

КОММЕНТАРИЙ

LESSON 1

C1. Before you start studying phonetics let us remind you what is a sound and what is a letter. A sound is what we hear and pronounce. A letter is a sign, which we see and write (put down). A letter serves to be a sign of a sound.

Here you see the Russian alphabet. See table 1. There are 33 letters in it. Some of them denote only one sound, for example the letters ш[ш] and ы[ы]. The others depending on their position can denote different sounds, as the letter О



On the other hand, one and the same sound can be denoted by different letters; as the sound



There are also letters, which correspond to no sound at all, but serve as the symbolization of some sound only in combination with other letters, for example the letter Ь (“soft sign”).

C2. All consonants in the Russian language can be divided into voiced and voiceless. Voiceless consonants are sounds on pronouncing of which the vocal cords “do not work”. But when we pronounce voiced consonants the vocal cords are tense and vibrate. You can feel it by touching your throat with your hand. The majority of voiced Russian consonants have the corresponding voiceless ones and they form a pair “voiced consonant/voiceless consonant”. This means that the voiced consonant differs from its voiceless pair in pronunciation - in its production the vocal cords take an active part. The consonants which form such pairs are п-б, ф-в, т-д, с-з and etc.

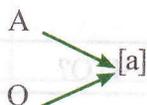
At the same time in the Russian language there are voiceless consonants which have no voiced pair (х, ц, ч, ш), and there are also voiced consonants which have no corresponding voiceless ones (м, н, р, л, й).

C3. a) Any word consists of syllables. The number of syllables in one word equals (or the same with) the number of vowels in it. One of the syllables in a word must be stressed. In different words the stress position (and position of the stressed syllable accordingly) is different. The vowel of the stressed syllable is pronounced with more force, it is longer. In unstressed syllables the vowel is weaker and shorter in pronunciation.

b) Any word can be represented as the rhythmical model, in which
/ / - symbolizes an unstressed syllable,

/ ' / - symbolizes a stressed syllable,
 □ - shows that the word combination is pronounced together.
 The rhythmical model of the word «кóмната», for example, looks as follows: / ' // // /.

C4.



Letters A and O in the unstressed position are pronounced as the short sound [a].
 For example: страна [странá]

- она [анá]
- это [эта]
- карта [káрта]

- комната [кóмната]
- доктор [дóктор]

C5. The voiced consonants at the end and in the middle of the word before voiceless consonants are pronounced as the corresponding voiceless consonants:

- Б - [п] ара́б [п]
- В - [ф] Ива́нов [ф], спрáв[ф]ка
- Д - [т] го́род [т]
- З - [с] за́каз [с]
- Г - [к] дру́г [к]

C-6. In the Russian language there are some different types of intonation. Let us call these types ИК («интонационная конструкция» - intonation construction). These ИК serve to differentiate the pronounced phrases and their parts (syntagms). In any type of the ИК you can find the pre-tonic part, logical center (stressed part) and post-tonic part. ИК-1 is the intonation of a “full stop”, or the intonation of the narrative sentence. The pre-tonic part of ИК-1 is pronounced with the middle tone, then on the stressed syllable of the word, which is the logical center, the tone falls and if then there is a post-tonic part, it is pronounced with the gradual lowering of the tone.

C7. a) Inside the phrase before the conjunction «и» you can make a small pause and the conjunction «и» then is pronounced together with the next word.

b) after the words ending with the hard consonant the conjunction «и» is pronounced as «ы», the words being pronounced together. For example, вот и он [вóт ы óн].

C8. In the Russian language all nouns can belong to one of the three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter.

Words ending with the hard consonant typically belong to the masculine gender. The pronoun “he” corresponds to them.

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Words ending with —А typically belong to the feminine gender. The pronoun “she” corresponds to them.

Words with flexion —О belong to the neuter gender. The pronoun “it” corresponds to them.

Look at the table:

Мужской род (mask.)	КТО?	ЧТО?
	Иван	дом
Женский род (fem.)	Тамара	комната
Средний род (neutre)	—	окно, фото

LESSON 2

C1. It is necessary to distinguish between the letters И and Й, which express different sounds: the letter И denotes the vowel [и]. It can be stressed and can form a syllable. The letter Й denotes the voiced consonant [й], which is pronounced more tensely, with the vibration of the vocal cords. This sound can not be stressed, it can not make a syllable and it is always combined with one of the following vowels: а, о, э, у, (и, ы).

