

**Your handy guide
to everyday words and expressions**

Russian Phrases

FOR
DUMMIES®

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®

- ✓ **Quick & easy approach gives you language fundamentals up front**
- ✓ **Words to Know sections help you find the right words fast**
- ✓ **Pronunciation key helps you talk the talk**

Andrew Kaufman, PhD

Serafima Gettys, PhD

Nina Wieda

Coauthors of Russian For Dummies®



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**by Andrew Kaufman,
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The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Honey, please! Be patient! How's anyone going to know what's wrong unless I find the Russian word for 'alligator'?"

Contents

[Title](#)

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[Chapter 1: I Say It How? Speaking Russian](#)

[Looking at the Russian Alphabet](#)

[Sounding Like a Real Russian with Proper Pronunciation](#)

[Chapter 2: Grammar on a Diet: Just the Basics](#)

[Making the Russian Cases](#)

[Building Your Grammar Base with Nouns and Pronouns](#)

[Decorating Your Speech with Adjectives](#)

[Adding Action with Verbs](#)

[Chapter 3: Numerical Gumbo: Counting of All Kinds](#)

[Counting in Russian](#)

[First, Second: Ordinal Numbers](#)

[The Clock's Ticking: Telling Time](#)

[Monday, Tuesday: Weekdays](#)

[Checking Your Calendar](#)

[Money, Money, Money](#)

[Chapter 4: Making New Friends and Enjoying Small Talk](#)

[To Whom Am I Speaking? Being Informal or Formal](#)

[Comings and Goings: Saying Hello and Goodbye](#)

[Break the Ice: Making Introductions](#)

[Let Me Tell You Something: Talking about Yourself](#)

[Talking about Family](#)

[Where Do You Work?](#)

[Let's Get Together: Giving and Receiving Contact Information](#)

[I'm Sorry! I Don't Understand](#)

[Chapter 5: Enjoying a Drink and a Snack \(or a Meal!\)](#)

[Focusing on Food Basics](#)

[Enjoying Different Meals](#)

[Going Out for Groceries](#)

[Eating Out with Ease](#)

[Chapter 6: Shop 'Til You Drop](#)

[Where and How to Buy Things the Russian Way](#)

[You Wear It Well: Shopping for Clothes](#)

[This or That? Deciding What You Want](#)

[You Gotta Pay to Play](#)

Chapter 7: Making Leisure a Top Priority

Together Wherever We Go: Making Plans to Go Out

Going Out on the Town

Shootin' the Breeze about Hobbies

Reading All About It

Rejoicing in the Lap of Nature

Doing Things with Your Hands

Scoring with Sports

Chapter 8: When You Gotta Work

Searching for a Job

Communicating in the Workplace

Ringin' Up Telephone Basics

Sending a Letter, a Fax, or an E-Mail

Chapter 9: I Get Around: Transportation

Understanding Verbs of Motion

Navigating the Airport

Conquering Public Transportation

Asking "Where" and "How" Questions

Understanding Specific Directions

Describing Distances

Chapter 10: Laying Down Your Weary Head: House or Hotel

Hunting for an Apartment or a House

Settling Into Your New Digs

[Booking the Hotel That's Right for You](#)

[Checking In and Out](#)

[Chapter 11: Dealing with Emergencies](#)

[Finding Help in Case of Accidents](#)

[Receiving Medical Care](#)

[Calling the Police When You're the Victim of a Crime](#)

[Chapter 12: Ten Favorite Russian Expressions](#)

[Oj!](#)

[Davaj](#)

[Pryedstav'tye Syebye](#)

[Poslushajtye!](#)

[Pir Goroj](#)

[Ya Tryebuyu Prodolzheniya Bankyeta](#)

[Slovo — Syeryebro, A Molchaniye — Zoloto](#)

[Odna Golova Khorosho, A Dvye — Luchshye](#)

[Drug Poznayotsya V Byedye](#)

[Saryj Drug Luchshye Novykh Dvukh](#)

[Chapter 13: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound Russian](#)

[Tol'ko Poslye Vas!](#)

[Vy Syegodnya Pryekrasno Vyglyaditye!](#)

[Zakhoditye Na Chaj!](#)

[Ugosh'ajtyes'!](#)

[Priyatnogo Appetita!](#)

Syadyem Na Dorozhku!

