions; these are described in detail in **Chapter 3**.

NOTE There is more than one standard order for listing the different cases. That used above (and in the following sections) is the one preferred for grammars and reference works produced in Russia.

2.2.2 How the cases are indicated

The *case* in which a noun is used is indicated by the *ending*. As there are separate sets of endings for the *singular* and the *plural*, the ending of a noun gives information about both *case* and *number*.

The *nominative singular* (*nominative plural* for nouns that occur only in the plural) is the form under which nouns are listed in dictionaries.

The process of changing the endings associated with each noun in order to indicate the different cases is usually referred to as *declension*. Russian has several standard *declension types*, and the great majority of nouns belong to one or other of these. There are also some non-standard declension types, which group together relatively small numbers of nouns. In most instances (although by no means always), the remaining endings of any noun can be predicted from the *nominative singular*.

The different declension types are described in detail in 2.6–2.11.

Russian has a number of indeclinable nouns. These have the same ending for all case forms in both singular and plural.

Indeclinable nouns are described in detail in 2.13–2.14.

2.3 Gender

2.3.0 Introduction

Grammatical *gender* is a means of classifying nouns. Russian has three grammatical genders – *masculine*, *feminine* and *neuter* – and all nouns that can occur in the singular belong to one or other of these genders. There are no gender distinctions in the plural, and nouns that occur only in the plural do not belong to any grammatical gender.

2.3.1 Grammatical and biological gender

There is a partial match between *grammatical* and *biological gender*, in that nouns referring to male persons or animals are generally *masculine*, and nouns referring to female persons or animals tend to be *feminine*. All other nouns, however, can belong to any one of the three genders:

мужчина (masc.)	man	брат (masc.)	brother
лев (masc.)	lion	женщина (fem.)	woman
сестра́ (fem.)	sister	львица́ (fem.)	lioness
потоло́к (masc.)	ceiling	дверь (fem.)	door
окно́ (n.)	window	атеи́зм (masc.)	atheism
рели́гия (fem.)	religion	христиа́нство (n.)	Christianity

There are a very small number of neuter nouns that refer or can refer to persons or animals:

живо́тное	animal	лицо́	face; person
-----------	--------	-------	--------------

2.3.2 Determining grammatical gender

The only absolutely reliable indicator of grammatical gender is the ending of any *adjective* or *pronoun* that may accompany a *noun*:

хоро́ший мужчи́на good man; **-ий** is an ending that indicates *masculine* gender.

хоро́шая же́нщина good woman; **-ая** is an ending that indicates *feminine* gender.

хоро́шее сло́во good word; **-ее** is an ending that indicates *neuter* gender.

хоро́шие мужчи́ны	good men
хоро́шие же́нщины	good women
хоро́шие сло́ва	good words

In these examples **-ие** is an ending used for all nouns in the *plural*.

The endings of *adjectives* are described in detail in **Chapter 6**.

The endings of *pronouns* are described in detail in **Chapter 7**.

The question of *agreement* between *adjectives*, *pronouns* and *nouns* is examined in detail in **11.1**.

2.3.3 Grammatical gender and declension type

There is a very close relationship between *grammatical gender* and *declension type*:

Nouns which in the *nominative singular* end in a *consonant* or in **-й** are normally *masculine*:

сто́л	table	студе́нт	(male) student
ма́й	May (the month)	геро́й	hero

Nouns which in the *nominative singular* end in **-а** or **-я** (except **-мя**) are normally *feminine*:

кни́га	book	студе́нтка	(female) student
неде́ля	week	тётя	aunt

Nouns which in the *nominative singular* end in **-а** or **-я** and which refer to male persons are *masculine*:

дядя́	uncle	мужи́на	man
юноша́	youth, young man		

Nouns which in the *nominative singular* end in **-а** or **-я** and which can refer either to male or to female persons are *masculine* unless they refer specifically to a woman, in which case they are *feminine*:

левша́	left-hander	пья́ница	drunkard
---------------	-------------	-----------------	----------

Nouns which in the *nominative singular* end in **-о**, **-е**, **-ё** or **-мя** are normally *neuter*:

окно́	window	мо́ре	sea
здáние	building	копё́	spear
вре́мя	time		

The only nouns that can cause problems are those ending in **-ь**, since some are *masculine*, while others are *feminine*. For some nouns it is possible to work out what the gender will be.

