

# Learn the Months in Russian

Category: Learn Russian



The linguistic journey of Russian month names is a fascinating intersection of linguistic evolution and cultural history. Rooted in a blend of Latin, Greek, and traditional Slavic influences, these names not only mark the passage of time but also reflect the agricultural and environmental nuances intrinsic to Russian life. From the Roman god Janus symbolizing new beginnings in January to the linden tree's prominence in July's "Lipen," each month's name encapsulates a unique aspect of Russia's heritage. This exploration raises intriguing questions about how language encapsulates tradition and identity, suggesting a deeper narrative awaiting discovery.

## **Introduction**

Understanding the names of months in Russian not only offers insight into the cultural and historical context of the language but also enriches our appreciation of its linguistic evolution.

The etymology of these terms reveals their roots and connections to various aspects of Russian life. This exploration underscores the broader significance of etymological studies in comprehending the intricate tapestry of any language.

## **Significance of Month Names in Russian Culture**

The names of the months in Russian culture are imbued with rich historical and linguistic significance, reflecting the nation's agricultural practices, climatic conditions, and Slavic heritage. Each month name encapsulates a blend of cultural significance and practical observation of seasonal changes, rooted in the agrarian lifestyles that historically dominated Russian society.

For example, the name "январь" (January) is derived from the Latin "Januarius," highlighting the historical context of Roman influence interwoven with Slavic traditions. Similarly, "август" (August) commemorates Emperor Augustus, showcasing the linguistic evolution influenced by various

ruling entities over centuries.

However, many other month names, like “март” (March) and “апрель” (April), retain a closer connection to the natural world and agricultural cycles, marking the changes in weather and farming activities.

This duality in nomenclature underscores the deep intertwining of [historical events and agricultural needs in Russian culture](#). The month names are not merely temporal markers but resonate with the rhythms of the natural environment and the historical contexts that shaped their formation.

Consequently, understanding these names offers a window into the linguistic evolution and cultural fabric of Russia, illuminating the symbiotic relationship between language and life.

## **Understanding the etymology of language**

Delving into the etymology of language reveals the intricate tapestry of [history](#), culture, and societal evolution interwoven in words. Understanding the etymological significance behind terms, particularly those marking the passage of time such as month names, offers profound insights into the cultural identity of a people.

For instance, the names of Russian months are not merely arbitrary labels; they encode narratives of agrarian practices, climatic conditions, and historical events that shaped the society over centuries.

Exploring the evolution of language through its etymological roots highlights how linguistic diversity evolves in response to shifting historical contexts. Words are living entities, adapting and transforming to reflect the collective experiences and knowledge of a community.

This dynamic process underscores the importance of preserving linguistic diversity, as each language encapsulates unique worldviews and wisdom.

Moreover, tracing the historical context of language evolution fosters a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of human [experiences across different cultures](#) and epochs. It empowers individuals with the freedom to uncover hidden layers of meaning within their own language and those of others, enriching their understanding of the world's rich cultural mosaic.

Embracing this etymological exploration ultimately fortifies our grasp of shared human heritage.

[https://howtorussia.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ruusia\\_names\\_for\\_months.mp4](https://howtorussia.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ruusia_names_for_months.mp4)

The short above demonstrates how to pronounce the months in Russian. You will

notice that each month is said in two ways: there is the month name itself, and also the phrase “in the month of,” which is pronounced slightly differently. The video covers both pronunciations.

## Russian Month Names

The Russian calendar features month names that reflect both Slavic and Western influences, starting with January (Январь, *yanvar'*) and February (Февраль, *fevral'*).

March (Март, *mart*) and April (Апрель, *aprel'*) follow, showcasing a blend of historical and linguistic evolution.

Understanding these names offers insight into the cultural and etymological development of the Russian language.

### List of the months in Russian

Exploring the names of the months in Russian provides valuable insights into the linguistic and cultural nuances of the language. Each month name carries with it cultural significance and historical context, reflecting the linguistic evolution of the Russian language.

For instance, the names often draw from the natural world, agricultural cycles, and religious observances, offering a glimpse into the lives and priorities of the people through the ages.

