



RUSSIAN FOR BEGINNERS

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**RUSSIAN FOR
BEGINNERS**

2018



1 - INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN

RUSSIAN IS ONE OF THE MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD

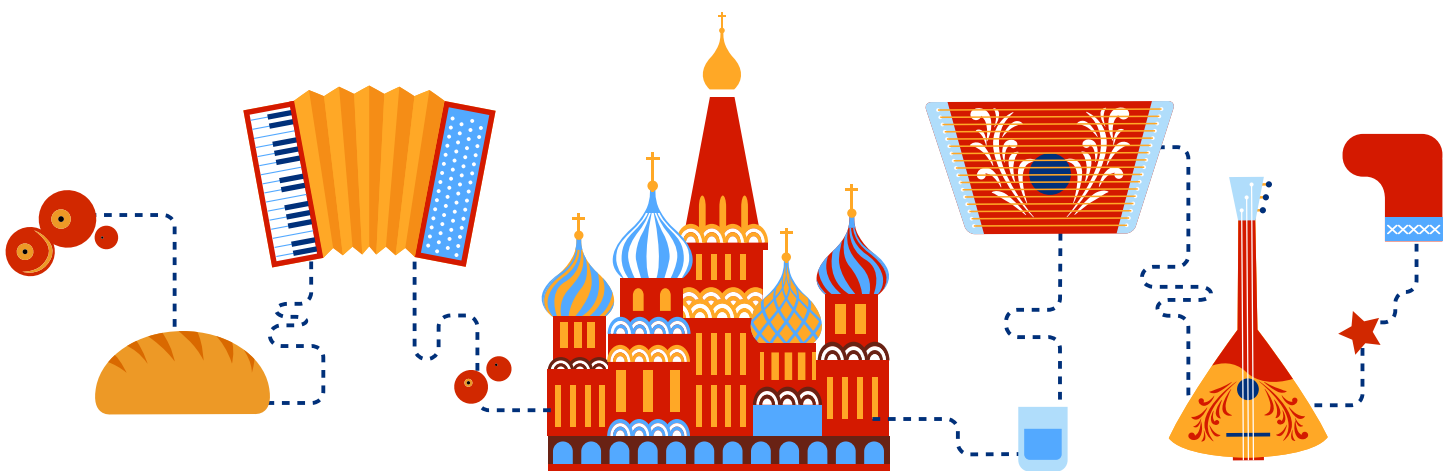
The first of my reasons for learning the Russian language is that it is spoken by more than 240 million people around the world. It is not only the official language of Russia, but also of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Also there's a large number of Russian-speakers in Ukraine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Israel. According to some researchers Russian is the 8th most spoken language in the world.

IT WILL BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

This low popularity of Russian language is a shame because there are a number of economic opportunities currently arising in Russia and Eastern Europe. Lots of international companies have opened their branches in Moscow. And in order to get there, you have to speak a bit of Russian.

RUSSIA HAS A FASCINATING CULTURE

A big part of Russian culture can be discovered through its literature and music. Wouldn't it be great to read original novels of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Pushkin. The Russian language has an enormous amount of expressions you can't find in English. Russian culture isn't limited to classics. It has become modernized and has mixed with global culture.



RUSSIANS DON'T SPEAK A LOT OF ENGLISH

Only about 5% of Russians speak English, and in the majority of Russian cities, you'll find almost no signs written in the Latin alphabet. So if you decide to discover Russia, you won't be able to get around without at least a basic knowledge of Russian.

LEARNING RUSSIAN IS A CHALLENGE

It's one of the hardest languages for English speakers to learn, and has a complex grammatical structure. When you do learn it, you'll feel a real sense of accomplishment from the fact that you can read another alphabet. Don't forget there are hundreds of foreign words that Russian adopted. Knowing the Russian language will help you empathize with the people of its country and to establish professional relations or making new friendships during one of your trips.





2- RUSSIAN ALPHABET

Learning the alphabet is the first step to learning the Russian language. Even if you don't plan to learn the language, knowing the alphabet is great for travelling because you can read all the street and shop signs.

It may seem super hard to learn a new alphabet, but it is relatively easy. In fact, the great thing about Russian is that almost all words can be sounded out as they are written.

