RU

LANGUAGE COURSE

# Russian Alphabet 1

12 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

RUSSIAN ALPHABET 1

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# Russian Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · Meet Cyrillic

## Кириллица — Meet Cyrillic

*Russian is written in the **Cyrillic alphabet**, and it is easier than it looks. It is a true alphabet: one letter for one sound, with very few surprises. A few letters are old friends from English or Greek, a few look English but sound different (the trap, and the fun), and the rest are new shapes. By the end of this chapter you will know how the alphabet is organised and you will have learned your first three letters, **А К М**, enough to read four real Russian words. Every letter is shown with its sound, and the stressed part of each word is shown in CAPITALS in the English respelling.*

## Where Cyrillic Comes From

- **Not made by Cyril.** The script is named after Saint Cyril, but he did not invent it. Cyril, possibly with his brother Methodius, created an older alphabet called Glagolitic, around the year 863. Cyrillic was developed later, most scholars think by Cyril's students at the Preslav Literary School in Bulgaria, in the 890s.
- **Mostly Greek.** It was based on the uncial (capital-style) Greek alphabet, with some letters kept from Glagolitic for sounds that Greek did not have. That is why some Cyrillic letters look Greek.
- **The oldest text.** The earliest known Cyrillic inscription dates from 921, found near Preslav in what is now Bulgaria.
- **One of many languages.** Cyrillic later spread and was adapted to write many other languages. Russian uses its own version of it.

## The Russian Alphabet at a Glance

*The modern Russian alphabet has **33 letters**:*

| Kind | How many | What they are |
|---|---|---|
| Vowel letters | 10 | а е ё и о у ы э ю я |
| Consonant letters | 21 | the rest, except the two signs below (some sources count й as a semivowel and give 20) |
| Signs | 2 | ъ (the hard sign) and ь (the soft sign): they have no sound of their own |

*The 33-letter form dates from a spelling reform in 1918; an alphabet of 35 letters had been approved in 1917.*

## Capitals, small letters and print

*Like English, Russian has capital and small letters, and each letter is shown here as a pair: **А а**. In this course you learn the **printed** letters, the ones you see on signs, in books and on a screen. Russian handwriting (cursive) uses some different shapes, and it is taught later in Russian Alphabet 2.*

### How this course teaches the alphabet

- **Three letters a chapter**, each with its sound, an English respelling and a memory hook.
- **Friends first.** This chapter and the next teach the letters that look and sound as you expect (А К М О Т). Then come the *false friends*, letters that look English but are not (В Н Р С У Х), and then the new shapes.
- **Read real words early.** A cumulative *Read it* list uses only letters you have already learned.

## Before the First Letters: Stress

*In a Russian word with more than one syllable, one syllable is **stressed**: it is said louder and longer. Two facts matter from the start:*

- **Stress is free.** It can fall on any syllable, so there is no rule to predict it. You learn the stress along with each word.
- **It is not marked in ordinary Russian text.** Books and signs do not show it. Learners' materials, including this course, put an **acute accent** over the stressed vowel (for example ма́ма) and the respelling shows the stressed syllable in CAPITALS.

*Stress also changes how vowels sound: an unstressed vowel is weaker. You will hear it already in the word ма́ма below; the rules for it are the subject of Russian Alphabet 2, so for now just copy the respelling.*

## Your First Three Letters — А К М

*These three are **true friends**: they look like English letters and sound close to them. The capitals are the English shapes, and the small letters к and м are shrunken capitals (the small а is the familiar small a).*

# А а

**a**

like the "a" in *father* ("ah") when stressed

**Memory hook:** it is the first letter of the alphabet, and it looks just like the English A, a roof with a bar. Say "ah" as if the doctor were looking at your throat.

# К к

**k**

like the "k" in *skip*: a "k" with no puff of breath

**Memory hook:** the letter is an English K, so the sound is the one you expect; the small к is the capital shrunk down. Say it without the little puff of air you add in "key".

# М м

**m**

like the "m" in *mum*

**Memory hook:** the capital M is the English M, two mountains, and it says "m". The small м is the same two mountains made smaller.

**Writing and Saying**

This course does not teach handwriting yet, so copy the printed shapes slowly, one at a time, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud each time. Write each pair five times on paper. Say *ah · k · m* out loud, then in other orders (*m, ah, k*), until the sounds come without thinking about the shapes.

## Read It — Your First Words

*With just these three letters you can already read real Russian.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | а | AH | and, but | *one letter, one word; a small linking word* |
| 2 | как | KAHK | how | *к + а + к: three letters, one syllable* |
| 3 | мак | MAHK | poppy | *м + а + к: the flower, and the poppy seed* |
| 4 | ма́ма | MAH-muh | mum, mother | *stress on the first syllable; the last а is weaker, like "uh"* |

**Watch Out: One Letter, One Sound**

Russian does not spell the same sound several ways, the way English does ("see, sea, ceiling"). When you meet a letter you know, you know its sound: *как* is k-a-k, not "cack" or "kack". The traps come from letters that *look* English but are not, and you meet them in Chapter 3.

**Not Yet Verified**

The history of Cyrillic (Cyril and Methodius, Glagolitic, the Preslav school in the 890s, the inscription of 921), the number of letters (33, split 10 vowels, 21 consonants, 2 signs) and the 1918 reform come from web searches that returned encyclopaedia and reference pages (see the sources below), not a textbook, and I did not read the Wikipedia article itself. The words а, как, мак and ма́ма with their meanings and stress, the English respellings, the "no puff of breath" description of к, and the weaker unstressed a are from general knowledge: the searches did not return a dictionary entry for them. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

Search results on Cyrillic's origin (Wikipedia, "Early Cyrillic alphabet"; the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' *Bulgarian alphabets* page; Omniglot; the New World Encyclopedia); Wikiversity and Wikibooks pages on the Russian alphabet; a search on free and unmarked stress in Russian.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** How many letters does the modern Russian alphabet have, and how many are vowel letters, consonant letters and signs?

▼ Show answer

33 letters: 10 vowel letters, 21 consonant letters and 2 signs (ъ and ь).

**2.** Read these aloud: а · как · мак · ма́ма

▼ Show answer

АН · КАНК · МАНК · МАН-muh ("and/but", "how", "poppy", "mum").

**3.** Is the stress of a Russian word always on the same syllable? Is it shown in ordinary text?

▼ Show answer

No: stress is free, so it can fall on any syllable and has to be learned with the word. And it is not marked in ordinary Russian text; only learners' materials show it, with an acute accent.

**4.** Which three letters did you learn, and which of them looks and sounds almost the same as its English twin?

▼ Show answer

А, К and М. All three are "true friends": they look like the English letters A, K and M and sound close to them (the к has no puff of breath, as in "skip").

**5.** Write in Cyrillic: *how* · *poppy* · *and/but*

▼ Show answer

как · мак · а

**Coming Up in Chapter 2**

You know the first three friends. Next come three more: **О Т Е**. О and Т are friends again, and Е is a first small surprise: it looks like an English E but says "ye". With six letters you can already read more words, such as кот ("cat") and то ("that").

# Друзья — More Friends

*Chapter 1 gave you **А К М**. This chapter adds **О Т Е**: two more true friends, and one letter that looks like an English letter but already makes a different sound, a gentle first warning of what is coming in Chapter 3. With six letters you can read eight real words by the end.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | А К М | а к м |
| 2 | О Т Е | а к м<br>о т е |

## Your Next Three Letters — О Т Е

### О о

**o**

like the "o" in *more* or *for* ("oh"), but short and pure: do not let it glide into "oo" as English does in "go"

**Memory hook:** it is a round mouth, and the English O is a round mouth too. The small о is just a smaller circle. Make your lips a circle and say "oh" without moving them.

### Т т

**t**

like the "t" in *stop*: a "t" with no puff of breath, with the tongue against the back of the teeth

**Memory hook:** the capital Т is the English T, a table with one leg. The small т is the same table, only smaller. Say it without the puff of air you put into "tea".

