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FREE ALPHABET LEARNING GUIDE

Serbian Alphabets Everywhere

Learn both Latin and Cyrillic — from scratch, in 3 days

А Б В Г Д Е Ж З И Ј К Л Љ

Full 30-letter alphabet table — Latin & Cyrillic side by side
The 10 false friends (the #1 beginner mistake)
Memory tricks for every tricky letter
50+ essential phrases in both scripts with pronunciation
3-day study plan to read Serbian out loud

Reviewed & edited by a native Serbian speaker

How Serbian Scripts Work

Serbian is one of the only languages in the world that officially uses two scripts simultaneously — a system linguists call synchronous digraphia. Both scripts represent identical sounds. The difference is purely visual.

Latinica (Latin)

Texts, social media, digital life, commerce

A B C Č Ć D Đ E F G H I J K L Lj M N Nj O P R S Š T U V Z Ž Dž

(Cyrillic)

Official docs, street signs, government, history

А Б В Г Д Ђ Е Ж З И Ј К Л Љ М Н Њ О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Џ Ш

The one rule: "Write as you speak, read as it is written." Every letter = exactly one sound. No exceptions. No silent letters.

Serbian Latin: The 5 Special Characters

You already know the Serbian Latin alphabet. The only additions are four letters with diacritics and one with a stroke:

Character	Sound	Pronunciation	Example
Š š	SH	Like "sh" in shop	šuma — forest
Ž ž	ZH	Like "s" in pleasure	žena — woman
Č č	CH (hard)	Like "ch" in chalk	čaj — tea
Ć ć	CH (soft)	Like "t" in British Tuesday	ćevapi — grilled meat
Đ đ	J (soft)	Like "j" in juice	đak — student

Once you know these five characters, Serbian Latin is completely transparent — you can read anything written in it immediately.

The 10 Cyrillic "False Friends"

These Cyrillic letters look like English characters but sound completely different. This is the #1 mistake beginners make.

The most famous example: an English speaker reads using English sounds and gets "PECTOPAH" — because looks like P, looks like C, looks like H. The correct reading is RESTORAN (restaurant). Once you learn these false friends, the confusion disappears within hours.

Cyrillic	Looks like	Actually sounds like	Memory trick
В	Looks like B	V (as in van)	"V for Viktor" — not B
Г	Upside-down L	G (as in go)	Think: corner = Go around the corner
Д	D with legs	D (as in dog)	"D" sound — Serbian has a wider base
Н	Looks like H	N (as in no)	= N, not H — they swapped
Р	Looks like P	R (rolled)	= R, not P — they swapped
С	Looks like C	S (as in sun)	= S, not C — they swapped
У	Looks like Y	OO (as in moon)	sounds like "oo" — think "you"
Х	Looks like X	KH (Scottish loch)	= throaty kh — like clearing throat
Ш	Wide W-shape	SH (as in shoe)	Three legs = SHuffle your feet
З	Looks like 3	Z (as in zebra)	= always a letter — never the number

The pattern: The problem is not the script — it's importing English assumptions into Cyrillic. Treat these 10 letters as a genuinely new system that happens to share shapes with Latin, and becomes instantly readable as RESTORAN.

The Full 30-Letter Serbian Alphabet

Both scripts contain exactly 30 letters, each representing exactly one sound. Every Cyrillic letter has a perfect Latin equivalent. Q, W, X and Y do not exist in Serbian.

