

С МЕСТА В КАРЬЕР

LEAPING INTO RUSSIAN

A Systematic Introduction to
Contemporary Russian Grammar

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Leaping into Russian

Users of this textbook can hear a native speaker reading the vocabulary and dialogues.

These sound files are available online at:

<http://www.seelrc.org/albums/LIR/>

The sound files are organized by chapter and part of speech.

Any mp3 player should be able to play the sounds.

Please send any questions about this project to

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The Russian Alphabet

Cyrillic letter		English equivalent (approximate)	Structural transcription ¹
А	а	ah (father)	a
Б	б	b (better)	b
В	в	v (very)	v
Г	г	g (get)	g
Д	д	d (dog)	d
Е	е	yeh (yes)	e/je ²
Ё	ё	yoh (yore)	o/jo ²
Ж	ж	zh (garage)	ž
З	з	z (zoo)	z
И	и	ee (easy, zebra)	i ²
Й	й	name: ee kratkoyeh sound: y (boy, guy); only after vowels	j
К	к	k (king)	k
Л	л	l (lamp, full)	l
М	м	m (map, game)	m
Н	н	n (new, notice)	n
О	о	oh/aw (office)	o
П	п	p (paper; hope)	p
Р	р	r (softly rolled like tt in butter)	r
С	с	s (soft; cross)	s
Т	т	t (timber; tot)	t
У	у	oo (boo hoo)	u
Ф	ф	f (giraffe; food)	f
Х	х	h (heather); kh (Bach)	x
Ц	ц	ts (cats; it's up to you)	c
Ч	ч	ch (cherry; birch)	č
Ш	ш	sh (shiny; mush)	š
Щ	щ	ssh (misshapen)	šč
	Ъ	name: tvyordy znak (hard sign)	"
	Ы	name: yiry sound: i (sit)	i
	Ь	name: myakh-kee znak (soft sign)	'
Э	э	eh (elephant)	e
Ю	ю	yoo (usual, youth)	u/ju ²
Я	я	yah (Yalta)	a/ja ²

¹Structural transcription can be used in describing the **morphophonemic** structure, not the phonetics or spelling, of Russian words. Morphophonemic transcription allows us to look directly at the structure of the Russian language, which is partially hidden by the Cyrillic alphabet. You will find an explanation of the system of structural transcription in Appendix I.

²All Group II vowels (и, е, ё, ю, я) obligatory soften all preceding paired consonants. If е, ё, ю, я occur at the beginning of a word or following another vowel, they indicate the presence of *jot* - je, jo, ju, ja.



Introduction

The Russian Alphabet

When you practice your pronunciation of the Russian letters, it is important to rely on the correct Russian pronunciation given on the accompanying cassette tapes and described in Appendix I. It is only for your convenience that the table on the facing page gives approximate English equivalents for the Russian letters. Also refer to pages 4–5 for specific remarks concerning Russian phonology.

The Russian Spelling System

There are 33 letters in the Russian alphabet. Some of them correspond directly to Latin letters:

A, E, K, M, O, T

while others you will recognize are similar to letters from the Greek alphabet. These letters are actually derived from Greek letters:

Г, Д, З, Л, П, Ф, Х.

The remaining letters look either completely different from Latin letters or backwards:

Б, Ё, Ж, И, Й, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ, Ъ, Ы, Ь, Э, Ю, Я

or they *look* like certain Latin letters to which they do *not* correspond:

В (v), Н (n), Р (r), С (s) У (u)

Russian Vowels and Consonants

Vowels. There are five basic vowel sounds in Russian, and each one is represented by two different letters, which we will divide into Group I and Group II:

Group I (ST)

А	(a)
Э	(e)
И	(i)
О	(o)
У	(u)

Group II (ST)

Я	(ja, 'a)
Е	(je, 'e)
И	(i, 'i)
Ё ¹	(jo, 'o)
Ю	(ju, 'u)

¹Written E when unstressed, and not to be confused with Э/Е.

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Why does Russian have two sets of vowel letters to express only five basic vowel sounds? There are three reasons for using Group II vowels:

- 1) To show the presence of a "j" immediately before the vowel sound (cf. ja, je, jo, ju). This may occur

- a. in any position in the root:

Ялта	jalta	семья	s'em'ja
Ельцин	jel'cin	бельё	b'el'jo

- b. when one vowel directly follows another vowel:

-ая (-aja) -ое (-ojo) -ые (-ije)

[Note that two vowels may occur together **without** the presence of "j" in the following Russian words паук, наука, and in many foreign words such as: театр, поёт, хаос, etc.]

