

Introduction

Speaking more than one language is like living more than one life, one of the ancient philosophers said. And it's true — traveling in a foreign country such as Russia suddenly becomes a lot more exciting when you can engage in elegant small talk with a hotel receptionist, compliment your tour guide's dress, or actually read the menu and order the food that you really want. Being able to ask for things instead of pointing at them and getting directions from the locals instead of staring at a map are some of the little things that make you feel at home.

You don't even need to cross the ocean to immerse yourself in Russian culture; you can find little Russian neighborhoods (or even pretty big ones!) in many American cities. Whether your colleagues, your neighbors, or your friends speak Russian, the best way to win their hearts is to speak their language to them.

Now, *Russian For Foreigners для чайников*, won't make you a fluent reader of the original works of Dostoevsky (most Russians themselves need some preparation for that). It will, however, equip you with phrases necessary to function in many life situations, from shopping to visiting the theater. And little gems of cultural wisdom offered throughout the book help you not only translate the language, but also understand Russians so much better. So, buckle up, and good luck on your journey! Or, as the Russians like to say, **Желаем вам удачи!** (žê-la-ýem vam u-da-chi; We wish you good luck!)

About This Book

The best thing about *Russian For Foreigners для чайников*, is that you don't have to read all the way through it to get the information you need. You can open the table of contents, find the section that interests you at the moment, and start talking! You don't have to read the previous chapters to understand any sections of this book. And if you decide that you want more information about something, a convenient system of cross-references takes you to just the right place.

Another thing you don't need to do is memorize long vocabulary lists or grammar rules. We give you ready-made phrases; you just need to read them to start using them right away to impress your Russian friends!

Conventions Used in This Book

Here are some conventions that allow you to navigate through this book with maximum ease:

- » We present Russian in Russian, or what is also known as the Cyrillic alphabet. You can see the Cyrillic alphabet in Chapter 2. Russian terms are easily found in the text because they're set in **boldface**.
- » Each Russian word or sentence is followed by its pronunciation shown in English letters (with additional marks, if necessary), and its English translation, respectively, in parentheses. In each pronunciation, the stressed syllable is underline; translations are underlined by a double line.
Here's a little example to give you an idea of what we mean: The phrase for "I love you" in Russian is **Я тебя люблю** (ya tē-b'a l'u-bl'u; I love you).
- » Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order:
 - The **I** form
 - The **you** (informal singular) form
 - The **he/she/it** form
 - The **we** form
 - The **you** (formal singular or plural) form
 - The **they** formPronunciations follow in the second column.

The meaning of a phrase doesn't always equal the sum of the individual words the phrase consists of. In this case, we talk about a literal meaning (the meaning of the individual words) and an idiomatic meaning (the actual meaning of the phrase in conversation). If the literal translation of a phrase differs from its idiomatic meaning, we give you both the idiomatic and the literal meanings in parentheses. For instance: **Как дела?** (kak dē-la; How are you? *Literally:* How is business?)

In each chapter, look for the following elements:

- » **Talkin' the Talk:** These real-life dialogues illustrate how native speakers use words and phrases in a particular section of the book. These informal dialogues are the actual conversations you may hear in similar situations. You can also play an audio version of these dialogues to help you grasp them even faster!
- » **Words to Know:** This element follows every *Talkin' the Talk* and provides pronunciation and transcription of key words and expressions you encounter in the dialogue.

- » **Fun & Games:** Find this section at the end of each chapter. These fun activities allow you to use the new words and phrases you encounter in each chapter to answer questions and solve puzzles.

What You're Not to Read

We like to think that you'll read every word in this book, but we also know that you're eager to start speaking Russian. So feel free to skip the sidebars (the gray-shaded boxes sprinkled throughout the book); they contain interesting information but aren't essential to your study of Russian.

Foolish Assumptions

When we started writing this book, we tried to imagine what our future reader was going to be like. In the end, we came up with a list of foolish assumptions about who we think wants to read this book. Do you recognize yourself in these descriptions?

- » You know no Russian — or if you took Russian in high school, you don't remember a word of it.
- » You're not looking for a book that will make you fluent in Russian; you just want to know some words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in Russian.
- » You don't want to have to memorize long lists of vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- » You want to have fun and learn a little bit of Russian at the same time.