C2. a) If the sound [й] is placed after a vowel, this combination is expressed in writing as the corresponding two letters: [ай]- ай, [ой] — ой, [эй] — эй, [уй] — уй, [ий] — ий, [ый] — ый.

b) If the consonant [й] precedes (stands before) a vowel, such combination is expressed by one letter only: [йа] — Я, [йо] — Ё, [йэ] — Е, [йу] — Ю.

c) the letters Я, Ё, Е, Ю express two sounds (the combination of the consonant [й] with a vowel) in a word-initial position (beginning of the word) and after vowels.

C3. In the Russian language the majority of consonants form pairs according to the softness/hardness principle:

Soft																				
Hard																				

The difference in softness/hardness is essentially important for understanding the word meaning:

брат-брать (a brother — to take)

угол-уголь (a corner — a coal)

The consonant softness in writing is expressed with the help of the following letters:

a) Ь — soft sign, which can be used after the consonant in the final position (мать) or before the other consonant (деньги). The letter Ь corresponds to no sound and only shows that the preceding consonant is soft;

b) Я, Ё, Е, Ю, И after the consonants:

after a hard consonant	а	о	э	у	ы
after a soft consonant	я	ё	е	ю	и

When you pronounce any soft consonant, the position of all the parts of the speech apparatus keeps the same as if you pronounce the corresponding hard consonant. The only feature which is added to the articulation is that you move the middle part of your tongue up to the hard palate (as in pronouncing [и]).

C4. Attention! The syllables of НЯ-*type* consist of two sounds: a soft consonant and a vowel. At the same time the НЪЯ-*type* syllables consist of three sounds: a soft consonant, [й]-consonant and a vowel.

Compare: НЯ [Н'А] — НЪЯ [Н'ЙА]. By analogy with it the НЪЯ-*type* syllables consist of three sounds: a hard consonant, consonant [й] and a vowel: НЪЯ [НЙА].

So taking the position between a consonant and a vowel, the letters Ъ and Ь show that the letter, following one of them (Я, Ё, Е, Ю), is read the same as at the beginning of a word (see C2 b)).

C5. In the unstressed position both the letters Е and Я after a soft consonant are pronounced as a short sound, something between [и] and [e], which is expressed in transcription as [иe]: театр — [т'иeатр]

девятъ — [д'эвиeт']

At the beginning of the word the combination of these letters is pronounced as [йиe]:

её — [йиeйó]

его — [йиeвó]

язык — [йиeзык]

C6. In the interrogative sentence with a question word the intonation center is the stressed syllable of the question word. The pre-tonic part is pronounced with the middle tone, the stressed syllable — with the abrupt fall of the tone. In the post-center part the lowering of the tone is continued. This is ИК-2.

C7. Some nouns in the Russian language denote a living object (people, animals). Such nouns in grammar are called animated and answer the question "Who?" - «Кто?» («Кто это?»).

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C8. 1) the majority of the nouns of feminine or masculine gender with the hard stem (base) have flexion —И in the plural;

2) the nouns ending with —Б may be either of feminine or masculine gender. The gender in such cases is defined according to the dictionary. All the nouns of feminine and masculine gender with the soft stem (ending with —Б) have flexion -И in the plural;

3) the majority of the nouns of neuter gender, which end with —О, have flexion—А in the plural

NOTES:

a) Feminine, masculine and neuter gender nouns with the stem ending with —Г, -К, -Х, have flexion —И in the plural.

b) Some nouns have specific forms of the plural: друг — друзья, брат — братья, etc.

c) Some nouns are used only in the singular.

d) Sometimes when you change a word into plural the stress is also changed.

C9. In the Russian language there is a special group of words, which substitute noun in the sentence and point to a person or a subject. This group is called "personal pronouns": я, ты, он, она, оно, мы, вы, они.

Another group of words indicates that some person or object belongs to someone. This group is called "possessive pronouns": мой, твой, его, её etc.

