

# LESSON 4

## HARDNESS AND SOFTNESS OF CONSONANTS



Some of the Russian consonants can have a hard version of pronunciation and a soft version of pronunciation.

Compare these words:

NOODLE – NEEDLE

DILL – DEAL

FOOT – FEW

Why is it important? In Russian, this difference can affect the meaning!

БЫТЬ – БИТЬ (to be – to beat)

МАТЬ – МЯТЬ (mother – to crumple, to squeeze)

ЛУК – ЛЮК (onion – hatch)

So, how to make these sounds?

This is the best explanation I have found so far. Read it carefully:

“Certain Russian consonants can be slightly modified by arching your tongue and moving it forward, towards the hard palate area (that ridge on the roof of your mouth where your upper teeth fit in) while making the consonant sound.

The effect is to make a sound softer and, in terms of pitch, slightly higher.”

A little tip for you – try to **SMILE!** Smiling really helps to pronounce the consonants softly.

Here I have used an apostrophe ‘ to demonstrate the soft sounds. Try to read this:

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Б – Б'  
П – П'  
М – М'  
В – В'  
Ф – Ф'  
Г – Г'

Д – Д'  
Н – Н'  
С – С'  
З – З'  
Т – Т'  
К – К'

Do you feel the difference? Now go to the exercises, please.

### EXERCISES

Listen and repeat

Б – Б', П – П', М – М', В – В', Ф – Ф', Г – Г', Д – Д', Н – Н', С – С', З – З', Т – Т', К – К';

БЫ – БИ, БЫ – БИ, БЫ – БИ, ПЫ – ПИ, ПЫ – ПИ, ПЫ – ПИ, МЫ – МИ, МЫ – МИ, МЫ – МИ, ВЫ – ВИ, ВЫ – ВИ, ВЫ – ВИ, ФЫ – ФИ, ФЫ – ФИ, ФЫ – ФИ, ГЫ – ГИ, ГЫ – ГИ, ГЫ – ГИ, ДЫ – ДИ, ДЫ – ДИ, ДЫ – ДИ, НЫ – НИ, НЫ – НИ, НЫ – НИ, СЫ – СИ, СЫ – СИ, СЫ – СИ, ЗЫ – ЗИ, ЗЫ – ЗИ, ЗЫ – ЗИ, ТЫ – ТИ, ТЫ – ТИ, ТЫ – ТИ, КЫ – КИ, КЫ – КИ, КЫ – КИ;

ИБИ, ИБИ, ИБИ, ИПИ, ИПИ, ИПИ, ИМИ, ИМИ, ИМИ, ИВИ, ИВИ, ИВИ, ИФИ, ИФИ, ИФИ, ИГИ, ИГИ, ИГИ, ИДИ, ИДИ, ИДИ, ИНИ, ИНИ, ИНИ, ИСИ, ИСИ, ИСИ, ИЗИ, ИЗИ, ИЗИ, ИТИ, ИТИ, ИТИ, ИКИ, ИКИ, ИКИ.