

ACCUSATIVE Forms**Feminine declension nouns**

hard type: 'room'		soft type: 'week'	
singular	plural	singular	plural
ко́мнату	ко́мнаты	неде́лю	неде́ли
	= GEN if animate		= GEN if animate
-ь: 'talent'			
singular	plural		
спосо́бность	спосо́бности		

Masculine declension nouns

hard type: 'courtyard'			soft type: 'nail'
singular	plural	singular	plural
дво́р	дво́ры	гвоздь	гвозди́
= GEN if animate	= GEN if animate	= GEN if animate	= GEN if animate

Neuter declension nouns

hard type: 'body'		soft type: 'schedule'	
singular	plural	singular	plural
те́ло	те́ла	расписа́ние	расписа́ния

Adjectives

hard type: 'first'			
feminine	masculine	neuter	plural
пе́рвую	пе́рвый	пе́рвое	пе́рвые
	= GEN if animate		= GEN if animate
soft type: 'last'			
feminine	masculine	neuter	plural
последнюю́	последний	последнее	последние
	= GEN if animate		= GEN if animate

Pronouns

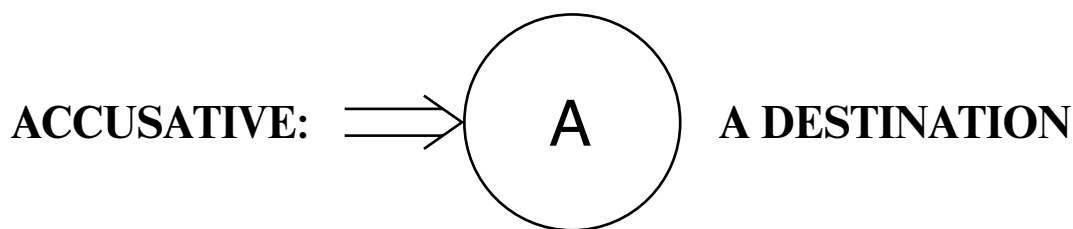
'I'	'we'	'you' informal	'you'
меня́	нас	тебя́	вас
'she'	'he'	'it'	'they'
(н)её	(н)его́	(н)его́	(н)их
'who'	'what'	'oneself'	
кого́	что	себя́	
'this'			
feminine	masculine	neuter	plural
эту́	э́тот	э́то	э́ти
	э́того if animate		э́тих if animate
'all, every'			
feminine	masculine	neuter	plural
всю́	весь	всё	все
	всего́ if animate		всех if animate

Possessives

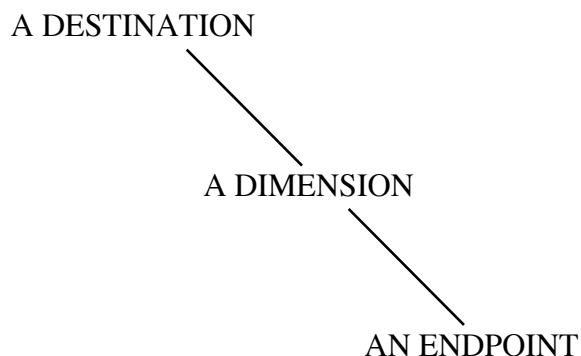
feminine	masculine	neuter	plural
'my'			
мою́	мой	моё	мо́й
	моего́ if animate		мо́их if animate
'our'			
на́шу	наш	на́ше	на́ши
	на́шего if animate		на́ших if animate

Numerals

'one'			plural
feminine	masculine	neuter	одни́
одну́	о́дин	о́дно	о́дних if animate
	о́дного if animate		
'two'	'three'	'four'	'five'
две/два	три	четы́ре	пять
двух if animate	трёх if animate	четырёх if animate	



The accusative network:



PROLOGUE

An apt subtitle for this chapter would be “Toward, down, and at the bottom of a slippery slope.” The accusative case can do all three things: it can take you to a place (toward a slippery slope = ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION), it can take you along a place (down a slippery slope = ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION), and it can take you to the end of a place (to the bottom of a slippery slope = ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT). Just as running up to, sliding down, and getting to the bottom of a slippery slope can be all folded into one continuous action, the three meanings of the accusative are really all parts of a continuum without precise boundaries between them. And the accusative is itself a slippery slope.

Above all else, the accusative describes a destination, and this is equally true for all of its meanings. The relations between the three meanings of the accusative are noticeably different from those that we see in the other cases with multiple meanings (the nominative, instrumental, dative, and genitive). Rather than being relatively discrete and independent (but related), the meanings of the accusative are like the nesting parts of a матрёшка doll. The basic meaning of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is the biggest, least specific meaning; it does not analyze its object in any way². An item marked by ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is just a destination, its structure is of no particular interest. ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION, however, focuses on a destination extended through time, space, or some other dimension. ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT takes this concept even further, focusing specifically on the endpoint of a destination extended through some dimension; you might think of it as a destination (endpoint) within a destination. Overall, you can visualize the accusative meanings as a megaphone or a telescope, with ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION at the wide end, ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT at the narrow end, and ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in between. The accusative operates on

An overview of the accusative case.

The meanings of the accusative case are increasingly specific, identifying first a destination in general, then extension along a dimension, and then an endpoint.

The distribution of prepositions among the meanings of the accusative case.

a scale from general to specific, and the boundaries between submeanings are rather diffuse.

Another hallmark of the accusative case is the way it deploys prepositions. With all other cases, each preposition is associated with only one submeaning. Not so the accusative. It is not uncommon for prepositions to use two or even all three meanings of the accusative. This table will give you some idea of how versatile prepositions are in the accusative case, and the individual uses of each will be discussed below.

Distribution of prepositions among the meanings of the accusative case

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION

в 'to, in, into; on, at; for'
на 'to, on, onto; on, at; for'
за 'behind; for'
о 'against'
по 'up to; after, to get'
под 'under, toward; for use as'
про 'for'

ACCUSATIVE:: A DIMENSION

в 'in, during; like'
на 'for, lasting; to'
за 'during'
о 'with'
по 'through; each'
под 'like; to the tune of'
про 'about'
с 'approximately'
сквозь 'through'
через 'through'

ACCUSATIVE:: AN ENDPOINT

в 'in, at; at the end of'
за 'away; by the end of'

через 'across, after; in, at the end of'

We often spend so much time learning the prepositions in Russian that we neglect the fact that it also has postpositions. Just as a preposition is a word that comes before other words, a postposition is a word that comes after other words. All the postpositions associated with the accusative case are used to express time with ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT, and appear in the last section of this chapter.

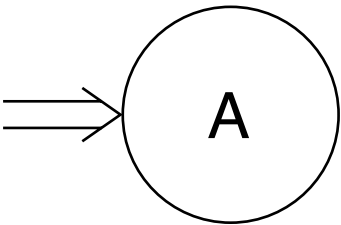
ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 1—в 'in, into'

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION with space, time, action, and purpose.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION operates in four domains: space, time, action, and purpose. In the spatial domain ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is a destination of physical motion; in terms of time it is a temporal destination, a time when something happens; in the domain of action it is the destination of a verbal activity — what we usually call the direct object; and in the domain of purpose its meaning is roughly equivalent to the English word *for*.

In the domain of space, ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION always requires a preposition to tell us what sort of trajectory is envisioned. The prepositions that can appear here are: в 'to, into', на 'to, onto', за 'to the far/back side of', о 'against', по 'up to; after, to get', под 'to the underside of, approaching', and про 'for'. We will look at each preposition, including its metaphorical uses, in turn.

Physical movement through space in the direction of or entering something is the most basic use of в expressing ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION.



A force (arrow) arrives at an ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION (circle labeled A)

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of space is explored in sections 1-6.

в + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of space means 'in, into'.

Лишь 7 процéнтов людéй вЫразили желáние вЫехать в *другúе местá*.
[Only 7-NOM percent-GEN people-GEN expressed desire-ACC move to other places-ACC.]

Only 7 percent of the people expressed a desire to move to *other places* .

Эта дéвушка рáньше учИлась в их клáссе, а потóм перешлá в *другúю шкóлу*.
[That girl-NOM earlier studied in their class-LOC, but later transferred to another school-ACC.]

That girl used to study in their class, but later she transferred to *another school* .

Мáма попáла в сумасшéдший дóм.
[Mama-NOM wound-up in lunatic asylum-ACC.]
Mama wound up in *a lunatic asylum* .

The last example shows that Russian will often express the idea of moving toward a destination even when the equivalent English doesn't. Here's another typical example:

Я раздéлась и леглá в *постéль*.
[I-NOM got-undressed and lay-down in bed-ACC.]
I got undressed and lay down in *bed* .

