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case.The nominative case designates the subject, and answers the questions "who?" or "what?". It requires the initial form of the noun. (Words in the dictionary are always listed in the nominative case.)For example:Студент читает [student chitayet] – The student is reading.студент -> студент (no change)The genitive case is used to indicate possession or origin. In English, we do this using the word "of" or an apostrophe followed by "s". It answers the questions "whose?" or "of what?"For example:берег реки [bereg reki] – the bank of the riverрека -> реки (-a becomes -a)The dative case indicates that something is given or going to someone/some thing. It answers "to whom?" or "where to?"For example:Я иду к врачу [Ya idoo k vrachoo] – I'm going to the doctorЯ даю это маме [Ya daooo eh-to mamye] – I'm giving this to Momпаеч -> паче (the ending -y is added)мама -> маме (-a becomes -e)The accusative case tells you the object of the verb. It answers the questions "what?" and "whom?" in reference to something or someone that is the target of an action.For example:Я читаю книгу [Ya chetaooo knigoo] – I'm reading a bookЯ встретил друга [Ya vstretyil drooga] – I met a friendкнига -> книгу (the ending -a becomes -y)друг -> друга (the ending -a is added)The instrumental case is used to denote an instrument or tool which helps perform an action. It answers the questions "with what?" or "how?"For example:Я пишу карандашом [Ya pishoo karandashom] – I write with a pencilЯ копаю яму лопатой [Ya kopao yamoo lapatoy] – I dug a hole with a shovelкарандаш -> карандашом (the ending -om is added)лопата -> лопатой (-a becomes -ой)Finally, the prepositional case is used after the prepositions o [oh] (about), в [v] (in or inside), and на [nah] (on or at).For example:Она говорит о литературе [Ona govareet o leetyeratoorye] – She is talking about literatureОна сидит на стуле [Sabaka speet na stoolye] – The dog sleeps on the chairЛитература -> литературе (-a becomes -e)Стул -> стуле (the ending -e is added)Although you will eventually need to memorise how each case impacts every kind of noun ending, this is not the recommended initial approach.As a beginner, a good way to familiarise yourself with the cases is by looking at what question is being answered in the sentence, and how that affects the noun.Alternatively, you can also try the reverse approach, and think about what each case allows you to express. Then, try practicing by forming some sentences you would actually want to use which require that case.Because cases follow rules and patterns, getting the hang of them should be easier than it seems. And it only gets easier over time.I've covered all the key features of Russian that are crucial for beginners to know about. As you've noticed, some of these can seem quite complex, while others are very simple and elegant.All in all, you must remember that Russian is a very logically constructed language. There is a lot of grammar to get the hang of, but once the rules make sense to you, they always will.That's enough of the heavy grammatical stuff for now, let's talk about some aspects of Russian culture.Want to download a PDF of this article to read later? Click here to get your FREE copy.Russia is the largest country in the world, making up an eighth of all the globe's landmass. You can only imagine the incredible diversity of cultures you can find between the Gulf of Finland in the West and the Kamchatka peninsula in the East.Early Russian culture was influenced by Slavic tribes, nomads and settlers from Scandinavia, Finland, and Eurasia, Byzantine missionaries, and so many more. All of these peoples have left their mark, however great or small.It would take far too many words to describe all of Russian culture. Instead, let's focus on some important aspects that you need to know about.Classical music, ballet, and opera are pillars of Russian culture. You may recognise the names of world-famous Russian composers like Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky.Concert halls like the Bolshoi and Mariinsky theatres are notorious in the world of classical music, ballet, and opera. (If you ever go to one of these concert halls or theatres, you are expected to dress formally and elegantly.)Russian cuisine draws on many cultures, and widely uses fish, poultry, root vegetables, mushrooms, berries, and honey, as well as pastry and dough. Some of my favourite Russian dishes are:Dressed herring, or herring in a fur coat: a layered salad made of diced pickled herring, grated boiled vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and beetroots, chopped onions, and mayonnaise. It is a traditional dish, and commonly found on the table at New Year's and Christmas celebrations.Borsch: a soup usually made with beetroot, potatoes, and meat, as well as other soup vegetables. It is often served with a dollop of smetana, or sour cream. It is believed to originate from Ukrainian cuisine.Pelmeni: these are dumplings usually filled with ground beef, pork, or both. They can be boiled or fried, and are also usually served with smetana. They likely originate in Siberia or the Ural.Bliny: traditional thin pancakes that can be compared to crepes. They can be topped or stuffed, sweet or savoury. Some popular fillings include condensed milk, smetana, minced meat, and caviar. They are so popular that there are at least 2 Russian fast food chains which specialise in bliny. (Fun fact: bliny is also a euphemism for a Russian swear word (a bit like "fudge" in English)Zakuski: these snacks are a centre-point of Russian food culture. No matter what the celebration, you will always find zakuski on the table. From small open sandwiches topped with