



LEARNER PROFILE: RUSSIAN (русский язык)

This guide presents common challenges faced by Russian learners of English and typical features of language production. Please note, these guidelines are intended to advise teachers on areas where students may experience problems; however, native speakers may not all find the following points challenging.



Facts

- **Language family:** A Slavic language part of the Indo-European language family
- **Native speakers:** 150 million
- **Second language speakers:** 110 million
- **Location:** Russian is an official language of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan and Moldova.
- **Writing system:** Cyrillic script
- **Alphabet:** The Russian alphabet consists of 33 letters.



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Pronunciation

- Russian native speakers frequently encounter problems with pronouncing the 'th' sound in the English language, as this sound simply does not exist in Russian. It is often replaced with an 's' or 'z' sound.
- Russian native speakers may have difficulties with long and short vowels in English, such as 'sheep' and 'ship'.
- The 'w' sound is not found in the Russian phonemic inventory and, therefore, this sound might be replaced with 'v'.

Grammar

- Russian does not have articles and therefore articles may be omitted and knowing when to use definite and indefinite articles may be confusing.
- The prepositions in English can also be confusing to Russian speakers.
- Some lexical verbs such as 'say' and 'tell', 'borrow' and 'lend' and 'make' and 'do' may be confused by Russian speakers.
- Some expressions are directly translated from Russian and this can lead to mistakes such as 'I am agree' and 'I feel myself'.
- Word order is more fluid in Russian.
- 'How' and 'what' are frequently confused by native Russian speakers because they are directly translated from Russian questions formations where 'what' and 'how' have a different scope.
- Some countable nouns in Russian are uncountable nouns in English and vice versa. 'Information', 'advice' and 'work' are three examples of uncountable nouns which native Russian speakers may treat as countable nouns.



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Writing

- Currencies are written with a comma for the decimal and with the currency symbol at the end of the amount so £3.50 would be 3,50 £.
- The multiplication symbol may be written as 2•5, and division sign as 10:5.
- Russian has a more phonetic writing system than English and may become frustrated at the silent letters in English.

Cultural differences

- Russian teachers tend to give less praise and parents may expect very high marks if teachers express positive feedback.
- Russian pupils are more likely to express an apology with body language rather than verbally.
- Russian parents may feel left out by the British education system. In Russia, all exercise books may be brought home so parents can see what their child is learning.
- Telling the time can be confusing because time is expressed so 6:30pm may be expressed as 'half [to] seven'.

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Recommended FlashAcademy® lessons

-  Beginner > Phonics 1 > Set 6

-  Beginner > Phonics 1 > Additional Sounds '

-  Beginner > Food & Drink > Articles

-  Beginner > Food & Drink > Countable and uncountable nouns

-  Beginner > School Essentials > Question words

-  Beginner > Holidays & Travel > Prepositions of time (in, on, at)

-  Beginner > Holidays & Travel > Prepositions of place (in, on, at)

-  Beginner > Holidays & Travel > In, on, by

-  Beginner > Work & School > Lend vs. Borrow

-  Intermediate > Maths > Currency symbols

-  Intermediate > Family & Relationships > Say vs. Tell

-  Intermediate > Everyday Life > Make vs. Do

-  Intermediate > Environment & Society > Articles