

Putting It All Together

By [Michele A. Berdy](#)

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Слитно или раздельно: one word or two

I love to read articles and books designed to help native Russian speakers negotiate the trickier aspects of the great and mighty Russian language. One of my favorite problems is the question of *слитно* (written together in one word) or *раздельно* (written separately as two words). There are entire books devoted to this topic, which is worth mastering, since the meaning of the words depends on how you write them.

Sometimes the distinction is quite dramatic. Take the word *купе* (compartment, as in a train). *Мы поместили вещи в купе и вышли из вагона покурить* (We put our things in our compartment and then got off the train to smoke).

В купе (in the compartment) is different from the less colloquial *вкупе*, an adverb that means together, in harmony, in coordination with: *В иностранных языках и в словарях слово*

"интеллигенция" переводится, как правило, не само по себе, а вкуче с прилагательным русская" (In foreign languages and dictionaries the word "intelligentsia" is usually not translated by itself but in conjunction with the adjective "Russian"). You might also see вкуче on wedding banners: вкуче и влюбe (in perfect harmony).

In other cases, the distinction is a bit more subtle, like ввиду and в виду. Ввиду is a preposition that takes the genitive case and means "in view of, due to, in light of." Today it is probably most often found in what Russians call канцелярский язык (bureaucratese, business Russian).

Using it makes me feel like Miss Murchison typing away in a Dorothy Sayers novel: Ввиду морозов школы закрывают (In light of the cold temperatures, schools are closed). Производство по делу об административном правонарушении прекратили ввиду отсутствия состава правонарушения (The investigation of an administrative violation was closed due to the absence of violation). Well, maybe Kafka is a better comparison here, but you get the idea.

In any case, ввиду is distinct from в виду, a phrase that combines the preposition "в" with the noun вид (view) in the locative case, and means "in viewing distance of, close to." It's not used too much in this way: Корабль плыл в виду берега. (The ship sailed close to the shore, literally within viewing distance of the shore). But it is used very frequently in a standard expression, иметь в виду (to have in mind; literally to have in view). This is what you say when you aren't sure you understood someone: Что ты имеешь в виду? (What did you mean by that? What did you have in mind?)

And finally there is навстречу and на встречу. The former refers to something coming from the opposite direction: Машина ехала навстречу (The car was approaching [as we moved toward it]). Sometimes this is figurative: Понимая ваше положение, мы готовы пойти вам навстречу (We understand your situation and are willing to meet you halfway). Or sometimes literal: Если пойдём навстречу друг другу, то мы встретимся в парке. (If we walk toward each other, we'll meet in the park).

But на встречу means "to a meeting" and refers to a specific get-together. Её пригласили на встречу со студентами (She was invited to meet with students).

And both навстречу and на встречу are different from встреча, a slang word that means either the oncoming lane of traffic or the illegal zipping into that lane. So if your Russian friend suggests that you двигаться ему навстречу in order to go на встречу, don't try to do it по встрече.

Michele A. Berdy, a Moscow-based translator and interpreter, is author of "The Russian Word's Worth" (Glas), a collection of her columns.

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