Here's a list of the months in Russian:

1. Январь (*yanvar'*)
2. Февраль (*fevral'*)
3. Март (*mart*)
4. Апрель (*aprel'*)
5. Май (*may*)
6. Июнь (*iyun'*)
7. Июль (*iyul'*)
8. Август (*avgust*)
9. Сентябрь (*sentyabr'*)
10. Октябрь (*oktyabr'*)
11. Ноябрь (*noyabr'*)
12. Декабрь (*dekabr'*)

A comparative analysis with other Slavic languages reveals both similarities and regional variations, indicating a shared cultural heritage yet unique adaptations.

Understanding these month names helps one appreciate the intricate interplay between language and culture. The historical context behind these names also

underscores their significance, capturing the essence of Russia's past while shaping its present linguistic landscape.

This journey through time and language underscores the deep-rooted traditions and the continuous evolution of [Russian culture](#).

## January – Январь (yanvar')

January, known as январь (yanvar') in Russian, marks the beginning of the year and holds significant cultural and historical connotations. The name "yanvar'" has its origins in Latin, derived from "Ianuarius," named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and changes. This etymological lineage highlights the month's role as a threshold between the old and new.

In Russian pronunciation, "yanvar'" is articulated with a soft 'y' at the start, followed by an 'a' that sounds like 'ah', and an ending that blends 'var' seamlessly. For non-native speakers, paying attention to the soft sign (ь) at the end can guarantee accurate pronunciation, adding a subtle palatalization to the final 'r'.

Culturally, январь is synonymous with New [Year celebrations](#), a period of reflection and renewal in Russia. The month's linguistic evolution mirrors this, as it transformed through Slavic adaptations while retaining its core symbolism.

January's seasonal associations in Russia are deeply tied to the harsh winter, characterized by snow and cold, which shapes the cultural activities and traditions observed during this month.

Understanding январь in Russian offers a glimpse into the intricate blend of history, language, and culture that defines the Russian calendar.

## February – Февраль (fevral')

In the Russian calendar, February is known as февраль (fevral'), a name derived from the Latin "Februarius," which is associated with purification rituals in ancient Rome.

In Russia, February holds a unique place as the last full month of winter, bringing with it an array of February traditions and Winter celebrations that resonate with the spirit of freedom and renewal.

One of the most notable February traditions is Maslenitsa, a week-long festival that heralds the end of winter and the coming of spring. This celebration is marked by the consumption of bliny (pancakes), which are considered seasonal foods symbolizing the sun. The festival embodies a sense of liberation from winter's grasp, fostering communal joy and cultural significance.

Russian poetry often reflects the somber yet hopeful tones of February, capturing the interplay between the harshness of winter and the promise of spring. Poets like Boris Pasternak have penned verses that immortalize this pivotal month, adding layers of cultural significance to it.

In essence, февраль (fevral') is more than just a month; it is a period rich with traditions, celebrations, and artistic expressions that celebrate the end of winter and the dawn of a new season.

## **March – Март (mart)**

As the final weeks of winter give way to the early signs of spring, the month of March, known in Russian as март (mart), emerges with its own cultural and linguistic significance. This period marks a pivotal shift in the Russian calendar, symbolizing renewal and the awakening of nature after the harsh winter months.

The name март itself has its roots in Latin, derived from "Martius," in honor of Mars, the Roman god of war and agriculture, illustrating the deep historical influences on the Russian language.

The linguistic evolution of март reflects Russia's complex historical interactions with Western Europe. The adoption of this term during the Christianization of Kievan Rus' underscores the blend of indigenous and foreign elements that shape Russian cultural identity.

March carries substantial cultural significance, as it heralds the beginning of agricultural activities and traditional celebrations like Maslenitsa, a festival that bids farewell to winter and welcomes the rejuvenating warmth of spring.

Seasonal changes during март are profound, offering a sense of liberation from winter's grip. The gradual thawing of the landscape epitomizes the spirit of freedom and renewal, resonating deeply within the collective consciousness of the Russian people, and enriching their linguistic and cultural heritage.

## **April – Апрель (aprel')**

April, or апрель (aprel') in Russian, continues the theme of renewal and transformation initiated by March. As the natural world awakens, April brings with it the promise of longer days and warmer weather, setting the stage for a series of vibrant spring celebrations and cultural festivals across Russia.