- c. when a vowel follows "j" in noun endings and verb conjugations (this indicates a "j" in the stem):

музéй + [а/я] → музéя чита́й + [ут/ют] → чита́ют
muz'ej + [a] → muz'eja čitaj + [ut] → čitajut

- 2) To indicate that the consonant preceding it is soft:

преподава́тель + (а/я) → преподава́теля
pr'epodavat'el' + (a) → pr'epodavat'el'a

Once the Group II vowel shows the consonant is soft, the soft sign is no longer needed in cyrillic.

- 3) When required by the spelling rules (see page 7).

Russian has no diphthongs. A Russian syllable has one and only one vowel sound.



Consonants. Of the 20 Russian consonants, 12 are called paired consonants; that is, they occur in two types: 1)hard and 2)soft (or palatalized). A palatalized consonant is a sound formed by raising the back of the tongue toward the roof of the mouth. There is no such group of sounds in English; therefore, the student must make an effort to pronounce these sounds correctly.

Cyrillic	hard (ST)	soft (ST)
б	b	b'
в	v	v'
д	d	d'
з	z	z'
л	l	l'
м	m	m'
н	n	n'
п	p	p'
р	r	r'
с	s	s'
т	t	t'
ф	f	f'

The soft and hard variants of a paired consonant should be viewed as completely different sounds in Russian. In some instances, using the incorrect paired consonant may result in miscommunication. For example:

мать	mother
мат	obscenity
пóлька	Polish woman
пóлка	bookshelf

Before the Bolshevik revolution, hard paired consonants at the end of a word were accompanied by a "hard sign" (ъ), but it was (wisely!) decided that there was no need to mark these; as long as it is clear which ones are soft, we can assume the others are hard. The hard sign is still used today in certain words where the addition of a prefix is added to a root that begins with a j (об + яснить [ob + jasn'it'] = обьяснѣть). This will make more sense to you at a later time.

So how do we recognize the spelling of a hard paired consonant? If it is followed by a vowel, that vowel will come from Group I. If it is not followed by a vowel, we know it is hard if there is no soft sign after it.

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It therefore goes to reason that we know a paired consonant is soft if it is followed by a Group II vowel, or if it has a soft sign after it. For example:

дом	д, м are hard
дерёвня	д, р, в ¹ , н are soft
дйктор	д is soft; к, т, р are hard
преподаватель	п ¹ , р, т, л are soft; п, д, в are hard.

Unpaired consonants. All other consonants in Russian are unpaired. These include:

—the velars **к г х**, which are automatically hard or soft depending on the vowel sound that follows: hard before the sounds [a], [u], and [o]; soft before the sounds [i], [e] (Note that the spelling of the vowel sound always corresponds to the pronunciation of the velar as hard or soft, unlike with the hushers);

—the hushers **ж ш ч щ**, where **ж** and **ш** are inherently hard and **ч** and **щ** are inherently soft, although this may not be reflected in their spelling (see spelling rules);

—**ц**, which is inherently hard, although, as with hushers, this may not be reflected in the spelling (see spelling rules); and

—the consonant **й** (called “j” in ST), which is inherently soft. Do not confuse this with the vowel **и**; they are completely different letters. In the spelling of words the consonant **й** will appear *only* after vowels and often in word final position [exception: Нью-Йорк].

When **й** is the last letter of a noun or verb stem, and an ending beginning with a vowel is added to it, the **й** will disappear and will be replaced by the Group II vowel:

музе́й + а → музе́я	трамва́й + и → тра мва́и
muz'ej + a → muz'eja	tramvaj + i → tramvaji
чита́й + ут → чита́ют	Андре́й + ом → Андре́ем
čitaj + ut → čitajut	Andr'ej + om → Andr'ejom

Remember that **j** as **й** may disappear in the cyrillic spelling of a particular word, but structurally the **j** remains; it is being represented by the Group II vowel.

Voicing and Devoicing. Some consonants are considered “voiced” (pronounced with the vocal cords) or “voiceless.” Compare the following groups:

Voiced (ST)		Voiceless (ST)	
б	b	п	p
в	v	ф	f
г	g	к	k
д	d	т	t
ж	ž	ш	š
з	z	с	s

(Compare this kind of pairing to the formation of certain plurals ending in **f** in English: hoof - hooves, etc.)

