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Introduction to Russian Grammar

The Russian Alphabet:

Letter	Pronunciation
Aa	like o in Mom
Bb	like b in brother
Vv	like v in vase
Gg	like g in good
Dd	like d in day
Ee	like ye in Yemen
~`	like yo in yo-yo
""	like s in pleasure
Zz	like z in zoo
Ii	like ee in feet
Jj	like y in toy
Kk	like k in kite
Ll	like l in line
Mm	like m in Mom
Nn	like n in nose
Oo	like o in row
Pp	like p in pit
Rr	a rolled R, as in Spanish or Russian
Ss	like s in sea
Tt	like t in tea
Uu	like oo in booth
Ff	like f in fell
Xx	like ch in Bach
Cc	like ts in tse-tse fly
Hh	like ch in chin
Ww	like sh in shop
}}	like shch in borshch
+=	the hard sign separates a vowel from a preceding consonant within a word
Yy	like i in big
::	the soft sign softens the preceding consonant
\	like a in bath
{[like you in youth
Qq	like ya in yard

In English, the role of words in a sentence is indicated by the word order. For example, the subject normally appears before the object. In the sentence, "Bob ate the fish," there is no confusion as to which is eating which. Most of the information conveyed by word order in English is conveyed in Russian by the grammatical endings of the words, so Russian word order is far more flexible. This means that, in Russian, more information can often be conveyed with fewer words than are needed in English. It also means that to understand a Russian sentence, one must understand the grammatical characteristics of each word. For this reason, our discussion of nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and numerals will center on grammatical endings.

The terms case, declension (decline), and agreement will be used throughout the discussion of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and numerals. There are six cases in modern Russian which apply to these parts of speech. The case of a word tells how it is being used in a sentence.

The six cases and their most common meanings are:

Nominative	the subject of a sentence
Accusative	the direct object of most verbs; the object of some prepositions
Genitive	possession; absence or negation; the object of some verbs and prepositions
Prepositional (or Locative)	used only with certain prepositions, often showing location
Dative	the indirect object; used in impersonal constructions; the object of some verbs and prepositions
Instrumental	shows the means by which an action is performed; the object of some verbs and prepositions

The nominative singular form is considered the **root word** and is the form found in the dictionary. The cases other than nominative are collectively called the **oblique** cases. The **full declension** of a noun, pronoun, adjective, or numeral is the application of the six case endings.

Each word in a sentence reflects its role in the sentence with its ending. An adjective has the same case, number, and gender (when singular) as the noun that it modifies. In other words, adjectives agree with the nouns they modify. There is also agreement between subjects and verbs.

On your screen the following information is given for each word in a Transparent Language title: the dictionary entry; the word translation, which may differ from the translation given in the segment translation; and the grammatical comments, which describe, as applicable, the case, gender, number, tense, and other aspects of the word as it is used in the sentence. Sometimes a phrase translation is also given, where the meaning of a group of words cannot easily be inferred from the meanings of each individual word.

Nouns

As in English, a Russian noun names a person, place, thing, or abstract idea. However, Russian nouns have different endings to reflect three different attributes - gender, number and case.. Unlike English, Russian nouns are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. The number of a noun is either singular or plural. The use of a noun in a sentence is shown by the case ending. There are six cases in Russian, as described in the topic, [Introduction to Russian Grammar](#)).

Gender

Nouns are divided among three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. This is true not only of people and animals, but of inanimate objects as well.

Masculine nouns end in a consonant (j is a consonant) or the soft sign, -ъ:

brat	(brother)
dom	(house)
haj	(tea)
meh	(sword)
kon;	(horse)

Feminine nouns end in the vowels, -а or -я, or in the soft sign, -ь.

svoboda	(freedom)
izn;	(life)
teta	(aunt)
pult	(desk)
dver;	(door)
vols	(will)

Neuter nouns end in the vowels -о, -е, -ь. A few end in -мя.

selo	(village)
okno	(window)
serdce	(heart)
oblako	(cloud)
ruka	(rifle)
vrema	(time)
imya	(name)

Number

In English the plural of a noun is usually formed by adding -s. In Russian the form of the plural depends on its case and gender. The formation of plural nouns of each gender in the six cases is shown in the tables below.

Case

A noun may appear in any of the six cases, depending on its function in a sentence. There are three basic declension patterns for nouns. The first pattern includes nearly all masculine and neuter nouns, the second applies to feminine nouns ending in a vowel (-а or -я) and the third applies to feminine

nouns ending in the soft sign (-;).

Note that in some words the stress shifts when the word is declined in some cases or in the plural.

Animate or Inanimate and the Accusative Case

In the first declension pattern of nouns and in plural nouns, a distinction exists between animate and inanimate nouns in the accusative case. (This distinction does not apply to neuter nouns since they **always** represent inanimate objects.) All masculine nouns, singular and plural, which refer to animate beings (persons or animals) take a genitive ending in the accusative case. The same is true of animate feminine nouns, but only in the plural. Masculine inanimate nouns and plural feminine inanimate nouns use the nominative ending for the accusative case.

