

Russian Grammar Made Easy -

Lesson 1

Russian alphabet and pronunciation rules



Online course by ExpressRussian.com

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Russian alphabet & Cyrillic script

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To read and speak Russian, you will first need to understand the alphabet.

The Russian language is based on **Cyrillic script:**

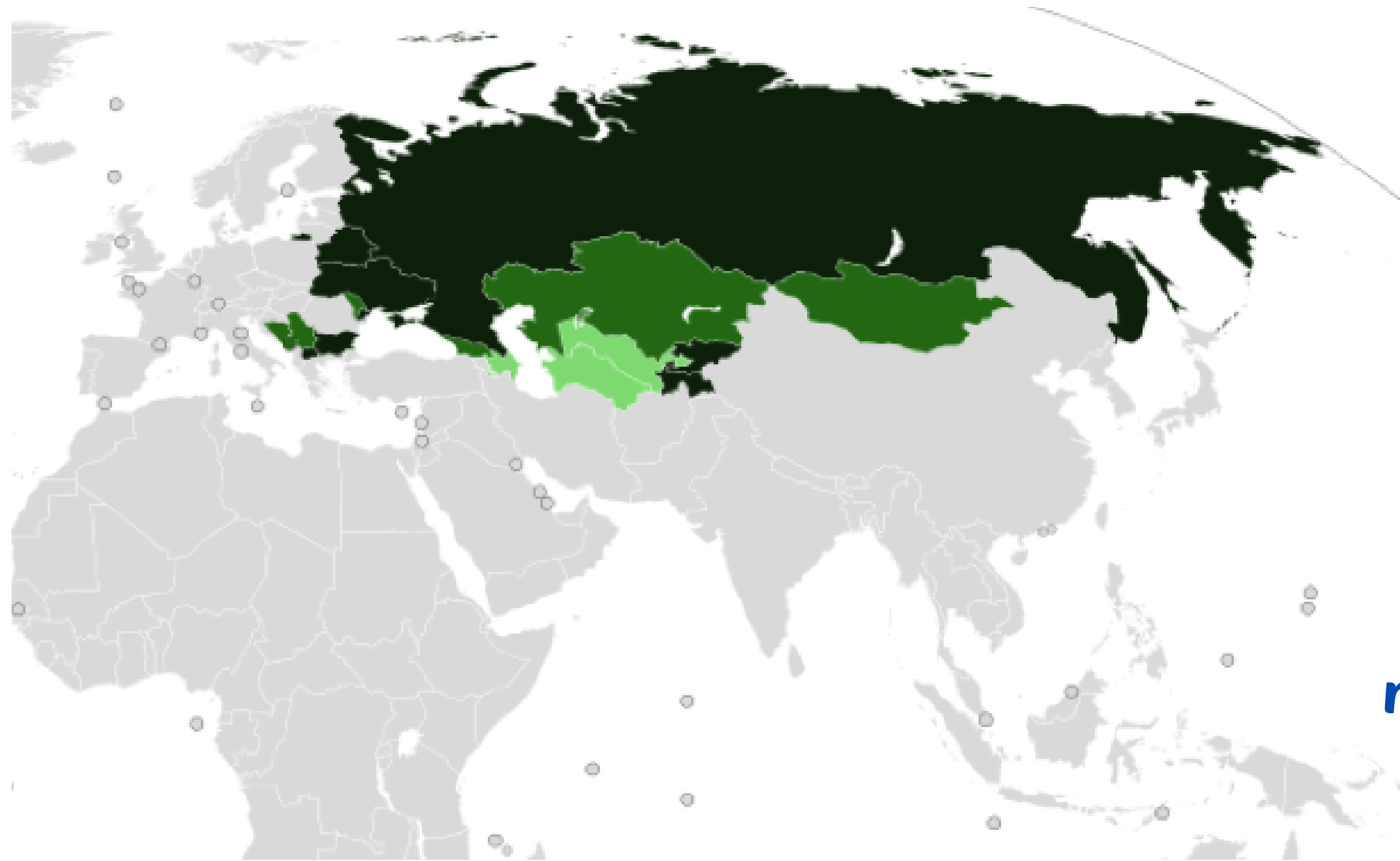
-introduced into Kiev Rus' at the time of its conversion to Christianity (988 AD).

