The alphabet Áзбука

1 · 30 letters, read it out loud

The trick: Bulgarian has 30 letters, and each one keeps its sound. Some look and sound like English, some only look familiar, the rest are new. **Under each word:** CAPITALS show the stressed syllable, uh is ъ, zh is the s in pleasure, sht is щ, and y is the y in boy.

Look and sound like English | Look familiar, sound different | New shapes | The soft sign

	Letter	Sounds like	Example
1	А а	a in father	автобу́с av-to-BUS bus
2	Б б	b in book	ба́ба BA-ba grandma
3	В в	v in van	вода́ vo-DA water
4	Г г	g in go, always hard	гора́ go-RA forest
5	Д д	d in day	дете́ de-TE child
6	Е е	e in bed	е́зеро E-ze-ro lake
7	Ж ж	s in pleasure	жена́ zhe-NA woman
8	З з	z in zoo	зи́ма ZI-ma winter
9	И и	ee in see	и́ме I-me name
10	Й й	y in boy and in yes	чай chay tea
11	К к	k in skip	ко́тка KOT-ka cat
12	Л л	l in lamp	луна́ lu-NA moon
13	М м	m in mum	море́ mo-RE sea
14	Н н	n in no	небе́ ne-BE sky
15	О о	o in more, short and round	о́блак OB-lak cloud
16	П п	p in spin	планина́ pla-ni-NA mountain
17	Р р	r with a quick tap of the tongue	ри́ба RI-ba fish
18	С с	s in sun	си́рене SI-re-ne white cheese
19	Т т	t in stop	то́рта TOR-ta cake
20	У у	oo in food, short	у́тро UT-ro morning
21	Ф ф	f in fun	фу́рна FUR-na oven; also a bakery
22	Х х	h, breathy, a soft ch as in loch	хляб hlyab bread
23	Ц ц	ts in cats	цве́те TSVE-te flower
24	Ч ч	ch in chat	ча́ша CHA-sha glass, cup
25	Ш ш	sh in shop	ша́пка SHAP-ka hat
26	Щ щ	sht, as in ashtray: one letter	ща́стие SHTAS-ti-e happiness
27	Ъ ъ	uh, the u in but: a real vowel	ъ́гъл UH-guhl corner
28	Ь ь	only in ьо, said yo	актьо́р ak-TYOR actor
29	Ю ю	yu in you	ю́ли YU-li July
30	Я я	ya in yard	я́бълка YA-buhl-ka apple

Ъ is a real vowel

It sounds like the u in but, and it carries whole syllables: път puht road, сърце́ suhr-TSE heart, Бълга́рия buhl-GA-ri-ya. It's in the very first word you'll say: съм suhm, I am.

Щ, Ю, Я, Й and Ь

Щ is sht: о́ще O-shte still. Ю and Я are yu and ya: юг yug south. Й is a short y: мой moy my. Ь only comes before о, to make yo: шофьо́р sho-FYOR driver.

In italic and handwriting a few letters change shape. Italic д curls up at the top, г looks like a backwards s, т like m, и like u and п like n. By hand, л is often written like an upside-down v.

Д → *д* | Г → *г* | Т → *т* | И → *и* | П → *п* | Л → *л*

How words work Грама́тика

No cases: a Bulgarian noun keeps one form, whatever its job in the sentence. Little words do the work: кафе́ с мля́ко ka-FE s MLYA-ko, coffee with milk; без за́хар bez ZA-har, without sugar.

The goes on the end

-ът

masculine: usually ends in a consonant

магази́н ma-ga-ZIN → магази́нът ma-ga-ZI-nuht, the shop

телефо́н te-le-FON → телефо́нът te-le-FO-nuht, the phone

-та

feminine: usually ends in -а or -я

жена́ zhe-NA → жена́та zhe-NA-ta, the woman

я́бълка YA-buhl-ka → я́бълката YA-buhl-ka-ta, the apple

-то

neuter: usually ends in -о or -е

се́ло SE-lo → се́лото SE-lo-to, the village

кафе́ ka-FE → кафе́то ka-FE-to, the coffee

The famous one: there's no separate word for the, just an ending. A noun without it is a or just the word: кафе́ ka-FE is coffee or a coffee. Баща́ ba-SHTA, father, ends in -а but is masculine, and нощ nosht, night, is feminine. On the next pages the noun wears its gender colour, so you don't have to guess.