Many kinds of motion, large and small, may be conceived of as showing direction. Here are some examples that you might not expect to use the accusative, given the way we think of them in English. Still, they do show directed motion, and thus the logic of using ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is justified.

удáр в *грудь*, стучáть в *дверь*
[blow-NOM to chest-ACC, knock to door-ACC]
a blow to *the chest* , to knock on *a door*

Я как сумасшéдший захлóпал в *ладóши*.
[I-NOM like crazy-person-NOM began-clapping to palms-ACC.]
I started clapping *my hands* like a crazy person.

Of course, in addition to moving oneself, one can also move other objects to accusative destinations, as in the following example:

Ван Гог отрéзал себе́ у́хо и отдал в *бордéль*.
[Van Gogh-NOM cut-off self-DAT ear-ACC and sent to brothel-ACC.]
Van Gogh cut off his ear and sent it to *the brothel* .

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is also used when the motion is more imaginary than actual, as in the following to examples:

B + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION with motion in Russian, conceived of as location in English.

B + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION with metaphorical motion.

В Япо́нии всё ча́ще звучи́т лóзунг: Отбро́сим Евро́пу, вернё́мся в А́зию.
[In Japan-LOC all more-frequently sounds slogan-NOM: Cast-away Europe-ACC, return to Asia-ACC.]

In Japan one more and more frequently hears the slogan: Let's cast off Europe and return to *Asia*.

Э́то должнó снять основнóе препя́тствие на пу́ти за́падных инвести́ций в на́шу эконо́мику.

[This-NOM should remove primary barrier-ACC on path-LOC western investments-GEN to our economy-ACC.]

This should remove the primary barrier on the path leading western investments into *our economy*.

Vision is conceived of as moving along a path from the eyes to what they perceive. We therefore look at something using ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION.

Он ей посмотре́л в гла́за.

[He-NOM her-DAT looked into eyes-ACC.]

He looked into her *eyes*.

Just as light travels, so do sound and telephone signals, motivating the use of the accusative with verbs like звони́ть 'call':

Он звони́л в разл́ичные организа́ции.

[He-NOM called to various organizations-ACC.]

He called *various organizations*.

There are also some idiomatic uses of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION; here are some common examples:

Э́то в пе́рвую о́чередь пробле́ма президéнта.

[This-NOM in first line-ACC problem-NOM president-GEN.]

In *the first place* this is the president's problem.

Э́то мо́жет уси́лить кр́итику в а́дрес президéнта.

[This-NOM can intensify criticism-ACC in address-ACC president-GEN.]

This can intensify the criticism *directed toward* the president.

Два го́да наза́д я посети́л э́тот го́род и буквáльно влюби́лся в негó.

[Two years-ACC ago I-NOM visited that city-ACC and literally fell-in-love to it-ACC.]

Two years ago I visited that city and literally fell in love with *it*.

Sometimes movement can also cause a change in the object itself, as in hair, which via movement goes from a free state to one in which it forms a braid:

Idiomatic uses of
B + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION.

B + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION
expresses
changes of state.

У Пёти были длинные белые волосы, которые он заплетал сзади в косу.
 [By Petya-GEN were long white hairs-NOM, which-ACC he-NOM wove in-back to braid-ACC.]
 Petya had long white hair which he wove into *a braid* in back.

This sort of movement as a transformation inspires a metaphorical usage of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in which objects move from one state of existence to another, as in the following three examples:

Иногда любовь переходит в ненависть.
 [Sometimes love-NOM passes to hatred-ACC.]
 Sometimes love turns into *hatred*.

Редактор переименовал своё издательство в “Невидимую книгу”.
 [Editor-NOM renamed his publishing-house-ACC to “Invisible book”-ACC.]
 The editor renamed his publishing house *“The Invisible Book.”*

С помощью световых эффектов здание МГУ превратилось в башню Кремля.
 [With help-INST light effects-GEN building-NOM MGU-GEN turned to tower-ACC Kremlin-GEN.]
 With the help of light effects the MGU building turned into *a tower* of the Kremlin.

In the abstract domain of mathematics, a “destination” is a factor involved in multiplication, motivating this common use of **В + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION**:

За последние пять лет преступность увеличилась почти в четыре раза.
 [In past five-ACC years-GEN crime-rate-NOM increased nearly in four times-ACC.]
 In the past five years the crime rate has nearly *quadrupled*.

There is one use of the preposition **в** with ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION that refers exclusively to people who are taking on an identity or joining a group. The most common example is *идти/ехать в гости* [go to guests-ACC] ‘go on *a visit*’ (where the subject takes on the identity of a guest); but you will encounter other examples like *выдвинуться в руководители* [be-promoted to managers-ACC] ‘be promoted to *manager*’, and *играть в кошки-мышки* [play to cats-mice-ACC] ‘play *cat-and-mouse*’. What is very strange about this use of the accusative is that even though the items marked with the accusative tend to be plural and animate, there is no use of the genitive-accusative. That is because this use of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is a historical throw-back — it dates from a time before the genitive-accusative spread to the plural, back when all plural accusatives looked like the inanimate accusatives of today. So that is why you see *гости* instead of *гостей*, *руководители* instead of *руководителей*, and *кошки-мышки* instead of *кошек-мышек*. Here is a contextualized example:

Лора поступила в ученицы к маникюрше.
 [Lora-NOM entered to apprentices-ACC to manicurist-DAT.]
 Lora joined (became one of) the manicurist’s *apprentices*.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION expresses multiplication.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION expresses joining a group — note that animates are not marked with the genitive-accusative form.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 2—на ‘to, on, onto’

на + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION in
the domain of
space means ‘to,
on, onto’.

The behavior of на is very similar to that of в. The only difference is that в can imply entering the accusative object, whereas на treats it like a two-dimensional surface. See the chapter on the locative case for a list of common “на words”, including ones we wouldn’t think of as surfaces in English. Like в, на is often used to describe the destination to which objects move or are moved:

Мáленькая змея́ влезáла на горя́чий ка́мень и поднимáла го́лову.
[Small snake-NOM crawled-up on hot stone-ACC and lifted head-ACC.]
The small snake crawled up on *the hot stone* and lifted its head.

Я причёсываюсь, положив шпíльки на умывáльник под зéркалом.
[I-NOM brush-hair, having-laid hairpins-ACC on sink-ACC under mirror-INST.]
I brush my hair, having laid the hairpins on *the sink* under the mirror.

Он усéлся на со́бственные очкí.
[He-NOM sat-down on own glasses-ACC.]
He sat down on *his own glasses* .

на + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION
with metaphori-
cal motion.

Sometimes the motion involved is more imaginary than real:

Сли́шком ráно отпра́вляе́т он Росси́ю на дно морско́е!
[Too early sends he-NOM Russia-ACC to bottom sea-ACC!]
It’s too early for him to be sending Russia to *the bottom of the sea* !

As we saw above, vision is understood as directed motion, motivating the use of на with things that can be looked upon or at:

Я смотре́ю на её ли́чи́ко, гла́денькое и ова́льное, как яй́чко.
[I-NOM look on her face-ACC, smooth and oval-ACC, like an egg-NOM.]
I look at *her face, smooth* and *oval* like an egg.

The fact that there is a direction indicated, even if there is no actual motion, is often sufficient to trigger the ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION meaning:

Президéнт провóдит полити́ку, напра́вленную на подде́ржани́е тесных свя́зей с Кита́ем.
[President-NOM conduct policy-ACC, directed-ACC on support-ACC close ties-GEN with China-INST.]
The president is setting policy aimed at *supporting* close ties with China.

Idiomatic uses of
на + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION.

This idea of energy rather than actual objects moving toward a destination inspires further uses of на, which function to some degree as fixed phrases. Here are a few typical examples:

Горький никогда не претендовал на роль “верховного судьи” литературы.
[Gorky-NOM never not aspired/claimed on role-ACC “supreme judge”-GEN literature-GEN.]

Gorky never claimed *to be* the “supreme judge” of literature.

Вероятно, великие люди имеют право на особые пристрастия и предпочтения.

[Probably great people-NOM have right-ACC on peculiar passions-ACC and preferences-ACC.]

Great people probably have a right to *their peculiar passions* and *preferences* .

В ответ на предложение Горького приехать Цветаева написала ему второе письмо.

[In answer-ACC on suggestion-ACC Gorky-GEN come Tsvetaeva-NOM wrote him-DAT second letter-ACC.]