butter and caviar, to cold cuts like seasoned sausage, to pickled cucumbers and tomatoes, to slices of Russian "black" bread", to fruits, zakuski can be a whole lot of different things. The main commonality between them is that they're great to eat with a drink.You also need to know that outdoor activities are very popular in Russia, which makes sense considering the winters can be cold and dark, and summer days are long and hot.You will find that many people who live in cities will get away to their dacha, or summer house, as soon as the weather is warm enough. Barbecues, fishing, gardening, foraging, boating, skiing, swimming, hunting, and camping are some of the most popular things to do with friends and family.As for sports, you may have noticed how competitive Russians are about their athletic performance. The two most popular spectator sports are football (or soccer, to Americans) and ice hockey.There is much, much more to be said about Russian culture. The best way to learn about it is to consider it a part of your language studies. As you begin to speak more Russian, the language will open up the culture and philosophy too.It's kind of a silly question, but everybody asks it, so I will do my best to answer. As I've pointed out repeatedly in previous sections, Russian looks a lot more intimidating than it really is. You've already learned that the Cyrillic alphabet is actually pretty easy!Cases can be a challenging aspect of grammar to remember, but they do make Russian a lot more specific and direct. In many ways, this makes it easier to understand.Additionally, word order is very flexible, unlike in other languages such as English, French, or Spanish.Luckily for you, there are many cognates in Russian. The shared vocabulary with other European languages means you can already understand a lot of words before you even begin studying Russian.Prefixes and suffixes will take some time to remember, but they also make expanding your Russian vocabulary much easier. Instead of having to learn every single word, you can often infer its meaning from what you already know.Overall, learning Russian is perfectly doable. There will always be challenges to learning any language, but Russian is very structured and logical compared to some others. Besides, because Russian is so widely spoken, there are plenty of learning resources to help you along.Here are some bad habits you should avoid at all costs as you begin to learn Russian. Trust me, even if it seems counter-instinctive, these will only make learning Russian more difficult than it needs to be.This rule is very important when learning any new language. While it can seem easier to say the sentence in your head first and then translate it into Russian, this is a habit you must learn to avoid.Doing this will most likely just confuse you, and cause you to lose sight of how to structure a sentence in Russian. Instead, start by learning useful words and phrases, and tie them together with what you know about Russian grammar.You're right, expanding your vocabulary and some memorisation is important if you're ever going to become fluent. But keep in mind that the brain is not made to memorise lists.A much better approach is to form connections and use real examples when you learn words, phrases, and declensions. Instead of trying to learn lots at a time, practice a few words until you're completely comfortable with using them in a sentence.The fact of the matter is: you're going to screw up, and it's going to happen many times. Don't be afraid of this! When you're learning a language, mistakes are some of your best learning opportunities.Besides, most Russians will be thrilled that you're even making an effort to speak their language. Don't be afraid to get things wrong. Remind yourself that most native speakers make grammar mistakes all the time!I'm warning you now - there are tons of resources out there to help you learn Russian, and each one is going to be a little bit different. Every teacher teaches in their own way, and every student learns differently.The key here is not to get caught up in the resources. If a particular approach doesn't make sense to you, don't be afraid to consult a different source. After all, it's about learning the language, not conforming to the resource. This is probably the last thing you want to hear when you're frustrated and ready to abandon your dream of learning Russian. But it's also the most important!When things get difficult, or you're confused, try to take a step back. Find someone or something that can clarify what you're struggling with. Talk to a Russian-speaking friend. Just stick with it, and it will keep getting easier. I promise!I've covered the "don't's", so what about the "do's"? Where is the best place to start?One important thing about learning a language is that it must come from the learner, not the teacher. The teacher's job is to guide you - but you must do the learning.This means you will need the necessary tools to learn, and a good beginner course is indispensable.You're going to need lots of input via reading and listening in order to move beyond beginner Russian and grow your vocabulary. That's why I've created my online Russian course - Russian Uncovered - to teach you through the power of story.You'll listen to and read your first book in Russian, and our expert Russian teacher Anastasia, will help uncover the grammar and vocabulary in the story, chapter by chapter.By the time you've finished, you'll be a confident and well-rounded Russian speaker, ready to use your Russian in the real world!Get started now with a FREE 7-day trial!Fluency is a coveted trophy, but it's a long-term goal, so don't set your sights only on that: break the big goal down