

Grammar 9—Motion and Location

Concepts of location, direction, and motion are very important in Russian. Careful study of the way Russians think about and talk about motion and location will provide you with a rich set of tools for expressing yourself.

See Also

- [Language Generator 8—Motion and Location](#)
- [Video: Motion and Location](#)
- [Grammar 9—Motion and Location Slide](#)

Russian makes a distinction between being at a location and moving toward or away from it. This is a distinction which was lost in English around the time of World War I. In the table below we show the archaic English words in parentheses:

	From Where	Where	To Where
Question	откуда? from where? (whence?)	где? where?	куда? to where? (whither?)
Here	отсюда from here (hence)	здесь here	сюда to here (hither)
There	оттуда from there (thence)	там over there	туда to there (thither)

This distinction holds even when we name the location:

	From Where Genitive Case	Where Prepositional Case or (y) + gen.	To Where Accusative or Dative Case (к) + dat.
Surface	со стола off the table	на столе on the table	на стол onto the table
Enclosed Space	из банки out of the can	в банке inside the can	в банку into the can
Unpenetrated Space	от человека from the man	у человека near the man	к человеку toward the man

Examples

From a surface: Дай тарелку со стола.
 Into a space: Сыпь сахар в банку.
 Toward a space: Я идущу к врачу.

Pass the plate from the table.
 Pour sugar into the can.
 I am going toward the doctor.

The classification of a space may at times surprise:

As a surface: Он приехал на машине.
 As a surface: Он пришёл на работу.
 As a surface: Он пришёл на собрание.

He arrived on an automobile.
 He arrived onto work.
 He arrived onto the meeting.

The classification can depend on how the space is used:

An enclosed space: из коробки
 A surface: с коробки

from inside the cardboard box
 from on top of the cardboard box

Thus as the interaction with a space changes, the classification may have to change to match:

Seen as unpenetrated: Он шёл к человеку. He was walking toward the man.
 Seen as a surface: Он насыпал на человека песок. He poured sand onto the man.
 Seen as enclosed: Он стрелял в человека. He shot into a man. (Seen as enclosed)

Russian Prepositions Expressing Motion and Location