¹When one finds two or more consonants together in a word, the final consonant in the cluster determines the pronunciation of the preceding consonant in terms of softness.

Voicing Rules.

1. In word-final position, all voiced consonants are pronounced voiceless: сад > [cat]
2. In consonant clusters, the status of the final consonant of the cluster determines whether the cluster is pronounced as all voiced or all voiceless; for example:

a) voiceless becomes voiced:

вокза́л > [ваґза́л], футбо́л > [фудбо́л]

b) voiced becomes voiceless:

авто́бус > [афто́бус], ло́жка > [ло́шка]

Diacritical Marks and Accents. There are only two letters in the Russian alphabet that have diacritical marks: -Й̑ & Ё̑. (Examples of diacritical marks in other languages are the acute, grave, circumflex, and cedille in French and the umlaut in German.) The mark on the й̑ must always be shown; in Russian books and handwriting, the two dots over the ё̑ are usually not shown, but beginning students of Russian should always indicate them.

The other “accents” that you see over Russian words, mostly in texts for students of Russian, are not a part of the spelling of the word. Rather, they indicate where the stress falls in that word.

Russian Word Stress. Stress—which syllable is to be emphasized—is variable in Russian, as it is in English. (We don’t, like the French, put emphasis on the same syllable of every word.) Unlike English, however, the stress of a Russian word is **strong**, i.e. it implies greater force on the stressed syllable of a word and can reduce the vowel sounds in unstressed syllables. Also, Russian stress can change when a word is put into a certain case or made plural. Beginning students of Russian should write the stress (by using an acute accent) on every word that has more than one syllable, not only to encourage proper pronunciation, but also to help distinguish between certain words that look exactly the same, but have different meanings depending on their stress:

до́ма = at home	пла́чу = I’m crying	писа́ть = to write
дома́ = houses	плачу́ = I’m paying	пи́сать = to pee

Stress can occur in two different patterns: 1) fixed stress—including *stem* stressed or *ending* stressed, and 2) shifting stress. In the vocabulary list of each chapter, **we indicate in the following manner when a word is stressed on its endings throughout its declension:**

карандаш́	отец́	сто́л
-----------	-------	-------

This means that, without any ending (in the nominative case), the stress will be on the last syllable of the stem (карандаш́, отец́, сто́л), but when an *ending* is added, the *ending* carries the stress: (карандашом́, отцу́, столе́). The examples directly above are all masculine first declension nouns.

All second declension nouns with stem stress in the nominative singular (nominative

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ending in -а) will have **fixed stress on the root** in all case forms:

кни́га ко́мната де́вушка де́душка ло́жка те́тя

Many nouns and verbs have a **shifting stress** pattern, and we will point these out as they occur in each chapter.

Vowel reduction. One of the consequences of **strong stress** in Contemporary Standard Russian is the change in vowel quality depending on the vowel's location in the word. In pre-tonic (pre-stressed) or post-tonic (post-stressed) syllables, vowels are "reduced". This means that in unstressed syllables they do not have their full vowel sound as given in the alphabet. The system of vowel reduction in Russian depends on (1) the position of the unstressed syllable in relation to the stressed syllable and (2) the type of consonant preceding the unstressed vowel. Below the student will find a chart of the vowel sounds possible in stressed and unstressed positions. Special attention should be paid to the vowels [O] and [E], in particular. The stressed syllable is called the **tonic**.

STRESSED		UNSTRESSED
/O/, /A/	→	[a] or [ə] (schwa) ¹
/E/, /I/	→	[i]
/U/	→	[u]

Only three vowels participate in reduction: /O/, /A/, and /E/.

	Pre-pretonic	Pretonic	Tonic	Post-tonic
Back Vowels (a,o)	ə	a	ó/á	ə
Front Vowels (e)	i	i	é	i ²

¹Schwa [ə] can never occur in word initial position, only [a].

²The neuter ending spelled with cyrillic E reduces to [ə], not [i] (for example: more= [mór'ə]).

Spelling Rules

Many languages have spelling rules. In English, for example, school children learn “*i* before *e* except after *c*,” (to help them remember *believe* vs. *receive*); and we all learned to change final *y* to *ie* when adding an *s* to the end of a word (*baby* → *babies*, *accompany* → *accompanies*). In Russian there are three spelling rules of a similar nature, which apply to noun and verb endings:

Rule 1: Always *a*, never *я* / Always *y*, never *ю* after *к, г, х, ж, ч, ш, щ, ц*.