into more manageable, short-term goals. This will give you a sense of progress and achievement as you work towards fluency in Russian.Whether or not you're following a textbook or course, you will need to get a strong grip on the fundamentals of Russian grammar and vocabulary.I've covered a lot of these in this article, which can serve as a rough guide on where to start. Some of the main topics are the Cyrillic alphabet, pronunciation, verb conjugation, and when and how to use the different cases. These topics make for some great short-term goals to get you started.You're right, I told you not to memorise too much. But there are certain Russian words or phrases that you need to learn by heart. These include things like "hello", "my name is", "how are you?", and so on. You know - the essentials.It's important to understand the main aspects of Russian grammar, and be able to use them to express yourself. However, try not to get too hung up on the linguistic theory.Don't tell anyone I said this, but if you asked your average Russian why certain rules are the way they are - they wouldn't really be able to explain. It just sounds right!You will learn to converse faster and more organically if you have a native speaker to practice with. There are some things textbooks just don't tell you, like how Russian really sounds, and how Russians really talk to each other.Whether you find an online Russian tutor or a local friend, try to spend as much time as possible practicing what you've learned out loud.If you follow these five steps, you'll already be making a fantastic start to your language learning journey. Before you know it, you'll be a pro!There is a very wide variety of materials available for helping English speakers learn Russian.To close out this article, I'm going to provide you with recommendations for some of the best materials I've come across for learning Russian.Whether you plan to learn Russian online, or you prefer to use traditional materials, I'm confident you'll find some great resources here to help you get started.Russian Uncovered - My comprehensive online Russian course that teaches you Russian through the power of story. Learn to speak Russian like a local and create your ideal life, all while enjoying an entertaining story in Russian! Get started now with a FREE 7-day trial!Not sure of your current level in Russian? Take my FREE online Russian level test and find out, so that you can choose the right resources and strategies for your level.Russian Grammar Hero - Tired Of Translating In Your Head When You Speak Russian? Grammar Hero Helps You Internalise Russian Grammar. Speak with Authenticity & Communicate with Freedom!Russian Short Stories For Beginners - Improve your comprehension, grow your vocabulary and ignite your imagination with these eight unconventional Russian short stories! (Beginner)LanguaTalk - This is my favourite website for finding teachers and affordable tutors to help practise my Russian. I use LanguaTalk literally every day to get that all-important speaking practice that helps me stay fluent.Hopefully, with everything this beginner's guide has taught you, you are now ready to face the Russian language with more confidence than ever.Remember that there are plenty of people and resources out there that can help you. If you need help with anything, make sure to visit my topic-based guides for beginning Russian learners. I wish you the best of luck!Берег хопонери! hope you've found this post helpful!If you have a friend learning Russian, please take a moment to share this post with them, it would mean a lot to me! (You can click here to send a Tweet!)I know this is a long post and it's difficult to take everything in all at once. That's why I've created a special PDF version which you can download and refer to any time you need it! And if you download the PDF, I'll send you even more tips to help you as you continue learning Russian.Click here to download the PDF version of the article and receive more great language learning tips for free.Recommended Articles Learning a new language is more than just memorizing new words and knowing how to put them all together into sentences. First of all, learning a foreign language is about opening up new horizons and immersing into an unknown culture. Why learn Russian? This language allows you to communicate with more than 300 million people who speak Russian worldwide. Widely-spoken in former Soviet republics, this Slavic language is also popular among large Russian-speaking communities in Europe and the US. How to learn Russian fast? Whether you need Russian for business, traveling, or any other purpose, Preply is here to help you. We've prepared some practical tips and tricks you can start using right away to master your skills by yourself. With Preply, you can also learn Russian online with the help of certified Russian-speaking tutors. What can be better than learning a language with a native speaker? They will teach you how to speak Russian right from the first session. The lessons are provided one-on-one via the easy-to-use video chat so that you can get to your virtual classroom in a few clicks. All you have to do to start your learning journey is to choose a preferred tutor and schedule your first lesson. Why not give it a try? Find my Russian tutor Is Russian hard to learn? Some English speakers consider learning Russian as a challenging task to cope with since there are so few similarities between these two languages. The main difficulty appears when it comes to dealing with tons of grammar rules. But some things make Russian easier to learn than other languages. Here are some of them: The first step to mastering Russian is by learning the Russian alphabet or