In answer to Gorky’s *suggestion* to come, Tsvetaeva wrote him a second letter.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 3—за ‘beyond, behind’

The preposition *за* takes an object beyond or behind its destination; this is clearly expressed in concrete examples:

Вечерело и солнце закатывалось за горизонт.

[Night-fell and sun-NOM rolled-away behind horizon-ACC.]

Night was falling and the sun was rolling away behind *the horizon* .

Лётчик схватил его, завёл ему руку за спину, повалил на землю, а сам сел сверху.

[Pilot-NOM grabbed him-ACC, put him-DAT arm-ACC behind back-ACC, threw-down on ground-ACC, and self-NOM sat on-top.]

The pilot grabbed him, put his arm behind *his back* , threw him to the ground and sat on top of him.

Sitting down is of course also a movement toward a destination, and there are important idioms associated with this idea, such as: *сесть за стол* [sit-down behind table-ACC] ‘sit down at *the table*’ and *сесть за руль* [sit-down behind steering-wheel-ACC] ‘take *the wheel*’. The first one seems odd because in English we talk about being *at*, not *behind*, tables. The insistence on mentioning sitting when assuming control of a car will likewise strike us as odd, though the logic behind it is clear. Less clear is the idiomatic use of *за* to express marriage for women; a man “marries on” a woman at the altar (using the construction *жениться на* — see the chapter on the locative case), but a woman “goes behind” her man (since this book is about grammar, let’s leave the explanation to the cultural historians):

за + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION in
the domain of
space means
‘behind, to the
far/back side of’.

Idiomatic uses of
за + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION.

Тётя Ёра вѣшла зáмуж за америкáнца.
 [Aunt Ira-NOM went-out married behind American-ACC.]
 Aunt Ira got married to *an American* .

Another common idiomatic use is за *границу* [behind border-ACC] ‘*abroad*’, as in this example:

Ещё когда я в пѣрвый раз поѣхала со своими фильмами за *границу*, была поражена неадекватностью восприятия зарубежной аудиторией.
 [Still when I-NOM in first time-ACC rode with own films-INST behind border-ACC, was shocked-NOM inadequacy-INST perception-GEN foreign audience-INST.]
 Even the first time I went *abroad* with my films, I was shocked at the inadequate reception of foreign audiences.

за + ACCUSATIVE:
 A DESTINATION
 expresses
 grabbing or
 holding.

When one object goes behind another it can get caught there or use that position to restrain the other object (remember the pilot in the example above). You will often see за plus ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION used to mean grabbing or holding. Common examples involve hands, as in *взяться за руку* [take behind hand-ACC] ‘join *hands*’ and *вести за руку* [lead behind hand-ACC] ‘lead by *the hand*’, but grabbing and holding can be invoked in a variety of situations, as illustrated in the following two examples:

Он подошёл к машине, взял за *задний бампер*, оторвал задние колёса от земли, потом поставил и ушёл.
 [He-NOM approached to car-DAT, took behind back bumper-ACC, tore-away back wheels-ACC from ground-GEN, then placed and left.]
 He walked up to the car, took it by *the back bumper* , tore the back wheels off the ground, then put it down and walked away.

Полицейские крепко держали его за *плечи*.
 [Policemen-NOM firmly held him-ACC behind shoulders-ACC.]
 The policemen held him firmly by *the shoulders* .

за + ACCUSATIVE:
 A DESTINATION
 expresses
 replacing or
 exchanging.

Placing one thing behind another can also be the first step in replacing or exchanging items; the most common transaction of this kind is the receipt of goods or services in exchange for money (here the use of за is very similar to its use meaning ‘for’ in the domain of purpose):

Англичáне приобрели дочку за *мизерную плату* у 17-лѣтней цыгáнки.
 [English-people-NOM obtained daughter-ACC for wretched sum-ACC by 17-year-old gypsy-GEN.]
 The English [couple] obtained a daughter from a 17-year-old gypsy girl for *a wretched sum*.

за + ACCUSATIVE:
 A DESTINATION
 means ‘more
 than’.

Finally, in the metaphorical space of numbers, за can name a number that is exceeded, as in: *набралось за сотню желающих* [gathered beyond hundred-ACC interested-parties-GEN] ‘more than *a hundred* interested parties gathered’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 4—о ‘against’

The preposition *о*, like *на*, treats the accusative object as a surface, but it requires that contact be made and that there be some kind of force or pressure, usually involving leaning on or striking the object.

Брала́ их за дли́нный ро́зовый хвост и с разма́ху би́ла головой о це́ментный пол.

[Took them-ACC beyond long pink tail-ACC and from sweep-GEN beat head-INST against cement floor-ACC.]

She took them by their long pink tail and with all her might beat their head against *the cement floor*.

Электромеха́ник сказа́л, что о́коло четырёх часо́в утра́ посла́шались си́льные уда́ры о ко́рпус кора́бля.

[Electromechanic-NOM said, that around four hours-GEN morning-GEN were-heard strong blows-NOM against hull-ACC ship-GEN.]

The electromechanic said that heavy blows against *the hull* of the ship were heard at about four in the morning.

O + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION also provides the structure for the idiom *бок о́ бок* [side-NOM against side-ACC] ‘side by *side*’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 5—по ‘up to’

Most frequently *по* with the accusative means ‘up to’ a certain point. Some activity is progressing through some space, and the accusative item is its destination, the place where it stops.

Бы́ло очеви́дно, что его́ дед приви́к сто́ять по ко́лено в наво́зе и шу́рвать лопáтой.

[Was obvious, that his grandfather-NOM accustomed stand up-to knee-ACC in manure-LOC and stoke shovel-INST.]

It was obvious that his grandfather was used to standing up to *his knees* in manure and heaving a shovel.

The next two examples demonstrate metaphorical extensions: the arranging of meetings is an activity which has six as its stopping point/destination, and writing is an activity which has eighty pages as its destination (note that this meaning overlaps with the use of *по* + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION meaning ‘each’).

Дире́ктору назна́чали ежеднёвно по ше́сть деловы́х свидáний.

[Director-DAT arranged daily up-to six-ACC business meetings-GEN.]

They were arranging up to *six* business meetings a day for the director.

O + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of space means ‘against’.

ПО + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of space means ‘up to; after, to get’.

Этот журналист писал по *восемьдесят* страниц в день.
 [That journalist-NOM wrote up-to eighty-ACC pages-GEN in day-ACC.]
 That journalist wrote up to *eighty* pages a day.

The use of *по* to mean ‘after, to get’ is fairly infrequent, and sounds archaic to most Russians. It can also be paraphrased as ‘to fetch’, as in *идти по ягоды* [to-go after/to get/to fetch strawberries-ACC] ‘to go get *strawberries*’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 6—под ‘under’

The preposition *под* expresses a destination ‘under’ an item. Here’s a concrete illustration of how it is used:

На таёжной трассе погиб тигр, попавший под *колёса* проезжавшего лесовоза.
 [On taiga route-LOC died tiger-NOM, fallen-NOM under wheels-ACC passed logging-truck-GEN.]

A tiger that fell under *the wheels* of a passing logging truck died on the taiga road.

More frequently *под* is used to describe the creation of metaphorical relationships, often involving power, as in this newspaper headline:

Русские пограничники в Грузии взяты под *наблюдение*
 [Russian border-guards-NOM in Georgia-LOC taken-NOM under observation-ACC]
 Russian border guards are put under *observation* in Georgia

This last example is of ‘under’-handed financing, involving the attraction of investments with a promise of state-owned stocks:

Правительство готово рассмотреть вопрос привлечения инвестиций под *гарантию* акций Сберегательного банка, принадлежащих государству.
 [Government-NOM prepared-NOM examine question-ACC attraction-GEN investments-GEN under guarantee-ACC shares-GEN Savings bank-GEN, belonging-GEN state-DAT.]

The government is prepared to examine the question of how investments were solicited by means of *a guarantee* of Savings Bank shares that belong to the state.

Similar to *под гарантию* is the common phrase *под залог* [under pledge-ACC] ‘on *the security* of’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 7—Destinations in time

If a destination in space is the point where something goes, then a destination in time is the point when something happens.

ПОД + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of space means ‘under’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of time.

Both *в* and *на* are deployed for this meaning, which is very common, especially for days and times of day:

Курс доллара в *пятницу* несколько снизился.
[Exchange-rate-NOM dollar-GEN to Friday-ACC somewhat declined.]
The exchange rate for the dollar declined somewhat on *Friday*.

В *семь часов* вечера она стояла возле его дома в чём-то модном, ярком и коварном.
[To seven-ACC hours-GEN evening-GEN she-NOM stood next-to his house-GEN in something fashionable, bright and insidious-LOC.]
At *seven* o'clock in the evening she was standing next to his house in something fashionable, bright, and insidious.