This month is characterized by significant seasonal changes, as the last remnants of winter melt away, giving way to budding greenery and blooming flowers, symbolizing hope and rejuvenation.

Historically, April held a key role in Russian agricultural practices. It

marked the beginning of essential farming activities, as the thawing soil allowed farmers to prepare their fields for planting.

Traditional practices such as sowing seeds and tending to young crops were critical for ensuring a bountiful harvest later in the year. These agricultural rhythms were often intertwined with various rites and rituals, reflecting the deep connection between the people and the land.

Culturally, April is a time of festivity and reflection. The celebration of Easter, known as Пасха (Paskha), often falls in this month, bringing communities together in joyous gatherings and elaborate feasts.

These events embody the spirit of renewal and communal harmony, fundamental elements of Russian cultural heritage.

## **May – Май (may)**

May, or Май (may) in Russian, ushers in a period of blossoming and growth, symbolizing the full arrival of spring. This month is imbued with rich may traditions and vibrant may celebrations, offering a tapestry of cultural practices that resonate deeply with the Russian spirit.

One of the most significant observances is May Day on May 1st, known as International Workers' Day, a public holiday celebrated with parades and gatherings, championing workers' rights and social justice.

In the sphere of may symbolism, this month is often associated with renewal and hope. The burgeoning flora and fauna mark a shift from the dormancy of winter to the vibrancy of spring, fostering a sense of freedom and new beginnings.

May folklore is replete with tales that emphasize themes of fertility and growth, reflecting the agricultural significance of this time of year.

May agriculture plays a pivotal role in Russian life, as farmers begin planting crops, taking advantage of the fertile spring soil. This period is vital for setting the stage for a bountiful harvest later in the year.

## **June – Июнь (iyun')**

One of the most significant events of the month is the Summer Solstice, occurring around June 21st. This astronomical event is not merely a date on the calendar but a time when daylight extends into the late evening, symbolizing freedom and the boundless possibilities of summer.

Seasonal changes usher in longer days and warmer temperatures, inviting people to embrace the outdoors and revel in nature's beauty.

Cultural festivals abound, celebrating everything from music and art to

traditional folklore. These gatherings offer a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Russian heritage while fostering a sense of community and shared experience.

The natural world, too, seems to awaken, with lush greenery and blooming flowers painting the landscape. June in Russia is a month of renewal, celebration, and the unbridled joy of summer's embrace.

## **July – Июль (iyul')**

July, known as Июль (iyul') in Russian, marks the height of summer in Russia. This month is a vibrant tapestry of July traditions, where the sun's prolonged presence invites people into a season of freedom and festivity.

Summer celebrations abound, with open-air festivals and concerts that echo the country's rich cultural heritage.

Historically, July has been a month of significant events. The Russian Revolution of 1917 saw pivotal moments during this period, shaping the nation's destiny.

Meanwhile, folklore stories often celebrate the mystical and the extraordinary, such as tales of the water spirit Vodnik, who is said to emerge during this warm season.

Seasonal foods play an essential role in July's cultural landscape. Freshly picked berries, such as strawberries and raspberries, become the stars of many dishes, offering a taste of summer's bounty.

Traditional meals often feature shashlik, a type of skewered and grilled meat, enjoyed during outdoor gatherings.

In essence, Июль (iyul') encapsulates a month where the past and present intertwine, offering a period of reflection, celebration, and a deep connection to the natural world.

It is a time when the spirit of summer is fully embraced, inviting all to partake in its warmth and freedom.

## **August – Август (avgust)**

August, or Август (avgust) in Russian, signifies the shift from the height of summer to the early whispers of autumn. This transitional month is rich with cultural traditions and seasonal significance, reflecting the tapestry of Russian life.

Among the notable August customs is the celebration of the Spas, or Saviour's Feast Days, which are deeply rooted in the Orthodox Christian faith. These include Honey Spas, Apple Spas, and Nut Spas, each marking a stage in the

harvest season and embodying gratitude for nature's bounty.

Russian celebrations in August also highlight the importance of communal gatherings. Village fairs and open-air markets become vibrant with activity, showcasing local crafts, produce, and culinary delights. The month is a period of family reunions, where generations come together to honor their heritage and enjoy the last warm days before the onset of autumn.

