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Basic Russian

A Grammar and Workbook

Sarah Smyth and John Murray

BASIC RUSSIAN

Basic Russian: A Grammar and Workbook comprises an accessible reference grammar and related exercises in a single volume.

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- exercises reflecting contemporary spoken Russian
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- index of grammatical topics
- full answer key
- glossary of all Russian words featured.

Sarah Smyth and **John Murray** are Lecturers in Russian at Trinity College, Dublin. They are the authors of *Intermediate Russian: A Grammar and Workbook*, also published by Routledge.

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BASIC RUSSIAN: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

2nd edition

Sarah Smyth and John Murray

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PREFACE

This grammar and workbook is intended for learners of Russian at an elementary stage or for those who want to refresh their knowledge of the grammar. It is suitable both for people studying on their own and for those participating in language courses. It is intended not to replace a course book, but to be an additional resource for teachers and learners. This book provides brief explanations and illustrations of elementary grammatical patterns and ample scope for practising and consolidating basic Russian structures.

In order to use this book, learners should be familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet and should have acquired a vocabulary of about 500 words.

Each unit contains a brief explanation of a couple of related areas of grammar, illustrative examples of the contexts in which the structures can be used and a selection of exercises. The first five units are introductory and graded. Thereafter the units are arranged in thematically linked parts, each covering a range of grammatical structures. Each unit also has an independent focus, which allows learners to concentrate on specific areas at appropriate stages in their own progress. Within each unit, the exercises provide systematic coverage of the points under discussion. The final unit of each part places the structures which have been learnt independently in a wider context and offers the opportunity for revision.

The six parts are:

- Part 1 – Identifying and describing people, places and objects – which introduces the noun phrase;
- Part 2 – Saying who does or did what – which introduces the Russian verbal system;
- Part 3 – When, where and why we do things – which introduces adverbial phrases and clauses;
- Part 4 – Talking about people – which introduces common constructions used when talking about people's professional and private lives;
- Part 5 – Going places – which introduces verbs of motion;
- Part 6 – Responding to the world around us – which introduces the expression of affective responses to the world we live in and the people who surround us.

Basic Russian aims to cover the key points a learner needs to know in order to start speaking, reading and writing correct Russian. It is not intended to cover all the needs of the more advanced learner. Learners at both intermediate and advanced levels will, however, find *Basic Russian* useful for reference and revision.

This workbook is intended to be self-contained. The grammatical exercises are complemented by an explanation of the grammatical terms used, a key to the exercises and a list of vocabulary. Students are advised to supplement the vocabulary list by the use of a good dictionary for fuller information on individual words, their stress and usage. Personal names which might not normally be found in dictionaries are marked for stress in the appendices and glossaries.

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Finally, we would like to dedicate this book to our students, past and present.

Sarah Smyth and John Murray
Trinity College, Dublin

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Dictionaries

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PART 1

Identifying and describing people,
places and objects

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UNIT 1

Identifying people

Gender

(i) Nouns are classified in Russian according to three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. The grammatical gender of a noun, which is constant, can usually be identified by its ending in the nominative case, that is, the dictionary form of the noun. In this unit we concentrate on nouns that refer to people. These are usually masculine or feminine nouns. Masculine nouns refer to men, feminine nouns to women. (See Unit 3 for nouns referencing objects and places and for the introduction of neuter nouns.)

Masculine nouns end in a consonant, a consonant followed by a soft sign (**-ь**) or a vowel followed by the semi-consonant (**-й**).

hard	consonant	музыкант	Иван
soft	consonant + -ь	писатель	Игорь
soft	vowel + -й	герой	Николай

Feminine nouns end in **-а**, **-я**, **-ия** or **-ь**. Note that the ending **-ь** may indicate either a masculine or feminine noun.

hard	consonant + -а	балерина	Анна
soft	consonant + -я		Катя
soft	consonant + -ь		Любовь
soft	consonant + -ия		Анастасия

(ii) Generally speaking males are designated by masculine nouns and females by feminine nouns.

Note: There are, however, some nouns ending in **-а** or **-я** which designate males. These nouns, though they look like feminine nouns, are grammatically speaking masculine, e.g., **мужчина** ‘man’, **дядя** ‘uncle’, **дедушка** ‘grandfather’; a number of first names, such as **Илья**, **Никита**, **Фома**; and many affectionate forms of names, such as **Коля** (short for **Николай**), **Ваня** (short for **Иван**) and **Петя** (short for **Пётр**). These nouns are qualified by masculine adjectives, e.g. **хороший мужчина** ‘a good man’ (see Unit 4).

