
Introduction

1 The Cyrillic alphabet

(1) The Russian Cyrillic alphabet contains 33 letters, including 20 consonants, 10 vowels, a semi-consonant/semi-vowel (й), a hard sign (ъ) and a soft sign (ь).

(2) There are a number of different systems for transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet. Three of these, that of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), that of the British Standards Institution (BSI) (whose system is used throughout this *Grammar*), and that of the Library of Congress (LC) are listed alongside the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the Russian names of the individual letters:

Cyrillic letters	Letter name	ISO	BSI	LC
Аа	[а]	a	a	a
Бб	[бэ]	b	b	b
Вв	[вэ]	v	v	v
Гг	[гэ]	g	g	g
Дд	[дэ]	d	d	d
Ее	[е]	e	e	e
Ёё	[ё]	ë	ë	ë
Жж	[жэ]	ž	zh	zh
Зз	[зэ]	z	z	z
Ии	[и]	i	i	i
Йй	[и краткое]	j	ĭ	ĭ
Кк	[ка]	k	k	k
Лл	[эль]	l	l	l

Cyrillic letters	Letter name	ISO	BSI	LC
Мм	[эм]	m	m	m
Нн	[эн]	n	n	n
Оо	[о]	o	o	o
Пп	[пэ]	p	p	p
Рр	[эр]	r	r	r
Сс	[эс]	s	s	s
Тт	[тэ]	t	t	t
Уу	[у]	u	u	u
Фф	[эф]	f	f	f
Хх	[ха]	h/ch	kh	kh
Цц	[цэ]	c	ts	\widehat{ts}
Чч	[че]	č	ch	ch
Шш	[ша]	š	sh	sh
Щщ	[ща]	šč	shch	shch
Ъъ	[твёрдый знак]	”	”	”
Ыы	[ы]	y	\bar{y}	y
Ьь	[мягкий знак]	,	,	,
Ээ	[э оборотное]	ě	é	ě
Юю	[ю]	ju	yu	\widehat{iu}
Яя	[я]	ja	ya	\widehat{ia}

Note

- (a) Certain letters with diacritics and accents which appear in the standard BSI system (ě for ѓ, ĭ for й, é for э, \bar{y} for ы) are used without diacritics and accents here.
- (b) The ligatures used over certain combinations of letters in the standard LC system (\widehat{ts} , \widehat{iu} , \widehat{ia}) are often omitted by other users.
- (c) An apostrophe (') for the soft sign (ь) is used only in the bibliography.
- (d) The endings -ый/ -ий are rendered as -y in names.

2 The international phonetic alphabet (IPA)

The following symbols from the IPA are used in the Introduction for the phonetic transcription of Russian words.

Vowels

i	as in ил	[il]
ɨ	as in пыл	[pɨl]
ɪ	as the first vowel in игла́	[t'gla]
ɨ	as the first vowel in дыра́	[dɨ'ra]

ε	as in лес	[l̥ɛs]
e	as in весь	[vɛʃ]
a	as in рад	[rat]
æ	as in пять	[pɾæɸ]
л	as the first vowel in один	[l̥'ɸin]
ə	as the first vowel in хорошó	[xəɾl̥'ʃo]
o	as in моx	[moχ]
ö	as in тётя	[t̥öɸə]
u	as in бук	[buk]
ü	as in ключ	[k̥l̥ütʃ]

Semi-consonant/semi-vowel

j	as in бой	[boj]
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Consonants

p	as in пол	[pol]
p̥	as in пёс	[p̥os]
b	as in бак	[bak]
b̥	as in бел	[b̥el]
t	as in том	[tom]
t̥	as in тем	[t̥em]
d	as in дом	[dom]
d̥	as in день	[d̥en̥]
k	as in как	[kak]
k̥	as in кем	[k̥em]
g	as in гол	[gol]
q̥	as in гид	[q̥it]
f	as in флóра	[f̥lorə]
f̥	as in фен	[f̥en]
v	as in вот	[vot]
v̥	as in винó	[v̥i'no]
s	as in сам	[sam]
ʃ	as in сев	[ʃɛf]
z	as in зуб	[zup]
z̥	as in зéбра	[z̥ɛbrə]
ʃ̥	as in шум	[ʃ̥um]
ʒ	as in жук	[ʒuk]
x	as in хам	[xam]
x̥	as in хíмик	[x̥i'm̥ik]
ʃ̥ʃ̥	as in щекá	[ʃ̥ʃ̥t̥'ka]
ts	as in цех	[tsɛx]

tʃ	as in чин	[tʃin]
m	as in мол	[mol]
m̞	as in мел	[m̞ɛl]
n	as in нос	[nos]
n̞	as in нет	[n̞ɛt]
l	as in лак	[lak]
l̞	as in ляг	[l̞ak]
r	as in рак	[rak]
r̞	as in река́	[r̞t'ka]
j	as in я́ма	[j'ama]

Pronunciation

3 Stressed vowels

Russian has ten vowel letters:

а	э	ы	о	у
я	е	и	ё	ю

(1) **А** is pronounced with the mouth opened a little wider than in the pronunciation of ‘a’ in English ‘father’, e.g. зал [zal] ‘hall’.

(2) **Э** is pronounced like ‘e’ in ‘end’, but the mouth is opened a little wider and the tongue is further from the palate than in articulating English ‘e’ in ‘end’, e.g. это [t'ɛtə] ‘this is’.

(3) **У** is pronounced with the tongue drawn back and the lips rounded and protruding. The sound is similar to but shorter than the vowel in ‘school’, e.g. бук [buk] ‘beech’.

(4) **О** is also pronounced with rounded and protruding lips, but to a lesser extent than in the pronunciation of **у**. The sound is similar to the vowel in English ‘bought’, e.g. бок [bok] ‘side’.

(5) The vowel **Ы** is pronounced with the tongue drawn back as in the pronunciation of **у**, but with the lips spread, not rounded or protruding, e.g. сын [sɪn] ‘son’.

(6) The vowels **я** [ja], **е** [jɛ], **ё** [jo] and **ю** [ju] are ‘iotated’ variants of а, э, о and у (i.e. they are pronounced like those vowels preceded by the sound [j]). The vowel **и** resembles ‘ea’ in English ‘cheap’, but is a ‘closer’ sound, that is, the centre of the tongue is nearer to the hard palate in articulation, e.g. мир [m̞ir] ‘world, peace’. After a preposition

or other word ending in a hard consonant, however, stressed initial **н** is pronounced [i]: от Ёгоря [л'т̪ iɡəɾə], cf. also 4 (4) note.

Note

Vowels can be classified as:

- (a) **back** vowels (pronounced with the back part of the tongue raised towards the back of the palate): **у/ю, о/ё**;
- (b) **central** vowels (pronounced with the central part of the tongue raised towards the central part of the palate): **ы, а/я**;
- (c) **front** vowels (pronounced with the central part of the tongue raised towards the front of the palate): **и, э/е**.

4 Unstressed vowels

(1) Unstressed у, ю, и and ы

The sound of unstressed **у/ю** is similar to that of English 'u' in 'put': дугá [du'gá] 'arc', юлá [ju'la] 'top'. Unstressed **и** and **ы** are shorter and pronounced in a more 'relaxed' fashion than their stressed equivalents: игрá [i'grá] 'game', былá [bɨ'la] 'was'. Ё does not appear in unstressed position. The other vowels are 'reduced' in unstressed position.

