

# Icons Used in This Book

For your convenience, we marked some information in this book with special icons. Check out this guide to the icons, and the next time you see one of them, you'll know what to expect!



**CULTURAL WISDOM**

From famous Russian writers to a polite way to decline an invitation, this icon marks a wide variety of curious and useful facts about Russian culture.



**PLAY THIS**

The website associated with this book gives you the opportunity to hear Russian in action. The site features audio files of native Russian speakers bringing to life some of the dialogues from the pages of this book. Check it out at: [www.dummies.com/go/russianfd3e](http://www.dummies.com/go/russianfd3e).



**REMEMBER**

This icon points out some important information about Russian that's worth remembering.



**TIP**

This icon signals a useful bit of information that can make life easier for you, whether it's a handy way to remember a useful word or an insider's advice on how to better handle a certain situation.



**WARNING**

This icon attracts your attention to something you need to know to avoid a common mistake.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to

[www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **Russian For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

Now that you're familiar with the anatomy of *Russian For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, you can embark on your journey. You can start anywhere, and you don't have to go in a specific order. Just choose a topic that seems appealing, find the corresponding chapter in the table of contents, and start speaking Russian!

If you're at a loss about where to start, please take our advice and begin with [Chapter 2](#): It provides you with a very powerful tool — the ability to read Russian. [Chapter 3](#) is a good place to get a grasp on the essentials of Russian grammar. After that, you can go straight to the sections that deal with information you need urgently.

Wherever you decide to start, you can find plenty of useful phrases to get you speaking Russian and exploring the benefits that your language skill brings. And now we wish you **Счастливого пути!** (sh'eesh-lee-vah-vah pooh-tee!) (*Bon voyage!*).

# Part 1

## Getting Started

## **IN THIS PART ...**

- Learn the basics of Russian.
- Explore the Russian alphabet.
- Understand basic Russian grammar.
- Say some simple Russian expressions.
- Get your numbers, times, and measurements straight.
- Identify items at home using Russian.

# Chapter 1

## Russian in a Nutshell

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Approaching the Russian alphabet
  - » Looking at grammar in a new light
  - » Getting started with some useful words and expressions
  - » Putting Russian to use in common social situations
  - » Taking Russian on the road
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Russian has a reputation for being a difficult language. Is it? We would say that *different* is a better word to describe the experience of studying Russian. Russian actually is a distant cousin of English. Both languages belong to a huge Indo-European family of languages — unlike, say, Arabic, Chinese, or Japanese, which belong to completely different language-family clans.

This chapter provides you a taste of Russian. Get ready to study this fascinating language!

## *Discovering How Easy the Russian Alphabet Really Is*

If you were to ask people on the street what they think the most difficult thing about learning Russian is, most of them (slightly taken aback by your question) would likely say, “The alphabet!”

But we’re here to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth: The Russian alphabet is perhaps the easiest part of learning Russian. In fact, you may be surprised to hear that most people are able to start reading Russian in several hours. That’s how easy the Russian alphabet is!

Don’t believe us? Consider this: The Russian alphabet, often called the *Cyrillic* alphabet, was named after a ninth-century Byzantine monk named Cyril, who developed it with the help of his brother, Methodius. (Please don’t ask us why Methodius’s name wasn’t added to the name of the alphabet. Life isn’t fair.) Cyril and Methodius wanted to translate the Bible into one of the Slavic languages spoken