How This Book Is Organized

Russian For Foreigners для чайников, consists of five parts. Each part of the book offers something different.

Part I: Getting Started

In this part, you find the essentials of the Russian language. Chapter 1 gives you an overview of what you discover in this book. Chapter 2 introduces the Russian alphabet, Chapter 3 gives you a crash course on Russian grammar, and Chapter 4 gets you started with some basic Russian expressions. Chapter 5 is the right place to turn to if you want to talk about numbers, times, and measurements in Russian. And finally, Chapter 6 encourages you to start speaking Russian in the comfort of your home.

Part II: Russian in Action

Part II prepares you for most social situations that you need to handle in Russian. Chapter 7 shows you how to make small talk; Chapter 8 is all about asking for directions in a strange city. Chapters 9 and 10 prepare you to talk about food and shopping. Chapter 11 equips you with words and phrases you can use while going out on the town. Chapter 12 takes you on a tour of your office and equips you with the necessary phrases to make phone calls and use a computer. In Chapter 13, you find out how to talk about fun things, such as sports, reading, and other hobbies.

Part III: Russian on the Go

This part covers all the aspects of traveling, such as planning your trip (Chapter 14), settling your financial matters (Chapter 15), discussing transportation (Chapter 16), and arranging for a place to stay (Chapter 17). Chapter 18 prepares you for handling emergencies.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

The Part of Tens is an unusual part of this book; it gives you lists of fun things to know, such as ten ways to pick up Russian quickly and ten things never to say in Russian. This part is also the place to find ten favorite Russian expressions and to pick up ten phrases that make you sound authentically Russian.

Part V: Appendixes

Russian For Foreigners для чайников, also includes four appendixes, which bring together some useful information. In Appendix A, you find two mini-dictionaries (both Russian-to-English and English-to-Russian) for quick reference. Appendix B contains verb tables that show you how to conjugate regular and irregular verbs. Appendix C contains descriptions of all the audio dialogues and tells you in which chapter you can find the text of each dialogue. And Appendix D offers the answer keys to the Fun & Games sections of each chapter.

Icons Used in This Book

For your convenience, we marked some information in this book with special icons. Check out this guide to the icons, and the next time you see one of them, you'll know what to expect!



From famous Russian writers to a polite way to decline an invitation, this icon marks a wide variety of curious and useful facts about Russian culture.



If you're curious about how the Russian language works or if you want to expand your command of Russian to the extent of making up your own phrases, these bits of grammatical information may be of interest to you.



This icon indicates those Talkin' the Talk dialogues that are featured on audio clip, allowing you not only to read but also to hear real, conversational Russian.



This icon points out some important information about Russian that's worth remembering.



This icon signals a useful bit of information that can make life easier for you, whether it's a handy way to remember a useful word or an insider's advice on how to better handle a certain situation.



This icon attracts your attention to something you need to know to avoid a common mistake.

Where to Go from Here

Now that you're familiar with the anatomy of *Russian For Foreigners для чайников*, you can embark on your journey. You can start anywhere, and you don't have to go in a specific order. Just choose a topic that seems appealing, find the corresponding chapter in the table of contents, and start speaking Russian!

If you're at a loss about where to start, please take our advice and begin with Chapter 2: It provides you with a very powerful tool — the ability to read Russian. Chapter 3 is a good place to get a grasp on the essentials of Russian grammar. After that, you can go straight to the sections that deal with information you need urgently. Wherever you decide to start, you can find plenty of useful phrases to get you speaking Russian and exploring the benefits that your language skill brings. And now we wish you **Счастливого пути!** (sh'âs-li-vô-vô pu-ti; Bon voyage!)

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You, the reader of this book, are its main critic. We appreciate your opinion and want to know what was done by us correctly, what could be done better and

what else you would like to see published by us. We are interested in any of your comments to us.

We are waiting for your comments and hope for them. You can send us a paper or email or just visit our web server and leave your comments there. In a word, in any convenient way for you, let us know if you like this book, and also express your opinion on how to make our books more interesting for you.

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