The alphabet Абе́тка

1 · 33 letters, read it out loud

The trick: Ukrainian has 33 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, y is the short i in bit, i is ee, kh is the ch in loch, zh is the s in pleasure, and ' is a soft sound.

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

	Letter	Name	Sounds like	Example
1	А а	а a	a in father	абе́тка a-BET-ka alphabet
2	Б б	бе be	b in book	бабу́ся ba-BU-sya grandma
3	В в	ве ve	v in van; at the end of a syllable, close to w	ве́чір VE-chir evening
4	Г г	ге he	a soft, breathy h, like h in hello, but voiced	гора́ ho-RA mountain
5	Ґ ґ	ґе ge	a hard g, as in go	ґу́дзик GU-dzyk button
6	Д д	де de	d in day	дім dim house, home
7	Е е	е e	e in bed	е́хо E-kho echo
8	Є є	є ye	ye in yes	єно́т ye-NOT raccoon
9	Ж ж	же zhe	s in pleasure	жа́ба ZHA-ba frog
10	З з	зе ze	z in zoo	зима́ zy-MA winter
11	И и	и y	i in bit, short	син syn son
12	І і	і i	ee in see	ліс lis forest
13	Ї ї	ї yi	yi in yield, always two sounds	їжа́к yi-ZHAK hedgehog
14	Й й	йот yot	y in boy and in yes	йо́гурт YO-hurt yogurt
15	К к	ка ka	k in skip	кіт kit cat
16	Л л	ел el	l in lamp	лев lev lion
17	М м	ем em	m in mum	мо́ре MO-re sea
18	Н н	ен en	n in no	не́бо NE-bo sky
19	О о	о o	o in more, short and round	о́зеро O-ze-ro lake
20	П п	пе pe	p in spin	пес pes dog
21	Р р	ер er	r with a quick roll of the tongue	рука́ ru-KA hand, arm
22	С с	ес es	s in sun	сир syr cheese
23	Т т	те te	t in stop	тут tut here
24	У у	у u	oo in food, short	у́смішка US-mish-ka smile
25	Ф ф	еф ef	f in fun	фо́то FO-to photo
26	Х х	ха kha	ch in Scottish loch	ха́та KHA-ta house, cottage
27	Ц ц	це tse	ts in cats	цу́кор TSU-kor sugar
28	Ч ч	че che	ch in chat	чай chai tea
29	Ш ш	ша sha	sh in shop	шко́ла SHKO-la school
30	Щ щ	ща shcha	shch, as in fresh cheese	ща́стя SHCHAS-tya happiness
31	Ь ь	м’яки́й знак mya-KYI znak	no sound of its own; it softens the letter before	сіль sil' salt
32	Ю ю	ю yu	yu in you	ю́шка YUSH-ka clear soup
33	Я я	я ya	ya in yard	я́блуко YA-blu-ko apple

Г and Ґ

Г is soft and breathy, the h of hello with your voice in it: гора́ ho-RA mountain, голова́ ho-lo-VA head. Ґ is a hard g, and fewer words use it: ґа́нок GA-nok porch, ґу́дзик GU-dzyk button.

И and І

И is short, the i in bit. І is long, the ee in see. Mix them up and the word changes: лис lys fox, ліс lis forest. Щ is one letter for shch: борщ borshch borshch.

Reading rules Як чита́ти

Good news: once you know the letters, you can read any Ukrainian word out loud. Vowels are clear and full, even without stress, and that's what makes Ukrainian sound so melodic. Let every vowel ring.

Say every letter

Ukrainian is read as it's written. Every letter is said: no silent letters, and no swallowed vowels. О is always o, stressed or not.

молоко́ mo-lo-KO
milk

ма́ма MA-ma
mum

Stress moves

Normal texts don't mark stress. This sheet does, with a small line over the vowel. Stress can move between forms of a word, and sometimes it changes the meaning.

рука́ / ру́ки ru-KA / RU-ky
hand / hands

за́мок / замо́к ZA-mok / za-MOK
castle / lock

The soft sign softens

ь has no sound of its own. It softens the letter before it: lift the middle of your tongue, as if a tiny y follows.