I. Declension of Masculine and Neuter Nouns

INANIMATE MASCULINE AND NEUTER SINGULAR NOUNS: **klass, m&sto** (class, place)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative		klass, m&sto	class place
Accusative		klass, m&sto	class place
Genitive	-a	kl@ssa, m&sta	of (the, a) class of (the, a) place
Prepositional	-e	kl@sse, m&ste	about (the, a) class about (the, a) place
Dative	-u	kl@ssu, m&stu	to/for (the, a) class to/for (the, a) place
Instrumental	-om	kl@ssom, m&stom	by (the, a) class by (the, a) place

INANIMATE MASCULINE AND NEUTER PLURAL NOUNS: **kl@ssy, mest@** (classes, places)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-y, -a	kl@ssy, mest@	classes places
Accusative	-y, -a	kl@ssy, mest@	classes places
Genitive	-ov, -	kl@ssov mest	of (the) classes of (the) places
Prepositional	-ax	kl@ssax, mest@x	about (the) classes about (the) places
Dative	-am	kl@ssam, mest@m	to/for (the) classes to/for (the) places
Instrumental	-ami	kl@ssami, mest@mi	by (the) classes by (the) places

ANIMATE MASCULINE SINGULAR NOUN: **stud&nt** (student)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-	stud&nt	student
Accusative	-a	stud&nta	student
Genitive	-a	stud&nta	of (the, a) student
Prepositional	-e	stud&nte	about (the, a) student
Dative	-u	stud&ntu	to/for (the, a) student
Instrumental	-om	stud&ntom	by (the, a) student

ANIMATE MASCULINE PLURAL NOUN: **stud&nty** (students)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-y	stud&nty	students
Accusative	-ov	stud&ntov	students
Genitive	-ov	stud&ntov	of (the) students
Prepositional	-ax	stud&ntax	about (the) students
Dative	-am	stud&ntam	to/for (the) students
Instrumental	-ami	stud&ntami	by (the) students

II. Declension of Feminine Nouns ending in a Vowel

FEMININE SINGULAR NOUN: **d@ma** (lady)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-a	d@ma	lady
Accusative	-u	d@mu	lady
Genitive	-y	d@my	of (the, a) lady
Prepositional	-e	d@me	about (the, a) lady
Dative	-e	d@me	to/for (the, a) lady
Instrumental	-oj	d@moj	by (the, a) lady

FEMININE PLURAL NOUN: **d@my** (ladies)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-y	d@my	ladies
Accusative	-	d@m	ladies
Genitive	-	d@m	of (the) ladies
Prepositional	-ax	d@max	about (the) ladies
Dative	-am	d@mam	to/for (the) ladies
Instrumental	-ami	d@mami	by (the) ladies

III. Declension of Feminine Nouns ending in the soft sign

FEMININE SINGULAR NOUN: **tetr@d;** (exercise book, notebook)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-	tetr@d;	notebook

Accusative	-	tetr@d;	notebook
Genitive	-i	tetr@di	of (the, a) notebook
Prepositional	-i	tetr@di	about (the, a) notebook
Dative	-i	tetr@di	to/for (the, a) notebook
Instrumental	-i;	tetr@d;i	by (the, a) notebook

FEMININE PLURAL NOUN: **tetr@di** (exercise books, notebooks)

Case	Ending	Noun	Translation
Nominative	-i	tetr@di	notebooks
Accusative	-ej	tetr@di	notebooks
Genitive	-i	tetr@dej	of (the) notebooks
Prepositional	-qx	tetr@dqx	about (the) notebooks
Dative	-qm	tetr@dqm	to/for (the) notebooks
Instrumental	-qmi	tetr@dqmi	by (the) notebooks

Indeclinable Nouns

In Russian, as in English, many words have been borrowed from other languages. Very often, these words do not change their case endings to reflect their use in a sentence. However, adjectives modifying them reflect the correct case, number and gender. These nouns can be masculine, feminine or neuter.

taks\$	neuter indeclinable for 'taxi'
men^	neuter indeclinable for 'menu'
k%fe	masculine indeclinable for 'coffee'
t@ngo	neuter indeclinable for 'tango'
l&di	feminine indeclinable for 'lady'

Russian Names

A person's name in Russian consists of 3 parts: the first name, the patronymic, indicating that the person is the son or daughter of the father, and the surname or family name. In Russian, these are:

\$mq, %thestvo, fam\$liq

(first name, patronymic, last name)

For example:

P@vel Iv@novih Ivan%v

(Paul, son of Ivan, Ivanov)

El&na Nikol@evna Petr%va

(Helen, daughter of Nikolai, Petrova)

Russian names decline like common nouns with similar endings. The genitive form is used for the accusative (animate accusative) case. The polite form of address among acquaintances is the first name and patronymic. Among intimate friends or relatives, only the first name is used.

Diminutive Form

Diminutive forms of nouns are commonly used in Russian to express not only smallness, but also different emotional nuances. Diminutive forms of first names often express endearment:

L&na, L&nohka from **El&na**
K%lq, K%l[wka from **Nikol@j**

Diminutive forms can also express irony or disparagement, depending on context:

d&vka from **d&va**- means 'girl' in a derogatory sense
dom\$wko from **dom** - means 'small, wretched house' or 'hovel'

Adjectives

An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun. In Russian, adjectives agree with the nouns they modify. If the noun is singular, then the adjective will agree with the noun in gender, number (singular), and case. If the noun is plural, the adjective will agree only in number (plural) and case. Plural adjectives do not reflect gender. If the noun is in the animate accusative, all the modifying adjectives should be as well.