(2) Reduction of о and а

(i) The vowels **о** and **а** are pronounced as [o] and [a] only when they appear in stressed position: дом [dom], зал [zal]. In unstressed position they are reduced, **о** being the vowel most affected by various forms of reduction resulting from its position in relation to the stress.

(ii) In pre-tonic position or as the unstressed initial letter in a word **о** and **а** are pronounced [ɐ]: потóm [pɐ'tom] 'afterwards', оди́н [ɐ'dɨn] 'one', парóm [pɐ'rom] 'ferry', аку́ла [ɐ'kuɫə] 'shark'. This also applies to pre-tonic prepositions: под мóрем [pɐ'd mɔrɨm] 'under the sea', над дóмом [nɐ'd doməm] 'above the house'. The combinations **аа, ао, оа, оо** are pronounced [ɐɐ], e.g. сообрази́ть [sɐɐbrɐ'zítɨ] 'to comprehend'.

(iii) In pre-pre-tonic position (except as initial letters, see (ii)) or in post-tonic position both vowels are pronounced [ə]: thus парохóд [pɐɐɫ'xot] 'steamer', молодóй [mɐɐl'doj] 'young', рáно [rɐnə] 'early', ви́лка [vɨlkə] 'fork'. This also applies to prepositions (под водóй [pɐd vɐl'doj] 'under water', над головóй [nɐd gɐɐl'voj] 'overhead') and to the initial letters of words governed by prepositions (в огорóде [v ɐgɐ'rodɨ] 'in the market garden' (cf. огорóд [ɐgɐ'rot] 'market garden')).

Note

- (a) Unstressed **o** is pronounced [o] in a number of words of foreign origin (какао 'cocoa', радио 'radio', хаос 'chaos'), with an optional [o] in véто 'veto', досье́ 'dossier', шоссе́ 'highway' and some other words. In certain cases, pronunciation is differentiated stylistically. The pronunciation [ʌ] in words such as поёт 'poet' and шоссе́ 'highway', said to be the more colloquial variant, has gained ground in educated speech and is found even in the pronunciation of foreign names such as Шопён [ʃʌ'pɛn]/[ʃo'pɛn] 'Chopin', especially where these have gained common currency (e.g. Толья́тти 'Togliatti'). However, [o] is retained in words where it follows another vowel: трёо 'trio'.
- (b) The vowel **a** is pronounced [ɪ] in pre-tonic position after **ч** and **ш**: thus часы́ [tʃɪ'si] 'clock', щадить́ [ʃɪ'dɪtʃ] 'to spare'. The pronunciation of unstressed **a** as [ɪ] after **ж**, **ш** is now limited for many speakers to жалéть [ʒɪ'ɫɛtʃ] 'to regret', к сожалéнию [k sɔʒɪ'ɫɛɲɪju] 'unfortunately' and end-stressed plural oblique cases of лошадь 'horse', e.g. gen. pl. лошаде́й [lɔʃɪ'tʃɛj]. Ца́ is pronounced [tsɪ] in the oblique cases of some numerals: двадцатí [dvɔtsɪ'tɕi] 'twenty' (gen.).

(3) Reduction of **e** and **я**

(i) In pre-tonic position both **e** and **я** are pronounced [(j)ɪ]: язы́к [jɪ'zɪk] 'language', перево́д [pɪʃɪ'vot] 'translation'. Thus, разре́дить 'to thin out' and разря́дить 'to unload' have the same pronunciation.

(ii) In post-tonic position **e** is pronounced [ɪ] (по́ле [pɒɪ] 'field'), while **я** is usually pronounced [ɔ] (ды́ня [dɪɲɔ] 'melon'). However, post-tonic **я** is pronounced [ɪ] before a soft consonant (па́мять [pamɪtʃ] 'memory') and in non-final post-tonic position (вы́глянул [vɪgɪɫnʉl] 'looked out').

(4) Reduction of **э**

Э́ is pronounced [ɪ] in unstressed position (э́тап [ɪ'tap] 'stage').

Note

Unstressed initial **и** and **э** and conjunction **и** are pronounced [ɪ] after a preposition or other word ending in a hard consonant (see 3 (6)): в Ита́лию [v ɪ'talɪju] 'to Italy', брат идёт к Ива́ну [brat ɪ'dɔt k ɪ'vanu] 'my brother is on his way to see Ivan', над эква́тором [nɔd ɪ'kvatɔrɔm] 'above the equator'. **И** is also pronounced [ɪ] in certain stump compounds, e.g. Госизда́т [gosɪ'zdat] 'State Publishing House'.

5 Hard and soft consonants

With the exception of **ж**, **ц** and **ш**, which are invariably hard, and **ч** and **щ**, which are invariably soft, all Russian consonants can be pronounced hard or soft.

(1) Hard consonants

(i) A hard consonant is a consonant which appears at the end of a word (e.g. the **м** in **дом** [dom] ‘house’, the **т** in **вот** [vot] ‘here is’) or is followed by **а**, **ы**, **о** or **у** (**э** appears only as an *initial* letter, except in acronyms such as **нэп** ‘NEP’ (New Economic Policy) and rare words such as **сэр** ‘sir’). Thus, the consonants in the words **голова́** [gəɫɐ'va] ‘head’, **мы́ло** [mɨ'lə] ‘soap’ and **ду́ма** [dumə] ‘thought’ are all hard.

(ii) Most hard consonants, e.g. **б**, **в**, **г**, **з**, **к**, **м**, **п**, **с**, **ф**, are pronounced in similar fashion to their English counterparts, i.e. ‘b’ in ‘bone’, ‘v’ in ‘van’, ‘g’ in ‘gone’, ‘z’ in ‘zone’, ‘c’ in ‘come’, ‘m’ in ‘money’, ‘p’ in ‘pun’, ‘s’ in ‘sun’, ‘f’ in ‘fun’. However, **к** and **п** (and **т**; see (iii)) lack the slight aspiration of ‘k’, ‘p’ and ‘t’.

(iii) In pronouncing the dentals **д** [d], **т** [t] and **н** [n], the tip of the tongue is pressed against the back of the upper teeth in the angle between teeth and gums.

(iv) **Р** is a moderately ‘trilled’ [r]. **Л** is pronounced with the tip of the tongue in the angle between the upper teeth and the gum, and the middle of the tongue curved downwards. The ‘l’ sound in English ‘bubble’ is a good starting-point for the pronunciation of this letter.

(v) **Х** sounds as ‘ch’ in ‘loch’ or German ‘acht’, but is formed a little further forward in the mouth.

(vi) Unlike other consonants, **ж**, **ц** and **ш** are always pronounced hard (see, however, note (b), below). This means in practice that the vowels **е** and **и** are pronounced as **э** and **ы** after **ж**, **ц** and **ш** (**жест** [zɛst] ‘gesture’, **жир** [zɨr] ‘fat’, **цех** [tsɛx] ‘workshop’, **цирк** [tsɨrk] ‘circus’, **шест** [ʃɛst] ‘pole’, **маш́ина** [mɐ'ʃɨnə] ‘car’) while **ё** is pronounced as **о** after **ж** and **ш** (**жёлоб** [ʒoləp] ‘groove’, **шёлк** [ʃolk] ‘silk’). A soft sign (as in **рожь** [roʃ] ‘rye’) has no softening effect on the pronunciation of **ж** or **ш**.

Note

(a) Neither a soft sign nor the vowel **ё** can be written after **ц**.

(b) **Ш** is sounded hard in the loan words парашю́т [pəʃʌ'ʃut] 'parachute' and брошю́ра [brʌ'ʃurə] 'brochure', while **ж** is pronounced soft in жу́ри [ʒü'ʃi] 'jury'.

