

## **Romantic Russian Phrasebook**

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## Unit 1. How To Be Polite In Russian?

*This unit was developed to introduce you into the world of communication in Russian. You will learn how to start and support dialog in any situation, at any level of communication. The unit contains a collection of the most commonly used, universal words of politeness, and a few sample dialogs to illustrate how these phrases can be integrated into conversation. Please, do not forget to use these words and phrases in everyday communication when you are in Russia.*

*Please, pay special attention to pronunciation and intonation. The way you pronounce words is very important in Russian, because a slight violation of intonation can change meaning of a whole sentence. Listen to the melody of Russian language and try to adjust your ear to it. Then, try to imitate the phrases, exactly as they are pronounced by the announcers in the recordings.*

Looking and being polite is not difficult in Russian culture. An ordinary smile and an open look into a person's eyes is enough to attract attention to yourself. Then, you may say a word of greetings, and proceed to the topic of the talk. Unlike native English speakers, who traditionally begin conversation with an introductory talk about weather, Russians get to the point right away. Traditional words to attract attention to yourself are:

### Attracting Attention to Yourself

|                   |                   |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Извините, ...     | Excuse me (Sorry) | Izviniti            |
| Простите,...      | Excuse me (Sorry) | Prastiti            |
| Будьте добры, ... | Excuse me         | <b>Bud'ti dabry</b> |

Use one of these starters, and, as soon as the person's eyes meet yours, ask your question right away. Here is an example of a simple dialog:

|                       |                                    |                           |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A: Извините... Такси? | A: Excuse me...                    | A: Izviniti... Taksi?     |
| B: Да?                | B: Yes?                            | B: <b>Da</b> ?            |
| A: Отель Киев.        | A: Taxi. Hotel Kiev.               | A: <b>Atel Kiiv.</b>      |
| A: Да-да. Садитесь.   | B: Yes, certainly, please, get in. | B: <b>Da-da. Saditis.</b> |

Here are a few more phrases to use as starters, when you need to attract someone's attention to yourself.

|                           |                                    |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Я хочу с Вами поговорить. | I would like to speak to you.      | <b>Ya hachu s vami pagavarit'.</b> |
| Вы (сейчас) очень заняты? | Are you very busy (at the moment)? | <b>Vy (sichas) ochin zanyaty?</b>  |
| Можно Вас на минуту?      | Could you spare me a moment?       | <b>Mozhna vas na minutku?</b>      |
| Простите, у меня вопрос.  | Excuse me, I have a question.      | <b>Prastiti, u minya vopros.</b>   |

Very polite Russians speak in calm, relaxed manner, and their intonation often rises a little in the end of the phrase. Ordinary people may sound a bit harsh; the words they pronounce may sound abrupt; the intonation may go up and down almost uncontrollably. Do not let this scare you away from people. Once you see smiles on their faces, you may be sure that they feel very friendly towards you.

Though Russian intonations may sound a bit harsh to the ear of a foreigner, most of the people tend to address each other very politely. There is a set of universal words, which will always work well for you. Russians love to hear them – especially when pronounced by foreigners – so the nicest smiles of pretty shop assistants will all be yours!

The first place where you may need to try your Russian will be in the airport. Though majority of the airport workers can speak English, you may want to try these words-

## Some Words of Politeness

|                              |  |                                  |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Пожалуйста                   | Will you please...<br>You are welcome<br>(Here you are)  | Pzhalsta (or: pazhalusta)        |
| Пожалуйста. Это – вам.       | Here you are. Take it, please.<br>(You may say this when you are giving your passport or tickets to the airport workers for check in.) | Pzhalsta. <b>Eta vam.</b>        |
| Вот. Пожалуйста.             | Here you are. (You may say this when you are giving your passport or tickets to the airport workers for check in.)                     | <b>Vot.</b> Pzhalsta             |
| Пожалуйста, проходите.       | You may go.<br>(You will very probably hear this from a customs officer in the airport)  | Pzhalsta, prahaditi              |
| Прошу вас...                 | You are welcome (means permission to do something)   | Prashu <b>vas.</b>               |
| Пожалуйста, возьмите...      | Will you please, take this...  | Pzhalsta, vazmiti                |
| Пожалуйста, дайте мне...     | Will you please, give me...  | Pzhalsta, <b>daiti mne</b>       |
| Пожалуйста, скажите мне...   | Will you please, tell me...  | Pzhalsta, skazhiti mne           |
| Пожалуйста, покажите мне...  | Will you please, show me...  | Pzhalsta, pakazhiti mne          |
| Спасибо.                     | Thank you.   | Spasiba                          |
| Благодарю вас.               | Thank you. I appreciate this.  | Blagadaryu <b>vas.</b>           |
| Вы очень добры.              | It's very kind of you.   | <b>Vy ochen' dabry.</b>          |
| Скажите пожалуйста, где... ? | Tell me please, where...?  | Skazhiti pzhalsa, <b>gde...?</b> |
| Помогите мне пожалуйста....  | Will you, please, help me?..   | Pamagiti mne pzhalsa             |
| Можно вас спросить?          | May I ask you?   | <b>Mozhna vas sprasit?</b>       |
| Спасибо, всё хорошо.         | Thank you, everything's OK.<br>Thank you. I'm OK.  | Spasiba. <b>Vsyo harassho.</b>   |
| Спасибо, я – в порядке.      | Thank you. I'm OK.   | Spasiba, <b>ja v paryadki.</b>   |
| Спасибо, да.                 | Yes, Thank you.  | Spasiba, <b>da.</b>              |
| Спасибо, нет.                | No, thank you.   | Spasiba, <b>nyet.</b>            |
| Конечно.                     | Certainly.   | Kaneshna.                        |
| Конечно, да.                 | Certainly, Yes. Indeed.  | Kaneshna, <b>da.</b>             |

