



Reading Cyrillic

All 33 letters, grouped by how much trouble they are going to give you.

Five you already know

These look like English letters and sound like them too.

А а

a – father

К к

k – kilo

М м

m – map

О о

o – more

Т т

t – top

Five that look familiar but sound different

These are the ones that catch everyone out. Worth real attention.

С с

s – sun

Р р

r – rolled

Н н

n – no

У у

oo – boot

Е е

ye – yes

New shapes, simple sounds

П п

p – pen

Б б

b – book

Г г

g – go

Д д

d – day

И и

ee – meet

Л л

l – lamp

Ф ф

f – fun

В в

v – van

Х х

kh – loch

З з

z – zoo

Э э

e – echo

Й й

y – boy

Ы ы

i – hard

Sounds English spells with two letters

Ж ж

zh – measure

Ц ц

ts – cats

Ч ч

ch – chair

Ш ш

sh – shop

Щ щ

shch

The last five

Я я

ya – yard

Ю ю

yu – youth

Ё ё

yo – always stressed

Ь ь

soft sign – no sound

Ъ ъ

hard sign – no sound

Words you can already read

Russian borrowed plenty from English. Sound these out.

СТОП stop	ПАРК park	БАНК bank	СУП soup
ТАКСИ́ taxi	МЕТРО́ metro	ЛИФТ lift	А́ДРЕС address
ТЕЛЕФОН telephone	ПА́СПОРТ passport	ИНТЕРНЕ́Т internet	ПРОБЛЕ́МА problem
АВТО́БУС bus	ШОКОЛА́Д chocolate	СТАДИО́Н stadium	ЖУРНА́Л magazine

Everyday words that are not borrowed

Each is a single stressed syllable, so it reads exactly as written.

ДОМ house	СЫР cheese	МОСТ bridge	ХЛЕБ bread
ЁЖ hedgehog	ЮГ south	ЧАЙ tea	КОТ cat

Two things that trip up beginners

What happens	Why	Example
Unstressed o sounds like "a"	Only the stressed vowel is pronounced fully; the rest reduce.	молоко́ — "ma-la-KO"
Final consonants harden	б в г д ж з become p f k t sh s at the end of a word.	хлеб — "khlep"; ёж — "yosh"

Stress is not marked in real Russian

Learning materials add an accent (молоко́) to show you which syllable carries the weight. You will not see it on a menu or a road sign — but ё is always stressed, so it tells you for free.