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Russian Naming Convention / Useful Notes - TV Tropes

36–45 minutes

Russian naming conventions (along with the conventions of the neighboring East Slavic countries and the non-Slavic peoples of the ex-USSR) and your quick and easy guide to diminutives.

Diminutives

You're reading a Russian-written and/or set novel in which there's a hot Soviet spy (with blonde highlights, natch) called Ekaterina Ivanovna Smirnova. She hangs around Moscow and goes to Moscow Centre to do her work, where she's called Major Smirnova or Ekaterina Ivanovna. Then she has lunch with her friends, who start calling her *Katya*. In the evening, she visits her parents at their dacha and they call her *Katenka*. There, she meets her old grandmother and her sister who address her as *Katyusha*, and her sister's husband who calls her *Katerina*. Elsewhere, her workmates are enviously discussing her successes, stating that *Katka* has given herself too many airs.

No, you haven't gone mad. Nor has the author engaged in a stunning display of inconsistency. You've just entered the world of the Russian diminutive.

Russian diminutives are kind of like standardized nicknames in English-speaking countries, where a character called Joseph

would often be called "Joe". Except there's three different types of them:

- The regular one, in this case "Katya" (Kate). Used among friends and work colleagues. It is worth stressing that in Russian-speaking countries people are almost never given the diminutive names officially (and even then they are only names that have their Western counterparts, like "Max" or "Alex"). So, even if two friends call themselves "Fyedya" and "Vanya", they will be invariably called "Fyodor" and "Ivan" by anyone else.
- The intimate one, in this case "Katenka" (roughly equal to the Japanese "-chan" honorific). Used by close family members, very close friends and lovers, for small children, and generally a suffix to indicate something the user finds 'cute', or again, is speaking to a small child. In the neighboring East Slavic countries the Russian version is used along with local diminutives; Irina Farion, a quack Ukrainian nationalist politico, once became infamous for her xenophobic rants against the Russian diminutives addressed at Ukrainian children.
- There are even more intimate ones, usually used by young couples, made by adding several suffixes to the short form of their names. "Ekaterina" could become "Katyushka", "Katyushenka", or even "Katyushechka".
- The derogatory one, in this case "Katka" (basically "This Kate chick"). Used when you're being insulting or for nonchalant familiarity, whether in actual display thereof or to take someone who obviously doesn't apply down a notch or two. Except in some contexts this form isn't offensive (most often, if the person who accepts it is trying to present herself as simple, down-to-earth person). Or sometimes Russians use this form when talking about themselves, ironically.

- She could also be called "Katyusha" (an equivalent to Katie), a name best known since it was applied to truck-mounted rocket launchers used by the Red Army during the Second World War and is still used today.

  Every Russian name has at least a dozen nicknames, since most have several different short forms and a multitude of suffixes, so you can get dozens of results by mix-matching and even stacking suffixes on top of each other. Continuing with our initial example, there are at least 50+ different variants for "Ekaterina".[note] And if you try to fiddle with the name "Alexander", just sell your soul to the nearest devil for such knowledge, and then redeem it for not fulfilling the contract. There's that many.

  There are other, non-standardized forms of Russian names, often occurring in slang and among the *gopniki*. They are not described here.

  There are examples for virtually every common Russian name. No, they aren't predictable. Note that unlike in the West, diminutive names are never used in formal situations, only full ones.

Naming Conventions

So we're back to our hot female spy. Her full name is Ekaterina Ivanovna Smirnova. Her first name is obvious — the Russian form of Katherine. But what about the other two:

- Ivanovna means "daughter of Ivan". The male version is 'Ivanovich' — "son of Ivan". The technical term is Patronymic.
- Smirnova is the feminine form of Smirnov, a very common Russian surname. For all surnames of native Russian origin

there is a masculine and a feminine form. More on this in the Surnames section.

Surnames

Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian surnames have a variety of different types, usually tallying with ethnic origin. The Russian ones:

- -ov/ova
- -ev/eva
- -in/ina
- -sky/skaya: More of a Jewish or Polish name today, but before 1917, there were many noble (committal or princely) Russian families with names like this, mainly because a lot of them *were* of Polish or Belorussian origin.
- Plus there's the whole "add a -ski and it's Russian" thing for nicknames (not Reporting Names), for Soviet/Russian military tech. '-ski' is usually added to the ends of objects or places.
- -iy/aya: Also in Ukraine.

Ukrainian ones, no gender changes here:

- -enko
- -ko
- -lo
- -uk, -chuk
- -ych
- This one is often of Belorussian origin, where it is rendered as -ich.

- Names that are just nouns without familial endings are more common among Ukrainians and Belorussians than Russians.

  E.g. Koval (smith), Shpak (starling), Kuchma (woolly hat)[note] (all Ukrainian), Filin (owl), Moroz (frost) (more likely to be Belorussian), etc. There are "proper" Russian equivalents, with gendered endings, for some of these, e.g. "Kovalyov(a)" (also spelled "Kovalev(a)").