### Е е

**ye**

like the "ye" in *yes* ("yeh") when stressed

**Memory hook:** it looks like an English E, but it is the "ye" letter: think of a *ye*llow E. Do not read it as the "eh" of "egg" at the start of a word; it begins with a "y".

**Watch Out: е Is Not an English E**

The letter looks like an English E, but at the start of a word it says **ye** (as in "yes"). So a word that starts with *е* starts with a "y" sound. After a consonant, the same letter says "ye" too, and it also makes that consonant *softer*, which you hear in те́ма (TYEH-muh, with a "ty" rather than a plain "t"). Chapter 9 explains this softening properly; for now, copy the respelling.

**Writing and Saying**

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. Then say all six friends in a row, *ah, k, m, oh, t, ye*, and then in a different order, until the sounds come without thinking about the shapes.

## Read It — Eight Words

*With the six letters of Chapters 1 and 2 you can read all of these. The first four are from Chapter 1; the other four are new.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ма́ма | MAH-muh | mum, mother | *from Chapter 1* |
| 2 | как | KAHK | how | *from Chapter 1* |
| 3 | мак | MAHK | poppy | *from Chapter 1* |
| 4 | кот | KOHT | (male) cat | *к + о + т* |
| 5 | там | TAHM | there | *т + а + м* |
| 6 | так | TAHK | so, like this | *т + а + к* |
| 7 | кто | KTOH | who | *к + т + о: two consonants in a row, with no vowel between them: say the k and t together* |
| 8 | те́ма | TYEH-muh | topic, theme | *stress on the first syllable; the last a is weak, like "uh"; the m is soft* |

**Watch Out: Short Words, Short Vowels**

The one-syllable words above (*кот, там, так, кто*) have their stress on the only vowel, so the vowel sounds in full. In longer words, the vowel *before* the stress is weaker: you already heard this with the last a of ма́ма. The rules for it belong to Russian Alphabet 2, so just copy the respellings.

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of о, т and е, the "no puff of breath" description of т, the tongue position, the softening of the consonant before е and the weakened unstressed a are from general knowledge; I did not read a pronunciation source for this chapter. The words кот, там, так, кто, те́ма (meanings, stress and respellings) are also from general knowledge: no dictionary entry was consulted. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** Read these aloud: КОТ · ТАМ · ТАК · КТО

▼ Show answer

КОНТ · ТАНМ · ТАНК · КТОН ("cat", "there", "so", "who").

**2.** Which of the three new letters looks like an English letter but does not sound like it, and what does it say?

▼ Show answer

E. It looks like an English E but says "ye" (as in "yes") when stressed.

**3.** Read aloud and say what it means: ТЕ́МА

▼ Show answer

TYEH-muh: "topic, theme". The stress is on the first syllable and the т is soft.

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *cat* · *who* · *there*

▼ Show answer

кот · кто · там

**5.** Chapter 1 words: write *mum* and *poppy* in Cyrillic, with the stress mark on the first.

▼ Show answer

ма́ма · мак

**Coming Up in Chapter 3**

Now the false friends begin. **В Н Р** all look like English letters, and none of them sounds like its English twin: в says "v", н says "n" and р says "r". Do not read them as English, or you will read *нет* as "heT"!

# Ложные друзья — False Friends

*So far every letter has sounded roughly as it looks. Now comes the part that makes Cyrillic look hard and is easy once you have been warned: some letters **look exactly like English letters but say something else**. They are called false friends. This chapter has three, **В Н Р**, and Chapter 4 has three more. The rule is simple: do not read them as English; read them as Russian.*

| Looks like | It is the Russian letter | It says |
|---|---|---|
| B | **В в** | v |
| H | **Н н** | n |
| P | **Р р** | r |

*Letters known so far: **а к м о т е** (Chapters 1 and 2), and now **в н р**.*

## Your Next Three Letters — В Н Р

### В в

**v**

like the "v" in *vet*

**Memory hook:** it is shaped like a B, but it is the V of *vodka*: the Russian word for vodka, водка, begins with this letter (you will read the rest of it in Chapter 5). The small в is a smaller version of the same

### Н н

**n**

like the "n" in *net*

**Memory hook:** it looks like an H, a ladder, but it says "n": the first sound of *нет* ("no"), which you will read below. Think "N for *nyet*": the little bar across the middle is the diagonal stroke of the English N laid flat.

### Р р

**r**

a tapped or rolled "r", made with the tip of the tongue, like the "r" in Spanish *pero*

**Memory hook:** it looks like a P, but it is an R: it begins the word *Россия* (Russia), whose first letter is this one (you will read the rest in a later chapter).

shape. If you read it as a B, say "v" instead.

The small н is a smaller capital H.

The tongue taps the ridge behind the teeth, not the English "r" curled in the mouth. The small p has the same shape as the English small p, but it says "r".

**Watch Out: B, H, P**

These three are the main traps of the alphabet. Say them aloud as the Russian sounds: *B = v, H = n, P = r*. A word like *вот* looks like "bot" and is read VOHT. A word like *нет* looks like "Het" and is read NYET. A word like *рот* looks like "pot" and is read ROHT.

**Writing and Saying**

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the Russian sound aloud. Then read this row out loud, slowly: *в, н, р, о, т, е*, and say its sounds ("v, n, r, oh, t, ye"). It is a good habit to say the sound that you want *before* you let the English letter name into your head.

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the nine letters of Chapters 1 to 3 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | он | OHN | he | *о + н* |
| 2 | на | NAH | on, onto | *н + а* |
| 3 | нет | NYET | no | *н + е + т: е says "ye"* |
| 4 | вот | VOHT | here is, there is | *в + о + т: not "bot"* |
| 5 | рот | ROHT | mouth | *р + о + т: not "pot"* |
| 6 | метр | MYEHTR | metre | *м + е + т + р: the same word as English, with the Russian sounds* |

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | март | MAHRT | March | *м + а + р + т* |
| 8 | торт | TOHRT | cake | *т + о + р + т* |
| 9 | ка́рта | KAHR-tuh | map, card | *stress on the first syllable; the last a is weak, like "uh"* |
| 10 | она́ | uh-NAH | she | *stress on the second syllable; the unstressed o sounds weak, like "uh"* |

**Watch Out: Unstressed o**

In *она́* the first o is *not* stressed, so it does not sound like the full "oh" of *он* or *рот*: it sounds closer to "uh". This is the weakening of unstressed vowels, which Russian Alphabet 2 teaches properly. For now, the respelling tells you what to say.

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of в, н and р, the description of the tapped р, the Spanish comparison, the words and their meanings (он, на, нет, вот, рот, метр, март, торт, ка́рта, она́), stress and respellings, the origins of the memory hooks (водка, Россия, нет), and the weak unstressed о and а are all from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? В · Н · Р

▼ Show answer

В says "v", Н says "n" and Р says "r" (not the English B, H and P that they look like).

**2.** Read aloud: вот · рот · нет · март

▼ Show answer

VOHT · ROHT · NYET · MAHRT ("here is", "mouth", "no", "March").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: торт · метр · ка́рта

▼ Show answer

TOHRT ("cake") · MYEHTR ("metre") · KAHR-tuh ("map, card").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *he* · *no* · *mouth*

▼ Show answer

он · нет · рот

**5.** Which of the words you read in this chapter has its stress on the second syllable, and what happens to the first vowel?

▼ Show answer

она́ (uh-NAH, "she"). The stress is on the last syllable, and the unstressed o sounds weak, like "uh".

**Coming Up in Chapter 4**

Three more false friends: **С У Х**. С looks like an English C but says "s"; у looks like an English Y but says "oo"; and х looks like an X but says "kh", like the "ch" of Scottish *loch*. With them you can read new words such as *сто* ("a hundred").

