

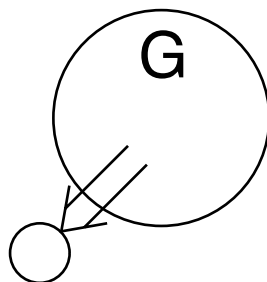
GENITIVE Forms**Feminine
declension
nouns**hard type: 'room'
singular
ко́мнатыplural
ко́мнатsoft type: 'week'
singular
неде́лиplural
неде́ль-ь: 'talent'
singular
спосо́бностиplural
спосо́бностей**Masculine
declension
nouns**hard type: 'courtyard'
singular
дво́ряplural
дво́ровsoft type: 'nail'
singular
гвозд́яplural
гвозд́ей**Neuter
declension
nouns**hard type: 'body'
singular
те́лаplural
телsoft type: 'schedule'
singular
расписа́нияplural
 расписа́ний**Adjectives**hard type: 'first'
feminine
пе́рвойmasculine
пе́рвогоneuter
пе́рвогоplural
пе́рвыхsoft type: 'last'
feminine
последне́йmasculine
последне́гоneuter
последне́гоplural
последне́их**Pronouns**'I'
меня́'we'
нас'you' informal
тебе́я'you'
вас'she'
(н)её'he'
(н)его́'it'
(н)его́'they'
(н)их'who'
кого́'what'
чего́'oneself'
себе́я'this'
feminine
этойmasculine
этого́neuter
этого́plural
эти́х'all, every'
feminine
всейmasculine
всего́neuter
всего́plural
всех**Possessives**feminine
'my'
моёйmasculine
моего́neuter
моего́plural
мои́х'our'
нашей

нашего́

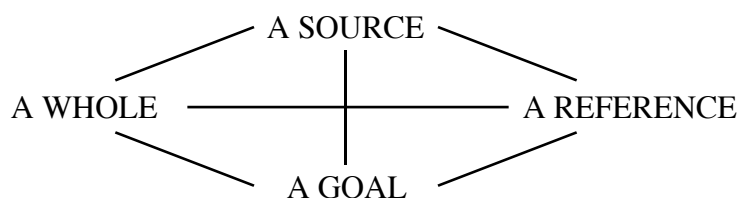
нашего́

наши́х

Numerals'one'
feminine
одно́йmasculine
одно́гоneuter
одно́гоplural
одно́их'two'
двух'three'
трёх'four'
четырёх'five'
пяти́

GENITIVE:**A SOURCE**

The genitive network:



PROLOGUE

Let's start by looking at an example:

Фидель Кáстро на пятом съезде *своей компáртии* говорíл без умóлку шесть часóв и сóрок три минúты, что достóйно *рекóрдов Кнúги Гúннесса*.

[Fidel Castro-NOM at fifth congress-LOC own communist-party-GEN spoke without pause-GEN six-ACC hours-GEN and forty-three minutes-ACC, that worthy records-GEN Book-GEN Guinness-GEN.]

At the fifth congress *of his communist party*, Fidel Castro spoke without *pause* for six *hours* and forty-three minutes, an accomplishment worthy *of the Guinness Book of Records*.

Here we see six uses of the genitive case in a single sentence, one that is not even particularly long or unusual. If there were an entry for Russian case use in the Guinness Book of World Records, the genitive case would walk off with multiple honors, among them:

- The genitive is the most used case in Russian. The likelihood of finding sentences with six uses of any other case is relatively small.
- The genitive is used with over one hundred prepositions (about 40 simple prepositions and 70 complex ones), vastly more than all the other cases combined.
- The genitive is the only case that forms chains of consecutive uses, as in our example above: *достóйно рекóрдов Кнúги Гúннесса* [worthy records-GEN Book-GEN Guinness-GEN], literally ‘worthy *of the records of the Book of Guinness*’.
- The genitive is probably the most complex case in Russian, and the basic idea of the genitive is perhaps the hardest to grasp.

The genitive case is the most frequent case, has the most prepositions, forms chains, and has the most complex meaning.

An overview of
the genitive case.

The genitive
case diverts
attention to
another item.

An abstract
definition of the
genitive.

These might look like formidable hurdles, but our strategy is to tackle the last item on the list, the meaning of the genitive. After that, all the other “problems” will become opportunities for easy success.

The uses of the genitive will be described in terms of four categories: GENITIVE: A SOURCE, GENITIVE: A GOAL, GENITIVE: A WHOLE, and GENITIVE: A REFERENCE. The four labels used here hint at both what the basic meaning of the genitive is and why it is so hard to make sense of it. The genitive is by nature an elusive beast, a sort of “back-seat driver” that is always handing off the responsibility of focusing attention to something else. When we say that something comes from a source, we generally aren’t as interested in the source as we are in the something that comes from it. The same goes for goals; while a goal is important, what we really care about is the person or thing that is headed for it. In the GENITIVE: A WHOLE use, there is always another item that plays the role of the “part”, and of course when we are talking about something that is part of a whole, we are focusing our attention on the part more than on the whole. A reference point is something that we use to locate something else, and in its GENITIVE: A REFERENCE use, the genitive serves as a mental address for other things. Rather than turning focus to the item it marks, the genitive deflects our focus away from it. It is this habit of retreating into the background that makes the genitive so hard to pin down. Passing the buck, by the way, also makes the chaining of genitives possible, allowing focus to bounce from one item to the next.

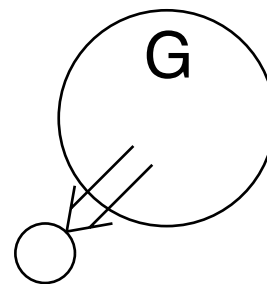
Looking at the labels, however, it is at first hard to understand what they have in common. After all, a source and a goal seem to be opposites, and both involve movement, whereas whole and reference are static. If we compare the diagrams of the four uses, we see that the GENITIVE: A GOAL is really the same as the GENITIVE: A SOURCE, just run in reverse, and furthermore the GENITIVE: A WHOLE and GENITIVE: A REFERENCE are simply the two endpoints of GENITIVE: A SOURCE. More abstractly, we could say that all of the diagrams support the following definition:

The genitive is a backgrounded item (big circle) that yields focus of attention to something else (small circle) which exists or maneuvers in its proximity.

In order to make sense of this definition we will have to examine the many faces of the genitive in action.

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 1—Going to > coming from

The GENITIVE: A SOURCE meaning is always triggered by a preposition or word indicating removal or withdrawal from the genitive item. All three of the prepositions particularly important in expressing this meaning are often translated as ‘from’: из, с, and от. These three prepositions reverse the direction of motion described by the prepositions в, на, к in their meaning ‘to, toward’. Here again is the table comparing в, на, к, this time adding the reverse direction:



An item (small circle) departs from a
GENITIVE: A SOURCE
(circle labeled G)

GOING TO

some non-human destinations require в + ACC

Дочь пошла́	в	шко́лу.
[Daughter-NOM went	in	school-ACC.]
My daughter went	to	school.

some non-human destinations require на + ACC

Дочь пошла́	на	по́чту.
[Daughter-NOM went	on	post-office-ACC.]
My daughter went	to	the post-office.

all human destinations require к + DAT

Дочь пошла́	к	врачу́.
[Daughter-NOM went	to	doctor-DAT.]
My daughter went	to	the doctor.

COMING FROM

non-human destinations that require в + ACC use из + GEN when they are sources

Дочь пришла́	из	шко́лы.
[Daughter-NOM came	from	school-GEN.]
My daughter came (home)	from	school .

non-human destinations that require на + ACC use с + GEN when they are sources

Дочь пришла́	с	по́чты.
[Daughter-NOM came	from	post-office-GEN.]
My daughter came (home)	from	the post-office .

all human destinations require к + DAT and use от + GEN when they are sources

Дочь пришла́	от	врача́.
[Daughter-NOM came	from	doctor-GEN.]
My daughter came (home)	from	the doctor .

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 2—из ‘from’

Here are some examples of the use of из to indicate a container or location from which something is removed:

На сту́льях и кровати лежа́ли ве́щи, вы́нутые из сунду́ка.
[On chairs-LOC and bed-LOC lay things-NOM, taken-NOM from trunk-GEN.]
On the chairs and bed lay things that had been taken out of the trunk .