Russian alphabet (the Cyrillic alphabet) consists of 33 letters: 11 vowels, 20 consonants, and 2 pronunciation signs. Here is what they look like:

А Б В Г Д Е Ё Ж З И Й К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч
Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ь Э Ю Я.



Russian Character	English Equivalent	Sound	Letter Name in Russian
А а	A a	Like "a" in car	"ah"
Б б	B b	Like "b" in bat	"beh"
В в	V v	Like "v" in van	"veh"
Г г	G g	Like "g" in go	"geh"
Д д	D d	Like "d" in dog	"deh"
Е е	YE ye	Like "ye" in yet	"yeh"
Ё ё	YO yo	Like "yo" in yonder	"yo"
Ж ж	Zh zh	Like "s" in measure or pleasure or like "g" in beige (the colour)	"zheh"
З з	Z z	Like "z" in zoo	"zeh"
И и	EE ee	Like "ee" in see	"ee"
Й й	I i or Y y	like "y" in boy or toy	"ee kratkoyeh"
К к	K k	Like "k" in kitten, "c" in cat.	"kah"
Л л	L l	Like "l" in light	"ehl"
М м	M m	Like "m" in mat	"ehm"
Н н	N n	Like "n" in no	"ehn"
О о	Stressed: O o Unstressed: A a	Like "o" in bore Like "a" in car	"oh"
П п	P p	Like "p" in pot	"peh"
Р р	R r	Like "r" in run (rolled)	"ehr"
С с	S s	Like "s" in sam	"ehs"

Т т	T t	Like "t" in tap	"teh"
У у	U u	Like "oo" in boot	"oo"
Ф ф	F f	Like "f" in fat	"ehf"
Х х	H h, KH kh	Like "h" in hello or like the "ch" in Scottish 'loch' or German 'Bach'	"khah"
Ц ц	TS ts	Like "ts" in bits	"tseh"
Ч ч	CH ch	Like "ch" in chip	"cheh"
Ш ш	SH sh (hard)	Like "sh" in shut	"shah"
Щ щ	SH sh (soft)	Like "sh" in sheep	"schyah"
Ъ ъ	Hard Sign	Letter before is hard	"tvjordiy znahk"
Ы ы	I i	Like "i" in ill	"i"
Ь ь	Soft Sign	Letter before is soft	"myagkeey znahk"
Э э	E e	Like "e" in pet	"eh"
Ю ю	YU yu	Like "u" in use or university	"yoo"
Я я	YA ya	Like "ya" in yard.	"yah"



3- RUSSIAN ALPHABET

Russian alphabet (the Cyrillic alphabet) consists of 33 letters: 11 vowels, 20 consonants, and 2 pronunciation signs. Here is what they look like:

А Б В Г Д Е Ё Ж З И Й К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ь Э Ю Я.

Russian letters that are (almost) the same.

- А а - Pronounced like the "a" in the word "father" or "car". It is not the 'flat' "a" sound you sometimes hear in words like "cat" or "flat".
- К к - Pronounced like the "k" in "kitten" or "kangaroo".
- М м - Pronounced like the "m" in man.
- о - When stressed, it is pronounced like the "o" in "bore".
- Т т - Pronounced like the "t" in "tap".

Russian letters that look like English letters but sound different.

(These are the most important to learn so you don't get them mixed up.)

- В в - Pronounced like the "v" in "vet". (Equivalent to the English letter "v").
- Е е - Pronounced like the "ye" in "yes"
- Н н - Pronounced like the "n" in "no". (Equivalent to the English letter "n").
- Р р - Pronounced like the "r" in "run", but it is rolled. (Equivalent to the english letter "r").
- С с - Pronounced like the "s" in "see". (Equivalent to the English letter "s").
- У у - Pronounced like the "oo" in "boot" or "root".
- Х х - Pronounced like the "h" in "hello". However, this is often pronounced more like the "ch" in the Scottish "Loch" or German "Bach", or the mexican pronunciation of "x" in "Mexico".



