



TEN SECRETS OF RUSSIAN NAMES

1. DO RUSSIAN NAMES HAVE A MEANING?

Not really. They have a history, and an etymology, which means that most of them come from words that have a meaning. But names today are not considered to have a “meaning” and people are not named for that long-ago historical meaning.

2. BUT ARE RUSSIAN NAMES MEANINGFUL?

Yes, definitely. People do choose names after relatives, friends, or even famous people. Moreover, traditional ethnic Russian names come from the Eastern Orthodox Tradition and are baptismal names. So People are named in honor of specific saints, with the hope that the character of the saint will rub off on the person carrying his or her name.

3. IS MISHA A GIRL'S NAME?

No, and it can never be. It's derived from Mikhail (the Russian form of Michael), so it's definitely a man's name.

4. IS MISHA A NAME IN AND OF ITSELF?

Definitely not. *The name is Mikhail, but his friends call him Misha.*

5. BUT IT LOOKS LIKE A GIRL'S NAME!

Some nicknames derived from men's names end in *-a*. That's just how the language works. It doesn't turn them into girls' names.

6. HOW ABOUT MASHA? IS IT RELATED?

Not at all. Masha comes from Maria, and it's not a name in and of itself either. It works like Mikhail and Misha, but of course it's a woman's name. *The name is Maria, but her friends call her Masha.*

7. IS ALESHA SHORT FOR ALEKSANDR?

No! No, no, no! Alesha (or Alyosha) come from Aleksei. Those are two completely different names. *My name is Aleksei, but my friends call me Alyosha.*

8. WHAT ABOUT ALEKSANDR, THEN?

Aleksandr has its own nicknames: Shura, Shurik, Sasha. And to make it stranger (and unique), Shura and Sasha work for Alexandra, too. *My name is Aleksandr, but my friends call me Shurik. My name is Aleksandra, but my friends call me Sasha.*

9. TELL US ABOUT TANYA.

It's not a name in and of itself, either. It's derived from Tatiana. *My name is Tatiana, but my friends call me Tanya.*

10. CAN I SPELL A RUSSIAN NAME ANY WAY I WANT?

No. The reason there are different spellings is because the names are really written like this: *Миша, Михаил, Маша, Мария, Аляша, Алексей, Александр, Шура, Шурик, Саша.* But if you want to write them in English letters (Latin characters), you have to make choices and there are different systems for doing that. It's called *transliteration.*