

## Grammar 12—Declension of Names

A person's given name (also known as first name or forename) is declined using one of the standard noun declensions. Some foreign names cannot be declined because the Russian declension rules do not cover them.

### See Also

- [Grammar 5—Russian Case Charts](#)
- [Alphabet 5—Spelling of Biblical Names](#)

If you are still struggling with the Russian cases, names which you do not have to decline may sound wonderful, but in the long run they are very inconvenient because you cannot decline them even when you really need to. For example, you cannot really say “This<sup>1</sup> is Ann's grandmother.” It comes out sounding like “This is Ann grandmother.” That is why Russians name their daughters Anna, Susanna, Irina, and Katerina rather than the awkward Ann, Susan, Irene, and Katherine.

In many English-speaking cultures the spelling and pronunciation of one's name is a matter of personal choice and expression which others are called on to respect. So Anne of Green Gables announces that she is Anne with an E and a man with “Stephan” written on his name tag tells you the correct pronunciation is “Steven”. In contrast Russians and other Slavic peoples are more likely to see the spelling and pronunciation of names as a function of the language being spoken. So do not be surprised or offended if your new friends use a form of your name which is more familiar to them.

### Masculine Given Names

Most Russian given names for males end in a consonant. They are declined as first declension masculine nouns. Foreign male names which end in a consonant must be declined in the same way:

Он Иван сын Ивана.	He is Ivan the son of Ivan.
Он Джон сын Джона.	He is John the son of John.
Он друг Робина Гуда.	He is a friend of Robin Hood.
Он Андрей сын Андрея.	He is Andrew the son of Andrew.

Some Russian male names or nicknames end in -а or -я. They are declined as second declension nouns (a group to which most feminine nouns also belong):

Он Саша сын Саши.	He is Sasha the son of Sasha.
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Some foreign names for males end in -о. They are not declined:

Он Эдуардо сын Эдуардо.	He is Eduardo the son of Eduardo.
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English diminutives ending in -у are not declined:

Он Джони сын Джони.	He is Johnny son of Johnny.
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### Feminine Given Names

Russian female names end in -а or -я. They are declined as second declension feminine nouns:

Она Анна дочь Анны.	She is Anna the daughter of Anna.
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A few Biblical feminine names end in -ь and so are declined as third declension nouns:

Она Ноеминь дочь Ноемини.	She is Naomi daughter of Naomi.
Она Руфь дочь Руфи.	She is Ruth daughter of Ruth.

Feminine names which end in a consonant cannot be declined even when they look like first declension nouns:

Она Робин дочи Робин.	She is Robin daughter of Robin.
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Feminine names which end in a vowel other than -а or -я also cannot be declined:

Она Кэйдди дочь Кэйдди.	She is Cadie daughter of Cadie.
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