

НАДО

НУЖНО

How to Express
Necessity or Obligation
in Russian



"**Надо**" [nada] and "**нужно**" [noozhna] are both commonly used in Russian to express necessity or obligation. They function as the *predicate* (main verb) in a sentence.

They are *impersonal*, meaning they don't change form based on person, number, or gender.

Grammatical structure:

dative case

[To whom] + **надо/нужно** + [what to do]
infinitive verb

Мне надо идти.

I need to go.

Ему надо отдохнуть.

He needs to rest.

Нужно закончить работу.

It's necessary to finish the work.

Надо беречь природу.

It's necessary to protect nature.

"Нужно" is more formal and is more often found in written language.

"**Не надо/нужно**" is the negative form and is used to express that something is not necessary, shouldn't be done, or isn't needed.

Завтра мне не надо на работу.

I don't have to go to work tomorrow.

Не надо волноваться.

There's no need to worry.

НАДО and **НУЖНО** can be used in the future and past tenses.

To express "need" or "must" in the future tense, you can use **будет** (3rd person singular future tense form of the verb "быть").

Надо будет позвонить ей позже.

It will be necessary to call her later. (*I/we/anyone should call her later.*)

To express "need" or "must" in the past tense, you can use **было** (past tense form of the verb "быть" in the neuter gender, singular form).

Ей надо было сказать правду.

She should have told the truth.

"**Надо**" and "**нужно**" can often be replaced by "**должен**", which means "must" or "should". However, the grammatical structure changes:

[Who (nominative)] + **должен/должна/должно/должны** + [infinitive]

Я должен больше тренироваться.

I should exercise more.

"**Должен**" changes according to the gender and number of the subject:

должен - masculine

должна - feminine

должно - neuter

должны - plural

- **Мне надо идти.** → **Я должен идти.** (I need to go. → I must go.)
- **Ей нужно учиться.** → **Она должна учиться.** (She needs to study. → She must study.)
- **Нам нужно работать.** → **Мы должны работать.** (We need to work. → We must work.)

Note that while "надо" and "нужно" are impersonal constructions, "должен" requires a subject and agrees with it in gender and number.

In more formal or official contexts, Russian also uses "**следует**" (*one should, it is advisable*) and "**необходимо**" (*it is necessary, it is essential*) as alternatives to "надо" and "нужно". These words carry a stronger sense of obligation or necessity and are often found in official documents, academic writing, or formal speech.

Examples:

Необходимо принять меры по улучшению ситуации.

It is necessary to take measures to improve the situation.

Студентам необходимо сдать все экзамены до конца семестра.

It is essential for students to pass all exams by the end of the semester.

Вам следует обратиться к специалисту.

You should consult a specialist.

Руководству необходимо пересмотреть текущую политику.

The management needs to review the current policy.

В данной ситуации следует действовать осторожно.

In this situation, one should act cautiously.

Like "надо" and "нужно", both "следует" and "необходимо" are used with the dative case to indicate who should perform the action.

Here are some more examples of how to use "надо" and "нужно" in Russian, so you can get a better grasp on it.

Надо подумать об этом. - It's necessary to think about this.

Нужно быть осторожнее. - One needs to be more careful.

Нам **надо** поговорить. - We need to talk.

Надо спешить. - It's necessary to hurry.

Тебе **надо** больше спать. - You need to sleep more.

Не **надо** грустить. - Don't be sad. (*You don't need to be sad.*)

Надо починить крышу. - The roof needs to be fixed.

Мне **нужно** закончить проект. - I need to finish the project.

Надо экономить деньги. - It's necessary to save money.

Вам **надо** извиниться. - You need to apologize.

Ему **надо** бросить курить. - He needs to quit smoking.

Нужно уважать старших. - It's necessary to respect elders.

Тебе **надо** сходить к врачу. - You need to go to the doctor.

Надо прибраться в комнате. - The room needs to be cleaned up.

Мне **надо** подстричься. - I need to get a haircut.

Им **надо** помириться. - They need to make up.

Тебе **надо** быть внимательнее. - You need to be more attentive.

Зачем тебе это **надо**? - What do you need this for?

Им **надо** готовиться к экзамену. - They need to prepare for the exam.

Fill in the Blanks

Now it's time to practice. For each sentence, choose the correct dative pronoun to fill in the blank.

1. ____ **не надо идти на работу завтра.** (I don't need to go to work tomorrow.)
2. **Что** ____ **нужно?** (What do you need?)
3. ____ **нужно срочно что-то придумать.** (We need to come up with something urgently.)
4. ____ **надо поговорить со своими детьми.** (They need to talk to their children.)
5. ____ **надо съездить к родителям.** (He needs to go visit his parents.)
6. ____ **надо было купить хлеб, но в магазине его не было.** (She needed to buy bread, but there was none at the store.)

Answers: 1. мне 2. тебе/вам 3. нам 4. им 5. ему 6. ей

Thanks for checking out this guide!

If you're keen to improve your Russian further, I've got more resources for you:

- **Visit my website** <https://easy-russian.com/> for helpful tips and more guides (some are free).
- **Watch Russian lessons on my YouTube channel** https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwXJTp1Dn_JJRCynBN1wKQ
- **Join my Telegram channel** <https://t.me/eeasyrussian> for weekly updates on Russian language.

Newbies and fluent speakers alike will find something useful.

Come explore and level up your Russian!