As in English, adjectives can be used before the noun being modified or in the predicate: "The beautiful flower caught my eye"; "That flower is beautiful." In Russian, the second example could use the short form of the adjective. Short form adjectives are used only in the predicate in Russian. They are always in the nominative case and their endings show only if the noun being modified is masculine (singular), feminine (singular), neuter (singular), or plural. A long form adjective used in the predicate indicates a permanent quality of the noun being modified. A short form adjective in the predicate indicates a temporary quality of the noun. Presented below are the declensions for the adjective 'beautiful.' Remember the animate/inanimate accusative rule as you look at these declensions. The accusative form of the masculine singular adjective and the plural forms of all genders will be like the nominative for inanimate objects and like the genitive for animate beings.

Singular:

Case	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	kras\$vyj	kras\$vaq	kras\$voe
Accusative *:	kras\$vogo	kras\$vu[kras\$voe
	kras\$vyj		
Genitive	kras\$vogo	kras\$voj	kras\$vogo
Prepositional	kras\$vom	kras\$voj	kras\$vom
Dative	kras\$vomu	kras\$voj	kras\$vomu
Instrumental	kras\$vyym	kras\$voj	kras\$vyym

* For masculine form, animate accusative/inanimate accusative.

Plural:

Case	Plural
Nominative	kras\$vye
Accusative *:	kras\$vyx
	kras\$vye
Genitive	kras\$vyx
Prepositional	kras\$vyx
Dative	kras\$vyym
Instrumental	kras\$vyymi

* Animate accusative/inanimate accusative.

Short forms:

Masculine (singular), Feminine (singular), Neuter (singular), Plural

kras\$v, kras\$va, kras\$vo, kras\$vy.

D&ti b(li kras\$vy.

(The children were beautiful)

D&vohka byl@ kras\$va.

(The girl was beautiful)

Reb`nok byl kras\$y.

(The child was beautiful)

Comparative Degree

The comparative degree of an adjective is formed in Russian with the addition of the suffix "**e**" or the suffix "**ee/ej**" or by placing the word for 'more', **b%lee**, before the adjective.

kras\$y(yj) + ee > kras\$vee

beautiful + suffix > more beautiful

b%lee + kras\$vyj > b%lee kras\$vyj

'more' + beautiful > more beautiful

Superlative Degree

The superlative degree is formed with the addition of the suffix "**-ejw-**" or "**-ajw-**", or with the addition of the word for 'the most', "**s@myj**".

kras\$y(yj) + ejwij > kras\$vejwij

beautiful + suffix = the most beautiful

s@myj + kras\$vyj > s@myj kras\$vyj

'the most' + beautiful = the most beautiful

Pronouns

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to a person or thing that has been previously mentioned. For example, "Pam went to the game. I met her there." The pronoun 'her' refers to 'Pam.' 'Pam' is the antecedent of 'her.' Pronouns agree in gender and number with their antecedents. The case of a pronoun is determined by its use in the sentence.

Personal pronouns may be singular or plural, and 1st, 2nd or 3rd person. They are used in all six cases. In English, these are:

	Singular	Plural
1st person	I	we
2nd person	you	you
3rd person	he / she / it	they

In Russian, the nominative forms are as follows:

	Singular	Plural
1st person	q	my
2nd person	ty	vy
3rd person	on, on@, on%	on\$

Presented below are the personal pronouns in their six cases. Note that in the oblique cases, the personal pronouns **on, on@, on%, on\$** have an "n" added when they follow a preposition. Note also, that unlike English, the equivalent of 'I', "**q**", is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence. In formal correspondence, however, the pronoun "**vy**" (in all its forms) is capitalized as a token of respect. The polite singular person "**vy**" is used to address everyone other than family members, small children, and people with whom one is on intimate terms.

Singular:

Case	1st sing. (I)	2nd sing. (you: familiar)	3rd sing. (he, she, it)
Nominative	q	ty	on, on@, on%
Accusative	men*	teb*	eg%, e`, eg%
Genitive	men*	teb*	eg%, e`, eg%
Prepositional	%bo mne	o teb&	o n`m, o nej, o n`m
Dative	mne	teb&	em), ej, em)
Instrumental	mnoj/mn%[tob%j/tob%[im, ej/e[, im

Plural:

Case	1st plural (we)	2nd plural (you: plural and formal)	3rd plural (they)
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Nominative	my	vy	on\$
Accusative	nas	vas	ix
Genitive	nas	vas	ix
Prepositional	o nas	o vas	o nix
Dative	nam	vam	im
Instrumental	n@mi	v@mi	\$mi

In the following sentence, the pronoun I is the subject of the sentence, and is in the nominative case, while the pronoun she, as the direct object, is in the accusative:

Q l[bl^ e`. (I love her.)

The Reflexive Pronoun

The reflexive pronoun always refers back to the nearest subject. Since it cannot be a subject itself, there is no nominative form. It means: 'myself, yourself, himself/herself/itself, themselves.', depending on its antecedent. It does not change for gender or number. It declines as follows:

Case	The reflexive pronoun "seb*"
Nominative	no nominative
Accusative	seb*
Genitive	seb*
Prepositional	o seb&
Dative	seb&
Instrumental	sob%j/sob%[

On@ kup\$la **seb&** n%vye t)fli. (She bought (for) herself some new shoes)

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns show to whom something belongs. They answer the question - "whose?". In English, they are: "my, our, your, his/her/its, their." In Russian, possessive pronouns agree with the noun they modify in gender, number and case. Like plural adjectives, plural possessive pronouns show only number (plural) and case, not gender.