(2) Soft consonants

(i) A soft consonant is a consonant (other than **ж**, **ц** or **ш**) followed by a soft sign, e.g. **ль** in сталь 'steel', or by **я**, **е**, **и**, **ё** or **ю**. Thus, the initial consonants in мя́та [ˈmʲatə] 'mint', лес [lɛs] 'forest', пил [pʲil] 'was drinking', нёбо [nʲobə] 'palate' and дю́на [ˈdʲunə] 'dune' are all soft.

(ii) Soft consonants are pronounced with the centre of the tongue raised towards the hard palate, as in articulating **и**, for example. Correct rendering of the vowels **я** [ja], **е** [jɛ], **и** [i], **ё** [jo] and **ю** [ju] will assist in the articulation of the preceding soft consonants. Soft [ʲ] as in то́лько 'only' is similar to 'll' in 'million', with the tip of the tongue against the teeth-ridge and the front of the tongue pressed against the hard palate.

(iii) Soft consonants may also appear at the end of words, e.g. **пь** and **ть** in топь [top] 'swamp' and мать [matʲ] 'mother'; the final sounds in these words are similar to those of the initial consonants in 'pure' and 'tune' (standard British English 'Received Pronunciation').

(iv) Unlike other consonants, **ч** and **щ** are always pronounced soft. In practice this means that the vowels **а**, **о** and **у** are pronounced as [ja], [jo] and [ju] following these consonants (час 'hour', чопорный 'grim', чугу́н 'cast iron', поща́да 'mercy', щу́ка 'pike').

(v) The consonant **щ** is pronounced as a long soft **ш** [ʃʃ] (e.g. защища́ть [zəʃʃʲi'ʃʃætʲ] 'to defend'); the pronunciation [ʃtʃ] is falling into disuse.

(vi) The double consonants **жч** (мужчи́на 'man'), **зч** (зака́зчик 'client'), **сч** (подпи́счик 'subscriber') are pronounced like **щ** [ʃʃ]. The pronunciation [ʃtʃ], however, is preferred in prefixed forms such as бесчи́сленный 'innumerable', расчлени́ть 'to dismember'.

(vii) **Жж** and **зж** may be pronounced either as a double soft **ж** (with the front of the tongue raised towards the hard palate) in words such as во́зжи [ˈvoʒʒi] 'reins', дро́зжи 'yeast', жже́т 'burns', жу́зжать 'to buzz', бры́зжет 'sprays', визжа́ть 'to scream', е́зжу 'I travel', поезжа́й! 'go!', по́зже 'later', especially in the speech of the older generation, as well as in that of actors and professionally trained announcers, or alternatively as a double hard **ж** [ˈvoʒʒtɕ], a pronunciation preferred by very many younger speakers. **Зж** is invariably pronounced as hard [ʒʒ] across the boundary between prefix and stem: изжи́ть 'to

eradicate'. The cluster **жд** in **дождя́** 'of rain' etc. is pronounced as soft **жж** by some speakers and as [ʒd] by others.

(3) Use of hard and soft consonants to differentiate meaning

Hard and soft consonants may be used to differentiate meaning, cf. **лук** [luk] 'onions' and **люк** [lʉk] 'hatch', **мат** [mat] 'checkmate' and **мать** [matʃ] 'mother' etc.

6 Double palatalization

Some words contain two adjacent soft consonants, a phenomenon known as 'double palatalization' or 'regressive softening'. The following combinations of letters are involved:

(1) [dʃ], [tʃ] and [nʃ] followed by other soft dentals or by [ʃ], [zʃ], [tʃ], [ʃʃ] or [j]: **оттепель** [oʦʦʉpʲɪlʲ] 'thaw', **дни** [dʃni] 'days', **кóнчик** [kʉnʃʉk] 'tip', **го́нщик** [gʉnʃʃʉk] 'racer', **пя́тница** [pʲætʃnʉtsə] 'Friday', **пéнсия** [pʲeʃʃjə] 'pension'.

(2) [ʃ] or [zʃ] followed by a soft dental, [ʃ], [zʃ] or [j]: **возни́к** [vʉʲzʃnʉk] 'arose', **разде́л** [rʉʲzʃdʲel] 'partition', **здесь** [zʃdʲesʃ] 'here', **снег** [ʃnʉk] 'snow', **сте́на** [ʃʃʉna] 'wall', **вме́сте** [vmʲesʃʉ] 'together'.

Note

In some words, single or double palatalization is possible: **две** [dʲvʲe] or [dʃvʲe] 'two', **дверь** [dʲvʲerʃ] or [dʃvʲerʃ] 'door', **зверь** [zʲvʲerʃ] or [zʃvʲerʃ] 'wild animal', **пéтля** [pʲetʃlʲə] or [pʲetʃlʲə] 'loop', **свет** [svʲet] or [ʃvʲet] 'light', **след** [slʲet] or [ʃlʲet] 'trace', **че́тверть** [tʃʲetʉrtʃ] or [tʃʲetʉrtʃ] 'quarter'.

7 Non-palatalization of consonants in some loan words

(1) The consonants **т** and **д** are pronounced hard before **е** in certain loan words and foreign names (**те́рмос** [tʲerʉmʉs] 'thermos flask', **анте́нна** 'aerial', **апарте́йд** 'apartheid', **ателье́** 'workshop', **бифште́кс** 'beefsteak', **бу́тербро́д** 'sandwich', **оте́ль** 'hotel', **парте́р** 'stalls', **принте́р** 'printer', **стенд** 'stand'), in words with the prefix **интер-** (**Интерне́т** 'Internet'), **ко́декс** 'legal code', **моде́ль** 'model' **стюа́рдэсса** 'stewardess' and in many words with the prefix **де-** (**дегра́дация** 'degradation').

(2) Hard **з** has been retained in *безе́* ‘meringue’; hard **м** in *консоме́* ‘consommé’, *резюме́* ‘résumé’; hard **н** in *кашне́* ‘scarf’, *бизнес* ‘business’, *киберне́тика* ‘cybernetics’, *тонне́ль* ‘tunnel’, *турне́* ‘tour’, *фонети́ка* ‘phonetics’, *эне́ргия* ‘power’; hard **п** in *купе́* ‘compartment’; hard **р** in *каба́ре* ‘cabaret’, *реле́* ‘relay’; hard **с** in *шоссе́* ‘highway’, *экстра́сене́с* ‘a psychic’; and hard **ф** in *кафе́* ‘cafe’.

Note

A hard consonant is more likely to be retained in foreign loan words immediately preceding the stressed vowel (e.g. *те́ннис* ‘tennis’). Dental consonants (**д**, **т**, **н**) are more likely to remain hard than labials (**б**, **п**, **м**).

8 Hard sign and soft sign

(1) The hard sign appears only between a hard consonant — usually at the end of a prefix — and a stem beginning **я**, **е**, **ё** or **ю**: *отъе́зд* [ɒ'tʲɛst] ‘departure’, *объя́снить* ‘to explain’.

(2) A soft sign appearing between a consonant and **я**, **е**, **ё** or **ю** indicates that the consonant is soft and that the sound **й** [j] intervenes between consonant and vowel: *семья́* [sʲɪ'mʲja] ‘family’. See also 5 (2) (i) and (iii).

9 The reflexive suffix -сь/-ся

(1) The pronunciation of **сь** as [sʲ] is widespread: *бою́сь* [bɒ'juʲs] ‘I fear’, *боя́сь* [bɒ'jaʲs] ‘fearing’ etc.