Russian letters that look unusual, but have familiar sounds

- Б б - Pronounced like the "b" in "bat". (Equivalent to the english letter "b").
- Г г - Pronounced like the "g" in "go". (Equivalent to the english letter "g").
- Д д - Pronounced like the "d" in "dog". (Equivalent to the english letter "d").
- З з - Pronounced like the "z" in "zoo". (Equivalent to the english letter "z").
- И и - Pronounced like the "i" in "taxi". (Sometimes equivalent to the english letter "i", the short 'ee' sound.). (Note: The hand-written form for "и" looks a little like the english "u").
- Л л - Pronounced like the "l" in "love". (Equivalent to the english letter "l").
- П п - Pronounced like the "p" in "pot". (Equivalent to the english letter "p").
- Ф ф - Pronounced like the "f" in "fat". (Equivalent to the english letter "f").
- Э э - Pronounced like the "e" in "fed".

New Russian letters and sounds

(The sounds will be familiar, but they don't have their own letter in English).

- Ю ю - Pronounced like the "u" in "universe". (Pronounced much like the english word "you").
- Я я - Pronounced like the "ya" in "yard".
- Ё ё - Pronounced like "yo" in "yonder". (Note: In modern Russian you may find this letter simply written as Е е.)
- Ж ж - Like "s" in "measure", "pleasure" or "fusion" or like "g" in colour "beige". (As there is no english symbol for this sound, it is usually represented as "zh")
- Ц ц - Similar to the "ts" sound in "sits" or "its".
- Ч ч - Pronounced like the "ch" in "chips" or "church".
- Ш ш - Pronounced like the "sh" in shut.
- Щ щ - Pronounced like "sh" but with your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Try putting your tongue in the same position as you would to say "ch" but say "sh" instead. English speakers may find it hard to define the difference between "ш" and "щ".
- Ы ы - Pronounced like the "i" in "bit" or "ill". (Said with your tongue slightly back in your mouth.)
- Ё ё - This letter is used to form diphthongs. So "ой" is like the "oy" sound in "boy" or "ай" is like the "igh" in "sigh".

Pronunciation Symbols

(These letters have no sound on their own, but are still considered letters.).

- ь ь - The 'Hard Sign' is rarely used. It indicates a slight pause between syllables.
- ъ ъ - The 'Soft Sign' makes the previous letter 'soft'. Think of the "p" sound in the word "pew". (Try inflecting a very slight "y" sound onto letter before it.)





4 - GREETINGS AND GOODBYES IN RUSSIAN

As a new learner of the language you probably know that, unlike in English, Russian has a polite form for addressing a single person: **Вы** [vi].

Вы coincides with the plural form **вы** [vi] as opposed to the informal form of **ты** [tih].

Due to the existence of the polite form, there is a special way to greet a stranger or a person whom you address formally using **вы**, a business partner or an elderly person:

Здравствуйте [zdrah-STVOOY-tee],

You can use the same word to greet a group of people. To say hello to a single person whom you address informally (using **ты**) you can use the following two variants:

Здравствуй [ZDRAH-stvooy] - **Hello**

Or

Привет [pree-VYET]- **Hi**

Just like in English, you can say hello in Russian by referring to the time of the day when you meet a person:

Доброе утро! [DOHB-ruh-ee OO-truh] – Good morning (used until noon).

Добрый день! [DOHB-rihy dyen'] – Good afternoon (it can be used throughout the day).

Добрый вечер! [DOHB-rihy VEE-cheer] – Good evening (used in the evening).

These phrases can be used in both formal and informal greetings, whether you address people using **ты** or **вы/Вы**.

As is the case with Russian greetings, you can use a formal or an informal word when saying goodbye depending on the situation. The most common words are:

Пока [pa-KAH] – Bye – an informal way to say goodbye. Used when saying goodbye to friends and family and also anyone whom you address as **ты**.

До свиданья [duh svee-DAH-nee-ye] – a more formal phrase used when leaving, which means until the next meeting. You can use this phrase when saying goodbye to people whom you address as either **ты** or **вы**.

Спокойной ночи [spa-KOJ-naj NO-chee] – Good night!

Доброй ночи [DOB-raj NO-chee] – Good night!

До встречи! [duh VSTRIE-chi] – see you later





5 - INTRODUCE YOURSELF IN RUSSIAN

When you are in Russia and you meet somebody, the first thing you will want to do is to say "hello". There are two forms of this word.