'Hard' and 'soft' endings

As can be seen from the tables above some nouns have what are called 'hard' endings and others 'soft' endings. The categories of 'hard' and 'soft' refer to the quality of the final consonant as realised in the vowel that follows it.

'Hard' endings are represented in the written language by a consonant followed by:

- a zero ending (no ending) which in some grammar books is represented as Ø
- or one of the following vowels: **-а, -у, -ы** or **-о**

'Soft' endings are represented in the written language by a consonant followed by:

- a soft sign: **-ь**
- or one of the following vowels: **-я, -ю, -и, -ё** or **-е**

This distinction is easy to remember once you realise that Russian has two renditions of every sound, a 'hard' one and a 'soft' one. In both Russian and English there are five basic vowel sounds; the only difference between the two languages is that Russian has two variants of each:

Hard Soft

а	я
э	е
ы	и
о	ё
у	ю

A word ending in a consonant is hard (**музыкант**); a word ending in a consonant and a soft sign (**-ь**) is soft (**писатель**).

All nouns ending in two vowels or a vowel and the semi-consonant **-й** are 'soft':

-ия	Англия (England)
-ие	общежитие (hostel)
-ай	май (May)
-ей	музей (museum)
-ий	санаторий (sanatorium)
-ой	герой (hero)

Naming people

Russians are given three names: a first name (**имя**), a patronymic (**отчество**) and a surname (**фамилия**).

The first name is chosen by the parents.

The patronymic is based on the father's name with the suffix **-ович**, **-евич** meaning 'son of' or **-овна**, **-евна** meaning 'daughter of'. The choice of suffix depends on whether the father's first name is 'hard', 'soft' ending in **-ей/-ай** or 'soft' ending in **-ь**.

Father's first name Son's patronymic Daughter's patronymic

Иван	Иванович	Ивановна
Андрей	Андреевич	Андреевна
Игорь	Игоревич	Игоревна

The surname is normally the father's surname, but may be the mother's surname. The surname ending changes depending on the gender of the person. So, Mr Karenin's son Alex would be called Alex Karenin (**Алексей Каренин**), whereas his daughter Anna would be called Anna Karenina (**Анна Каренина**).

When filling out official forms Russians are asked to supply all three names, normally in the order (1) surname, (2) first name and (3) patronymic, which are often expressed on forms using the three initials: **ФИО** (**фамилия, имя, отчество**).

Addressing people you know

There are a number of ways to address a person in Russian, each of which depends on the relationship between the people concerned:

First name, including the following forms

The diminutive or affectionate form (**Витя, Володя, Катя, Серёжа, Оля, ...**) is used to address children and friends (from one's peer group). One would also use the pronoun **ты** (you) with these groups of people.

The long form (**Виталий, Владимир, Екатерина, Сергей, Ольга, ...**) is rarely used. The use of the long form alone is one way in which foreigners can be identified.

Long form and patronymic (**Виталий Максимович, Владимир Петрович, Екатерина Михайловна, ...**) is used by younger people to address older or senior people whom they do not know very well or with whom they are on formal terms. It is normal for the older person to decide when it is appropriate to change how the younger person addresses them. It is not

unusual for the older person to address the younger person by the first name only.

The first name and patronymic are also used between adults who do not know one another well or who wish to remain on formal terms.

When addressing someone by his or her first name and patronymic, the personal pronoun **Вы** 'you' is used.

Surname or patronymic only (Сидоров, Мартынов, Образцова, . . .)

This tends to be restricted to special areas such as education, where a teacher or lecturer might address a student in this manner. In post-primary and higher education it is usual in such cases for the personal pronoun **Вы** to be used. Officers may also address subordinates (privates) by their patronymic only using the familiar **ты** pronoun. Occasionally close friends or colleagues address one another using either only the surname or only the patronymic form.

When referring to a well-known (or infamous) cultural, political or sporting personality it is common practice to use only the surname.

Asking what someone does, who someone is

The question word (interrogative) **кто** is used to ask about people. It is used in the following three questions:

Кто это?	'Who is that?'
Кто такой Толстой?	'So, who is Tolstoy? What does or did Tolstoy do?'
Кто он? Кто она?	'What does he/she do?'