Ти or Ви́е

Как си? kak si?
ти: friends, family, kids, anyone your age

Как сте? kak ste?
Ви́е: strangers, older people, at work, and more than one person

To be: съм

аз съм az suhm I am	ти си ti si you are (casual)	той, тя е toy, tya e he, she is	ни́е сме NI-e sme we are	ви́е сте VI-e ste you are (polite, or all of you)	те са te sa they are

Verbs change with the person: говоря, to speak

аз гово́ря az go-VO-rya I speak	ти гово́риш ti go-VO-rish you speak (casual)	той, тя гово́ри toy, tya go-VO-ri he, she speaks	ни́е гово́рим NI-e go-VO-rim we speak	ви́е гово́рите VI-e go-VO-ri-te you speak (polite, or all of you)	те гово́рят te go-VO-ryat they speak

No need for аз: the ending already says who, so Гово́ря. go-VO-rya. is I speak. To say no, put не ne before the verb: Не знам. ne znam. I don't know.

No to-form: да + verb

И́скам да ям.
IS-kam da yam.
I want to eat.

Мо́га да плу́вам.
MO-ga da PLU-vam.
I can swim.

Оби́чам да чета́.
o-BI-cham da che-TA.
I love reading.

A nod can mean no: in Bulgaria, people often shake the head side to side for yes and nod up and down for no. It's a well-known Bulgarian habit, and many Bulgarians switch for visitors. If the head and the words seem to disagree, smile and trust the words: да da is yes, не ne is no.

The first 243 words Пъ́рви ду́ми

How: learn five a day, then hunt for them in Kitsumi subtitles. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Greetings and survival

Здраве́й zdra-VEY
hi, hello *(to one person you know)*

Здраве́йте zdra-VEY-te
hello *(polite, or to a group)*

Добро́ у́тро dob-RO UT-ro
good morning

Добъ́р ден do-BUHR den
good day, hello *(polite)*

Добъ́р ве́чер do-BUHR VE-cher
good evening

Лека́ нощ le-KA nosht
good night

Дови́ждане do-VIZH-da-ne
goodbye

Ча́о CHA-o
bye; also hi *(casual)*

Благодаря́ bla-go-da-RYA
thank you

Мерси́ mer-SI
thanks *(casual, very common)*

Мо́ля MO-lya
please; you're welcome; pardon?

Извине́те iz-vi-NE-te
excuse me, sorry *(polite)*

Извиня́вай iz-vi-NYA-vay
sorry *(casual)*

Да da
yes

Не ne
no; not

Как си? kak si?
how are you? *(casual)*

Как сте? kak ste?
how are you? *(polite)*

Добре́ съм dob-RE suhm
I'm fine

Прия́тно ми е pri-YAT-no mi e
nice to meet you

Не разби́рам ne raz-BI-ram
I don't understand

Не знам ne znam
I don't know

Наздра́ве! naz-DRA-ve!
cheers! *(also bless you)*

Добъ́р апети́т! do-BUHR a-pe-TIT!
enjoy your meal!

Добре́ дошли́! dob-RE dosh-LI!
welcome!

Question words

какво́ kak-VO
what

кой koy
who; which

къде́ kuh-DE
where

откъде́ ot-kuh-DE
where from

кога́ ko-GA
when

защо́ za-SHTO
why

как kak
how

ко́лко KOL-ko
how much, how many

Ко́лко стру́ва? KOL-ko STRU-va?
how much is it?

Какво́ е това́? kak-VO e to-VA?
what is this?

