

Vocabulary 14—Verb Prefixes

Russians put prefixes on their verbs in order to create new meanings or shades of meaning. If you learn the meanings of the most common prefixes, you will often be able to guess what a familiar verb means with a different prefix. In the table below we show some common prefixes and how they alter the meanings of verbs.

The use of prefixes is so popular that some verbs are seldom or never used without them. Where this is the case in standard modern Russian, we note it below.

The verb prefixes can also sometimes be used with nouns and adjectives, especially if these are derived from verbs.

Prefix	New Meaning Imparted	Examples
В-/ВО-	entry into an enclosed space	идти—to walk in a certain direction войти—to enter an enclosed space душа—soul воодушевить—to inspire, to enthuse
ВОС-	a rising up, an ascending	стать—to stand восстать—to rise up (in the sense of rebel) питать—to nourish воспитать—to rear (a child for example) становиться—to become восстановить—to restore, rebuild
ВЫ-	an emergence from an enclosed space	идти—to walk in a certain direction выйти—to exit an enclosed space лезть—to crawl вылезть—to crawl out копать—to dig выкопать—to dig out
ЗА-	a moving off to one side	идти—to walk in a certain direction зайти—to turn aside, to make a stop during a journey ложить—to lay (use without a prefix is non-standard) заложить—to set aside, to pile up, to pawn заложник—a hostage менять—to change заменить—to replace
ИЗ-/ИС-	an exhausting	черпать—to dip in a container and draw out liquid исчерпывать—to get out everything possible полный—round, fat, full исполнить—to fulfill теребить—to pull at something, to pluck истребить—to annihilate следовать—to follow исследовать—to study thoroughly, to investigate носить—to care, to wear износиться—to become worn out вращать—to rotate извращать—to subvert извращение—a perversion

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на-	a falling or placement upon something	идти—to walk in a certain direction найти—to find пасть—to fall напасть—to attack строить—to build, to set in order настроить—to prepare for use, adjust, configure стоять—to stand настоящий—actual сорить—to toss litter насорить—to cover in litter
о-/об-	a going around, a visiting of all sides	идти—to walk in a certain direction обойти—to bypass, to walk around жигать—to burn something (archaic without prefix) обжигать—to scorch, to singe круг—a circle окружной—encircling нять—to take (dialectal without any prefix) обнять—to embrace
от-/ото-	a moving back	идти—to walk in a certain direction отойти—to step back печать—a seal, a stamp отпечатать—to print слать—to send отослать—to send away
пере-	a moving through	брать—to pick up перебрать—to sort out пугать—to try to frighten, to threaten перепугать—to thoroughly frighten править—to lead, to rule переправа—a river ford
по-	to some extent	кушать—to eat покушать—to have something to eat бегать—to run побег—an escape низкий—low понизиться—to debase oneself
под-	a placing under something	строить—to build, to set up подстроить—to arrange for something to happen нять—to take (dialectal without any prefix) поднять—to raise рыть—to burrow дрыть—to undermine

при-	a bringing or coming near, an attaching	<p>близить—to bring near (rare without prefix)</p> <p>приблизить—to bring near</p> <p>идти—to walk in a certain direction</p> <p>прийти—to arrive</p> <p>нять—to take (dialectal without any prefix)</p> <p>принять—accept, adopt</p>
пре-	a going too far	<p>дать—to give</p> <p>предать—to betray</p> <p>ступить—to step</p> <p>преступить—to violate</p> <p>преступление—a crime</p> <p>действовать—to act</p> <p>прелюбодействовать—to commit adultery</p> <p>деяние—an act</p> <p>прелюбодеяние—adultery</p>
про-	a passing along or through	<p>водить—to lead</p> <p>проводить—to conduct along a course</p> <p>провод—an electrical conductor</p> <p>расти—to grow</p> <p>произрастать—to raise (a plant for instance)</p>
раз-/рас-	a distribution or scattering	<p>носить—to carry</p> <p>разносить—to deliver to multiple locations</p> <p>бросать—to throw</p> <p>разбросать—to scatter</p> <p>водить—to lead</p> <p>разводиться—to divorce</p> <p>глас—voice</p> <p>разгласить—to announce to a wide audience</p> <p>точить—to wear down</p> <p>расточительство—profligacy</p> <p>кладывать—to lay (archaic without prefix)</p> <p>раскладывать—to set up, to spread out</p>
с-/со-	a descent or a coming together	<p>ехать—to travel by vehicle</p> <p>съехать—to leave a road</p> <p>идти—to walk in a certain direction</p> <p>сойти—to go down (such as to the town)</p> <p>ставить—to place something in an upright position</p> <p>составить—to compose, to assemble</p> <p>кладывать—to lay (rare without prefix)</p> <p>складывать—to fold</p> <p>близить—to bring near (archaic without prefix)</p> <p>сблизить—to bring together</p>

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y-	a departing or putting away	идти—to walk in a certain direction уйти—to depart on foot класть—to lay (rare without prefix) укладывать—to put into storage становиться—to become установить—to set up, to establish
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