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	Example	Meaning
A a	**А а**	Like 'a' in father	auto	car
B b	**Б б**	Like 'b' in boy	brat	brother
V v	**В в**	Like 'v' in van	voda	water
G g	**Г г**	Like 'g' in go	grad	city
D d	**Д д**	Like 'd' in dog	dan	day
Đ đ	**Ђ ђ**	Like 'j' in juice (soft)	đak	student
E e	**Е е**	Like 'e' in met	ime	name
Ž ž	**Ж ж**	Like 's' in pleasure	žena	woman
Z z	**З з**	Like 'z' in zebra	zid	wall
I i	**И и**	Like 'ee' in see	igra	game
J j	**Ј ј**	Like 'y' in yes	jug	south
K k	**К к**	Like 'k' in king	kuća	house
L l	**Л л**	Like 'l' in love	lice	face
Lj lj	**Љ љ**	Like 'lli' in million*	ljubav	love
M m	**М м**	Like 'm' in man	majka	mother
N n	**Н н**	Like 'n' in no	nebo	sky
Nj nj	**Њ њ**	Like 'ny' in canyon	knjiga	book
O o	**О о**	Like 'o' in more	oko	eye
P p	**П п**	Like 'p' in pen	pas	dog
R r	**Р р**	Rolled R (can be a vowel)	ruka	hand
S s	**С с**	Like 's' in sun	sat	hour
T t	**Т т**	Like 't' in top	tata	dad
Ć ć	**Ћ ћ**	Like 't' in British Tuesday	ćevapi	grilled meat
U u	**У у**	Like 'oo' in moon	ulica	street
F f	**Ф ф**	Like 'f' in fun	fudbal	football
H h	**Х х**	Like 'ch' in Scottish loch	hvala	thank you
C c	**Ц ц**	Like 'ts' in pizza	cvet	flower
Č č	**Ч ч**	Like 'ch' in chalk (hard)	čaj	tea
Dž dž	**Џ џ**	Like 'j' in jungle	džep	pocket
Š š	**Ш ш**	Like 'sh' in shoe	šuma	forest

* Lj/: No direct English equivalent. "Million" is closest. Spanish speakers: same as "ll" in tortilla. * R/: Can function as a vowel — e.g. vrt (garden), krst (cross).

Memory Tricks for Tricky Cyrillic Letters

Beyond the false friends, several Cyrillic letters are genuinely new shapes. These memory anchors help them stick:

Letter	Shape	What it looks like	Memory anchor
Б б	б	Like b with a cap on top	Think: Balancing a cap =
Ж ж	Ж	Like a snowflake or asterisk shape	Three crossing lines = Zhuzzing like a bee
И и	И	Like N written backwards	Mirror-N = sounds like "ee" in see
Й й	Й	with a breve (short mark)	Short = short "y" (used in loanwords)
Љ љ	Љ	+ soft sign joined	is L is L softened = Lj
Њ њ	Њ	+ soft sign joined	is N is N softened = Nj
П п	П	Like an upside-down U or doorframe	The Portal shape = sounds like P
Ф ф	Ф	Circle on a stick — like a lollipop	Fancy F = sounds like F
Ц ц	Ц	C with a small tail at bottom right	The tail = the extra ts sound (like pizza)
Ч ч	Ч	Like a cup or chalice shape	The Chalice shape = sounds like CH
Џ џ	Џ	but mirrored — tail on left	Mirrored = DŽ sound (like jungle)
Ђ ђ	Ђ	with a curved crossbar	Softer = softer sound (Đ, like juice)
Ћ ћ	Ћ	Like a T with a soft curve	Softer T shape = softer sound (Ć, like Tuesday)

How to use this table: Don't try to memorize all 13 at once. After Day 2 of the study plan, come back to this table and pick the 3–4 letters that keep tripping you up. One strong visual anchor beats ten weak ones.

3-Day Serbian Alphabet Study Plan

You don't need weeks to read Serbian. Three focused sessions are enough to go from zero to reading basic Cyrillic out loud.

Day 1 15 min	**Shared Characters & Easy Wins** Focus: Letters that look and sound the same in both scripts: A/, E/, K/, M/, O/, T/ — shapes you already know. Practice: Write common words using only these: mama, koka-kola, tata, auto, motor, atom. Real-world test: Spot these on Serbian street signs using Google Maps Street View in Belgrade.
Day 2 20 min	**The False Friends** Focus: Cyrillic letters that look like English but sound different — , , , , , , , , . Practice: Use the false friends table above. Say each Serbian sound out loud 3× to override the English reflex. Real-world test: Try reading , , without looking at the table.
Day 3 25 min	**The Unique Serbian Sounds** Focus: Serbian-specific characters with no English equivalent: , , , , , , , . Practice: Listen to native audio before producing each sound. Start with: ljubav (love), knjiga (book), žena (woman). Real-world test: Read 5 street names in Belgrade on Google Maps. You should be able to attempt every letter.