Из сара́я вы́бежал ма́льчик.
[From barn-GEN ran-out boy-NOM.]
A boy ran out of the barn .

Comparison of three GENITIVE: A SOURCE prepositions meaning ‘from’: из, с, and от.

из + GENITIVE: A SOURCE ‘from’.

Он археолог, недавно верну́лся из *Яку́тии*.

[He-NOM archeologist-NOM, recently returned from Yakutia-GEN.]

He's an archeologist, and he's recently returned from *Yakutia*.

ИЗ + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE 'from' in
metaphorical
domains.

ИЗ can also be used metaphorically to indicate abstract objects and refer to domains other than space. In the first of these two examples Hitchcock's films are the source of horrors, and in the second charity (shown by a very self-important hairdresser) is the source (and thereby the motive) for giving the person a seat in the beauty parlor. Note the use of English *from* and *out of* in these examples; the metaphorical extension of the source concept is something we share with Russian.

Иногда Ва́дик зарисовывал свои́ сны, похо́жие на у́жасы из *фíльмов* Хичко́ка.

[Sometimes Vadik-NOM drew his dreams-ACC, similar-ACC on horrors-ACC from films-GEN Hitchcock-GEN.]

Sometimes Vadik drew pictures of his dreams, similar to horrors from Hitchcock's *films*.

Я понима́ю, что поса́жена в крѐсло из *ми́лости* и вооб́ще по сравне́нию с парикма́хершей ниче́го не сто́ю.

[I-NOM understand, that seated-NOM to chair-ACC from charity-GEN and in-general along comparison-DAT with hairdresser-INST nothing-GEN not be-worth.]

I understand that I have been given a seat *out of charity* and that in general in comparison with the hairdresser I am worthless.

ИЗ + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE in fixed
phrases
исходи́ть из
'proceed from',
оди́н из
'one of'.

ИЗ appears in numerous fixed phrases. Perhaps the two most common ones are *исходи́ть из* 'proceed from; base one's assumptions on' and *оди́н из* 'one of [a group of things]'. Here is an example for each of these uses:

Исходя́ из *про́шлого о́пыта*, дога́дываюсь, что ...

[Proceeding from past experience-GEN, guess, that...]

Based on *past experience*, I guess that...

Оди́н из ча́сто *встреча́емых моти́вов* его́ произведе́ний — сон.

[One-NOM from frequently encountered motifs-GEN his works-GEN — sleep-NOM.]

One *of the frequently encountered motifs* of his work is sleep.

ИЗ-за + GENITIVE:
A SOURCE 'from
beyond;
because of'.

ИЗ forms two secondary prepositions, both of which can be used in concrete and metaphorical contexts. Из-за, literally means 'from beyond'. The first example below illustrates a concrete use, из-за *рубе́жá* [from-beyond border-GEN] 'from *abroad*', whereas the second is metaphorical, indicating a cause:

У э́той фи́рмы то́же есть ресу́рсы из-за *рубе́жá*.

[By this firm-GEN also are resources-NOM from-beyond border-GEN.]

This firm also has resources from *abroad*.

Вре́мя от вре́мени она́ переставала́ кра́ситься, из-за хандрѣ́, ѝли из-за того́, что пропа́дала кра́ска, ѝли лень бы́ло е́хать в магази́н.

[Time-NOM from time-GEN she-NOM stopped dye from-beyond depression-GEN, or from-beyond that-GEN, that lost dye-NOM, or laziness-NOM was ride to store-ACC.]

From time to time she would stop dyeing her hair, whether from *depression* , or from *the fact* that there was no dye in the store, or because she just felt too lazy to go to the store.

Из-под is the other complex preposition, literally ‘from beneath’. The first example is of a concrete use, whereas the second is idiomatic:

Гла́вную опору́ выбива́ют у него́ из-под ног.

[Main support-ACC knock-out by him-GEN from-beneath feet-GEN.]

They are knocking his main support out from under *his feet* .

Сковорода́ свали́лась на бутѣ́лки из-под кефи́ра, кото́рые сто́ят во́зле плитѣ́.

[Frying pan-NOM fell on bottles-ACC from-beneath kefir-GEN, which-NOM stand next-to burner-GEN.]

The frying pan fell onto the *kefir* bottles that are next to the burner.

ИЗ-ПОД +
GENITIVE: A
SOURCE ‘from
beneath’.

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 3—с ‘from’

Just as из takes us on the path reversing the direction of в + ACC for something that is conceived of as a container, so с takes us on the path reversing на + ACC for something that is conceived of as a surface. The bee house was *on* the tree, the pinecone was *on* the ground, and the friends were *at* the language department, all using на for locations, and consequently с for removal from these locations.

Он снял пчели́ный до́мик с де́рева.

[He-NOM removed bee house-ACC from tree-GEN.]

He removed the bee house from *the tree* .

Она́ подняла́ с земли́ ши́шку.

[She-NOM picked-up from ground-GEN pinecone-ACC.]

She picked up a pinecone from *the ground* .

Прия́тели с фи́лфа́ка не внуша́ли дове́рия.

[Friends-NOM from language-department-GEN not inspired confidence-GEN.]

Our friends from *the language department* did not inspire confidence.

с + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE ‘from’.

Although the GENITIVE: A SOURCE preposition that is usually used with human beings is от, we do occasionally see human beings with с, particularly when they are viewed as a source of money, as in the common phrase Ско́лько с меня́? [How-much from me-GEN?] ‘How much *do I owe you* ?’, or the following example:

c + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE with
human beings
when they serve
as the source of
funds.

c + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE in the
domain of time.

Правительство не собира́ет нало́г с *проститу́ток*.
[Government-NOM not collects tax-ACC from prostitutes-GEN.]
The government does not collect a tax from *prostitutes* .

With time expressions, c can be used to indicate the time when something begins. Common examples are months and ages, as well as the fixed expression c *mex nop* [from those times-GEN] ‘from *that time on*’. Here are three examples to illustrate:

Ра́йса с *пяти́ лет* кле́ила коро́бочки для пилю́ль.
[Raisa-NOM from five years-GEN glued boxes-ACC for pills-GEN.]
Raisa started gluing pill boxes *when she was five years old* .

С *января́* по май вы бу́дете в олимпийской фо́рме.
[From January-GEN along May-ACC you-NOM will-be in olympic form-LOC.]
From *January* through May you will be in olympic form.

Я с *детства́* мечта́л о литерату́ре.
[I-NOM from childhood-GEN dreamed about literature-LOC.]
I have dreamed about literature since *childhood* .

c + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE in
metaphorical
domains.

Like any other preposition, c has its metaphorical uses. Here are a couple of examples to whet your appetite, one involving the source serving as a motive (the hangover causing the gloomy mood), and the other referring to an abstract numerical realm:

Ты явля́ешься, когда́ Дудко́ с *похмеля́* — мра́чный.
[You-NOM appear, when Dudko-NOM from hangover-GEN — gloomy-NOM.]
You keep showing up when Dudko is gloomy because *he's got a hangover* .

Сла́ва Бо́гу, мы начина́ли не с *нуля́*.
[Glory-NOM God-DAT, we-NOM started not from zero-GEN.]
Thank God we weren't starting from *zero* .

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 4—от ‘from’

от + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE ‘from’.

As our table above indicates, when a human being serves as GENITIVE: A SOURCE, you can usually expect to see the preposition от. The following example serves to illustrate both the use of от with human sources and the fact that от is frequently used with non-human sources as well:

По его́ лицу́ я по́нял, с каки́м удово́льствием у́ехал бы он на юг от *кри́ка*, от *те́щи*, и от *жены́*.
[Along his face-DAT I-NOM understood, with what pleasure-INST leave would he-NOM to south-ACC from yell-GEN, from mother-in-law-GEN, and from wife-GEN.]
From his face I understood how glad he would be to go south, away from *the yelling*, away from *his mother -in-law*, and away from *his wife* .

Whenever location is expressed in terms of *у* 'by' + GEN (see below under GENITIVE: A REFERENCE), removal from that place is expressed with *от*. In Russian a person can stand *у окна* [by window-GEN] 'by the window', and removal from this position is achieved by *от*:

Почти четы́ре шага́ можно сде́лать в прогу́лке от *окна́* до *дверей*.
[Almost four steps-ACC possible do in walk-LOC from window-GEN to door-GEN.]
One can take almost four steps in walking from *the window* to the door.

