A PRACTICAL BULGARIAN GRAMMAR FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

A comprehensive guide to Bulgarian grammar and usage. Clear explanations, real-life examples and varied exercises.
CONTENTS

SYSTEMATIC INDEX v
INTRODUCTION vii

about the book • if you don’t understand grammar

01 THE BULGARIAN ALPHABET AND PRONUNCIATION 1
1 the Bulgarian alphabet 2 vowels 3 consonants 4 orthography
principles 5 vowels and diphthongs 6 consonants

02 PRESENTING PEOPLE AND THINGS 17
1 subject pronouns 2 the verb to be 3 nouns for nationality and
occupation 4 gender of the nouns 5 question words 6 demonstrative
pronouns 7 basic conjunctions 8 nationality, titles and jobs -
more about genders

03 DESCRIBING PEOPLE AND THINGS 33
1 demonstrative pronouns 2 the definite article - forms 3 adjectives
4 the definite article - usage 5 adjectives - usage 6 making
comparisons 7 types of adjectives

04 AVAILABILITY AND QUANTITIES 51
1 there is/there are 2 plural nouns 3 numbers 4 countable form
of the masculine nouns 5 expressing quantities 6 talking about
height, weight, age, prices, etc. 7 numbers - special uses
8 ordinal numbers, the date

05 POSSESSION 67
1 the verb to have 2 the preposition na 3 possessive pronouns -
short forms 4 possessive pronouns - long forms 5 reflexive
possessive pronouns 6 using other prepositions to express
possession 7 omitting the possessive pronouns 8 special uses
of the long possessive pronouns 9 adjectives meaning possession
- family names

06 TALKING ABOUT THE PRESENT 81
1 groups of verbs 2 the present tense - forms 3 the present tense
- usage 4 reflexive verbs 5 interrogative pronouns and adverbs
- overview 6 negative statements 7 yes/no-questions - special uses

07 LIKES AND DISLIKES 99
1 constructions expressing likes and dislikes 2 direct object
pronouns 3 indirect object pronouns 4 emphasizing and prepo-
tional pronouns 5 telling what you like to do - the subjunctive
construction 6 word order of the short pronouns 7 expressing
PHONETICS
vowels 1.2, 1.5
consonants 1.3, 1.6
diphthongs 1.2, 1.5

MORPHOLOGY
articles
definite 3.2, 3.4, 7.1
indefinite 4.introduction

nouns
gender 2.3, 2.4, 2.8
plural 2.3, 4.2, 4.3, table 1
diminutive forms 13.5
countable form 4.4
vocative form 13.4
proper names 3.4, 13.4, 13.5

adjectives
gender and number 3.3
grades of comparison 3.6, 9.4
definite and vocative forms 3.3, 3.4
forming 3.7, 5.9, 13.5

numerals
cardinal 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7
ordinal 4.8

pronouns
personal pronouns table 2
subject 2.1, 14.3
direct object 5.6, 7.2, 7.6, 7.8
indirect object 5.6, 7.3, 7.6, 7.8
reflexive 5.6, 6.4
emphatical 7.4
possessive pronouns 5.3, 5.7
short forms 5.4, 5.7, 5.8
long forms 5.5
demonstrative pronouns 2.6, 3.1
interrogative pronouns 2.5, 6.5
relative pronouns 14.5
negative pronouns 6.6
indefinite pronouns 14.3, 14.4, 14.5

adverbs
of time 10.5
of cause 14.6
of manner 14.6
### Systematic Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
<td>table 3, table 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Verbs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjugations</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>6.4, 13.3, 14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be</td>
<td>2.2, 8.2, 9.1, 10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have</td>
<td>4.1, 5.1, 8.2, 9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspect</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>8.3, 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>8.3, 8.3, 9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicative Mood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Tense</td>
<td>6.2, 6.3, 8.1, 8.6, 11.6, 12.6, 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Tense</td>
<td>8.2, 11.6, 12.6, 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aorist (Past Simple) Tense</td>
<td>10.1, 10.2, 11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect Tense</td>
<td>10.3, 10.4, 11.6, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Tense</td>
<td>11.2, 11.3, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluperfect Tense</td>
<td>12.1, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Perfect Tense</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future-in-the-Past Tense</td>
<td>12.4, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative Mood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Mood</td>
<td>9.5, 12.5, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative Mood</td>
<td>13.1, 13.2, 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive (đa-)form</td>
<td>7.5, 9.1, 13.2, 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Voice</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infinite Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Past Participles</td>
<td>11.1, 12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Present Participle</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Past Participle</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Adverb</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Noun</td>
<td>12.7, 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunctions</strong></td>
<td>2.7, 8.6, 12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prepositions</strong></td>
<td>5.2, 10.5, table 5, table 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Syntax

**Parts of the Sentence**

- **Subject**
  - 2.1, 14.2
- **Objects**
  - 7.1, 7.8, 14.2
- **Determiners**
  - 3.5
- **Adverbials**
  - 10.5, 14.6

**Simple Sentences**

- **Word Order**
  - 2.2, 6.5, 6.7, 7.1, 7.6, 11.2, 14.2, 14.5, 14.6
- **Questions**
  - 2.2, 2.5, 6.7
- **Negative Statements**
  - 2.2, 6.6, 8.2, 9.2, 13.1
- **Impersonal Constructions**
  - 7.8, 14.3

**Complex Sentences**

- **Time Clauses**
  - 8.6
- **Conditional Clauses**
  - 12.6
- **Relative Clauses**
  - 14.5
- **Direct and Reported Speech**
  - 11.6
ABOUT THE BOOK

The Practical Bulgarian Grammar for English Speakers is a grammar book intended to serve as a textbook and reference manual for all learners of Bulgarian at all learning levels. If you are at the very start of a Bulgarian language course and you need more information about the basic grammar rules, or you already speak the language but you are baffled by construction that you hear in spoken Bulgarian and were not explained in your basic course, this book will give you more knowledge about how the language really works. If you study or teach Bulgarian or other Slavic languages at university and you need another view on grammar; or you are just a language enthusiast, this book will reveal for you some details about Bulgarian grammar that you are not likely to learn in standard textbooks.