The nominative, singular forms of these possessive pronouns are:

moj	1st person, singular (my)
tvoj	2nd person, singular (your)
naw	1st person, plural (our)
vaw	2nd person, plural (your)

eg%, e`, ix 3rd person (his/its, her, their)
svoj "one's own" - all persons and genders

The following sets of possessive pronouns have similar declensions:
svoj, tvoj, moj. Also, **naw** and **vaw** share the same declension.

To modify a masculine noun (Animate/Inanimate choice in the Accusative case):

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Prepositional	Dative	Instrumental
moj	moeg%/moj	moeg%	o mo`m	moj	mo\$m
naw	n@wego/naw	n@wego	o n@wem	n@wemu	n@wim

To modify a feminine noun:

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Prepositional	Dative	Instrumental
mo*	mo^	mo&j	o mo&j	mo&j	mo&j
n@wa	n@wu	n@wej	o n@wej	n@wej	n@wej

To modify a neuter noun:

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Prepositional	Dative	Instrumental
mo`	mo`	moeg%	o mo`m	moem)	mo\$m
n@we	n@we	n@wego	o n@wem	n@wemu	n@wim

To modify a plural noun (Animate/Inanimate choice for the Accusative case):

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Prepositional	Dative	Instrumental
mo\$	mo\$x/mo\$	mo\$x	o mo\$x	mo\$m	mo\$mi
n@wi	n@wix/n@wi	n@wix	o n@wix	n@wim	n@wimi

The possessive pronouns for "his, her, its and their" are borrowed from the genitive form of the personal pronoun. These do not agree with the noun they modify. Instead, they reflect the gender and number of their antecedent (as in English).

eg%, e`, ix (his/its, her, their)

On zn@et e` br@ta.
 (He knows her brother.)

Interrogative/Relative Pronouns

These pronouns can either ask a question or act as the subject of a clause in a sentence. The interrogative/relative pronouns include:

kto, hto, hej, kak%j, kot%ryj
 who, what, whose, what (as an adjective), which

Kto napis@l "Prestupl&nie i nakaz@nie"? (**Who** wrote Crime and Punishment?)

|tu kn\$gu napis@l tot 'e s@myj pis@tel;, **kot%ryj** napis@l "Br@t;q Karam@zovy".
(This book was written by the same author **who** wrote Brothers Karamazov.)

The full declension of **kto/hto** (who/what):

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Prepositional	Dative	Instrumental
kto	kog%	kog%	o kom	kom)	kem
hto	hto	heg%	o h`m	hem)	hem

The pronoun **hej** (whose) declines for masculine, feminine, and neuter gender, as well as in the plural. The nominative case forms are as follows:

masculine: **hej** feminine: **h;q** neuter: **h;`** plural: **h;i.**

Hej #tot z@mok? (**Whose** castle is this?)

The pronouns **kak%j** (what, or what kind of) and **kot%ryj** (which, that, who(m)) decline like hard adjectives.

Kak@q seg%dnq pog%da?
(What is the weather like today?)

3to kart\$na, o kot%roj my govor\$li.
(This is the painting we were talking about.)

Demonstrative Pronouns

Two common demonstrative pronouns in English are 'this' and 'that'. As in Russian, these words can be used to modify a noun or can stand alone. "This is good juice." "This juice is good." In Russian, demonstrative pronouns agree with the noun they modify in gender, number and case when they are used as adjectives. When the equivalent of 'this' is used as the subject, it is always used in the neuter, nominative, singular form and gives the meaning 'This/that is'.

Some demonstrative pronouns, shown here in the nominative form, are:

	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
this	#tot	#ta	#to	#ti
that	tot	ta	to	te
such	tak%j	tak@q	tak%e	tak\$e

(Declines as an adjective.)

3tot bor] byl tak%j vk)snyj!
(This borsch was so tasty!)

Definitive Pronouns

This group of pronouns can also be used alone or to modify a noun. Some definitive pronouns, shown here in the masculine, singular, nominative form are:

ves;	vs*kij	k@'dyj	l[b%j
all/the whole	all kinds of	every	any

While the last three examples decline like adjectives, the nominative forms of **ves;** are:

masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
ves;	vsq	vs`	vse

Vse n@wi t[l;p@ny rascvel\$ v m@e.
(All our tulips bloomed in May.)

Negative Pronouns

These pronouns act as they do in English with one important exception. Negative pronouns with the prefix "**ni-**" require the use of the negative particle "**ne**" (no) or "**net**"(there is not) in the sentence. Double or triple negatives are poor grammar in English, but required grammar in Russian.

Nikt%, nikogd@, ne m%'et zab(t;!

A literal translation of such a sentence including a negative pronoun would be, "**No one cannot never** forget!":

Some negative pronouns include:

nikt%	niht%	nikak%j	nih&j
no one	nothing	none	nobody's

The first two of these pronouns decline like the relative pronouns **kto/hto**, while **nikak%j** declines like an adjective, and **nih&j** declines like **hej**, all shown in previous examples.

Indefinite Pronouns

These pronouns give the meaning of 'some' or 'any' . Some indefinite pronouns are:

kt%-to	kt%-nibud;	ht%-to	ht%-nibud;
someone	anyone	something	anything

Numerals

Ordinal Numerals

All ordinal numerals act as adjectives and agree with the noun they modify in gender, number and case. For example, first, second, third are presented below in masculine, nominative, singular form:

p&rvyj, vtor%j, tr&tij

Cardinal Numerals

Cardinal numerals are divided into groups, each of which has its own set of rules. A summary of the rules governing cardinal numerals and the nouns and adjectives they modify is presented below.