Здравствуйте ("zdra-stvooy-tye") - Hello (Formal)

Привет ("pree-vyet") - Hi (Informal)

Здравствуйте may be a little difficult for you to pronounce at first, but it is the most common Russian greeting so you should try to practice it. Привет is also commonly used with friends. However, keep in mind that Привет is informal (much like "hi" in English), and should only be used with friends. If somebody says Привет to you, then it is normally safe to proceed in the friendly tone.

Introducing Yourself:

In order to introduce yourself, you may need the following phrases.

Меня зовут ... ("men-ya za-voot") - My name is ...

Как вас зовут? ("kak vas za-voot") - What is your name?

Очень приятно ("och-en pree-yat-na") - Pleased to meet you.

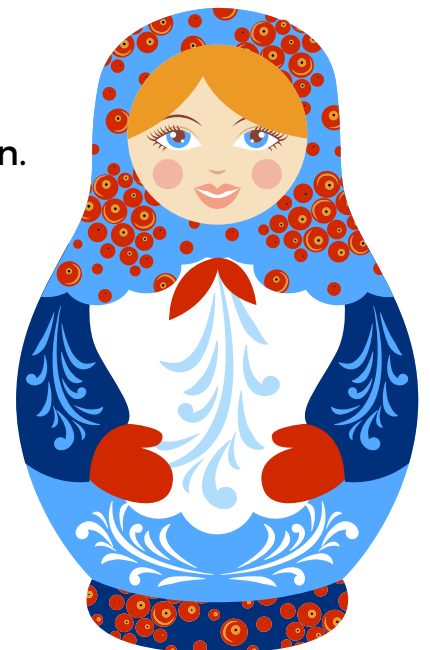
-Zdrastvuyte, menya zavut (name). A kak vas zavut?- "Hello, My name is

-What's your name?" in Russian

-Ya iz (country or city)- "I am from" in Russian.

-Mne (age #) let-"I am years old" in Russian

-Ya - (occupation)- "I am a (student/occupation)" in Russian.





6 - MONTHS, WEEKDAYS AND SEASONS

The days of the week in Russian...

- Понедельник - **Monday**
- Вторник - **Tuesday**
- Среда - **Wednesday**
- Четверг - **Thursday**
- Пятница - **Friday**
- Суббота - **Saturday**
- Воскресенье - **Sunday**

Months

- Январь - **January**
- Февраль - **February**
- Март - **March**
- Апрель - **April**
- Май - **May**
- Июнь - **June**
- Июль - **July**
- Август - **August**
- Сентябрь - **September**
- Октябрь - **October**
- Ноябрь - **November**
- Декабрь - **December**



Related words

- Сегодня - Today (pronounced "sivodnya")
- Завтра - Tomorrow
- Вчера - Yesterday
- День - Day
- Неделя - Week
- Месяц - Month
- Год - Year

Seasons

- Winter- Zima
- Spring- Vesna
- Summer- Leto
- Autumn -Osen'

Notes:

1. The preposition "в" is used to mean "on". ("в понедельник" - on Monday). If the last letter is "а" it becomes "у".

2. The days always start with a lowercase letter unless at the start of a sentence.



7 - NUMBERS

The next step in learning Russian is to learn the Russian numbers. Once you learn the Russian numbers you will find it much easier doing things like shopping, or catching a train or tram. You will be able to understand when people give you the price of something. We will start with the numbers 1-10.

Russian numbers: 1 to 10

- 1 - один ("a-deen")
- 2 - два ("dva")
- 3 - три ("tree")
- 4 - четыре ("chye-tir-ye")
- 5 - пять ("pyat")
- 6 - шесть ("shest")
- 7 - семь ("syem")
- 8 - восемь ("vo-syem")
- 9 - девять ("dyev-yat")
- 10 -десять ("dyes-yat")

Read through the numbers 1-10 a couple of times until you are comfortable with them. Try counting from 1 to 10 without referring to them. Then for practice, try counting backwards from 10 to 1 in Russian.

Russian numbers: 11 to 19

Now that you are comfortable with your first Russian numbers, try to learn the numbers from 11 to 19. To help you with reading practice we will not include the trans-literations.