Me and you

аз az
I

ти ti
you *(casual)*

той toy
he

тя tya
she

то to
it

ни́е NI-e
we

ви́е VI-e
you *(polite, or all of you)*

те te
they

мой / мо́я / мо́е moy / MO-ya / MO-e
my *(m / f / n word)*

твой / тво́я / тво́е
tvoy / TVO-ya / TVO-e
your *(casual)*

това́ to-VA
this, that; this is

Little words

и i
and

а a
and, but *(to contrast)*

но no
but

или́ i-LI
or

съ́що SUH-shto
also, too

мно́го MNO-go
very; a lot, many

ма́лко MAL-ko
a little

са́мо SA-mo
only, just

ве́че VE-che
already

о́ще O-shte
still, more

тук tuk
here

там tam
there

с s
with

без bez
without

защо́то za-SHTO-to
because

мо́же би MO-zhe bi
maybe

за za
for

в v
in

Мо́ля does a lot: it means please, you're welcome, and pardon? when you didn't catch something. Благодаря́! bla-go-da-RYA!
Мо́ля! MO-lya! Thank you! You're welcome!

People and time Хо́ра и вре́ме

Family

ма́йка MAY-ka
mother

баща́ ba-SHTA
father *(masculine, despite the -a)*

ма́ма MA-ma
mum

та́тко TAT-ko
dad *(masculine too)*

брат brat
brother

сестра́ ses-TRA
sister

син sin
son

дъщеря́ duh-shte-RYA
daughter

ба́ба BA-ba
grandma

дя́до DYA-do
grandpa *(masculine too)*

чи́чо CHI-cho
uncle

ле́ля LE-lya
aunt

роди́тели ro-DI-te-li
parents *(plural)*

семе́йство se-MEY-stvo
family

People

челове́к cho-VEK
person

хо́ра HO-ra
people *(plural)*

мъж muhzh
man; husband

жена́ zhe-NA
woman; wife

дете́ de-TE
child

деца́ de-TSA
children

момче́ mom-CHE
boy *(neuter)*

моми́че mo-MI-che
girl *(neuter too)*

прия́тел pri-YA-tel
friend *(a man)*; boyfriend

прия́телка pri-YA-tel-ka
friend *(a woman)*; girlfriend

съсе́д suh-SED
neighbour

ле́кар LE-kar
doctor

учи́тел u-CHI-tel
teacher

Things

телефо́н te-le-FON
phone

кни́га KNI-ga
book

пари́ pa-RI
money *(plural)*

ключ klyuch
key

кола́ ko-LA
car

прозо́рец pro-ZO-rets
window

When

днес dnes
today

у́тре UT-re
tomorrow

вче́ра VCHE-ra
yesterday

сега́ se-GA
now

ви́наги VI-na-gi
always

ни́кога NI-ko-ga
never

у́тро UT-ro
morning

ден den
day

ве́чер VE-cher
evening *(feminine, with no -a)*

нощ nosht
night *(feminine, with no -a)*

час chas
hour; also o'clock

вре́ме VRE-me
time; also weather

се́дмица SED-mi-tsa
week

ме́сец ME-sets
month

годи́на go-DI-na
year

Days of the week

понеде́лник po-ne-DEL-nik
Monday

вто́рник VTOR-nik
Tuesday

сря́да SRYA-da
Wednesday

четвъ́ртък chet-VUHR-tuhk
Thursday

пе́тък PE-tuhk
Friday

съ́бота SUH-bo-ta
Saturday

неде́ля ne-DE-lya
Sunday

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ну́ла NU-la	едно́ ed-NO	две dve	три tri	че́тири CHE-ti-ri	пет pet	шест shest	се́дем SE-dem	о́сем O-sem	де́вет DE-vet

10	11	12	20	30	40	50	100	200	1,000
де́сет DE-set	едина́десет e-di-NA-de-set	двана́десет dva-NA-de-set	два́десет DVA-de-set	три́десет TRI-de-set	четири́десет che-ti-RI-de-set	петдесе́т pet-de-SET	сто sto	две́ста DVE-sta	хи́ляда HI-lya-da

One and two change: they follow the gender: еди́н чай e-DIN chay, една́ би́ра ed-NA BI-ra, едно́ кафе́ ed-NO ka-FE; два ча́я dva CHA-ya, but две би́ри dve BI-ri. Counting, you say едно́, две, три ed-NO, dve, tri.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: понеде́лник po-ne-DEL-nik, януа́ри ya-nu-A-ri, January. On Monday is в понеде́лник v po-ne-DEL-nik.