# Ещё ложные друзья — More False Friends

*Chapter 3 gave you the first three false friends, **В Н Р**. This chapter finishes them with **С У Х**: a letter that looks like C but says "s", a letter that looks like Y but says "oo", and a letter that looks like X but makes a sound English has lost, the "kh" of Scottish loch. After this chapter you know twelve letters, and you will be reading ten new words.*

| Looks like | It is the Russian letter | It says |
|---|---|---|
| C | **С с** | s |
| Y | **У у** | oo |
| X | **Х х** | kh |

*Letters known so far: **а к м о т е в н р** (Chapters 1 to 3), and now **с у х**: twelve in all.*

## Your Next Three Letters — С У Х

### С с

**s**

like the "s" in *sit*, always: never the "k" of *cat*

**Memory hook:** it is a C, a curled snake, and the snake hisses: *sss*. The Russian letter С never says "k": it always hisses. The small с is the capital shrunk.

### У у

**oo**

like the "oo" in *moon* ("oo"), with rounded lips

**Memory hook:** it is shaped like a Y, and the sound is the "oo" at the end of English *you*: round your lips, and the letter says *oo*. It is also a word by itself: *у* means "at" or "by" in the sense "at someone's place".

### Х х

**kh**

like the "ch" in Scottish *loch* or German *Bach*: a rough breath from the back of the mouth

**Memory hook:** an X marks the spot, and the spot is the back of your throat, where you scratch out the "kh" of *loch*. It is not "ks" as in English *box*, and it

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | The small y has a tail below the line. | is not a plain "k". The small x is the capital shrunk. |

**Watch Out: C, Y, X**

The three new traps, to say out loud: *С = s, У = oo, Х = kh*. A word like *сок* looks like "cok" and is read SOHK. A word like *мут* looks like "tyt" and is read TOOT. A word like *хор* looks like "xop" and is read KHOHR. Together with Chapter 3's false friends, **В Н Р С У Х** are the six letters to say twice before reading any new word.

**Writing and Saying**

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the Russian sound aloud. Then read the six false friends in a row, *в, н, р, с, у, х*, and say them as "v, n, r, s, oo, kh". For *х*, practise the Scottish "loch" sound on its own: breathe out roughly from the back of the mouth.

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the twelve letters of Chapters 1 to 4 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | сто | STOH | a hundred | *с + т + о: not "sto" as in "stop"* |
| 2 | сок | SOHK | juice | *с + о + к: an "s", not a "k"* |
| 3 | нос | NOHS | nose | *н + о + с: not "hoc"* |
| 4 | тут | TOOT | here | *т + у + т: the "oo" is long* |
| 5 | тур | TOOR | tour | *т + у + р: a loanword, "tour"* |
| 6 | хор | KHOHR | choir | *х + о + р: not "xop"* |
| 7 | мох | MOHKH | moss | *м + о + х: ends with the "loch" sound* |

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | страх | STRAHKH | fear | *c + m + p + a + x: three consonants in a row at the start* |
| 9 | у́тро | OO-truh | morning | *stress on the first syllable; the last o is weak, like "uh"* |
| 10 | метро́ | mih-TROH | metro, underground | *stress on the last syllable; the unstressed e sounds weak, like "ih"* |

**Watch Out: Unstressed e**

In *метро́* the first e is not stressed, so it does not say the full "yeh" you learned in Chapter 2: it sounds weak, closer to "ih". As with o and a, the weakening of unstressed vowels is taught in Russian Alphabet 2, so for now copy the respelling.

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of c, y and x, the comparison of x with Scottish *loch* and German *Bach*, the words and their meanings (сто, сок, нос, тут, тур, хор, мох, страх, у́тро, метро́), stress and respellings, the "y means at/by" note, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

# Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? С · У · Х

▼ Show answer

С says "s", У says "oo" and Х says "kh", the rough "ch" of Scottish *loch*.

**2.** Read aloud: сок · нос · тут · хор

▼ Show answer

SOHK · NOHS · TOOT · KHOHR ("juice", "nose", "here", "choir").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: страх · мох · у́тро

▼ Show answer

STRAHKH ("fear") · MOHKH ("moss") · OO-truh ("morning").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *a hundred* · *choir* · *here*

▼ Show answer

сто · хор · тут

**5.** Name the six false friends of Chapters 3 and 4, with the English letter each looks like and the sound it really says.

▼ Show answer

В (looks like B) says "v"; Н (looks like H) says "n"; Р (looks like P) says "r"; С (looks like C) says "s"; У (looks like Y) says "oo"; Х (looks like X) says "kh".

**Coming Up in Chapter 5**

The false friends are done. Now the *new shapes* begin: **Б Г Д**, which say "b", "g" and "d". Their shapes are new, but their sounds are the familiar ones. You will be able to read *дом* ("house") and *год* ("year") straight away.

# Новые формы — New Shapes

*The false friends are behind you. From here the letters look unlike English ones, and that is easier than it sounds: with no English twin to confuse you, each new shape just says its sound. This chapter has three letters that say familiar sounds in unfamiliar shapes, **Б Г Д**: "b", "g" and "d". After it you know fifteen letters, and you will meet your first words with a "b", a "g" and a "d".*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–2 | А К М<br>О Т Е | а к м<br>о т е |
| 3–4 | В Н Р<br>С У Х | а к м<br>о т е<br>в н р<br>с у х |
| 5 | Б Г Д | а к м<br>о т е<br>в н р<br>с у х<br>б г д |

# Your Next Three Letters — Б Г Д

Б б

Г г

Д д

## b

like the "b" in *bar*

**Memory hook:** the capital Б is a B whose top bulge has been cut off and replaced with a flat roof, so it has only *one* bump. The small б looks like a 6 with a flat top, and the letter begins *брат* ("brother"), which you will read below.

## g

like the "g" in *go*: always hard, never like the "g" of *gem*

**Memory hook:** it is a goalpost corner, a vertical post with a bar across the top, and *g* is for *goal*. It is the same shape as the Greek capital gamma, the letter that English G descends from. The small г is the same shape, smaller.

## d

like the "d" in *door*, with the tongue against the back of the teeth

**Memory hook:** the capital Д is a little house: a triangle roof with two feet underneath, and it begins *дом*, "house" (below). It looks like the Greek capital delta with legs added. The small д is a smaller house.

### Watch Out: Б and B

Б and B can look alike at a glance, and they are not the same letter. **B** has two bumps and says *v* (Chapter 3). **Б** has a flat roof and one bump and says *b*. The word *брат* ("brother") starts with Б, and *вода́* ("water") starts with B.

### Watch Out: A Final д or г

At the end of a word, Russian says д like a "t" and г like a "k": *год* sounds like GOHT, and *друг* sounds like DROOK. The respellings below show what you hear. The full rule about voiced and voiceless consonants belongs to Russian Alphabet 2; for now, copy the respelling.

### Writing and Saying

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. For д, draw the house: a roof, then the two feet. Then say the three together, *b, g, d*, and in another order, *d, b, g*, until the shapes and the sounds are linked.

# Read It — Ten New Words

*With the fifteen letters of Chapters 1 to 5 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | да | DAH | yes | *д + а* |
| 2 | дом | DOHM | house | *д + о + м* |
| 3 | год | GOHT | year | *г + о + д: the final д sounds like "t"* |
| 4 | два | DVAH | two | *д + в + а: the "dv" is said together* |
| 5 | друг | DROOK | friend | *д + р + у + г: the final г sounds like "k"* |
| 6 | брат | BRAHT | brother | *б + р + а + т* |
| 7 | банк | BAHNK | bank | *б + а + н + к: a loanword, "bank"* |
| 8 | вода́ | vuh-DAH | water | *stress on the last syllable; the unstressed o sounds weak, like "uh"* |
| 9 | го́род | GOH-ruht | city, town | *stress on the first syllable; the last д sounds like "t"* |
| 10 | до́ктор | DOHK-tuhr | doctor | *stress on the first syllable; the last o is weak, like "uh"* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of б, г and д, the Greek letter comparisons (gamma and delta), the final-д and final-г rule, the words and their meanings (да, дом, год, два, друг, брат, банк, вода́, го́род, до́ктор), stress and respellings, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Б · Г · Д

▼ Show answer

Б says "b", Г says "g" (hard, as in *go*) and Д says "d".