1. Od\$n

The numeral 1 agrees with the noun it modifies in gender, number and case. When this numeral stands alone it agrees with its antecedent in gender and number. The forms in the nominative case are:

masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
od\$n	odn@	odn%	odn\$

The plural form of the numeral 1 is used to modify nouns which only have a plural form. The noun, n%'nicy, only has a plural form. As with the singular forms, the meaning can also be only.

Na p@rte ost@lis; **odn\$** n%'nicy. (**Only** the scissors remained on the desk.)

Agreement with Nouns

Starting with the numeral 2, it is important to note whether the numeral is in the nominative case (or the identical inanimate accusative form) or in one of the other cases, referred to as oblique cases.

Numerals in the nominative or inanimate accusative case determine the case of the adjectives and nouns they modify. Numerals in oblique (animate accusative, genitive, prepositional, dative, instrumental) cases agree with the noun they modify.

2, 3, 4 **dva** (the masculine and neuter form) /**dve** (the feminine form of **dva**), **tri**, **het(re**

The numeral 2 has both a masculine and a feminine form, as noted above. When 2, 3 or 4 is in the nominative or inanimate accusative form, the case of the noun and any modifying adjectives are governed by these numerals. They require that the noun they modify be in the genitive singular form. The adjective, however, is in the genitive plural for masculine and neuter nouns and in the nominative plural for those modifying feminine nouns. As with all numerals in oblique cases, the case of the numeral is governed by the case of the noun it modifies.

Het(re xrust@l;nyx bok@la wamp@nskogo sverk@li na stol&.
(**Four** crystal goblets of champagne sparkled on the table.)

The noun modified by the numeral **het(re** is bok@la; it is in the singular genitive form. The modifying adjective is xrust@l;nyx. Since bok@l is a masculine noun, the adjective is put into the genitive plural form.

5-999 **pqt;-devqt;s%t devqn%sto d&vqt;**

These numerals require the noun and adjective to be in the genitive plural case (when the numeral is in the nominative form). The exception to this rule is described in the following paragraph.

Compound Numerals ending in 1, 2, 3, 4

Compound numerals ending in 1 (i.e., 41, 571, 751) take a singular noun and a singular verb and predicate. Compound numerals ending in 2, 3 and 4 (i.e., 62, 823, 794) follow the same rules as for the numerals they end in, i.e., 2, 3, 4. (See above.)

1,000, 1,000,000, 1,000,000,000 **t(sqha, milli%n, milli@rd**

These numerals require the genitive plural of the noun and adjective regardless of their own case.

Milli%n merc@[ix zv`zd v(sypalis; na nohn%e n&bo.

(A million shimmering stars spilled out into the night sky.)

Both the noun and its modifying adjective are in the genitive plural form.

Collective Numerals

2, 3, 4...10 **dv%e, tr%e, h&tvero,...d&sqtero**

The collective numerals for 2, 3, 4...10 have specific, yet fairly uncommon uses. The most frequently seen use of collective numerals is with nouns that have no singular form. Collective numerals require the noun and a modifying adjective to be in the genitive plural when they themselves are in the nominative form.

Tr%e ves`lyx reb*t str%ili plot.

(A threesome of merry kids were building a raft).

%ba/%be (masculine/ neuter & feminine forms of 'both')

The words for 'both' behave like the numeral 2 and take the genitive singular of the noun and a plural adjective.

5be m@len;kie d&vohki ris)[t kart\$nki.

(Both little girls are drawing pictures).

The noun **d&vohki** is in the genitive singular form, while the adjective which modifies it, **m@len;kie**, is nominative plural as required for modifying feminine nouns.

Indefinite Numerals

few	many/much	several	how many	so many
m@lo	mn%go	n&skol;ko	sk%l;ko	st%l;ko

Some grammar books will describe these words of quantity as indefinite numerals, and others as adverbs of measure. These words are used with the genitive singular or plural of the noun, depending on the context.

Verbs

Verbs express action, existence or occurrence. A sentence is not complete without a verb, or implied verb. In Russian, the present tense of the verb 'to be - is, are' is usually omitted, replaced by a dash or merely implied. In general, Russian verbs act as verbs do in English. There is, however, one important concept that must be understood to understand the use of Russian verbs.

NEW TERMINOLOGY:

Verbal Aspect - Perfective and Imperfective

Every verb in Russian has either the imperfective or the perfective aspect. The imperfective verb denotes the process of an action or a state without any reference to its completion, or refers to repeated action. For example, in English, the following sentences have an imperfective meaning: 'Yesterday I was writing letters.' or 'I always write letters in Russian.'

The perfective verb denotes an action which has been completed in the past or will be completed in the future. Perfective verbs have only two tenses:

Past tense: Vher@ q **napis@la** em) pis;m%. (I **wrote** him a letter yesterday.)

Future tense: Z@vtra q **napiw)** em) pis;m%. (I **will write** him a letter tomorrow.)

Both of these sentences in English have a perfective meaning, stressing completion of the action.

Usually, the imperfective form is unprefixes and the perfective form has a prefix. This is the basic concept of verbal aspect. You will see that every verb is described in the Comments Window as imperfective or perfective. Pay attention to the many shades of meaning that can be expressed through the imperfective and perfective aspects of different verbs.