Method

The method used in this book differs from most standard grammars. We have abandoned the systematic rendering used in most linguistic studies where the three main levels of organization in language - sound, word and sentence - are treated separately in the disciplines of phonetics, morphology and syntax; and where different grammatical categories are strictly divided and explained as independent ideas. Instead, we have tried to group them according to their function in the language, e.g. describing people and things, talking about the future, relating past events, etc. So here, you won't find the well-known pattern of nouns, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, verbs and particles treated separately in different chapters but a conglomerate of different grammatical notions combined together to serve concrete purposes of communication.

For example, in the Possession unit you will learn not only the possessive pronouns but also all verbs, prepositions, object pronouns and adjectives that are used in Bulgarian to tell what belongs to whom. In the Giving Commands unit, you'll find information not only about the imperative mood, but also about all other constructions you can use to tell or induce somebody to do something.
INTRODUCTION

Structure

The *Practical Bulgarian Grammar for English Speakers* consists of 15 main units and a reference part at the end.

**Unit 1** is a little different from all other units. This is an introduction to the Bulgarian writing and sound system. It contains explanations about the most important pronunciation rules and the phonetic patterns of the language. The unit is divided into three main parts that correspond to different levels of knowledge. The basic section, **Bulgarian Alphabet**, will give you enough information about Bulgarian letters and their formal sound equivalents. This should be enough for you to be able to read the words and examples in this book and be understood when speaking Bulgarian. With the **Bulgarian Sound System** section, you will be able to refine your pronunciation and try to sound more like a native Bulgarian. In the **Spelling Rules and Phonetic Laws** section, you'll learn the main orthography principles of Bulgarian that will help you to write correctly, and some patterns of sound mutation in different word forms.

If you are at the very beginning of your learning, you don't need to read all information. Just try to learn the Bulgarian alphabet and the basic pronunciation rules and go ahead.

If you already have some knowledge of Bulgarian, it can be a good idea to refine your knowledge about pronunciation by reading more about the Bulgarian sounds.

And if you want to become an expert and write correctly in Bulgarian, you'll need to look at the last section.

**Units 2 through 14** follow more or less the same pattern. At the very beginning of the unit you will find what functional and grammatical points you are supposed to learn. For example, in Unit 3 you will learn how to talk about definite things, how to describe them and how to compare their characteristics; to fulfill these functional tasks, you'll need to know the demonstrative pronouns, the definite article, adjectives and their degrees of comparison, as well as some prepositions and suffixes to form new adjectives.

In the **Introduction** to each unit you will find some of the main points related to its main subject but not necessarily explained again further in the unit. For example, in Unit 1 you will learn about the most common greetings in Bulgarian but this information can be found only in the Introduction.
Further on, each unit is divided into three main sections: **Basics**, **Fine Tuning** and **Language Expert**. Evidently, the information in the first section is more basic; the second one gives you advanced knowledge about the subject; and in the last section additional information is included that can be important if you want to upgrade your basic language skills. For example, in Unit 6 you will learn basic information about the verb and the present tense in the first section; about reflexive verbs and negative statements in the second; and about different nuances when asking questions in the third.

There are up to four **Exercises** after the Basics and Fine Tuning sections in each unit that will help you to refine further your knowledge. The **Answers** are given at the end of the same unit as it is much easier to check them than if they were at the end of the book.

**The Did You Know** sections contain curious facts about differences between the English and the Bulgarian mode of speech or about grammatical mistakes that Bulgarians make so often in the spoken language that they have become a rule. **References** throughout the book, like *(see 12.4)*, denote the number of the unit and the number of the section.

This structure of the units is designed so that you will learn something new in every section, even in the exercises and the answers. You can read them all successively or decide what is important to know and concentrate only on this information. No matter how you use the book, the most important thing is to make the best of it.

**Unit 15** is a bit different, too. It does not concern the grammar, strictly speaking, but contains information about the history of the Bulgarian language and script, the place of Bulgarian in the system of world languages, its dialects and styles, and the problems of using a different alphabet in a Latin-dominated world. So, there is nothing to learn here, but only interesting facts that an enthusiastic learner of Bulgarian may want to know.

At the end of the book, there are several **Tables** of the most important plural nouns, verb forms and prepositions - information that needs to be rendered in a more systematic way. And lastly, the **Thematic Index** will help you find your way if you know exactly which topic you need to read. If you need a more systematic approach, you can look at the **Systematic index** at the beginning of the book.
IF YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND GRAMMAR

Grammar is a science of its own, having lots of terms that are not always clear to ordinary people. If you find it difficult to understand those terms, try to read this section and maybe things will get a little easier.

The smallest building blocks of speech are the sounds that are produced by the vocal apparatus of the speaker. In writing, sounds are represented by letters but one letter does not always represent one sound or vice versa.

Depending on how much voice you use to articulate them, sounds can be vowels (more voice; see 1.2) or consonants (less voice; see 1.3). There are sounds that resemble both vowels and consonants and they are called semivowels. Their combinations with the real vowels are called diphthongs.

But sounds are just a meaningless juggling if they are not combined in words. And words represent notions.