Nouns ending in **-тель** or **-арь** and denoting someone who carries out a particular activity are *masculine*:

писа́тель	writer	председа́тель	chairman
врати́тель	goalkeeper		

Names of months are *masculine*:

январь	January	апрель	April
октябрь	October		

Abstract nouns ending in **-ость** or **-нь** are *feminine*:

радо́сть	joy	ста́рость	old age
боле́знь	illness	жизнь	life

Nouns ending in **-овь**, **-жь**, **-чь**, **-шь** or **-щь** are *feminine*:

кро́вь	blood	це́рковь	church
ро́жь	rye	мелочь	small change
ро́скошь	luxury	вещь	thing

With other nouns ending in **-ь** there are no reliable ways of predicting the gender. For example, the following are *masculine*:

автомобиль	car, motor vehicle	голубь	dove, pigeon
гость	guest	гусь	goose
день	day	дождь	rain
камень	stone	картофель	potatoes
Кремль	Kremlin	лебедь	swan
портфель	briefcase	ремень	strap
рояль	(grand) piano	рубль	rouble
словарь	dictionary	уголь	coal
шампунь	shampoo		

The following nouns are *feminine*:

дверь	door	кость	bone
лошадь	horse	мебель	furniture
очередь	queue	печень	liver
пыль	dust	роль	part, role
соль	salt	степь	steppe
цель	goal, aim	цепь	chain

The rules for determining the gender of *indeclinable* nouns and of *abbreviations* and *acronyms* are given in 2.13.2 and 2.14.2 respectively.

2.4

Animacy

Russian nouns are divided into *animate* and *inanimate* nouns. Animate nouns are those that denote human beings or animals. All other nouns are inanimate.

The importance of the distinction between animate and inanimate nouns is its effect on certain endings for the *accusative* case. In the *singular*, all *animate masculine* nouns

ending in a *consonant*, in **-й** or in **-ь** have an ending in the *accusative* that is identical to that of the *genitive*; all *inanimate masculine* nouns belonging to these declension types have an ending in the *accusative* that is identical to that of the *nominative*:

Animate

<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Gen.</i>
брат 'brother'	брата	брата
герой 'hero'	героя	героя
король 'king'	короля	короля
тигр 'tiger'	тигра	тигра
соловѣй 'nightingale'	соловьѣ	соловьѣ
лось 'elk'	лося	лося

Inanimate

<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Gen.</i>
стол 'table'	стол	стола́
поцелуй 'kiss'	поцелуй	поцелу́я
день 'day'	день	дня́

No other nouns are affected in the singular by the distinction between animate and inanimate nouns.

In the *plural* all animate nouns (regardless of the gender and the declension type in the singular) have an ending in the *accusative* that is identical to that of the *genitive*; all inanimate nouns have an ending in the *accusative* that is identical to that of the *nominative*:

Animate

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Acc. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
тигр 'tiger'	ти́гры	ти́гров	ти́гров
герой 'hero'	герои́	героев	героев
король 'king'	коро́ли	короле́й	короле́й
му́ха 'fly'	му́хи	мух	мух
судья́ 'judge'	судьи́	суде́й	суде́й
ло́шадь 'horse'	лошади́	лошаде́й	лошаде́й
лицо́ 'person'	лица́	лиц	лиц

Inanimate

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Acc. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
стол 'table'	сто́лы	сто́лы	сто́лов
день 'day'	дни́	дни́	дне́й
кни́га 'book'	кни́ги	кни́ги	кни́г
неде́ля 'week'	неде́ли	неде́ли	неде́ль
ко́сть 'bone'	ко́сти	ко́сти	ко́стей
по́ле 'field'	поля́	поля́	поле́й

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Acc. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
и́мя 'name'	име́на	име́на	имё́н
ли́цо 'face'	ли́ца	ли́ца	лиц

In the following sections the tables illustrating declension types will, where applicable, contain examples of both animate and inanimate nouns.

