

## Russian Conjugation

This is a very complex work and one that is fundamental to morphology theory. We will consider here only the most basic principles. Non-Russianists need not be concerned with details. This would be an interesting term project for a Russianist who likes morphology.

### 17) Morphophonemic stems.

p'ok—	bake
smotr'ě —	look at
žg—	burn
pláka—	weep
uči—	teach
v'is'ě—	hang
ková—	forge
trónu—	touch
v'od—	lead
krád—	steal

Stress patterns are predictable from the stem, as are *all* verbal forms! (I do not discuss the rather complicated stress rules here.) Phonemic transcription is in italics, morphophonemic, in roman or roman bolded. Do you understand the difference?

All present desinences (endings) are vocalic, all past and infinitive are consonantal. Basic dichotomy is V vs. C.

Please look up the word 'desinence' in the Webster's Unabridged dictionary.

Past non-terminal **l** is followed by a suffix indicating gender or plural. Zero – masc, **a** – fem, **o** – neuter, **i** – plural. This last desinence softens all previous consonants in verbal morphology. Note that here the unmarked high vowel does not alternate with y; it forces C palatalization rather than the other way around, as in phonemics.

Infinitive. Velars drop and replace them with **č**. In verbs with unaccented stems, the ending is **t'i**, all others have **t'**. *n'ist'í* ,carry', *žeč* ,burn', *krast'* ,steal'.

Present. The first V indicates present tense, the second, either person and number or only number. *čitáj-u*, *čitáj-i-š*, *čitáj-i-t*, *čitáj-u-t* ,read'. Before **u** the nonterminal suffix cannot occur (that is, **i** and other vowels are dropped).

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> pl the first suffix is **u** or **á**, in all other present forms it is **i** or **ó**. (lack of a stress mark means the V may or may not be stressed.) Note that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person it distinguishes number: p'j— ,drink' > *p'jút*, *p'jót*.

If unstressed, the present desinences (1<sup>st</sup> sg treated below) begin with a high V. Unstressed is weak position and these V are diffuse; rule of intensity attraction. Thus **u** and **i**. *pláču, pláčít, účut, učít*. (This 3<sup>rd</sup> pl is old Moscow pronunciation, now it is *účít*, or, as you may analyze it, *účat*.)

The stressed desinences (not 1<sup>st</sup> sg) begin with an unrounded V in soft open full stems, and with a rounded V otherwise. Hence **a** and **i**, **u** and **o**. Soft C's have a higher acuteness, and unrounded V are acute vs. grave rounded (or plain vs. flat rounded); this is the rule of acuteness attraction. *xran'í—* ,preserve' < *xran'át, xran'íš, v'is'é—* ,hang' > *v'is'át, v'is'ít, stučá—* ,knock' > *stučát, stučít*, *talknú—* ,give a push' > *talknúť, talkn'óš*. *gríz—* ,gnaw' > *grízút, gríz'óš*. Note that there is automatic bare softening before the vocalic desinences **i**, **ó**.

Imperative. Zero alternates with **i**. Zero occurs in stems with a fixed accent on the stem, unless there is a consonant cluster. *pláč* ,weep', *trón'* ,touch', *kříkn'i* ,cry out', *číst'i* ,clean', *krad'í* ,steal', *p'íší* ,write'. The group *j—i* is permitted only if the full stem itself ends in **ji—**: *stojá—* > *stój* ,stand', *tají—* > *tají* ,conceal', *p'j* > *p'ej* ,drink'. The V in the last form is a fill vowel before a zero. The real stem is *p'#j—*.

Open full stems remain intact before a C and lose their final C before a V. *l'ožá* ,lie' > *l'ížála, l'ížát*, *govor'í* ,say' > *gavar'íla, gavar'át*.

Any morpheme ending with a V loses that V before a suffix beginning with a vowel.

All closed full stems remain intact before a V. *kradú, v'idú*.

Full stems in **j v n m** — the two glides and the two nasals — drop their final element before C. They are regularly closed before V and open before C. *d'élaj—* ,do' > *d'élajut, d'élala*, *stán—* ,become' > *stánu, stála*, *živ* ,live' > *živút, žilá*.

The broadly closed stems stay intact before V and before at least part of the C endings. They end in **k g t d s z b r**. The velars drop before infinitive, and the dental stops before the past tense; the other four (**s z b r**) are never truncated. Note the very selective inventory of C's a stem may end in.

Deep truncation. If *—nu-* does not mean momentariness and is preceded by a C, it is dropped in the past. *iščéznu—* ,disappear' > *iščés, iščézla*.

Before **j—** the group **vá**, if preceded by **a**, is omitted in the present, and the stress falls on the following syllable. *daváj—* ,give' > *dajú, dajóš, davála*. Imperative is formed from the full stem, *daváj*.