-named after Byzantine scholar **Cyril, who created the **first Slavic writing system to translate Christian texts into the Slavic languages.****

-used in many **Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian, Montenegrin) and **non-Slavic** languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Tyva, etc).**



Map of Cyrillic script spread



As you see, apart from Russian, Cyrillic script is used for non-Russian and non-Slavic languages.

How many people in the world speak Russian?

**Russian is an official language in
Russia, Belarus,
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan.**

**It is also widely-spoken in
Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, Estonia,
and to a lesser extent, the other ex-Soviet countries.**

There are over 300 million Russian speakers in the world.

How many people in the world speak Russian?

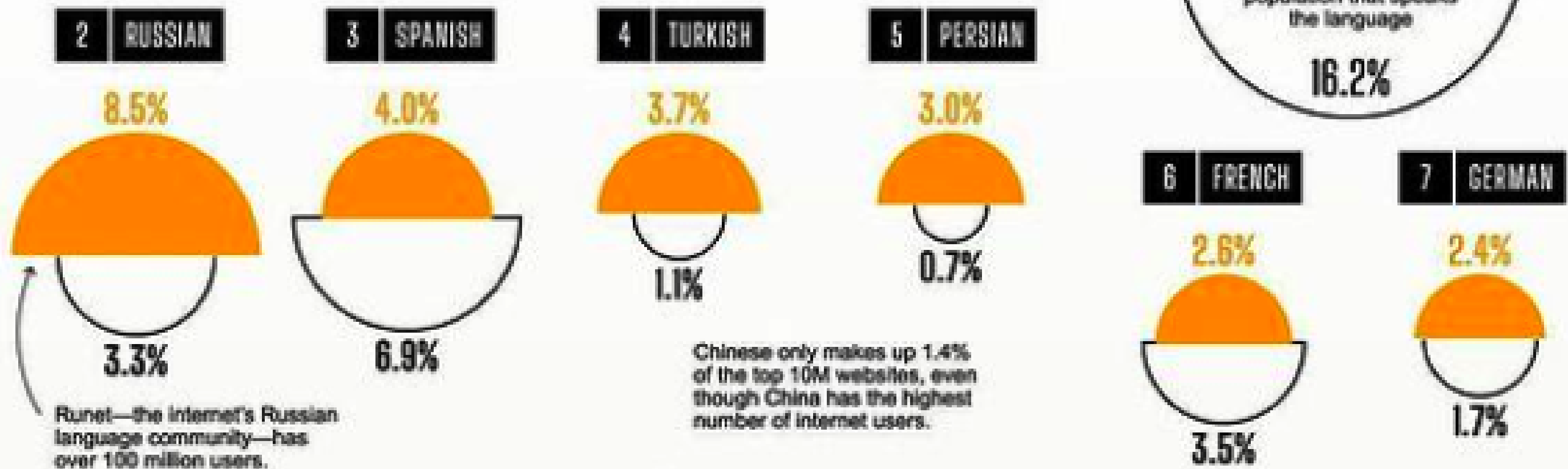


- **Russian is the 8th most-spoken language in the world by the total number of speakers,**
- **which makes it the most geographically widespread language of Eurasia (over 15 countries!)**
- **and the most widely spoken Slavic language**
- **with over 300 million speakers.**

Most Commonly Used Languages ON THE INTERNET



Here's a look at the most commonly used languages on the web, and how they compare to the world's population of speakers.



Russian is one of the most widespread (used) languages on the Internet.



The Russian alphabet contains 33 letters

- **21 consonants:**

**б [b], в [v], г [g], д [d], ж [zh], з [z], к [k],
л [l], м [m], н [n], п [p], р [r], с [s], т [t],
ф [f], х [h], ц [ts], ч [ch], ш [sh], щ [shch].**

**+ й which is sometimes called
a semivowel, as its sound is close to [i].**

- **10 vowels:**

**а [a],
э [e],
ы [y/i],
у [u],
о [o],**

**я [ya],
е [ye],
ё [yo],
ю [yu],
и [i]**

**2 letters of the Russian alphabet
do not designate any sound:**

“soft sign” (ь) softens the previous consonant,

“hard sign” (ъ) hardens the previous consonant.

Have you ever seen Russian “cursive”

(hand-written

Russian language) ?



Съешь же ещё этих мягких

французских булок, да выпей чаю.