На *следующий день* после подписания контракта началась отправка грузов.
[On next day-ACC after signing-GEN contract-GEN began shipment-NOM freight-GEN.]
Shipment of freight began *the day* after the contract was signed.

Both *в* and *на* are used with *раз* [time-ACC] in time expressions such as: в *первый раз* 'the first time', в *последний раз* 'the last time', на *этом раз* 'this/that time'. Here's an example:

Предвыборный штаб постарается опротестовать результаты выборов, тем более что на *этом раз* было зафиксировано немало нарушений.
[Election staff-NOM tries protest results-ACC elections-GEN, that-INST more that on this time-ACC was recorded-NOM not-few violations-GEN.]
The election staff will try to protest the election results, especially since *this time* quite a number of violations were recorded.

The preposition *по* preserves its meaning of 'up to' in the domain of time, as these examples demonstrate:

Ты́сячи людей поколения наших родителей по *пятьдесят* лет жили вместе, но при *этом* нередко были абсолютно чужими друг другу людьми.
[Thousands-NOM people-GEN generation-GEN our parents-GEN up-to fifty-ACC years-GEN lived together, but at this-LOC not-infrequently were absolutely alien-INST friend-NOM friend-DAT people-INST.]
Thousands of people of our parents' generation lived together for up to *fifty* years, but still were not infrequently absolutely estranged from each other.

С середины января по *конец* февраля вооружёнными отрядами исламистов уничтожено свыше 600 мирных граждан, включая стариков и детей.
[From middle-GEN January-GEN up-to end-ACC February-GEN armed divisions-INST Islamists-GEN destroyed-NOM more 600 peaceful citizens-GEN, including old-people-GEN and children-GEN.]
From the middle of January through *the end* of February more than 600 peaceful citizens, including children and the elderly, were killed by armed divisions of Islamists.

в and *на* +
ACCUSATIVE: A
DESTINATION in
the domain
of time
means 'on, at'.

по + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION in
the domain
of time means
'up to'.

ПОД + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of time means 'toward'.

Parallel to its spatial uses, под can indicate a time approaching another set time (note how we also express directed motion in English by using *toward* in this way):

Возвращаясь под *утро*, она говорила себе: ладно, обойдётся. Что-нибудь придумаю в такси.

[Returning under morning-ACC, she-NOM said self-DAT: okay, work-out. Something-ACC think-up in taxi-LOC.]

Returning toward *morning*, she said to herself: okay, things will work out. I'll think something up in the taxi.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 8—The direct object

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of action expresses the direct object.

Thus far we have traveled through the domains of space and time in search of destinations. What happens if we enter the domain of action? Where will we find the destination of the activity expressed by the verb in a sentence? The answer is something traditionally called the direct object. Here is the logic that ties it to the ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION. Imagine any sentence with both an agent (something that does something) and a patient (something that has something done to it). The patient is the direct object, and it is in the accusative case because the action moves along a path from the agent to the patient. For example, let's take *I* for the agent, *pushed* for the action, and *button* for the patient. Result: *I pushed the button*, where *the button* is the direct object of the verb. Of course in Russian it will appear in the accusative case, and here is what it looks like:

Я нажал *большую круглую кнопку* лифта.

[I-NOM pressed big round button-ACC elevator-GEN.]

I pressed the elevator's *big round button*.

This formula will work for just about any verb (except the ones that govern the instrumental, dative, or genitive for some special reason explained in those chapters), even verbs that don't involve any real "action".

Вертолёт пошёл ввёрх, увлекая за собой *Бонда*.

[Helicopter-NOM went up, dragging behind self-INST Bond-ACC.]

The helicopter went up, dragging *Bond* behind it.

Каждый трудящийся содержит *троих*.

[Each worker-NOM supports three-ACC.]

Each worker supports *three people*.

Новый документ предполагает *открытие* национальных и международных рынков.

[New document-NOM proposes opening-ACC national and international markets-GEN.]

The new document proposes *the opening* of national and international markets.

Четы́ре спо́рных о́строва име́ют *ва́жное значе́ние* для безопа́сности Росси́и.
[Four disputed islands-NOM have important meaning-ACC for security-GEN Russia-GEN.]

The four disputed islands are *important* for Russia's security.

Я ве́л *двойну́ю жизнь*.

[I-NOM led double life-ACC.]

I led *a double life* .

Thanks to the fact that the direct object is marked with the accusative case (and thus distinct from the nominative agent/subject), the subject, verb, and direct object can be presented in just about any order. Here are a few examples of word orders that won't usually work in English (at least not with active verbs):

Вита́лика любя́ли оба́ роди́теля, две ба́бушки, праба́бушка, и два де́душки.
[Vitalik-ACC loved both parents-NOM, two grandmothers-NOM, great-grandmother-NOM, and two grandfathers-NOM.]

Vitalik was loved by both parents, two grandmothers, a great-grandmother, and two grandfathers.

Свою́ двухо́мнатную кварти́ру она́ сда́ла внаём.

[Own two-room apartment-ACC she-NOM let-out to-rent.]

She rented out *her two-room apartment* .

Зави́стники счита́ют, что *жéнщин* привлека́ют в бога́чах их де́ньги.

[Envious-people-NOM think, that women-ACC attract in rich-men-LOC their money-NOM.]

Envious people think that what attracts *women* about rich men is their money.

It is possible to have an accusative direct object even when we tamper a bit with the rest of the sentence structure. For example, sometimes the subject might appear in the dative case (for more about such datives, see the following chapter):

Кабинéту мини́стров поручéно разрабо́тать *тéхничэ-экономическое обосновáние* проéкта.

[Cabinet-DAT ministers-GEN charged work-out technical-economic basis-ACC project-GEN.]

The cabinet of ministers has been charged with working out *the technical and economic basis* of the project.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION as the direct object doesn't always come after the verb.

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION as the direct object can appear without a nominative subject.

Often in Russian we simply use a plural verb with no subject to express a generic “they”. Here the subject is implied even though we can’t see it, and the direct object stays in the accusative case, just as we would expect it to:

Печально, но *тех*, кто счастлив в браке, полностью игнорируют.
[Sadly, but those-ACC, who-NOM happy-NOM in marriage-LOC, completely ignore.]

It’s unfortunate, but *people* who are happy in marriage are utterly ignored.

Вот уж поистине режут *курицу*, несущую золотые яйца!
[Well already indeed slaughter hen-ACC, laying-ACC golden eggs-ACC!]
Well now they really are killing *the goose that lays the golden eggs* !

The first of these two sentences is based on the structure игнорируют *тех* ‘[they] ignore those [people]’; these two words are inverted and the clause about who is happy in marriage is inserted to explain what *тех* refers to. The second sentence contains two examples of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of action: one is *the hen* (with no subject), and the other is *the golden eggs* (with the hen as the subject).

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 9—Objects without subjects

It is possible to have sentences without even an implied subject, in which case the verb shows “default” agreement of neuter singular. This is required for certain verbs (usually involving feeling sick), and some examples (like the one with the barn below) are clearly parallel with the “raw force” type of INSTRUMENTAL: A MEANS (minus the instrumental itself; note that the accusative items in the “raw force” instrumental examples are all direct objects, too). The verbs most frequently encountered in this construction are знобить ‘have the chills’, рвать ‘vomit’, тошнить ‘feel nauseated’, and трясти ‘shake, have the shivers’. The following examples demonstrate how these verbs are used in context:

И когда зазвенел звонок на обед и все родители столпились у лестницы, он понял, что это значит, и *его* стало рвать бутербродом.

[And when rang bell-NOM on lunch-ACC and all parents-NOM crowded by staircase-GEN, he-NOM understood, what-ACC this-NOM means, and him-ACC began vomit sandwich-INST.]

And when the lunch bell rang and all the parents crowded around the staircase, he understood what it meant and *he* began to throw up his sandwich.

Вас не тошнит от того, что Чечня считается территорией России, а там регулярно похищают и убивают людей?

[You-ACC not feel-nauseated from that-GEN, that Chechnya-NOM is-considered territory-INST Russia-GEN, but there regularly capture and kill people-ACC?]

It doesn’t make *you* sick that Chechnya is considered a Russian territory, but people are being captured and killed there?

ACCUSATIVE: A
DESTINATION AS
the direct object
can appear
without any
subject at all.

Пассажи́ров трясёт ме́ньше, чем в други́х маши́нах.
 [Passengers-ACC shakes less, than in other vehicles-LOC.]
Passengers get shaken less than in other vehicles.