  Many surnames are derived from animal names. For example, former president Dmitry Medvedev has a surname that means "Bear's Son" (from *medved* meaning *bear*). Others derive from professions, i.e. Kuznetsov, "Smith's Son".

  When the Soviet Union took over Central Asia, the Muslim Turkic and Persian locals generally adapted their names (which already used Patronymics) to the Russian system. Thus you get lots of people with Arabic, Turkic, or Persian names attached to '-ov(a)', etc., like the Uzbek strongman Islam Karimov (*karīm* being Arabic for "generous") and his Vice-President Shavkat Mirziyoyev (*mirza* meaning "child of the prince" in Persian). A peculiar example would be Azeris, who actually managed to introduce *their* patronymic system into the Russian language, so Azeri patronymics would be written not in the Russian way, but with native Azeri suffixes *-ogly* ("son of") or *-kyzy* ("daughter of"). Most of these people use first names of Arabic, Turkish, or Persian origin—unlike ethnic Russians, women from these groups frequently have given names ending in consonants.

  Siberian and Altaic peoples (Buryats, Tuvans, etc.) often add '-ov(a)'/ or '-ev(a)' to their names, such as Buryat singer Namgar Lhasaranova. But not always, such as the unappended Tuvan Sergei Shoigu, the Minister of Emergency Situations and now Defense.[note] Some Christianized Siberian peoples, like Yakuts,

for example, use Russian names almost exclusively, but keep a distinctly archaic set of popular names, which sometimes might be confusing, especially given that Yakuts have particularly Asian features.

Chukchi have One Name Only, which for census purposes can be used as a last name, in which case they will attach some random Russian first names and Patronymics. Examples: Tenevil, (Yuri Sergeyevich) Rytkheu, (Antonina Alexandrovna) Kytymval, and Ergyron members (Vasily) Kevkey, (Anastasia) Keytuk, (Denis) Kymylkut, (Regina) Tagrytval, etc. There is also a practice of giving boys female names and girls male names to confuse evil spirits.

Some of the most common Russian surnames: Ivanov, Smirnov, Kuznetsov, Petrov, Sidorov.

First Names

What follows is a list of first names commonly found in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus—with added English equivalents where they exist, as many of these names are typically of Ancient Greco-Roman, Biblical, Slavic, or Scandinavian/Norse origin. For more comprehensive lists of examples, one may refer to sites such as Behind the Name and this entry on Russian Lessons.

Male names:

- Aleksey/Alexei (Alexis)
- The basic diminutive for this name is "Alyosha". Not to be confused with "Alexander" below.
- Aleksandr/Alexander
- The basic diminutive for this name is "Sasha". Has an equally

popular female version, "Aleksandra", which diminutives to "Sasha" as well. Sometimes gets shortened to "Alex" just as "Aleksey" above.

- The gender of Heavy's main weapon is, therefore, still up in the air (although Russian guns are inherently female given their use of gendered nouns).
- Thus is explained the stage name of welsh trance producer Alexander Coe, DJ Sasha.
- Sasha Alexander, from *NCIS*, is in fact using a stage name.
- The Ukrainian diminutives for these names are "Lesik" for a boy and "Lesia" for a girl, which also happen to be names in their own right. "Olesik"/"Olesya" is another variant.
- Another common diminutive is "Shura" or "Shurik". The latter is male-only (i.e. Aleksandr) and is also a popular Soviet comical stock character—an awkward and clumsy Soviet student, reeking of geekiness and *intelligentsya*.
- "Alik" is a nickname for Aleksandr associated specifically with Russian Jews, and also serves as a nickname for other, rarer names that start with "Al-" (including foreign names such as Albert).
- Some other variations include "Sanya", "Sanyok" or "San" — the latter is even commonly used for abbreviating "Alexandr Aleksandrovich" to the more diminutive-sounding form "San Sanych".
- Anatoly (Anatolius, from an ancient Greek name meaning "sunrise")
- Diminutives include "Tolya" and "Tolik", low-class male friends may call him "Toly**a**n".

- Andrey/Andrei (Andrew)
- "Andryusha", "Dyusha", "Dryusha", "Dryunya", "Dron"
- Anton (Anthony)
- Diminutive is "Antosha", hence Anton Chekhov using the pseudonym "Antosha Chekhonte". "Antoshka" is a character of a famous kid's song[note] . Also, "Tosha" and even "Toha".
- Arkady (Greek: Arkadios, meaning "of Arcadia" and by extension, "of (the land of) the bear")
- Diminutive: "Arkasha"
- Artyom started out as a diminutive of Artemiy (Artemus, as in Artemus Gordon). Both are now considered full forms of the same name, though Artemiy is rarer.
- "Tyoma" and "Tyomik" are the diminutives for both variations. (Their equivalent in English would be "Artie".)
- Artur (Arthur; Celtic name only recently introduced in Russia)
- "Artyusha", "Arturchik"
- Arseny (Greek: Arsenios, meaning "virile")
- "Arsen", "Senya"
- Bogdan. A name of Slavic origin meaning "given by God".
- Diminutives: "Bogdasha", "Bodya".
- Boris, a pre-Christian diminutive of Borislav — "Fighter for Glory", but now a full first name.
- The diminutive is "Borya". For some reasons the name, while undeniably Slavic in origin, is now perceived as mostly Jewish, because it was historically used as a Russian substitute of Boruch (Baruch) — a very popular Eastern Ashkenazi name.
- Denis (Dennis)