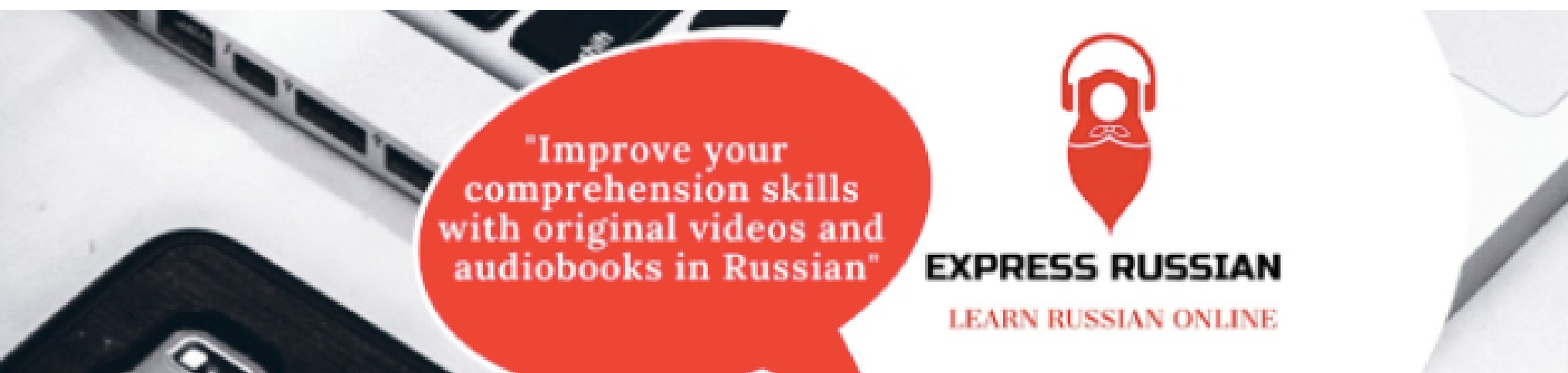
The good news is that you'll mainly come across computer-typed Russian words, just as they appear in dictionaries.

**Now, let's see the letters in action!
I will pronounce the letter and the word with it.**

On the video, you will also see printed and hand-written letter.



Watch on Express Russian YouTube channel



Learn Russian with ExpressRussian. com
1.16K subscribers

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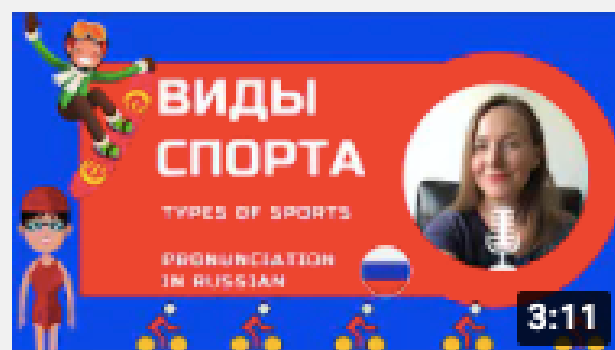
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L1 - Russian alphabet and pronunciation

**Refer
yourself
to this
guide**

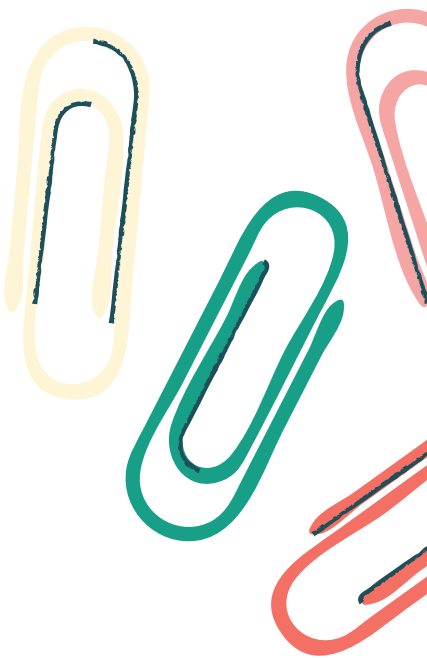
Russian letter - English analog		Russian letter - English analog	
А а	A	Р р	R
Б б	B	С с	S
В в	V	Т т	T
Г г	G	У у	U
Д д	D	Ф ф	F
Е е	E	Х х	H
Ж ж	ZH	Ц ц	TS
З з	Z	Ч ч	CH
И и	I	Ш ш	SH
Й ъ	I-short	Щ щ	SCH
К к	K	Ъ ъ	- hard
Л л	L	Ы ы	-(maybe y)
М м	M	Ь ь	- soft
Н н	N	Э э	E
О о	O	Ю ю	IU
П п	P	Я я	IA



Is everything clear so far?