As the last example with the shaken passengers above suggests, it is also possible just to name the patient of some (usually damaging) action, and leave the agent anonymous, as in this statement of arson:

Сара́й зажгло́.
 [Barn-ACC set-on-fire.]
The barn was set on fire.

Another variant is to leave the verb in the infinitive form, again without a subject, as in:

Курс интенсѝвной терапѝи решено́ продо́лжить.
 [Course-ACC intensive therapy-GEN decided continue.]
 It was decided to continue *the course* of intensive therapy.

Finally, one can even dispense with the verb entirely, provided it can be retrieved from context, as in this expression which you might hear when someone offers their hand to help you up a steep path (where *на* is an interjection, not a preposition):

На ру́ку!
 [Here hand-ACC!]
 Here, take *my hand*!

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 10—Destinations of purpose

Now we move to a more nebulous realm, that of the wishes, wants, and hopes that make up the human will. Moving the will in a certain direction means using it as a cause to produce a desired effect. Here we see ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION fleshed out as an object toward which an agent is directing its will, its sense of purpose. Usually this takes the form of somebody doing something for *something or somebody* (and perhaps for *a reason*). This kind of ‘for’ is most commonly expressed by the preposition *на*, though *в*, *за*, and less frequently *под* and *про* are deployed for this purpose.

In this first example, the purpose of Moscow’s taking action is the defense of one of its citizens; Moscow is obliged to do something for him:

Росси́йский гражда́нин преступле́ния не соверши́л, и Москва́ обяза́на
 вѝступить в *его́* защи́ту.
 [Russian citizen-NOM crime-GEN not committed, and Moscow-NOM obliged-NOM
 act for his defense-ACC.]
 The Russian citizen has not committed any crime, and Moscow is obliged to act in
his defense .

ACCUSATIVE: A
 DESTINATION in
 the domain of
 purpose.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A
 DESTINATION in
 the domain of
 purpose means
 ‘for’.

на + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION in
the domain of
purpose means
'for'.

The next two examples illustrate the use of на in this domain. In the first one the purpose of action is destruction. The second example is actually two examples in one, containing a budget designated for *the following year* , as well as money allocated for *the purposes of public well-being* .

Некоторые маньяки не переносят чужого совершенства и действуют на *его* *уничтожение*.

[Certain maniacs-NOM not endure strange perfection-GEN and act for its destruction-ACC.]

Certain maniacs cannot endure others' perfection and work to *destroy it* .

В бюджете на *будущий год* предусмотрено увеличение расходов на *социальные* *нужды*, *здравоохранение* и *образование*.

[In budget-LOC for future year-ACC envisaged increase-NOM expenses-GEN for social needs-ACC, public health-ACC and education-ACC.]

An increase in the expenses for *social needs* , *public health* , and *education* is envisaged in *next year's* budget.

A common use of на expresses the purposeful act of answering a question. There is a construction in which both на and в act in this domain, namely в *ответ* на + ACC [in answer-ACC to + ACC] 'in *answer* to', and we also commonly see just на + ACC following the verb отвечать/ответить, as in this example:

Не могу ответить на *его* *вопрос*.

[Not can answer on his question-ACC.]

I cannot answer *his question* .

On occasion you may see examples with на that involve a transaction similar to that described under за below:

На *средства* японского правительства будет построено новое здание школы бизнеса.

[For funds-ACC Japanese government-GEN will-be built-NOM new building-NOM school-GEN business-GEN.]

A new building for the business school will be built with *funds* from the Japanese government.

за + ACCUSATIVE:
A DESTINATION
in the domain
of purpose
means 'for'.

The use of за can mean 'for' in the sense of 'in support of'; in asking for a vote one might say кто за, а кто против? [who-NOM for and who-NOM against?] 'who's in favor and who's opposed?', where за implies *наш план*, *нашего президента* [our plan-ACC, president-ACC] '*our plan, our president* ', etc. One can also express other emotional or moral relationships in this way, as in feeling shame for, on account of something or someone:

Мне стыдно за *российское оружие*!

[Me-DAT shameful for Russian weaponry-ACC!]

I'm ashamed of *Russian weaponry* !

Very frequently, however, *за* inspires the concept of exchange, getting this for *that*, fighting for *something*, being punished for *something*, or paying for *something*. We have already seen *за* play this role in expressing transactions when we looked at the spatial destinations above.

Кажется маловероятным, чтобы такой человек планировал бороться за президентское кресло.

[Seems unlikely-INST, that such person-NOM planned fight for president's seat-ACC.]

It seems unlikely that such a person would plan to fight for *the president's seat*.

Будут ли у нас когда-нибудь наказывать за врачебные преступления и ошибки?

[Will whether by us-GEN someday punish for medical crimes-ACC and errors-ACC?]

Will people someday be punished in our country for *medical crimes* and *errors*?

Журналисты заплатили штраф за незаконное пребывание в пограничной полосе.

[Journalists-NOM paid fine-ACC for illegal stay-ACC in border zone-LOC.]

The journalists paid a fine for *staying illegally* in the border zone.

When the preposition *под* is used in the domain of purpose, it means 'for use as', and involves designing or redesigning something to serve a given function, as in this example:

Однако после революции церковь переделали под крематорий.

[However after revolution-GEN church-ACC remade under crematorium-ACC.]

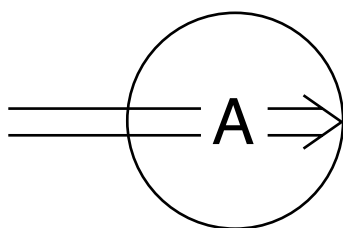
However after the revolution they remodeled the church to serve as *a crematorium*.

The use of the preposition *про* is also relatively restricted in the domain of purpose. It is part of the fixed phrase *сохранить про чёрный день* [save for black day-ACC] 'save for a rainy day' and often occurs in the negative with the pronoun *нас* 'us', as in this example:

Эти лакомства — не про нас.

[These delicacies-NOM — not for us-ACC.]

These delicacies aren't for *us*.



A force (arrow) moves through an ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION (circle labeled A)

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION 1— Distance and duration

The hallmark of the ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION is that the action of the verb extends over some dimension. The domains invoked by ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION can be grouped as follows: distance and duration, size and capacity, comparison, and performance of activities. Each grouping will be examined in turn below.

ПОД + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of purpose means 'for use as'.

ПРО + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION in the domain of purpose means 'for'.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION is invoked in the domains of distance and duration, size and capacity, comparison, and performance of activities.

ACCUSATIVE: A
DIMENSION in the
domain of
distance and
duration.

There's a Russian proverb that nicely illustrates the distance and duration uses of ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION:

Жизнь прожить не поле перейти.

[Life-ACC live-through not field-ACC walk-across.]

Living through *life* isn't like walking across *a field* / *Life's* no bed of roses.

Here life is understood as a stretch of time with a beginning and an end (and punctuated by trials and tribulations), and living is an activity that stretches all along this time period. The field is a bounded space, and walking extends along the distance from one edge of it to the other. Both the life and the field provide dimensions that guide activities.

Although examples of distance are by no means rare, you will encounter many more examples of duration, which can be expressed both without prepositions and with them: *в*, *за*, *на*, and *по*.

The following four sentences illustrate duration without prepositions. The first two contain obvious cues, such as the idiomatic expression *провести время* 'spend time' and the verb *длиться* 'last'. The other two show that duration can be expressed for any activity (walking) or state (being).

Мы с ним обязательно ещё раз сходим в ресторан и опять прекрасно проведём время вдвоём.

[We-NOM with him-INST surely still one-time-ACC go to restaurant-ACC and again splendidly conduct time-ACC together.]

Surely he and I will go once more to a restaurant and again have a splendid *time* together.

Наркомания почти неизлечима, и если ремиссия длится два-три года, то это уже хороший результат.

[Drug-addiction-NOM almost incurable-NOM and if remission-NOM lasts two-three years-ACC, then that-NOM already good result-NOM.]

Drug addiction is almost incurable, and if a remission lasts *two or three years*, then that's a pretty good result.

Американец купил эти сапоги в спортивном магазине и ходил в них по горам лет пять или шесть.

[American-NOM bought these boots-ACC in sport store-LOC and walked in them-LOC along mountains-DAT years-GEN five-ACC or six-ACC.]

An American bought these boots in a sporting goods store and walked around the mountains in them for about *five* or *six* years.

Пять десятилетий Япония была верным последователем США.

[Five-ACC decades-GEN Japan-NOM was loyal follower-INST USA-GEN.]

For five decades Japan was the USA's loyal follower.