**2.** Read aloud: да · дом · брат · банк

▼ Show answer

DAH · DOHM · BRAHT · BAHNK ("yes", "house", "brother", "bank").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: год · друг · го́род

▼ Show answer

GOHT ("year") · DROOK ("friend") · GOH-ruht ("city, town"). The final д and г sound like "t" and "k".

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *two* · *water* · *doctor*

▼ Show answer

два · вода́ · до́ктор

**5.** How do you tell Б from В, and what does each say?

▼ Show answer

В has two bumps and says "v"; Б has a flat roof and one bump and says "b".

**Coming Up in Chapter 6**

Three more new shapes: **З Л П**, which say "z", "l" and "p". With them you can read *пол* ("floor") and *ла́мпа* ("lamp"), and it will be your longest word list yet.

# Ещё новые формы — More New Shapes

*Three more shapes with familiar sounds: **З Л П**, which say "z", "l" and "p". After this chapter you know eighteen of the 33 letters, more than half the alphabet, and you can read a good number of everyday words. Two of the three have Greek ancestors you may recognise from maths and science: Л is like lambda and П is like pi.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–4 | А К М О Т Е В Н Р С У Х | 12 letters |
| 5 | Б Г Д | 15 letters |
| 6 | З Л П | а к м о т е в н р с у х б г д з л п: 18 letters |

# Your Next Three Letters — З Л П

# З з

**z**

like the "z" in *zoo*

**Memory hook:** it looks like the number 3, and a 3 is a Z with its corners rounded: say "zzz". The small з is a smaller 3.

# Л л

**l**

like the "l" in *lamp*, with the tip of the tongue just behind the upper teeth

**Memory hook:** the capital Л is a little tent, a roof with the left leg curving out, much like the Greek capital lambda. L is the first letter of *ла́мпа* ("lamp"), which you will read below. The small л is the same tent, smaller.

# П п

**p**

like the "p" in *spin*: a "p" with no puff of breath

**Memory hook:** it is a doorway, a bar on two posts, the same shape as the Greek capital pi. It begins *пол* ("floor"), which you see below. The small п is the same doorway, smaller.

### Watch Out: П, Н and Р

Three letters that are easy to mix up. **П** is a doorway with no bar and says *p*. **Н** has a bar across the middle and says *n* (Chapter 3). **Р** looks like an English P, has a loop at the top and says *r* (Chapter 3). So *пол* is POHL, and *рот* is ROHT, and *нос* is NOHS.

### Watch Out: A Final б

You met the rule in Chapter 5: at the end of a word a voiced consonant is said like its voiceless partner. The same holds for б, which is said like a "p" at the end: *зуб* ("tooth") is read ZOOP. The full rule belongs to Russian Alphabet 2, so for now copy the respelling.

### Writing and Saying

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. Then say the three together, *z, l, p*, and in another order, *p, z, l*. Finally cover the letters on the chart above and write the 18 letters you know, saying each sound as you write it.

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the eighteen letters of Chapters 1 to 6 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | пол | POHL | floor | *п + о + л* |
| 2 | зал | ZAHL | hall | *з + а + л* |
| 3 | зуб | ZOOP | tooth | *з + у + б: the final б sounds like "p"* |
| 4 | лук | LOOK | onion | *л + у + к* |
| 5 | стол | STOHL | table | *с + т + о + л* |
| 6 | папа | PAH-puh | dad | *stress on the first syllable; the last a is weak, like "uh"* |
| 7 | луна́ | loo-NAH | moon | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 8 | ла́мпа | LAHM-puh | lamp | *stress on the first syllable* |
| 9 | зо́лото | ZOH-luh-tuh | gold | *stress on the first syllable; the two later o are weak, like "uh"* |
| 10 | лето | LYEH-tuh | summer | *e says "ye" and makes the л soft; the last o is weak* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of з, л and п, the Greek comparisons (lambda and pi), the final-б rule, the words and their meanings (пол, зал, зуб, лук, стол, па́па, луна́, ла́мпа, зо́лото, ле́то), stress and respellings, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

# Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? З · Л · П

▼ Show answer

З says "z", Л says "l" and П says "p" (with no puff of breath).

**2.** Read aloud: пол · зал · лук · стол

▼ Show answer

POHL · ZAHL · LOOK · STOHL ("floor", "hall", "onion", "table").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: зуб · луна́ · ле́то

▼ Show answer

ZOOP ("tooth"; the final б sounds like "p") · loo-NAH ("moon") · LYEH-tuh ("summer").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *floor* · *lamp* · *gold*

▼ Show answer

пол · ла́мпа · зо́лото

**5.** How do you tell П, Н and Р apart, and what does each say?

▼ Show answer

П has no bar and no loop (a doorway) and says "p"; Н has a bar across the middle and says "n"; Р has a loop at the top and says "r".

**Coming Up in Chapter 7**

Three more letters: **Ф И Й**. Ф says "f", И says "ee", and Й is a short "y" that comes after a vowel. Then you can read the small word *и* ("and") and words like *кино́* ("cinema").

# Ф, И, Й — An F, an Ee and a Short Y

*Three letters again, and this time they bring the first vowel since Chapter 2 and a new idea.* ***Ф*** *is an "f",* ***И*** *is "ee", and* ***Й*** *is the same letter with a small hat that turns it into a short "y" sound, the one at the end of English boy. After this chapter you know twenty-one letters, and you can read the first words with the "ee" sound.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–6 | А К М О Т Е В Н Р С У Х Б Г Д З Л П | 18 letters |
| 7 | Ф И Й | а к м о т е в н р с у х б г д з л п ф и й: 21 letters |

# Your Next Three Letters — Ф И Й

## Ф ф

**f**

like the "f" in *fan*

**Memory hook:** a circle with a stick through it, like a lollipop standing up, and it says "f" for *fun*. It is the Greek letter phi, the one behind the "ph" in *phone*. The small ф is taller, with the stick going above and below the circle.

## И и

**i (ee)**

like the "ee" in *see* ("ee")

**Memory hook:** it is a backwards N: the diagonal runs from the top right to the bottom left, the opposite of an English N. A turned-round N says "ee", as if you were looking in a mirror and smiling. The small *и* is the same shape, smaller. On its own, *и* is also a word: "and".

## Й й

**y**

like the "y" at the end of *boy*: a very short "y" after a vowel

**Memory hook:** it is an И wearing a little hat (a curved mark on top, called the breve), and the hat makes it short: the "ee" shrinks into a quick "y". It is called the "short И". Й is mostly met after a vowel, as in *май* and *мой*.

### Watch Out: И, Н and Й

**И** and **Н** are mirror images of each other: И has its diagonal running one way and says *ee*; Н has a straight bar and says *n* (Chapter 3). So *мир* is MEER, with an И, and *нос* is NOHS, with an Н. And **Й** is not a different letter from И: it is И plus a hat, and it says a short "y" instead of "ee". Look for the hat.

### Writing and Saying

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. For Й, write the И first, then add the hat as a separate last stroke. Then say the three together, *f, ee, y*, and then read the pairs *ой* and *ай* aloud: "oy" and "eye".