Infinitive

The infinitive is considered the rootword of a verb. In English, the infinitive is expressed as 'to read, to eat,' etc. as in the sentence "I love to read." Infinitives are recognized in Russian by the ending **-t;**.

For example: hit@t; (to read), tancev@t; (to dance), byt; (to be)

[Reflexive Verbs](#)

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[Future Tense](#)

[Imperative](#)

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Reflexive Verbs

Many verbs in Russian have a reflexive form which is formed by adding the following ending to the infinitive:

-sq

Reflexive verbs are intransitive verbs, meaning there can be no direct object of a reflexive verb. Often, the subject and object of the verb are the same. Besides this primary meaning, reflexive verbs can describe actions directed to each other. Other reflexive verbs refer to feelings or conditions. For example:

m(t; sq	to wash oneself
vstr&tit; sq	to meet with
stanov\$ sq	to become

The reflexive ending is applied to all verb forms. When the verb form ends in a vowel, the reflexive ending is as follows:

stanovl^**s**; I am becoming

Present Tense

The present tense exists only for imperfective verbs. Since perfective verbs refer generally to the completion of an action, they only have a past or future meaning. Imperfective verbs, on the other hand, express the process of carrying out an action. One important difference between the use of present tense verbs in Russian and English is how the action in a sentence like 'I have been exercising.' is expressed. This action started in the past and is continuing in the present. In Russian, this idea is expressed with the imperfective present form of a verb.

1st Conjugation and 2nd Conjugation

A verb conjugation consists of the six forms of a verb in the present tense that correspond to 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, singular and plural (in English, 'I, you, he/she/it, we, you, they'). Russian verbs fall (generally) into one of two conjugation patterns. These are described as 1st and 2nd conjugations. There are many spelling rules which affect verb conjugation and there are irregular verbs which have unique conjugations, but even most of these verbs can be described as either 1st or 2nd conjugation.

The distinctive difference between the two conjugations is the ending of the 3rd person plural form of the verb: "**-[t/-ut]**" for 1st conjugation, and "**-qt/-at**" for the 2nd conjugation. As mentioned in the discussion of verbal aspect, (almost) every verb has both an imperfective and perfective form.

The verb for 'to make (or do)' is an example of a 1st conjugation verb. The verb for 'to speak, talk' is a 2nd conjugation verb. The following two conjugations are for the imperfective present tense.

infinitive: **d⪫** (to do)

1st, 2nd, 3rd singular	Translation	1st, 2nd, 3rd plural	Translation
q d&la[I am doing, I do	my d&laem	we are doing, we do
ty d&laew;	you are doing, you do	vy d&laete	you are doing, you do
on, on@, on% d&laet	he, she, it is doing	on\$ d&la[t	they are doing

infinitive: **govor\$t**; (to speak/talk)

1st, 2nd, 3rd singular	Translation	1st, 2nd, 3rd plural	Translation
q govor^	I am speaking/talking	my govor\$m	we are speaking/talking
ty govor\$w;	you are speaking/talking	vy govor\$te	you are speaking/talking
on, on@, on% govor\$t	he, she, it is speaking/talking	on\$ govor*t	they are speaking/talking

Past Tense

The past tense is formed by removing the infinitive ending and adding the correct past tense ending to denote that the subject of the verb is masculine, feminine, neuter, or plural. For example:

infinitive	>	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
d&lat;	>	d&lal	d&lala	d&lalo	d&lali

The past tense is formed from both imperfective and perfective verbs with the general difference in meaning of 'an action that was performed in the past' and 'an action that was completed in the past.' The imperfective past tense can express such variations as: 'I used to read from time to time.' and 'I read for a while and then stopped reading.' Both of these sentences express an action that started and stopped in the past.

Imperfective:

V wkole q **izuh@la** angl\$jskij qz(k. (I studied/used to study English in school.)

Perfective:

Sob@ka **zaryh@la**. (The dog began to growl.)

Future Tense

Future Tense: Perfective

The future tense of a perfective verb is formed by following the present tense conjugation. Compare the present imperfective and future perfective forms:

Q hit@[. (I am reading)

Q prohibit@[. ((I will read) with the emphasis on the completion of the action)

Future Tense: Imperfective

The future tense of an imperfective verb is formed with the addition of the future form of the verb 'to be' plus the imperfective infinitive.

1st, 2nd, 3rd person
singular

Translation

q b)du d⪫

I am going to do
(shall do)

ty b)dew; d⪫

you are going to do
(shall do)

**on, on@, on%
b)det d⪫**

he, she, it is going to
do (shall do)

1st, 2nd, 3rd person
plural

Translation

my b)dem d⪫

we are going to do (shall do)

vy b)dete d⪫

you are going to do (shall do)

**oni b)dut
d⪫**

they are going to do (shall do)

Imperative

The imperative is formed by dropping the ending from the 2nd person singular form of the present tense and adding the imperative ending:

-i singular

-ite plural

If the stem ends in a vowel, add:

-j singular

-jte plural

Present > Imperative

Singular:

Tj govor\$w; (you are saying/you say) > **govor\$!** (speak!)

Plural and polite singular:

Vy govor\$te (you are saying/you say) > **govor\$te!** (speak!)