The use of *от* with expressions of time is not particularly common, but here is an example:

В отве́тном письме́ Лутóхину от *пе́рвого* ма́я 1926 г. Го́рький дал бо́лее развёрнутую оцёнку по́эзии Цвета́евой.
[In answer letter-LOC Lutokhin-DAT from first-GEN May-GEN 1926-GEN Gorky-NOM gave more extensive evaluation-ACC poetry-GEN Tsvetaeva-GEN.]
In his letter of response written to Lutokhin on *the first* of May, 1926, Gorky gave a more extensive evaluation of Tsvetaeva's poetry.

In Russian dependence is expressed using the verb *зависеть* (or the noun *зависимость* or the adjective *зависимый*) *от* + GEN, as in this example:

Западноевропе́йские госуда́рства смо́гут уме́ньшить свою́ зави́симость от *стран-чле́нов ОПЕК*.
[West-European states-NOM can reduce their dependence-ACC from countries-members-GEN OPEC-GEN.]
West European states can reduce their dependence on *the OPEC member-countries*.

Just like *из* and *с*, *от* can identify a metaphorical source in terms of a cause. In the case of *от*, this is usually the cause of illness or death, although other causes can also come into play:

Её муж у́мер от *разры́ва* се́рдца.
[Her husband-NOM died from rupture-GEN heart-GEN.]
Her husband died from a heart *attack*.

Утвержда́ют, что Микела́нжело та́кже страда́л от *безу́мных мы́слей*.
[Claim, that Michelangelo-NOM also suffered from crazy thoughts-GEN.]
They claim that Michelangelo also suffered from *crazy thoughts*.

От *зажжённого* за окно́м *фонаря́* на полу́ коса́я зы́бкая те́нь ра́мы.
[From lighted-GEN beyond window-INST lamp-GEN on floor slanting flickering shadow-NOM windowframe-GEN.]
From *the lighted lamp* outside the window there is a slanting, flickering shadow of the windowframe on the floor.

от indicates removal 'from' a location marked as *у* + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE.

от + GENITIVE: A SOURCE in the domain of time.

от + GENITIVE: A SOURCE in the fixed phrase *зависеть от* 'depend on'.

от + GENITIVE: A SOURCE in metaphorical domains.

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 5—Withdrawal

Words indicating withdrawal trigger the use of GENITIVE: A SOURCE.

In addition to prepositions, some other words trigger the use of GENITIVE: A SOURCE. Like the prepositions, they all indicate motions of withdrawal from the genitive item, whether due to fear or disgust. Here is a table of the words you are likely to encounter, followed by a few examples:

Expressions of fear and avoidance associated with GENITIVE: A SOURCE

‘fear’ боя́ться	‘avoid’ избега́ть/избежа́ть	‘be shy’ стесня́ться/постесня́ться
‘abhor, have aversion’ гнуша́ться/погнуша́ться	‘beware’ остерега́ться/остере́чься	‘shun, avoid’ сторони́ться/посторони́ться
‘shy away from’ дичи́ться	‘be frightened’ пуга́ться/испуга́ться	‘be ashamed’ стыди́ться/постыди́ться
		‘shun, stand aloof’ чужда́ться

Она́ предава́лась удово́льствиям, разу́мно избега́я *неприятностей*.
[She yielded pleasures-DAT, judiciously avoiding unpleasant-things-GEN.]
She abandoned herself to pleasure, judiciously avoiding *unpleasant things*.

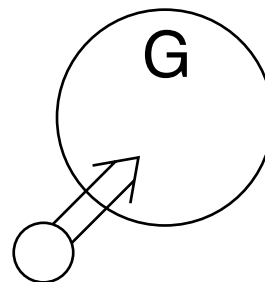
Они́ соверше́нно не стесня́лись *присутствия* люде́й.
[They-NOM completely not were-shy presence-GEN people-GEN.]
They were not the least bit shy *of the presence* of people.

Они́ не владе́ли англи́йским языко́м и стыди́лись *этого*.
[They-NOM not commanded English language-INST and were-ashamed this-GEN.]
They did not know English and were ashamed *of this*.

GENITIVE: A GOAL 1—до ‘to’

As its name suggests, GENITIVE: A GOAL identifies an item that is approached. Like GENITIVE: A SOURCE, GENITIVE: A GOAL is always triggered by a preposition or other word. By far the most common is the preposition до ‘to’, which can be applied to the domains of space and time, as well as to metaphorical realms. Here are two examples of how до defines an approach in terms of physical space:

ДО + GENITIVE: A GOAL ‘to’.



An item (small circle) reaches a
GENITIVE: A GOAL
(circle labeled G)

До *трамвая* я дошёл благополучно, неся чемодан то в правой, то в левой руке.

[To tram-GEN I-NOM went successfully, carrying suitcase-ACC that in right-LOC, that in left hand-LOC.]

I made my way to *the tram* successfully, carrying my suitcase first in my right hand and then in my left.

Ступеньки моего вагона не доходят до *земли*.

[Steps-NOM my train-car-GEN not go to ground-GEN.]

The steps of my train car do not reach *the ground*.

When used with time expressions, до can mean 'before', as in до *войны* [before war-GEN] 'before *the war*', but more frequently has a meaning very similar to English 'until', as in до *свидания* [until seeing-GEN] 'goodbye (lit: until *we see each other again*)'. Here are a couple of examples to show how this works in sentences:

После тридцати шести лет разлуки, отец и сын беседовали до *утра*.

[After thirty-six years-GEN separation-GEN, father-NOM and son-NOM talked until morning-GEN.]

After being separated for thirty-six years, father and son talked until *morning*.

Выкупавшись в реке, он ложился на траву и спал до *обеда*.

[Having-swum in river-LOC, he-NOM lay-down on grass-ACC and slept until lunch-GEN.]

After taking a swim in the river, he would lie on the grass and sleep until *lunch*.

In relation to points in time, до performs the inverse of с, treating the point as a surface. Thus, as in the following example, one stretches a time line (of devotion to children's literature) from one point (the end of the twenties) to another (the end of life) by using с and до in tandem:

Детская литература с конца 20-х годов до *конца* жизни была его лицом, его визитной карточкой, именем наконец.

[Children's literature-NOM from end-GEN 20's years-GEN until end-GEN life-GEN was his face-INST, his calling card-INST, name-INST in-the-end.]

From the late twenties until *the end* of his life, children's literature was his face, his calling card, his name really.

This pairing of с and до motivates the use of до with the fixed expression до *сих/тех пор* [up-to this/that time-GEN] 'until *this/that time*':

Очевидно, до *сих пор* я казался ей воплощением здоровья и наивности.

[Obviously, until this time-GEN I-NOM seemed her-DAT incarnation-INST health-GEN and naivete-GEN.]

Obviously until *then* I had seemed to her to be health and naivete incarnate.

ДО + GENITIVE: A GOAL means 'until, before' in the domain of time.

С + GENITIVE: A SOURCE ... ДО + GENITIVE: A GOAL means 'from ... to' in the domain of time.

ДО + GENITIVE: A GOAL in the fixed expression до *сих/тех пор* 'until this/that time'.

ДО + GENITIVE: A GOAL means 'to, up to' in metaphorical domains.

Metaphorically до can describe movement into various states, such as the politico-economic states in the first example below, and states of mind in the second one:

Не важно, что режим довёл страну до *международной изоляции*, до *массового исхода* интересов, до *бездёнежья*.

[Not important, that regime-NOM led country-ACC to international isolation-GEN, to mass exodus-GEN interests-GEN, to pennilessness-GEN.]

It's not important that the regime led the country to *a state of international isolation* , *mass exodus* of interests, and *pennilessness* .

Гогёна мучили мания преследования и депрессия, доведя его до *мыслей* о самоубийстве.

[Gauguin-ACC tormented mania-NOM persecution-GEN and depression-NOM, leading him-ACC to thoughts-GEN about suicide-LOC.]

Gauguin was tormented by persecution mania and depression, leading him to *thoughts* of suicide.