Pay attention that the pronouns его, её, их in contradiction to the pronouns мой, твой do not change in number and gender. They only indicate the belonging to some person or people, show that something (or someone) belongs to someone. At the same time the pronoun его indicates the belonging to the person of male sex, the pronoun её - to the person of female sex, the pronoun их — to two or more people of both sexes. For example:

Это Антон. Это его фото, его справка. Это Анна. Это её фото, её справка. Это Антон и Анна. Это их фото и справки.

LESSON 3

C1. When you pronounce hard [л], the front part of the back of the tongue touches the upper teeth and the tip of the tongue looks down, as if you articulate the hard consonants т-д-н. The middle part of the tongue is curved, and the back part of it is raised and tense. The tongue takes the spoon-like form.

When you pronounce soft [л'], it is necessary to change the form of the middle part of the tongue by moving it up to the hard palate, as if you pronounce the vowel [и].

C2. When you pronounce the pair consonants [ш]-[ж], the tongue moves back, it is tense, the tip of the tongue touches the alveolas and is slightly turned up, thus making a fricative with them. The middle part of the tongue is curved inwards and its sides are pressed to the sidelong teeth. The back part of the tongue is raised and makes with the back part of

the hard palate the second fricative. The lips are moved slightly forward. The sounds [ш] and [ж] are always hard.

In unstressed position in the syllables ШЕ and ЖЕ we pronounce the vowel, which is something between [э] and [ы]. This sound is expressed in transcription as [ыэ]: инженер [ИНЖЫЭНЭР] and so on.

C3. To pronounce the sound [ч'] in the correct way, it is necessary to move the lips slightly forward, to press the tip of the tongue and the front part of the tongue to the alveolas and hard palate, thus making an occlusion. At the same time the middle part of the tongue is moving up, as if when you articulate soft consonants. Then it is necessary to make quickly a fricative between the tongue and the teeth, having the sides of the tongue pressed to the sidelong teeth.

The consonant [ч'] is always voiceless and soft. After this consonant in the unstressed syllable we read the vowel [а] as [ие]: часы [ч'иесы].

C4. a) In the interrogative sentence without a question word it is necessary to find what word is the logical center. This word will be the intonation center too. The part of the sentence, preceding the stressed syllable of the intonation center, is pronounced with the middle tone. On the stressed syllable your voice goes up (makes a rise) and all the post-tonic part (if any) is pronounced with the gradual lowering of the tone. This is ИК-3.

b) to the question without a question word you can give:

1.a positive answer, beginning with the word «да»;

2.a negative answer, which includes two negations:

-a common one — the word «нет» (pronounced with a stress) at the beginning of the sentence, and

-a special one — the unstressed particle «не», which is placed before the logical center.

Compare:

Это ваш журнал? 1) Да, мой. (Да, это мой журнал.)

2) Нет, не мой. (Нет, это не мой журнал.)

C-5. Asking a question about an unfamiliar subject or an unanimated object, we use the interrogative pronoun «что» in combination with the demonstrative pronoun «это». The letter «ч» in the pronoun «что» is pronounced as [ш].

C-6. If you want to know to whom some object belongs, you should ask a question with the pronoun «Чей?» («Чья?», «Чье?», «Чьи?»). This pronoun agrees in gender and number with the corresponding noun.

For example: Чей это журнал?

Чья это ручка?

Чье это фото?

Чьи это очки?

Answering such questions, you use one of the possessive pronouns with the noun.

Analyze the table:

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Кто это?	Чей это журнал?	Чья это ручка?	Чьё это фото?	Чьи это очки?
Это я.	Это мой журнал.	Это моя ручка.	Это моё фото.	Это мои очки.
Это ты.	Это твой журнал.	Это твоя ручка.	Это твоё фото.	Это твои очки.
Это мы.	Это наш журнал.	Это наша ручка.	Это наше фото.	Это наши очки.
Это вы.	Это ваш журнал.	Это ваша ручка.	Это ваше фото.	Это ваши очки.
Это он.	Это его журнал.	Это его ручка.	Это его фото.	Это его очки.
Это она.	Это её журнал.	Это её ручка.	Это её фото.	Это её очки.
Это они.	Это их журнал.	Это их ручка.	Это их фото.	Это их очки.

C7. In the Russian language there is a special group of words, denoting the number. These words are called cardinal numbers (or numerals) and answer the question «Сколько?» («How much?»).

