YOUR GUIDE TO BETTER PRONUNCIATION IN RUSSIAN

After learning the Cyrillic alphabet, students of the Russian language are usually pleased to discover that, unlike English, Russian is a phonetic language—that is, words are almost always pronounced as they are spelled. Nonetheless, knowing the alphabet does not guarantee an acceptable Russian accent. The subtle differences, for example, between Russian vowels and their English counterparts can only be discerned by listening to Russian speakers.

The How to Pronounce Russian Correctly audiocassette affords students—from beginning to advanced—the opportunity to concentrate on the sounds of Russian with a fluent Russian speaker. How to Pronounce Russian Correctly explains, illustrates, and drills the basic sounds of the Russian language, concentrating on those that cause special problems for English speakers. The tape begins with the sounds that are closest to English and concludes with the three sounds that have no equivalent in our language. Pronunciation material is divided up into 11 parts, so that you are introduced to Russian sounds in short, accessible lessons. And the cassette format allows you to repeat and practice as often as you like, until you get it right!

This User's Manual features both a transcript of the cassette, as well as charts and footnotes that expand on the recorded explanations. The Manual's Introduction discusses the differences between the English and Russian sound systems, explains stress and describes how best to use the cassette.

All in all, How to Pronounce Russian Correctly is an indispensable key to an improved Russian accent.

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Introduction

*How to Pronounce Russian Correctly* is a comprehensive program designed to introduce and reinforce the basic sounds of the Russian language. Consisting of a Study Guide and an audiocassette, the program is designed to help language students develop the most authentic Russian accent possible.

Russian has certain intrinsic features that make it relatively easy for an English-speaker to pronounce. To begin with, each letter in the Russian alphabet represents a definite sound. When a Russian letter deviates from this "true" sound in the alphabet, it does so according to definite rules that have few exceptions. In addition, Russian spelling is essentially phonetic—that is, a Russian word is pronounced exactly as it is spelled. Thus, once you learn the true sound of every letter in the Russian alphabet and know the circumstances that modify that sound, you will be able to pronounce at sight every Russian word you encounter. By contrast, many letters in the English alphabet represent not one, but several sounds, and it is often very difficult for English-language students to know which of these sounds a particular letter is intended to represent.

Besides the natural characteristics that make Russian an easy language to pronounce, certain special features of the cassette and Study Guide should make your progress still easier. First of all, you do not have to know the Russian alphabet before you begin. In Units 1–5, you will learn to recognize each letter as you learn to pronounce it. In addition, the letters will be presented, not in alphabetical order, but in a sequence that begins with the sounds closest to those in English (and therefore the easiest to pronounce), moving gradually towards the three sounds that have no counterpart in English. Transcriptions have been provided for all Russian sounds, but, to simplify matters, they are given as simple English transliterations, rather than in phonetic symbols. In addition, technical terminology has been avoided whenever possible. When it is used, it has been fully explained.

The example words provided for illustration and practice have been carefully selected so that your attention is focused on a single aspect of pronunciation at a time. In Unit 1, you will study only four Russian letters—the sounds *ah*, *aw*, *eh*, and *oo*. You will practice pronouncing them in actual Russian words that contain only three additional letters (the Russian *K, M, and T*), selected because they look and sound like their counterparts in English.

In Units 2–5, you will learn one additional letter at a time. The example words in these units do not contain any Russian letters that have not been formally introduced. In this way, you will be able to concentrate on the sound of each new letter, as you reinforce your familiarity with letter sounds previ-
ously discussed. With only one exception, sound variations will not be discussed in Units 1–5. Instead, these will be covered systematically in Units 6–11, so that, in the first five units, you can concentrate on the "true" sounds of the letters.

The one variation that could not be deferred involves the sounds of stressed and unstressed Russian vowels. Although discussed in detail in Unit 10, this variation occurs so frequently in Russian that some mention of it has to be made in Unit 1. Because of their importance, you should be familiar at the very outset with the following characteristics of stressed and unstressed Russian vowels.

1. In Russian, words have as many syllables as they have vowels.

2. However, only one syllable (and thus only one vowel) in a Russian word is stressed.

3. The sound of a stressed vowel is its true sound in the alphabet. Any other vowels in the same word are slurred, that is, they are shorter and less distinct.

4. In words of one syllable, the vowel is automatically stressed.

5. In words of more than one syllable, you can identify the stressed syllable by the accent mark [ь] that appears over the vowel in that syllable. Accent marks are not a usual part of the Russian writing system, but they appear in most textbooks as an aid for beginners.

Stressing, as it does, the component sounds of Russian words, How to Pronounce Russian Correctly reflects an approach that is thoroughly consistent with current methodology in language teaching. The emphasis on sound patterns that can be recognized in any number of unfamiliar words contrasts with an older methodology that treated each word as a unique sound unit having little relationship to other sound units in the language.

As you move through this program, you will study all the basic aspects of Russian pronunciation, as well as the most common exceptions to the phonetic rules. After mastering the material in the Study Guide and on tape, you will be able to approach Russian pronunciation with confidence.

From beginning to end, the material on tape takes about 50 minutes to listen to. However, do not do too much at one time: you will only become confused. You may also acquire incorrect speech habits that will be hard to lose later on. So, plan to study just one unit at a time, and master it before you move on to the next one.

Before listening to any one lesson on the cassette, read the corresponding section in the Study Guide. Pay particular attention to the supplementary explanations, which may be set off in indented paragraphs, enclosed in brackets, or given in footnotes to distinguish them from the basic text that is heard on tape. When you have understood the explanations as a whole, review the example words highlighted in boldface type and followed by four periods. The phonetic transcriptions accompanying these examples are a preliminary guide to the correct pronunciation you will hear on the audiotape.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the contents of one unit in the Study Guide, listen to the same unit on the cassette. Repeat the indicated words right after you hear the speaker pronounce them. Ample time has been provided on the tape for you to do this. Do not be afraid to exaggerate the sounds at first. However, as soon as you can, try to speak softly and in a natural way. You will learn faster if you do. Next, go back and practice reading the examples aloud by yourself. Then test yourself by repeating them after the speaker again. When you find that you can quickly associate a new letter with its proper sound and can pronounce the examples as the speaker does, go on to the next unit and follow the same procedure. At frequent intervals, review the material you have studied up to that point. Review will strengthen your mastery of correct pronunciation at each stage of progress.

As soon as you are ready, extend the principles you have learned to other Russian-language materials of your choice, using the Study Guide and cassette tape to refresh your memory of the rules and to improve your pronunciation of particular sounds. The alphabetical reference guide at the back of this book has been specially provided for this purpose.

Designed for classroom use, practice in the language laboratory, or individual study at home, How to Pronounce Russian Correctly is an invaluable tool for developing and maintaining an appropriate Russian accent at all levels of language study.
Part One

The Russian Alphabet
UNIT 1

THE VOWELS A, O, Э, AND Y

The first sounds you will learn to pronounce will be the vowels a [ah], o [aw], э [eh], and y [oo]. These are some of the Russian sounds that are closest to those in English.

The Letter A a [transcribed ah when stressed]

The stressed Russian а sounds almost like the a in father, but it is brighter and shorter. Say: Ah . . . .

<table>
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<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Now say: мак . . .</td>
<td>mahk</td>
<td>poppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ккак . . .</td>
<td>kahk</td>
<td>how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>таак . . .</td>
<td>tahk</td>
<td>thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>акт . . .</td>
<td>ahkt</td>
<td>act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now say the four words together:

мак, ккак, таак, акт . . . .