# Read It — Ten New Words

*With the twenty-one letters of Chapters 1 to 7 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | и | EE | and | *one letter, one word* |
| 2 | кит | KEET | whale | *к + и + т* |
| 3 | мир | MEER | world, peace | *м + и + р: not "mir" with a short English "i"* |
| 4 | тигр | TEEGR | tiger | *т + и + г + р: two consonants together at the end, said as one quick sound* |
| 5 | кино́ | kee-NOH | cinema | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 6 | вино́ | vee-NOH | wine | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 7 | фо́то | FOH-tuh | photo | *ф + о + т + о: the last о is weak, like "uh"* |
| 8 | спорт | SPORT | sport | *с + п + о + р + т: a loanword, "sport"* |
| 9 | май | MY | May | *м + а + й: it rhymes with English "my"* |
| 10 | мой | MOY | my, mine (masculine) | *м + о + й: it rhymes with English "boy"* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of ф, и and й, the Greek phi comparison, the name "short И" and the breve, the words and their meanings (и, кит, мир, тигр, кино́, вино́, фо́то, спорт, май, мой), stress and respellings, and the weak unstressed о are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

# Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Ф · И · Й

▼ Show answer

Ф says "f", И says "ee" and Й says a short "y", like the end of *boy*.

**2.** Read aloud: кит · мир · тигр · спорт

▼ Show answer

KEET · MEER · TEEGR · SPORT ("whale", "world, peace", "tiger", "sport").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: кино́ · вино́ · фо́то

▼ Show answer

kee-NOH ("cinema") · vee-NOH ("wine") · FOH-tuh ("photo").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *and* · *May* · *my (masculine)*

▼ Show answer

и · май · мой

**5.** How do you tell И, Н and Й apart, and what does each say?

▼ Show answer

И has a diagonal running from top right to bottom left and says "ee"; Н has a straight bar across and says "n"; Й is an И with a hat on top and says a short "y".

**Coming Up in Chapter 8**

Three vowels that English does not have in this form: **Э ЫЁ**. Э says "e" as in *met*, Ы is a vowel with no English twin, and Ё says "yo" and is always stressed. With Э you can read *э́то* ("this, it is") and with Ы the word *мы* ("we").

# Э, Ы, Ё — Three More Vowels

*Russian has ten vowel letters, and you already know five of them (**а о у е и**). The other five are in this chapter and the next: **Э Ы Ё** now, and **Ю Я** in Chapter 9. Э is a mirror-image Е, Ы is a vowel with no English twin (the one new sound of the alphabet so far), and Ё is a Е with two dots. After this chapter you know twenty-four letters.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–7 | А К М О Т Е В Н Р С У Х Б Г Д З Л П Ф И Й | 21 letters |
| 8 | Э Ы Ё | 24 letters |

# Your Next Three Letters — Э Ы Ё

| Э э | Ы ы | Ё ё |
|---|---|---|
| e | y (a back vowel) | yo |

like the "e" in *met* ("eh"), with no "y" in front

**Memory hook:** it is an E in the mirror: the bulge faces the other way. The E from Chapter 2 says "ye"; this reversed one says plain "eh". The small э is the same mirror shape, smaller.

no English twin: say "ih" as in *bit* with the tongue pulled back

**Memory hook:** it looks like a small ь (the soft sign of Chapter 9) with a stick stuck on its right, and the sound is the grunt of someone punched in the stomach: "uhh", with the tongue pulled back. A word never starts with ы, so you only meet it inside or at the end of words. The small ы is the same shape, smaller.

like the "yo" in *yo-yo*: a "y" and then "o"

**Memory hook:** it is an E with two dots, the two eyes of a yo-yo staring at you. The dots matter: E says "ye" and Ё says "yo". **Ё is always stressed**, so a word with Ё never needs a stress mark. The small ё is the same shape, smaller.

### Hard and Soft Vowel Pairs

Vowels come in pairs. The first vowel in each pair keeps the consonant before it hard; the second makes it soft, with a "y" colour added. So *е* is the soft partner of *э*, *и* of *ы*, and *ё* of *о*:

| Hard vowel | Soft partner | Pair sounds |
|---|---|---|
| э | **е** | eh / ye |
| ы | **и** | ih (back) / ee |
| о | **ё** | oh / yo |
| а | **я** | ah / ya (Chapter 9) |
| у | **ю** | oo / yoo (Chapter 9) |

*You do not have to remember the pairs now: seeing them once is enough. Chapter 9 completes the table, and Russian Alphabet 2 uses it for consonant pairs.*

**Watch Out: Э, E and З**

**Э** is a mirrored E and says *eh*. **Е** says *ye* (Chapter 2). **З** says *z* (Chapter 6), has two curves like a 3, and has no bar in the middle, which tells it from Э. So *э́то* is EH-tuh and *зал* is ZAHL.

**Watch Out: Ё Is Often Printed as Е**

In ordinary Russian text the two dots of Ё are often left out, and the letter is printed as a plain Е, so you have to know the word. In this course, as in learners' materials, the dots are always shown. Since Ё is always stressed, you know where the stress of the word is.

**Writing and Saying**

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. For ы, write the stick last. Then say the three together, *eh, ih (back), yo*, and in another order, *yo, eh, ih*. Practise the ЫI on its own: say "ee", then pull your tongue straight back without moving your lips.

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the twenty-four letters of Chapters 1 to 8 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | э́то | EH-tuh | this, it is | *э + т + о: the last о is weak, like "uh"* |
| 2 | э́хо | EH-khuh | echo | *э + х + о: the "kh" from Chapter 4* |
| 3 | мы | MIH | we | *м + ы: the vowel is pulled back, not "my"* |
| 4 | ты | TIH | you (to a friend) | *т + ы* |
| 5 | вы | VIH | you (several people, or politely) | *в + ы* |

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | сын | SIHN | son | *с + ы + н* |
| 7 | рыба | RIH-buh | fish | *stress on the first syllable; the last a is weak* |
| 8 | мы́ло | MIH-luh | soap | *stress on the first syllable; the last o is weak* |
| 9 | ёлка | YOHL-kuh | fir tree, Christmas tree | *ё is stressed, so there is no accent mark* |
| 10 | самолёт | suh-muh-LYOHT | aeroplane | *stress on the last syllable (the ё); the л is soft; the two a are weak* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of э, ы and ё, the description of ы (the tongue pulled back and the "punched in the stomach" memory aid), the claim that no word starts with ы, the hard and soft vowel pairs, the rule that ё is always stressed and is often printed without dots, the words and their meanings (э́то, э́хо, мы, ты, вы, сын, ры́ба, мы́ло, ёлка, самолёт), stress and respellings are from general knowledge; the searches before Chapter 1 gave only that ё is always stressed. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings, especially the respelling of ы, which English cannot spell.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Э · Ы · Ё

▼ Show answer

Э says "eh" (as in *met*), Ы says an "ih" with the tongue pulled back, and Ё says "yo".

**2.** Read aloud: мы · ты · вы · сын

▼ Show answer

MIH · TIH · VIH · SIHN ("we", "you", "you (plural or polite)", "son").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: рыба · эхо · самолёт

▼ Show answer

RIH-buh ("fish") · EH-khuh ("echo") · suh-muh-LYOHT ("aeroplane").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *we* · *soap* · *this*

▼ Show answer

мы · мыло · это

**5.** What is the difference between Е, Э and Ё?

▼ Show answer

Е says "ye" (Chapter 2); Э is a mirrored Е and says "eh"; Ё is an Е with two dots and says "yo", and is always stressed.

**Coming Up in Chapter 9**

The last vowels and the soft sign: **Ю Я Ь**. Ю says "yoo", Я says "ya", and Ь has no sound at all but softens the consonant before it. With them you can read *я* ("I") and the word *моя́* ("my", for a feminine word).

# Ю, Я, Ь — The Last Vowels and the Soft Sign

*With **Ю** and **Я** you have all ten vowel letters of Russian: **а о у э ы** (the "hard" vowels) and **я ё ю е и** (their "soft" partners). And **Ь** is a letter that makes no sound of its own: it only changes the consonant before it. After this chapter you know twenty-seven letters, and you can finally read the two words that the hooks of Chapters 3 and 4 promised, Россия (Russia) and во́дка (vodka).*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–8 | А К М О Т Е В Н Р С У Х Б Г Д З Л П Ф И Й Э Ы Ё | 24 letters |
| 9 | Ю Я Ь | 27 letters |

## Your Next Three Letters — Ю Я Ь

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ю ю | Я я | Ь ь |

## yu (yoo)

like the word *you* ("yoo")

**Memory hook:** it is a stick joined to a circle, an I and an O side by side, read together as "yoo". It is the soft partner of У, which says "oo": put a "y" in front. The small ю is the same shape, smaller.