C8. The infinitive form of the Russian verb is usually ended with —ть. In the Present Tense Russian verb changes in number and persons. There are some conjugation models and stress types. The verbs of the I-st group of model 1 in the Present Tense have the following flexion system (the system of endings):

Я	...-ю	Мы	...-ем
Ты	...-еешь	Вы	...-ете
Он	...-ет	Они	...-ют
Она			

Imperative mood ...-й (singular)

-йте (plural)

The stress in these verbs, as a rule, is fixed: in all the forms it falls upon one and the same syllable of the stem (base).

Study some of the verbs from the I-st group of model 1: читать, знать, слушать, делать.

C9. Answering the question «Что ты делаешь?» («What are you doing?») and such like questions you should not repeat the verb «делать». This verb is used only in the question.

LESSON 4

C1. [x]-sound is formed at the same place as the back-lingual [к], [г]. But differently to [к] and [г], the consonant [x] is not occlusive, but fricative. It means that the back part of your tongue and the palate do not touch each other when you articulate this sound, the air goes freely. It is a voiceless consonant, which have no voiced pair.

C2. To pronounce the consonant [ц] in the correct way, it is necessary to pronounce the consonant [т] first and immediately after that to articulate the consonant [ц]. It is very important here to pronounce [ц] tensely and shortly. The consonant [ц] is always voiceless and hard, that is why the combination of the letters Ц and Е is pronounced as [цэ], and the combination of the letters Ц and И is pronounced as [цы]. In writing the consonant [ц] is expressed with the help of the letter Ц or the combinations of the letters ТС, ДЦ, ТЪС. The unstressed vowels А and Е after Ц, ТС, ДЦ are pronounced as the short vowel [ы].

C3. When you pronounce the consonant [ш'], the position of your tongue is the same as if you pronounce [ч'], but the tip of the tongue and the palate do not touch each other so the air goes freely. The consonant [ш'] is long, voiceless and soft.

In writing it is expressed with the help of the letter ШЦ and the letter combination СЧ. The unstressed vowels А and Е after ШЦ are pronounced as the short vowel [и].

C4. a) The interrogative sentence which begins with the conjunction «а» expresses comparison. The logical and information center of such sentences is usually the word, following the conjunction. Within the bounds of the stressed syllable the tone first falls and then immediately rises. The pre-center part is pronounced with the middle tone, and on the post-center part the tone continues to rise. This is ИК-4.

b) The conjunction «а» can also be used at the beginning of the second part of the complex sentence, the parts of which are opposed in meaning. The first part of such sentence is pronounced with the intonation of ИК-3 (see commentary C-4 to the lesson 3). The second part of the sentence is separated from the first one by the pause.

C5. In the Russian language the adjective agrees with the subject in gender, number and case. Usually it takes the position before the noun, to which it refers.

Depending on the final consonant of the base (stem) and the place of the stress we distinguish between different adjective models. Each of these models has its own peculiarities of conjugation.

The interrogative pronoun «Какой?» («Which?») also changes its form depending on the gender, number and case of the corresponding noun.

Analyze the table.

C6. Study the II group of the Russian verb. The verbs of this group in the Present Tense have the following flexion system (system of endings):

Я	...-ю	Мы	...-им
Ты	...-ишь	Вы	...-ите
Он	...-ит	Они	...-ят (-ат)
Она			

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Imperative mood: ... -и (singular)

-ите (plural)

The stress in such verbs can be either fixed (fall upon the ending, or flexion) or can be moving. The typical verb of the II group— «говорить».

C7. Adverbs are the words, which characterize actions. They can indicate the quality of the action (such adverbs answer the question «Как?»), for example, хорошо, внимательно, по-русски; they can indicate the place (these adverbs answer the question «Где?»), for example, здесь, там, дальше. They can also indicate the time of the action (these adverbs answer the question «Когда?»), for example, сегодня, сейчас, потом; and may have other meanings. The adverbs can have the position before the verb or after it.

C8. The verb «говорить» is often followed by the adverbs «по-русски», «по-английски» and such like. Pay attention that these adverbs begin with the prefix «по-» and differ from the corresponding adjectives (русский, английский ...) - they do not change their form. The same as the adverbs ending with —О (хорошо, плохо), the adverbs like «по-русски» relate to the verb and answer the question «как?».