- 11 - одиннадцать
- 12 - двенадцать
- 13 - тринадцать
- 14 - четырнадцать
- 15 - пятнадцать
- 16 - шестнадцать
- 17 - семнадцать
- 18 - восемнадцать
- 19 - девятнадцать



Russian numbers: 20 and onwards

As you could see, the numbers 11-19 are simply formed by adding "надцать" to the numbers 1-9. (You will need to drop the soft sign, or the "e" in "четыре")

20 in Russian is "двадцать". The numbers 21-29 are formed in a similar way to English. Here are some examples:

- 20 - двадцать
- 21 - двадцать один
- 22 - двадцать два
- 23 - двадцать три
- 24 - двадцать четыре

Other compound numbers are formed in the same way, quite similar to English. (There is no need to use the word "and" in Russian). Here are the other numbers you will need to form numbers in Russia. It will be useful to learn as many of these numbers as you can because it makes it easier to understand the price of goods in Russian roubles.

- 30 - тридцать
- 40 - сорок
- 50 - пятьдесят
- 60 - шестьдесят
- 70 - семьдесят
- 80 - восемьдесят
- 90 - девяносто
- 100 - сто
- 200 - двести
- 300 - триста
- 400 - четыреста
- 500 - пятьсот
- 600 - шестьсот
- 700 - семьсот
- 800 - восемьсот
- 900 - девятьсот
- 1,000 - тысяча
- 1,000,000 - миллион
- 1,000,000,000 - миллиард



8 - BASIC RUSSIAN PHRASES

Please and Thank-You.

The two most important words you will learn in Russian are please and thank-you. You can just add these to any sentence to make it more polite.

- Спасибо ("spa-see-ba") - Thank-You
- Пожалуйста ("pa-zhal-sta") - Please (and You're Welcome)
- You're welcome. – Не за что. (ne za chto)

The word Пожалуйста is also used to mean "You're Welcome", after somebody says thank-you.

Yes and No.

Two other very important Russian words are "Yes" and "No".

- Да ("da") - Yes
- Нет ("nyet") - No

How are you?

- How are you? – Как дела? (kak deLA?)
- I'm fine, thank you. – Хорошо, спасибо. (haraSHO, spaSIbo)
- I'm OK, thank you. – Неплохо, спасибо. (nePLOho, spaSIbo)