Note that the equivalent of the verb 'to be' (am, is, are) is usually omitted in Russian in the present tense. When the subject and predicate are both nouns the omitted verb 'to be' is rendered by a dash: **Толстой – писатель** (Tolstoy is a writer).

Saying who someone is

Это is an invariable pronoun meaning 'this (is)', 'that (is)' or 'it (is)', which functions like French *ce* and German *das*. Its predicate can be either singular or plural and of any gender. (See Unit 3 for plurals.)

Кто это?	Это Филипп.	'Who's that? It's Philip.'
Кто это?	Это Аня.	'Who's that? It's Anya.'
А кто это?	Это Тихоновы.	'And who is that? It's the Tikhonovs.'

Saying what he/she does

In order to express what someone does in life by referring to their profession or occupation, you name the person in question (or refer to them using the personal pronouns 'he' (**он**) or 'she' (**она**)) and supply their occupation.

Кто такой Толстой?	Толстой – писатель.	'Tolstoy is a writer.'
Кто он?	Он писатель.	'He is a writer.'
Кто она?	Она писатель.	'She is a writer.'

Exercise 1

Sort the following full first names into two lists according to gender.

Александр	Галина	Максим
Алексей	Григорий	Марина
Алла	Дмитрий	Михаил
Анна	Евгений	Надежда
Антон	Екатерина	Никита
Борис	Жанна	Николай
Валентин	Иван	Ольга
Василий	Илья	Сергей
Виктор	Исаак	Фазиль
Виссарион	Лев	Фёдор
Владимир	Людмила	Филипп
Всеволод	Майя	

Exercise 2

Sort the following short/diminutive names into two lists according to gender.
In how many cases are names common to both genders?

Аня	Галя	Миша
Боря	Дима	Надя
Ваня	Женя	Оля
Вася	Катя	Паша
Вика	Коля	Саша
Вова	Люда	Серёжа
Володя	Маша	

Exercise 3

Identify which of the following names are hard and which are soft.

Александр	Галина	Максим
Алексей	Григорий	Марина
Алла	Дмитрий	Михаил
Анна	Евгений	Надежда
Антон	Екатерина	Никита
Борис	Жанна	Николай
Валентин	Иван	Ольга
Василий	Илья	Сергей
Виктор	Исаак	Фазиль
Виссарион	Лев	Фёдор
Владимир	Людмила	Филипп
Всеволод	Майя	

Exercise 4

Supply patronymics for each of the following famous Russians. Their fathers' first names are supplied in brackets after their own first name. Check your answers by referring to the Glossary of proper names.

Model: Бродский, Иосиф _____ (Александр)
Бродский, Иосиф Александрович

- 1 Аксёнов, Василий _____ (Павел)
- 2 Ахматова, Анна _____ (Андрей)
- 3 Билан, Дима _____ (Николай)
- 4 Бичевская, Жанна _____ (Владимир)
- 5 Высоцкий, Владимир _____ (Семён)
- 6 Глазунов, Илья _____ (Сергей)
- 7 Карпов, Анатолий _____ (Евгений)
- 8 Менделеев, Дмитрий _____ (Иван)
- 9 Михалков, Никита _____ (Сергей)
- 10 Путин, Владимир _____ (Владимир)
- 11 Сафин, Марат _____ (Мубин)
- 12 Толстой, Лев _____ (Николай)
- 13 Уланова, Галина _____ (Сергей)
- 14 Шарапова, Мария _____ (Юрий)

Exercise 5

Supply the appropriate pronouns in the following questions and answers.

Model: Кто такой Толстой? – _____ писатель.
– Он писатель.

- 1 Кто такой Аксёнов? – _____ писатель.
- 2 Кто такая Ахматова? – _____ поэт.
- 3 Кто такой Билан? – _____ певец.
- 4 Кто такая Бичевская? – _____ певица.
- 5 Кто такой Высоцкий? – _____ поэт, автор-исполнитель и актёр.
- 6 Кто такой Глазунов? – _____ композитор и дирижёр.
- 7 Кто такой Карпов? – _____ шахматист.
- 8 Кто такой Менделеев? – _____ химик.
- 9 Кто такой Михалков? – _____ актёр и кинорежиссёр.
- 10 Кто такой Путин? – _____ президент РФ.
- 11 Кто такой Сафин? – _____ теннисист.
- 12 Кто такой Толстой? – _____ писатель.
- 13 Кто такая Уланова? – _____ артистка балета.
- 14 Кто такая Шарапова? – _____ теннисистка.