Historically, August is significant for key events, such as the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380, which symbolized Russian resistance against the Mongol yoke.

This blend of historical events and cultural traditions makes August a month of reflection and anticipation, embodying a spirit of freedom as the nation prepares for the seasonal change ahead.

## **September – Сентябрь (sentyabr')**

Signifying the definitive arrival of autumn, September, or сентябрь (sentyabr') in Russian, marks a period of transformation and new beginnings. This month holds profound September Significance, as it heralds the end of the languid summer days and the onset of crisp autumnal breezes.

For those who cherish the ethos of freedom, September embodies a time when nature undergoes a remarkable metamorphosis, symbolizing change and renewal.

Russian Autumn Traditions are rich and varied, with September being a focal point for many cultural practices. The month is synonymous with Harvest Festivals, where communities come together to celebrate the bounty of the land.

These festivities are not merely agricultural but are steeped in Cultural Reflections, offering insights into the historical and social fabric of Russian life. Traditional dances, songs, and communal meals are integral to these gatherings, reinforcing communal bonds.

Seasonal Changes during September are palpable, with the landscape transforming into a mosaic of gold, red, and amber hues. This visual alteration underscores a deeper, more introspective shift, inviting individuals to reflect on the cycles of life.

Consequently, сентябрь (sentyabr') is not just a month but a celebration of nature's enduring rhythm.

## **October – Октябрь (oktyabr')**

As the golden hues of September give way to the deeper tones of autumn, October, or октябрь (oktyabr') in Russian, ushers in a period of profound reflection and preparation.



The oktyabr' significance in Russian culture is deeply intertwined with both its historical and seasonal context. The month is a bridge between the fullness of harvest and the dormancy of winter, a time when nature and society alike pivot towards introspection and readiness.

Autumn traditions in Russia during October are rich and varied. This period sees the celebration of cultural festivities that honor the past and anticipate the future. Key among these is Pokrov, a religious holiday marking the Protection of the Mother of God, celebrated on October 14th. This event is steeped in rituals that seek blessings for the forthcoming winter.

Seasonal changes during oktyabr' are vivid, with landscapes transforming into a tapestry of browns, oranges, and yellows. It's a time when the last harvests are gathered, and preparations for the colder months intensify.

Historically, October also commemorates significant events such as the October Revolution of 1917, which reshaped Russian society and left an indelible mark on its cultural psyche.

## **November – Ноябрь (noyabr')**

November, known as Ноябрь (noyabr') in Russian, marks the shift from the vibrant colors of autumn to the stark realities of impending winter. This change month carries a profound cultural significance in Russia, where people prepare for the long, cold months ahead.

November celebrations often include Days of Military Glory, honoring historical events that shaped the nation, highlighting a deep sense of patriotism and remembrance.

Seasonal traditions in November reflect the changing weather patterns, with temperatures dropping and the first snowfall often occurring. Families begin to embrace indoor activities, gathering around warm hearths to share stories and preserve the spirit of togetherness.

Additionally, this period is marked by the observance of National Unity Day on November 4th, a public holiday commemorating the expulsion of Polish invaders in 1612, reinforcing national solidarity.

Historically, November has witnessed significant moments, such as the October Revolution of 1917, which altered the course of Russian history.

The month's weather patterns, changing from autumnal rains to early winter frosts, serve as a poignant reminder of the resilience and adaptability intrinsic to Russian culture.

## **December – Декабрь (dekabr')**

December – Декабрь (dekabr') begins with the stark onset of winter, as the

last vestiges of autumn give way to the icy grip of the colder months. This change marks a profound shift in the cultural and natural landscape of Russia.

Winter celebrations become the focal point of communities, with grand preparations for New Year's Eve, a festivity deeply cherished across the nation.

The historical significance of December in Russian culture is enormous. Traditionally, it has been a time for folk traditions that reflect the cyclical nature of life and the endurance of the human spirit. Seasonal changes are observed with reverence as the long nights and short days foster introspection and a sense of renewal.

Cultural practices during December in Russia often include elaborate feasts, music, and dance, all aimed at warding off the winter's chill and fostering communal bonds. The month is also notable for its religious observances, where many partake in Advent and prepare for the Orthodox Christmas in early January.