Sometimes the duration is made up of small discontinuous pieces of time, usually indicated by the use of words like *каждый* ‘every’ and *раз* ‘time’, as in *говорить сто раз* [say hundred-ACC times-GEN] ‘say *a hundred* times’, and as in this example:

Если ты любишь меня, тогда зачем мы *каждый день* расстаёмся?
[If you-NOM love me-ACC, then why we-NOM every day-ACC break-up?]
If you love me, then why do we break up *every day* ?

With the preposition *в*, duration is usually expressed in terms of *время/времена* ‘time(s)’ or *годы* ‘years’, as in the following two examples:

Сати́ра во *все времена́* испыты́вала недоброжелательство власте́й и во *все времена́* пита́лась горя́чей подде́ржкой публики.
[Satire-NOM in all times-ACC experienced disfavor-ACC authorities-GEN and in all times-ACC been-nourished ardent support-INST public-GEN.]
Satire has at *all times* experienced the disfavor of the authorities and at *all times* been nourished by the ardent support of the public.

В *те го́ды* всем не хватало на́личных де́нег.
[In those years-ACC all-DAT not sufficed available money-GEN.]
In *those years* everyone had a shortage of available money.

Probably the most common use of *в* + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of time is with the word *раз* ‘time’ to express frequency, as in *раз в неде́лю* [time-ACC in week-ACC] ‘once *a week*’, *три ра́за в ме́сяц* [three times-ACC in month-ACC] ‘three times *a month*’.

Like *в*, *на* can also identify a duration, specifically one during which something is done, or how long the results should last, usually translatable into English as ‘for’ or ‘lasting’. Thus in Russian you can come on a visit *на одну́ неде́лю* [for one week-ACC] ‘for *one week*’, and one can also engage in an activity for a specified period of time, as in this example:

Врачи́ настаива́ют на скорейшем ухо́де в о́тпуск не ме́нее чем на *три́дцать* дней.
[Doctors-NOM insist on fastest departure-LOC in vacation-ACC not less than last- ing thirty days-ACC.]
The doctors insist that he immediately take a vacation lasting at least *thirty* days.

The preposition *за* can mean ‘during, in the course of’, as we see in these two examples:

За *э́тот ме́сяц* нико́го в на́шем до́ме не хорони́ли.
[During that month-ACC no one-ACC in our house-LOC not buried.]
During *that month* no one in our house was buried.

в + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of duration means ‘in, during’.

на + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of duration means ‘for, lasting’.

за + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of duration means ‘during’.

ПО + ACCUSATIVE:
A DIMENSION in
the domain of
duration means
'through'.

За *сѹтки* состоя́ние больно́го незначи́тельно меня́ется то в лу́чшую, то в ху́дшую сто́рону.

[During twenty-four-hours-ACC condition-NOM patient-GEN imperceptibly changes now to better-ACC, now to worse side-ACC.]

In the course of *twenty-four hours* the patient's condition changes imperceptibly, getting better and worse by turns.

The meaning of *по* in this context is usually best translated as 'through':

С января́ по *май* вы бу́дете в олимпийской фо́рме.

[From January-GEN through May-ACC you-NOM will-be in olympic form-LOC.]

From January through *May* you will be in olympic form.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION 2—Size and capacity

ACCUSATIVE: A
DIMENSION in the
domain of size
and capacity
usually requires
a preposition.

In the domain of size and capacity, some feature of an object is measured against a standardized scale (often units of weight and measure) or against another object or objects. You will usually have a preposition here (*в* is most frequent, *на* and *по* are possible, and *о* is rather rare), followed by the ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION marking the scale, units, or object along which size or capacity are measured.

Here are typical examples expressing weight and size:

Оди́н из слоно́в — трёхле́тний Раджа́ ве́сом в 850 килогра́ммов — воспользовался прогу́лкой, что́бы загляну́ть в посу́дную ла́вку.

[One-NOM of elephants-GEN — three-year-old Rajah-NOM weight-INST in 850-ACC kilograms-GEN — took-advantage outing-INST, to take-peek to china shop-ACC.]

One of the elephants — three-year-old Rajah, weighing 850 kilograms — took advantage of the outing to take a peek into a china shop.

Сра́зу броса́ется в глаза́ ваго́нчик в *два этажа́*, сде́ланный в А́нглии незадо́лго до пе́рвой мирово́й войны́.

[Immediately throws in eyes-ACC wagon-NOM in two stories-ACC, made-NOM in England-LOC not-long before first world war-GEN.]

Suddenly there appears a *two-story* wagon, made in England not long before the first World War.

The preposition *в* can also be used to tell us the amount by which things differ:

Ста́рый ку́рс от но́вого отлича́ется ро́вно в *ты́сячу* раз.

[Old rate-NOM from new-GEN differs exactly in thousand-ACC times-GEN.]

The old rate is exactly *a thousand* times more than the new one.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A
DIMENSION in the
domain of size
and capacity
expresses a
number
of units.

In this domain, *на* can tell us how big an item is in phrases like: театр *на пятьсот* мест [theater-NOM on five-hundred-ACC places-GEN] ‘a *five-hundred* -seat theater’, облигация *на сто* рублей [obligation-NOM on hundred-ACC rubles-GEN] ‘a *one-hundred* -ruble obligation’, комната *на двоих* [room-NOM on two-ACC] ‘a room for *two*’.

Like *в*, *на* can measure the amount by which it differs from some other object. Here you will usually see a comparative adjective (like больше ‘bigger’, меньше ‘smaller’, короче ‘shorter’) or a verb indicating exceeding or failing to reach some mark, plus the preposition *на*:

В понедельник курс доллара зафиксирован на уровне 2017 рублей, что на *пять* рублей выше предыдущего показателя.

[To Monday-ACC exchange-rate-NOM dollar-GEN fixed-NOM on level-LOC 2017 rubles-GEN, what-NOM to five-ACC rubles higher previous indicator-GEN.]

On Monday the exchange rate for the dollar is fixed at the level of 2017 rubles, which is *five* rubles higher than the previous indicator.

Я опоздала на *пятнадцать* минут.

[I-NOM got-late on fifteen-ACC minutes-GEN.]

I was *fifteen* minutes late.

In this domain the preposition *по* refers to a distribution such that each of a series of items is assigned the same amount. In the following example the value of two rubles is assigned to each kilo of mimosa:

В Сочи мимозу можно продать по *два рубля* за один килограмм.

[In Sochi-LOC mimosa-ACC possible sell along two rubles-ACC for one kilogram-ACC.]

In Sochi you can sell mimosa for *two rubles* a kilo.

The use of the preposition *о* in the domain of size and capacity is rare and archaic, but here are two phrases to give you an idea of what it looks like: избушка *об одно оконце* [hut-NOM with one window-ACC] ‘a hut with just *one little window*’, крыльцо *о три ступеньки* [porch-NOM with three steps-ACC] ‘a porch with just *three little steps*’.

A very common use of ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION deals with financial rather than physical dimensions, here the cost of an item is presented in the accusative with no preposition. This meaning of the accusative is most frequently associated with the verb стоить ‘cost’, although, as this example illustrates, other verbs can occasionally serve this purpose:

Обычно перевыпуск карточки стоит *пятьдесят* долларов, сервисная плата составляет *сто пятьдесят* долларов.

[Usually reissue-NOM card-GEN costs fifty-ACC dollars, service fee-NOM comes-to hundred fifty-ACC dollars-GEN.]

Usually the reissue of a card costs *fifty* dollars, and the service fee comes to *one hundred and fifty* dollars.

НА + ACCUSATIVE:
A DIMENSION in the domain of size and capacity expresses a number of units.

ПО + ACCUSATIVE:
A DIMENSION in the domain of size and capacity expresses an amount per item.

О + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of size and capacity means ‘with’.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of size and capacity expresses cost.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of comparison always requires a preposition.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of comparison indicates a characteristic.

ПОХОЖ НА + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of comparison means 'resembling'.

ПОД + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of comparison means 'like'.

С + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domain of comparison means 'approximately'.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION 3—Comparison

The measurement of one thing against another in and of itself implies a comparison of the thing measured with some standard. It is perhaps no surprise that comparison is an important component of the ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION, and that comparison can be made in many different ways.

The use of *в* in the domain of comparison is rather marginal, but one does come across examples such as *бумага в клеточку* [paper-NOM like square-ACC] 'graph paper' and *юбка в полоску* [skirt-NOM in stripe-ACC] 'a striped skirt.