UNIT 2

Meeting and greeting

Interrogatives

Interrogatives are words that introduce questions. Very often their English-language equivalents begin with the letters 'wh'. These may be pronouns or adverbs:

interrogative pronouns	кто 'who'	Unit 1
	что 'what'	Units 2 & 3

The interrogative **кто** refers to people; the interrogative **что** refers to objects or places.

interrogative adverbs	как 'how'	Unit 2
	где 'where' – location	Units 2 & 3
	когда 'when'	Units 10 & 14
	куда 'where' – motion	Unit 25
	почему 'why' – cause	Unit 17
	зачем 'why' – purpose	Unit 17

Establishing contact: meeting and greeting

Russians greet people they know using one of the following formulae: **Здравствуйте!** **Здравствуй!** 'hello'; **Привет!** 'hi'; **Доброе утро!** 'good morning'; **Добрый день!** 'good afternoon'.

Note: The exclamation mark is a conventional component of greetings in written texts.

Maintaining contact

After initial contact has been established it is normal to enquire how someone is before moving on to the business in hand. The questions asked are invariably introduced by the interrogative adverb **как** 'how', as in the following examples, which are equivalent to the English-language politeness formulae 'How are things?', 'How's life?': **Как дела? Как жизнь?**

You are not expected to give a lengthy reply. A one- or two-word response is all that is required. The following are all variants on: 'OK', 'Not too bad': **Спасибо, ничего; Спасибо, так себе; Спасибо, неплохо; Спасибо, нормально; Спасибо, хорошо.**

Note: When you are responding positively, it is normal to preface your response with **Спасибо** 'Thank you'. When you respond negatively to someone asking you how things are, it would not be normal to say **Спасибо** 'Thank you'. When you do not want to pursue the conversation you simply reply **Спасибо** 'Thank you' without making any reference to whether things are OK or not. This is a polite way of closing the conversation.

Formal and informal reference/greetings

In Unit 1, it was mentioned that there are two pronouns used to address people, one of which is used with one's peer group and friends (**ты**) and one of which is used with the older generation and people who are senior to one in a place of study or work (**вы**). This distinction between familiarity/informality, on the one hand, and formality is mirrored in the ways in which one addresses others more broadly. The following table illustrates this distinction:

	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Either</i>
Greeting	Здравствуйте!	Здравствуй!	Доброе утро! Добрый день!

Meeting new people

When Russians meet for the first time they go through the following ritual:

greeting one another	Здравствуй(те)!
introducing themselves	Меня зовут ...
expressing pleasure at meeting the other person	Очень приятно!/Очень рад(а) с Вами познакомиться.

Young people might vary these exchanges as follows:

greeting one another	Привет!
introducing themselves	Меня зовут...
expressing pleasure at meeting the other person	Очень приятно!/Очень рад(а) с тобой познакомиться.

Addressing groups

The following forms of address are common:

a group of peers	Ребята	‘Lads’, ‘Guys’: frequently used among the young
colleagues	Дорогие коллеги!	‘Dear colleagues!’
a group of friends	Дорогие друзья!	‘Dear friends!’
a group in a formal context	Дамы и господа!	‘Ladies and gentlemen’

Addressing strangers

When addressing strangers, the following forms are common:

- a young man (in a café, restaurant, on the street): **молодой человек**
- a young woman (in a café, restaurant, on the street): **девушка**
- a young boy: **мальчик**
- a young girl: **девочка**

Gender

Note that most professional titles, and indeed names of high prestige occupations, are masculine in gender even when the position is held by a woman.

Директор компании «Вектор» Викторова Елена Сергеевна ‘Director of the Company “Vector” Viktorova Elena Sergeevna’
Менеджер Уланова Оксана Михайловна ‘Manager Ulanova Oksana Mikhailovna’

Politeness formulae

Formulae such as those listed below are often used without any attempt to name the person one is addressing, such as when asking directions on the street.

Скажите, пожалуйста, ... 'Could you tell me, please, ...'

Подскажите, пожалуйста, ... 'Excuse me, ...'