NOTES

- (i) The distinction between *animate* and *inanimate* nouns generally follows common-sense principles and presents few difficulties. Nevertheless, it may be noted that while **труп** 'corpse', is inanimate, **мертвец** 'dead man' is animate; **кукла** 'doll, puppet' is animate. **Ферзь** 'queen' (in chess) is a masculine animate noun.
- (ii) As the example of **лицо́** shows, some nouns can be either *animate* or *inanimate*, depending on the meaning: when **лицо́** means 'person', it is animate, but when it means 'face', it is inanimate. Similarly, when **Спартак** denotes 'Spartacus' (the leader of the Roman slave rebellion), it is animate; when it denotes 'Spartak' (the sports organisation) it is inanimate (when used in the latter sense it is normally written in inverted commas; see 1.5.8).

2.5

The fleeting vowel

2.5.0

Introduction

An important part in the Russian grammatical system is played by the so-called *fleeting vowel*. This is a vowel that is found in some forms of a word, but not in others. There are occasional exceptions, but normally the only vowels that can be fleeting are **е**, **ё** and **о**. Although examples of the fleeting vowel can be found elsewhere, this phenomenon is particularly important for the noun declension system.

For examples of the fleeting vowel in verbs and adjectives, see 4.5.3, 4.7.3, 4.7.13, 6.5.1.

2.5.1

The fleeting vowel with masculine nouns ending in a consonant, -й or -ь

The fleeting vowel occurs with a large number of masculine nouns ending in a consonant, -й or -ь. The vowel is present in the *nominative singular* (and *accusative singular* if the noun is *inanimate*), but absent in all other forms of the noun. The fleeting vowel is particularly likely to occur with nouns ending in -ец, -ок, -ёк or -ей, although it is by no means restricted to these nouns:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Gen. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>
оте́ц 'father'	отца́	отцы́
огуре́ц 'cucumber'	огурца́	огурцы́
рыно́к 'market'	рынка́	рынки́
ту́рок 'Turk'	ту́рка	ту́рки
ве́тер 'wind'	ве́тра	ве́тры
огонь 'fire'	огня́	огни́
козёл 'billy-goat'	козла́	козлы́

With nouns ending in **-ёк** (after a consonant) or **-ей**, the fleeting vowel is replaced by a *soft sign* (**ь**):

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Gen. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>
конёк 'skate'	конька́	коньки́
воробей 'sparrow'	воробья́	воробьи́

With nouns ending in **-ёк** (after a vowel) the fleeting vowel is replaced by **-й-**:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Gen. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>
пайёк 'ration'	пайка́	пайки́

With the noun **за́яц** 'hare' in all forms except the nominative singular **-я-** is replaced by **-й-**:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Gen. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>
за́яц	за́йца	за́йцы

2.5.2

The fleeting vowel with nouns ending in **-а, -я, -о, -е, -ё**

With nouns ending in **-а, -я, -о, -е, -ё**, a *fleeting vowel* sometimes appears in the *genitive plural*. This occurs with most (though not all) nouns which have a series of *two or more* consonants immediately preceding the ending:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
ло́жка 'spoon'	ло́жки	ло́жек
ку́хня 'kitchen'	ку́хни	ку́хонь
о́кно 'window'	о́кна	о́кон
се́рдце 'heart'	се́рдца	се́рдц

In some instances, the sequence of two consonants may be separated by **-ь-**:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
тю́рма 'prison'	тю́рьмы	тю́рем
пи́сьмо 'letter'	пи́сьма	пи́сем

The rules for determining which vowel is used are as follows:

- (i) After **к, г, х** only **-о-** is used; for examples, see **ку́хня** and **о́кно** above.
- (ii) The vowel **-о-** is used before **-к, -г, -х** unless the preceding consonant is **ж, ц, ч**, or **ш**:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
ска́зка 'fairy tale'	ска́зки	ска́зок
ру́чка 'handle', 'pen'	ру́чки	ру́чек

(See also **ло́жка** above.)