Examples: In verbs, пиш^у - пиш^{ут}; спеш^у - спеш^{ат}

Rule 2: Always *и*, never *ы* after *к, г, х, ж, ч, ш, щ*.

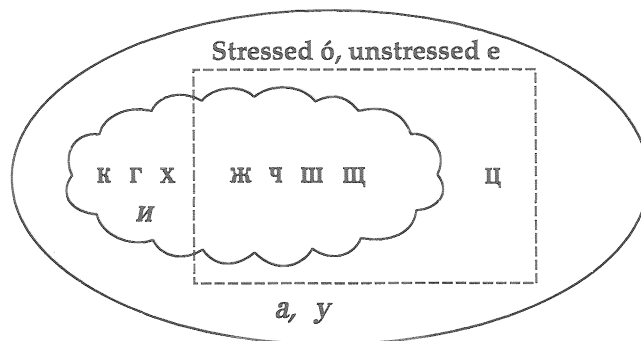
Examples: a) In plural noun formation: кн^ига - кн^иги
b) In adjective endings, both masculine singular, as in хор^оший; and nominative plural, as in пло^хой - пло^хие

Rule 3: Unstressed *e*, but stressed *о* after *ж, ч, ш, щ, ц* in endings.

Examples: a) In adjective endings: хор^оший - хор^ошее; гор^ячий - гор^ячее
b) But a word like больш^ое is correct, because the *о* in the ending is stressed.

Remember that these rules apply to the addition of *endings*; what may look like spelling errors in certain words or proper names are often not errors, as they are part of the word root. For example:

шовин^изм
Горбач^ёв
Хрущ^ёв



Fleeting vowels (or Fill Vowels). Some words in Russian have vowels that appear and disappear, called “fleeting vowels.” The word “от^ец” in the examples above is one of these. The letter *е* in от^ец appears when there is a *zero ending* (that is, no vowel in the ending); it disappears when any ending is added (от^{цы}, от^{ца}, от^{цу}, etc.) (Sometimes the fleeting vowel does not appear in the nominative form (dictionary entry), but will appear in some other form (the genitive plural, for example):

д^очка - д^очек, зем^ля - зем^ель, etc.

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But you needn't worry about these until you learn about the genitive plural in Chapter 7. In the list of new vocabulary in each chapter, we will indicate a fleeting vowel by underlining it: о тец, ден ь, etc. In Chapters 1-6, these examples will all be first declension masculine nouns.



Writing Cursive Cyrillic

When you learned to write in English, you probably first learned to print, and then to write in "longhand," or "cursive." In Russian, "printing," or block letters, are reserved for publications (books, newspapers, and other "printed" materials); by hand only "cursive" is used. That is, when you write Russian, you will not write the "block" letters we have shown you above. Rather, you will write in "longhand," as described on the following pages.

Cursive Cyrillic

Printed		Cursive	Remarks
(printed form given in cyrillic and English equivalent)			
А, а	ah	<i>А а</i>	Upper case A always written A, not like Latin <i>A</i> .
Б, б	b	<i>Б б</i>	No loops; rounded part fills bottom part of line, top part goes all the way to the top and loops to the right.
В, в	v	<i>В в</i>	Similar to Latin "b," rounded part on bottom half of line, top part reaches up to top.
Г, г	g (get)	<i>Г г</i>	Note the difference between upper and lower case. On lower case, keep the "hump" rounded so it will not be confused with a Ч.
Д, д	d	<i>Д д/д</i>	Upper case written just like a Latin cursive <i>D</i> . No other way. Traditional lower case looks like a Latin "g", but remember always to bring the bottom loop up and connect it to the next letter. The optional form "д" is similar to "d", but with the upper part looping over to the left.