Вы не подскажите, ...

Извините, ...

Note: If you negate a construction (a question or request) in Russian, you automatically make it more polite. So the request: 'Could you not tell me where the cinema is?' (**Вы не подскажите, где здесь кино?**) and the invitation 'Would you not like to go to the cinema?' (**Вы не хотите пойти в кино?**) are polite forms and it would not be normal to use the word 'please' in these formulations. These constructions are very alien to the English-speaker's ear and sometimes they can cause misunderstandings.

Exercise 1

Indicate which of the following greetings are formal and which informal/familiar.

- 1 Здравствуйте, Анатолий Евгеньевич!
- 2 Здравствуй, Толик!
- 3 Здрасьте!
- 4 Здорово!
- 5 Добрый день!
- 6 Привет.
- 7 Приветик.

Exercise 2

Identify where each of the exchanges might take place by matching the numbers in each column.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 Молодой человек, где тут касса? | i In the street |
| 2 Девушка, разрешите пройти. | ii At a reception |
| 3 Молодой человек, где тут рынок? | iii In the metro |
| 4 Господин посол, разрешите
представиться – Иванов Сергей Иванович. | iv In a school
classroom |
| 5 Мальчик, ты новенький? Как тебя зовут? | v At a meeting |
| 6 Разрешите мне не согласиться с
Вами, госпожа Министр. | vi In a shop |

Exercise 3

Identify where each of the requests might take place by matching the numbers in each column.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Скажите, пожалуйста, где
ближайшее метро? | i In a restaurant |
| 2 Покажите, пожалуйста, паспорт. | ii In a university |
| 3 Дайте мне двести грамм колбасы. | iii On the street |
| 4 Скажите, пожалуйста, где столовая? | iv In the student
hostel lobby |
| 5 Предъявите, пожалуйста, ваш пропуск! | v In the airport |
| 6 Дайте, пожалуйста, счёт. | vi In a grocery store |

Exercise 4

Identify who is talking on the phone by matching the numbers in each column. Natalya Ivanovna is a hotel receptionist at the “Rossiya” hotel.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Гостиница «Россия». | i A client is ringing to follow up on
a booking. |
| 2 Да, это я. | ii A client is ringing to make
a booking. |
| 3 Девушка, это гостиница
«Россия»? | iii A friend of Natalya Ivanovna's is
ringing to find out how she is. |
| 4 Наташ, это ты? | iv Natalya Ivanovna is answering the
phone at work. |
| 5 Нет, это не Наталья
Ивановна. | v Natalya Ivanovna is confirming that
it is she on the line. |
| 6 Простите, это Наталья
Ивановна? | vi Natalya Ivanovna is confirming that
the caller has reached the right
number. |
| 7 Совершенно верно. | vii Natalya Ivanovna's colleague is
indicating that she is not Natalya
Ivanovna. |

Exercise 5

Ask and answer questions with the nouns listed below according to the model.

Model: театр – Что это? – Это театр.
Мария – Кто это? – Это Мария.

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| 1 врач | 8 магазин |
| 2 дом | 9 мальчик |
| 3 журналист | 10 Павел |
| 4 журналистка | 11 площадь |
| 5 инженер | 12 Соня |
| 6 институт | 13 студент |
| 7 квартира | 14 школа |

Exercise 6

Complete the following questions by inserting the interrogatives **где** or **как** in the spaces provided.

- 1 Вы не подскажете, _____ здесь кино?
- 2 Вы не подскажете, _____ его зовут?
- 3 Девочка, _____ тебя зовут?
- 4 Девушка, _____ тут аптека?
- 5 Молодой человек, _____ тут касса?
- 6 Парни, привет! _____ дела?
- 7 Ребята, скажите, пожалуйста, _____ называется эта улица?
- 8 Скажите, пожалуйста, _____ ближайшее метро?

Exercise 7

Complete the following questions by inserting the interrogatives **кто** or **как** in the spaces provided.

- 1 _____ жизнь? Спасибо, нормально.
- 2 А _____ это? Это Тихоновы.
- 3 _____ его зовут? Его зовут Иван.
- 4 _____ такой Аксёнов? Аксёнов – писатель.
- 5 _____ тебя зовут? Меня зовут Мария.
- 6 _____ она? Она писатель.

