

Пятьдесят первый урок

Диалоги: "Everybody was asking about you."
"What time did you get up today?"
"What are you going to do tomorrow?"
Грамматика: Introduction to Verbal Aspect

Диалоги

А. Все спрашивали о тебе *Everybody was asking about you*

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---|--|
| Макс: | 1 2 | Где ты была вчера? Все спрашивали о тебе. Даже Серёжа спросил о тебе. | <i>Where were you last night? Everybody was asking about you. Even Serjozha asked about you.</i> |
| Лиля: | 3 4 | Я сидела (была) в кабинете, как всегда, и писала учебник. | <i>I was sitting (was) in my office, as always, and writing my textbook.</i> |
| Макс: | 5 | А сколько страниц ты вчера написала? | <i>How many pages did you write yesterday?</i> |
| Лиля: | 6 7 8 | Вчера был хороший день. Я три страницы написала. Раньше я только одну страницу в день писала. | <i>Yesterday was a good day. I wrote 3 pages. Before I would only write a page per day.</i> |

Б. Во сколько ты встал сегодня? *What time did you get up today?*

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---|---|
| Варя: | 9 | Во сколько ты обычно встаёшь? | <i>(At) what time do you usually get up (in the morning)?</i> |
| Лёва: | 10 | Обычно я встаю в семь. | <i>Usually I get up around 7.</i> |
| Варя: | 11 | А сегодня? Во сколько ты встал сегодня? | <i>And today? What time did you get up today?</i> |
| Лёва: | 12 | Сегодня я встал очень поздно, в девять. | <i>Today I got up really late, at 9.</i> |
| Варя: | 13 | А когда ты вставал, когда ты учился в школе? | <i>And when did you get up when you were in high school?</i> |
| Лёва: | 14 15 16 | Раньше я очень рано вставал. Я играл в футбольной команде, и у нас каждое утро в шесть была тренировка. | <i>I used to get up really early. I played on the football team and every morning at 6 we had practice.</i> |
| Варя: | 17 | А когда ты встанешь завтра? | <i>When are you going to get up tomorrow?</i> |
| Лёва: | 18 | Завтра суббота, значит я поздно встану. | <i>Tomorrow's Saturday, so (= which means) I'll get up late.</i> |

В. Что ты будешь делать завтра? *What are you going to do tomorrow?*

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Нина | 19 | Что ты будешь делать завтра? | <i>What are you going to do tomorrow?</i> |
| Рома | 20 21 22 23 | Утром я буду сидеть дома и заниматься. Завтра у меня экзамен по русскому языку. А потом, может быть, я приготовлю обед. Придут мои родители. | <i>In the morning I'm going to stay home and study. I have an exam tomorrow in Russian. And then maybe I'll make (=prepare) dinner. My parents are coming (over).</i> |

(The grammar explanations in the lesson often refer back to these dialogues. We suggest you remove this page for easy reference while reading the lesson.)

Словарь

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | спрашивай+ // спроси ^х + | <i>ask (for information)</i> (See below for explanation of //) |
| 5 | страница | <i>page</i> |
| 8 | в + ACC (of time period) в день; в час | <i>per</i> <i>per day; per hour</i> |
| 9 | во сколько | <i>at what time; when</i> |
| 15 | футбольный | <i>football – Adj.</i> |
| 15 | команда | <i>team</i> |
| 16 | тренировка | <i>(athletic) practice</i> |
| 22 | готови+ // при- | <i>cook; prepare</i> |
| 22 | приходи ^х // {прид+ /приш(ё)л+ } Infinitive: прийти | <i>arrive; come (on foot)</i> |

50.A Introduction to Verbal Aspect (Вид)

(Today's lesson contains more grammatical explanations and less practice than a normal lesson. Read through the explanations very carefully. Don't worry if the notion of Aspect seems very strange. We'll be working on this for the rest of the year and throughout second-year Russian as well.)



The Good News

Russian, unlike English, has no complicated verb tenses like the Past Anterior, Present Perfect, Present Perfect Continuous, Past Indicative, etc., etc. Instead, there are just 3 tenses in Russian: **PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**.