(2) The suffix **-ся** is usually pronounced [sə] in the infinitive (*мы́ться* ‘to wash’) and the present tense (*мо́ется* ‘he washes’), though an alternative soft pronunciation [sʲə] is also found in the second-person singular and first-person plural.

(3) [sʲə] is preferred in participles (*смею́щийся* [sʲə] ‘laughing’), the imperative (*не сме́йся* ‘don’t laugh’) and the past tense (*он смея́лся* ‘he was laughing’) — except for forms in **-ссия** or **-зся** (*па́сся* [pʲassə] ‘was grazing’).

10 Effect of a soft consonant on a vowel in the preceding syllable

(1) **Э** and **е** are pronounced [ɛ] and [jɛ] in stressed position when followed by a hard consonant (e.g. *э́то* [tʲɛtɒ] ‘this is’, *лес* [lɛs] ‘forest’),

but as [e] and [je] (similar to French ‘e acute’ [é]) when followed by a soft consonant (e.g. эти [’eʲtʲ] ‘these’, весь [veʂ] ‘all’).

(2) **Я** is pronounced as [æ], **ё** as [ö] and **ю** as [ü] preceding a soft consonant: мяч [mʲætʃ] ‘ball’, тётя [’tʲötʲə] ‘aunt’, ключ [kʲlütʃ] ‘key’.

(3) **А, о** and **ы** are also affected as the tongue is raised closer to the palate in anticipation of a following soft consonant (e.g. мать ‘mother’, ночь ‘night’, пыль ‘dust’, where **а, о** and **ы** are pronounced as if followed by a much-reduced **и** sound).

11 Voiced and unvoiced consonants

(1) Some consonants are pronounced with vibration of the vocal cords (‘voiced’ consonants), and others without such vibration (‘unvoiced’ consonants).

(2) There are six pairs of voiced and unvoiced equivalents:

Voiced	Unvoiced
б	п
г	к
з	с
д	т
в	ф
ж	ш

The eight other consonants include the unvoiced **ц, х, ч, щ** and the voiced sonants **л, р, м, н**.

(3) **Б, г, з, д, в, ж** are pronounced as their unvoiced counterparts when they appear in final position or before a final soft sign.

лоб ‘forehead’ is pronounced [lop]
 луг ‘meadow’ is pronounced [luk]
 раз ‘time’ is pronounced [ras]
 сад ‘garden’ is pronounced [sat]
 лев ‘lion’ is pronounced [lʲɛf]
 муж ‘husband’ is pronounced [muʃ]

(4) When a voiced and an unvoiced consonant appear side by side, the first assimilates to the second. Thus, voiced consonant + unvoiced

consonant are both pronounced unvoiced, while unvoiced consonant + voiced consonant are both pronounced voiced.

(i) **Voiced + unvoiced (both pronounced unvoiced)**

гу́бка	‘sponge’	is pronounced [ˈgʊpkə]
загс	‘registry office’	is pronounced [zaks]
рэ́зко	‘sharply’	is pronounced [ˈrʲɛskə]
ло́дка	‘boat’	is pronounced [ˈlotkə]
вхо́дит	‘goes in’	is pronounced [ˈfxodʲɪt]
ло́жка	‘spoon’	is pronounced [ˈloʲʃkə]

Note

- (a) Devoicing also takes place on the boundary between preposition and noun or adjective: в ко́мнате [ˈf kɔmnətʲ] ‘in the room’, под сто́лом [pət stɐˈlom] ‘under the table’.
- (b) The devoicing of a final consonant may in turn cause the devoicing of the consonant which precedes it: визг [vɨsk] ‘scream’, дрозд [drosʲt] ‘thrush’.
- (c) Г is pronounced as [x] in лёгкий ‘light, easy’, лёгче ‘easier’, мягкий ‘soft’ and мягче ‘softer’, as well as in Бог ‘God’ (only in the singular nominative case, however). The initial consonant in Гóсподи! ‘Lord!’ is now usually pronounced as [g], though [h] is still heard. The noun бухгáлтер ‘book-keeper’ is the only word in which хг is pronounced as [h].

(ii) **Unvoiced + voiced (both pronounced voiced)**

футбо́л	‘football’	is pronounced [fuˈdbol]
к до́му	‘towards the house’	is pronounced [ˈgː domu]
про́сьба	‘request’	is pronounced [ˈprozʲbə]
та́кже	‘also’	is pronounced [ˈtagʲzʲ]
маш́иню́р	‘typing pool’	is pronounced [mazʲɨˈru]

Note

- (a) The voicing of consonants also occurs at the boundary between words, especially when the second word is a particle or other unstressed form: Я спас бы егó [ˈspaz bʲɪ] ‘I would have saved him’. **И** is voiced as [dz] in such circumstances (Оте́ц бы́л до́ма [ɐˈtʲɛdz bʲɪl] ‘Father was in’) and **ч** as [dʒ] (до́чь бы́ла [dodʒ bʲˈla] ‘the daughter was’).
- (b) **В** has no voicing effect on a preceding unvoiced consonant, e.g. тво́й [tvoj] ‘your’.

12 The pronunciation of -чн-

(1) **-чн-** is pronounced [ʃn] in certain words (конечно [кə'нѣʃнə] 'of course', нарочно 'on purpose', очечник 'spectacle case', прачечная 'laundry', скучно 'boring', яйчница 'fried eggs'), as well as in the patronymics Ильичина 'Ilinichna', Саввична 'Savvichna' and Никитична 'Nikitichna'.

(2) However, the pronunciation [tʃn] is used in more 'learned' words such as алчный ['altʃntj] 'greedy', античный 'ancient' добавочный 'additional', and конечный 'ultimate'.

(3) **-чн-** is pronounced either as [ʃn] or [tʃn] in булочная 'bakery' and молочная 'dairy'. Коричневый 'brown' is pronounced with [tʃn].

Note

Ч is also pronounced [ʃ] in что 'that' and чтобы 'in order to'.

13 Consonants omitted in pronunciation

In some groups of three or more consonants one is omitted in pronunciation. Thus, the first **в** is not pronounced in здравствуйте! 'hallo!', чувство 'feeling' (however, it **is** pronounced in девственный 'virgin' and нравственный 'moral'), **д** is not pronounced in звёздный 'starry', ландшафт 'landscape' поздно 'late', праздник 'festival' or сердце 'heart' (however, it **is** pronounced in бездна 'abyss'), **л** is not pronounced in солнце 'sun' (however, it **is** pronounced in солнечный 'solar') and **т** is not pronounced in грустный 'sad', известный 'well-known', лестный 'flattering', местный 'local', окрестность 'vicinity', частный 'private' and счастливый 'happy' (however, the first **т** in постлать 'to spread' **is** pronounced).

14 The pronunciation of double consonants

Double consonants are pronounced as two letters across the boundary between prefix and stem, e.g. оттащить [tt] 'to drag away'. When a double consonant appears within a stem, practice varies, cf. грамматика [m] 'grammar', группа [pp or p] 'group'. A single consonant is pronounced in final position: грамм [m] 'gram', грипп [p] 'influenza'.

15 Stress

(1) Stress in Russian is ‘free’, that is, in some words it falls on the initial syllable (долго ‘for a long time’), in others on a medial syllable (дорога ‘road’) and in others on the final syllable (карандаш ‘pencil’). The vowel *ë* is *always* stressed.