- "Denya", "Den"
- Dmitri/Dmitry (Demetrius)
- Has two diminutive forms: "Dima" and "Mitya".
- Daniil/Danila (Daniel)
- "Danya" (Dan, Danny)
- Eduard (Edward)
- "Edik" ("Eddie"), "Ed"
- Emil (Rare. Probably imported from the West during the XIX century.)
- Diminutive : "Milya"
- A fictional bearer of the name would be Emil Blonsky, aka The Abomination, from *The Incredible Hulk (2008)*.
- Evgeny/Yevgeny (Eugene)
- The female equivalent, Evgenia/Yevgenia, is also common. Both are abbreviated to "Zhenya". The variant "Zheka" can also be used by male friends.
- Feodor/Fyodor (Theodore)
- "Fedya"
- Filipp (Philip/Phillip)
- "Filya", "Fil"
- Foma (Thomas)
- Diminutive: "Fomka", "Khomka"
- Gavriil (Gabriel)
- "Gavrik", "Gavryusha"
- Gennadiy (Gennadius, derived from the Old Greek *Gennadas*, meaning "noble" or "generous")

- "Gena" and "Genya". Also has a rare feminine variant: "Gennadiya".
- German (from Latin *germanus*, meaning "brother". This is also the Russian variant of the German name *Hermann*)
- "Gera", "Gerya"
- Grigori (Gregory)
- "Grisha"
- One possible exception is the male name "Gleb". It has no diminutive forms, only the pet names, as this name hails from Scandinavia.
- Pet forms of it, for example, "Glebushka", or "Glebka", can only be used by the closest relatives or loved ones. Otherwise, it's pretty damn offensive.
- OTOH, another originally Scandinavian name, 'Oleg' (a Russian form of Norse "Helgi") does have diminutives aplenty, though most of them are also pet names.
- Igor
- Note that while English speakers tend to fully pronounce both syllables (sounding like "EE-GOR"), Slavic pronunciation stresses only the first syllable ("EE-gr", sounding similar to the word "eager").
- Modern variant of the old Norse name "Ingyar", (literally "Ing's warrior" with Ing being the Norse god of peace and fertility). Commonly translated as meaning "Warrior of Peace" (Russian), "Hero" (Scandinavian) or (wrongly) "Prince of Peace" (because it was a noble's name, used primarily by the feudal nobility).
- Given its Scandinavian roots and short nature, it's not usually modified. The diminutive, "Gosha", is seldom used, and the only

nickname in common use (aside from affectionate ones) is "Igoryok".

- Innokentiy (Innocent)
- Diminutive is "Kesha".
- Ilya (Elijah)
- Diminutive is "Ilyusha".
- Ivan (John)
- "Ivanushka" or "Vanya" (as in Uncle).
- The "human (given) name" of Russia himself in *Hetalia: Axis Powers*.
- Kirill (Cyril), born by the 9th century saint who did missionary work among the Slavs with his brother, St. Methodius. It's the most commonly used form.
- "Kirya", "Kiryuha". This one is actually used in a group of school or university students/friends.
- "Kiryusha" This form is family one, for example Mother-to-Son.
- "Kir" is rarer, but is situationally neutral.
- The name is also similar to the slang verb "kiryat'", to drink heavily, so expect a lot of bad puns.
- Konstantin (Constantine)
- "Kostya", "Kostik"
- "Kostyl'" ("Crutch")
- Leonid (Leonidas, a Greek name known to Westerners thanks to *300*, but which was also borne by several saints.)
- The common diminutive is "Lyonya". A possessive case of this name would be "Lyonin" ("Лёнин"), which is just one diaeresis

away from "Ленин" ("Lenin"). Cue the jokes about Leonid Brezhnev being seen around Lenin's Mausoleum with a folding bed or jar of paint — the hint to the Brezhnev's Personality Cult-lite that started to grow during his late life.