The Letter O о [transcribed aw when stressed]

The stressed Russian о sounds like the aw [au] in fault or law, but it is crisper. Say: Walk . . . .

Now pucker your lips the same way and say the Russian о . . . .

Say:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
<th>TRANSCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>том . . .</td>
<td>tawm</td>
<td>volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>тот . . .</td>
<td>tawt</td>
<td>that (one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кто . . .</td>
<td>ktaw</td>
<td>who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кот . . .</td>
<td>kawt</td>
<td>cat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The four words together:

там, тот, кто, кот . . .

The Unstressed A and O [transcribed uh]

Now you know how to pronounce the stressed a and o in Russian. Whenever they appear in an unstressed position in a word of more than one syllable, both the a and the o sound like the uh-sound in lemon.

Say: там . . . tahn* there

Now say: мама . . . mahn-muh* mother

Did you hear the difference between the stressed a in the first syllable and the unstressed a in the second syllable?

Repeat: там, мама . . .

Again: там, мама . . .

Say: кот . . . kawt cat

Now say: кота . . . kuh-tah of the cat

This is the difference between the stressed and the unstressed o.

Repeat: кот, кота . . .

Again: кот, кота . . .

The Letter Я я [transcribed oo]

The Russian letter я sounds much shorter than the oo in noodles or room. Puckering your lips will help you to pronounce the Russian я.

Say: ум . . . oom mind, intelligence

кум . . . koom godfather
tут . . . toot here
tомый . . . tuh-mooh* to that (one)

Repeat all four together:

ум, кум, тут, томый . . .

The Unstressed Э э [transcribed eh]

The Russian letter э sounds almost like the eh in men or let, but keep your mouth a little more closed.

* In the phonetic transcription of the examples, the stressed syllable is given in italics. Words of one syllable will always be transcribed in italics since the vowel in such words is always stressed.

The Unstressed Э и У

The э and the у sound almost the same, whether stressed or unstressed. [That is, the unstressed э and у sound almost like their stressed counterparts. Hence, there will be no variation in the respective transcriptions of these letters.]

* Note the unstressed o in the first syllable.
UNIT 2

CONSONANTS

Now let us pronounce some Russian consonants that also sound much as they do in English. They are the letters: м [emm] . . . , б [beh] . . . , в [veh] . . . , ф [eff] . . . , and г [geh] . . .

The Letter М м [transcribed m]
Say: мак . . . махк poppy
tам . . . тамак there
tом . . . тавм volume
ум . . . оом mind

мак, там, том, ум . . .

The Letter Б б [transcribed b]
Say: бак . . . бахк tank (receptacle)
бум . . . бом boom
бок . . . бахк side
баба . . . бах-бух peasant woman

бак, бум, бок, баба . . .

The Letter В в [transcribed v]
Say: вам . . . вахм to you
вот . . . вахт here

вата . . . vah-tuh cotton, wadding
буква . . . book-vuh letter (of the alphabet)
вам, вот, вата, буква . . .

The Letter Ф ф [transcribed f]
Say: фат . . . фаht fop
факт . . . факт fact
фото . . . фоht-tuh photo
фатá . . . фуh-tuh bridal veil

фат, факт, фото, фатá . . .

The Letter Г г [transcribed g]
The Russian letter г [geh] is pronounced like the g in go, never as in gentle or gem.
Say: гамма . . . gahm-muh scale (in music)
губа . . . goo-bah lip
гамак . . . guh-mahk hammock
бумага . . . boo-mah-guh paper

гамма, губа, гамак, бумага . . .

Now let us consider the Russian letters д [deh] and н [enn] which sound harder than the corresponding letters in English because the tip of the tongue goes down rather than up.
The Letter Д ɗ [transcribed d]
Say: да . . . ɗаh yes
dва . . . ɗвah two
дом . . . ɗаwn house
dáма . . . ɗаh-muh lady
da, два, дом, dáма . . .

The Letter Н ԋ [transcribed n]
Say: на . . . nah on, upon
ну . . . noo well!
нам . . . nahm to us
Канáда . . . kuh-nah-duh Canada
на, ну, нам, Канáда . . .

The Letter Я я [transcribed l]
The Russian letter я [ell] is also a hard sound, harder than the l in table or Mabel. Say: table . . . Now say: tablah . . .
Make the я as hard as you possibly can. Make sure that the tip of your tongue touches your upper teeth and then bends downwards. Say: я [ell] . . . Now practice the following words:
лак . . . lahk lacquer
лом . . . lawn crowbar
лук . . . look onion

лак, лом, лук . . .
ку́кла . . . kook-luh doll
малá . . . muh-lah small (f.)
луна́ . . . loo-nah moon
ку́кла, малá, луна́ . . .
The Russian consonants з [zeh] and с [ess] sound sharper than the corresponding letters in English. Whistle more.

The Letter З з [transcribed z]
Say: за . . . zah behind
знак . . . znahk sign, signal
звук . . . zvoook sound
вáза . . . vah-zuh vase
за, знак, звук, вáза . . .

The Letter С с [transcribed s]
Say: сам . . . sahm oneself
сон . . . sawm dream, sleep
нос . . . naws nose
стул . . . stool chair
сам, сон, нос, стул . . .
UNIT 3

CONSONANTS (Continued)

Now let us take up some sounds that will require a little practice—first, the letters п [peh], т [teh], and к [kah].

A Note on Aspiration

Aspiration occurs when a short puff of breath is released after another sound, giving the effect of a slight hesitation or h-sound. It can be heard after the п in pie, after the т in tie, and after the к in kind. By contrast, the h-sound should not be heard after the п in please, after the т in try, or after the hard c in clean.

Before you proceed to work intensively on the letters п, т, and к, practice on the English words please, try, and clean so that you may be sure to avoid any aspiration when you pronounce the Russian п, т, and к.

The Letter П п [transcribed п]

The Russian п [peh] sounds like the п in please. The slight aspiration heard after the п in English words like pen and pie never occurs in Russian.

Say: пакт . . . пахkt pact
not пHHахkt
but: пакт . . . пахkt pact
пост . . . pawst post
суп . . . soop soup
Панама . . . puh-nah-muh Panama

пакт, пост, суп, Панама . . .

The Letter Т т [transcribed т]

The Russian т [teh] sounds like the т in try. Again, the aspiration heard after the т in such English words as tie and table never occurs in Russian.

Say: там . . . tахm there
not tHHахm
but: там . . . тахm there
тон . . . tawn tone
тут . . . toot here
мост . . . mast bridge

tам, тон, тут, мост . . .

The Letter К к [transcribed к]

The Russian к [kah] sounds like the k-sound in clean. Once more, the aspiration heard after the к in English words like key and kind never occurs in Russian.

Say: как . . . kахk how
not kHHахk
but: как . . . кахk how
кот . . . kawt cat
класс . . . klahss class
лук . . . look onion

как, кот, класс, лук . . .
The following Russian letters are quite easy to pronounce because we have similar sounds in English. However, in English, it is necessary to use several letters to represent these sounds; in Russian, each of these sounds has its own special letter. These letters are: ж [zheh] . . . , ш [shah] . . . , ц [tsheh] . . . , ч [cheh] . . . , and шч [shchah] . . . .

The letters ж, ш, and ц sound harsher than in English.

**The Letter Ж ж [transcribed zh]**

The Russian letter ж [zheh] sounds even harsher than in pleasure or vision.

Say: жук . . . zhook beetle

жажда . . . zhahzh-duh thirst

жук, жажда . . .