The Not-As-Good News

For the Past and the Future, **but not for the Present**, most verbs come in what are known as “aspectual pairs”, consisting of an **IMPERFECTIVE** (Несовершенный) and a **PERFECTIVE** (Совершенный) form. While the rules for deciding between Imperfective and Perfective in the Past and Future can be complex (often depending on what *aspect* of the action the speaker wishes to convey), the rule that only the Imperfective is used for the Present can be confidently taken to the bank.¹

First, let's look at how Imperfective and Perfective verbs differ (or are similar) in *form*. After that, we'll discuss the difference in *meaning* between the two aspects.

¹ In rare, very rare instances, the Perfective can be used to describe an action in the Present.

51.A.1 Imperfective and Perfective verbs in the different tenses

- Past

| IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE |
|--------------|------------|
| писа́л | написа́л |
| встава́ла | вста́ла |
| говори́ли | сказа́ли |
| мог | смо́г |

Both Imperfective and Perfective add **-л, -ло, -ла, -ли** (except, of course, for Greasy Zeke verbs) to form the Past Tense. So to some extent, you can't immediately identify the aspect of a Past Tense verb. Tomorrow we'll discuss a few guidelines, but there's no 100% rule.

Note: We have not yet explained how to derive a Perfective stem. For now just be aware that the Perfective uses a different stem than the Imperfective. (One example: Imperfective **писа́**+; Perfective: **написа́**+. Much more on this later.)

- Present

| IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE |
|--|------------------------|
| пишу́, пи́нешь, etc. встаю́, встаёшь, etc. говору́ю, говори́шь, etc. | DOES NOT EXIST! |

Judging from this chart, you might conclude that you can always identify a Present Tense verb – it would have the Present Tense endings (1st or 2nd conjugation) we've been practicing since Chapter 2. However, as we'll see directly below, verbs with "Present Tense" endings can have a Future meaning.

- Future

| IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE |
|--|--------------------------|
| бу́ду писа́ть, бу́дешь писа́ть, etc. | напишу́, напи́нешь, etc. |
| бу́ду встава́ть, бу́дешь встава́ть, etc. | вста́ну, вста́нешь, etc. |
| бу́ду гово́рить, бу́дешь гово́рить, etc. | скажу́, ска́зешь, etc. |

Here we see that the Imperfective has a "compound Future", the verb **бу́д**+ *be/will* followed by an Infinitive. The Perfective Future simply conjugates the verb by **adding "Present Tense" endings to the stem of the perfective verb**. Technically, we should have called the Present Tense endings we gave back in Chapter 2 "non-Past endings". So, if you see just the verbal ending **-у, -ишь, -ет, -ят** or **-ют**, etc., you can't immediately tell what tense the verb is. If the verb is Imperfective, it's the Present Tense; if it's Perfective, it's the Future:

• **Infinitive**

| IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE |
|--------------|------------|
| писа́ть | написа́ть |
| встава́ть | встать |
| говри́ть | сказа́ть |

Technically, the Infinitive is not a tense, but in any case, you can see that both the Imperfective and Perfective attach **-ТЬ**. (We'll see some other ways to form the Infinitive later on):

*****Very Important Note About Our Notation*****

In the Словáрь we will always list the **Imperfective stem(s) on the left** and the **Perfective stem(s) on the right**, separated by 2 slashes. In cases where the Perfective simply attaches a prefix, we will list just the prefix. Here are a few sample entries:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Impf // Perf | спра́шивай+ // спроси́+ | <i>ask (for information)</i> |
| Impf // Perf | {встай+ / встава́й+} // вста́н+ | <i>get up; wake up</i> |
| Impf // Perf w/ prefix | чита́й+ // про- | <i>read</i> |

In the second example the Imperfective is double-stem verb {встай+ / встава́й+}. This is NOT an aspectual pair. Both stems are Imperfective, with the stem on the left used for the Present, and the stem on the left for the Past and Infinitive. The Perfective stem (to the right of the //) is вста́н+.

As we mentioned above, we still have not seen exactly how to form a Perfective verb from its Imperfective pair (or vice versa). We'll cover that in depth tomorrow.