Food, places, verbs Храна́ и глаго́ли

Food and drink

вода́ vo-DA
water

кафе́ ka-FE
coffee *(neuter)*

чай chay
tea

мля́ко MLYA-ko
milk

би́ра BI-ra
beer

ви́но VI-no
wine

хляб hlyab
bread

си́рене SI-re-ne
white brined cheese, on almost everything

кашкава́л kash-ka-VAL
yellow cheese

месо́ me-SO
meat

ри́ба RI-ba
fish

ба́ница BA-ni-tsa
banitsa, flaky pastry with egg and cheese

шо́пска сала́та SHOP-ska sa-LA-ta
shopska salad: tomato, cucumber, pepper, grated cheese

ки́село мля́ко KI-se-lo MLYA-ko
yoghurt *(it means sour milk)*, a national pride

айря́н ay-RYAN
ayran, a cold drink of yoghurt, water and salt

тарато́р ta-ra-TOR
cold yoghurt and cucumber soup

лю́теница LYU-te-ni-tsa
roasted pepper and tomato spread

раки́я ra-KI-ya
rakia, fruit brandy

заку́ска za-KUS-ka
breakfast

обя́д o-BYAD
lunch

вече́ря ve-CHE-rya
dinner

Гла́ден съм GLA-den suhm
I'm hungry *(a woman says гла́дна)*

Сме́тката, мо́ля SMET-ka-ta, MO-lya
the bill, please

Places

къ́ща KUH-shta
house

вкъ́щи VKUH-shti
at home

ра́бота RA-bo-ta
work, job

учи́лище u-CHI-li-shte
school

рестора́нт res-to-RANT
restaurant

кафене́ ka-fe-NE
café

бо́лница BOL-ni-tsa
hospital

га́ра GA-ra
train station

магази́н ma-ga-ZIN
shop

град grad
town, city

се́ло SE-lo
village

у́лица U-li-tsa
street

площа́д plosh-TAD
square

тоале́тна to-a-LET-na
toilet

море́ mo-RE
sea

Со́фия SO-fi-ya
Sofia

Бълга́рия buhl-GA-ri-ya
Bulgaria

Verbs: the аз form

съм suhm
be *(see page 2)*

и́мам I-mam
have

хо́дя HO-dya
go *(on foot)*, walk

оти́вам o-TI-vam
go *(somewhere)*

и́двам ID-vam
come

ям yam
eat

пи́я PI-ya
drink

ви́ждам VIZH-dam
see

гле́дам GLE-dam
watch, look

пра́вя PRA-vya
do, make

спя spya
sleep

гово́ря go-VO-rya
speak, talk

разби́рам raz-BI-ram
understand

знам znam
know

и́скам IS-kam
want

мо́га MO-ga
can

оби́чам o-BI-cham
love; also like

живе́я zhi-VE-ya
live

рабо́тя ra-BO-tya
work

у́ча U-cha
learn, study

ча́кам CHA-kam
wait

Describing words

добъ́р / лош do-BUHR / losh
good / bad

голя́м / ма́лък go-LYAM / MA-luhk
big / small

то́пъл / студе́н TO-puhl / stu-DEN
warm / cold

нов / стар nov / star
new / old

скъп / е́втин skuhp / EV-tin
expensive; also dear / cheap

краси́в kra-SIV
beautiful

вку́сен VKU-sen
tasty, delicious

интере́сен in-te-RE-sen
interesting

щастли́в shtast-LIV
happy

One form to learn: Bulgarian verbs have no to-form. The dictionary lists the аз form, so that's the one to learn: и́скам IS-kam, I want. For to, add да: И́скам да ям. IS-kam da yam. I want to eat.

Describing words agree: the list shows the masculine form. With a feminine noun it usually adds -a, with a neuter one -о: нов телефо́н nov te-le-FON, но́ва кола́ NO-va ko-LA, но́во кафе́ NO-vo ka-FE.

Show words Ду́ми от фи́лми

Reactions

Бра́во! BRA-vo!
well done!

Наи́стина ли? na-IS-ti-na li?
really?

Сериозно? se-ri-OZ-no?
seriously?

Су́пер! SU-per!
great!

Ле́ле! LE-le!
oh my! wow! oh no!