кожа . . . kaw-zhuh skin

ужас . . . oo-zhuhs terror

кожа, ужас . . .

**The Letter Ш ш [transcribed sh]**

The Russian letter ш [tsheh] sounds harsher than in quarts or cats.

Say: баш . . . bahts bang

чукат . . . tsoo-kaht candied fruit

баш, чукат . . .

пласт . . . plahts parade ground

чаца . . . tsah-tsuuh swelled head (coll.)

пласт, чэца . . .

* For example, in English words the sound of ж is represented by a variety of combinations: e.g., pleasure, vision, seizure. For the sound of ш, consider: nation, Russian, short, sure. For the sound of ц, consider: quarts, cats.

The next two sounds are softer than in English. It helps to smile when you pronounce them.
UNIT 4

LETTERS WITH UNUSUAL SOUNDS

Now let us consider the sounds that have no counterpart in English. Two of them occur in several other European languages; the last one is particularly Russian. These sounds are the п [err], the к [khah], and the м [ih].

The Letter П п [transcribed r]

To pronounce the Russian п [err], purr like a cat: rrrr . . . Exaggerate the sound at first. It will help you get used to it. Try again: rrrr . . .

Now say: роm . . . . rawm rum
    раk . . . . rahk crayfish, crab
    брат . . . . braht brother

роm, раk, брат . . . .

спорт . . . . sport
    курс . . . . koors course
    март . . . . mahrt March

спорт, курс, март . . . .

The Letter Х х [transcribed kh]

The Russian letter х [khah] is something like the English h in hut, hid, or harp, but pronounced much more harshly. It is really a guttural sound, closer to the хh-sound in the German nacht or the Scottish loch. Say: Хa [khah] . . . .
Now say:  ок . . .     awkh   oh!
         хам . . .     kham   cad
         хор . . .     khawr  choir

ок, хам, хор . . .

слух . . .     slookh  hearing
ýхо . . .     oo-khuh  ear
мýха . . .     moo-khuh fly

слух, ýхо, мýха . . .

The Letter ы* [transcribed ih when stressed]

The letter ы is typically Russian. Nothing like it exists in English. To pronounce it, put a pencil between your teeth and push your tongue backwards. Now try to say:

its . . .

its . . .

Hear the sound rumbling in your throat? That is where it should be—down deep in your throat.
Exaggerate and try it again: its . . .

Say:  sin . . .

Now say:  сын . . .     sihn  son

Say:  dim . . .

Now say:  дым . . .     dihm  smoke

Say:  bit . . .

Now say:  быт . . .     biht  mode of life

Do you hear the difference? Now let us try some Russian words with the only really difficult sound in the Russian language—ы.

Say:  мы . . .     mih  we
сыр . . .     sihr  cheese
бык . . .     bihk  bull

мы, сыр, бык . . .

рыба . . .     ri-buh  fish
týква . . .     tihk-vuh  pumpkin
мýшка . . .     mihs-kuh  mouse
рыба, тýква, мýшка . . .
UNIT 5

THE SOFT VOWELS AND Й

You have now learned and practiced the five hard vowels: а, о, э, у, and ы. Next, let us take up the five soft vowels.*

The Letter И [transcribed ee when stressed]

The first soft vowel we will study is the letter И. The Russian И sounds shorter than the ee in feet or people.

Say: ива . . . . ee-vuh willow tree
иск . . . . eesk legal action
идол . . . . ee-duhl idol

и́ва, иск, и́дол . . . .

The Letter Й й [transcribed y; pronounced as in yank]

Before studying the other soft vowels, you will find it very useful to learn to pronounce a special Russian letter which is part of the sound of these soft vowels. This letter closely resembles the И [ee] in appearance, but it is neither a consonant nor a vowel. It never stands alone. It always stands next to a vowel. This is the letter Й.

After a Vowel. When Й comes after a vowel, it sounds like the y in boy.

Say: май . . . . mahy May
бой . . . . bawy battle

* The words hard and soft, as used in connection with vowels, are widely accepted, conventional terms that have nothing to do with the actual sounds of the vowels themselves. What the terms do indicate is that certain vowels (the soft vowels) affect the sound of a consonant that precedes them, whereas the hard vowels do not. This phenomenon will be discussed in Band 6 and 7.

худо́й . . . . khoo-dawy thin
dвойно́й . . . . dvuh-nyáy double
май, бой, худо́й, двойно́й . . . .

Before a Vowel. When И comes before a vowel, it is pronounced like the y in yer.

Say: Йорк . . . . yawrk York
йота . . . . yaw-tuh iota
Йорк, йота . . . .

Between Two Vowels. When Й falls between two vowels, it sounds like the y in coyote.

Say: майо́р . . . . muh-yawr major
райо́н . . . . ruh-yawn region, district
майо́р, райо́н . . . .

The Letters Я я, Е е, Е е, and Ю ю

Now you are ready to study the other four soft vowels. They actually sound like a combination of Й plus one of the hard vowels—а, о, э, or у.*

* When я, е, e, and ю are stressed, and appear (1) at the beginning of a word or (2) following another vowel, they will be transcribed, respectively, as yah, yaw, yeh, and yoo.
The Phonetic Relationship between Hard and Soft Vowels

\[ \text{клад} \ = \ y + a = yah \]
\[ \text{клю} + o = yaw \]
\[ \text{кл} + e = yeh \]
\[ \text{кл} + y = yoo \]

Say: yard . . . . The sound of й [y] plus a [ah] is the sound of the Russian letter я [yah].

Say: York . . . . The sound of й [y] plus o [aw] is the sound of the Russian letter е [yeh].

Say: yet . . . . The sound of й [y] plus e [eh] is the sound of the Russian letter е [yeh].

Say: you . . . . The sound of й [y] plus y [oo] is the sound of the Russian letter у [yoo].


For the letter я at the beginning of a word, say:

Á́ма . . . . yahb-luh-kuh apple
Á́ма, Ñ́нки, Ñ́ва, Ы́блоко . . . .

For the letter е at the beginning of a word, say:

Èлка . . . .* yawl-kuh spruce tree
Èрзал . . . . yawr-zuhl (he) fidgeted
Èлка, Èрзал . . . .

For the letter е at the beginning of a word, say:

Èм . . . . yehm (I) am eating
Èва . . . . yeh-vuh Eve
Èст . . . . yehst (he) is eating
Èм, Èва, Èст . . . .

For the letter у at the beginning of a word, say:

Ý́мор . . . . yoo-muhr humor
Ý́нга . . . . yoon-guh cabin boy
Ýкóн . . . . yoo-kawn Yukon
Улá . . . . yoo-lah top (a toy)
Ý́мор, Ýнга, Ýкóн, Улá . . . .

* The vowel е is always stressed. Hence, the diaeresis [“] not only serves to distinguish е from е, but also serves as a stress mark.

* When я appears in an unstressed position, its sound is shorter and less distinct. This variation is discussed in Band 10 (page 28).
After Another Vowel. Now let us try я, ё, е, and ю when these letters follow a vowel.

For the letter я after another vowel, say:

ма́йк .... muh-yahk  lighthouse
бу́йн .... boo-yahn  ruffian

ма́йк, бу́йн ....

For the letter ё after another vowel, say:

за́ём .... zuh-yawm  loan
по́ёт .... puh-yawt  (he) sings

за́ём, по́ёт ....

For the letter е after another vowel, say:

я ем .... yah yehm  I am eating
у́ехал .... oo-yeh-khuhl  (he) drove away

я ем, у́ехал ....