(2) A change in stress may indicate a change in meaning: орган ‘organ of the body’, орган ‘organ’ (musical instrument). A few words have alternative stress without a change in meaning: творог (the commoner form)/творог ‘cottage cheese’.

(3) For stress patterns in individual parts of speech see nouns (57, 60, 62, 63 (4)), adjectives (164, 165), verbs (219, 223, 228, 232, 341, 343, 345, 350, 369) and prepositions (405).

(4) Secondary stress (a weaker stress marked here with a grave accent [˘]) is found in some compounds, e.g. машиностроение ‘engineering’ (in fast speech, however, the word is pronounced with one full stress only: машиностроение). Secondary stress is particularly common in words with foreign prefixes (антикоммунизм ‘anti-communism’, контрмеры ‘counter-measures’, трансатлантический ‘transatlantic’, ультракороткий ‘ultra-short’ (also in words with the prefix сверх-: сверхурочные ‘overtime’), in technical terms (морозостойчивый ‘frost-proof’), in compounds where there is a polysyllabic gap between the natural stresses in the components (времяпрепровождение ‘pastime’) and in compounds consisting of a truncated word and a full word (госбюджет (= государственный бюджет) ‘state budget’). The use of secondary stresses is sometimes optional, varying with speaker and speech mode. Generally speaking, the newer a compound word is, the more likely a secondary stress (e.g. киносценарий ‘film script’). Tertiary stresses are found in some compounds: автомотоклуб ‘car and motor-cycle club’.

(5) Some primary-stressed adverbs take secondary stress when used as prepositions: внутри/внутри ‘inside’, возле/возле ‘near’, вокруг/вокруг ‘around’, мимо/мимо ‘past’, около/около ‘close (to)’, после/после ‘after’.

Note

Stresses are marked in a Russian text only:

- (a) to resolve ambiguity, cf. Я знаю, что он говорит ‘I know that he is speaking’ and Я знаю, что он говорит ‘I know what he is saying’, большая часть ‘a large part’, большая часть ‘a larger part’;

- (b) to denote archaic pronunciations (e.g. библио́тека for contemporary библиотéка ‘library’);
- (c) in rendering certain professional words, non-Russian words, dialect and slang words;
- (d) in verse, where normal stress is sometimes distorted in the interests of rhythm.

Orthography

16 Spelling rules

Spelling rule 1

ы is replaced by **и**, **я** by **а** and **ю** by **у** after **ж, ч, ш, щ** and **г, к, х**:

нога́, ‘leg’, gen. sing. **ноги́**

молча́ть, ‘to be silent’, first-person sing. **молчу́**, third-person pl.

молча́т

Note

Exceptions are found in some non-Russian words and names: брошю́ра ‘brochure’, Кызылку́м ‘Kyzylkum Desert’, Кя́хта ‘Kyakhta’.

Spelling rule 2

о is replaced by **е** in unstressed position after **ж, ч, ш, щ, ц**:

не́мец ‘German’, instr. sing. **не́мцем**, gen. pl. **не́мцев**

Spelling rule 3

Initial **и** is replaced by **ы** following a prefix ending in a consonant:

impf. **игра́ть**/pf. **сыгра́ть** ‘to play’

интерéсный ‘interesting’, **небезынтерéсный** ‘not uninteresting’

(for exceptions see 28(3)(c))

Spelling rule 4

The prefixes **без-/бес-**; **вз-**, **воз-/вс-**, **вос-**; **из-/ис-**; **раз-/рас-** are spelt with **з** before voiced consonants, voiced sonants or vowels and with **с** before unvoiced consonants: **беззубый** ‘toothless’ but **бесконéчный** ‘infinite’; **взлетáть** ‘to take off’ but **всходíть** ‘to rise’; **избíть** ‘to beat up’ but **испíть** ‘to sup’; **разобра́ть** ‘to dismantle’ but **расцепíть** ‘to uncouple’.

Spelling rule 5

Prefixes ending in a consonant (e.g. **под-**, **от-**, **раз-**, **с-**) are spelt **подо-**, **ото-**, **разо-**, **со-**:

(i) In compounds of **-йти** (**подойти** ‘to approach’, **подошёл** ‘I approached’ etc.) (see **333** (2)).

(ii) Before consonant + **ь** (**сошью́** ‘I shall sew’) (see **234** (5)).

(iii) Before certain consonant clusters (**разогна́ть** ‘to disperse’) (see **234** (1–4)).

Note

For spelling rules relating to prepositions see **404**.

17 Use of capital and small letters in titles and names

(1) In the names or titles of most posts, institutions, organizations, books, newspapers and journals, wars, festivals etc., *only the first word* is spelt with a capital letter: Всемирная федерация профсоюзов ‘World Federation of Trade Unions’, Европейский союз ‘European Union’, Министерство транспорта ‘Ministry of Transport’, Московский государственный университет ‘Moscow State University’, Политехнический музей ‘Polytechnical Museum’, Российская академия наук ‘Russian Academy of Sciences’, Тверской муниципальный суд ‘Tver Municipal Court’, Художественный театр ‘Arts Theatre’, «*Война и мир*» ‘*War and Peace*’, *Нью-Йорк таймс* ‘*New York Times*’, Семилетняя война ‘Seven Years’ War’ (but Великая Отечественная война ‘Great Patriotic War’), Новый год ‘New Year’, Первое мая ‘May Day’, Нобелевская премия ‘Nobel Prize’.

Note

Any word spelt with a capital letter in its own right retains the capital in extended titles: Государственный академический **Большой** театр ‘The State Academic Bolshoi Theatre’.

(2) In geographical names, the names of administrative areas, local features and so on, the generic terms are spelt with a *small* letter and the descriptive words with a *capital*: о́зеро Байка́л ‘Lake Baikal’, Бе́лое мо́ре ‘the White Sea’, пу́стыня Го́би ‘the Gobi Desert’, мыс До́брой Наде́жды ‘the Cape of Good Hope’, тропи́к Ра́ка ‘the Tropic of Cancer’, Се́верный Ледови́тый океа́н ‘the Arctic Ocean’, полуо́стров

Таймы́р ‘the Taimyr Peninsula’, Ю́жный по́люс ‘the South Pole’, Тверская́ у́лица ‘Tverskaya Street’, Зи́мний дворе́ц ‘the Winter Palace’, Исаа́киевский собо́р ‘St Isaac’s Cathedral’, Кра́сная пло́щадь ‘Red Square’, Ми́нский автомоби́льный заво́д ‘Minsk Car Factory’.

Note

Generic terms are spelt with a *capital* letter, however, if used in a non-literal sense: Золото́й Ро́г ‘the Golden Horn’ (a bay), О́гненная Земля́ ‘Tierra del Fuego’ (an archipelago).

(3) Some titles consist of words, all of which have *capital* letters. These include the names of exalted governmental institutions and organizations, as well as a number of international bodies (and certain geographical names, e.g. Бе́лый Нил ‘the White Nile’, Да́льний Восто́к ‘the Far East’, Но́вая Земля́ ‘Novaya Zemlya’): Генера́льная Ассамбле́я ОО́Н ‘the General Assembly of the UNO’, Междунаро́дный Кра́сный Крест ‘the International Red Cross’, Сова́т Федера́ции ‘the Council of the Federation’, including, as a rule, the names of states: Объеди́нные Ара́бские Эмира́ты ‘the United Arab Emirates’, Респу́блика Тата́рста́н ‘the Republic of Tatarstan’, Росси́йская Федера́ция ‘the Russian Federation’, Сова́тский Сою́з ‘the Soviet Union’, Соеди́ненное Коро́лство ‘the United Kingdom’, Соеди́ненные Шта́ты Аме́рики ‘the United States of America’.