We spoke about:

- **Cyrillic Script**
- **Russian Alphabet with 33 letters**
- **Cursive (handwritten Russian)**



Russian pronunciation & reading rules



In Russian, the pronunciation is slightly **different from the spelling.**

Two important things to keep in mind are:

- **the stress (for vowels)**
- **the influence of surrounding letters (for consonants)**

In short, a soft neighbor letter makes the preceding letter softer, and a voiced letter makes the preceding letter sound stronger.

You will be understood if you just pronounce the words the way they are written, but don't be surprised if you hear half-sounds.



Vowel pronunciation

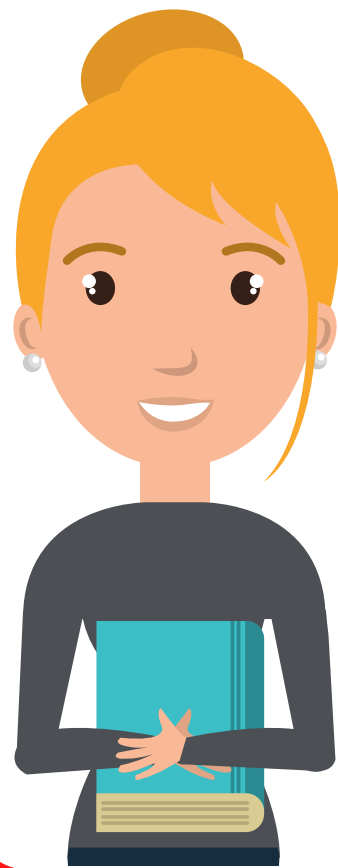
- The **stress** of a word always falls on a **vowel**.
- Stressed vowels are marked with the **acute accent** (´) in dictionaries.
- Words have only **one stress**, except for compound words (2 words joined by a hyphen):
Москв́а-реќа (Moscow River), де́вушка-краса́вица (beautiful girl).
- While stressed vowels are pronounced rather distinctly, unstressed vowels undergo pronunciation changes (so-called **voice reduction**). **МА́МА**

Voice reduction: Unstressed **o**

!!! The farther the vowel is from the stress, the less sound it gets.

vowels '**o**' in the word **молоко́**, (milk) are pronounced differently
[m_ -**l**a-**k**ó]:

- the first **o** is the farthest from the stressed syllable, so it is almost not pronounced at all;
- the second **o** is reduced to the “**u**” sound as in “**u**nder”;
- and the third **o** is fully pronounced because it appears with the stressed syllable.



Voice reduction: Unstressed **Е** and **Я**

Similar voice reduction happens to vowels “**е**” and “**я**”:
in unstressed position, they sound close to “**и**”:

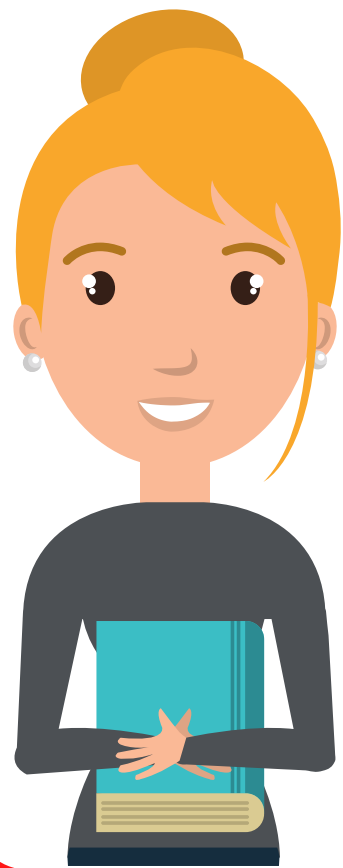
ведрó [vi-dró] (bucket)

темнó [ti-mnó] (it's dark)