- Lev (Leo, literally "lion")
- Diminutive: "Leva", "Lyova". Far more rarely "Lyovushka" (which is more of an affectionate pet name).
- Leo Tolstoy is by far the most famous bearer of the name, outside of Russian Orthodox patriarchs. Also Lev Revolyutsii Tovarisch (Revolutionary Lion Comrade) Trotsky.
- Maksim/Maxim (Max) — originally just a diminutive of Maksimilian (Maximillian), but now a given name in its own right.
- "Max" is nowadays sometimes encountered as a name on its own.
- Mark
- "Marka", "Marik"
- Martyn (Martin)
- "Martynka"
- This is a very rare name nowadays, because of its unfortunate similarity to the word *martyshka* (monkey). If this name is encountered now at all, it is rendered as "Martin" with the stress on the first syllable, to avoid the monkey associations.
- Matvey (Matthew)
- "Matyash", "Motya"
- All names that end with "-slav". Note that the Slavic root forming the suffix here is *not* the same as the actual word *Slav*. The suffix "-slav" in this case has as its root the Slavic word "slava" meaning "glory".[note] Names ending in -slav have their origins in

many different Slavic cultures and are shared amongst them; they do not all originate in Russia. For example, Bronislav is a Polish name.

- Yaroslav (Yarilo's Glory)[note]
- Diminutive is "Yarik".
- Bronislav (Defender of Glory)
- Mstislav (Glory of Vengeance)
- Rostislav (Growth of Glory)
- Diminutive is "Rostya".
- Svyatoslav (Holy Glory, or Glory of the Light)
- Stanislav (Become Glorious)
- Diminutive is "Stas".
- Vyacheslav (Greater Glory)
- English-speakers know this name as *Wenceslas* of "Good King Wenceslas" fame, which is of Czech origin. Best known for being the name of Joseph Stalin's right hand man—A.K.A. the man for whom the Molotov Cocktail is named.
- Diminutive is "Vyachik".
- Vseslav (All Glorious)
- Diminutive is "Vseslavushka".
- Izyaslav (Taker of Glory)
- Joked to be especially convenient, as to one bunch of friends you could be "Izya"[note] and "Slava" to another.)
- And so on. Most of the -slav names can be referred to with the diminutive forms "Slava" or "Slavik".
- Mikhail/Michail (Michael)

- Diminutive: "Misha"
- Another common, more familiar diminutive is "Mishka", which is also a diminutive for "bear". For example, Teddy Bear is "plyusheviy (plush) mishka".
- Mitrofan (Metrophanes, a name of Ancient Greek origin which roughly translates to "mother's appearance")
- Diminutives: "Mitrokha", "Mitroshka"
- Nikita (Yes, it is a boy's name. Just ask Mr. Khrushchev.)
- Diminutives: Nikitka, Nika, Kita, Kenya, Kesha, Nikikha, Nikisha, Nikusya, Nikusha, Nikenya, Nikesha
- Nikolai/Mykola (Nicholas)
- Basic diminutive is "Kolya". "Nikolasha" is a more intimate form. "Nika" is a babyish version of this name. "Kolyan" is a slang form used by male friends.
- Oleg (Like Gleb, an import from medieval Scandinavia, this is a non-Slavic, non-Biblical name)
- Diminutive: "Lyoka", "Olezhka", "Alik", "Alka"
- Pavel/Pavlo (Paul)
- Diminutive: "Pasha", "Pavlik" (the last one is more common in Ukraine)
- Pyotr/Petr (Peter)
- The diminutive is "Petya".
- In colloquial Ukrainian (especialy western Ukrainian dialects), it can often appear as "Petro".
- This is the given name of Colossus from X-Men.
- Rodion (Herodion)
- Diminutive: "Rodya", "Rodik"

- This is the given name of Raskolnikov, the protagonist of the famous novel *Crime and Punishment*.
- Roman
- Diminutive: "Roma"
- Ruslan
- "Rusya"
- Sergei (Sergius)
- Diminutive: "Seryozha", "Sergunya"
- "Seryoga" and "Serzh" are slang forms used by male friends.
- A very common slang diminutive is "Seriy", literally meaning "Gray".
- Form "Senya" can also be heard in south-western areas.
- Semyon (Simon)
- "Syoma", "Sem" (pronounced like "Sam").
- Oddly enough, Semyon can also be spelled "Semen" when anglicized, much to the amusement of English-speakers. This is also exactly how you pronounce this name in Ukrainian.
- Sevastyan (Sebastian)
- "Seva" (note that Sevastyan shares this diminutive with the name 'Vsevolod'), "Sevik"
- Stepan (Stephen/Stefan)
- Diminutive: "Styopa"
- Vadim
- Diminutives are Vadik, Vadya, and (less commonly) Dima. Note that while the stress in "Vadim" is on the second syllable, it is on the first one in all diminutives.