After three days you won't be fluent in Cyrillic — but you will be able to read it out loud, which is the most important milestone. Everything builds from there.

Essential Phrases in Both Scripts

Every phrase below is shown in Latin script, Cyrillic script, and with pronunciation guidance. Use this as your practical reading exercise too.

Greetings

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	English
Zdravo	Здраво	ZDRAH-voh	Hello (informal)
Dobar dan	Добар дан	DOH-bar dahn	Good day (formal)
Hvala	Хвала	HVAH-lah	Thank you
Molim	Молим	MOH-leem	Please / You're welcome
Izvinite	Извините	eez-VEE-nee-teh	Excuse me / Sorry
Živeli!	Живели!	ZHEE-veh-lee	Cheers! (make eye contact)
Ne razumem	Не разумем	neh rah-ZOO-mem	I don't understand
Učim srpski	Учим српски	OO-cheem SRP-skee	I'm learning Serbian

Transport & Getting Around

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	English
Gde je...?	Где је...?	gdeh yeh	Where is...?
Koliko košta?	Колико кошта?	KOH-lee-koh KOSH-tah	How much?
Jedna karta, molim	Једна карта, молим	YED-nah KAR-tah	One ticket, please
Levo / Desno	Лево / Десно	LEH-voh / DES-noh	Left / Right
Ovde, molim vas	Овде, молим вас	OHV-deh MOH-leem vahs	Here, please (taxi)
Uključite metar	Укључите метар	oo-KLYOO-chee-teh	Turn on the meter

More Essential Phrases

Restaurant & Food

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	English
Meni, molim	Мени, молим	MEH-nee MOH-leem	Menu, please
Šta preporučujete?	Шта препоручујете?	shtah prep-oh-ROO-choo	What do you recommend?
Prijatno!	Пријатно!	pree-YAHT-noh	Bon appétit!
Bilo je ukusno	Било је укусно	BEE-loh yeh oo-KOOS-noh	It was delicious
Račun, molim	Рачун, молим	RAH-choon MOH-leem	The bill, please
Zadržite kusur	Задржите кусур	zahd-RZHI-teh KOO-soor	Keep the change

Serbian servers won't bring the bill until asked — always say Račun, molim when ready.

Shopping & Daily Life

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	English
Koliko ovo košta?	Колико ово кошта?	KOH-lee-koh OH-voh	How much does this cost?
Da li primate kartice?	Да ли примате картице?	dah lee PREE-mah-teh	Do you accept cards?
Uzeću ovo	Узећу ово	oo-ZEH-choo OH-voh	I'll take this
Gde je apoteka?	Где је апотека?	gdeh yeh ah-poh-TEH-kah	Where is the pharmacy?

Emergency Phrases

Latin	Cyrillic	Pronunciation	English
Pomoć!	Помоћ!	POH-moch	Help!
Zovite policiju!	Зовите полицију!	ZOH-vee-teh poh-LEE-tsee-yoo	Call the police!
Zovite hitnu pomoć!	Зовите хитну помоћ!	HEET-noo POH-moch	Call an ambulance!
Trebam doktora	Требам доктора	TREH-bahm DOK-toh-rah	I need a doctor
Alergičan/na sam na	Алергичан/на сам на	ah-ler-GEE-chan sam nah	I'm allergic to…

Emergency Numbers 112 All services • 192 Police • 194 Ambulance • 193 Fire

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Take Your Serbian Further

This guide gives you the alphabet foundation. Ling gives you fluency.

Native speaker audio for every word and phrase
Speaking exercises with real pronunciation feedback
Gamified lessons — 15 minutes a day
Cultural notes so you sound natural, not textbook
Serbian course using Latin script — pairs with this Cyrillic guide

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