инт**е**рécный [in-ti-rés-nyy] (interesting)

язы́к [yi-zýk] (language)

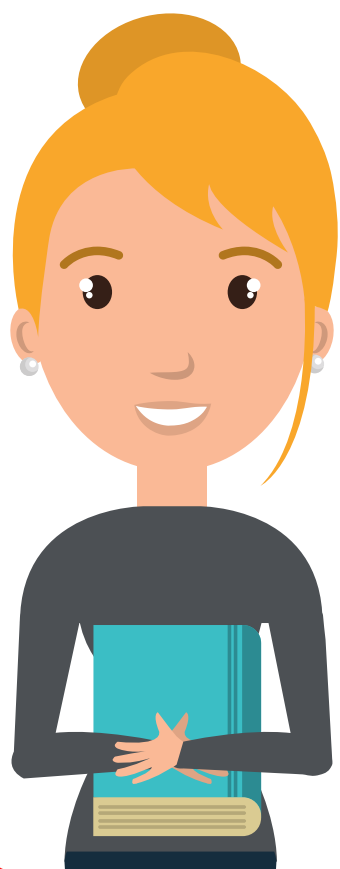
янвáрь [yin-vár'] (January)



Other unstressed vowels

Other vowels in unstressed syllables undergo minor reductions, unnoticeable for foreigners and even for many natives.

Generally, they are pronounced like a weaker version of themselves.



A few more words about accents

- **Russians do NOT write with accents, they are only for language learners (in books for beginners and dictionaries)**
- **When a word has only 1 syllable - зуб (tooth), хлеб (bread) – the accent mark is also NOT typed**

А́ Е́ Ё́ О́ У́ Ы́ Э́ Ю́ Я́
а́ е́ ё́ о́ у́ ы́ э́ ю́ я́

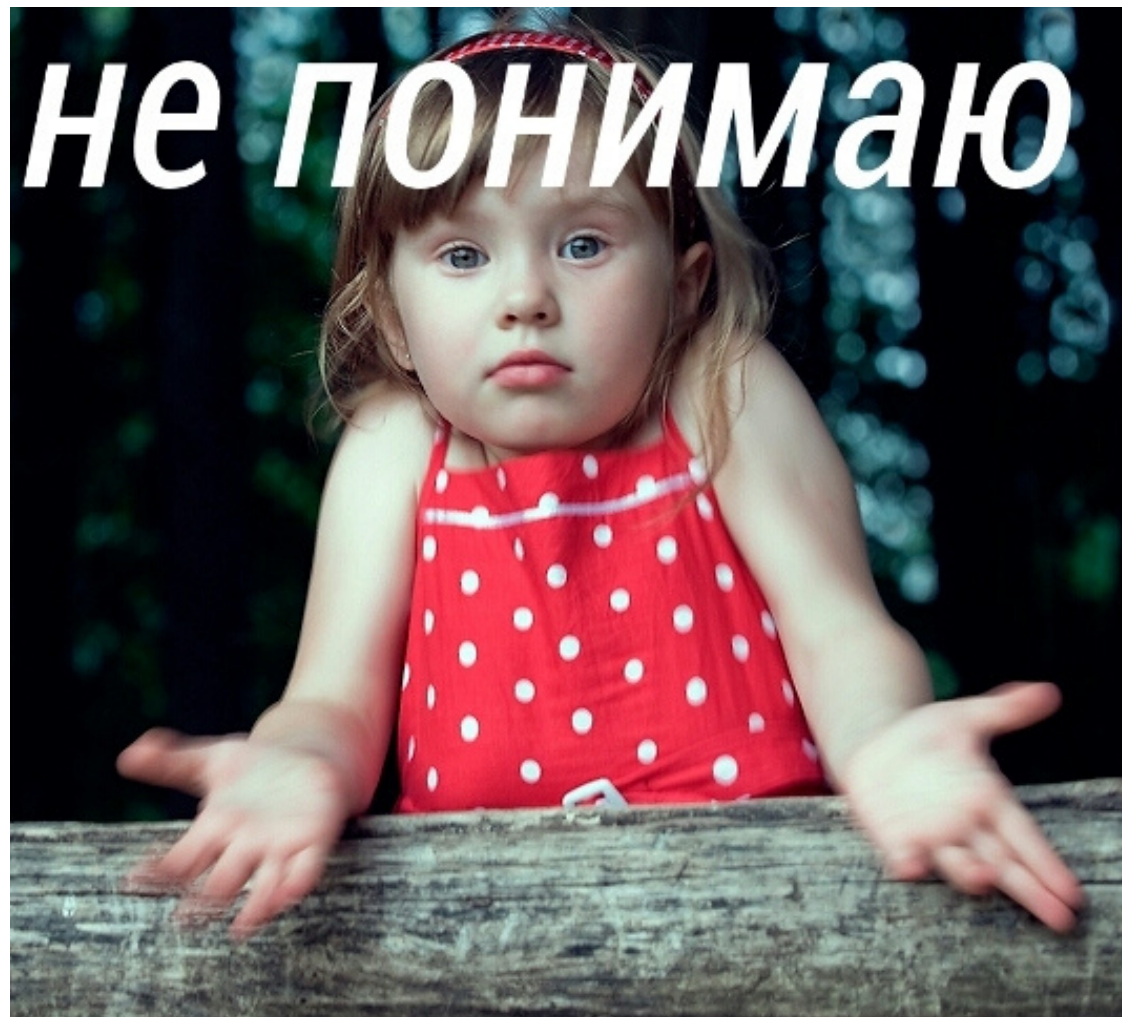
Однáжды, в студёную зímнюю пóру,
Я íз лесу вы́шел; был сíльный морóз.
Гляжú, поднимáется мéдленно в гóру
Лошáдка, везúщая хвóросту воз.
И, шéствуя вáжно, в спокóйствии чíнном,
Лошáдку ведёт под уздцы́ мужичóк
В больш́их сапогáх, в полушúбке овч́инном,
В больш́их рукав́ицах... а сам с ноготóк!

