

## Reading List for Beginners Russian (updated summer 2023)

Congratulations on your offer of a place to study Russian at New College – we look forward to your joining the vibrant community of modern linguists in the college and hope you enjoy the four years of your course. The beginners' course in Russian at Oxford, for which you have been offered a place, is intended for students who have no experience of the language. We aim to give a thorough grounding in Russian from the beginning, and therefore recommend that you do not embark on studying Russian by yourself or on other courses before you come here, partly because you may find yourself marking time when you arrive in Oxford, but mainly because we think you are likely to get off to a less satisfactory start. Familiarizing yourself with the alphabet, for example, is no bad thing, but all grammar books explain features differently, and you can end up confused and having to unlearn bad habits. In fact, one of the very best things you can do between now and arriving in Oxford in October is to concentrate on consolidating your command of your *other* language, so please take seriously the recommendations for further reading and preparation from your tutors in that subject.

If you do have time to spend on preparation for the beginners' course in Russian, there is plenty that you can usefully do without starting to learn the language on your own. It would be a good idea to familiarize yourself with the historical and cultural background to the course by exploring some general introductions to Russian history and literature, e.g.:

Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* and *A History of The Soviet Union*  
Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Putin*  
V. Terras, *A History of Russian Literature*  
D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian literature*  
Catriona Kelly, *Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction*  
Caryl Emerson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*

Please note, you are not required to buy *any* of these books in advance. These are just suggestions for library browsing and borrowing.

If you wish to acquire any reference works, then you might find the following useful throughout the course (again, you are *not* required to acquire these and copies will be available in college and university libraries):

Edwina J. Cruise, *English Grammar for Students of Russian*  
P. Falla, M. Wheeler, B. Unbegaun, C. Howlett, *The Oxford Russian Dictionary*  
D. Offord, *Modern Russian. An Advanced Grammar Course*, Bristol Classical Press  
T. Wade, *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* and *A Russian Grammar Workbook*

You should, though, make sure that you have obtained the course book that you will be using in the first year: Sarah Smyth and Elena V. Crosbie, *Rus: A Comprehensive Course in Russian*. You won't need to buy the accompanying CDs and tapes, as the Faculty has online copies of those for you to use when you get here.

You could also start exploring Russian literature in translation: prose by Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov's plays and short stories, Teffi, Bulgakov, Babel, Zamyatin, Solzhenitsyn, Petrushevskaya, Ulitskaya and Alexievich, for example.

As you will have gathered from your interview in December, one of the requirements for our beginners' course in Russian is that you should spend the second year on an approved language course. In the past, this has been on a specially designed eight-month course arranged in Yaroslavl for our Oxford students by a British charitable organization, Russian Language Undergraduate Studies Ltd ([www.rlus.co.uk](http://www.rlus.co.uk)), and their local Russian partner, Yaroslavl State University. The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed matters, of course, and our current beginners are going to be spending their year abroad in Tallinn, Estonia. We will keep you posted about developments affecting your year group.

Under current arrangements, the fees for the course in Tallinn are paid by the Faculty. As with other year abroad activities, you will need to cover cost of your flights, insurance and visa, and pay for local accommodation and subsistence. All students on the year abroad are liable for a course fee set by the university ([https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees\\_funding/fees/abroad](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees_funding/fees/abroad)). The total cost of the year abroad should not be greater than a year at Oxford, but if you have difficulty in getting the money together, the college and the Faculty may be able to help with small hardship grants, and there may be grants through the UK's Turing scheme.

Once again, congratulations on your offer of a place at Oxford. We look forward to seeing you in person in October!

*Philip Ross Bullock*  
**Professor of Russian Literature and Music**  
**Fellow and Tutor in Russian, Wadham College**  
**Lecturer in Russian, Worcester College**

Email: [philip.bullock@wadham.ox.ac.uk](mailto:philip.bullock@wadham.ox.ac.uk)  
Postal address: Wadham College, Oxford, OX1 3PN