In comparing objects according to their various characteristics to determine whether they are similar to each other, the accusative object is used as a standard, along which another object is measured in a metaphorical sense. The most common example of this use of ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION is the phrase *похож на* 'looks like, resembling':

Хотите знать, на *кого* вы похожи? На *разбитую* параличом *гориллу*, которую держат в зоопарке из жалости.

[Want know, to whom-ACC you-NOM resemble? To stricken-ACC paralysis-INST gorilla-ACC, which-ACC keep in zoo-LOC from pity-GEN.]

Do you want to know *what* you look like? Like *a paralyzed gorilla* that they keep in a zoo out of pity.

With the preposition *под*, comparison has the connotation of imitation, as in this bit of conversation from a beauty parlor, where a woman is being offered a haircut 'like *a boy's*':

Согласно вашему лицу, предлагаю под *мальчика* — не возражаете?

[In-harmony your face-DAT, suggest under boy-ACC — not object?]

To suit your face, I suggest giving you *a boy's* haircut — is that okay with you?

A specialized type of comparison is approximation, and this use has its own preposition: *с* 'about the size/length of, approximately'. This is the only meaning that *с* ever has when it is used with the accusative case. An easy way to recognize this use is to remember the Russian rhyme for 'Tom Thumb', which is *Мальчик с пальчик*, literally [Boy-NOM approximately finger-ACC] 'A boy about the size of *your finger*'. Here are some contextualized examples:

Наш попугай был ростом с *курицу*.

[Our parrot-NOM was size-INST approximately chicken-ACC.]

Our parrot was about the size of *a chicken*.

Он с *минуту* подержал жену в объятиях.

[He-NOM approximately minute-ACC held wife-ACC in embraces-LOC.]

He held his wife in his arms for about *a minute*.

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION 4—Activities in various domains

Measurement and comparison are not the only activities that can extend along the dimensions of an object marked as ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION. Almost any kind of activity can behave this way, being guided or limited by the features or dimensions of the accusative object. The concept of activity extending along some defining space is abstract and metaphorical; considering some concrete examples will help you to see how this works.

A very common use of this meaning is in the phrase *играть в* [play to] which is used when we talk about playing games and sports. The name of the game or sport follows in the accusative. Let's think for a minute about the relationship between a game or sport and playing. Playing in itself is a relatively loosely defined activity. A game or sport, however, brings all kinds of concrete parameters with it: rules, implements used, techniques, etc. In this sense the game or sport lends specific dimensions to the playing activity (otherwise left undefined).

На новом стадионе можно играть в *регби, бейсбол, софтбол...*

[At new stadium-LOC possible play in rugby-ACC, baseball-ACC, softball-ACC...]

At the new stadium one can play *rugby, baseball, softball* ...

The distinction we make in English between 'believe' (say, 'a story') and 'believe in' (say, 'God') has an exact parallel in Russian. Whereas *верить* is usually followed by a DATIVE: A COMPETITOR (parallel to 'believe'), when speaking of strong convictions Russians use *верить/вера в* + accusative: a dimension, as in *верить/вера в Бога* [believe/belief in God-ACC] 'believe/belief in God'.

Here's another example using *в*, where the activity is crying, defined by the dimension of one voice (unison).

Но плакать в *один голос* с ним не хочется.

[But cry to one voice-ACC with him-INST not want-self.]

But one doesn't feel like crying in *unison* with him.

The extension of an activity along a dimension can be variously expressed by all of the following prepositions: *на*, *под*, *про*, *сквозь*, and *через*. *На* is usually the place where something is or happens. In this example being beautiful is something that extends along the face, but being fat extends along the figure:

Она была красивая на *лицо*, но толстая на *фигуру*.

[She-NOM was beautiful-NOM to face-ACC, but fat-NOM to figure-ACC.]

She had a beautiful *face*, but a fat *figure*.

A more abstract, but very common example is the phrase *на мой (твой, её, его...) взгляд* [to my (your, her, his...) view-ACC] 'in *my (your, her, his...) view/opinion*'. The proposition (whatever it is that the person believes) extends along that person's view; in other words, it is true for the domain of that person's opinion. In the following example, the belief that taking such steps will be beneficial is true for the domain of the ambassador's opinion:

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities always requires a preposition.

В + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION can express games, beliefs, and manner of action.

НА + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities expresses locations and opinions.

На *взгляд* посла́, та́кие ша́ги созда́ют благоприя́тную атмосфе́ру для реше́ния террито́риальной пробле́мы.

[To view-ACC ambassador-GEN, such steps-NOM create favorable atmosphere-ACC for solution-GEN territorial problem-GEN.]

In the ambassador's *opinion*, such steps create a favorable atmosphere for solving the territorial problem.

ПОД + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities means 'to the tune of'.

The preposition *под* indicates an activity that accompanies another one, most commonly involving music, as in *танцевать под му́зыку* [dance under music-ACC] 'dance to *the music*', *петь под гита́ру* [sing under guitar-ACC] 'sing along with *the guitar*'. This idea of musical accompaniment can be extended to other activities involving rhythmic sounds, as in this example:

Под *сви́реную ворко́тню* гарде́робщика оста́вляю сво́и су́мки на по́лу, подни́маюсь на́вэрх и сра́зу са́жусь в крэ́сло.

[Under fierce growling-ACC coat-check-man-GEN leave own bags-ACC on floor-LOC, raise up and immediately sit in chair-ACC.]

To the tune of the coat-check man's *fierce growls* I leave my bags on the floor, go upstairs, and sit right down in a chair.

ПРО + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities means 'about'.

The preposition *про* designates dimensions for activities like thinking, talking, and writing. The domain of these cognitive and communicative activities is their topic, literally the thing that you think, talk, or write *about*.

Мы все́ зна́ем друг *про дру́га*.

[We-NOM all-ACC know other-NOM for other-ACC.]

We know everything about *each other*.

Я забы́л про *царе́вну-лягу́шку*.

[I-NOM forgot for queen-frog-ACC.]

I forgot about the *frog-queen*.

СКВОЗЬ + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities means 'through'.

Сквозь refers to something that has dimensions, 'through' which something else (usually light or sound or the perception of something seen or heard) passes, often with some difficulty or alteration, as we see in these two examples:

Зара́зительная по́этика ве́ликой кнѐжки заста́вляе́т смотре́ть *сквозь её о́птику* на мно́гие обы́денные ве́щи.

[Infectious poetics-NOM great book-GEN force look through its lens-ACC on many ordinary things-ACC.]

This great book's captivating poetry forces us to look at a multitude of everyday things through *its lens*.

Я ещё слышу сквозь сон, как ложится Дима, но не могу открыть глаза.
 [I-NOM still hear through sleep-ACC, how goes-to-bed Dima-NOM, but not can open eyes-ACC.]
 Through *the veil of sleep*, I can still hear Dima going to bed, but I can't open my eyes.

We should also note the common Russian expression смех сквозь слёзы [laughter-NOM through tears-ACC] 'laughter through *tears*', a metaphorical extension of the use of сквозь to the domain of the emotions, where one can bring forth a smile despite the trials and tribulations of life.

Через likewise identifies a dimension through which something passes. The first example describes a money-laundering scheme where funds are being cycled through a firm in order to make it look like they have a legitimate origin. The firm provides the dimensions for this cycling activity:

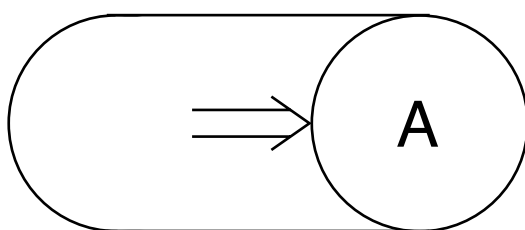
Они прокручивали через фирму сотни тысяч долларов.
 [They-NOM cycled through firm-ACC hundreds-ACC thousands dollars-GEN.]
 They cycled hundreds of thousands of dollars through *the firm*.

People can also serve this purpose when they act as go-betweens. Here Russian journalists provide a medium for the act of conveying:

Лишь немногим бойцам удаётся передать через случайно встреченных российских журналистов записку для родственников.
 [Only few soldiers-DAT manage convey through by-chance met Russian journalists-ACC note-ACC for relatives-GEN.]
 Only a few soldiers manage to convey a note for their relatives via *Russian journalists that they meet* by chance.

ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT 1—Space as opposed to time

ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT is very similar to the ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION, except that it focuses just on one part of the accusative object, namely the one furthest away. The accusative object is thus reduced to its logical endpoint. ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT functions in only



A force (arrow) arrives at the
 ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT
 (circle labeled A) of a domain

two domains, that of space and time; however, space and time actually function rather differently from each other. Imagine yourself standing on a certain spot at a certain time. Space stretches out from your spot in all directions equally. Since all directions are equal, they are all the same in some sense. In other words, if some object is one meter away from you, that fact is essentially the same regardless of the direction in which the object lies: it will always be *one meter* away

через +
 ACCUSATIVE: A
 DIMENSION in the
 domains of
 various activities
 means 'through'.

