

Guide to Russian Diction

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Consonants

Voiced	b	v	g	d	ʒ	ʒ	
Voiced palatalized	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ		ʒ	j

Unvoiced	k	p	s	t	f	x	h	ts	ʃ	
Unvoiced palatalized	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ			ɸ	č

Sonorant	L	m	n	R
Sonorant palatalized	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ	ɸ

Vowels

Vowel sounds	a	ɑ	e	ɛ	i	ɨ	o	u	i ^e	e ⁱ	ə	ɨ
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GENERAL

- Treat Russian as a combination of the vowel-to-vowel legato of Italian and the strongly articulated consonants of German.
- In order to achieve legato and avoid choppiness in the delivery of clauses, pronounce the final consonant as if it were the initial consonant of the word that follows.

CONSONANTS

- Every consonant sound can be palatalized, except for [ʒ] and [ts]. Palatalized consonants are pronounced with the middle of the tongue raised to the hard palate. Palatalization is indicated with a palatalization hook attached to the consonant: [ɟ].
- Plosive consonants [p,], [t], and [k] are not aspirated.
- [x] is slightly less strong than the German achlaut, somewhere in between “h” in the English word “hot” and “ch” in German “doch”. In the unstressed final position in the word this sound is often indicated as [h].
- [č] is like “ch” in the English word “chair”.
- [r] can be rolled or flipped. When palatalized, [ɽ] is easier to pronounce if flipped. Rolled “r” can be used for dramatic expression.

VOWELS

- [ɨ] is similar to [l] in the English word “thing”.
- One of the most important criterion of vowel pronunciation is its stressed vs. unstressed position in the word.
 - o Stressed vowels sound slightly longer, with a higher degree of articulation and dynamic level.
 - o Unstressed vowels are weaker, and their articulation is less distinct. They should always be treated as upbeats to the following stressed vowel.
- [a] in italics indicates an unstressed vowel a with lower degree of articulation and weaker position.
- [i^e] and [eⁱ] indicate an unstressed [e] sound which is between [i] and [e]. [i^e] is closer to [i] and [eⁱ] is closer to [e]. Depending on the context, one is more appropriate than the other.
- ['] before the syllable indicates the stress.