- Valentin (from the Ancient Roman name *Valentinus*, or Valentine)
- "Valya", "Valik"
- Valery (from the Latin family name *Valerius*, or the masculine form of Valerie)
- "Valera"
- Varfolomei (Bartholomew)
- Vasily (Basil, from the Greek *basileus* — "king")
- Diminutive is "Vasya".
- Vikentiy (Vincent)
- Diminutives: "Kesha" (which is also used for Innokentiy), "Vika", "Kent"
- Viktor (Victor)
- "Vitya"
- Vitaly/Vitaliy (from Latin *Vitalis* — "of life")
- "Vitalik", "Vitasha", "Vitalya"
- Vladimir/Volodymyr: Another pre-Christian name. Historically was 'Volodimer' and meant something like "Great Lord" or "Great Ruler", related to the Germanic 'Waldemar'. Spelling reform shifted the ending from '-mer' to '-mir'. *Mir* means both "world" and "peace" in Russian, creating the folk etymology "Lord of the World" or "Lord of Peace". Its English equivalent is 'Walter'.
- English pronunciation stresses the first syllable ("VLAD-i-mir"). Slavic pronunciation stresses the second ("Vla-DEE-mir").
- The diminutive can be either "Vova" or "Volodya", but *never* "Vlad" — Russians associate that diminutive with other names, like "Vladislav" or "Vladilen" (an abbreviation of "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin").

- Be noted, "Vova" / "Vovochka" only appear in XX century, before it's always "Volodya".
- Also, Vovochka is a well-known character in jokes, kind of a Russian Bart Simpson.
- Vsevolod ("Lord of All" — see the connection between 'Vlad-' and '-volod'?)
- "Seva"
- Yaropolk
- "Yarik", "Yarya"
- Yakov (Jacob/James)
- Diminutive is "Yasha".
- Yemelyan (Emilien, from the Ancient Roman name Aemilianus)
- Diminutive is "Yemelya", mostly known from a famous Russian folk tale about a guy who rode on a magical stone oven
- Another famous bearer of this name is Yemelyan Pugachev, a XVIII-century rebel leader and self-styled Tsar. Nowadays, this name is associated with either him or the fairy tale character.
- Yuri (George)
- As in Yuri Dolgoruki, aka George I, a Grand Prince of Moscow. Not to mention the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin.
- Note that there are actually as many as *three* different forms of 'George' in Russian: Georgi, Yuri, and Yegor.
- Diminutives are Yura (for Yuri) and Zhora (for Georgi). Yegor is its own diminutive (the unbearably cutesy "Yegorik"/"Igoryok" is actually a diminutive of Igor, used by close friends and relatives).

Female names: They almost all end in *a* or *ya* (which is a compound letter).

- Agafya (Agatha). A Greek name, ἀγαθός, meaning "good".
- "Gasha", "Ganya"
- Agrafena (Russian variant of the ancient Roman name Agrippina, borne by the wife and niece [same person] of the Emperor Claudius)
- "Grunya", "Grushenka". Grushenka the temptress of *The Brothers Karamazov* is an Agrafena.
- "Grusha" too, literally meaning "pear".
- Aleksandra/Alexandra
- "Sasha", "Sanya", "Lesya", "Olesya", "Shura"
- Anastasiya/Anastasia. A Greek name, Αναστασήα, meaning "resurrection".
- The English and Slavic pronunciations are quite distinct. While the standard English pronunciation is something like "Ann-nuh-STAY-zhuh", the Slavic pronunciation is, "Ann-nuh-stah-SEE-yah".
- Unique in having complete sets of diminutives formed from three alternative roots: Asya, Nastya, Stasya
- Probably the best-known in the West is Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova, youngest daughter of the last Tsar of Russia.
- The diminutive "Nastya" is likely familiar — as "Nastia" — thanks to Anastasia "Nastia" Valeryevna Liukin, Russian-American Olympic gymnastics champion in 2008.
- Anna (notice its diminutives are separate from those of Anastasia, above)
- "Anya", "Nyura", "Nyusha", "Nyuta", "Annichka"

- Antonina
- "Tonya"
- Anzhela (Angela)
- Daria/Dariya/Darya
- "Dasha", "Dashenka", "Daryonka"
- Elena, alternatively Yelena (Helen)
- "Lena", seldom "Alyona" (which can be a name itself)
- A number of successful Soviet and Russian gymnasts have had this name; among the most famous are Davydova, Mukhina, Naimushina, Produnova, Shushunova, Volchetskaya, and Zamolodchikova.
- Irina (Irene). A Greek name meaning "peace".
- "Ira", "Irishka", "Irochka", "Irusya", "Irinka", "Irusik", "Iren"
- Irina Derevko from *Alias*.
- Galina (the feminine form of the Greek name Galen/Galenos, meaning "calm")
- "Galka", "Galya", or "Galchonok" which literally means "little jackdaw" ("Galka" also means "jackdaw", but pun is rarely made on that)
- Karina (Karen)
- "Karinka"
- Kira (Greek, κυρία, "mistress")
- "Kirya", "Kirka", "Kirusha"
- Kseniya/Xenia. A Greek name meaning "foreigner". Its Ukrainian form is "Oksana".
- "Senya", "Ksenya", "Ksyusha"