In essence, Декабрь (dekabr') is a month steeped in historical significance and cultural richness, symbolizing resilience and the joyous anticipation of new beginnings amid winter's embrace.

## **Latin and Greek Roots**

The influence of Latin on Russian month names is evident, particularly through the adoption of terms associated with Roman deities.

For instance, January ("январь" in Russian) originates from Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and changes.

This connection underscores the profound cultural and linguistic impact that ancient Roman civilization has had on the Russian calendar system.

### **Influence of Latin on Russian month names**

Drawing from the rich tapestry of linguistic evolution, the influence of Latin and Greek roots on Russian month names reveals a fascinating intersection of history and language. The Latin influence is particularly notable in the etymological roots of several Russian month names. For instance, "Januar" (январь) and "Februar" (февраль) in Russian closely mirror their Latin counterparts, Ianuarius and Februarius.

This linguistic evolution underscores the cultural significance of the Roman calendar, which has permeated various languages, including Russian. Understanding this historical context emphasizes how interconnected the development of languages is. The adoption of these Latin-rooted names in

Russian is not merely a reflection of linguistic borrowing but also a demonstration of the cultural exchanges and influences that have shaped societies over centuries.

Such etymological roots are vital in appreciating the shared heritage and common threads that run through different linguistic traditions. In essence, the Latin influence on Russian month names serves as a vivid reminder of the dynamic interplay between language and history.

This intersection showcases how languages evolve, adapt, and reflect the cultural and historical narratives of the societies that speak them, providing a nuanced understanding of our collective past.

## **Connection to Roman gods and goddesses**

Often overlooked in discussions of linguistic evolution, the connection between Russian month names and Roman gods and goddesses underscores the profound influence of mythology on language. This Roman influence is evident in the etymological roots of several Russian month names, revealing a fascinating tapestry of mythological connections and cultural syncretism.

For example, the month of January in Russian is “Январь” (Yanvar), derived from Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and transformations. Similarly, March, or “Март” (Mart) in Russian, draws from Mars, the Roman god of war, embodying the historical context of Roman military campaigns commencing in early spring.

These examples highlight how Roman deities have left an indelible mark on the Russian calendar, reflecting a broader narrative of language evolution shaped by historical and cultural exchanges.

The syncretism between Roman and local cultures facilitated the adoption and adaptation of Roman month names into the Russian lexicon. This cultural syncretism underscores the dynamic nature of language as it evolves, absorbing influences from various mythological and historical contexts.

Understanding these mythological connections enriches our appreciation of the linguistic journey that has shaped the Russian calendar we recognize today.

## **Traditional Slavic Names**

The traditional Slavic names for months offer a fascinating glimpse into the cultural and environmental influences on early Slavic societies.

For example, the month of January was known as “Sichen,” meaning “cutting,” reflecting the harsh, cutting winds of winter.

Meanwhile, July was called “Lipen,” derived from “lipa” or linden tree, which

blossoms during this time.

These names vividly illustrate how the natural world and seasonal changes were integral to the naming conventions of the Slavic calendar.

## **Overview of older Slavic names for months**

Traditional Slavic names for months offer a fascinating glimpse into the ways ancient Slavic cultures understood and interacted with their environment.

These names, deeply rooted in Slavic linguistic evolution, reflect the profound connection between people and the natural world. The ancient month significance embedded in these names provides insight into the daily lives and seasonal rhythms of early Slavic communities.

The cultural calendar variations across different Slavic regions highlight the influence of local climates and agricultural practices on how time was perceived and organized.

Each name often encapsulates specific activities or natural phenomena characteristic of that period, underscoring the importance of folk traditions influence in shaping the historical calendar systems.

These variations also reveal a mosaic of cultural identities within the broader Slavic world, each with its unique way of marking the passage of time.

## **Examples of traditional names and their meanings**

Among the traditional Slavic names for months, each term encapsulates a rich tapestry of cultural and environmental significance.

For instance, "Sichen" (January) originates from the root word "sich," meaning "to cut," symbolizing the cold winds that cut through the air. This traditional naming reflects the seasonal associations deeply rooted in the Slavic experience of winter.