UNIT 3

Identifying people and objects

Gender

In Unit 1 we introduced the endings which mark masculine and feminine nouns. We focused particularly on nouns which refer to, or name, people. In this unit we look at nouns used to refer to objects and places. In this context we need to look at nouns of all three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. Indeed, nouns which reference things and places may be of any gender.

As with masculine and feminine nouns, it is possible to identify neuter nouns on the basis of their nominative singular form (or dictionary form). The endings used to mark neuter nouns are **-о** and **-е**.

hard	-о	окно	‘window’
soft	-е	море	‘sea’
soft	-ие	общежитие	‘hostel’
soft	-ия	время	‘time’

Note: In Russian there are a small number of nouns which end in **-ия**, all of which are neuter. In this workbook you will come across two of them: **время** ‘time’ and **имя** ‘first name’.

Number

In English the singular and plural of nouns are usually distinguished by use of the ending ‘-s’: book → books; dog → dogs. Likewise in Russian the plural of nouns is marked by an ending.

For masculine and feminine nouns the plural endings are **-ы** for ‘hard’ nouns and **-и** for ‘soft’ nouns:

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Singular form</i>	<i>Plural form</i>	<i>English</i>
Hard	masculine	стол	→ столы	‘tables’
	feminine	квартира	→ квартиры	‘apartments’
Soft	masculine	словарь	→ словари	‘dictionaries’
	masculine	музей	→ музеи	‘museum’
	feminine	кухня	→ кухни	‘kitchens’
	feminine	площадь	→ площади	‘squares’
	feminine	лекция	→ лекции	‘lectures’

The plural endings used to mark neuter nouns are **-а** for ‘hard’ nouns and **-я** for ‘soft’ nouns:

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Singular form</i>	<i>Plural form</i>	<i>English</i>
Hard	neuter	окно	→ окна	‘windows’
Soft	neuter	море	→ моря	‘seas’
	neuter	общежитие	→ общежития	‘hostels’; ‘dormitories’

Notes:

- 1 Spelling rule 1: The letters **г, к, х,** and **ж, ч, ш, щ** can never be followed by **-ы**. The nominative plural of nouns ending in these letters always ends in **-и**, e.g. **врачи** ‘doctors’, **книги** ‘books’, **руки** ‘arms, hands’, **ноги** ‘legs, feet’, **товарищи** ‘comrades, colleagues’.
- 2 A few nouns have plural forms which are not related to the singular forms: **человек** → **люди** ‘person → people’; **ребёнок** → **дети** ‘child → children’.

Personal pronouns

In English the choice of pronoun (he, she, it) depends on animate/inanimate and male/female distinctions: a teacher (animate) is referred to as ‘he’ or ‘she’, whereas a book or a bus (inanimate) are referred to as ‘it’. In Russian the choice of pronoun is determined solely by the grammatical gender of a noun: **учитель** and **автобус** (masculine) are referred to using **он**; **учительница** and **книга** (feminine) are referred to using **она**; and **окно** (neuter) is referred to using **оно**. In the plural there is no reference to gender and **они** is used in all cases.

		<i>Singular noun</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Plural noun</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>
Masculine	Animate: 'footballer'	футболист	он	футболисты	они
	Inanimate: 'table'	стол	он	столы	они
Feminine	Animate: 'ballerina'	балерина	она	балерины	они
	Inanimate: 'apartment'	квартира	она	квартиры	они
Neuter	Inanimate: 'window'	окно	оно	окна	они

Negation

The negative particle **не** precedes the part of the sentence to be negated. If the whole statement is to be negated, **не** comes before the predicate:

Affirmative statement

Я врач.
'I'm a doctor.'

Она студентка.
'She's a student.'

Negative statement

Я не врач.
'I'm not a doctor.'

Она не студентка.
'She's not a student.'

Contrast

Contrast is the relationship between two statements or propositions. In English it is often marked by words such as 'but', 'however', 'whereas'. In Russian, the conjunction **а** introduces a positive statement coming after a negative statement:

Я не врач, а шофёр.

Она не аспирант, а преподаватель.

'I'm not a doctor but a driver.'

'She's not a postgraduate
but a lecturer.'

Asking about things and places

The question word (interrogative) **что** 'what' is used when asking for something to be identified or named: **Что это?** 'What is this?' 'What is that?'