Е, е	yeh (yes)	Е е	Always rounded, never straight.
Ё, ё	yoh (yore)	Ё ё	Same as above, with two dots above. (Remember, the dots are often not seen in Russian texts and native handwriting. They are also removed when this letter is not stressed in the word.)
Ж, ж	zh	Ж ж	Takes practice! Count 5 strokes: 1st and 5th curved outward, 3rd fairly straight up and down, the 2nd and 4th sort of diagonally stretching to connect those on either side.
З, з	z	З з	Always rounded, never straight. Upper case looks like number 3; keep it all above the line. Make sure not to confuse this with upper case Э, which does not pinch in at the center. Lower case always loops down and back up to connect with the next letter.
И, и	ee	И и	In both upper and lower cases, looks like Latin U, but must never connect at the top to another letter. A stroke must bring the pen down to the line to end the letter and/or connect it to another letter.
Й, й	y (boy)	Й й	Same as above, but always with ˇ above it.
К, к	k	К к	Upper case same as Latin K. Lower case not the same: the whole letter is confined to the lower half of the writing space, and there are no loops. Compare: Latin <i>k</i> Cyrillic <i>к</i>
Л, л	l	Л л	When preceded by any letter, must be "prefaced" with a small hook to set it off. DON'T FORGET THIS HOOK!
М, м	m	М м	When preceded by any letter, must be "prefaced" with small hook to set it off. (Otherwise it can be mistaken for an и.). First downward stroke must reach bottom line before going back up. DON'T FORGET THIS HOOK!
Н, н	n	Н н	Lower case fills only lower half of writing space.
О, о	oh/aw	О о	When followed by another letter, connect to top of next letter, never at the bottom; or leave it dangling and start at bottom of next letter. Otherwise it will look like an а.

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П, п	p	<i>П п</i>	Note difference between upper and lower case. Lower case resembles cursive Latin <i>n</i> .
Р, р	r	<i>Р р</i>	Upper case like Latin upper case P (does not go below the line). Rounded part of lower case does not close in, as Latin p does.
С, с	s	<i>С с</i>	Just like Latin c.
Т, т	t	<i>Т т</i>	Note upper case: like a П, but with an extra "stem." Lower case similar to Latin cursive <i>m</i> . Horizontal line across top (but not touching) is optional, to help sort out humps. Sometimes written <i>ѣ</i> .
У, у	u (boo hoo)	<i>У у</i>	Like Latin y. Again, lower loop always reaches back up to connect to next letter.
Ф, ф	f	<i>Ф ф</i>	NOT made by vertically bisecting a circle. Two contiguous circles are joined by a long vertical stroke between them.
Х, х	kh	<i>Х х</i>	Always curved, never straight. Like two unfinished circles back to back.
Ц, ц	ts (gets)	<i>Ц ц</i>	Like an <i>u</i> with a small squiggle reaching down below the line. The squiggle is important but not long.
Ч, ч	ch (church)	<i>Ч ч</i>	Don't round the top of the lower case or it will look like a <i>г</i> (<i>ə</i>).
Ш, ш	sh	<i>Ш ш</i>	Like a rounded cursive Latin <i>w</i> , with one big difference: always bring last stroke back down to line. DO NOT end it or connect it to another letter from the top.
Щ, щ	ssh	<i>Щ щ</i>	Same as above Ш, only with a squiggle reaching down a little below bottom line. The squiggle is important.
Ъ	(hard sign)	<i>Ъ</i>	In height only occupies half of writing space. Clear hook begins from top left. No upper case.
Ы	i (if)	<i>Ы</i>	No upper case. Think of it as a soft sign connected to a Latin i without the dot. Bring last stroke down before joining to next letter.
Ь	soft sign	<i>Ь</i>	In height only occupies half of writing space. Like a half-sized <i>ѐ</i> .

Э, э	eh (elephant)	Э э	An evenly rounded partial circle, with opening on left and a straight or curvy horizontal line bisecting it. Connect this line to following letters. Do not confuse with <i>З</i> .
Ю, ю	yoo	Ю ю	Straightish line connected at center to an O of equal height. Remember not to bring line down to connect to next letter (as with O); connect it at top or leave it hanging.
Я, я	ya	Я я	Lower case only fills half of writing space in height. When preceded by any letter, must be "prefaced" with small hook to set it off. DON'T FORGET THIS HOOK!

Don't forget your hooks! Remember to make a small 'hook' at the beginning of the letters л, м and я, and a little smile on the й.

Capitalized words

As in English, proper names in Russian are capitalized (Ива́н, Москва́, Фран́ция, Мисси́ппи, etc.) as is the first word of every sentence. Unlike English, the following are not capitalized in Russian:

- nationalities (америка́нец, америка́нский, ру́сский);
- the first-person singular pronoun "I" (я);
- words after the first word of a title ("Геро́й на́шего вре́мени") or name of an organization (Коммуни́стическая па́ртия);
- months and days of the week (январь, март, понеде́льник).

