

Appendix B: Nouns and Modifiers

Hard Stems vs. Soft Stems

Every Russian noun and modifier has either a *hard* (nonpalatalized) or a *soft* (palatalized) stem. *When adding endings to hard-stem nouns and modifiers, always add the basic (hard) ending. When adding endings to soft-stem nouns and modifiers, always add the soft variant of the ending.*

However, if the stem of a modifier or noun ends in one of the velar sounds (г к х), or one of the hushing sounds (ш щ ж ч) or ц, do not worry about whether the stem is hard or soft. Rather, always attempt to add the *basic* ending, then apply the spelling rule if necessary (see Appendix A).

One can determine whether a noun or modifier stem is hard or soft by looking at the first letter in the word's ending. For the purposes of this discussion, ѣ and ъ are considered to be endings.

Hard Stems	Soft Stems
Have one of these letters or nothing as the first letter in the ending	Have one of these letters as the first letter in the ending
а	я
(э)*	е
о	ё
у	ю
ы	и
no vowel (Ø)	ь й

*The letter э does not play a role in grammatical endings in Russian. In grammatical endings, the soft variants of о are ё (when accented) and е (when not accented).