

Cyrillic Alphabet

Russia “How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

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GOAL

This guide will teach you to recognize the letters of the typed Cyrillic alphabet of the Russian language and know the sounds that the letters make.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet is necessary in doing research for Russia as well as other countries that were once part of the Russian Empire.

HOW TO

Here is a link to a document with the Cyrillic alphabet. Use and refer to it as you go through the packet. It might be useful to print it out. https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Russian_Alphabet

The following charts will also help you identify Russian letters and sounds.

Letters that look and sound the same in English and Russian

ENGLISH	A a	I i	K k	M m	O o	T t
RUSSIAN	А а	І і*	К к	М м	О о	Т т

*one of the letters eliminated from the Russian alphabet by the 1913 spelling reforms

Cyrillic letters that look the same in both languages, but make different sounds

LETTER	В в	Е е	Н н	Р р	С с	У у	Х х
SOUND	V	Ye	N	R	S	OOO	Kh (guttural)

Unique letters in the Cyrillic alphabet

LETTER	SOUND
Б б	B
Г г	G
Д д	D
Ж ж	Zh
З з	Z
И и	I

LETTER	SOUND
Й й	Y
Л л	L
П п	P
Ф ф	F
Ц ц	Ts
Ч ч	Ch

LETTER	SOUND
Ш ш	Sh
Щ щ	Shch
Ы ы	ih
Ь ь	ye
Э э	Eh
Ю ю	Yu
Я я	ya

Russian letters that don't make a sound

Ъ	forces soft sound of the letters before it
Ь	forces a hard sound of the letters before it

Russian letter practice

The following links will take you to websites that are very helpful for practicing letter and sound recognition. The second link provides audio clips that give the pronunciation of Russian words.

- <https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/lesson/reading-russian-handwritten-records-lesson-1-the-russian-alphabet/31>
- <http://www.russianforeveryone.com/RufeA/Lessons/Introduction/Alphabet/Alphabet.htm>

PRACTICE

With the help of the *Russian Alphabet* document and the charts above, we will practice identifying personal names that you will see in Russian documents. You will learn to sound out the names so you can express them in English. First, look at the Russian name; then find the letters on the charts above; and, finally, say the sounds and write the name as you would expect it to be spelled in English.

Here is the first name:

Александр

Let's identify the sounds by looking at the charts above.

- The letter "А" sounds the same in both Russian and English.
- The letter "л" is a unique letter that sounds like the English letter "l".
- The letter "е" sounds like "ye" or "eh".
- The letter "к" sounds the same in both Russian and English.
- The letter "с" sounds like the English letter "s".
- Again, the letter "а" sounds the same in both Russian and English.

- The letter “н” sounds like the English letter “n”.
- The letter “д” is a unique letter that sounds like the English letter “d”.
- The letter “р” sounds like the English letter “r”.

Now, let’s put the sounds together and say them out loud:

A – l – eh – k – s – a – n – d – r

By sounding out the Russian letters, you should be able to recognize the name Aleksandr, the Russian form of “Alexander.”

Let’s look at one more name:

Мария

Using the charts above, we can identify the following sounds:

- The letter “М” sounds the same in both Russian and English.
- The letter “а” sounds the same in both Russian and English.
- The letter “р” sounds like the English letter “r”.
- The letter “и” is a unique letter that sounds like the English letter “i”.
- The letter “я” is a unique letter that makes a “ya” sound.

Put the sounds together and sound out the name:

M – a – r – i – ya

By sounding out the Russian letters, you should have identified this name Mariya, the Russian form of “Maria.”

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.