А́йде! AY-de!
come on! let's go!

Добре́ dob-RE
OK, fine, good

Ня́ма пробле́м
NYA-ma prob-LEM
no problem

Ей! ey!
hey!

Я́ко! YA-ko!
cool! *(slang)*

Е́то! E-to!
here! there you go!

Разби́ра се raz-BI-ra se
of course *(it means it's understood)*

У́жас! U-zhas!
how awful!

Сти́га! STI-ga!
enough! stop it! also no way!

Ура́! u-RA!
hooray!

The big scenes

Оби́чам те o-BI-cham te
I love you

Ли́псваш ми LIPS-vash mi
I miss you *(it means you are missing to me)*

Вси́чко ще бъ́де наре́д
VSICH-ko shte BUH-de na-RED
everything will be all right

Внима́вай! vni-MA-vay!
watch out! careful!

По́мощ! PO-mosht!
help!

Оста́ви ме на ми́ра
os-TA-vi me na MI-ra
leave me alone *(it means leave me in peace)*

Какво́ ста́на? kak-VO STA-na?
what happened?

Не се притесня́вай
ne se pri-tes-NYA-vay
don't worry

Прости́ ми pros-TI mi
forgive me

What to call people

ми́ло MI-lo
dear, sweetie *(to anyone close)*

скъ́па / скъ́пи
SKUH-pa / SKUH-pi
darling, dear *(to a woman / a man)*

брат / бра́те brat / BRA-te
bro, mate *(to a friend; the second when you call him)*

ба́те BA-te
big brother; also a friendly word for an older man

ка́ко KA-ko
big sister; also for an older woman

господи́н / госпо́жа
gos-po-DIN / gos-PO-zha
sir / madam; Mr / Mrs before a name

А́йде, the word everywhere: come on, let's go, hurry up. With ча́о CHA-o it's a quick goodbye: А́йде, ча́о! AY-de, CHA-o! Right, bye!

Calling someone changes the word: Ива́н i-VAN becomes Ива́не! i-VA-ne!, ба́ба BA-ba becomes ба́бо! BA-bo! It sounds warm and close, and you'll hear it in every scene.

Strong words: Bulgarian has strong swear words too, and you'll hear them on screen, even between friends. They hit harder than the subtitles show: recognise them, but don't say them. Ле́ле! LE-le! is the one you can say in front of anyone.

Practice Упражне́ние

How: cover the orange and grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Bulgarian out loud, using the stress marks, then slide the paper down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Questions: add ли li after the word you ask about: Гово́рите ли англи́йски? go-VO-ri-te li an-GLIY-ski? Do you speak English?

Read these sentences

1. Здраве́й, ка́звам се Ма́рия.
   zdra-VEY, KAZ-vam se MA-ri-ya.
   Hi, my name is Maria.

2. Откъде́ си?
   ot-kuh-DE si?
   Where are you from?

3. Извине́те, къде́ е тоале́тната?
   iz-vi-NE-te, kuh-DE e to-a-LET-na-ta?
   Excuse me, where's the toilet?

4. Едно́ кафе́, мо́ля.
   ed-NO ka-FE, MO-lya.
   One coffee, please.

5. Гово́ря ма́лко бълга́рски.
   go-VO-rya MAL-ko buhl-GAR-ski.
   I speak a little Bulgarian.

6. Днес е мно́го студе́но.
   dnes e MNO-go stu-DE-no.
   It's very cold today.

7. У́тре оти́вам в Со́фия.
   UT-re o-TI-vam v SO-fi-ya.
   Tomorrow I'm going to Sofia.

8. Ба́ницата е мно́го вку́сна!
   BA-ni-tsa-ta e MNO-go VKUS-na!
   The banitsa is delicious!

9. А́йде, да тръ́гваме!
   AY-de, da TRUHG-va-me!
   Come on, let's go!

10. Благодаря́ за вси́чко!
    bla-go-da-RYA za VSICH-ko!
    Thank you for everything!

Vowels relax: in everyday speech, an unstressed a sounds close to ъ, and an unstressed o close to y. Say every letter as written and you'll be understood.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Bulgarian subtitles to see what it means.