Cyrillic. Once you learn the alphabet, you'll be able to pronounce words quite accurately from the very beginning of your learning journey since almost all words are pronounced like they're spelled. Russian has plenty of words adopted from the English language. For example, while there is its word for "doctor" in Russian — "врач", you could also say "доктор" which sounds the same as "doctor". Unlike in English, sentence structure in Russian has no strict sentence word order. For example, if you want to say in English that you want to go to the cinema, you'd probably say: "I'm going to the cinema". You wouldn't say: "To the cinema, I go". A flexible word order makes Russian a very expressive language, as you can emphasize a point simply by interchanging the words. Thus, you could translate "I'm going to the cinema" in various ways: Я иду в кино. — I'm going to the cinema. Иду в кино. — Going to the cinema. (without the subject) В кино иду. — To the cinema, go. (without the subject) В кино я иду. — To the cinema, I go. (with the subject) As you can see, the pronoun isn't always needed in Russian since there is a defined conjugation for each one. Russian has a considerable advantage over English because there are no definite or indefinite articles such as "a", "an", and "the". In fact, the sense of a noun is defined from the context in which it appears in a sentence. Now that you've seen that learning Russian isn't as hard as it may seem, at first sight, let's turn to our step-by-step guide. Keep on reading, and you'll find the easiest way to learn Russian fast. The Russian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet, which has only 33 letters. English speakers usually overestimate how difficult Cyrillic is as it looks different than Latin. They see "Я" [ja] that reminds them the backward "R" and immediately think that it's too hard for them. But the truth is that you can learn Cyrillic in a day. Can you believe that? Several letters in Cyrillic are precisely like their Latin equivalents in look and pronunciation: А, В, Д, К, Л, М, О, Т. Besides, many letters have the same pronunciation even though they look different. For example, "Ф" sounds like "F". Overall, there are only a few new sounds you need to learn. As we previously mentioned, some words in Russian are similar to their English equivalents. So, when you learn the Russian alphabet, you'll be able to understand some written words, even if you don't study any vocabulary yet (e.g., "аэропорт" — "airport"). Find more similar words on The Russian Blog. There are a lot of helpful resources to learn the alphabet online. For instance, you can check out "Russian ABC" on RussianPlus YouTube channels or the Master Russian's guide. No matter what resource you choose, learning the Russian alphabet won't take a long time, but it'll save you time in the long run. The best way to start mastering your skills is to learn basic Russian words. Getting fully fluent will take hours of practice, but being able to introduce yourself in Russian, ask basic questions and give short answers is like getting a running start on your way to language fluency. If you know the most common words and phrases, you'll be able to make small talk as well as read simple books, watch TV shows with subtitles, and listen to Russian music or podcasts. You can start expanding your vocabulary with these useful words and phrases. Immersion is the best way to learn Russian in the shortest possible time. Even if you can't go to one of the Russian-speaking countries right now, you can still surround yourself with the Russian language. To immerse yourself into Russian culture daily, try to: read books and magazines; watch Russian movies and YouTube videos with subtitles; listen to podcasts either for language learners or native speakers (depending on your level); listen to Russian music and translate song lyrics; use flashcards and vocabulary stickers; opt for apps for language learning; change your phone language to Russian. Just think about your daily routine and how you can add some Russian language into it. For example, you can set Russian audio track as an alarm on your phone. Perhaps, you prefer listening to audiobooks while commuting. So why not choose a Russian book? How long does it take to learn Russian? It all depends on how much time you're ready to spend on mastering your skills. Even if you find the fastest learning technique, it won't work unless you start practicing daily. Daily practice is significant to stay motivated and keep moving forward. Even if you spend just thirty minutes per day, this is still more effective than studying for several hours one day and then forgetting to practice for a few days. You don't want to slow down your learning progress, right? If you add learning Russian to your daily routine, you won't have to waste your precious time relearning material. Learning how to speak Russian is no small feat. But if you have a native speaker to interact with by your side, you'll surely make fast progress. Communication with native speakers will improve your Russian pronunciation, speaking, and listening skills. If you don't have any friends from Russia, try an online language exchange platform like MyLanguageExchange. You can also learn Russian online with one of the professional language tutors on Preply. We offer 1-on-1 lessons with certified Russian-speaking tutors from all around the world. All lessons are provided online via the video chat so that you can enter the classroom in a few simple clicks. By studying Russian with Preply, you'll get a personalized study plan based on your level and personal preferences. Thousands of learners have already found their perfect tutors. Join our global community today!