A few more words about accents

- The letter **ё**, if present in the word, is **always stressed**, but **no accent (stress) mark** is typed over it.

лётчик, овёс, огонёк, орёл

A few more words about accents



- **Placing the stress on the correct syllable is important.**
- **Mistaken word stress sounds not only weird, but can also change the meaning of a word.**

Consonant pronunciation

With few exceptions, Russian consonants can be pronounced either “soft” or “hard”, “voiced” or “voiceless”, depending on the type of letter that follows them.



Voiced and voiceless consonants form pairs.

Voiced vs voiceless consonants

	Voiced consonants	Voiceless consonants
pairs voiced < > voiceless	Б [b] В [v] Г [g] Д [d] Ж [zh] З [z]	П [p] Ф [f] К [k] Т [t] Ш [sh] С [s]
consonants not forming pairs	Л [l] М [m] Н [n] Р [r] Й [ij]	Х [kh] Ц [ts] Ч [tch] Щ [sch]

Consonant pronunciation

Voiced consonants devocalize

(in other words, their voiceless pair is pronounced instead of them)

when:

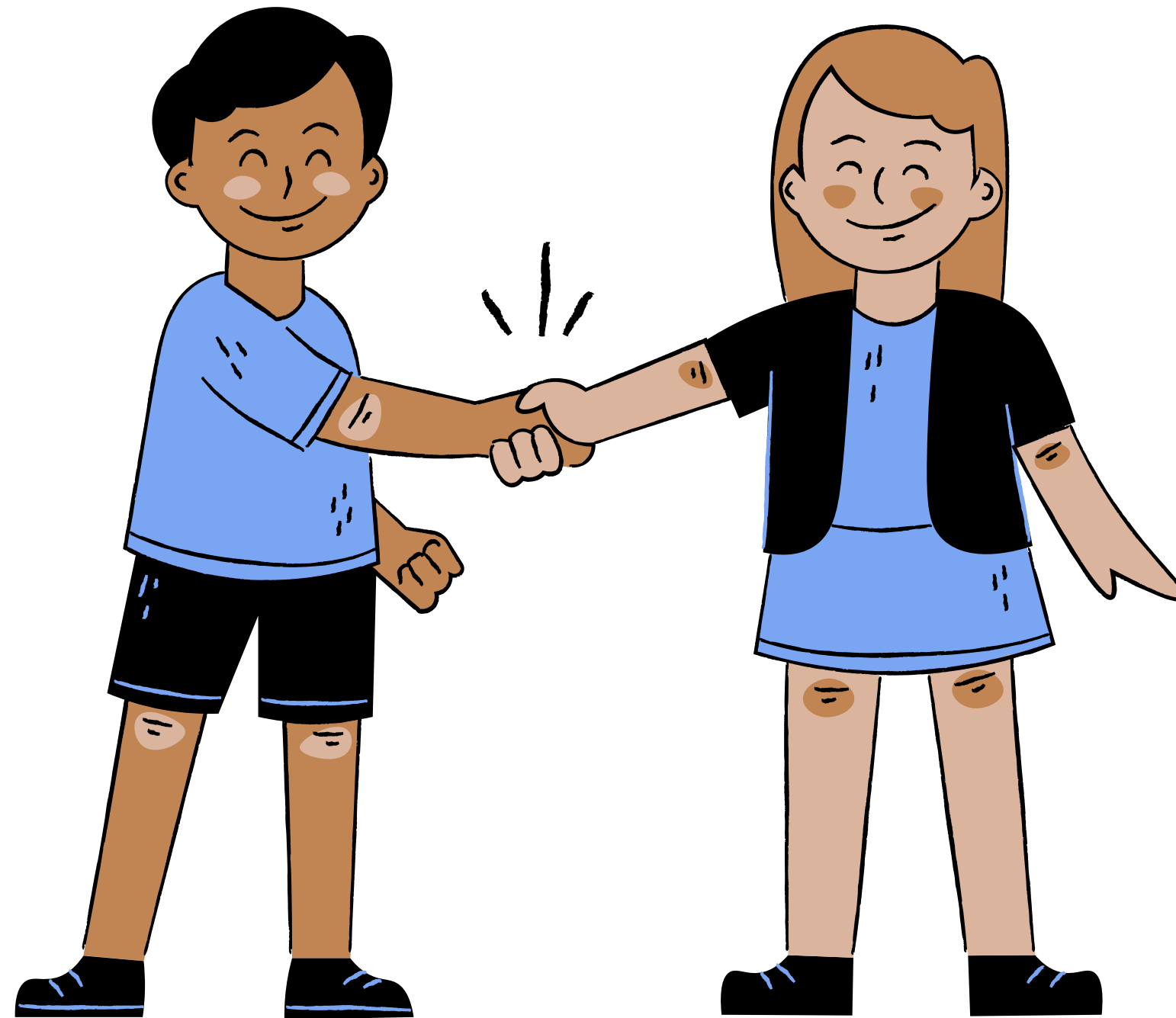
- they are the last letter in a word:**

зуб [zup] (tooth), хлеб [khlep] (bread), Ивано́в [ivanóv] (Ivanov)

- they are followed by another voiceless consonant:**