Note

(a) Госуда́рственная ду́ма *or* Госуда́рственная Ду́ма ‘the State Duma’

(b) Па́ртия ‘party’ is not usually spelt with a capital letter: Коммунисти́ческая па́ртия Росси́йской Федера́ции [КПРФ] ‘Communist Party of the Russian Federation’, Либе́ра́льно-демократи́ческая па́ртия Росси́и [ЛДПР] ‘the Russian Liberal Democratic Party’.

(4) Unofficial titles, the names of foreign parliaments and some other titles consist of words, all of which are spelt with a *small* letter: моско́вский аэропо́рт ‘Moscow Airport’ (cf. official titles, now also used colloquially, e.g. аэропо́рт Вну́ково ‘Vnukovo Airport’), па́ртия большеви́ков ‘the Bolshevik Party’ (cf. official Росси́йская социал-демократи́ческая рабо́чая па́ртия (большеви́ков) ‘Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (of Bolsheviks)’), пала́та о́бщин ‘House of Commons’, бундеста́г ‘the Bundestag’, сейм ‘the Sejm’.

(5) Nouns denoting nationality, town of origin etc., are also spelt with a *small* letter (англича́нин ‘Englishman’, москвич ‘Muscovite’), as are

the corresponding adjectives (английский ‘English’, московский ‘Moscow’), except where they form part of a title (Английский банк ‘the Bank of England’, Московский цирк ‘Moscow Circus’). This principle is also applied to the names of months, thus март ‘March’, октябрь ‘October’, октябрьский ‘October’ (adj.), but 8 Марта ‘8 March’ (International Women’s Day), Октябрь/Октябрьская революция ‘the October Revolution’; and to days of the week, thus пятница ‘Friday’, but Страстная Пятница ‘Good Friday’.

(6) The words земля ‘land’, луна ‘moon’, солнце ‘sun’ are spelt with capitals when they denote heavenly bodies: Земля ‘the Earth’, Луна ‘the Moon’, Солнце ‘the Sun’.

(7) (i) Names of deities are spelt with capital letters: Аллах ‘Allah’, Бог ‘God’, Брахма ‘Brahma’, Шива ‘Shiva’.

Note

Of heathen gods, one of a number of gods, or figuratively, бог is spelt with a *small* letter: бог Аполлон ‘the god Apollo’, бóже мой! ‘my God!’ In certain contexts, however, a capital is possible:

“Как хорошо – сказала жена, медленно натягивая на себя шёлковое одеяло. – Слава **Бóгу**, слава **Бóгу** . . .” (Nabokov)
‘That is good’, said his wife, slowly drawing a silken blanket about her. ‘Thank God, thank God . . .’

(ii) Capitals are also used for religious festivals: Пáсха ‘Easter’, Рождество ‘Christmas’, holders of exalted ecclesiastical offices: Святейший Патриáрх Московский и всея Руси ‘His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia’, Папа Римский ‘The Pope’, and sacred texts: Библия ‘the Bible’, Корáн ‘the Koran’, Тóра ‘the Torah’, Талмуд ‘the Talmud’, Вéды ‘the Vedas’.

Division of Words

18 Division into syllables

(1) Each syllable in a Russian word contains a vowel and, in most cases, consonants peripheral to it, e.g. па-спорт.

(2) Russian distinguishes ‘open’ syllables, which end in a vowel (го-лова́) from ‘closed’ syllables, which end in a consonant (нос).

(3) The principles of syllabic division are different in English and Russian, cf. E doc-tor/R до-ктор, E her-o/R ге-рoй. Russian non-initial syllables are formed on the basis of an ascending level of ‘sonority’, vowels being the most sonorous letters, the voiced sonants (**р, л, м, н**) the next most sonorous and noise-consonants (the other sixteen consonants) the least sonorous.

(4) In practice, this means that the **syllable boundary** occurs either:

(i) **between a vowel and a following consonant:** со-ло́-ма, сте-пнoй, ка́-ска, ко-стю́м, ста-ле-ва́р, стра-на́, о-то́рo-сить, вра-жда́ etc.;

or:

(ii) **between a sonant and a following consonant** (including another sonant): су́м-ка, кон-ве́рт, боль-шoй, ка́р-та, вол-на́, че́р-ный, кар-ма́н.

Note

Non-initial syllables cannot begin with the sequence sonant + noise-consonant (this sequence is possible, however, in an *initial* syllable, e.g. мшoй-стoй). Note, however, the sequences sonant + sonant (во́-ль-ный), consonant + consonant (ме́-сто) and noise-consonant + sonant (ме-тла́). The syllabic boundary may occur *before* or *between* two sonants (ка-рмáн or кар-мáн, во-лнá or вол-на́).

Syllabic division in a text

Я встал и на-де́л паль-то́. Же-на́ ре-ши́-ла, что я по-ше́л за си-га-ре́-та-ми, и ве-ле́-ла не су-ту́-ли-ться при хо-дье́. О-на́ ска-за́-ла, что ко-гда́ я хо-жу́, то ны-ря́-ю вниз го-ло-во́й, как при-стя-жна́-я ло́-шадь. Е-щё о-на́ ска-за́-ла, что я всё вре́-мя смо-трю́ вниз, бу́-дто хо-чу́ най-ти́ на а-сфа́ль-те мо-не́-тку (Tokareva).

19 Splitting a word at the end of a line

(1) Two basic criteria are observed in splitting a word at the end of a line:

(i) Syllabic division: го-ловá or голо-ва́.

(ii) Word structure: it is desirable, for example, not to disrupt monosyllabic prefixes etc. (**под-бежа́ть, со-гласе́н**) (cf. **пе-рево́д** and note that the rule does not apply when a prefix is no longer perceived as such: **ра́-зум, разо-ря́ть**).

(2) A word is normally split **after a vowel**: го́-род, го́-лоден or го́ло-ден, ребя́-та or ре-бя́та. Sometimes this involves splitting a two-vowel sequence: чита́-ете.

(3) A sequence of **two or more consonants** may also be split: ме́д-ленно, ро́д-ственники, проб-ле́ма, и́стин-ный etc.

(4) Other conventions include the following:

(i) A hard or soft sign must not be separated from the preceding consonant (**подь-езд, боль-шой**) and **й** must not be separated from the preceding vowel (**вой-на́**).

(ii) A single vowel should not appear at the end of a line or be carried over onto the next: **аги-та́ция** (*not* *а-гита́ция or *агита́ци-я).

(iii) Two identical consonants appearing between vowels should be split: **жуж-жа́ть, ма́с-са, ко́н-ный**.

(iv) A monosyllabic component of a stump compound should not be split (**спе́цде́жда**); nor should abbreviations (**ОО́Н, и т.д.**).

(5) Some words can be split in different ways, e.g. **се-стра́, сес-тра́** or **сест-ра́**.

Punctuation

20 Introductory comments

Rules of punctuation are, in general, more rigorously applied in Russian than in English. Differences of usage between the two languages relate in particular to the comma (especially in separating principal from subordinate clauses), the dash and the punctuation of direct speech.

21 The full stop, exclamation mark and question mark

Usage of the full stop, exclamation mark and question mark is comparable in the two languages:

Люди́ и́щут сча́стья в любви́.	People seek happiness in love.
Кака́я прекра́сная пого́да!	What magnificent weather!
Куда́ вы и́дёте?	Where are you going?