Before dropped **a—** the group **ov** is replaced by *uj—*; in a non-initial syllable the stress is transferred from *á* to *új*, otherwise to the following V. *sovétova—* ,advise' > *sav'étuju, sav'étoval*, *darová—* ,grant' > *darúju*, *ková—* ,forge' > *kujú, kujóš*, *pl'ová—* ,spit' > *pl'ujú, pl'ujóš*.

Before dropped j— the vowel **o** in monosyllabic stems and zero in non-syllabic is replaced by **i**. *mój*— ,wash‘ > *míla*, *p’j*— ,drink‘ > *p’ilá*.

Before dropped nasal, zero in non-syllabic stems is replaced by **á**. *žm*— ,press‘ < *žála*. Jakobson is not treating prefixed stems here, but note that *na-čn*— will by rule give > *načát’*, *načalá* (but with retracted stress in the past).

All final dentals and labials of broadly closed full stems coalesce into **s** before infinitive ending. No other C is admitted here. *m’ot*— ,sweep‘ > *m’ist’í*, *grob*— ,row‘ > *gr’ist’í*.

An open full stem can end in any of the five Russian vowels **a i u e o**. They are dropped before a V. The last C is soft or palatal before **i** and **e**, hard before **u** and **o**, hard or palatal, never palatalized, before **a**. Closed stems may end in **j**, otherwise only in hard C.

*l’iší*— ,deprive‘, *v’ér’i* — ,believe‘, *gnú*— ,bend‘, *pr’áta*— ,hide‘, *žda*— ,wait‘, *stučá*— ,knock‘, *kolo*— ,stab‘.

If the final C in an open full stem is soft, it preserves its softness everywhere. In the 1<sup>st</sup> sg the softness is substitutive. *s’id’é*— ,sit‘ > *s’i žú*, *s’id’iš*, *kup’i*— ,buy‘ > *kupl’ú*, *kúp’iš*. See below for table of sets.

If the final C in an open full stem is hard, it becomes soft only in these conditions: 1) a C followed by **a**— or **o**— in a polysyllabic stem is subject to substitutive softening: *pláka*— ,weep‘ > *pláču*, *pláčiš*, *pláčit*, *iska*— ,search for‘ > *iščú*, *iščiš*, *p’isa*— ,write‘ > *p’išú*, *p’išiš*. Otherwise, the C undergoes bare softening before any V except u. The velars undergo bare softening only before imperative, otherwise substitutive. *žda*— ,wait for‘ > *ždú*, *žd’ót*, *lga*— ,lie‘ > *lgú*, *lžót*, *imp lg’i*, *tonu*— ,drown‘ > *tanú*, *tón’iš*. Closed full stems: *pas*— ,tend‘ > *pasú*, *pas’óš*, *p’ok*— ,bake‘, *p’ikú*, *p’ičóš*, *b’er’og*— ,spare‘ > *b’ir’igú*, *b’ir’ižóš*.

Inserted vowels. A V is inserted within a non-syllabic full stem before a non-syllabic desinence, and, if the stem ends in **r**, before any C desinence. The inserted V is **é** in the infinitive, **ó** elsewhere. *žg*— ,burn‘ > *žók*, *žglá*, *t’r* — ,rub‘ > *t’ór*, *t’órla*.

See the text for further rules of stress.

Productive are all types with a polysyllabic accented full stem, when it ends in a high V, or when the prevocalic alternate ends in **j**.

E.g. *xaltúr’i*— ,turn out potboilers‘, *bl’ofnú*— ,bluff‘, *šámaj*— ,eat‘, *m’itingová*— ,assemble‘.

The rules enable one to seek out exceptional forms very easily. Do you know the actual forms?

xot'ě— ,want' 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sg expected are *xot'íš, xot'ít*  
 b'ěžá— ,run' 1<sup>st</sup> sg and 3<sup>rd</sup> pl expected are *b'ížú, b'ížát*, imp. expect *b'i ží*.  
 id— ,go' infinitive expected is *ist'í*.  
 m'r— ,die', p'r— ,push', t'r— ,rub' expect infinitives *m'ért', p'ért', t'ért'*.  
 sípa— ,scatter' imp. expected *sípli*.  
 spa— ,sleep' expect *spú, sp'óš*.  
 sm'ejá— ,laugh' expect *sm'ijíšsa*.  
 poj— ,sing' expect past *pola*.

rod'í— ,give birth' has past fem. *rod'ilá*, with a mobile past stress which never should occur with open full stems in **i**.

Here are the substitutive softening correspondences of Russian:

Change of velar or dental to palatal or a change of one phoneme into a cluster.

k, (k')	č
sk (sk')	šč
tk (tk')	bare softening
g (g')	ž
zg (zg')	ždž
x (x')	š
t (t')	č
st (st')	šč
d (d')	ž
zd (zd')	ždž
s (s')	š
z (z')	ž
p (p')	pl'
b (b')	bl'
f (f')	fl'
v (v')	vl'
m (m')	ml'
n (n')	bare softening
r (r')	bare softening
l (l')	bare softening