Summary of the Forms of Imperfective and Perfective Verbs

| | PAST | PRESENT | FUTURE |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| IMPF. | form with -л, -ло, -ла, -ли писа́л, писа́ла, etc. | As we have learned: пишу́, пи́нешь, пи́шет пи́шем, пи́нете, пи́шут | бу́д+ (will) + Infinitive Я бу́ду занима́ться . <i>I am going to study</i> Он бу́дет весь день смотре́ть телеви́зор. <i>He is going to watch TV all day.</i> |
| PERF. | Same endings as for Imperfective verbs: написа́л, написа́ла, etc. | Никогда! NOT GONNA DO IT. !NO! | No helping verb. Just conjugate like a Present-Tense verb: Во сколько ты вста́нешь завтра? <i>What time are you going to get up tomorrow?</i> Завтра приду́т мо́й роди́тели. <i>My parents are coming tomorrow.</i> |

51.A.2 Basic Meaning of Aspect:

- **Perfective for Single Completed Actions**

Use the **Perfective** in the Past and the Future to indicate a **single action that definitely has been/will be completed**. If there is any other information being conveyed (see below) use the Imperfective.

- **Imperfective – Repeated Actions / Describing Progress of the Action**

Some of the most common uses of the **Imperfective** are:

1. **Present Tense** – (a “no-brainer”) Applies to all the uses of the Present: action in progress (*He’s doing his homework*), general statement (*He does his homework every day; I’ve been living in Moscow for 5 years.*)
2. **Repetition/Habit** – Actions repeated either on one occasion or over a long period of time appear in the Imperfective. In line 1 of the dialogue the imperfective **спрашивали** is used to indicate that over the course of the evening the action of asking was repeated. Contrast this with the Perfective **спросил** in line 2, where the action was successfully performed one time. In lines 13 and 14 the Imperfective **вставал** is used to describe a habitual action. Again, contrast this with the Perfective **встанешь** and **встану** in lines 17-18, which describe a single action that (it is assumed) will be successfully completed.

For the **Repetition/Habit** meaning, even though the action is completed, the repetitiveness “trumps” the notion of completion and the Imperfective must be used.

3. **State/Activity Verbs** – These verbs describe either: 1) the physical position or state a person was (will be) in or; 2) how a person spent (will be spending) their time. Note that there is no emphasis on *accomplishment*:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| a. the state (i.e., physical position or condition) a person was / will be in | Он лежал на диване. Голова́ вчера́ весь день бо́ле́ла Я бу́ду спать на полу́. | <i>He was lying (lay) on the couch. (My) head hurt all day yesterday. I'll sleep on the floor.</i> |
| b. how a person spent / will spend their time | Я вчера́ смотре́л телеви́зор. Я бу́ду занима́ться завтра́ ве́чером. Маша бу́дет учи́ться в При́нстоне. Мы жи́ли в Москвё. | <i>I watched TV yesterday I'm going to study tomorrow night.. Masha is going to study at Princeton. We lived / were living in Moscow.</i> |



Question: In the first part of the Sara story I recall the phrase: Я реши́ла один семе́стр **пожи́ть** в Москвё. Is the verb **пожи́ть** Perfective? If so, how can that be? Isn't *living in Moscow* how she planned on spending her time? This seems like a prototypical State/Activity Verb. And how can you “accomplish” living somewhere?

Answer: Like we said, Aspect can be tricky. Yes, **пожи́ть** is Perfective. But here the prefix **по-** adds a special meaning – “to do something for a short, limited time”. It was not her intention to live in Moscow forever, but for a specific amount of time. Anyway, we’ll get back to this later, but we just wanted to point out just one example of aspect in the real world.

51.A.3 More on Choosing between Perfective and Imperfective

To some extent, there (almost always) is no choice. When a native speaker wishes to convey the way they view² a particular (Past or Future, but not, of course, Present) action, they automatically, instinctively pick the “correct” aspect. For non-Russians, this process is, sadly, much less automatic and instinctive. Instead, we must rely on certain keys that indicate something about the nature, the *aspect* of the action.

- **Keys for deciding Aspect**

You are not (yet) responsible for any new adverbs [marked with *] in this list. We’ve included them because they provide very clear examples of the distinction between Imperfective and Perfective. We don’t expect you to memorize this chart at this point. It’s given for general reference. We’ll cover each of these points in depth later on.

| IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRESENT TENSE (trumps everything) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single, completed act (in the Past or Future) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English uses <i>-ing</i> form (so-called “continuous”): <i>Yesterday I was reading a book.</i> <i>Tomorrow I will be fixing my car all afternoon.</i> <i>While I was eating breakfast, the phone rang.</i> * Do not confuse the <i>-ing</i> of the continuous tense with the <i>-ing</i> found on ‘going’, which is used for simple Future tense. Thus, the sentence <i>I am going to open the door</i> would be translated with a Perfective verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sequence of completed actions: <i>Woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head.</i> * Note that this does not contradict the above key. Even though more than one action is described, each action itself is a single, completed action. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Adverbs indicating: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) repetition/habit: всегда́, ча́сто, иногда́, ра́ньше, ка́ждый (день / ме́сяц, etc.) 2) duration: до́лго, це́лый (день), всю (неде́лю) 3) non-existence of action: нико́гда (не) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Adverbs indicating: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) completion: уже́, *нако́нец <i>finally</i> 2) “one-timedness”: *о́днџжды – once (in the Past) 3) Suddenness: *вд́руг <i>suddenly</i>³, срџзу <i>immediately</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the verb люби^x+: Мы лю́бим стоџть на балкџне и кури́ть. Я лю́блю чи́тать. Она́ не лю́бит занима́ться | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfective Transitive verbs very often have a direct object, whereas Imperfective verbs may not Contrast Imperfective: Я весь день писа́л (no direct object) vs. Perfective: Я вчера́ написа́л три писа́ма. It is impossible to say Я написа́л without a direct object (unless it is clear from context that a direct object is implied). |

² It’s not a coincidence that the Russian word for Aspect is **вид**, which is obviously related to **виде**+ *see*.

³ Has no relation to **а вдруг** *what if*.

- **Nice test for Perfective – got something X-ed**

Use the Perfective form if you can form a sentence with the colloquial English verb *got + participle* as in *I (finally) got the stupid paper written* or *I eventually got the room cleaned up*. As we see in line 4 of the dialogue, the Perfective **написал** is used to focus on the completion of the action. The action itself, the writing of the three pages, probably lasted the entire day, but because the speaker wishes to focus on what she got done the Perfective is used. The example nicely illustrates that the same activity can be described with different verbs, depending on what aspect of the action the speaker wishes to emphasize. However, we don't want to give you the impression that it's entirely your choice as to which aspect to use. For almost all situations there is a correct way of describing the action.

- **Aspect ≠ Tense**

In the above chart we indicated that English *continuous tense* (*was eating, will be fixing*) always corresponds to the Imperfective. However, as a general rule you **cannot** associate specific tenses in English (except the Present) with one or the other aspect. (Believe us, this has been tried by many a student and teacher and it just doesn't work.)

- **How to “Learn” Aspect**

Learning Aspect is different from learning conjugation or declension in that it's not simply a matter of memorization and practice. You need to look at a lot of examples, and eventually (with the proper guidance) you'll develop a 'feel' for aspect. Still, we can tell you from experience that there are a lot of instances where even very experienced learners of Russian have a hard time with aspect – so don't worry if this seems hard.

Let's take a look at each of the verbs in the dialogues and discuss the aspect. (Be sure you have the first page of the lesson handy.)

| LINE | VERB | ASPECT (I or P) | REASON (S/A = “State/Activity”) |
|------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | была́ | I | This verb is by nature Imperfective. You can't complete “being”. It's the ultimate state/activity verb. |
| 1 | спра́шивали | I | Action was repeated (by everyone) over the course of the evening. Not a one-time action. |
| 2 | спроси́л | P | A single, completed action (as opposed to the repeated action in line 1). |
| 3 | сиде́ла | I | S/A verb (In what position the person was located.) |
| 4 | писа́ла | I | S/A verb (How the time was spent. No focus on accomplishing action. Even though there is the direct object <i>уче́бник</i> , there is no indication that the textbook was completed.) |
| 5 | написа́ла | P | The question focuses on the completion of X number of pages. Also note that it's a transitive verb with direct object . |
| 6 | был | I | As in line 1 – no perfective for this verb. |
| 7 | написа́ла | P | As in line 5. Almost always if someone asks a question in the perfective the answer should also be in the perfective. |
| 8 | писа́ла | I | Habitual action. Same action repeated over a long period of time. |
| 9 | встаёшь | I | Present Tense |

| | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|--|
| 10 | встаю́ | I | Present Tense |
| 11 | встал | P | One time, completed action. (Since the verb is intransitive, the presence or absence of a direct object makes plays no role.) |
| 12 | встал | P | Answer to a question containing a perfective verb. Again, a one time, completed action. |
| 13 | встава́л | I | Habitual action, repeated over a stretch of time. |
| 13 | учи́лся | I | S/A verb. Provides “background” information. |
| 14 | встава́л | I | Same as previous <i>встава́л</i> in line 13. If the question asks about a habitual action, your answer should (logically) describe a habitual action. |
| 14 | игра́л | I | S/A verb. Describes how time was often spent. Also, provides “background” information. |
| 16 | была́ | I | No perfective. |
| 17 | вста́нешь | P | One time completed action in the future. Perfective indicates speaker expects action to be completed. |
| 18 | вста́ну | P | Answer to question containing a perfective verb. |
| 19 | бу́дешь де́лать | I | S/A verb. Even though certain actions may be accomplished, there is no emphasis on this in the question. It’s simply <i>How will you spend your time tomorrow?</i> |
| 20 | бу́ду сиде́ть | I | S/A verb. |
| 20 | (бу́ду) занима́ться | I | S/A verb. If you really wanted to emphasize that you intend learn a specific amount or write a specific number of pages, the Perfective would be used. |
| 22 | пригото́влю | P | One-time completed action in the future. Again, the use of the Perfective stresses the intention to complete the action. |
| 22 | приду́т | P | One time complete action in the future. The speaker expects his parents to arrive. |



Exercise 1

Explain why the verb would be Imperfective or Perfective in Russian. (You don't have to translate anything, unless you happen to know the verb *to rollerblade*.)

1. I am reading a book.

2. We danced all night.

3. Who stole my car?

4. I used to wear glasses.

5. I like to travel (*aspect of Infinitive*).

6. Where were you?

7. I will buy him a new car.

8. My grandfather rollerblades in the park every Wednesday.

9. I am going to relax during vacation.

10. Suddenly she opened the door.

11. Everyone kept asking about you all night.

12. I was reading an interesting article the other day.

13. I will finish the paper by 5:00.

14. Who will feed our elephant while we are away on vacation?

15. I unlocked the cabinet, grabbed my bazooka, and headed toward the laundromat.

**Exercise 2**

Fill in the blank with the correct aspect. Be sure to pay attention to Tense. Recall our convention, imperfective on the left of the double slashes, perfective on the right.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Она́ вчера́ _____ три страни́цы. | писа́ ^х // на- |
| 2. Я слы́шал, что Толсто́й _____ ле́вой руко́й (<i>with his left hand</i> – as far as we know, this is not historically accurate, but it's good for Aspect.) | писа́ ^х // на- |
| 3. Когда́ ты _____ завтра? | {вста́й+ ^х /встава́й+} // вста́н+ |
| 4. На бу́дущей неде́ле (<i>next week</i>) я _____ в 9:00. | {вста́й+ ^х /встава́й+} // вста́н+ |
| 5. Что она́ _____? (Past Tense) | говори́+ // сказа́ ^х + |
| 6. О чём все _____ на вечери́нке? (Past Tense) | говори́+ // сказа́ ^х + |
| 7. Е́сли я его́ уви́жу (<i>will see him</i>) я _____. | говори́+ // сказа́ ^х + |
| 8. Я вчера́ _____ в два часа́. | ложи́+...ся // {ля́г+/ле́г+ ^х } |
| 9. Ра́ньше я _____ в час. | ложи́+...ся // {ля́г+/ле́г+ ^х } |
| 10. Она́ ка́ждый день _____ газе́ту. | покупа́й+ // купи́ ^х + |
| 11. Я люблю́ _____. | чита́й+ // про- |
| 12. Вчера́ я _____ очень интере́сную статью́. | чита́й+ // про- |
| 13. Мы не _____ <i>are not going to drink</i> на вечери́нке | {пью́+/пи́+ ^х } // вы́- (*note stress on <i>prefix</i>) |
| 14. Вера _____ це́лую бутылку́ вина́. | {пью́+/пи́+ ^х } // вы́- |
| 15. Что ты _____ вчера́? (<i>How did you spend your time?</i>) | дела́й+ // с- |
| 16. На́до _____ ко́мнату! | убира́й+ // {убе́р+ ^х /убра́+} <i>clean; clean up</i> |
| 17. Моя́ мать ка́ждый день _____ мою́ ко́мнату. | убира́й+ // {убе́р+ ^х /убра́+} |