



# 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.

|                              |                              |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>СТОП</b><br>stop          | <b>ПАРК</b><br>park          | <b>БАНК</b><br>bank          | <b>СУП</b><br>soup          |
| <b>ТАКСИ́</b><br>taxi        | <b>МЕТРО́</b><br>metro       | <b>ЛИФТ</b><br>lift          | <b>А́ДРЕС</b><br>address    |
| <b>ТЕЛЕФО́Н</b><br>telephone | <b>ПА́СПОРТ</b><br>passport  | <b>ИНТЕРНЕ́Т</b><br>internet | <b>ПРОБЛЕ́МА</b><br>problem |
| <b>АВТО́БУС</b><br>bus       | <b>ШОКОЛА́Д</b><br>chocolate | <b>СТАДИО́Н</b><br>stadium   | <b>ЖУРНА́Л</b><br>magazine  |

## Everyday words that are not borrowed

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

|                       |                      |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>ДОМ</b><br>house   | <b>СЫР</b><br>cheese | <b>МОСТ</b><br>bridge | <b>ХЛЕБ</b><br>bread |
| <b>ЁЖ</b><br>hedgehog | <b>ЮГ</b><br>south   | <b>ЧАЙ</b><br>tea     | <b>КОТ</b><br>cat    |

## Two things that trip up beginners

| What happens                        | Why                                                           | Example                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Unstressed o sounds like "a"</b> | Only the stressed vowel is pronounced fully; the rest reduce. | молоко́ — "ma-la-KO"        |
| <b>Final consonants harden</b>      | 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.