

Lesson 1

Greeting

Hello and welcome to the Russian language course! I'm Dmitry Slomov and I'll be your teacher through this course. First, let me acknowledge all of you who have decided to start learning Russian! Very well done! You are really courageous! Well, let's start!

When you meet a person, first of all you would want to greet him or her, wouldn't you?

In English you would probably say: Hello!

In Russian we are doing it too, and for Hello, we say:

Privet! Privet!

Let's here it some more times: Privet! Privet! Privet!

The response to this greeting is: Privet!

Now, after a greeting you may want to ask a person: How are you?

In Russian you are actually asking: How are affairs? Namely, how are daily affairs running?

How – kak, kak

Affairs – dela, dela

Kak dela? Kak dela?

The response will be “Thanks, fine!”

Thanks – spasibo, spasibo, like maybe: spacy bow. Spasibo.

Fine – horosho, horosho - like maybe: a fine hour show. Horosho.

Spasibo, horosho! Spasibo, horosho.

Kak dela?

Spasibo, horosho!

Very well done!

Now, if approached by a Russian friend with a question “Kak dela?” you respond him

“Spasibo, horosho!” and now it's your turn to ask: and how are you? In Russian you ask:

How are your affairs? How are yours, actually.

Remember: how - kak

How are yours goes:

Kak u tebya? Kak u tebya?

In the word 'tebya' you encounter the truly Russian sound “ya”. It is often transcribed as “y-a” but it is not exactly that. It is better if you just pronounce it as “ah”, but while pronouncing “ah” you keep the middle of your tongue higher than usual. Ah – ya, ah – ya. Give it a try. Generally, Russians speak with their tongue much higher, much closer to the palates, than English speakers. This is how Russian accent occurs. While pronouncing Russian words you may definitely try to keep your tongue higher than usual. You may notice that now you would sound even more Russian.

One more pronunciation issue is the “t” sound. In Russian it is less explosive and clicking than it is in English. And it is even easier to learn: you just set the tip of your tongue like you want to pronounce the t-h sound - “th” , but you have to press the tip of your tongue to the upper teeth and palates, so the air does not get out. This is Russian “t”. Try: Th – t, th – t. It is also easier to pronounce this sound correctly when you keep your tongue a little bit higher.

Fine! Very good! Horosho.

So, after your Russian friend asks you “Kak dela?” and you reply “Spasibo, horosho! Kak u tebya?” You may also hear a more reserved reply, not that 'Fine, thanks!', but something like: Everything goes normally.

Everything: vsyo, vsyo

Normally: normal'no, normal'no.

Vsyo normal'no. Vsyo normal'no.

Kak dela? Spasibo, vsyo normal'no. Kak u tebya? Horosho!

In the word vsyo - everything - vsyo - you encounter one of those odd Russian sounds. It is written as 'y-o'. However, it is not “yo” but rather some kind of “o” with the middle and the back of your tongue slightly up. It may remind the English word 'were' but the tip of your tongue might be down. Try: were – yo, were – yo.

Russians are generally more reserved in public, than Westerners. They will rarely respond on their daily affairs in some passionate way. At first, they will be coolly polite with you. That's OK, for them you are a foreigner, they do not know how to treat you. But, when you become closer, maybe at a common meal at home of one of your Russian friends after some vodkas, - then you may discover really strong passions! Please, keep it in mind!

Now, so far, you have had your first conversation with your Russian friends. It is time to say “good bye!” In Russian you say “Poka!” Once more: Poka! Poka!
And the response is: Poka.

Very good!

So, let's summarize. Imagine, John is walking down the street and he meets his Russian friend Peter, in Russian Petya. This will be a dialog between them:

Privet, Petya!

Privet, Dzhon!

Kak dela, Petya?

Vsyo normal'no, Dzhon. Kak u tebya?

Vsyo horosho, spasibo!
Poka, Dzhon!
Poka, Petya!

Now, listen to this dialog spoken in a fast manner. Most probably, this will be the speed at which you will hear your Russian friends speaking. If you find it too difficult, you better listen to the slow version of this dialog and then start with the faster. You may listen to this dialog a few times until you recognize each word in it.

Privet, Petya!
Privet, Dzhon!
Kak dela, Petya?
Vsyo normal'no, Dzhon. Kak u tebya?
Vsyo horosho, spasibo!
Poka, Dzhon!
Poka, Petya!

Good job! Very good job! Very well done! Now, that's enough for this time. Thank you for staying with me through this lesson! And I'll be glad to meet you in the next one!
Poka!