Gerunds

Gerunds are also called verbal adverbs in Russian because they act as adverbs and are formed from verbs. Imperfective gerunds have the meaning in English of the 'ing' form of a verb. 'She sat, reading her book.' Perfective gerunds have the meaning found in 'having (done something).' 'Having finished the book, she went to the store.' Gerunds are not formed from all verbs or in both aspects. Like adverbs, gerunds are indeclinable. They do not change their form.

Imperfective gerunds, sometimes called present gerunds, are formed by adding the following ending to the present tense stem of the verb:

Q hit@[> hit@q
(I read > reading)

Perfective gerunds, sometimes called past gerunds, are formed by adding an ending to the past tense stem.

Q prohibit@l > prohibit@v, prohibit@vwi
(I read > having read)

-wi

This ending is always used when the past tense stem ends in a consonant.

On isp`k > isp`kwi.

(He baked > having baked)

Participles

Participles are formed from verbs and decline like adjectives. They have an adjectival use in a sentence, usually translated as an adjectival clause in English. There are both active and passive participles, giving the meaning of being the doer or the object of an action.

Present Active Participle

This is formed by replacing the final letter of the 3rd person plural present form with the correct ending for the masculine, feminine, neuter and plural :

hit@[t	(they read)
hit@[ij	(he who is reading)
hit@[aq	(she who is reading)
hit@[ee	(it, which is reading)
hit@[ie	(they who are reading)

D@ma, hit@[aq gaz&tu, vdrug rassme*las;,. (The lady **who is reading** the newspaper suddenly burst out laughing.)

Past Active Participle

This is formed by adding the **-vwij** ending to the past tense stem:

masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
hit@vwij	hit@vwaq	hit@vwee	hit@vwie

Past Active Participles can be formed from both perfective and imperfective verbs to convey the different meanings of an action completed in the past or covering a span of time in the past. Below is an example of a past active participle formed from a perfective verb, **prohit@t**; (to read through):

masculine, feminine, neuter, plural:

prohit@vwij, prohit@vwaq, prohit@vwee, prohit@vwie

Present Passive Participle

This is formed by adding the adjectival ending to the 1st person plural form of an imperfective verb, in this case, **hit@t**; (to read):

masculine, feminine, neuter, plural:

hit@emyj, hit@emaq, hit@emoe, hit@emye

Note that the meaning of the passive participle is quite different from that of the active participle: while the present active **hit@[ij** means one who is reading, the present passive **hit@emyj** means that which is being read.

Past Passive Participle

These participles are formed only from perfective and transitive (those which require an object) verbs. There is both a long form and short form (for predicate use).

Infinitive: **narisov@t;** > to draw

masculine, feminine, neuter, plural:

Short form : **naris%van, naris%vana, naris%vano, naris%vany** (has (have) been drawn)

Long form: **naris%vannyj, naris%vannaq, naris%vannoe, naris%vannye** (has (have) been drawn)

Infinitive: **ub\$t;** > to kill

masculine, feminine, neuter, plural:

Short form: **ub\$t, ub\$ta, ub\$to, ub\$ty** (has (have) been killed)

Long form : **ub\$tyj, ub\$taq, ub\$toe, ub\$tye** (has (have) been killed')

Adverbs

As in English, adverbs can modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs do not decline in Russian and are usually easy to spot by the ending **-o**, although some adverbs are formed differently. Adverbs are formed by removing the adjectival ending from an adjective and replacing it with the adverbial ending.

Many adverbs resemble the short form, neuter form of the adjective. The only difference is in their use.

kras\$vyj (adjective for 'beautiful') > **kras\$vo** (adverb for 'beautifully')

xor%wij (adjective for good) > **xorow%** (adverb for good, well)

On@ %hen; **xor%waq** pev\$ca. (She is a very **good** singer.) Adjective.

On@ po`t %hen; **xorow%** (She sings very **well**.) Adverb.

Prepositions

Prepositions are used with nouns in every case except the nominative. They are identified in all Transparent Language Russian Titles by their meaning and the case they require. Many prepositions can be followed by different cases to give different meanings.

Prepositions with Verbs of Motion

You will see that prepositions are identified by location or direction. This is an important distinction in Russian because, very often, the same preposition used with different cases will indicate either the location of an activity or the direction in which a verb of motion is occurring.

Q *sídel na stole*.

I was sitting on the chair. Uses prepositional case to indicate location.

Q *sídel na stul*.

I sat down on the chair. Uses accusative case to indicate motion toward something.

Particles

Particles are words which add different shades of meaning to other words in a sentence or to the sentence as a whole.

Negative Particles

ne, ni

Negates the meaning of the word that follows with the general meaning 'not'.

Q **ne** zn@[, hto d⪫. (I **dont** know what to do)

Interrogative Particles

li, r@zve, neu'&li

These particles add an interrogative meaning to the sentence with no real translation of their own.

Hit@la **li** ona Dosto&vskogo?

(Has she read Dostoyevsky?) Gives a somewhat sceptical tone, expressing doubt that she has read him.

Neu'&li vy ne hit@li Dosto&vskogo? (**Could it really be true** that you have never read Dostoyevsky?) A tone of incredulity.

R@zve vy ne shit@ete ego s@mym vel\$kim r)sskim pis@telem? (Dont you consider him the greatest Russian writer?) A tone of surprise that anyone wouldnt think so. Similar to **neu'&li**, but not as strong.

Emphatic Particles

These parts of speech add emotional impact to the sentence meaning.