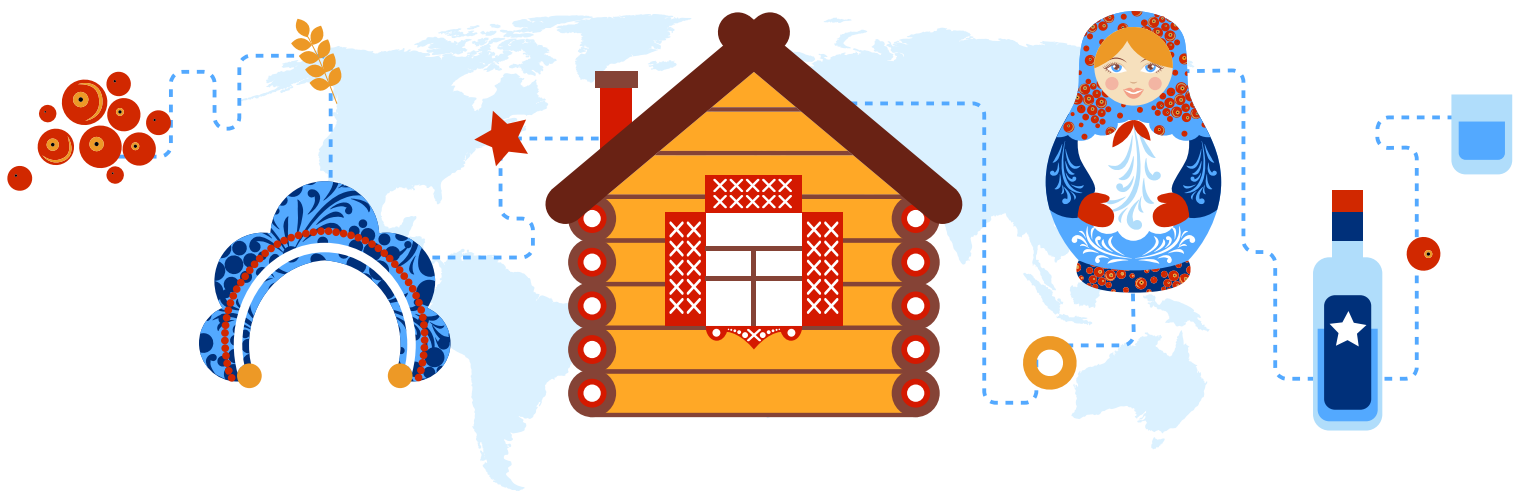
Apologies

- Извините – (Eezveeneete)- Sorry!
- Простите- (Prasteete)- Excuse me

Asking about languages.

When you are asking a yes/no question in Russian, there is no difference between the question and the statement, except for the question mark. When you are speaking Russian you should ask questions in a different tone.

- Вы говорите по-английски? - Do you (formal) speak English?
- Вы говорите по-русски? - Do you (formal) speak Russian?
- Я говорю по-английски - I speak English
- Я говорю по-русски - I speak Russian
- Я понимаю - I understand
- Я не понимаю - I don't understand
- Help me, please. – Помогите, пожалуйста. (pomogite, pozhalusta)





9 - IDIOMS

1. Когда рак на горе свистнет (Kogda rak na gore svistnet)

Literal translation: “When a lobster whistles on the top of a mountain.”

Similar English idiom: “When pigs fly”

2. Ни пуха ни пера (Ne Pukha, ne pera)

Literal translation: “Neither down nor feather” .

Figurative meaning: “Good luck”. Bonus: The preferred response to this well-wish is “К чёрту!” (“To hell!”).

It’s friendlier than it sounds. If you’re casual, you might even just say “ни пуха” in place of the whole phrase and people will know what you mean.

3. Делать из мухи слона

Literal translation: “To make an elephant out of a fly” .

Figurative meaning: “To exaggerate”

Similar English idiom: “To make a mountain out of a molehill”. This phrase is likely based on an old Latin proverb, and idioms about making an elephant out of a fly exist in several languages.

4. Любовь зла, полюбишь и козла

Literal translation: “Love is evil, you may fall in love with a goat”

Figurative meaning: “You can’t control who you love”

Similar English idiom: “Love is blind”

“Любовь зла, полюбишь и козла” may be a bit hyperbolic, but the point is that you can fall in love with anyone.

5. В ногах правды нет

Literal translation: “There is no truth in the legs”

Figurative meaning: “You can’t think straight while standing up”

Similar English idiom: None

Example:

Садись, и тогда поговорим—в ногах правды нет.

(Literal: Sit down, and then we’ll talk—there is no truth in the legs.)

(Figurative: Sit down, and then we’ll talk—you can’t think straight while standing up.)





10 - TIPS FOR LEARNING RUSSIAN: LEARN HOW TO THINK IN RUSSIAN

Surround yourself with the alphabet. When you do learn it, you'll feel a real sense of accomplishment from the fact that you can read another alphabet. Don't forget there are hundreds of foreign words that Russian adopted.

However it's not going to work if you spend just a couple minutes per day learning it. The more often you see Russian letters, the faster you'll remember them. Here are my suggestions:

- Use post-it notes (on each note write the letter and a couple of words with it). Put them everywhere around you.
- Print the whole alphabet on A4 and carry it with you.
- Download apps on your phone. There are dozens of them. And from now on instead of playing games or reading news – practice the alphabet.

Learn common words first.

- менеджер – **manager**
- директор – **director**
- маркетинг – **marketing**
- компания – **company**
- Интернет – **internet**
- компьютер – **computer**

If you have a language partner who speaks Russian he or she can practise with you in many ways. Interacting with native speakers is a quick way to improve your skills. Speaking with Russians will improve your pronunciation, speaking and listening. A written pen pal relationship can also improve your reading and writing. Use [VK.com](https://vk.com).

Start following Russian Youtubers and listen Russian music.

The Russian keyboard is necessary for learning the alphabet.





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