- (iii) In all other instances either **-е-** or **-ѐ-** is used, depending on the stress; **-ѐ-** is used when the stress is on the fleeting vowel:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
сестра́ 'sister'	сёстры	сестёр
серьга́ 'earring'	сёргии	серёг
крёсло 'armchair'	крёсла	крёсел

NOTE: The vowel **-е-** is used before **-ц** even in stressed syllables; see the example **се́рдце** above.

A *soft sign* (**ь**) before **я**, **е** or **ѐ** is usually replaced by **-е-** or **-и-**; the former normally occurs under stress:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
статья́ 'article'	статья́и	стате́й
свинья́ 'pig'	свинья́и	свине́й
сиде́нье 'seat'	сиде́нья	сиде́ний
копье́ 'spear'	копья́	копий

When **-й-** appears before the last consonant it is usually replaced by **-е-**:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
копе́йка 'kopeck'	копе́йки	копе́ек

NOTE: The genitive plural of **яйцо́** 'egg' is **яи́ц**; the genitive plural of **война́** 'war' is **войн**.

Not all nouns in these classes with a sequence of consonants immediately before the ending have the fleeting vowel in the genitive plural. Nouns that do not have the fleeting vowel include those ending in **-ство**, **-сто**, **-та**, **-да** as well as some others that are less predictable:

<i>Nom. sing.</i>	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	<i>Gen. pl.</i>
веще́ство 'substance'	веще́ства	веще́ств
ме́сто 'place'	ме́ста	ме́ст
ка́рта 'map'	ка́рты	карт
звезда́ 'star'	звёзды	звёзд
со́лнце 'sun'	со́лнца	со́лнц

2.5.3 The fleeting vowel with feminine nouns ending in -Ь

Some nouns, for example, **ложь** 'lie', **рожь** 'rye', **любовь** 'love' and **церковь** 'church', have a *fleeting vowel* that is present in the *nominative*, *accusative* and *instrumental singular*, but absent in all other forms:

Nom./acc. sing.	ложь	рожь	любовь	церковь
Gen./dat./prep. sing.	лжи	ржи	любви	церкви
Instr. sing.	ложью	рожьё	любовью	церковью
Nom./acc. pl.	—	—	любви	церкви

NOTE When **Любовь** occurs as a *forename*, it does not have a *fleeting vowel*:

Nom./acc. sing.	Любовь	Gen./dat./prep. sing.	Любови
-----------------	---------------	-----------------------	---------------

Examples of nouns containing a fleeting vowel will be included in the tables in the following sections.

2.6 Masculine nouns ending in a consonant, -Й or -Ь

2.6.1 Masculine nouns ending in a consonant other than -К, -Г, -Х, -Ц, -Ж, -Ч, -Ш, -Щ

The following tables give examples of:
 an *inanimate* noun (**стол** 'table');
 an *animate* noun (**слон** 'elephant');
 a noun with a *fleeting vowel* (**осёл** 'donkey').

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Nom.	стол	сто́лы
Gen.	стола́	сто́лов
Dat.	столу́	стола́м
Acc.	стол	сто́лы
Inst.	сто́лом	стола́ми
Prep.	столе́	стола́х

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Nom.	слон	сло́ны
Gen.	слона́	сло́нов
Dat.	слону́	слона́м
Acc.	слона́	сло́нов
Inst.	слоно́м	слона́ми
Prep.	слоне́	слона́х

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Nom.	осёл	ослы́
Gen.	осла́	осло́в
Dat.	ослу́	осла́м