The question word (interrogative) **где** 'where' is used when the speaker wishes to know where something is. Very often in conversation the adverb **здесь** 'here', 'nearby' is added: **Где здесь станция метро?** 'Where is the nearest metro station?'

The most straightforward answer involves simply pointing in the right direction and responding: **Вот она.** 'There it is.' 'It's right there.'

Animate and inanimate reference

English and Russian both distinguish between animate and inanimate reference in the interrogative pronouns used to enquire about each category of noun: **кто** and 'who' ask about nouns with animate reference, whereas **что** and 'what, which' ask about nouns with inanimate reference.

Animate reference

In English and Russian the pronouns 'he' and 'she' are used to refer to people: the choice of pronoun depends on the gender of the person concerned (see Unit 1).

Inanimate reference

In contrast, when referencing objects or places which are not living sentient beings, Russian and English do not function in the same way. Whereas English tends to use the neuter pronoun 'it' to refer to objects and places such as a 'station' (with some notable exceptions: cars and vessels, for instance, tend to be referred to as 'she' rather than 'it'), Russian uses a pronoun of the same grammatical gender as the noun. So, in the example below, Russian uses the feminine pronoun **она** to refer to the 'station' because **станция** is a grammatically feminine noun: **Где здесь станция метро? Вот она.** 'Where is the nearest metro station? There it is./It's right there.'

Exercise 1

Sort the following nouns into three lists according to gender.

окно; театр; письмо; магазин; город; музыка; студент; улица; место; фильм; автомобиль; площадь; словарь; учебник; карандаш; зал; здание; язык; метро; хлеб; станция; сад; университет; факультет; билет; библиотека; год; гора; дом; море; школа; этаж

Exercise 2

Identify which of the following nouns are affected by the spelling rule in the formation of the plural.

книга; театр; магазин; врач; город; студент; улица; урок; фильм; площадь; дача; учебник; карандаш; язык; библиотека; хлеб; станция; университет; ученик; билет; год; школа; этаж

Exercise 3

Identify which of the following nouns' endings are hard and which are soft.

окно; театр; письмо; магазин; врач; город; музыка; студент; улица; место; фильм; автомобиль; площадь; дача; словарь; учебник; карандаш; зал; здание; язык; библиотека; метро; хлеб; станция; сад; университет; ученик; факультет; билет; библиотека; год; гора; дом; море; школа; этаж

Exercise 4

Identify which of the following nouns have animate and which have inanimate reference.

автомобиль; артист; библиотека; библиотекарь; билет; билетёрша; больница; врач; дом; карандаш; магазин; метро; море; музыка; музыкант; писатель; преподаватель; профессор; строитель; студент; театр; турист; университет; урок; учебник; ученик; школа; школьник; шофёр

Exercise 5

Put the following sentences into the plural.

Model: Он музыкант. → Они музыканты.

- 1 Он студент.
- 2 Он инженер.
- 3 Он журналист.
- 4 Она студентка.
- 5 Она девочка.
- 6 Он врач.
- 7 Он мальчик.
- 8 Она журналистка.

Exercise 6

Sort the following nouns according to gender and put them into the plural form.

Model: masculine: университет → университеты
 feminine: книга → книги
 neuter: окно → окна

автобус; автомобиль; аудитория; балерина; библиотека; дача; дверь; занятие; здание; институт; карта; квартира; книга; комната; кошка; кресло; лампа; лицей; магазин; марка; море; музей; ночь; окно; парк; писатель; письмо; площадь; подруга; родитель; слово; станция; студент; театр; трамвай; улица; упражнение; урок; ученик; фильм; флаг; цирк; экскурсия; язык

Exercise 7

Supply the correct pronoun in the following exchanges.

Model: Где здесь станция метро? Вот _____.
 Вот она.

- 1 Где здесь библиотека? Вот _____.
- 2 Где здесь университет? Вот _____.
- 3 Где здесь магазин «Мелодия»? Вот _____.
- 4 Где здесь общежитие? Вот _____.
- 5 Где здесь кафе? Вот _____.
- 6 Где здесь поликлиника? Вот _____.
- 7 Где здесь кинотеатр? Вот _____.
- 8 Где здесь Дом книги? Вот _____.
- 9 Где здесь исторический музей? Вот _____.
- 10 Где здесь медицинский центр? Вот _____.
- 11 Где здесь музыкальная школа? Вот _____.
- 12 Где здесь спортзал? Вот _____.