



Lesson 1: Survival Phrases #1 - Thank You!

Спасибо.

LESSON NOTES

Wherever your destination maybe, manners are a must! And in this respect, Russia is no different. So in our very first lesson, we'll be taking a look at a phrase there is no excuse not to bring with you to Russia. Again, I'll stress this over and over, a little bit of the language can go such a long way! In Russian "Thank you" is spasiba. You can emphasize spasiba by adding balshoye which means "big". Balshoye spasiba literally means "Big thank you" and is the equivalent of "Thank you very much" in English. Now in Russian there are other ways to express one's gratitude. There are more formal and more casual ways to do this. For very special occasions when someone goes above and beyond the call of being kind, when someone is extremely generous, or for any other time you're extremely grateful, we have the following phrase to express extreme gratitude: Blagadaryu vas. The first word blagadaryu means "(I am) thankful." To reproduce the Russian consonant "r" in blagadaryu you should roll your "r"s. The Russian "r" resembles the Italian or Spanish ones, but even if you don't roll it properly you will be easily understood anyway. It is followed by the polite "you" which in Russian is vy but in this sentence we use vas. So in English it would be something like "I am grateful (thankful) to you".

PHRASES

Russian	Romanization	English
Благодарю Вас.	Blagadaryu Vas.	Thank you. (formal)
Спасибо.	Spasiba.	Thank you. (informal)

QUICK TIP

Please do know that in Russian there are two ways of referring to people: formal and informal. So let's start first with the polite form. The polite equivalent of the English "you" is vy in Russian. This polite word contains a sound that doesnot exist in English and is transcribed by the letter "y" but please don't worry; I will teach you how to produce this sound. Open your mouth as if you were preparing to pronounce the sound "a" in the word "able" and holding the same open position of your mouth try to reproduce the sound "ee" like in the word "if". Doing it this way you will achieve the desired sound "y" which is present in vy. Please note the same letter "y" will be also used to show the short "ee" sound and after some consonants in order to soften them. We use vy when we want to show respect to the other person or when the context requires formality. For instance, when meeting someone for the first time, at a shop, at work, with a professor, or with an older person. However, vy is not always required when you meet someone for the first time if the setting is casual, say at a party with people of your own age. Younger people, especially, are using vy less and less. They often speak directly in ty with each other and even their grandparents. So ty is the informal equivalent of "you". The sound "y" here is the same as

vy. We use ty in contexts where we know the person personally and the environment is casual. People of one's own age, classmates, family, and friends are such people. At home, at school, friendly social settings are such contexts. Ty is the most common form of "you" that you will hear, so don't feel nervous about using it. Not many Russians know that the origin of the word spasiba came from two words, spasi which means "save" and Bog which means "God". So the meaning of it is "May God keep you safe!" which was an old way of expressing gratitude. So surprise your Russian friends by asking them the origin of the word spasiba!