For the letter ю after another vowel, say:

ка́йта .... kuh-yoo-tuh  cabin
у́йт .... oo-yoot  coziness
жу́ю .... zhoo-yoo  (I) am chewing

ка́йта, у́йт, жу́ю ....
UNIT 6

ACTION OF THE SOFT SIGN

You have now learned to pronounce all the Russian letters when they are true to their sound in the alphabet. However, as in English, the sound of a Russian letter is affected by: the sounds of the letters that surround it, by its position in the word, and by its position in the sentence. First, let us study how a consonant is affected by the sounds that surround it.

The Hard Sound of Consonants

The sounds which you have already learned and practiced for the Russian consonants are known as hard sounds.

A Note on the Meaning of Hard Sounds

To speak of the "hard sounds of consonants" is to say that the Russian consonants are pronounced like their English counterparts, except for the slight differences that have been specifically pointed out thus far. In the actual production of hard sounds, the tongue is nearer to the lower teeth, the mouth is in a relaxed position, and the pitch of the voice is relatively low.

The consonants have a hard sound: at the end of a word, as in кон; when followed by a hard vowel, as in бьымара; or when followed by another consonant, as in стула.

The Soft Sound of Consonants

However, there are occasions when the hard sound of the consonant becomes softened [see note at the right]. It happens when the consonant is followed by the soft sign or by a soft vowel. Let us take up the soft sign first.
A Note on the Softening of Consonants

The softening of the sound of a consonant is accomplished by raising the tongue nearer to the roof of the mouth and smiling at the same time. This gives to the sound of a soft consonant a higher pitch than it has when pronounced hard.

Study the differences in pitch and in the position of the tongue in the following sets of English words, particularly with respect to the formation of the initial letter in each word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HARD INITIAL CONSONANT</th>
<th>SOFT INITIAL CONSONANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taught</td>
<td>reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dill</td>
<td>deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sill</td>
<td>seal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noodle</td>
<td>needle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poodle</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moose</td>
<td>muse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be clearly understood that soft consonants in Russian are not new letters. Most Russian consonants—with only a few exceptions—may be pronounced either hard or soft, depending upon the letter which follows. The exceptions are: ж, ш, and ц, which are always pronounced hard; and ч and щ, which are always pronounced soft.

The Letter Ъ (Soft Sign)

The soft sign [ъ] is a special Russian letter that has no sound. However, it affects the sound of the consonant before it.* It softens it. When you see the soft sign [ъ], smile—and slightly raise your voice. Smiling will help you pronounce a word with a soft sign [ъ] in it.†

At the End of a Word. Let us see what the soft sign [ъ] does at the end of a word.

Say: дань . . . . dahn̄ given

Now smile and say:

дань . . . . dahn̄ tribute

Say: моль . . . . mawl̄ pier

Now smile and say:

моль . . . . mawl̄ moth

Do you hear the difference? Say these words again.

дан dan

дань . . . . † dahn̄

* The soft sign [ъ] never begins a word.
† For the purposes of phonetic transcription, the softening of a Russian consonant will be indicated by the sign ~ above the softened consonant. This sign—known as the tilde—has been selected because of its softening effect on the sound of the letter ъ in Spanish words such as mañana (tomorrow) and niño (boy).

It should be noted that the tilde will not appear over the transcription for the letters ж, ш, ц, ч, and щ since their sound is not affected by either a soft sign or a soft vowel.
† When examples are arranged in this fashion, be prepared to repeat them as a group.
дан  
дань ....  
моль  
моль ....  
моль  
моль ....  

Say:  
стал  
сталь ....  
брат  
брать ....  
удар  
ударь ....  
мат  
мать ....  

Say:  
бóльно ....  
свáдьба ....  
тьма ....  
бóльно, свáдьба, тьма ....  

Hear the difference the soft sign [ь] makes in the following sets of words.

Say:  
пóлька ....  
пóлька ....  
пóлька, пóлька ....  

Now say:  
пóлька ....  
пóлька ....  
пóлька, пóлька ....  

Бéнка ....  
Вáнька ....  
Бáнка, Вáнька ....  

góрка ....  
góрько ....  
góрка, гóрько ....  

Between Two Consonants. When the soft sign [ь] comes between two consonants, it not only softens the consonant that comes before it, but also makes the entire word brighter and softer.
UNIT 7

ACTION OF THE SOFT VOWELS

Now that you know how consonants are softened by the soft sign [ь], let us see how the soft vowels и, я, е, е, and ю do the same. We shall start with the и.

The Vowel И after a Consonant

Say:  
мал . . .  
mahl  
small (m.)

Now smile and say:

мил . . .  
мeeel  
nice (m.)

мал, мил . . .

Say:  
пóл . . .  
pawl  
floor

Now smile and say:

пил . . .  
пeeel  
(he) drank

пóл, пил . . .

Did you hear the difference an и made in the sound of the м and of the п? Try it again.

мал  
mahl

мил . . .  
мeeel

пóл  
pawl

пил . . .  
пeeel

Let us practice some more words without and with an и.

Say:

пáр  
pahr  
steam

пíр . . .  
пeer  
feast

кóт  
kawt  
cat

кит . . .  
kíet  
whale

вáза  
vah-zuh  
vase

вíза . . .  
víee-zuh  
visa

láпа  
lah-puh  
paw

лíпа . . .  
líee-puh  
linden tree

был  
bihl  
(he) was

бíл . . .  
bíel  
(he) hit

The Vowels Я, Е, Е, and Ю after a Consonant

The vowels я, е, е, and ю also soften a consonant before them, but in doing so, they lose their initial í [y] sound.

The í sound which otherwise begins the letters я, е, е, and ю is absorbed by the softened consonant. In effect, when you see a consonant followed by я, е, е, or ю:

1. Pronounce the consonant soft (except in the case of ж, ш, and н)—lifting your tongue nearer to the roof of your mouth and smiling at the same time.

2. With the mouth in this position and the pitch of the voice raised, pronounce what remains of the soft vowel—i.e., ah, aw, eh, or oo.
Say:  яма . . . .  yah-muh  pit, hole

Now say: мял . . . .  mahl*  (he) crumpled
not  мял  myahl
but  мял . . . .  mahl

Say:  ел . . . .  yehl  (he) ate
Now say: пел . . . .  pehl  (he) sang
not  пйел  pyehl
but  пел . . . .  pehl

Did you hear the difference? Say these words again:

яма  yah-muh
мял . . . .  mahl
ел  yehl
пел . . . .  pehl

Let us practice some additional examples of the same type. First, я after a consonant.

Say:  мал  mahl  small (m.)
мял . . . .  mahl  (he) crumpled

* For purposes of phonetic transcription, when a stressed я, е, или  is preceded by a consonant, it will be transcribed as ah, aw, eh, or ow, respectively. At the same time, a tilde (~) will appear over the preceding consonant to indicate the softening action of the vowel and the absorption of the я sound by the consonant.

вял  vahl  rampart
вял . . . .  vahl  (he) faded
поля  puh-lah  flap, lap
поляя . . . .  puh-lah  fields

Now е after a consonant.

Say:  мол  mawl  pier
мёл . . . .  mawl  (he) swept
нос  naws  nose
нёс . . . .  naws  (he) carried
лот  lawt  half an ounce
слёт . . . .  slawt  gathering

Now е after a consonant.

Say:  пол  pawl  floor
пел . . . .  pehl  (he) sang
мол  mawl  pier
мел . . . .  mehl  chalk
сват  svaht  matchmaker
свет . . . .  svehlt  light
UNIT 8

ACTION OF THE SEPARATION SIGNS

In the previous examples illustrating the softening of consonants, the initial ŋ sound of the soft vowels—я, ё, е, and io—was lost. There is, however, a way of keeping the ŋ sound of the soft vowels. It is done by means of two signs, one of which is already familiar to you—the soft sign [ь].