- Larisa (Larissa)
- "Lara", "Larochka"
- Lyubov (meaning "love", this is the third in a trio of female names (Vera, Nadezhda, and Lyubov) based on Christian virtues; this is one of the rare Russian female names that doesn't end in an 'a' or 'ya')
- "Lyuba", "Lyubochka", "Lyubasha"
- Lyudmila (a Slavic name meaning "nice to people")
- "Lyuda", "Lusya"
- Marina. From the Latin *marinus*, "of the sea".
- "Marishka", "Mara", "Masha"
- Mariya (Mary)
- "Masha", "Marya", "Marusya", "Manya"
- Margarita (Margaret)
- "Rita", "Ritulya", "Margo", "Margosha".
- Melina (Melanie). A Greek name, meaning "dark".
- "Lana", "Melanyushka".
- Nadezhda (meaning "hope", this is the second in a trio of female names (Vera, Nadezhda, and Lyubov) based on Christian virtues)
- "Nadya/Nadia", "Dusya"
- Natalya/Nataliya/Natalia (Natalie). This is from the Latin *natalia*, Christmas Day.
- "Talya", "Natasha"
- Note that "Natalia" and "Natalya" are usually considered legally different forms of the same name, like Yuri and Georgi, and a typo in your ID can make it invalid. "Natalya" is more common

than "Natalia"; both abbreviate to "Natasha".

- This is another common name amongst Soviet gymnasts, including Ilienko, Kalinina, Kuchinskaya, Lashchenova, Shaposhnikova, and Yurchenko.
- In *Hetalia: Axis Powers*, Belarus' "human name" is stated to be Natalia Arlovskaya... which can, of course, be also spelt as Natalya or Natallya (the Belorussian spelling). She's also called Natasha in fanworks.
- Marvel's Black Widow is a Natalya/Natasha.
- Nina
- "Ninochka"
- Olga (Helga)
- "Olya", seldom "Olyona" (while Alyona is the different name that can also be used as a diminutive for Elena)
- Polina (Paulina)
- "Polya" (Polly)
- Polya might also be the diminutive of Praskovya. When the latter name became perceived as too rustic and old-fashioned, a lot of Praskovyas became Polinas.
- Raisa (read "ruh-EE-sah"). Possibly a form of the name Herais, which is likely derived from the Greek goddess Hera.
- "Raya"
- Sofiya (Sophia)
- "Sonya"
- Stefaniya (Stephanie)
- "Stefa"
- Svetlana/Svitlana (although it looks like a pre-Christian Slavic

name, it was actually invented in the early 1800s, and was popularized by a ballad. It means "clear" or "one of light")

- "Sveta"
- Tatyana (Tatiana). From the Latin family name *Tatius*.
- "Tanya", "Tanyusha"
- Valentina (Valentine)
- "Valya", "Valyusha"
- Valeriya (Valerie)
- "Lera", "Lerochka"
- Varvara (Barbara)
- "Varya"
- Vera (meaning "faith", this is the first in a trio of female names (Vera, Nadezhda, and Lyubov) based on Christian virtues).
- "Verochka"
- Veronika (Veronica)
- "Nika", or "Vera"
- Viktoriya (Victoria)
- "Vika", "Vita"
- Yekaterina, alternatively romanized Ekaterina (Catherine/Katherine)
- "Katya", "Katyusha" (Kate, Katie)
- Yevdokiya (Eudocia/Eudokia). A female name of Greek origin that means approximately "one with good sense".
- "Dunya", one of the more irregular diminutive forms of a given name.
- Yuliya/Yulia (Julia)

- "Yulya"
- Zhanna (Jeanne)
- "Zhannochka"
- Zinaida. A Greek name referring to the god Zeus.
- "Zina"
- Zoya (Zoë)
- "Zosya", "Zosha"

Trope, Son of Trope

What to call Russians.

In Russia, when you're referring to someone in a formal setting, you don't just use their first name, but their first name and patronymic, i.e. "Ekaterina Ivanovna" or their diminutive. ("Ivan Ilyich" is a name familiar to Tolstoy wonks, who will tell you that that's not the character's full name; Soviet history buffs will tell you the same about Ivan Denisovich.)

Oddly, even though addressing a person by the first name and patronymic is very formal, addressing them with the patronymic alone is seen as highly informal, even less formal than First-Name Basis. In this informal usage, male patronymics usually get shortened by removing the "ov/ev" (e.g. Ivanovich becomes Ivanych, Sergeyevich to Sergeich, etc.), unless that syllable is stressed (e.g. Petrovich). In addition, some names have completely idiosyncratic short forms, such as Pavlovich to Palych. Long patronymics can be shortened all the way down to just two syllables, e.g. Dmitriyevich to Mitrich, or Anatolyevich to Tolyich. As a way of emphasising his closeness to the people, Lenin was often referred to simply as "Ilyich" in speeches and Soviet media. In contrast, no one ever (except *maybe* general

Vlasik — they were reportedly quite close) referred to his successor as "Vissarionych".