Very often, but not always, the second person plural pronoun Вы ("you") is capitalized in formal correspondence with individuals or on official forms or questionnaires. The first person pronoun я ("I") is only capitalized at the beginning of a sentence.

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Commonly Used Russian Expressions for the Classroom

Что мы говорим на занятиях?

Преподаватель говорит:

Слушайте, пожалуйста!

Читайте, пожалуйста!

Пишите, пожалуйста!

Повторите, пожалуйста.

Откройте книги!

...на странице ____

Все (вместе)!

Ещё раз!

Дальше.

Громче!

Понятно? Ясно?

Просто так!

Правильно!

Молодец!

Очень хорошо!

Отлично!

Как вас зовут?

Студенты говорят или спрашивают:

Извините, я не понял/поняла.

Я не понимаю.

Я не знаю.

Повторите, пожалуйста.

Ещё раз.

Понятно.

Ясно.

Что значит _____?

Как сказать _____?

Почему?

Спасибо.

What do we say in class?

The teacher says:

Listen, please.

Read please.

Write, please.

Repeat, please.

Open your books!

...to/on page ____.

All together!

Again!

Further (keep going).

Louder!

Did you understand? Is it clear?

That's just the way it is.

Correct!

Way to go!

Very good!

Excellent!

What is your name?

The students say or answer:

Excuse me, I didn't understand.

I don't understand.

I don't know.

Repeat, please.

Once again.

Understood.

That's clear.

What does _____ mean?

How do you say _____?

Why?

Thank you.

Exercises

I. Write the English equivalent (in Latin letters) for the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Москва́ | 26. иди́от |
| 2. Ленингра́д | 27. перестро́йка |
| 3. университе́т | 28. гла́сность |
| 4. спортсме́н | 29. Горбачёв |
| 5. Пра́вда | 30. джи́нсы |
| 6. Ле́нин | 31. Солжени́цын |
| 7. Ми́ша | 32. Нью-Йо́рк |
| 8. рестора́н | 33. экза́мен |
| 9. метро́ | 34. объё́кт |
| 10. такси́ | 35. дуэ́ль |
| 11. Аме́рика | 36. Пу́шкин |
| 12. Во́лга | 37. Чайко́вский |
| 13. Толсто́й | 38. Че́хов |
| 14. Андре́й | 39. Хрущёв |
| 15. Ната́ша | 40. Достоёвский |
| 16. Бори́с | 41. Я́лта |
| 17. но́с | 42. октя́брь |
| 18. профе́ссор | 43. шпио́н |
| 19. ва́за | 44. Татья́на |
| 20. телеви́зор | 45. И́горь |
| 21. ла́мпа | 46. инженер |
| 22. КГБ | 47. да |
| 23. во́дка | 48. нет |
| 24. вино́ | 49. Ви́ктор |
| 25. минíстр | 50. Бре́жнев |

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5. Калифорнийский технологический институт
6. Массачусетский технологический институт
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II. Spelling Rules

A) Replace the basic -a ending (а or я) in these nouns with a basic -i ending (ы or и), following spelling rule 2:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. сестра _____ | 5. ма́ма _____ |
| 2. кнѝга _____ | 6. Аме́рика _____ |
| 3. Ма́ша _____ | 7. Зи́на _____ |
| 4. те́тя _____ | 8. Москв́а _____ |

(You've just put these nouns in the genitive case. For information on the genitive case, see p. 33)

B) Replace the basic -Ø ending of these nouns with a basic -ом (ом/ем/ём):

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. карандаш' _____ | 5. словарь' _____ |
| 2. му́ж _____ | 6. уче́бник _____ |
| 3. бра́т _____ | 7. преподава́тель _____ |
| 4. ве́чер _____ | 8. отец _____ |

(You've just put these nouns in the instrumental case. For more on the instrumental case, see p. 34–35)

C) Replace the basic -a ending (а or я) of these nouns with the basic ending -ой (ой/ей/ёй):

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. де́вушка _____ | 4. те́тя _____ |
| 2. шко́ла _____ | 5. семья́ _____ |
| 3. Росси́я _____ | 6. неде́ля _____ |

(You've just put these nouns in the instrumental case. For more on instrumental case, see p. 34–35)

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