Similar to the time line illustrated above, до can be used to reach points on all kinds of scales, be they numerical or otherwise (extent of persecution, spectrum of painting styles), as in the following examples:

До *двухсот тысяч* туристов ежегодно приезжают сюда полюбоваться на животных, живущих в естественных условиях.

[Up-to two hundred thousand tourists-GEN yearly come here admire on animals-ACC, living-ACC in natural conditions-LOC.]

Up to *two hundred thousand tourists* a year come here to admire the animals living in natural conditions.

Но она решила преследовать своего мужа до *конца*.

[But she-NOM decided persecute own husband-ACC to end-GEN.]

But she decided to persecute her husband to *the end* .

Картины от сурреализма до *демонизма* рождаются там.

[Pictures-NOM from super-realism-GEN to demonism-GEN are-born there.]

Pictures from super-realism to *demonism* are born there.

The idiom

не до + GENITIVE: A GOAL means 'not in the mood for'.

До also participates in an idiomatic phrase used to indicate that someone is not in the mood for something, namely DAT + не до + GEN:

Но Пушкину было не до *детей*.

[But Pushkin-DAT was not up-to children-GEN.]

But Pushkin wasn't in the mood for *children* .

GENITIVE: A GOAL 2—для ‘for’ and прѳтив ‘against’

In the domain of purpose, the approach involved in GENITIVE: A GOAL makes a gesture toward the genitive item, usually offering it some kind of benefit, and this is done with the preposition для ‘for’. Here are some examples to illustrate:

Я пишу не для *славѳстов*. Я пишу для *нормальных людѳй*.

[I-NOM write not for Slavists-GEN. I-NOM write for normal people-GEN.]

I don’t write for *Slavists* . I write for *normal people* .

Санаторѳй был закрытого тѳпа, для *высокопоставленных людѳй*.

[Sanatorium-NOM was closed type-GEN, for highly-placed people-GEN.]

It was an exclusive sanatorium, for *highly-placed people* .

Придѳтся обращаться за пѳмощью к друзьям и знакомым для *решѳния* нѳкоторых проблем.

[Is-necessary turn for help-INST to friends-DAT and acquaintances-DAT for solution-GEN certain problems-GEN.]

It is necessary to turn to friends and acquaintances in order *to solve* certain problems.

Similar to для is the preposition рѳди, usually translated as ‘for the sake of’:

Что с вами? Я же здесь рѳди *вас*.

[What-NOM with you-INST? I-NOM after-all here for-the-sake-of you-GEN.]

What’s with you? After all, I’m here for *your* sake.

An approach in the immediate vicinity of some person or thing can also be an act of aggression directed *against* GENITIVE: A GOAL, and this is expressed by means of the preposition прѳтив ‘against’:

Когда была кампания прѳтив *взяточничества*, Игорь рисовѳл краснорѳжего взяточника.

[When was campaign-NOM against bribery-GEN, Igor-NOM drew red-faced bribe-taker-ACC.]

When there was a campaign against *bribery* , Igor drew a picture of a red-faced bribe-taker.

Онѳ ищут срѳдства не тѳлько прѳтив *вируса*, но и для упрѳщения защитных фѳнкций нашего организма.

[They-NOM seek means-GEN not only against virus-GEN, but also for simplification-GEN defense functions-GEN our body-GEN.]

They are looking for something not only to fight *the virus* , but also to simplify our body’s defense functions.

для + GENITIVE: A GOAL means ‘for’ in the domain of purpose.

рѳди + GENITIVE: A GOAL means ‘for the sake of’ in the domain of purpose.

прѳтив + GENITIVE: A GOAL means ‘against’ in the domain of purpose.

ПРО́ТИВ +
GENITIVE: A GOAL
means 'opposite'
in the domain of
space.

Less frequently ПРО́ТИВ can be interpreted concretely as mere location opposite rather than actual opposition, as in this example:

ПРО́ТИВ *ко́рпуса* жгли костёр, навёрное, сжигáli ненужный хлам.
[Opposite building-GEN burned bonfire-ACC, probably, burned unneeded trash-ACC.]

Opposite *the building* they burned a bonfire; they were probably burning unneeded trash.

ЖАЛЬ/ЖА́ЛКО +
GENITIVE: A
WHOLE to express
'regret, pity'.

Finally, ЖАЛЬ/ЖА́ЛКО 'regret, pity' that can be used in impersonal expressions with the genitive (or accusative):

Я люблю́ де́тские голосо́а, и мне при э́том бывáет невырази́мо жаль *своёй уходя́щей жи́зни*.

[I-NOM love children's voices-ACC, and me-DAT at this-LOC is inexpressibly regret own slipping-away life-GEN.]

I love children's voices, and when I hear them I feel inexpressible regret *for my own life which is slipping away*.

GENITIVE: A GOAL 3—Actual approach

Words meaning
'get', 'approach'
and 'desire' can
trigger GENITIVE:
A GOAL.

There are two groups of words associated with GENITIVE: A GOAL. For the first group, the goal is actual, and it is touched, held to, acquired, desired, or deserved, in which case the use of the genitive case is obligatory. For the second group, the goal is potential, and it is sought, expected, or hoped for, in which case the use of the genitive is optional. We will look at each group in turn.

Words meaning 'get', 'approach', 'desire' associated with GENITIVE:: A GOAL

'hold to' держáться	'worthy' достóйный	'touch; concern' касáться/косну́ться
'get, obtain' добивáться/добы́ться	'desire, wish' желáть/пожелáть	'listen to; obey' слу́шаться/послу́шаться
'attain, reach' достига́ть/достигну́ть/досты́чь	'deserve, merit' заслу́живать/заслужы́ть	'be worth, deserve' сто́ить
		'receive, be awarded' удоста́ивать/удосто́ить

Here are a few examples to whet your appetite:

Как вы досты́гли *тако́го нра́вственного соверше́нства*?

[How you-NOM attained such moral perfection-GEN?]

How have you attained *such moral perfection* ?

Он встаёт, отхо́дит к окну́. Кажется, я доби́лась *своего́* — ему́ неприятно.

[He-NOM gets-up, walks to window-DAT. Seems, I-NOM got own-GEN — him-DAT unpleasant.]

He gets up and goes to the window. It seems that I have gotten *what I want* — he is uncomfortable.

Задача литературы состоит в том, чтобы показывать всех, кого обычно презирают, людьми, достойными уважения и жалости.

[Task-NOM literature-GEN consists in that-LOC, in-order show everyone-ACC, who-ACC usually despise, people-INST, worthy-INST respect-GEN and pity-GEN.] Literature's task consists of depicting all people who are despised as people who are worthy of *respect* and *pity*.

As the table suggests, касаться/коснуться can indicate both physical 'touching', as in the first example below, as well as touching in the intellectual realm, usually rendered in English as 'concerning', as in the second example:

Они как будто танцевали какой-то медленный танец в красной комнате и не касались пола.

[They-NOM as if danced some slow dance-ACC in red room-LOC and not touched floor-GEN.]

It was as if they were dancing some slow dance in a red room and were not touching *the floor*.

Другие протоколы касаются сотрудничества в области ядерной энергетики и безопасности.

[Other protocols-NOM touch collaboration-GEN in area-LOC nuclear energy-GEN and security-GEN.]

Other protocols concern *collaboration* in the area of nuclear energy and security.

The verb желать/пожелать 'wish' is an essential but often invisible ingredient in many salutations. A complete sentence such as Я желаю вам успеха [I-NOM wish you-DAT success-GEN] 'I wish you *success*' shows the underlying structure of these expressions. Usually this formula is abbreviated, leaving only the thing being wished in the genitive case. Here are some common phrases that are built this way:

Всего доброго/лучшего!

[All good/best-GEN!]

All the best !

Приятного аппетита!

[Pleasant appetite-GEN!]

Bon appetit !

Спокойной ночи!

[Calm night-GEN!]

Good night !

Счастливого пути!

[Happy trip-GEN!]

Have a good trip !

GENITIVE: A GOAL 4—Hypothetical approach

The difference between the words that require the GENITIVE: A GOAL, and those that can use either the genitive or the accusative boils down to a difference between the status of the item that might be marked with the genitive. The verbs that require the genitive also tend to

The invisible role of желать/пожелать 'wish' in salutations using GENITIVE: A GOAL.

