In this lesson the Russian language concept we will learn is 'plurals'. Naturally this topic is a very important as it is used in all aspects of the language. In English we create a plural by simply adding the letter 's'. In Russian things are not so simple. As the Russian language is based on the case system there are different plurals in each case. Don’t worry this is not as hard as it sounds, you will quickly learn to recognise and form plurals. Often it is best to practice grammar concepts with words that you already know, or are the same in your native language, that way your brain will get used to hearing the different cases.

Most Russian language resources teach plurals as they teach each case. Consequently a number of students struggle to master plurals for some time, as they are too busy worrying about learning each case. However we feel it would be more logical to teach plurals as one lesson on it's own. By now you should have a good understanding of the nominative, accusative and genitive cases. These three cases are the most important when it comes to plurals, it is less common to use plurals in the other cases.

Plural nouns follow their expected cases in the case system. The main exception to this rule is when you are talking about exact quantities. When you refer to exact quantities (eg ‘10 roubles’) you normally use the genitive case.

**Forming Plurals.**

First we will show you how to form the plurals in each of the cases we have already learnt. It is quite a bit of information to present all at once, but don’t worry, you will find it easier to learn and remember when you see it used in context later in the lesson.

The Nominative Case - Plural (Subject)

In Russian, in the nominative case, you make a plural by using the letters "и", "ы", "я" or "а".

For masculine nouns:  
    If the word ends in a consonant, add “ы”.  
    Replace “й” with “и”  
    Replace “ь” with “и”

For feminine nouns:  
    Replace “я” with “и”  
    Replace “ь” with “и”  
    Replace “а” with “ы” (unless previous consonant is Г, К, Х, Ж, Ч, Ш, Щ then replace with "и" as per the [spelling rules](https://www.russianlessons.net/grammar/spelling_rules.php).)

For neuter nouns:  
    Replace “о” with “а”  
    Replace “е” with “я” (don't forget the [spelling rules](https://www.russianlessons.net/grammar/spelling_rules.php))

Some examples:  
студент (student) - студенты (students)  
газета (newspaper) - газеты (newspapers)  
здание (building) - здания (buildings)

The Accusative Case - Plural (Direct Object)

For plural nouns the accusative case just 'borrows' from the other cases, depending on whether the object is animate or not.

Inanimate nouns (not-alive) : Same as the nominative plural.  
Animate nouns (alive) : Same as the genitive plural.

The Genitive Case - Plural (Possession)

The genitive seems to have the most rules for the plural, but it generally ends in -ов (masculine) or it is cut short (feminine). These rules refer to converting nouns from the nominative singular (dictionary form).

For masculine nouns:  
    If ends in "ж,ч,ш,щ,ь" then add "ей"  
    If ends in "й, ц" (stressed) add "ев"  
    All other masculine nouns end in "ов"

For feminine nouns:  
    If ends in "а" then drop "а" (no ending)  
    If ends in [consonant] "я" then "ь"  
    If ends in [vowel] "я" then "й"  
    If ends in "ь" then add "ей"  
    Note: If a feminine word ends in a double consonant it is quite common for a vowel (о, е) to be inserted for easy pronunciation. (марка - марок, англичанка - англичанок, девушка - девушек)

For neuter nouns:  
    If ends in "о" then drop "о" (no ending)  
    If ends in "е" becomes "ей"  
    If ends in "ие" becomes "ий"

Some examples:  
студент - студентов (students')  
газета - газет (newspapers')  
здание - зданий (buildings')

**General use of plurals.**

The Russian language works a little differently depending on whether you are counting something, or whether you are just using general plurals. For example in a sentence like “The books are on the table” we don’t specify how many books are on the shelf. In this instance you should just have the word ‘books’ in it’s normal case, but in the plural form. Here are some examples.

**Книги на столе** - The books are on the table.

**Анна любит книги** - Anna loves books.

**Plurals with numbers**

In the situation where you would like to specify how many books there are you will need to use the genitive case. Its kind of like saying “2 of books” or “10 of roubles”. This may feel a little strange at first, but it will become natural as you learn and hear more of the language. You will hear this quite often when you are talking about amounts of money.

Occasionally we use a similar construction in English “hundreds of dollars” or “a lot of money”, but in Russian we use it for all numbers.

Ok, now that we understand when to use counting-plurals, let’s see how to use them.

Numbers ending in : 1

If the number is 1, or the number ends in the word 'один' (example: 1, 21, 61) (but not 11), then you should use the case (singular) that is suitable for the position in the sentence. The number one declines like an adjective. Here are some examples.

Play**одна девушка** - one girl

Play**Я знаю одну девушку** - I know one girl

**один рубль** - one rouble

**двадцать один рубль** - 21 roubles

**один доллар** - one dollar

Numbers ending in : 2,3,4

If the number, or the last digit of the number is 2, 3 or 4, (example: 22, 42, 103, 4) (but not 12, 13 & 14), then you should use the genitive singular case.. Here are some examples.

Play**три рубля** - three roubles

Play**четыре рубля** - four roubles

Play**две книги** - two books

Play**три собаки** - three dogs

Play**четыре доллара** - four dollars

Play**четыре студента** - four students

Play**три газеты** - three newspapers

Numbers ending in : 5,6,7,8,9,0, -надцать

If the number ends in any other digit you should use the genitive plural. All the 'teens' (-надцать) fit in to this catagory (11, 12, 13, 14, etc)

Play**пять рублей** - five roubles

Play**десять рублей** - ten roubles

Play**сто рублей** - one hundred roubles

Play**сто долларов** - one hundred dollars

Play**шесть книг** - six books

Play**семь газет** - seven newspapers

Play**восемь зданий** - eight buildings

Play**девять собак** - nine dogs

Play**десять студентов** - ten students

Nobody really knows why we use two different plural formations in the Russian language. To help you get used to this concept, try using plurals that involve money. You are probably quite used to hearing the words “rouble” or “dollar”, so if you practice pronouncing these words in the different cases to form plurals your brain should be able to become accustomed to this concept very quickly.

So in summary...

Quantity ends in 1 - As per position in the sentence.

Quantity ends in 2,3,4 - Genitive Singular.

Quantity ends in 5,6,7,8,9,0,-надцать - Genitive Plural

General Quantity - Genitive Case (Singular or Plural depending on context.)

Quantity not specified - Use the case that is appropriate to the sentence position.

**Expressing Your Age in Russian**

When talking about your age you need to know the word ‘years’. In Russian this word has an irregular plural:

1: **год**  
2-4: **года**  
5-0: **лет**

**Сколько вам лет?** - How old are you?

**Мне восемнадцать лет**- I am 18 years old

**Мне двадцать три года**- I am 23 years old.

Notice that the dative case is used for the pronouns. This is occurs often when you are expressing the state of something. (Lit: To me there are 16 years). Much like “Мне холодно” - “I am cold” (lit: to me it’s cold). You will learn more about this in the lesson 13 - the dative case.