

Title: Russian Alphabet Bricks: an alternative to classroom practice
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The “Russian Alphabet Bricks” is an innovative multimedia project which can be used both in class and for self-study by beginner learners of Russian. This multimedia program includes four modules that present learners with basic knowledge of the Russian alphabet in the areas of general facts, reading basics, a writing guide, and a typing guide. The first module presents the learner with the factual information about the letters, paired vowels and consonants, soft and hard sets etc. The reading module includes explicit reading rules and multimedia files with a variety of recordings of native speakers of Russian. The writing module includes a controlled animated guide that shows step-by-step writing techniques. The typing module introduces the learners to the basics of typing in Cyrillic. All modules include practice that develops the target skills. The multimedia allows for learner control and easy navigation. The multimedia aims at lowering students’ anxiety in the beginning language classes that has been shown to increase due to the perceived difficulty of the Cyrillic alphabet (Saito and Horwitz). Another goal of the program is to provide additional tutor-like training to learners in classes that lack sufficient practice in listening comprehension (Benson and Hjelt), reading, and writing practice due to the time constraints. This program has been piloted with beginning Russian students at the University of Iowa. The results have shown increased motivation and decreased anxiety when using the program. An analysis of the results that compares the achievement levels of the students who used the program to the control group is underway.

- Benson, P.C., & Hjelt C. (1978). Listening competence: A prerequisite to communication. *The Modern Language Journal*, 62(3), 85-89.
- Saito, Y., & Horwitz, E. K. (1999). Foreign language reading anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 202-218.