GENITIVE: A GOAL
is used for
hypothetical
items, and
ACCUSATIVE: A
DESTINATION is
used for specific
items.

require that their object be something we know exists or can identify. You cannot attain a non-existent goal, nor can you touch something that isn't there. But you can look for something or wait for something regardless of whether the object of your quest exists. Snow White sang "Some day my prince will come" before she ever met him, and indeed before she even knew that such a person really existed. She was waiting for a dream, and got lucky. The words that can take either the genitive or the accusative leave the door open for this possibility. When the item being sought is relatively non-specific, the genitive is used; when a specific item is sought, it will appear in the accusative.

Words that can govern GENITIVE:: A GOAL or ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION

'wait for' ждáть	'expect' ожида́ть	'demand, require' требовать/потребовать
'seek' иска́ть	'request' проси́ть/попроси́ть	'want; feel like' хотéть/захотéть хотéться/захотéться

The following table should give you some insight into how these verbs are used. Boris is a dreamer like Snow White; he knows that he wants some things, but doesn't necessarily know exactly what they are. His brother Gleb is after specific items he can positively identify.

Comparison of GENITIVE:: A GOAL and ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION

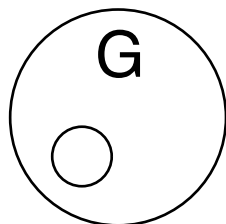
Бори́с ждёт <i>авто́буса</i> . (Boris isn't picky. He needs to get away from where he is. He'll take any bus that comes.)	[Boris-NOM waits bus-GEN.]	Boris is waiting for <i>a bus</i> .
Гле́б ждёт авто́бус. (Gleb knows which bus he wants to take and is waiting for that one.)	[Gleb-NOM waits bus-ACC.]	Gleb is waiting for the bus.
Бори́с и́щет ме́ста. (Boris is unemployed; any job commensurate with his qualifications will do.)	[Boris-NOM seeks place-GEN.]	Boris is looking for <i>a job</i> .
Гле́б и́щет своё ме́сто в за́ле. (Gleb has a ticket, and he is trying to find the seat that matches the number printed on it.)	[Gleb-NOM seeks own place-ACC in hall-LOC.]	Gleb is looking for his seat.

Of course, real examples aren't ordinarily so clear-cut. Here are a couple to illustrate:

Чего́ я жду ка́ждый раз, ока́зываясь в незнако́мом ме́сте?
[What-GEN I-NOM wait every time-ACC, finding-self in unfamiliar place-LOC?]
What is it that I wait for every time I find myself in an unfamiliar place?

Жизнь, кото́рую мы ве́ли, тре́бовала *значи́тельных расхо́дов*.
[Life-NOM, which-ACC we-NOM led, required considerable expenditures-GEN.]
The life we led required *considerable expenditures* .

GENITIVE: A WHOLE 1—‘Of’, possession, and color



An item (small circle) is a part of a
GENITIVE:: A WHOLE (circle labeled G)

In this submeaning the genitive is a whole of which something else is a part. This accounts for all the uses of the genitive that can be translated as ‘of’, as well as numerical quantifications indicating amounts of things.

By far the most common use of the genitive is what we call its “bare case” usage, where it is not triggered by any other word. In this pristine state the genitive can indicate possessors, wholes (in relation

to parts), and other kinds of ‘having’ relationships that can motivate a meaning of ‘of’.

Perhaps the most basic use of GENITIVE: A WHOLE is to identify wholes that parts belong to. In the physical realm we have parts of discrete objects (floors of buildings), as in the first example below. More abstractly one could say that realities are parts of the world, as in the second example. In the domain of time, hours are parts of the morning, day, evening, or night, motivating the use of утра [morning-GEN] ‘in the morning’, дня [day-GEN] ‘in the afternoon’, вечера [evening-GEN] ‘in the evening’, and ночи [night-GEN] ‘in the night’, as illustrated in the third example.

Мы занимаем целый этаж гигантского небоскрёба “Корвет.”
[We-NOM occupy whole floor-ACC giant skyscraper-GEN “Corvette”.]
We occupy a whole floor *of the giant Corvette skyscraper* .

Давайте трезво взглянем на реалии современного мира.
[Let’s soberly glance on realities-ACC modern world-GEN.]
Let’s take a sober look at the realities *of the modern world* .

В семь часов вечера она стояла возле его дома.
[In seven-ACC hours-GEN evening-GEN she-NOM stood next-to his house-GEN.]
At seven o’clock *in the evening* she was standing next to his house.

Since a part belongs to a whole, it can also be thought of as a possession of the whole, and GENITIVE: A WHOLE is often used for this meaning, translatable into English with either the possessive form in *’s*, or with *of*, as in these examples:

Не повторяйте ошибку президента.
[Not repeat error-ACC president-GEN.]
Don’t repeat *the president’s* error.

Я вообще люблю участвовать в жизни других людей: сватать, советовать, лечить.
[I-NOM in-general love participate in life-LOC other people-GEN: do-match-making, advise, heal.]
In general I love to participate in *other people’s* lives/in the life *of other people* : match-making, advising, and healing.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE can express ‘of’ and numerical quantification.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE expresses parts ‘of’ wholes.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE expresses possession.

GENITIVE: A
WHOLE expresses
membership in a
category.

Он нашёл позвонóк *мáмонта* в райóне *вéчной мерзлоты́*.
[He-NOM found vertebra-ACC mammoth-GEN in region-LOC eternal frost-GEN.]
He found the vertebra *of a mammoth* in the *permafrost* region.

The second use of the genitive in last example above, literally translatable as ‘the region *of eternal frost*’, demonstrates another meaning of ‘of’, namely belonging to a category, being of a type. Here are some examples:

Недáром я испы́тывал чýвство *стра́ха*.
[Not-without-reason I-NOM experienced feeling-ACC fear-GEN.]
It is not without reason that I experienced a feeling *of fear*.

Надéюсь, ты́ вы́растешь челоу́ком *большóй души́*.
[Hope, you-NOM grow-up person-INST big soul-GEN.]
I hope that you grow up to be a person *with a big soul*.

Был за́пах *дорогóго одеколóна* в ли́фте.
[Was smell-NOM expensive eau-de-cologne-GEN in elevator-LOC.]
There was the smell *of expensive eau-de-cologne* in the elevator.

GENITIVE: A
WHOLE describes
color.

Russian characteristically uses the GENITIVE: A WHOLE to describe colors of objects, using the logic of the English phrase *a horse of a different color*:

Он носíл гáлстук *бéлого цвéта*.
[He-NOM wore tie-ACC white color-GEN.]
He wore a *white* tie.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE 2—Events, idioms, and chains

GENITIVE: A
WHOLE expresses
participation in
an event.

The items that participate in an event (subject, object, action) are related to each other; in English this relationship is expressed by *of*, and in Russian by the GENITIVE: A WHOLE. In this first example, the event is *a man is planning to publish some books*. This event links the publication to the books:

Он плани́ровал издáние *сведóбных дéтских книг*.
[He-NOM planned publication-ACC edible children’s books-GEN.]
He planned the publication *of edible children’s books*.

In this next example the event is *unofficial literature exists*, with the entailment that existence is an attribute of unofficial literature:

Я ужé тогда́ знал о существова́нии *неофициáльной литерату́ры*.
[I-NOM already then knew about existence-LOC unofficial literature-GEN.]
At that time I already knew about the existence *of unofficial literature*.

The event *mentally ill people have produced creations* likewise links the creations to the people:

Всё больше хозяев музеев, галерей и критиков готовы рассматривать творения психически *больных людей* как искусство.

[All-NOM more proprietors-GEN museums-GEN, galleries-GEN and critics-GEN ready-NOM consider creations-ACC mentally ill people-GEN as art-ACC.]

More and more proprietors of museums and galleries, as well as critics, are ready to consider the creations *of mentally ill people* as art.

The bare use of GENITIVE: A WHOLE appears in some idiomatic expressions, such as *чего* [what-GEN] ‘why’, *всего* [all-GEN] ‘in all, altogether, just, only’, *своего рода* [own type-GEN] ‘in its own way, all to itself’, and *что нового/интересного*, etc. [what-NOM new/interesting, etc.-GEN] ‘what’s/is anything *new/interesting*, etc.’, as illustrated in the following examples (the first of which laments the dangers of narcotics):

Смерть косит именно их, молодых и здоровых, *всего* лишь раз попробовавших забыться и уже неспособных жить без этого забытья.