## ya

like the "ya" in *yard* ("yah") when stressed

**Memory hook:** it is a backwards R, and the backwards R says "ya", which is also the Russian word for *I*: the letter that points back at yourself. It is the soft partner of A. The small я is the same shape, smaller.

## ' (the soft sign)

no sound of its own: it softens the consonant before it, as if a very short "y" were added

**Memory hook:** it looks like a small b whose top bump is missing, a quiet letter that sits at the end of a word and says nothing. A word never starts with ь. This course shows the softness in the respelling with an apostrophe after the consonant: *мать* is MAHT'.

### The Completed Vowel Pairs

The five hard vowels and their five soft partners:

| Hard vowel | Soft partner | Pair sounds |
|---|---|---|
| а | **я** | ah / ya |
| э | **е** | eh / ye |
| ы | **и** | ih (back) / ee |
| о | **ё** | oh / yo |
| у | **ю** | oo / yoo |

*At the start of a word, or after a vowel, the soft vowels say a plain "y" and then the vowel (я = ya, ю = yoo, е = ye, ё = yo). After a consonant they also soften it, as in мя́со and дя́дя below.*

### Soft Consonants and the Soft Sign

A *soft* consonant is said with the middle of the tongue raised towards the roof of the mouth, which adds a quick "y" colour: the "ny" of *canyon* is close to a soft "n". Russian has soft consonants and hard ones, and spells the difference in two ways: with a soft vowel after the consonant (я ё ю е и), or, at the end of a word or before another consonant, with the soft sign **ь**. So *день* ("day") is said DYEHN, with a soft н, and *мать* ("mother") is MAHT', with a soft т.

### Watch Out: Я, ь and ы

**Я** is a backwards R: it says *ya*, and never "r" (that is **Р**). **Ь** is a small b with no sound, and **Ы** is a ь with a stick stuck to its right (Chapter 8): ь softens the letter before it, and ы is a vowel of its own. In Chapter 11 you will meet a third, similar-looking sign, Ъ.

### Writing and Saying

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. Then say the five pairs of Chapters 8 and 9 aloud, hard then soft: *ah ya, eh ye, ih ee, oh yo, oo yoo*. Practise soft consonants with the soft sign: say *н*, then *нь* (the same n, with the tongue raised, "ny").

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the twenty-seven letters of Chapters 1 to 9 you can read all of these, including the two promised words.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | я | YAH | I | *one letter, one word* |
| 2 | юг | YOOK | south | *ю + г: the final г sounds like "k"* |
| 3 | день | DYEHN | day | *д + е + н + ь: the ь softens the н* |
| 4 | мать | MAHT' | mother | *м + а + т + ь: the ь softens the т* |

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | соль | SOHL' | salt | *с + о + л + ь: the ь softens the л* |
| 6 | моя́ | muh-YAH | my (for a feminine word) | *stress on the last syllable; the first o is weak* |
| 7 | ю́бка | YOOP-kuh | skirt | *stress on the first syllable; the б sounds like "p" before к* |
| 8 | семья́ | sih-MYAH | family | *stress on the last syllable; ь and я together: "myah"; the first e is weak* |
| 9 | Росси́я | ruh-SEE-yuh | Russia | *the capital P from Chapter 3; the double с is said as one long "s"; the first o and the last я are weak* |
| 10 | во́дка | VOHT-kuh | vodka | *the в from Chapter 3; the д sounds like "t" before к* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of ю, я and ь, the description of soft consonants and the soft sign, the vowel pairs, the words and their meanings (я, юг, день, мать, соль, моя́, ю́бка, семья́, Росси́я, во́дка), stress and respellings, the voicing of б, г and д before к or at the end of a word, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings; in particular, the soft consonants are hard for English speakers, and a recording will help far more than a description.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Ю · Я · Ь

▼ Show answer

Ю says "yoo", Я says "ya", and Ь says nothing: it only softens the consonant before it.

**2.** Read aloud: я · день · мать · соль

▼ Show answer

YAH · DYEHN · MAHT' · SOHL' ("I", "day", "mother", "salt").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: Росси́я · во́дка · семья́

▼ Show answer

ruh-SEE-yuh ("Russia") · VOHT-kuh ("vodka") · sih-MYAH ("family").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *south* · *skirt* · *my (feminine)*

▼ Show answer

юг · юбка · моя́

**5.** Name the five hard vowels and their five soft partners.

▼ Show answer

а / я, э / е, ы / и, о / ё, у / ю.

**Coming Up in Chapter 10**

The hushing sounds: **Ж Ш Щ**. Ж says "zh" (like the "s" in *measure*), Ш says "sh" and Щ is a longer, softer "shch". With the first two you can read *шар* ("ball") and, with Щ, *ещё* ("more, still").

# Шипящие — The Hushing Sounds

*Three letters that make a hushing, hissing sound, the sounds of a kettle and of a "shh!" in a library: **Ж Ш Щ**. They say "zh", "sh" and a long soft "shch". They need some practice, and they are some of the most useful letters: they begin жена́ ("wife"), шко́ла ("school") and борщ (borscht). After this chapter you know thirty letters, and only three are left.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–9 | А К М О Т Е В Н Р С У Х Б Г Д З Л П Ф И Й Э Ы Ё Ю Я Ь | 27 letters |
| 10 | Ж Ш Щ | 30 letters |

# Your Next Three Letters — Ж Ш Щ

# Ж ж

## zh

like the "s" in *measure* or the "g" in *genre*

**Memory hook:** it is a beetle: a stick down the middle with a pair of legs on each side, and the Russian word for beetle, *жук*, begins with it. The beetle buzzes: "zhhh". The small ж is the same beetle, smaller.

# Ш ш

## sh

like the "sh" in *ship*

**Memory hook:** it is three sticks joined along the bottom, like a fork with three prongs held upside down, and the sound is the "shh!" of asking for quiet. The small ш is the same fork, smaller.

# Щ щ

## shch

a long, soft "sh": it sounds like the "sh-ch" of *fresh cheese* said fast, and many speakers say it as one long, soft "sh"

**Memory hook:** it is a Ш with a little tail hanging from the bottom right, the longer version of the same sound. The tail makes it longer and softer. The small щ is the same shape, smaller.

### Watch Out: Ш and Щ

**Ш** is three sticks and says *sh*. **Щ** is the same three sticks with a tail, and says a long, soft *shch*. So *шар* is SHAHR, with a Ш, and *борщ* is BORSHCH, with a Щ at the end. In Chapter 11 you will meet **Ц**, which also has a tail, but it has only *two* sticks: three sticks and a tail is Щ; two sticks and a tail is Ц.

### Watch Out: A Final ж

As with д, г and б (Chapters 5 and 6), a final ж is said like its voiceless partner, ш: *муж* ("husband") sounds like MOOSH and *нож* ("knife") like NOHSH. The rule is explained in Russian Alphabet 2.

### Watch Out: И After Ж and Ш

Ж and Ш are always *hard* consonants in Russian. After them, the letter и is therefore said like ы, the pulled-back "ih" of Chapter 8, and not as "ee": *жизнь* ("life") sounds like ZHIHZN'. You do not need to remember it as a rule yet: just copy the respelling, and notice that it is written с и, but said "ih".

### Writing and Saying

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. Then hush: say *sh* slowly, then *zh* (same mouth, but let your voice buzz), and then *shch* (a long, soft "sh"). Put a hand on your throat: for *zh* you should feel a buzz, and for *sh* you should not.