**сла́дкий [slatkii] (sweet), ло́жка [lóshka] (spoon),
по́д столóм [pat stalóm] (under the table).**

Introducing yourself in Russian



Introducing yourself in Russian

Russian	Transcription	English
Привёт!	privet	Hi
Здра́вствуйте!	zdrastvujte	Hello
До́брое у́тро!	dóbraye utro	Good morning!
До́брый де́нь!	dóbryy den'	Good afternoon!
До́брый ве́чер!	dóbryy vecher	Good evening!
Ме́ня зову́т...	Miniá zovut...	My name is...
При́ятно познако́миться.	priyátno paznakómitsa	Nice to meet you
Ра́д(а) вас ви́деть.	rád(a) vas videt'	I am glad to see you.

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!



АРБУЗ



БЕЛКА



ВИНОГРАД



ГРИБ



ДОМ

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

Е



ЕНОТ

Ё



ЁЖ

Ж



ЖУК

З



ЗОНТ

И



ИГЛА

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

Й



ЙОД

К



КОШКА

Л



ЛЯГУШКА

М



МЯЧ

Н



НИТКИ

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

О



ОБЛАКО

П



ПИЛА

Р



РАКЕТА

С



СОЛНЦЕ

Т



ТОРТ

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

У



УЛИТКА

Ф



ФОНАРЬ

Х



ХЛЕБ

Ц



ЦВЕТОК

Ч



ЧАСЫ

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

Ш



ШАР

Щ



ЩЁТКА

Ъ

ТВЁРДЫЙ
ЗНАК

Ы

Ь

МЯГКИЙ
ЗНАК

It's your turn now

Pause the video and try to read!