The letter Ь acts not only as a soft sign, softening the sound of a consonant that precedes it, but also as a separation sign. In the latter capacity, it serves to separate the sound of a soft consonant from the sound of the vowel that follows it. As a result of the separation, the initial ŋ sound of the vowel is preserved. However, there should be no pause whatsoever between the sound of the consonant and the sound of the vowel.

The Letter Ь as a Separation Sign

When the soft sign [ь] comes between a consonant and a vowel, you soften the consonant but keep the ŋ sound of the vowel.

Say: пьё . . . . . . . . . . ь’ьыоо* (I am drinking)

Hear the ŋ sound between the Ь and the io? Say it again:

пьё . . . . . . . . ь’ьыоо

So remember, whenever you see a soft sign between a consonant and a vowel, soften the consonant and say ŋ before the vowel.†

* In the phonetic transcription, to indicate the separation, an apostrophe will be inserted between the softened consonant and the following vowel.
† The insertion of a soft sign [ь] between a consonant and a vowel not only preserves the ŋ sound of the vowels я, ё, е, and io, but also adds a ŋ sound to vowels that otherwise do not have it. For example:

| воробьёй | vuh-ruh-б’ьye | sparrows |
| бульоья | boo-yay-ton | broth |
Ready for practice?

пью . . .  "p'yoo"  (I) am drinking

барьёр . . .  buh-'yehr  barrier

пью, барьёр . . .

судъй . . .  soo-'yah  judge
dрузъй . . .  droo-'yah  friends
конъйк . . .  kuh-'yakh  cognac

судъй, друзъй, конъйк . . .

To make sure you can recognize the difference the soft sign [ь] makes between a consonant and a vowel, repeat the following sets of words. Notice how the й sound is retained.

хоть  kuhuh-'rah  though
статья . . .  stuh-'yah  article
репа  'reh-puh  turnip
барьер . . .  buh-'yehr  barrier
полёт  puh-'lawt  flight
льёт . . .  'lawt  (he) pours

Сплю  sploo  (I) am sleeping
Пью . . .  "p'yoo"  (I) am drinking
Плюнть  plon  spit (imper.)
Вьюн . . .  'yoon  quicksilver (fig.)

The Letter ъ (Hard Sign)

To keep the й sound without softening the preceding consonant, however, another sign is used—the hard sign [ъ].

The hard sign is another special Russian letter which, like the soft sign, has no sound. The hard sign never begins a word but always falls between a consonant and a vowel. Its function is as follows:

When the hard sign [ъ] comes between a consonant and a vowel, you keep the consonant hard, and also keep the true sound of the vowel.

Say:

изъян . . .  eez'-yahm  defect
объект . . .  uhh'-yehkt  object
подъём . . .  puhd'-yaeum  ascent

изъян, объект, подъём . . .

To make sure you can recognize the difference a hard sign [ъ] makes when it comes before a vowel, repeat the following sets of words. Listen for the й after the hard sign [ъ].
UNIT 9

VOICING AND DEVOICING OF CONSONANTS

You have learned how the soft vowels and the soft and hard signs affect the sounds around them. Now you will see how the position of the consonant in the word affects its sound.

Voiced and Voiceless Consonants

Russian consonants are divided not only into hard and soft sounds (see page 14), but also into voiced and voiceless consonants. Voiced consonants are produced with the aid of the vocal chords, which give to the consonants a buzzing sound; in the production of voiceless consonants, however, the vocal chords remain inactive.

The same distinction exists in English: the English $b$, $v$, $d$, and $z$ are voiced or buzzing sounds; the $p$, $f$, $t$, and $s$ are voiceless sounds. Study the differences in the production of these letters in the following sets of words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voiced</th>
<th>Voiceless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$bat$</td>
<td>$pat$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$van$</td>
<td>$fan$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$die$</td>
<td>$tie$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$seal$</td>
<td>$seal$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will notice that when you form each pair of words, your mouth is in the same position, yet the sound is different. The difference can be clearly put: in each word on top, the vocal chords are used in the production of the initial letter; in the corresponding word on the bottom, they are not.

Most voiced consonants in Russian have their voiceless counterparts, just as in English the $b$ is related to the $p$, the $v$ to the $f$, the $d$ to the $t$, and the $z$ to the $s$. However, in Russian pronunciation, unlike English, this relationship is functional; for under certain circumstances, voiced consonants become devoiced (i.e., pronounced like their voiceless counterparts), and vice versa.
Study the following table, to be sure you understand the pattern of these changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of Russian Consonants as Voiced and Voiceless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALWAYS VOICED and COUNTERPARTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PI [p]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ч [v]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>К [g]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ц [d]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ш [sh]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>З [z]</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Devoicing at the End of a Word

Now let us take up the sounds that change when they are at the end of a word. The voiced consonants b, v, g, d, z and s—when they come at the end of a word—lose their sharpness; that is, they become voiceless.

The b sounds almost like п.
The v sounds almost like f.
The g sounds almost like к or x.
The d sounds almost like t.
The z sounds almost like c.

For instance: The word лоб (forehead) is pronounced as if it were spelled “лон” (lawp).
The word друг (friend) is pronounced as if it were spelled “друк” (drook).
The word раз (once) is pronounced as if it were spelled “рац” (rahs).
The Russian spelling, of course, does not actually change; only the pronunciation.

Listen carefully and repeat the following examples which illustrate the devoicing of the sound of these consonants at the end of a word, as compared with their regular voiced sound.

For the letter б, say:

** зуб** | **зубь** | **зубы** | **зубы м**
----------|----------|----------|----------
** zub** | **zub** | **zub** | **zub**
** tooth** | **teeth** | **teeth** | **teeth**

For the letter в, say:

** нов** | **новый**
--------|----------
** nawf** | **new**
** new** | **(m.)**
** new** | **(n.)**

For the letter г, say:

** луг** | **луга**
-------|--------
** look** | **meadow**
** meadows** | **(m.)**
** meadows** | **(f.)**

For the letter д, say:

** сад** | **сады**
-------|--------
** saht** | **garden**
** gardens** | **(m.)**
** gardens** | **(f.)**

For the letter ж, say:

** муж** | **мужья**
-------|--------
** mooosh** | **husband**
** husbands** | **(m.)**
** husbands** | **(f.)**

* When м appears in an unstressed position, its sound is much shorter and less distinct. This variation is discussed in Band 10 (page 27).
† The letter ж (like ш and н) is always pronounced hard. Thus, the soft sign which follows ж does not affect its sound but simply indicates that the ж sound of the vowel ж is to be preserved.
For the letter з, say:

глаз  glahs  eye
глаза́  gluh-zah  eyes

If a soft sign comes at the end of a word, the consonant which precedes it is considered to be “at the end of the word” for the purposes of this rule. Thus, for example, го́лю́бь (pigeon) is pronounced: gaw-loop. The soft sign simply softens the devoiced 6.

Devoicing before a Voiceless Consonant

The same consonants [б, в, г, д, ж, and з] also become devoiced when they precede a voiceless consonant [see table]. For example:

ло́вко  lauf-kuh  adroitly
крúжка  kroosh-kuh  mug
ло́дка  lauf-ka  boat

Did you hear how the в became an ф, how the ж became a ш, and the д became a т? [As in the case of the devoicing of consonants at the end of a word, here also the change occurs only in pronunciation. The actual spelling of the Russian word does not change.]