[Death-NOM mows precisely them-ACC, young-ACC and healthy-ACC, all-GEN only time-ACC tried-ACC forget-self and already incapable-ACC live without this oblivion-GEN.]

They are precisely the ones that death mows down, the young and the healthy, who tried *just* once to forget their worries and were no longer capable of living without that oblivion.

Бокс, это, в общем-то, *своего рода* искусство.

[Boxing-NOM, that-NOM, in general-LOC, own type-GEN art-NOM.]

Boxing is actually an art *all to itself*.

Кого интересуют признания литературного неудачника? *Что поучительного* в его исповеди?

[Who-ACC interest admissions-NOM literary failure-GEN? What-NOM enlightening-GEN in his confession-LOC?]

Who is interested in the admissions of a literary failure? Is there anything *enlightening* in his confession?

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the genitive is the one case that can be repeated to form chains. It is specifically the GENITIVE: A WHOLE in its bare case usage that makes this possible. Here is a chain of three consecutive genitive items:

Они боевики “Партии исламского единства Афганистана.”

[They-NOM revolutionary-fighters-NOM “Party-GEN Islamic unity-GEN Afghanistan-GEN.]

They are revolutionary fighters *of the “Islamic unity party of Afghanistan”*.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE in idiomatic expressions.

The chaining capacity of GENITIVE: A WHOLE.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE 3—Prepositions and prepositional phrases

GENITIVE: A WHOLE
with the
prepositions
среди́ ‘among’,
посреди́ ‘in the
middle of’, and
внутри́ ‘inside’.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE is also used with the prepositions среди́ ‘among’, посреди́ ‘in the middle of’, and внутри́ ‘inside’. Here are some examples:

В перерыве среди́ *участников* на́чали циркули́ровать докуме́нты.
[In break-LOC among participants-GEN began circulate documents-ACC.]
During the break documents began circulating among *the participants* .

Одна́жды мы с ма́чехой бежа́ли по у́лице, торопи́лись в кино́, а посреди́ *доро́ги* лежа́л райо́нный алкогóлик, но не дядя Ко́ля, а друго́й.
[Once we-NOM with step-mother-INST ran along street-DAT, hurried to cinema-ACC, and in-the-middle road-GEN lay regional alcoholic-NOM, but not uncle Kolya-NOM, but other-NOM.]
Once my step-mother and I were running down the street, hurrying to the cinema, and in the middle of *the road* lay a local alcoholic, but it wasn’t uncle Kolya, it was someone else.

Самолёт взвы́л, пото́м ста́л набира́ть отча́яние внутри́ *себя́*.
[Airplane-NOM howled, then began gather despair-ACC inside self-GEN.]
The airplane howled and then began gathering despair within *itself*.

GENITIVE: A
WHOLE with
prepositional
phrases
means ‘of’.

There are dozens of prepositional phrases in Russian that function as complex prepositions followed by the GENITIVE: A WHOLE with the meaning ‘of’. The following table displays some of the more typical phrases, and is followed by a couple of examples:

Prepositional phrases meaning ‘of’ associated with GENITIVE:: A WHOLE

в а́дрес	‘directed toward’	в тече́ние	‘in the course of’
в ви́де	‘in the form of’	в усло́виях	‘in the conditions of’
в гра́ницах	‘within the bounds of’	в че́сть	‘in honor of’
в де́ле	‘in the case of’	в числе́	‘in the number of, among’
в знак	‘as a mark/token of’	во вре́мя	‘in the time of, during’
в ка́честве	‘in the capacity of’	во и́мя	‘in the name of’
в напра́влении	‘in the direction of’	вне преде́лов	‘beyond the limits of’
в о́бласти	‘in the area of’	вне ра́мок	‘beyond the bounds/framework/ context of’
в отнóшении	‘in the relation of, with respect to’	за счё́т	‘at the expense of’
в по́льзу	‘in favor of, on behalf of’	на осно́вании	‘on the basis of’
в преде́лах	‘within the limits/bounds of’	на пу́ти	‘on the path of’
в продо́лжении	‘in the course of’	по ме́ре	‘according to the measure of, as far as’
в ра́мках	‘within the limits/framework of’	по по́воду	‘on the occasion of, concerning’
в резу́льтате	‘as a result of’	по при́чине	‘by reason of’
в ро́ли	‘in the role of’	по слу́чаю	‘by reason of’
в смы́сле	‘in the sense of, as regards’	под ви́дом	‘under the guise of’
в слу́чае	‘in case of’	под и́менем	‘in the name of’
в сфе́ре	‘in the realm of’		

Prepositional phrases meaning 'of' associated with GENITIVE:: A WHOLE (continued)

под назв́анием	'under the title of'	с по́мощью	'with the help of'
под предл́огом	'on the pretext of'	с це́лью	'with the goal of'
при по́мощи	'with the help of'	с то́чки зр́ения	'from the point of view of'
при посре́дстве	'by means of'	со сторо́ны	'from the side of'
при усло́вии	'on the condition of'	че́рез посре́дство	'by means of'

В ра́мках рабо́чего визи́та в Тегера́н состоя́лась встре́ча на́шего специа́листа с предста́вителями бази́рующейся в Ира́не афга́нской оппози́ции.

[In frames-LOC working visit-GEN to Tehran-ACC took-place meeting-NOM our specialist-GEN with representatives-INST based-GEN in Iran-LOC Afghan opposition-GEN.]

In the context of a working visit to Tehran our specialist met with representatives of the Afghan opposition based in Iran.

Впервы́е в ка́честве полнопра́вных уча́стников междунаро́дного соглаше́ния вы́ступили пятна́дцать бы́вших сове́тских респу́блик.

[For-the-first-time in capacity-LOC full-fledged participants-GEN international agreement-GEN acted fifteen-NOM former Soviet republics-GEN.]

For the first time the fifteen former Soviet republics acted in the capacity of full-fledged participants in an international agreement.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE 4—Numerals and quantifiers

A part of a whole can also be interpreted as an amount of the whole. In this use, the genitive is viewed as a set of objects or as a substance, and portions of the genitive item are measured out. This accounts for the use of GENITIVE: A WHOLE with numerals, with words meaning 'add', 'subtract', 'full', 'enough', as well as partitive uses.

Numerals come in many types. There are integers, fractions, and indefinite numerals such as *ско́лько* 'how many', *не́сколько* 'some', *сто́лько* 'so many', *мно́го* 'many/much', *немно́го* 'not many/much', *ма́ло* 'few/little', *бо́льше* 'more', *ме́ньше* 'fewer/less' *нема́ло* 'not a few', and many other words indicating amounts. In this sampling of quantifiers with GENITIVE: A WHOLE, note that the quantifier and the quantified (in the genitive) do not have to appear next to each other in a sentence; in the third and fourth examples the genitive item quantified is the first word, whereas the quantifier is the last:

Я опозда́ла на пятна́дцать мину́т.

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

I was fifteen minutes late.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE expresses quantification with numerals, quantifiers, and in partitive expressions.

Он пел просто, громко, монотонно, но в этом было столько *прямоты*, столько *мужской искренности*, *беззащитности*.

[He-NOM sang simply, loudly, in-monotone, but in that-LOC was so-much-NOM straightforwardness-GEN, so-much-NOM masculine sincerity-GEN, vulnerability-GEN.]

His singing was simple, loud, and monotonous, but in it there was so much *straight-forwardness*, so much *masculine sincerity* and *vulnerability*.

Желáющих обучáться в японском центре оказа́лось чрезвычайнó много.

[Desiring-GEN study in Japanese center-LOC turned-out exceedingly many-NOM.]

The number of people desiring to study at the Japanese center turned out to be exceedingly large.

Нарóду становíлось всё бóльше.

[People-GEN became all-NOM more.]

More and more *people* were there.

Although Russian does have words like *приблизительно* ‘approximately’, you can achieve a similar effect merely by inverting a numeral and the quantified genitive item. An approximate number of items is cited in the example below:

Их б́ыло *штук* пятьдесят.

[They-GEN was items-GEN fifty-NOM.]