When it comes to name orders, Russian does not stick to just one, unlike English or Japanese. The most formal order is family name first, followed by given name, followed by patronymic (e.g. Ivanov Ivan Ivanovich). However, this order is only used on official documents and when introducing or referring to people in a very formal setting (for instance, dinner at the Kremlin or a courtroom in session), never as a direct form of address. This does not differ too much from the equivalent Western usage; think of the situations someone might use the phrasing "Smith, John Michael", and you have a rough (but hardly complete) idea when "Ivanov Ivan Ivanovich" might be used in Russia. The more Western order of given name-patronymic-family name (Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov) is a less official, but more commonly used way of giving someone's full name. When the patronymic is left out both the Western (Ivan Ivanov) and Eastern (Ivanov Ivan) orders are acceptable. The media nowadays uses the Western order almost exclusively (which also means that most official anime dubs reverse the Japanese names, just like they do in the West), while in schools and colleges, the Eastern order is generally preferred, as in other cases when the list of names must be sorted: it's always done by surname, so it goes first. The only strict rule in Russian naming orders is that the patronymic can only be placed immediately after the given name (so "Ivan Ivanov Ivanovich" is always unacceptable). The surname alone is used in some formal situations. It assumes authority of the caller, such as of teacher in a class or a drill sergeant before a rank of enlisted men. But between friends behind someone's back he may be called by his last name, as an identifier. Surname and first letters of name and patronymic

(e.g. "I. I. Ivanov") are used in many documents.

The Russian equivalents to Mr. and Mrs. aren't really used save in older literature. Lack of an easy honorific to call someone actually became a problem a few years ago. *Gospodin* or *gospozha* (equivalents to 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.', respectively) were only recently returned to use and are used mostly by businessmen or civil servants to address each other, very formally. (Don't call a Russian the equivalent of "citizen"; that's how cops address a *perp*, so it sounds offensive.) The honorifics *sudar'* and *sudarynya* (equivalent to 'sir' and 'madam') are even rarer, technically valid but not really used; historically they were used only by nobles, so most Russians do not feel entitled to be called such,[note] The address "comrade" (historically rendered *tovarishch*) is used only in the army and in the Communist Party, which is removed from power and is slowly dying out. The most common forms of address between common people are the Russian equivalents of 'man' (*muzhchina*), 'young man' (*molodoy chelovek*), 'woman' (*zhenshina*) or 'girl' (*devushka*). While English speakers may try to get a stranger's attention by saying "Sir" or "Ma'am", Russians have no problem simply shouting "Man!" or "Girl!" at each other. Note that "girl" is *much* more preferable than "woman" as the latter may and frequently will be interpreted as connoting significant age and is thus offensive. Children mostly address unfamiliar adults as *dyadya/dyadenka* and *tyotya/tyotenka*. These words literally mean "uncle" and "aunt", but they do not imply family ties in this case, and in informal situations even grown-ups may use these for their parents' friends they've known since childhood, using with first name or even its diminutive form; even their parents may in turn adopt such forms. Similarly, in the predominately Muslim regions of Russia and the former USSR, it may be

customary for young and middle-aged people to address all elderly people as "father" and "mother", saying either *otets* and *mat'* in Russian, or a corresponding term in the local language. This came to Russian, so now it's pretty okay for an adult (but not a kid) to address a group of elderly people "fathers", *otzy*.

In Soviet times, *tovarisch* ("comrade") was more or less universal, but depending on its mode of usage, it could be more or less a honorific. Simply "comrade", as in "sir" or "madam", was considered polite address fitting for any honest Soviet citizen; criminals and enemies of the people, however, were forbidden both to be called comrades and call anyone comrades (a police officer upon hearing "comrade" from a detained perp may snap, "A wolf in Tambov is your comrade," drawing the line). That's why they were addressed *grazhdanin* ("citizen") and how that word became offensive (another honorific, *grazhdanin nachalnik* "citizen boss" or "citizen master" was reserved for non-comrades to address policemen and prison guards). The form "comrade + Name" (as in 'Mr. Name') was more of a honorific, used to address important people. Its most formal usage was *dorogoy tovarisch* ("dear comrade").

In other words, the lack of honorifics to call a Russian reflects the ideological vacuum typical for The New Russia. You can't call someone *sudar'* because they aren't a noble, you can't call someone "comrade" because they aren't a Communist, and you can't call someone "hey, you!", because they still feel too empowered for that after seventy years of "people's rule", perhaps wrongly, but still. So people use indirect addresses, like "sorry" (*izvinite*), or, if they need something to be done, "can you be so kind" (*bud'te dobry*).

When writing full Russian names in English, you either skip the

patronymic, initial both names, or do it in full. Usually. Some people get the "Name Patronymic-initial Surname" treatment, most famously Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, frequently called "Vladimir V. Putin" in the Western press.