Keep referring to the table of voiced and voiceless consonants in the manual (page 21). Now let us practice.

For the letter б, say:

вё́чёр  vuh-cheer*  evening
вчёра́  fchee-raah*  yesterday
весь  veezh  all (m. sing.)
все  fsee  all (pl.)

For the letter г, say:

на́гость  nauw-guh-ti  nail
на́ги  nauk-tee*  nails
магнит  muhg-nee  magnet
мя́гко  mahk-kuh  softly

For the letter д, say:

вода́  vuh-dah  water
вóдка  vawt-kuh  vodka
бу́дить  boo-dee  to awaken
бу́дка  boot-kuh  cabin, booth

For the letter ж, say:

крúжок  kroo-zhawk  circle
крúжка  kroosh-kuh  mug

* The unstressed е and the unstressed и sound alike—shorter and less distinct than the stressed í. This variation will be discussed in Band 10 (page 28).
м́жно  \textit{mawzh-nuh}  one may
н́жка . . .  \textit{nawsh-kuh}  little foot

For the letter з, say:

сказать  \textit{skuh-zahh}  to tell
ска́зка . . .  \textit{skahsh-kuh}  tale, story
мáзать  \textit{mah-zuhh}  to smear
замáзка . . .  \textit{zuh-mahsh-kuh}  putty

Devoicing before a voiceless consonant may occur when a word ends in two consecutive voiced consonants: the final consonant automatically becomes devoiced because it is at the end of a word; as a result, the next-to-last letter will also become devoiced because it precedes a consonant that has become voiceless. For example, consider the word съезд, spelled s’yezd but pronounced s’yehest. The final consonant д became devoiced because of its position at the end of the word. Consequently, the preceding consonant з must also become devoiced because it comes before a voiceless sound (the devoiced д).

Devoicing before a voiceless consonant may also occur, even though a soft sign intervenes. Consider the word рё́зьба [transcribed řeesh-kuh and meaning “horse-radish”]. Here, the д becomes devoiced because the consonant which follows it [к] is already voiceless. The intervening soft sign simply softens the voiceless д.

Voicing before a Voiced Consonant

The opposite holds true. If a voiced consonant [other than л, м, н, or п] follows a voiceless consonant, the voiceless consonant becomes voiced.

For example:

сделать . . .  \textit{zdeh-luhh}  to have done
Hear how the с almost becomes a з? As another example, say:

просить . . .  \textit{pruh-shahh}  to ask
Now say: просьба . . .  \textit{prawzh-buh}\(^*\)  request
Hear the difference?
Repeat: просить  \textit{pruh-shahh}
просьба . . .  \textit{prawzh-buh}

As in other instances of voicing and devoicing, when a voiceless consonant becomes voiced, the change occurs only in the pronunciation. The spelling of the Russian word remains the same.

Now repeat the following words where the voiceless consonants become voiced when followed by another voiced consonant.

сажать . . .  \textit{suh-zahh}  to seat
сжать . . .  \textit{zshahh}  to squeeze
собра́ть  \textit{suh-brahh}  to gather
сбор . . .  \textit{zbawr}  collection
кула́к  \textit{koo-lahk}  fist
вокзаль . . .  \textit{vuug-zahl}  railway station

* A soft sign intervening between a voiceless and voiced consonant does not prevent the voicing rule from operating. In the word просьба, the с becomes voiced because the consonant that follows it [б] is already voiced. The intervening soft sign simply softens the voiced с.
табак  

tuh-bahk  

tobacco

футбол  

food-bawl  

football

отдаться  

uh-tuh-drahee  

to tear off

отдать  

uhd-drah  

to give away

Voicing and Devoicing of Prepositions

The preceding rules for the voicing and devoicing of consonants hold true for prepositions consisting of one letter. For purposes of pronunciation, a preposition consisting of one letter is considered part of the following word.

Practice the following examples.

Say:  в окне . . .  vuhk-neh  
in the window

The в was not devoiced because it was followed by the vowel о. [However, it was pronounced as if it were part of the first syllable of the following word. There was, and should not have been, any hesitation between the two words.]

However, say:

в комнате . . .  fkaum-nuh-tee  
in the room

Here, the в was followed by the voiceless consonant к and became devoiced. [Again, it should have been pronounced as part of the following syllable without any hesitation whatsoever.]

Now an example showing when a voiceless consonant becomes voiced.

Say:  с дороги . . .  zduh-raw-gee  
after the journey

Say:  с обеда . . .  suh-beh-duh  
from dinner

The first с became voiced [being followed by the voiced consonant д]; the second с remained unvoiced [being followed by an unstressed о. Once again, both prepositions should have been pronounced as part of the following syllable.]

[The rules for the voicing and devoicing of consonants also apply to longer prepositions, as well as to any words ending and beginning with consonants that fall under these rules.]

Rules for Voicing and Devoicing: Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS VOICED</th>
<th>VOICELESS COUNTERPARTS</th>
<th>ALWAYS VOICED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Л</td>
<td>Б [b]</td>
<td>П [p]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>М</td>
<td>В [v]</td>
<td>Ф [f]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Н</td>
<td>Г [g]</td>
<td>К, Х [k, kh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Р</td>
<td>Д [d]</td>
<td>Т [t]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ж</td>
<td>Ш [zh]</td>
<td>И [i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>З</td>
<td>С [s]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The voiced consonants in the center column above become devoiced (i.e., pronounced like their voiceless counterparts):

   a. When they come at the end of a word.
   b. When followed by any voiceless consonant.

2. The voiceless consonants in the center column above become voiced (i.e., pronounced like their voiced counterparts):

   a. When followed by any voiced consonant except Л, М, Н, or Р (see the first column above).

Note: A soft sign coming at the end of a word or between two consonants will not prevent voicing or devoicing from taking place. The soft sign will simply soften the resulting sound of the affected consonant.
THE UNSTRESSED VOWELS

In the Introduction you learned that Russian words have only one stressed syllable and that the vowel in that stressed syllable always remains true to its sound in the alphabet. You therefore know how to pronounce every stressed vowel in the Russian language.

In this connection, it is also important to know that:

1. As in English, the stress in Russian has no fixed place in a word. In a word of two or more syllables, it may fall on any syllable. (In some languages there is a definite location of the stress: e.g., in French, on the last syllable; in Czech, on the first syllable; in Polish, on the next-to-last syllable.)

2. In Russian, the stressed syllable—and particularly the vowel in that syllable—is pronounced more emphatically than in English.

3. In the pronunciation of a stressed syllable in Russian, the pitch of the voice is raised.

The unstressed vowels? [i.e., all the other vowels in a given word.] They are much less distinct.* It is practically impossible to give an exact value to their sounds, so listen to this part very carefully.

The vowels that change their sound when unstressed are а, о, ы, е, и, and я.

The Unstressed A and O

We said [in Band 1] that the unstressed а and o sound like the uh-sound in lemon. Actually, there are slight differences in the sound of the unstressed а and o, depending on their exact position in a word.

* One could approximate the values of unstressed vowels in Russian to those of the unstressed English sounds in such words as potato, calendar, lantern, pencil, cabbage, city, and the like.

In the Pretonic Position. When the unstressed а and o come [in the syllable] immediately before a stressed vowel [i.e., in the pretonic position], both а and o sound like the uh-sound in come.

The unstressed vowel in the pretonic position is somewhat stronger and has a more distinct sound than all other unstressed vowels in the same word. This should be particularly noted because it is just the opposite in English, where the pretonic unstressed vowel is the weakest and least distinct.