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With the thirty letters of Chapters 1 to 10 you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | шар | SHAHR | ball | *ш + а + р* |
| 2 | нож | NOHSH | knife | *н + о + ж: the final ж sounds like "sh"* |
| 3 | муж | MOOSH | husband | *м + у + ж: the final ж sounds like "sh"* |
| 4 | борщ | BORSHCH | borscht (beetroot soup) | *б + о + р + щ: a long, soft sound at the end* |
| 5 | ещё | yih-SHCHOH | more, still | *stress on ё (the dots show it already; no extra mark is needed)* |
| 6 | жена́ | zhih-NAH | wife | *stress on the last syllable; the е after ж is weak, like "ih"* |
| 7 | жизнь | ZHIHZN' | life | *и after ж sounds like ы; the ь softens the н* |
| 8 | шко́ла | SHKOH-luh | school | *stress on the first syllable; the last а is weak* |
| 9 | журна́л | zhoor-NAHL | magazine | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 10 | хорошо́ | khuh-ruh-SHOH | good, well | *stress on the last syllable; the first two о are weak, like "uh"* |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of ж, ш and щ, the description of щ (the "fresh cheese" comparison and the single long soft "sh" that many speakers use), the final-ж rule, the rule that ж and ш are always hard so that и after them sounds like ы, the words and their meanings (шар, нож, муж, борщ, ещё, жена́, жизнь,

шко́ла, журна́л, хорошо́), stress and respellings, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. The pronunciation of щ in particular varies between speakers, so check a recording or a native speaker before relying on the respelling.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Ж · Ш · Щ

▼ Show answer

Ж says "zh" (as in *measure*), Ш says "sh" and Щ says a long, soft "shch".

**2.** Read aloud: шар · нож · муж · борщ

▼ Show answer

SHAHR · NOHSH · MOOSH · BORSHCH ("ball", "knife", "husband", "borscht").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: жена́ · шко́ла · хорошо́

▼ Show answer

zhih-NAH ("wife") · SHKOH-luh ("school") · khuh-ruh-SHOH ("good, well").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *ball* · *life* · *magazine*

▼ Show answer

шар · жизнь · журна́л

**5.** How do you tell Ш from Щ, and what does each say?

▼ Show answer

Ш has three sticks and says "sh"; Щ has the same three sticks and a tail, and says a long, soft "shch".

**Coming Up in Chapter 11**

The last three letters: **Ч Ц Ъ**. Ч says "ch", Ц says "ts" and Ъ is the hard sign, which has no sound of its own. With them you can read *чай* ("tea") and *цирк* ("circus").

# Последние буквы — The Last Letters

*Three letters are left:* ***Ч Ц Ъ****. Ч says "ch", Ц says "ts" and Ъ, the hard sign, has no sound of its own. With them you have met* ***all 33 letters*** *of the Russian alphabet, and at the end of this chapter you will see the whole alphabet in one table. The next chapter is for reading.*

| Chapter | New letters | Letters known so far |
|---|---|---|
| 1–10 | А К М<br>О Т Е<br>В Н Р<br>С У Х<br>Б Г Д<br>З Л П<br>Ф И<br>Й Э<br>Ы Ё<br>Ю Я<br>Ь Ж<br>Ш Щ | 30 letters |
| 11 | Ч Ц<br>Ъ | all 33 letters |

# Your Last Three Letters — Ч Ц Ъ

# Ч ч

## ch

like the "ch" in *chip*

**Memory hook:** it looks like a 4 with an open top, and the Russian word for four, *четы́ре*, begins with it. A 4 says "ch" for *chip*. The small ч is a cup shape, a smaller version of the same.

# Ц ц

## ts

like the "ts" in *cats*

**Memory hook:** it is a U with a little tail at the bottom right, and the tail is a cat's tail: *cats*, "ts". It has two sticks and a tail; Щ has three sticks and a tail. The small ц is the same shape, smaller.

# Ъ ъ

## " (the hard sign)

no sound of its own: a tiny break between a consonant and the soft vowel that follows it

**Memory hook:** it looks like a Ь with a flat shelf on the top left, the "hard" version of the soft sign. It is rare: it comes in the middle of a word after a prefix, before е, ё, ю or я, and keeps the consonant hard and the vowel with its "y": *объём* is ab-YOHM, not "ab-yom" with a soft б.

### Ь and Ъ: The Soft Sign and the Hard Sign

The two signs have no sound of their own. The **soft sign Ь** comes after a consonant and softens it (*мать*, MAHT'). The **hard sign Ъ** comes between a consonant and a soft vowel, and keeps the consonant hard (*объём*, ab-YOHM).

### Watch Out: Ч, Ц and Щ

Three letters that are easy to mix up. **Ч** is a cup and says *ch* (*чай*, CHY). **Ц** has two sticks and a tail and says *ts* (*цирк*, TSIHRK). **Щ** has three sticks and a tail and says a long, soft *shch* (*борщ*, Chapter 10).

### Watch Out: И After Ц, and the Word что

Ц, like Ж and Ш, is always a *hard* consonant, so и after it is said like ы, the pulled-back "ih": *цирк* sounds like TSIHRK, not "tseerk". And the word *что* ("what") is written с ч but said **SHTOH**: an old irregular spelling that you simply learn.

**Writing and Saying**

Copy each printed shape a few times, a capital and then a small letter, saying the sound aloud. Then say the three of this chapter together, *ch, ts, (silence)*, and write *ч ц ъ* from memory. Read the hushing letters in a row, *ж ш щ ч ц*, saying "zh, sh, shch, ch, ts".

## Read It — Ten New Words

*With all 33 letters you can read all of these.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | чай | CHY | tea | *ч + а + й: it rhymes with English "eye"* |
| 2 | час | CHAHS | hour | *ч + а + с* |
| 3 | ночь | NOHCH | night | *н + о + ч + ь: а ь after ч changes nothing in the sound* |
| 4 | что | SHTOH | what | *written ч + т + о, said "sh-toh"* |
| 5 | о́чень | OH-chihn' | very | *stress on the first syllable; the e is weak, like "ih"* |
| 6 | цирк | TSIHRK | circus | *и after ц sounds like ы* |
| 7 | цена́ | tsih-NAH | price | *stress on the last syllable; the e is weak* |
| 8 | у́лица | OO-lee-tsuh | street | *stress on the first syllable; the last a is weak* |
| 9 | объём | ab-YOHM | volume | *the ъ keeps the "y" of ё: "ab-yohm"* |
| 10 | подъе́зд | pahd-YEST | entrance (of an apartment block) | *stress on the last syllable; the ъ keeps the "y" of e; the final зд sounds like "st"* |

## The Whole Alphabet

*All 33 letters in the alphabet's own order, with the sound and the chapter where you learned each one. Look it up whenever you need it.*

| LETTER | SOUND | CH. | LETTER | SOUND | CH. | LETTER | SOUND | CH. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| А а | ah | 1 | Л л | l | 6 | Ч ч | ch | 11 |
| Б б | b | 5 | М м | m | 1 | Ш ш | sh | 10 |
| В в | v | 3 | Н н | n | 3 | Щ щ | shch | 10 |
| Г г | g | 5 | О о | oh | 2 | Ъ ъ | hard sign | 11 |
| Д д | d | 5 | П п | p | 6 | Ы ы | ih (back) | 8 |
| Е е | ye | 2 | Р р | r | 3 | Ь ь | soft sign | 9 |
| Ё ё | yo | 8 | С с | s | 4 | Э э | eh | 8 |
| Ж ж | zh | 10 | Т т | t | 2 | Ю ю | yoo | 9 |
| З з | z | 6 | У у | oo | 4 | Я я | ya | 9 |
| И и | ee | 7 | Ф ф | f | 7 | | | |
| Й й | y | 7 | Х х | kh | 4 | | | |
| К к | k | 1 | Ц ц | ts | 11 | | | |

**Not Yet Verified**

The sounds of ч, ц and ъ, the "cats" and "chip" comparisons, the description of the hard sign (where it is written and what it does), the rule that ц is always hard so that и after it sounds like ы, the irregular reading of что as "shtoh", the words and their meanings (чай, час, ночь, что, о́чень, цирк, цена́, у́лица, объём, подъе́зд), stress and respellings, and the weak unstressed vowels are from general knowledge. The alphabet table lists the sounds as taught in this course, not from a

source. No dictionary or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.*

**1.** What sound does each of these say? Ч · Ц · Ъ

▼ Show answer

Ч says "ch", Ц says "ts", and Ъ says nothing: it is the hard sign.