Sadis', V Nogakh Pravdy Nyet

Ni Pukha, Ni Pyera!

Tseluyu

S Lyogkim Parom!

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 being able to get 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 Phrases 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 real-life situations, from shopping to visiting the theater. 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 Phrases 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.

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're 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-*b’ah* l’oo-*bl’oo*; I love you).

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 or college, 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.

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, and 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 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 draws your attention to something you need to know to avoid a common mistake.

Where to Go from Here

Go ahead and start anywhere. You don't have to read 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've never taken Russian before, you may want to read Chapters 1 and 2 before tackling the later chapters. They give you some basics, such as how to pronounce the sounds.

Chapter 1

I Say It How? Speaking Russian

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the Russian alphabet
 - ▶ Pronouncing words properly
 - ▶ Discovering popular expressions
-

Welcome to Russian! Whether you want to read a Russian menu, enjoy Russian music, or just chat it up with your Russian friends, this is the beginning of your journey. In this chapter, you get all the letters of the Russian alphabet, discover the basic rules of Russian pronunciation, and say some popular Russian expressions and idioms.

Looking at the Russian Alphabet

If you're like most English speakers, you probably think that the Russian alphabet is the most challenging aspect of picking up the language. But not to worry. The Russian alphabet isn't as hard as you think.

From A to Ya: Making sense of Cyrillic

The Russian alphabet is based on the Cyrillic alphabet, which was named after the ninth-century Byzantine monk, Cyril. But throughout this book, we convert all the letters into familiar Latin symbols, which are the same symbols we use in the English alphabet. This process of converting from Cyrillic to Latin letters is known as *transliteration*. We list the Cyrillic alphabet here in case you're adventurous and brave enough to prefer reading real Russian instead of being fed with the ready-to-digest Latin version of it. And even if you don't want to read the real Russian, check out Table 1-1 to find out what the whole fuss is about regarding the notorious "Russian alphabet."



Notice that, in most cases, a transliterated letter corresponds to the way it's actually pronounced. As a rule, you may assume that the transliteration fairly well represents the actual pronunciation. The biggest exceptions to this are the letter **й**, which is transcribed as **j** but pronounced like an English *y*, and the soft sign **ь**, which is transcribed as ' but only softens the preceding consonant.



Scholars do not agree on the letter **ј**. Some believe that it's a consonant; others think that it's a vowel. We don't want to take sides in this matter and are listing it both as a consonant and a vowel.



Consonants are pronounced softly if they are followed by **ye, yo, ya, or yu** (е, ё, я, ю). These letters

(**ye, yo, ya,** and **yu**) preserve the *y* sound if they are at the beginning of the word (as in *yes, your, yard,* and *youth*).

Table 1-1 The Russian Alphabet in Cyrillic

<i>The Letter in Cyrillic</i>	<i>Transliteration (The Corresponding Letter or Sound in the English Alphabet)</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Vowel or Consonant</i>
Aa	A	<i>ah</i> if stressed as in <i>father</i> ; <i>uh</i> if appearing in any unstressed syllable, as in <i>human</i>	Vowel

The Letter in Cyrillic	Transliteration (The Corresponding Letter or Sound in the English Alphabet)	Pronunciation	Vowel or Consonant
Бб	B	<i>b</i> as in <u>b</u> ook; <i>p</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Вв	V	<i>v</i> as in <u>v</u> ictor; <i>f</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Гг	G	<i>g</i> as in <u>g</u> reat; <i>k</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Дд	D	<i>d</i> as in <u>d</u> uck; <i>t</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Ее	Ye	<i>ye</i> as in <u>y</u> es if at the beginning of the word; <i>eh</i> as in <u>t</u> en if preceded by any consonant, making that consonant sound soft; <i>ee</i> as in <u>s</u> ee <i>k</i> if appearing in any unstressed syllable before a stressed syllable; <i>eh</i> after a stressed syllable and at the end of the word, making the preceding consonant sound softly	Vowel
Ёё	Yo	<i>yo</i> as in <u>y</u> our	Vowel
Жж	Zh	<i>zh</i> as <u>m</u> ea <u>s</u> ure; <i>sh</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Зз	Z	<i>z</i> as in <u>z</u> ebra; <i>s</i> if at the end of the word	Consonant
Ии	I	<i>ee</i> as in <u>p</u> ee <i>k</i>	Vowel