Say: трава . . . . truh-vah* grass

Hear the difference between the first unstressed а and the second stressed а? Again, say:

трава . . . . truh-vah grass
арбуз . . . . uhr-booz† watermelon
магазин . . . . muh-guh-zen shop

трава, арбуз, магазин . . . .

Listen carefully to the speaker's pronunciation of магазин. The word has two unstressed а's, the second of which is in the pretonic position. Try to distinguish the difference in sound between the first а and the second (pretonic) а. The second а will sound stronger and more distinct than the first.

Say: онб . . . . uh-naw it

* The unstressed а and o will continue to be transcribed as uh, despite the slight differences in sound arising from their position in a word. To indicate these slight differences would require the use of more complicated phonetic symbols.
† Note the devoicing of the а at the end of a word. (See Summary, page 25.)
Hear the difference between the first unstressed o and the second stressed o? Again, say:

она... uh-naw it
полно... puhl-naw full (n.)
хорошо... kuhuh-ruh-shaw well

она, полно, хорошо... . . .

Listen carefully to the speaker’s pronunciation of хорошо. The word has two unstressed o’s, the second of which is in the pretonic position. Try to distinguish the difference between the two unstressed o’s. The second (pretonic) o will sound stronger and more distinct than the first.

In Other Positions. When the unstressed a and o come [in a syllable] after a stressed vowel or not immediately before a stressed vowel [such as the first a in магазин and the first o in хорошо], they are less distinct. Then they sound like the uh-sound in lemon.

Say: ы́та... eh-tuh this (f.)
Now say: ы́то... eh-tuh this is

Look at the spelling of these words. The first ends with a, the second with o; yet the sound is exactly the same. Now repeat:

ы́та eh-tuh this (f.)
ы́то... eh-tuh this is

слáва slah-vuh glory
слóво... slaw-vuh word

кóмната... kawm-nuh-tuh room
кóлокол... kaw-uh-kuhl bell
кóмната, кóлокол... . . .

To appreciate the difference between the stressed and the unstressed a and o, repeat the following sets of words.

сад saht* garden
сады... suh-dih gardens
раз rahs† once
разгово́р... ruhz-guh-vawr conversation
он awn he
онá... uh-nah she
гóрод gaw-ruh* town
города... guh-ruh-dah towns
хор khawr choir
хорошо... kuhuh-ruh-shaw well

Special Situations. The same rule often applies to one-syllable prepositions, conjunctions, and particles, which for purposes of pronunciation are considered part of the following word.

* Note the devoicing of r at the end of a word.
† Note the devoicing of a.
The Unstressed Е, И, and Я

Before a Stressed Syllable. The unstressed е, и, and я also become less distinct. They sound something like the short i in city. It is a tricky sound. Again, listen carefully to the unstressed е, и, and я before a stressed syllable.

Say: лесá . . . . ľees-sah*  woods
Now say: лисá . . . . ľees-sah fox

Now look at the spelling of these words. The first is spelled with a е, the second with an и; yet they sound alike.
Repeat: лесá ľees-sah  woods
лисá йëes-sah  fox
мёлá mëel-lah  (she) swept
мёлá mëel-lah  nice (f.)
яйцó jëe-tsaw†  egg
пятнó pëet-naw  spot
телефóн řee-jëe-fawn  telephone
телефóн řee-jëe-fawn

литератýра . . . . řee-ſee-ruh-too-ruh  literature
литератýра . . . .

* The unstressed е, и, and я will be transcribed as [ee]. Note also in the following examples that a consonant still becomes softened when followed by a soft vowel, even when the soft vowel is unstressed.
† The unstressed и and е retain the initial [i] sound when they come at the beginning of a word or after another vowel.

The Unstressed Ы

The unstressed ы, usually occurring at the end of a word, sounds something like a cross between the uh-sound in lemon and the true sound of the м.

вáзы . . . . vah-zih* vases
кúклы . . . . kook-ih dolls
вáзы, кúклы . . .

крáсный . . . . krahs-nih y† red (m.)
йáмный . . . . oom-nih y intelligent (m.)

крáсный, йáмный . . .

* The unstressed ы will be transcribed as [ih].
† Note that е remains voiceless. The letter ы is one of those voiced consonants which do not affect a voiceless consonant that precedes them. See Rule 2a in the Summary of Band 9 (page 25).
After a Stressed Syllable. Listen now to the unstressed e, и, and я after a stressed syllable.

When the unstressed e, и, and я come after a stressed syllable, they sound shorter and weaker and much less distinct (without completely becoming a short i) than they did in the preceding examples where they came before the stressed syllable. However, since the difference in sound is relatively slight, the same phonetic transcription [εε] will be used.

мёре . . . . maw-εε sea
книги . . . . kee-εε books
dáдя . . . . dαh-εε uncle

мёре, кни́ги, dáдя . . . .

мальчик . . . . mahі-чεεk boy
поле . . . . paw-εε field
память . . . . pah-mεεt memory

мальчик, поле, память . . . .

To appreciate the difference between the stressed and unstressed e, и, and я, repeat the following sets of words:

лес lehs wood
лесá . . . . řee-sah woods
лис lees fox (m.)
лисá . . . . řee-sah fox (f.)

мёл mehл chalk
мёла . . . . mεε-lah (she) swept
мил meel nice (m.)
милá . . . . mεε-lah nice (f.)
пр́мо prah-muh straight (adv.)
прямой . . . . pree-marow straight (adj., m.)
мáсо mah-suh meat
мясный . . . . mεεs-naow of meat

Special Situations. The same pronunciation rule applies to one-syllable prepositions, conjunctions, and particles. Practice the unstressed e and и in the following examples.

я не знаю . . . . yah řεε-znah-yoo I do not know
я не знаю . . .

что не хорошо . . . . eh-tuh nεε-kuh-ruh-shaw this is not good
что не хорошо . . . .

The Unstressed Э, У, and Ю

The other vowels э, у, and ю remain practically the same, whether stressed or unstressed. Let us practice the following sentences.

что экран . . . . eh-tuh ehk-rahn this is a screen
There was no real difference between the stressed and unstressed э, y, and io in these phrases.

The Letter Ё

ё is always stressed.

объём ёлки два ухбь-яموت явол-кее The spruce tree фûта . . . . . . дцах фоо-тух measures two feet

объём ёлки два фûта . . . .

Significance of the Stress

You are probably wondering why all this emphasis on stressed and unstressed vowels. In Russian, many words which are spelled exactly alike have different meanings, depending entirely on the position of the stress. Say the following words and pay close attention to the difference in the position of the stress. Afterwards, look at the difference in meaning.

1. зáмок zah-muhk castle
   замóк . . . zuh-mawk lock

2. мûка moo-kuh torment
   мукá . . . moo-kah flour

3. áтлас aht-luhs atlas
   атлác . . . . . . . uht-lahs satin

4. póлы paw-ih flaps
   полý . . . puh-ih floors

5. póлки pawl-kée shelves
   полкй . . . puhl-kée regiments

6. рûки roo-kee of the arm (gen. sing.)
   руки . . . . roo-kée arms (nom. pl.)

7. дбма datu-muh of the house (gen. sing.)
   домá . . . . duh-mah houses (nom. pl.)

8. носîте naw-śee-tee (you) are carrying
   носîте . . . нуह-śee-tee carry! (imper.)

9. кûрîте koo-śee-tee (you) are smoking
   курîте . . . . koo-ree-tee smoke! (imper.)