Note

- (a) There is a tendency to use exclamation marks more frequently in Russian than in English.
- (b) An exclamation mark may appear in the middle of a sentence: Так мне было плохо, **так горько и постыло!** — хуже всякой болезни (Rasputin) 'I felt so bad, so bitter and wretched! — it was worse than any illness'.
- (c) Exclamation marks are also used in commands expressed other than by a grammatical imperative: **Молчать!** 'Shut up!', **За мной!** 'Follow me!', **Вста́ли!** 'On your feet!'.
- (d) An exclamation mark enclosed in parentheses (!) may be used to indicate irony or indignation.
- (e) Exclamation and question marks may appear together for special emphasis: **Да что же это такое?!** 'Now what's all this?!'.

22 The comma: introductory comments

The comma is more frequently used in Russian than in English. In extreme examples a series of commas in a Russian sentence may have no English equivalents at all:

Мака́ренко пи́шет, что де́ти, кото́рые уме́ют труди́ться, уважа́ют труд дру́гих люде́й, стремя́тся при́йти на по́мощь тем, кто в э́той по́мощи нужда́ется (Belyakova)

Makarenko writes that children who know how to work respect the labour of other people and strive to come to the assistance of those who need it

23 Uses of the comma*Correspondence with English usage*

Commas are used, in Russian *and* English, to perform the following functions:

- (1) To separate
- (i) **two or more adjectives** which define one noun:
- Он шёл по **тёмной, грязной, шумной** улице
He was walking down the dark, dirty, noisy street
- (ii) **two or more adverbs** qualifying one verb:

Медленно, мучительно он встал с постели
Slowly, painfully he rose from the bed

(2) To separate **items in a list**:

Плата за **квартиру, электричество, газ** составляет около 20 рублей (Belyakova)
The rent, electricity and gas bills amount to about 20 roubles

(3) To mark off words and phrases which stand **in apposition**:

Валентина Терешкова, рабочая девочка из старинного текстильного городка, стала первой женщиной-космонавтом
Valentina Tereshkova, a working girl from an ancient textile town, became the first woman in space

(4) To mark off words which serve to **define and specify**:

Здание детского сада двухэтажное, **с большими светлыми окнами, с верандами для дневного сна** (Belyakova)
The building of the kindergarten is two-storey, with large light windows and verandas for a daytime nap

(5) After **да** 'yes' and **нет** 'no':

Да, я согласен с вами/**Нет**, я не согласен
Yes, I agree with you/No, I don't agree

(6) In **addressing people**:

Здравствуйте, Иван Иванович!
Hallo, Ivan Ivanovich!

(7) After **interjections**:

— **Ой**, как неудачно. Вчера упал или сегодня? (Rasputin)
'Oh, what bad luck. Did you fall over yesterday or today?'

(8) Between **repeated words**:

Ничего, ничего, утешал он себя, самое трудное позади
(Abramov)
Never mind, never mind, he consoled himself, the worst is over

(9) To mark off **participial phrases**:

По равнине, **освещённой поздним солнцем**, скакал табун диких лошадей
Over the plain, (which was) illuminated by the late sun, galloped a herd of wild horses

(10) To mark off **gerundial phrases**:

Я молчал, **не зная**, что делать (Rasputin)
I was silent, not knowing what to do

Note

In English, 'and' is often used as an alternative to a comma before the final element in enumerations and when two or more adjectives qualify a single noun or two adverbs a single verb (cf. (1) and (2) above).

Differences in usage between Russian and English

Russian *requires* the use of a comma in the following contexts, where usage in English is optional or inconsistent:

- (1) Between clauses linked by **co-ordinating conjunctions** (see **454**)
(2) (i) and **455–457**):

Оля знает буквы, **но** я пока помогаю ей читать (Belyakova)
Olya knows the letters, but for the time being I help her to read

Note

- (a) While a comma *always* appears before **но** (except when it is the first word in a sentence), the insertion of a comma before English 'but' depends largely on the length of the pause required by the context, cf. 'He is young but experienced' and 'He is young, but everyone trusts him'.
- (b) A comma is used between clauses linked by **и** if the clauses have different subjects (Но волк был мёртв, **и** его сейчас никто не боялся (Абрамов) 'But the wolf was dead, and no one was afraid of him any more'), but not if they have the same subject (Разожгли костёр **и** сварили грибной суп (Belyakova) 'They lit a fire and made mushroom soup'). In such contexts **и** may be replaced by a comma: Два дня он **не пил, не ел** (= не пил **и** не ел) (Абрамов) 'For two days he did not drink or eat'.
- (2) Between clauses linked by the conjunctions **и . . . и** 'both . . . and', **ни . . . ни** 'neither . . . nor', **или . . . или** 'either . . . or', **то . . . то** 'now . . . now':

На вѣчере выступали **и** мальчики, **и** девочки
Both boys and girls performed at the party

Нельзя **ни** спокойно почитать, **ни** сосредоточиться (Belyakova)
You can neither do a little quiet reading, nor concentrate

Это **или** собака, **или** волк
That is either a dog or a wolf

Она **то** смеётся, **то** плачет
Now she laughs, now she weeps

(3) Between a **principal** and a **subordinate clause** (see 458–467):

Я знаю, **что** конец будет не скоро
I know the end is still some way off

Мы не отдавали детей в ясли, **хотя** такая возможность была
(Belyakova)

We didn't put the children into a day-nursery, even though we had the opportunity to do so

Денис стал с нетерпением ждать лета, **чтобы** поехать с бабушкой к Чёрному морю
Denis waited impatiently for the summer, in order to go with his grandmother to the Black Sea

Он работал бы, **если бы** мог
He would work if he could

Она уходит, **потому что** она опаздывает
She is leaving because she is late

Note

The appearance of a comma between **потому** and **что** in Мы победим потому, что мы сильнее throws the element of cause into sharper relief: 'We shall win because we are stronger' (i.e. and for no other reason). This effect can be intensified by distancing **потому** from **что** (**Потому** мы победим, **что** мы сильнее), or by the addition of **лишь**, **только** or other intensifying words before **потому**.

(4) To separate **main from relative clauses** (see 123):

Я посещал город, **в котором (где)** провёл детство
I was visiting the town in which (where) I had spent my childhood

Note

English distinguishes *relative* clauses (which are marked off by commas) — 'Cats (i.e. *all* cats), who have excellent night vision, are nocturnal predators' — from *adjective* clauses (which are *not* marked off by commas): 'Cats (i.e. only *those* cats) who have no tails are called Manx cats'. In Russian, however, both types of clause are marked off with commas.

(5) To mark off **parenthetical words**:

во-первых/во-вторых in the first place/in the second place
допустим let us assume напริมёр for example

ка́жется	it seems	пожа́луйста	please
конечно́	of course	по-мо́ему	in my opinion
к сожа́лению	unfortunately	ска́жем	let us say
ме́жду прóчим	incidentally	с одно́й, друго́й	on the one, the
мо́жет бы́ть	perhaps	сторон́ы	other hand
наве́рное	probably		

Он, **должно́ быть**, ушёл
He must have left

Нам, **конечно́**, удобне́е, что де́ти си́дят ти́хо (Belyakova)
Of course, it's more convenient for us if the children are sitting quietly

Не спорь, **пожа́луйста**, со мной, я зна́ю (Rasputin)
Please don't argue with me, I know best

Он сказа́л, что, **к сожа́лению**, нам приде́тся и́дти́ без него́
He said that unfortunately we would have to go without him

(6) In **comparisons**:

Он ла́зит по дере́вьям, **как обезья́на**
He scrambles about in the trees like a monkey

Кто́-то научи́л свое́го малы́ша пла́вать **ра́ньше, чем** тот стал
ходи́ть (Belyakova)
Someone taught his baby to swim before he could walk

Он спал беспробу́дным сном, **бу́дто** его́ ничто́ не трево́жило
He was sound asleep, as though without a care in the world

24 The colon. The semicolon. The dash

The colon.