"Travien" (May) derives from "trava," meaning "grass," aligning with the month's lush greenery and growth. This name highlights the cultural significance of agriculture and the rejuvenation of nature, marking a joyful period of renewal.

"Listopad" (November) translates to "leaf fall," perfectly capturing the historical context of the autumnal shedding of leaves. Such names are more than mere labels; they encapsulate the linguistic evolution of the Slavic people as they adapted to and described their environment.

The month of "Serpen" (August) is named after the "serp," or "sickle," underscoring the harvest period's importance.

Each name, imbued with specific cultural and seasonal meanings, provides a window into the historical context and practices of the Slavic world, illustrating a vibrant interplay between language and life.

## **Calendar Reforms in Russia**

The Russian calendar has undergone significant transformations, beginning with Tsar Peter the Great's introduction of the Julian calendar in 1700, which replaced the traditional Slavic system.

This was later followed by the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1918 after the Bolshevik Revolution, aligning Russia with Western Europe.

These reforms not only affected the nation's temporal framework but also invite us to further explore the linguistic and cultural heritage encapsulated in the names of the months.

### **Introduction of the Julian calendar by Tsar Peter the Great in 1700**

In a decisive move to modernize Russia and align it more closely with Western Europe, Tsar Peter the Great introduced the Julian calendar in 1700. This bold calendar reform marked a significant shift from the traditional Byzantine calendar that had been in use. The Julian calendar, named after Julius Caesar, had already been adopted by much of Europe, underscoring its cultural significance and widespread acceptance.

Peter the Great's motivation for this change was rooted in his desire to propel Russia onto the global stage and integrate it into the European fold, both politically and culturally. By embracing the Julian calendar, Russia synchronized its timekeeping with major European powers, facilitating diplomatic, trade, and cultural exchanges that were previously hampered by differing calendar systems.

Historically, this reform was part of Peter's broader strategy to transform Russian society and institutions. It represented more than just a change in date-keeping; it was a symbol of Russia's new direction and aspirations.

The calendar reform was a clear statement of Peter the Great's vision: a modern, progressive Russia that embraced innovation and shed its isolationist tendencies. This period marked the beginning of a new era, paving the way for future transformations.

### **Adoption of the Gregorian calendar after the Bolshevik Revolution**

## **in 1918**

Frequently overlooked in discussions of Russian history, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1918 marked another pivotal moment of transformation for the nation. This calendar alteration impact was profound, intertwining with the broader socio-political upheavals of the Bolshevik Revolution. The shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar represented more than just a change in date-keeping; it signified a cultural identity evolution, aligning Russia with Western Europe and further distancing it from its own historical traditions.

A thorough historical context analysis reveals that the Bolsheviks aimed to modernize and secularize Russian society, and the calendar reform was an essential facet of that agenda. However, this change was not without societal adjustment challenges. Citizens had to adapt to new holidays, shifted seasons, and altered rhythms of daily life, which disrupted established customs and practices.

The linguistic adaptation processes also played a significant role. Names of months and days required recalibration in official documents, literature, and everyday usage.

This linguistic shift mirrored the broader cultural transformation, as Russia sought to redefine its place in a rapidly changing world. The 1918 calendar reform consequently stands as a reflection of Russia's complex journey through modernization and cultural redefinition.

## **Encouragement to explore language and cultural heritage further.**

Exploring the language and cultural heritage is essential for understanding the full impact of the calendar reforms in Russia. The shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1918 not only marked a significant political shift but also reflected deeper cultural transformations.

Engaging in cultural exploration allows individuals to appreciate the linguistic diversity that characterizes Russia's historical context. By delving into the origins of Russian month names and their evolution, one gains a richer appreciation of the heritage that shapes contemporary Russian society.

Language learning plays a pivotal role in this journey, offering insights into how historical events influence linguistic changes. The adoption of the Gregorian calendar, for instance, realigned Russia with Western Europe, fostering a unique blend of Eastern and Western cultural elements.

This historical context underscores the importance of heritage appreciation, encouraging individuals to explore the intersections between language, culture, and history. By doing so, we not only honor the past but also enrich our understanding of the present, nurturing a deeper connection to our cultural roots and linguistic heritage.