The position of the stress plays a very important role in the Russian language. It may:
   a. Indicate different meaning, as in the first three pairs of examples on the preceding page.
   b. Distinguish between words spelled alike in the plural though different in the singular, as in the fourth and fifth pairs of examples above.
   c. Determine the case of certain words, as in the sixth and seventh pairs of examples.
   d. Indicate the tense and mood of verbs, as in the eighth and ninth pairs of examples.
UNIT 11

SPECIAL PRONUNCIATION RULES

Even people who have studied Russian for many years frequently do not pay enough attention to some of the finer points of Russian pronunciation. Therefore, even if you are a more advanced student, study the following rules carefully.

The First Rule

After the letters ж, ш, and ц, the letters н, е, and ё will sound like м [ih], э [eh], and о [aw] or their unstressed counterparts.

Say: жить . . . .  zhiihë  to live

жест . . . .  zhehst  gesture

жёлтый . . . .  zhwawlt-hëy  yellow (m.)

жить, жест, жёлтый . . . .

шить . . . .  shiihë  to sew

шесть . . . .  shehstë  six

шёлк . . . .  shawlk  silk

шить, шесть, шёлк . . . .

cent . . . .  tsehnt  cent

cирк . . . .  tsihrk  circus

cифра . . . .  tsihfr-ruh  number

cент, цирк, цифра . . . .

The Second Rule

After the letters ч and ш [which are always pronounced soft], а, о, and я will sound like я, е, and о or their unstressed counterparts [minus the initial h sound]. The position of the mouth and the pitch of the voice are the same as in the pronunciation of consonants followed by soft vowels. (See page 17.)

Say:  чай . . . .  chahy  tea

час . . . .  chahs  hour

чулóк . . . .  choo-lawk  stocking

чай, час, чулóк . . . .

щóка . . . .  shchoo-kuh  pike

чацå . . . .  chah-shchuh  thicket

ощущáть . . . .  uh-shchoo-shchahi  to feel, to sense

щóка, чåцå, ощущáть . . . .

The Third Rule

The letter  р sometimes sounds like а в.

ерó . . . .  yee-vaw*  his

сёгóдня . . . .  sëe-vaw-dëe  today

ерó, сёгóдня . . .

* Note that the unstressed e retains the initial h sound when it comes at the beginning of a word. See footnote on page 28.
The Fourth Rule

The letter ч sometimes sounds like a ш.

что . . . shtaw what
конечно . . . kuh-nesh-nuh of course

что, конечно . . .

The Fifth Rule

Sometimes, in a group of three or more consonants, one of them is not pronounced.
A Russian will say:

For the word солнце, sun] sawn-tseh . . .
not sawln-tseh but sawn-tseh . . .

For the word честный, honest] chehs-nihy . . .
not chehsT-nihy but chehs-nihy . . .

For the word сердце, heart] sehr-tseh . . .
not sehrD-tseh but sehr-tseh . . .

For the word известный, known] eez-vehs-nihy . . .
not eez-vehsT-nihy but eez-vehs-nihy . . .

For the word чувство, feeling] choos-tvuh . . .
not choos-vs-tvuh but choos-tvuh . . .

For the word здравствуй, how do you do] zdrah-stvooy
not zdrahV-stvooy but zdrah-stvooy

There are even finer points that could be considered but you have now learned the fundamental principles of Russian pronunciation.
If you continue to practice and apply these rules consistently, you will pronounce Russian correctly.
# The Russian Alphabet in Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>А а</td>
<td>ah</td>
<td><em>Hard stressed</em>, 1-2, 16; unstressed, 2, 46-50; after у и ы, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Б б</td>
<td>beh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 4, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; hard devoiced, 38-45; soft devoiced, 40-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В в</td>
<td>veh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 4-5, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; hard devoiced, 38-45; soft devoiced, 40-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Г г</td>
<td>geh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 5, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; hard devoiced, 38-45; soft devoiced, 40-42; irregular, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Д д</td>
<td>deh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 6, 24, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; hard devoiced, 38-45; soft devoiced, 40-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Е е</td>
<td>yeh</td>
<td><em>Soft</em>, 17-18; stressed after a consonant, 29-32; stressed, other positions, 17-20, 33-36; unstressed after a consonant, 51-53; unstressed, other positions, 51n., 53; after ж, з, and э, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ё ё</td>
<td>yaw</td>
<td><em>Soft</em>, 17-18; stressed after a consonant, 29-32; stressed, other positions, 17-20, 33-36; never unstressed, 19n., 54; after ж, з, and э, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ж ж</td>
<td>zheh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 10, 24, 38; hard devoiced, 37-45; never soft, 24; followed by a soft sign, 39n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>З з</td>
<td>zeh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 7, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; hard devoiced, 38-45; soft devoiced, 40-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ё й</td>
<td>y</td>
<td><em>Semitvowel</em>, after a vowel, 16-17; before a vowel, 17; between two vowels, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>К к</td>
<td>kah</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 9, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Л л</td>
<td>ell</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 6-7, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; never devoiced, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>М м</td>
<td>emm</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 4, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; never devoiced, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Н н</td>
<td>enn</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 6, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; never devoiced, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>О о</td>
<td>aw</td>
<td><em>Hard stressed</em>, 1-2, 16; unstressed, 2, 46-50; after a soft sign, 33n.; after у and ы, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>П п</td>
<td>peh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 8, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45; soft voiced, 43n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Р р</td>
<td>err</td>
<td><em>Hard voiced</em>, 13, 23, 38; soft voiced, 23-35; never devoiced, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>С с</td>
<td>ess</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 7, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45; soft voiced, 43n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Т т</td>
<td>teh</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 9, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45; soft voiced, 43n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>У у</td>
<td>oo</td>
<td><em>Hard stressed</em>, 3, 16; unstressed, 3, 53-54; after у and ы, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ф ф</td>
<td>eff</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 5, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Х х</td>
<td>khah</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 13-14, 23, 38; soft voiceless, 23-35; hard voiced, 38, 42-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ц ц</td>
<td>tseh</td>
<td><em>Always hard voiceless</em>, 11, 24, 38; followed by a soft sign, 39n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ч ч</td>
<td>cheh</td>
<td><em>Always soft voiceless</em>, 12, 24, 38; irregular, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ш ш</td>
<td>shah</td>
<td><em>Hard voiceless</em>, 10-11, 24, 38; hard voiced, 38, 42-45; never soft, 24; followed by a soft sign, 39n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ щ</td>
<td>shchah</td>
<td><em>Always soft voiceless</em>, 12, 24, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ъ ъ</td>
<td>hard sign</td>
<td>No sound, 35-36; always between a consonant and a vowel, 35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ы ы</td>
<td>ih</td>
<td><em>Hard stressed</em>, 14-15; unstressed, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ь ё</td>
<td>soft sign</td>
<td>No sound, 25; at the end of a word, 25-26; between two consonants, 26-27; between a consonant and a vowel, 33-35; effect on voicing and devoicing, 42, 43n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Э э</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td><em>Hard stressed</em>, 2-3, 16; unstressed, 3, 53-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ю ю</td>
<td>yoo</td>
<td><em>Soft</em>, 17-18; stressed after a consonant, 29-32; stressed, other positions, 17-20, 33-36; unstressed, 53-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Я я</td>
<td>yah</td>
<td><em>Soft</em>, 17-18; stressed after a consonant, 29-32; stressed, other positions, 17-20, 33-36; unstressed after a consonant, 51-53; unstressed, other positions, 51n.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The phrases in italics indicate the characteristics of each letter when it is true to its sound in the alphabet.*
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