There were approximately fifty *of them*.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE 5—‘Some’

It is not uncommon for the genitive to signal quantification without a numeral or other word to express the amount. The “default” amount is usually equivalent to English *some* (often called the “partitive” meaning in textbooks), and with perfective verbs and certain nouns referring to substances the so-called “second genitive” ending (in -y/-ю) is used, as in the first example below.

Я в́ыпил *чаю*, котóрый заказáл по телефóну.

[I-NOM drank-up tea-GEN, which-NOM ordered along telephone-DAT.]

I drank up *the tea* that I ordered by phone.

—А вóдка есть там? —Есть. —Дава́й лúчше *вóдки* в́ыпьем.

[—And vodka-NOM is there? —Is. —Give better vodka-GEN drink-up.]

—And do they have vodka there? —Yes. —Let’s drink (*some*) *vodka* instead.

—А úтром она́ говорíт, без тебя́ не могу́. —А ты что? —Ну, успоко́ил, *дéнег* дал...

[—And morning-INST she-NOM says, without you-GEN not can. —And you-NOM what-ACC? —Well, calmed, money-GEN gave...]

—And in the morning she says, I can’t go on without you. —And what did you say?

—Well, I calmed her down, gave her *some money*.

The inversion of a numeral and GENITIVE: A WHOLE expresses approximation.

The partitive use of GENITIVE: A WHOLE means ‘some’.

The genitive can have a quantitative meaning in the presence of a variety of words that express having or manipulating an amount of something. Some of these words are listed in the table and illustrated in the examples below:

Words expressing quantities associated with GENITIVE:: A WHOLE

‘sufficient quantity’ достáток достáточно ‘enough’	‘collect, pick up’ набира́ться/набра́ться	‘increase, add’ прибавля́ть(ся)/прибави́ть(ся)
‘become filled’ исполня́ться/исполни́ться исполненный ‘full’	‘eat/have one’s fill’ наеда́ться/нае́сться	‘decrease, subtract’ убавля́ть(ся)/убави́ть(ся)
	‘full’ по́лный	‘be enough’ хвата́ть/хвати́ть

Она́ броса́ла непоня́тные, зага́дочные фразы́, исполненные *како́го-то пота́йного смы́сла*.

[She-NOM flung incomprehensible, mysterious phrases-ACC, filled-ACC some secret meaning-GEN.]

She flung incomprehensible, mysterious phrases, filled *with some secret meaning*.

Он набра́лся хра́брости и спроси́л: почему́?

[He-NOM collected courage-GEN and asked: Why?]

He collected *his courage* and asked: Why?

Буква́льно два дня наза́д я запусти́л ка́рточку в банкомáт и обнару́жил, что на моём счёту́ за́ год не то́лько не прибáвилось *причита́ющихся* мне *проце́нтов*, но да́же *мои́х кро́вных* Суще́ственно убáвилось.

[Literally two days-ACC ago I-NOM put card-ACC in automated-teller-ACC and discovered, that on my account-LOC in year-ACC not only not increased owed-GEN me-DAT percents-GEN, but even my own-GEN significantly decreased.]

Just two days ago I put my card into the automated teller and discovered that in the course of a year not only had *the percentage owed* me on my account not been added, but even *my own money* had significantly decreased.

Она́ никогда́ не задумыва́лась над тем, хвата́ит ли у неё *сил* и *здоровья́* на осуществле́ние свои́х пла́нов и что бу́дет пото́м.

[She-NOM never not thought above that-INST, is-enough whether by her-GEN strengths-GEN and health-GEN on realization-ACC own plans-GEN and what-NOM will-be afterward.]

She never thought about whether she had enough *strength* and *health* to realize her plans and what would happen afterward.

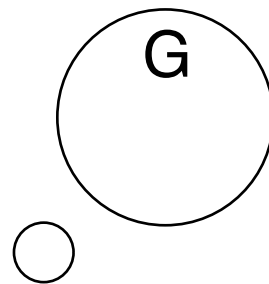
GENITIVE: A REFERENCE 1—Dates and other reference points

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE serves as a reference point for expressions of lack and comparison.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE expresses dates.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE with prepositions.

In the fourth and final meaning of the genitive, the focus of our attention is located near the genitive item, from which it is separated. This combination of proximity and separation allows the genitive to serve as a reference point in the domains of time and space and on scales of qualitative and quantitative assessment. In the domain of time, the most frequent use of the GENITIVE: A REFERENCE is with dates. Note that the genitive is only used for a date when something happens, in other words here the genitive item serves as a temporal reference point for an event:



An item (small circle) is in the proximity of a GENITIVE: A REFERENCE (circle labeled G)

На пресс-конференции, состоявшейся *третьего* декабря, шла речь о мерах, предпринимаемых правительством России для ускорения экономических реформ.

[On press-conference-LOC took-place-LOC third-GEN December-GEN, went talk-NOM about measures-LOC undertaken-LOC government-INST Russia-GEN for acceleration-GEN economic reforms-GEN.]

At the press conference which took place *on the third* of December, they talked about the measures that the Russian government has undertaken to accelerate economic reforms.

Восьмого августа 1927 г. М. Цветаева писала своей знакомой С. Н. Андрониковой-Гальперн.

[Eighth-GEN August-GEN 1927 year-GEN M. Tsvetaeva-NOM wrote own acquaintance S. N. Andronikova-Galpern-DAT.]

On the eighth of August 1927 M. Tsvetaeva wrote to her acquaintance S. N. Andronikova-Galpern.

A large number of prepositions locate items in both time and space with reference to GENITIVE: A REFERENCE as being without, after, before, behind, near, etc.⁵⁶ A few of these prepositions operate in other domains, such as similarity (наподобие ‘in the likeness of’) or concepts (ввиду ‘in view of’, насчёт ‘on the matter of’). In many instances (those marked with asterisks) these prepositions clearly derive from earlier prepositional phrases (now written as one word), originally with a following GENITIVE: A WHOLE meaning ‘of’; compare these with the prepositional phrases that appear in the section on GENITIVE: A WHOLE above. These complex prepositions can be thought of as belonging to both GENITIVE: A WHOLE and GENITIVE: A REFERENCE.

Prepositions associated with GENITIVE:: A REFERENCE

(Items marked with asterisks derive from earlier prepositional phrases, now written as one word.)

без	'without'	крóме	'except, besides, aside from'
близ	'near'	мíмо	'by, past'
вблизí*	'nearby'	накану́не*	'on the eve of'
ввиду́*	'in view of'	наподо́бие*	'in the likeness of'
вдо́ль*	'along'	напро́тив	'opposite'
вза́мён*	'in place of'	насчё́т*	'on the matter of'
вме́сто*	'in place of'	о́коло	'around; approximately'
вне	'outside of'	по́дле	'beside'
во́зле	'near'	позади́*	'behind'
вокруг*	'around'	помíмо	'aside from'
впередí*	'in front of'	поперёк*	'across'
вро́де*	'like'	пóсле	'after'
		пре́жде	'before'
		сверх*	'over, above'
		у	'near, at, by'

The following examples display some of these prepositions:

Но без *рiска* ничегó цéнного не сдéлаешь.

[But without risk-GEN nothing valuable-GEN not do.]

But you can't do anything of value without *risk*.

Правíтельством Украiны прiнято рéшение о проведéнии регистрáции верну́вшихся пóсле *эвакуáции* 1986 гóда людéй и их пропiске в населённых пýнктах, располо́женных вблизí *зóны*.

[Government-INST Ukraine-GEN taken-NOM decision-NOM about carrying-out-LOC registration-GEN returned-GEN after evacuation-GEN 1986 year-GEN people-GEN and their residence-registration-LOC in settled points-LOC, located-LOC near zone-GEN.]

A decision has been made by the government of Ukraine about registering people who returned after the 1986 *evacuation* and awarding them residence in settlements near *the zone*.

По бульвáру вдóль *жёлтых скамéек*, мимо *гiпсовых урн* шагáет небольшо́го рóста человек.

[Along boulevard-DAT along yellow benches-GEN, past plaster urns-GEN strides small stature-GEN person-NOM.]

Down the boulevard, along *the yellow benches*, past *the plaster urns*, strides a person of small stature.

“Жизнь прекра́сна и удивíтельна!” — как восклицáл товáрищ Маяко́вский накану́не *самоубíйства*.

