

Russian Grammar Lesson 1 by Linguajunkie.com

At this point you should already know how to read Russian and are learning vocabulary words. Then comes grammar. Grammar allows you to tie words together in order to make sense.

Most grammar lessons start with...

1. common sentence structure
2. personal pronouns
3. articles (a/the)
4. the verb to be

...so you can start forming basic sentences. So we'll start in that order.

Part 1. Russian Sentence Structure.

From the basic standpoint, English is an SVO language when it comes to sentences. Subject + Verb + Object/Adjective/Adverb. For example:

- *I'm going to school.*
- *You are smart.*
- *This will be interesting.*

Russian can follow that order, but it's a lot more flexible in terms of order, and yet remains grammatically correct. Crazy, I know. Here's an example of 6 ways.

- Я иду в школу (SVO) I'm going to school.
- Я в школу иду. (SOV) I'm school going to. (Yes, makes sense in Russian)
- В школу я иду. (OSV) To school I'm going.
- В школу иду я. (OVS) To school going, I am.
- Иду я в школу. (VSO) Going I am to school.
- Иду в школу я. (VOS) Going to school I am.

What's the difference?

There's a difference of nuance. Perhaps there's an exaggeration on the verb or object that a speaker wants to communicate. We'll stop here though.

As a beginner, don't worry about these but note that if you see a really weird pattern, see if it fits any of the 6 styles. For now, for the sake of simplicity, let's focus on the SVO format.

Part 2. Personal Pronouns.

What are they?

Personal pronouns include "I," "you" (singular), "he," "she," "it," "we," "you" (plural) and "they." These are what you can use as the **subject** or object of a sentence.

And it'll help us start forming sentences. The only annoying part about these pronouns is, like all other words and adjectives, they are affected by the 6 different cases of Russian.

Yes, that means you'll need to know 6 ways of conjugation.

But we'll save that for later.

Here's the list of Russian Personal Pronouns.

English	Russian	Romanization
I	Я	ya
you	ТЫ	yi
he	ОН	on
she	ОНА	on a
it	ОНО	ono
we	МЫ	mo
you (plural)	ВЫ	vi
they	ОНИ	oni

Example Sentences

- Я врач.
- Ya vrach.
- I am a doctor.

- Он студент.
- On student.
- He is a student.

- Она американка.
- Ona amerikanka.

- *She is an American.*

- *Это окно.*

- *Eto okno.*

- *This is a window.*

- *Мы путешествуем.*

- *My puteshestvuyem.*

- *We are traveling.*

Notice something here? The sentences are not exactly SVO. The sentences are SV or SO. For example, Я врач, were Я (I) the subject and врач (doctor) are missing the verb “is.”

Rule: In such sentences, the verb “is” is implied.

Meaning, in Russian, a sentence like...

- *“This is a window” becomes “This, window”*

- *“I am a doctor” becomes “I, doctor.”*

Which brings us to part 3.

Part 3. Articles (A/The)

This section will be short.

There are no articles in Russian. So if you wonder why Russians that try to speak English are missing articles, it's because of Russian. They're translating directly from Russian.

So, no articles. That was easy.

What's next?

Part 4. The Verb “To Be”

Remember in Part 2, that we omitted the verb “to be” for the example sentences?

Why's that?

Russian verb "быть" (= to be) isn't usually used in the present, just in the past and in the future. In the past tense it can be translated as "was, were, have been, has been".

The verb has 4 forms in the Past:

- *был (masculine)*

- *была (feminine)*

- *было (neuter)*
- *были (plural)*

Let's see some examples

- *Я был в Италии. = I have been to Italy.*

I (Linguajunkie) am a man! So, I use the masculine form of "быть" in the Past Tense: был.

- *Она была в Италии. = She was in Italy.*

She is a female, so we use the feminine form of "быть": была.

- *Утро было холодное. = It was a cold morning.*

"Утро" or morning is neuter, so we use the neuter form of "был": было.

- *Они не были в Италии. = They haven't been to Italy.*

"Они" is plural, so we use the plural form of "быть": были.

If the subject is "я" or "ты", use "был" if the pronoun refers to a man and "была" if it refers to a woman. We always use "были" with "вы", even if we speak to one person.

And that's it for Russian Grammar Lesson 1!

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