The colon is used to perform the following functions:

(1) To **introduce a list**, in which case the colon is usually preceded by a generic term:

Моя́ семья́ состои́т из четырёх челове́к: **мой муж Ви́ктор, дво́е дете́й и я** (Belyakova)

My family consists of four people: my husband Victor, the two children and myself

(2) To introduce a statement which **elaborates on, supplements or indicates the cause** of the statement which precedes the colon:

И тут их ожида́ла но́вая беда́: **оте́ц пропа́л** (Abramov)
And now a new misfortune awaited them: father had disappeared

В нау́ке всегда́ должна́ бы́ть то́чность: **ка́ждому нау́чному те́рмину должно́ соотве́тствовать одно́ поня́тие** (Vvedenskaya)
There should always be accuracy in science: a single concept should correspond to each scientific term

У́тром я со стра́хом смотре́л на себя́ в зе́рало: **нос вспух, под ле́вым гла́зом синя́к** (Rasputin)
In the morning I gazed at myself in the mirror in horror: my nose had swollen up, there was a bruise under my left eye

(3) To **introduce direct speech, thought or other communication**:

В кинофи́льме «Дожи́вём до понеде́льника» подро́сток пи́шет: **«Сча́стье — э́то когда́ тебя́ понима́ют!»** (Kovaleva)
In the film *We'll survive till Monday* a teenager writes, 'Happiness is when people understand you!'

(4) To introduce a **quotation**:

По́мните, в «Евге́нии Оне́гине»:
Привы́чка свы́ше нам дана́:
Заме́на сча́стью она́
Do you remember, in *Evgenii Onegin*:
Habit is granted us from on high:
It is a substitute for happiness

The semicolon

The semicolon is used to **separate extensive clauses** which are **not linked by conjunctions**, especially if each clause is itself broken up by commas:

В Ленингра́де все хотя́т посмотре́ть на легенда́рную «Аврору́», побы́вать в пу́шкинских места́х, в многочи́сленных дворца́х; в Улья́новске познако́миться с места́ми, где жил и учи́лся В. И. Ле́нин; в На́бережных Челна́х прое́хать по о́громному молодóму го́роду, посмотре́ть КамА́З (Vvedenskaya)
In Leningrad everyone wants to see the legendary 'Aurora', visit places associated with Pushkin, the numerous palaces; in Ulyanovsk to get to know the places where V. I. Lenin lived and worked; and in

Naberezhnye Chelny to drive through the enormous new town, see the Kamaz truck factory

Note

In 1991 Ленинград ‘Leningrad’ reverted to Санкт-Петербург ‘St Petersburg’ and Ульяновск ‘Ulyanovsk’ to Симби́рск ‘Simbirsk’.

The dash

The dash is extremely widespread in Russian. It not only has a number of specific uses of its own but in some contexts substitutes for other punctuation marks, in particular the comma, the colon and parentheses.

(1) Specific uses of the dash.

(i) It separates **subject noun** from **predicate noun**, replacing the verb ‘to be’:

Мой отец — преподава́тель ву́за, а ма́ма — врач (Belyakova)
My father is a college lecturer, and my mother is a doctor

Са́мое глубо́кое о́зеро ми́ра — э́то пресново́дный краса́вец Байка́л (Vvedenskaya)
The deepest lake in the world is the beautiful fresh-water Lake Baikal

Note

(a) The subject may sometimes be an **infinitive**:

Са́мое тяжё́лое при проща́нии — **не огля́дываться** (Ogonek)
The hardest thing on parting is not to look back

(b) The dash is not normally used to replace the verb ‘to be’ when the subject is a pronoun: Он водола́з ‘He is a diver’.

(ii) In elliptical statements it replaces a word, usually a verb, which is ‘understood’:

Студе́нт смотре́л на профе́ссора, профе́ссор — на студе́нта (Shukshin)
The student was looking at the professor, and the professor (was looking) at the student

(2) The dash is also used as a substitute for:

(i) The comma (when, for example, introducing an unexpected turn of events or sharp contrast):

Она сделала ещё попытку посадить меня за стол — **напрáсно** (=, **но напрáсно**) (Rasputin)
She made another attempt to seat me at the table, but in vain

Note

Generally speaking, the dash indicates a *more pronounced pause* than the comma, for example, in expressing apposition: Со мной был грузинский чай — моё единственное удовольствие (=, моё единственное удовольствие) ‘I had with me some Georgian tea, my only pleasure’.

(ii) The colon:

(a) in introducing an **enumeration**, following a generic term:

Иногда клуб приглашает гостей — **учёных, педагогов, врачей** (Belyakova)

Sometimes the club invites guests — scientists, teachers and doctors

(b) in **elucidating** a statement:

У Соколовых ещё не спали — **в избе мигал огонёк**

The Sokolovs were still up — a light was flickering in the hut (cf. ещё не спали: в избе мигал огонёк)

(iii) Parentheses:

На территории Российской Федерации — **не забывайте о том, что она занимает одну седьмую часть всей суши Земли!** — тысячи рек и речушек

On the territory of the Russian Federation (do not forget that it occupies one-seventh of the Earth’s surface!) there are thousands of rivers and streams

25 The punctuation of direct speech

(1) If the introductory verb *precedes* the direct speech, the verb is followed by a *colon*, and the direct speech *either*

(i) appears on a new line, preceded by a *dash*:

Я промямлил:
— **Правда** (Rasputin)
‘It is true’, I mumbled

(ii) *or* runs on after the colon and is enclosed in *guillemets* (« »):

Сам хозяин рáза два кричáл с крыльцá: «Эй, кто там?»
 The master himself shouted a couple of times from the porch,
 ‘Hey, who’s there?’

(2) If, however, the verb *follows* the direct speech, the latter is flanked by *dashes*:

— Уснóл, — услóжливо отвéтила Сýма (Rasputin)
 ‘He’s fallen asleep’, answered Sima obligingly

(3) A **conversation** may be rendered as follows:

— И сего́дня уже́ ссóрились? — спрашивала их сотру́дница зáгса.

— Конéчно!

— Ну из-за чего́ сего́дня?

— Из-за чего́? . . . Я уже́ забы́ла . . . (Belyakova)

‘And have you quarrelled today too?’, asked the registry office official.

‘Of course!’

‘And what have you been quarrelling about today?’

‘What have we been quarrelling about today? . . . I forget . . .’

Note

(a) A full stop, comma, semicolon or dash *follow* inverted commas.

(b) Quotes within quotes may be distinguished as follows:

«Кре́йсер “Аврóра” стоя́л на я́коре» ‘The cruiser “Aurora” lay at anchor’.

(c) In cursive script, inverted commas are rendered as follows:

«Привéт!» ‘Greetings!’

26 Suspension points (многотóчие)

Suspension points (. . .) indicate one of the following.

(1) **Hesitation:**

— Пройгрываешь, навéрное?

— Нет, **вы . . . выйгрываю** (Rasputin)

‘I suppose you lose?’

‘No, I – I win’

(2) An **unfinished statement:**

Знать бы нам, чем это всё кóнчится . . . (Rasputin)

Had we but known how it would all end . . .