[“Life-NOM wonderful-NOM and amazing-NOM!” — as exclaimed comrade Mayakovsky-NOM on-the-eve suicide-GEN.]

“Life is wonderful and amazing!” — as comrade Mayakovsky was exclaiming on the eve of *his suicide*.

The idiomatic expression *меж двух жерновов* ‘between a rock and a hard place’.

The genitive appears in an idiomatic expression that belongs among the GENITIVE: A REFERENCE prepositions, *меж двух жерновов*, literally ‘between *two millstones*’:

Когда сам уже начал пописывать, попал я *меж двух жерновов* — *между правдой и ложью*.

[When self-NOM already began write, fell I-NOM between two millstones-GEN — between truth-INST and falsehood-INST.]

When I myself began to write, I fell between *a rock and a hard place* — between truth and falsehood.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE 2—y ‘by’

y + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE means ‘by, near’ in the domain of space.

The use of the preposition y could be a subchapter to itself. Y can be variously deployed in the domains of space, possession, and causation. In its basic spatial use, y simply means ‘by’ or ‘near’:

У *двери* сидит мисс Филлипс и вяжет.

[By door-GEN sits Miss Phillips-NOM and knits.]

Miss Phillips sits by *the door* and knits.

y + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE expresses possession.

By far the most common use of y is in the Russian construction that expresses ‘have’, y possessor-GEN + (есть) + possession-NOM, literally ‘by *the possessor* is a possession’, usually understood as ‘*the possessor* has a possession’. Here is an example:

Кроме вас, у *семьи* убитой были друзья или хорошие знакомые?

[Aside-from you-GEN, by family-GEN deceased-GEN were friends-NOM or good acquaintances-NOM?]

Aside from you, did *the family* of the deceased have any friends or close acquaintances?

A similar construction is used for pain and other sensations coming from body parts (which are our inalienable possessions):

Вдруг я заметил, что у *меня* трясутся руки.

[Suddenly I-NOM noticed, that by me-GEN shake hands-NOM.]

Suddenly I noticed that *my* hands were shaking.

y + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE with people expresses ‘at so-and so’s place’.

When the genitive item is a person, y + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE can mean ‘at *so-and so’s place*’, as in this example:

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*.

This construction can also be used to express causation, in other words, having someone do something for you. In this example: ‘doing my hair y someone-GEN’ = ‘having *someone* do my hair’:

Мне безразлично, у *кого* причёсываться, я потом всё равно переделаю по-своему.

[Me-DAT indifferent, by who-GEN do-hair, I-NOM afterward all same redo in-own-way.]

I don’t care *who* does my hair, afterward I redo it my own way anyway.

The causative use of y + GENITIVE: A REFERENCE with people.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE 3—Lack

As we have already seen above under GENITIVE: A WHOLE, the genitive case in Russian is associated with quantification. The separation aspect of GENITIVE: A REFERENCE is here interpreted as negative quantification, or lack, a use commonly called the “genitive of negation”. Note that separation does not necessarily imply non-existence, it just means that the genitive item isn’t available. In the first example below there is of course no denial that the American way of life exists, but the hearer is separated from it by a lack of experience:

Вы просто не знаете *американской жизни*.

[You-NOM simply not know American life-GEN.]

You simply don’t know (*anything about*) *life in America*.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE with negation expresses lack.

Here are a few more typical examples of the GENITIVE: A REFERENCE with negated verbs. Notice that the genitive item can be either the subject of the sentence (as in the first two examples) or the direct object (as in the last two):

В то же время в частном секторе *никаких забастовок* не было.

[In that same time-ACC in private sector-LOC no-kind strikes-GEN not was.]

At the same time there were *no strikes* in the private sector.

Когда я добрался до угла — *её* нигде не было.

[When I-NOM reached to corner-GEN — she-GEN nowhere not was.]

When I reached the corner — *she* wasn’t anywhere.

Можно было догадаться, что *сильного впечатления* я не произвёл.

[Possible was surmise, that strong impression-GEN I-NOM not made.]

One could surmise that I did not make *a strong impression*.

Останавливаюсь перед рисунками, *ничего* не вижу, кроме чёрно-белых пятен.

[Stop in-front drawings-INST, nothing-GEN not see, aside-from black-white spots-GEN.]

I stop in front of the drawings, but I don’t see *anything* except black and white spots.

The following table lists some words in Russian that express the concept ‘lack’ and are associated with the use of the GENITIVE: A REFERENCE:

Expressions of lacking associated with GENITIVE:: A REFERENCE

‘deficit’ дефи́цит	‘be deprived’ лиша́ться/лиши́ться лише́нный ‘deprived’	‘be lacking’ недостава́ть/недоста́ть недоста́ток ‘lack’
‘deprive’ лиша́ть/лиши́ть		‘shortage’ нехва́тка

Here are a couple of examples for orientation:

Обы́чная на́ша жи́знь была́ лишенá *всей э́той ро́скоши, каза́вшейся* театра́льной, предназна́ченной исклю́чительно для сча́сливой мину́ты.

[Ordinary our life-NOM was deprived-NOM all this luxury-GEN, seeming-GEN theatrical-INST, set-aside-INST exclusively for happy minute-GEN.]

Our ordinary life was deprived *of all this luxury*, which seemed theatrical, and was set aside exclusively for a happy time.

38 проце́нтов (бо́льше тре́ти!) москвиче́й се́туют на нехва́тку не *магази́нов и рестора́нов*, а *горо́дских туалéтов*.

[38-NOM percent-GEN (more third-GEN!) Muscovites-GEN complain on shortage-ACC not stores-GEN and restaurants-GEN, but municipal toilets-GEN.]

38 percent (more than a third!) of Muscovites complain of a lack not *of stores* and *restaurants*, but *of municipal toilets*.

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE 4—Comparison

Finally, distance gives you a perspective for comparing items separated along various scales of measure. GENITIVE: A REFERENCE allows you to examine the difference between the genitive item (which is held as the standard) and another item in a comparison. This motivates the use of the genitive with comparative adjectives and adverbs in constructions of the type: other item + comparative + standard-GEN, meaning ‘the other item is better/longer/stronger, etc. *than the genitive item*’. Here are some examples:

Обще́е де́ло должно́ быть вы́ше *ли́чных интере́сов*.

[Common cause-NOM should be higher personal interests-GEN.]

The common cause should be higher (priority) *than personal interests*.

Глу́по держа́ть в помеще́нии бо́льше *одной карти́ны* Рембра́ндта.

[Stupid keep in room-LOC more one picture-GEN Rembrandt-GEN.]

It is stupid to keep more *than one of Rembrandt’s pictures* in the room.

Пел он, возмо́жно, и х́уже *за́падных певцо́в*, но тря́сся сильнее.
 [Sang he-NOM, perhaps, even worse Western singers-GEN, but shook stronger.]
 Perhaps he did sing worse *than Western singers* , but he shook more.

Год бу́дет лу́чше *предыду́щего*.
 [Year-NOM will-be better previous-GEN.]
 This year will be better *than the previous one* .

EPILOGUE

The word *genitive* is related to *generation* and *genesis* , and all these words are derived from the Latin and Greek roots meaning ‘give birth’. Indeed giving birth is the means by which living creatures such as ourselves serve as sources for more of our kind. The genitive case continues the theme of the role of human beings that was so prominent in our discussion of the dative case. People get special treatment in the system of preposition and case combinations to express ‘going to’, ‘being at’, and ‘coming from’. Not only do we humans require *к* + DAT when we are destinations, but as locations we demand *у* + GEN and when we are places of departure we are the objects of *от* + GEN. Location *у* + GEN ‘at’ a person can motivate a variety of interpretations, among them possession, being at someone’s place, or having that someone do something. Physical movement from and to items can be metaphorically extended to express human beings’ emotional withdrawal from and attraction to things through fear, disgust, desire, or expectation. Russian even asks us whether we can identify the object of our desire, thus grammatically capturing that very human dilemma of knowing that we want something but not knowing exactly what that something is. The genitive case is also very concerned with quantity in terms of amounts, deficiency, and comparison. In the current age of quantification, when we are all threatened with being reduced to statistics and identification numbers, it is curious to note that the Russian genitive integrates an appreciation of our distinctive human qualities with a focus on numerical concepts.