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Russian

FOR

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Andrew Kaufman, PhD

*Lecturer in Russian Language and Literature,
University of Virginia*

Serafima Gettys, PhD

*Coordinator of the Foreign Language Program,
Lewis University*

with Nina Wieda

***Includes dialogues
from the book
on audio CD***



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by Andrew Kaufman,
PhD, and Serafima
Gettys, PhD, with Nina
Wieda



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About the Authors

Andrew Kaufman, PhD, is currently a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia. He holds a PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Stanford University, and he has recognized success as both a published scholar and an innovative, award-winning teacher of Russian language, literature, and culture at some of the country's top universities. Dr. Kaufman has worked as a Russian language and literature expert for "Oprah's Book Club," he has discussed Russian literature and culture on the national television show *Democracy Now!*, and he has been heard as a featured guest on Talk America Radio and on Silver Rain Radio in Russia. A fluent speaker of Russian, Dr. Kaufman has lived extensively in Russia, where he studied at Moscow State University and also worked as an interpreter, translator, and management consultant. To learn more about Dr. Kaufman, please visit his website at www.professorandy.com.

Serafima Gettys, PhD, earned her doctorate degree in Foreign Language Education from Gertzen State Pedagogical University, Leningrad, USSR. She is currently a Coordinator of the Foreign Language Program at Lewis University, where she also teaches Russian. Prior to coming to Lewis University, she taught Russian at Stanford University. Gettys is also a member of a number of professional language associations.

Nina Wieda is a doctoral student in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Northwestern University in Chicago. She is committed to bringing Russian language and culture into the lives of her readers and students, because, as the Latin proverb goes, “With each new language, you live a new life.” A trained linguist with an MA in Social Sciences, Nina also has a book of poetry published in Russian, and a number of scholarly articles on Chekhov and contemporary drama published in English.

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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 Dummies* won't make you a fluent reader of Dostoevsky in the original (most Russians themselves need somewhat of a 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, **Zhelayem vam udachi!** (*zhih-lah-eem vahm oo-dah-chee*; We wish you good luck!)

About This Book

The best thing about *Russian For Dummies* 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 of the 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 and 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 phrases in *transliteration* (Russian sounds represented with English

characters). You can see the Cyrillic alphabet in Chapter 1. Russian terms are easily found in the text because they are set in **boldface**.

✓ Each Russian word is followed by its pronunciation and English translation in parentheses. In each pronunciation, the stressed syllable is in *italics*.

A little example to give you an idea of what we mean: The phrase for “I love you” in Russian is **Ya tebya lyublyu**. (ya tee-*bya* lyu-*blyu*; I love you.)

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 literal and the idiomatic meanings in parentheses. For instance: **Kak dyela?** (kahk dee-*lah*; 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. And the CD has the audio version of these dialogues to help you grasp them even faster!

✓ **Words to Know** — This section follows every **Talkin’ the Talk** and provides pronunciation and

transcription of new words and expressions encountered 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 encountered in each chapter to answer questions and solve puzzles.

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 Dummies consists of five parts and an audio CD. Each part of the book offers something different.

Part I: Getting Started

In this part, find the basic essentials of the Russian language. Chapter 1 shows you that you already know some Russian, although it may be a surprise to you. We introduce the Russian alphabet and also give you an idea of how to use your knowledge of English to decipher some Russian words. Chapter 2 gives you a crash course on Russian grammar; it's also the right place to turn to if you want to know Russian numbers. And finally, find your first Russian words — greetings and introductions — in Chapter 3.

Part II: Russian in Action

Part II prepares you for most social situations that you need to handle in Russian. Chapter 4 shows you how to make small talk; Chapters 5 and 6 prepare you to talk about food and shopping. When you have the essentials covered, find out how to talk about fun things, such as going out (Chapter 7), and sports, reading, and other hobbies (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 equips you with the necessary phrases to make phone calls and send mail. For navigation through serious situations like getting a job or finding an apartment, refer to Chapter 10.

Part III: Russian on the Go

This part covers all the aspects of traveling, from planning your trip (Chapter 11) and discussing transportation (Chapter 12), to arranging for a place to stay (Chapter 13) and settling your financial matters (Chapter 14). Chapter 15 also shows you how to ask for directions, and Chapter 16 prepares you for handling emergencies.