'e, '

(adds emphasis to other words)

Pohem) **'e** vy udivl*etes;? On **'e** sam prizn@lsq, hto vsegd@ l't. (**But** why are you surprised? He **even** admitted himself that he constantly lies.)

d@'e

'even'

On men* **d@'e** ne uzn@!! (He didnt **even** recognize me!)

ved;

after all

Obqz@tel;no poset\$te Od&ssu- **ved;** #to od\$n iz s@myx oba*tel;nyx gorod%v v m\$re!

(You simply must visit Odessa- **after all**, it is one of the most charming cities in the world!)

Sentences

Sentences are made up of one or more clauses. A clause consists of a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (what is said about the noun or pronoun). The predicate contains a verb.

D&vohka be'\$t. (A girl is running.)

In this simple sentence, **D&vohka** is the subject and **be'\$t** is the predicate.

Adjectives or nouns used along with the verb in order to describe what is being asserted about someone or something, are in the predicative position.

D&vohka byl@ xor%wej uhen\$cej. (The girl was a good **student**.)

In this sentence **uhenicej** is a predicate noun.

D&vohka byl@ vys%koj. (The girl was **tall**.)

In this sentence **vys%koj** is a predicate adjective.

Nouns or pronouns which are related to the action of the verb or to a preposition are called objects. There are direct and indirect objects. The direct object of a verb is a noun or pronoun which receives the action of a verb directly.

D&vohka l^bit otc@. (The girl loves her **father**.)

In this sentence **otc@** is the direct object of the verb.

Some verbs take an indirect object. Indirect objects are sometimes preceded by prepositions.

D&vohka da`t kn\$gu br@tu.

(The girl gives the book to her brother.)

In this sentence **kn\$gu** is the direct object and **br@tu** is the indirect object.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions join words, phrases, clauses and sentences:

Q sme^s;, **a** ty pl@hew;. (I am laughing, **but** you are crying.)

Prines\$ mne kl[h\$ **i** mo^ s)mku. (Bring me the keys **and** my purse.)

Ona ego prezir@la, **potom**) **hto** on byl %hen; gl)pyj. (She despised him **because** he was very stupid.)

Interjections

An interjection is a word or expression which gives added emotional emphasis in speech. In print an interjection will most likely be followed by an exclamation mark. Interjections can express awe, disgust, pain, and joy. Below are several common Russian interjections with examples of how to use them in a sentence:

Interjection	Meaning	Example	Translation
A, Ax, O	joy; awe; surprise;	Ax , kak zdes; krasivo!	Oh, how beautiful it is here!
F)	disgust	F) , kakoe otvrashchenie!	Yuck, what revolting behavior!
Ox	complaint	Ox , 'iznashno trudno!	Oh, life is so hard!

Grammar Pages

Number

Person

Gender

Number

There are two numbers in Russian: **singular** and **plural**.

Most nouns in Russian have singular and plural forms:

sem;* , s&m;i ((the) family, (the) families)

See [Nouns](#)

Pronouns also have singular and plural forms:

moj , mo* , mo` (mine [singular, masculine, feminine, neuter])

mo\$ (mine [plural])

See [Pronouns](#)

Adjectives and ordinal numerals agree with nouns in number (and also in gender).

bol;w%j dom (a/the big house, [masculine])

xor%waq kn\$ga (a/the good book [feminine])

kras\$voe %zero (a/the beautiful lake [neuter])

p*tyj ur%k (the 5th lesson [masculine])

See

[Adjectives](#)

[Cardinal Numeral](#)

Verbs and different verbal forms (present and past participles) agree with the subject of the sentence in number:

My pojd`m na progulku.

(We will go for a walk.)

Pojd`m is 1st person plural, future tense, perfective of the verb **pojt\$**. It agrees in number with the personal pronoun **my**.

See

[Verbs](#)

[Participles](#)

Person

Grammatical person indicates the relationship of speaker or writer to the rest of the sentence.

First person refers to the speaker or to the speaker group: **q, moj, my, naw** (I, mine, we, ours).

Second person refers to whomever is being spoken to: **ty, tvoj, vy, vaw** (you, yours). Third person refers to the entity being spoken about: **on/ona/ono, ego/e`, on\$, ix** (he/she/it, his/her/its, they, theirs).

See

[Pronouns](#)

Verbs are inflected (receive different endings) to agree with the person of the subject:

govor**\$t**; (to talk)

1st person

q govor[^]

my govor**\$m**

2nd person

ty govor**\$w**;

vy govor**\$te**

3rd person

on/ona/ono govor**\$t**

oni govor^{*t}

See

[Verbs](#)

Gender

There are three genders in Russian: **masculine**, **feminine** and **neuter**.

All nouns in Russian are either masculine, feminine or neuter.

Although there are no rules by which the gender of all nouns can be determined, the gender of many nouns can be determined by their meaning or their ending. The gender of other nouns must be learned individually.

chelov&k	(a/the man [masculine])
d&vohka	(a/the girl [feminine])
s&lnce	(the sun [neuter])

See

[Nouns](#)

Knowing the gender of every noun is important not only for the noun itself, but for the spelling and pronunciation of the words it influences in a sentence: adjectives, participles, ordinal numerals, the cardinal numerals 1 and 2, and pronouns. They agree in gender and in number with the noun.

See

[Adjectives](#)

[Participles](#)

[Pronouns](#)

[Ordinal Numeral](#)

[Cardinal Numeral](#)