ACCUSATIVE: AN
 ENDPOINT is
 invoked in the
 domains of space
 and time.

An interval of
 space indicates a
 distance away.

An interval of time indicates a point in the future or past.

ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT in the domain of space.

В + ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT in the domain of space means 'in'.

за + ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT in the domain of space means 'away'.

через + ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT in the domain of space means 'across, after'.

from you. Time is different. It stretches away from you in exactly two directions, and those directions are distinct from each other. One goes forward, into the future. And one goes backward, into the past. If an event is an hour away from you, it does matter which direction it lies in. The event will either happen *in an hour* or it will have happened *an hour ago*. We don't have any one way to say (in normal English) that an event is an hour away without indicating that it is future or past. The same goes for Russian. In terms of space, the ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT locates something as being a certain distance away (at the end of that distance), whereas in terms of time this meaning locates things as happening later, at the end of a certain period, or has having happened before, at or prior to the beginning of a certain period. In this way Russian shows a parallelism between the two concepts that we would express in English as I'll see him in *a week* and I saw him *a week ago*. In either case you have to reach one week away from where you are now to get to the point where the action is; you are always looking at something that happens at the far end of a week.

In the domain of space, there are three prepositions that identify endpoints: в, за, and через. В is relatively infrequently used to locate items at a given distance, but here is one example:

В *одн* скач*о*к он очутился у дв*е*ри.
[In one leap-ACC he-NOM found-self by door-GEN.]
In *one leap* he was at the door.

When за 'away' is used in the domain of space, it usually occurs in conjunction with от 'from' or до 'to' (which also means 'from' in this context), as in this example:

За *несколько* километ*р*ов до го*р*ода автоб*у*с сорва*л*ся с об*р*ыва в ре*к*у.
[Beyond several-ACC kilometers-GEN to city-GEN bus-NOM fell from precipice-GEN in river-ACC.]
Several kilometers before reaching the city the bus fell off the precipice into the river.

In its most simple manifestation, через 'across' locates something at the opposite edge of an item as in клуб — через до*р*о*з*у [club-NOM — across street-ACC] 'the club is across *the street*'. Usually, however, через refers to something that is repeated in a series, such that you wind up skipping over every other object, as in the common teacher's instruction писа*т*ь через *стр*о*ч*ку [write away line-ACC] 'skip *lines*/write *double-spaced*', which could be literally interpreted as 'go *one line* away and then write, and then repeat that pattern'. Here's an example to show how this works in context:

И че*р*ез *каждую* ф*р*азу слов*н*о подчёркивали: У Росси*и* в ко*с*мосе всё хорош*о*.
[And across every phrase-ACC as-if emphasized: By Russia-GEN in space-LOC all-NOM good.]
And it was as if *every other sentence* they were emphasizing: Everything is okay with the Russian space program.

ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT 2—Time as opposed to space

As we saw above, time differs in important ways from space. There are furthermore some special peculiarities about the way Russian uses ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT in time expressions. In addition to the usual use of prepositions (в, за, через) followed by the accusative case, you will also see the accusative case preceding words indicating direction of time (these words act as postpositions triggering the accusative). This table gives an overview of the uses, using *одну неделю* [one week-ACC] ‘one week’ as our unit of time:

ACCUSATIVE: AN
ENDPOINT in the
domain of time.

Time expressions associated with ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT

time running forward: in, after, later

в одну неделю	[to one week-ACC]	in/ by the end of a week
за одну неделю	[to one week-ACC]	in/ by the end of a week
через (одну) неделю	[across (one) week-ACC]	after a week, a week later; every other week
одну неделю погодя	[one week-ACC later]	one week later
одну неделю после того	[one week-ACC after that-GEN]	one week after that
одну неделю спустя	[one week-ACC later]	one week later

time running backward: ago, before

одну неделю до того/перед тем	[one week-ACC until that-GEN/before that-INST]	one week before that
за одну неделю до того/перед тем	[to one week-ACC until that-GEN/before that-INST]	one week before that
одну неделю назад	[one week-ACC ago]	one week ago

The preposition в is often used in reference to the ages of people to say ‘at *the age of* X this person did Y’; literally it means ‘at *the end of so many years* this person did Y’:

Наш дирижёр родился в семье музыкантов и уже в *пять* лет научился играть на фортепиано.

[Our conductor-NOM was-born in family-LOC musicians-GEN and already to five-ACC years-GEN learned play on piano-LOC.]

Our conductor was born in a family of musicians and already at the age of *five* he learned to play the piano.

в, за, and через
+ ACCUSATIVE: AN
ENDPOINT in the
domain of time
running forward
means ‘in, at, by
the end of’.

The meaning of the preposition за is very similar here. You will notice that when за is used with an accusative time expression, if the sentence refers to a completed action (usually with a perfective verb), you get focus on the endpoint, whereas if a process or state is involved, then you have a duration (ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION). Here is an example of за expressing ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT:

За *месяц* Дима превратился в обыкновенного человека.

[To month-ACC Dima-NOM transformed to ordinary person-ACC.]

By the end of *a month* Dima had become an ordinary person.

Через typically indicates a time period that elapses before something else happens:

Он поставил им ультиматум: сдаться через *неделю*.

[He-NOM set them-DAT ultimatum-ACC: give-up across week-ACC.]

He set an ultimatum for them: give up by the end of *a week*.

Буквально через *час* к ней приедет расстрельная бригада.

[Literally across hour-ACC to her-DAT arrives firing squad-NOM.]

Literally in *one hour* a firing squad will arrive at her place.

When the context calls for periodic repetition (often by means of *каждый* ‘every’), then you get the temporal equivalent of what we saw with *через* and intervals of space: things that happen at regular intervals of time:

Через *каждую неделю* — медицинский осмотр.

[Across every week-ACC — medical examination-NOM.]

There’s a medical examination *every other week*.

The postposition *спустя* ‘later’ (which can also be used as a preposition) gives Russian yet another way to say ‘later’ (just as we can also say *thereafter* and *after that*); here’s an example:

Четыре года спустя, в 1904 году на играх в Сент-Луисе, женщины стали мериться силами в стрельбе из лука.

[Four years-ACC later, in 1904 year-LOC at games-LOC in Saint Louis-LOC, women-NOM started compare strengths-INST in shooting-LOC from bow-GEN.]

Four years later, in 1904 at the games in Saint Louis, women started to compare their abilities in archery.

The postposition *назад* is probably the most common Russian equivalent for ‘ago’. Here are a couple of examples to show how it works:

Месяц назад я забыла у него очки от солнца.

[Month-ACC ago I-NOM forgot by him-GEN glasses-ACC from sun-GEN.]

A month ago I forgot my sunglasses at his place.

Неделю назад я слышала по радио передачу о счастье.

[Week-ACC ago I-NOM heard along radio-DAT program-ACC about happiness-LOC.]

A week ago I heard a program on the radio about happiness.

By the way, *назад* has a variant, *тому назад*, which also means ‘ago’ and is also preceded by ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT.

ACCUSATIVE: AN
ENDPOINT +
спустя in the
domain of time
running forward
means ‘later’.

ACCUSATIVE: AN
ENDPOINT +
назад/тому
назад in the
domain of time
running
backward means
‘ago’.

EPILOGUE

The word *accusative* is not very helpful in summing up this case, although you can think of the parallel between the force of an accusation being released upon the accused and the force of a verb being released upon an object. Accusation is indeed one kind of directed activity, and the accusative case is all about directed activity, particularly motion. Directed motion occupies a prominent place in the linguistic imagination of Russians, and they make a much crisper distinction between motion and location than we do in English. It doesn't matter how short the trip is: even the travel of our backside to a seat or the travel of hairpins to the place we lay them on the sink is described as a movement with a destination. Just looking at something constitutes a visual voyage. Once again our understanding of time is patterned after how we perceive space, motivating the conclusion that if a journey has a spatial destination, then an event has a temporal destination as well. Time is clearly conceived of in Russian as a unidimensional line stretching away from us in two directions. Change to a new state is comprehended as movement to a new location. Going to a destination behind an item can be interpreted as catching hold, replacing, or exceeding that item. Feeling nauseated or shaken up are not activities people engage in; these are things that just happen to us without any apparent agent. The dative case will continue this theme of forces directed at targets, albeit in a less immediate way.