



Habits That Make Russian Stick

Small changes to how you record a word, which save months of confusion later.

1. Store every noun with one agreeing word

Russian gender decides adjective endings, past-tense verbs and pronouns. An isolated noun does not tell you its gender reliably – one agreeing adjective does, and costs nothing extra to remember.

Instead of	Learn	Because
словарь	но́вый словарь	-ь can be either gender; this one is masculine
дверь	но́вая дверь	also -ь, but feminine – the adjective settles it
мо́ре	но́вое мо́ре	neuter
ко́фе	го́рячий ко́фе	masculine in careful usage, despite the -e

2. Learn verbs with their question word

A verb rarely takes a bare object. Record the case it governs as part of the word itself – the question word acts as a compact label.

Instead of	Learn	In use
помога́ть = to help	помога́ть кому? + dative	Я помога́ю бра́ту.
интересова́ться = to be interested	интересова́ться чем? + instrumental	Она́ интересу́ется исто́рией.
жда́ть = to wait	жда́ть кого? что? + accusative	Я жду авто́бус.

3. Collect contrast pairs

One good pair teaches more than ten isolated rules, because the contrast makes the grammar visible.

Pattern A	Pattern B	What the contrast shows
Я в шко́ле.	Я иду́ в шко́лу.	where you are vs where you are going
Я чита́л кни́гу.	Я прочита́л кни́гу.	the activity vs finishing it
Я шёл в магази́н.	Я ходи́л в магази́н.	on the way vs there and back

4. Learn the genitive plural with frequent nouns

It is the least predictable form in the language, so it is the one worth storing explicitly rather than deriving.

- ме́сто > мест · пи́сьмо > пи́сем · друг > друзе́й · челове́к > люде́й

5. Notice the pattern before you name it

While reading you may spot that в ро́де keeps describing where something is, в ро́де follows going and arriving, and из ро́да describes coming from it. That is worth more than the labels. The names – prepositional, accusative, genitive – are just handles for what you already sense.

And one thing not to do

Do not stop to translate every word. In a story, context does the teaching: you guess, the narrative confirms or corrects you, and the word sticks. Translating everything slows that down and makes reading feel like work.