Naming Trends

Generally speaking, Russians are rather conservative when it comes to naming their children, but one big exception to this was the early days of the Soviet Union. The 1920s brought in a vogue of exotic, "revolutionary" names, during which entirely new names honoring Soviet leaders were coined such as Vladilen (from Vladimir-Lenin) or Mels (from *M*arx, *E*ngels, *L*enin, *S*talin). Other newly-coined names included Revmir (from ревмир — short for "World Revolution"), or National (short for "Communist International"). People were even named after completely banal objects like Traktor (tractor) or Elektron (electron), as these things were considered particularly modern and "revolutionary". By the 1930s, traditional names were seen as stodgy and rustic — unfit for the shiny, glorious future Communism was building. Religious names, or names associated strongly with the clergy, such as Mitrofan and Varfolomei, particularly fell out of favor.

After Stalin's death, however, there was a revival of very Slavic names such as Yaroslav, and since the fall of the Soviet Union Russian names have swung back to being very conservative. Nowadays, Russians do not like to make their children stand out with exotic or "creative" names. Russians draw on a relatively small number of traditional names (in the low hundreds), and the top dozen or so male and female names are likely to make up a significant portion of all names in a given group.

Among Tatars, religious names had almost died out completely by the 1950s, and Western names like Alfred and Rudolf came into vogue (Rudolf Nureyev, the famous ballet dancer, was born to a Tatar family in Russia).

Ancient Slavic Names

Before the Christian era, the Slavic peoples inhabiting what is now Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, etc. gave their children a wide variety of names of native origin, most of which were nature names (i.e. Zima, "winter") or names reflecting personal attributes that the parent presumably hoped the child would have. A few are still used to this day, while many others fell by the wayside.

- Dobroslav
- Mal ("small one")
- Volk ("wolf")
- Zidislav

The Old Slavic names that are in use to this day and spring to mind when you say "Old Slavic name" (both native, like Boris, Vladimir, Svyatoslav, and Scandinavian loan-names such as Oleg, Igor and Gleb) were, in fact, *princely* names used by the feudal nobility. The common folk used more obscure names which right now are long-antiquated. The reason for that is that Christianization of the Rus started from the aristocracy, and it was the princes who became the first native saints (thus legalizing their Old Slavic names as Christian names).

Some people changed names, as their nicknames stuck stronger than their given names. Some kids names were talisman names, offering a kid some qualities or protection: said

name 'Volk' ("wolf") may imply that real wolves will not attack the kid, for he's one of them. The names 'Zhdan' ("awaited one") or 'Bogdan' ("God-given one") could be given to a long-awaited child. There was also a big set of "bad" names, meant to drive evil off: the spirit, learning that the kid is called 'Nekras' ("ugly one") or 'Nemil' ("unloved one") may decide to spare the child of extra misfortune.

Origin of the last names

One role in which a trace of the ancient Slavic names remains to this day is that of the progenitors of last names. While the nobles had last names derived from place names with a "ski" suffix (meaning "of" similarly to the French "de" and German "von" prefixes), the commoners (the few of them who got last names, at first mostly urban commoners) got theirs after an ancestor, with an "ov" or "in" suffixes, which mean "descendant of" (English equivalent may be "-son"). Descendants of a man named Nekras got the family name "Nekrasov", descendants of a Volk became the Volkovs. This way, last names for commoners were slowly spreading, but they became mandatory only in the XIX century. There were some trends used by Tsarist officials who assigned last names to everyone who didn't have them:

- Former serfs usually got the last name of their former lord, either unchanged or slightly modified with an -ikh suffix (e.g. 'Klinskikh' — "property of the Klinskys"). This was how Yuri Gagarin ended up with a name of a pre-Revolution princely house: his ancestor was one of their peasants.
- Priests got names for the churches they served for: Kreschensky ("of the Baptism") was a priest in the church for the Baptism of

Lord, Rozhdestvensky ("of the Nativity") — in the church for Nativity of Jesus, Uspensky ("of the Dormition") — in the church for Dormition of Our Lady.

- Seminary students got their surnames assigned by the seminary. Since inventing last names to a long list of students was quite a task, their last names sometimes were, to say the least, inventive. In general, if you find a last name that relates to some abstract matters, it may be a seminary name. Surnames Gidaspov, Granikov and Gavgamelskiy may be invented by someone studying for the exam on ancient history (all three representing major victories of Alexander the Great), Sokratov, Sofoklov and Diogenov — by someone learning Greek Philosophy by rote, and Azov, Bukin, Vedin, Glagolev etcetera — by someone so out of imagination he started using alphabet.
- Seminary dunces received last names after Biblical villains, such as "Saulov", "Pharaonov". Or some name meaningful in Greek or Latin: Illuvskiy (lat. "dirty"), Negligentov (lat. "one who neglects his duties"), Trihinskiy (gr. "hairy"). This surname may be changed by the authorities any time until one is released from the seminary, so a good student may also get a better name as a graduation mark.
- Jewish people which did not already had a Hebrew or Yiddish last name were assigned one from a place of birth, with a "sky" suffix. This is why there is a lot of Russian Jewish last names named after towns in the Pale of Settlement (e.g. "Bobruisky", "Zhmerinsky").