**2.** Read aloud: чай · час · ночь · цирк

▼ Show answer

CHY · CHAHS · NOHCH · TSIHRK ("tea", "hour", "night", "circus").

**3.** Read aloud and give the meaning: о́чень · у́лица · объём

▼ Show answer

OH-chihn' ("very") · OO-lee-tsuh ("street") · ab-YOHM ("volume").

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *tea* · *price* · *what*

▼ Show answer

чай · цена · что (said SHTOH)

**5.** How do you tell Ц, Ч and Щ apart, and what does each say?

▼ Show answer

Ч is an open cup (a 4 shape) and says "ch"; Ц has two sticks and a tail and says "ts"; Щ has three sticks and a tail and says a long, soft "shch".

### Coming Up in Chapter 12

You know all 33 letters. The last chapter is for **reading**: real words, names and signs, with no new letters, and a recap of what Russian Alphabet 1 taught you. For a first taste, you can already read *Москва́* (Moscow).

# Russian Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 12 · Reading Practice

## Читаем — Let's Read

*No new letters in this chapter. You know all 33, and the job now is to use them: to read a sign, a place name and a short sentence without stopping at each letter. Read every word aloud, using the respelling only when you need it, and cover the English column first.*

## Signs and Notices

*The words you would see on a street, in a station or on a shop front.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | вход | VKHOHT | entrance | *в + х + о + д: the final д sounds like "t"* |
| 2 | вы́ход | VIH-khuht | exit | *stress on the first syllable* |
| 3 | апте́ка | uhp-TYEH-kuh | pharmacy | *stress on the second syllable* |
| 4 | магази́н | muh-guh-ZEEN | shop | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 5 | такси́ | tuhk-SEE | taxi | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 6 | рестора́н | rih-stuh-RAHN | restaurant | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 7 | вокза́л | vuhg-ZAHL | railway station | *the к before з sounds like "g"* |
| 8 | музей | moo-ZYAY | museum | *the е after з is soft, and the й at the end is a short "y"* |
| 9 | по́чта | POHCH-tuh | post office | *stress on the first syllable* |
| 10 | туале́т | too-uh-LYEHT | toilet | *stress on the last syllable* |

## Countries and Cities

*Place names are among the easiest things to read in a new alphabet, because many are borrowed and you can guess them. Read each one aloud first, then check.*

| # | WORD | RESPELLING | ENGLISH | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Москва́ | muh-SKVAH | Moscow | *stress on the last syllable* |
| 2 | Санкт-Петербу́рг | sahnkt-pih-tihr-BOORK | St Petersburg | *the final г sounds like "k"* |
| 3 | Эдинбу́рг | ehd-ihn-BOORK | Edinburgh | *э + д + и + н + б + у + р + г* |
| 4 | Ло́ндон | LOHN-duhn | London | *stress on the first syllable* |
| 5 | Шотла́ндия | shuh-TLAHN-dee-yuh | Scotland | *ш + о + т + л + а + н + д + и + я* |
| 6 | А́нглия | AHN-glee-yuh | England | *stress on the first syllable* |
| 7 | Ве́нгрия | VYEHN-gree-yuh | Hungary | *в + е + н + г + р + и + я* |
| 8 | Герма́ния | gihr-MAH-nee-yuh | Germany | *stress on the second syllable* |
| 9 | Фра́нция | FRAHN-tsih-yuh | France | *ц is "ts"; the double sound "nts" is said together* |
| 10 | Япо́ния | yuh-POH-nee-yuh | Japan | *я + п + о + н + и + я* |

## A Few Whole Sentences

*Short sentences made only of words you have read in this course. Say each aloud, then read the translation.*

| # | SENTENCE | RESPELLING | ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Э́то мой дом. | EH-tuh MOY DOHM | This is my house. |
| 2 | Вот моя́ ма́ма. | VOHT muh-YAH MAH-muh | Here is my mum. |
| 3 | Где метро? | GDYEH mih-TROH | Where is the metro? |
| 4 | Да, э́то хорошо́. | DAH, EH-tuh khuh-ruh-SHOH | Yes, that is good. |

*The new word in these sentences is где ("where"): г + д + е, said GDYEH. Russian has no word for "is" in a simple sentence like this one: Это мой дом is literally "This my house".*

## What Russian Alphabet 1 Taught You

- **The alphabet:** 33 letters, with 10 vowel letters, 21 consonant letters and 2 signs. You can read every letter of the printed alphabet.
- **The three kinds of letters:** true friends (А К М О Т), false friends (В Н Р С У Х), and new shapes (all the rest).
- **Stress:** free and not marked in ordinary text; marked with an acute accent in this course, and always on Ё.
- **Hard and soft:** the five pairs of vowels (а я, э е, ы и, о ё, у ю) and the soft sign Ь and hard sign Ъ.
- **First glimpses of the sound rules:** a final д, г, б or ж is said like т, к, п or ш; unstressed vowels are weak; и after ж, ш and ц sounds like ы.

### What Comes Next

This course taught the letters and let you read words with the respellings. It did not teach the sound rules, the handwritten (cursive) letters, or spelling aloud; **Russian Alphabet 2** is the planned next course for stress, the weakening of unstressed vowels, voiced and voiceless consonants, handwriting, and more reading practice. After that come the Basic Conversation courses.

### Not Yet Verified

The words, names and sentences in this chapter (meanings, stress and respellings), the sound rules summarised in the recap, and the remark that Russian has no word for "is" in such sentences are from general knowledge. No dictionary, atlas or pronunciation source was consulted for this chapter, and the names Эдинбу́рг and Шотла́ндия are standard spellings I believe are right but did not look up. Check a Russian dictionary or a native speaker before relying on the respellings.

**Sources for This Chapter**

None beyond the searches listed in Chapter 1; this chapter's content comes from general knowledge, as the box above says.

## Try It Yourself — Практика

*Read each line aloud first, then click to check.*

**1.** Read these signs aloud: вход · вы́ход · апте́ка · метро́

▼ Show answer

VKHOHT · VIH-khuht · uhp-TYEH-kuh · mih-TROH ("entrance", "exit", "pharmacy", "metro").

**2.** Read these places aloud: Москва́ · Эдинбу́рг · Вене́грия · Япо́ния

▼ Show answer

muh-SKVAH ("Moscow") · ehd-ihn-BOORK ("Edinburgh") · VYEHN-gree-yuh ("Hungary") · yuh-POH-nee-yuh ("Japan").

**3.** Read and translate: Где вокза́л?

▼ Show answer

GDYEH vuhg-ZAHL: "Where is the station?" (Where + station.)

**4.** Write in Cyrillic: *taxi* · *museum* · *London* · *Scotland*

▼ Show answer

такси́ · музей · Ло́ндон · Шотла́ндия

**5.** Write your own first name in Cyrillic, saying its sounds one at a time: for *Philip* you would write Филип́п (fee-LEEP).

▼ Show answer

There is no single right answer: write the sounds of your own name with the letters you know, as one letter for one sound. Example: Philip is Филип́п (Ф + и + л + и + п + п; the double п is said as one long "p").

**Course Complete**

That is the end of Russian Alphabet 1: eleven chapters of letters and a chapter of reading. You can read the printed Russian alphabet, with the respellings, and you know where the next courses will take you: the sound rules and handwriting in **Russian Alphabet 2**, and then speaking with the Basic Conversation courses. *Молоде́ц!* ("Well done!").