## Sample Dialogs

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| A: Будьте добры...   | A: Excuse me...   | A: <b>Budti dabry</b>   |
| B: Да?   | B: Yes?   | B: <b>Da?</b>   |
| A: Скажите пожалуйста, где касса?                          | A: Tell me please, Where's the booking office?                            | A: Skazhiti pzhalsa, <b>gde kassa?</b>                        |
| B: Вот. Сюда, пожалуйста.                                  | B: Here. This way, please.  | B: <b>Vot.</b> Suda, pzhalsa.                                 |
| A: Спасибо.  | A: Thank you.   | A: Spasiba.   |
|  |   |   |
| A: Простите, у меня вопрос. Скажите пожалуйста, где касса? | Excuse me, I have a question. Tell me please, where is the ticket office? | Prastiti, u minya vapros. Skazhiti pzhalsa, <b>gde kassa?</b> |
| A: Там. У кафе.  | There. Near the cafeteria.  | <b>Tam.</b> U kafe.   |
| B: Вы очень добры.   | It's very kind of you.  | <b>Vy ochen' dabry.</b>                                       |
| A: Вы видите?  | Can you see it?   | <b>Vy viditi?</b>   |
| B: Конечно.  | Certainly.  | Kaneshna.   |
| A: Удачи.  | Good luck   | Udachi.   |
| B: Спасибо.  | Thank you.  | Spasiba   |

|                                   |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| A: Помогите мне, пожалуйста....   | Will you, please, help me?..      | Pamag <b>iti</b> mne pzh <b>al</b> sta                 |
| B: Да... ?                        | Yes...?                           |  |
| A: Билет, Ванкувер, пожалуйста.   | A ticket to Vancouver, please.    | Bil <b>e</b> t Vank <b>u</b> vir, pzh <b>al</b> sta    |
| B: Пожалуйста, возьмите билет.    | Will you please, take the ticket. | Pzh <b>al</b> sta, vazm <b>iti</b> bil <b>e</b> t      |
| A: Благодарю вас.                 | Thank you. I appreciate this.     | Blagadary <b>u</b> vas.                                |
| A: Пожалуйста. Это – вам.         | Here you are. Take it, please.    | Pzh <b>al</b> sta. <b>E</b> ta <b>v</b> am.            |
| B: Хорошо. Пожалуйста, проходите. | Good. You may go.                 | Harash <b>o</b> . Pzh <b>al</b> sta, prahad <b>iti</b> |
| A: Спасибо.                       | Thank you.                        | Spas <b>i</b> ba                                       |

## Language Notes

*Intonation.* Every Russian word can be pronounced separately – there is no need to tie them together, as you often do in English. When you want to be clearly understood, you may speak slowly, and separate every word from the others with a short pause. Try to pronounce every sound very clearly.

*Pronunciation.* Letter *O* sounds as [O] (like in *more*) when it is stressed, and as [A] (like in *aunt*) when it is not stressed. Letter *E* sounds as [E] (like in *net*) when it is stressed, and as [I] (like in *bee*) when it is not stressed. Letter *Ч* may sound like [CH] in *chance*, or like [SH] in *share*.

*Consonants* may be Hard or Soft in Russian. For example, Russian *H* sounds like [N] in the word *nose* when it is hard, and like [N'] in the word *money* when it is softened by a vowel which follows it. In the words **нет** and **конец** sound [n'] is softened by the letter *e* which follows it.

*Asking questions in Russian.* To ask a question in Russian, you do not need any question-words. A simple change of intonation (raising it up in the end of the phrase) is enough. So, in the above dialog, phrases *Da?* and *Taxi. Hotel Kiev* are pronounced with rising intonation and are regarded as questions.

Whenever you want to ask a question, you will only need to have a skill of using the right intonation pattern – no need in using additional grammar.

*Words order in Russian.* There is no fixed word order in Russian language. You may put words in any order which sounds meaningful or convenient to you. This makes the language very flexible and unbelievably creative. At the same time, there are numerous rules regulating logical and grammar connections between words. There are dozens of endings for every part of speech, which must be memorized and then used in particular situations of speech.