кінь kin'
horse

день den'
day

The apostrophe keeps letters apart

The letter before it stays hard, and я, ю, є, ї after it are said ya, yu, ye, yi.

п'ять pyat'
five

сім'я́ sim-YA
family

м'яч myach
ball

Я, Ю, Є after a consonant

At the start of a word or after a vowel, they are two sounds: ya, yu, ye. After a consonant, they soften it instead. Ї is always yi, everywhere.

моя́ mo-YA
my

дя́кую DYA-ku-yu
thank you

Ки́їв KY-yiv
Kyiv

В at the end sounds like w

At the end of a syllable, в is said close to the w in now.

вовк vovk
wolf

був buv
was

Voiced stays voiced

Б, д, з, ж and г keep their voice at the end of a word. Don't turn b into p.

хліб khlib
bread

дуб dub
oak

Two letters, one sound

Дж is j in jam, and дз is ds in words. Say each pair as one sound.

джерело́ dzhe-re-LO
spring of water

дзвін dzvin
bell

Double letters are long

Hold a doubled letter a little longer, and don't skip it.

життя́ zhyt-TYA
life

знання́ znan-NYA
knowledge

Where do I find the stress? Dictionaries mark it, and this sheet does too. In books, signs and subtitles it isn't written, so you learn it with each word, by ear.

Print and italic Курси́в

Why it matters: books, signs and subtitles sometimes use italic, and in italic a few Ukrainian letters change shape. Each box shows a letter in print on top and in italic below.

All 33 letters

А а *А а*	Б б *Б б*	В в *В в*	Г г *Г г*	Ґ ґ *Ґ ґ*	Д д *Д д*	Е е *Е е*	Є є *Є є*	Ж ж *Ж ж*	З з *З з*	И и *И и*
І і *І і*	Ї ї *Ї ї*	Й й *Й й*	К к *К к*	Л л *Л л*	М м *М м*	Н н *Н н*	О о *О о*	П п *П п*	Р р *Р р*	С с *С с*
Т т *Т т*	У у *У у*	Ф ф *Ф ф*	Х х *Х х*	Ц ц *Ц ц*	Ч ч *Ч ч*	Ш ш *Ш ш*	Щ щ *Щ щ*	Ь ь *Ь ь*	Ю ю *Ю ю*	Я я *Я я*

The eight that change the most

б → *б*	в → *в*	г → *г*	д → *д*	и → *и*	й → *й*	п → *п*	т → *т*

Watch for these: italic и looks like u, й like ŭ, п like n, т like m, and д like g. The letter is the same, only the shape changes.

Read them in italic

тут *тут* tut here	ми *ми* my we	під *під* pid under	гриби́ *гриби́* hry-BY mushrooms	дя́кую *дя́кую* DYA-ku-yu thank you

Handwriting: Ukrainians write by hand in shapes very close to the italic ones. Learn to read italic, and handwritten notes and cards get much easier too.

Practice Пра́ктика

How: cover the orange lines and the grey meanings with a strip of paper. Read each word out loud, using the stress mark, then slide the paper down to check. Can you read them all without peeking? You've got it.

16 everyday words

Приві́т pry-VIT hi	Дя́кую DYA-ku-yu thank you	Так tak yes	Ні ni no
Будь ла́ска bud' LAS-ka please; you're welcome	До поба́чення do po-BA-chen-nya goodbye	До́брий день DOB-ryi den' good afternoon, hello	ма́ма MA-ma mum
та́то TA-to dad	вода́ vo-DA water	хліб khlib bread	ки́цька KYTS'-ka kitty, cat
со́нце SON-tse sun	сім’я́ sim-YA family	Украї́на u-kra-YI-na Ukraine	Ки́їв KY-yiv Kyiv

Three short sentences

1. Як спра́ви?
   yak SPRA-vy?
   How are you? (it means how are things?)

2. Мене́ зва́ти ...
   me-NE ZVA-ty ...
   My name is ...

3. Сла́ва Украї́ні! Геро́ям сла́ва!
   SLA-va u-kra-YI-ni! he-RO-yam SLA-va!
   Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes! A greeting you'll hear all over Ukraine, with its reply.

Questions: keep the same words and raise your voice at the end. Ти студе́нт? ty stu-DENT? Are you a student?

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