### ACCUSATIVE Forms

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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 Mattel doll. The basic meaning of ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION is the biggest, least specific meaning; it does not analyze its object in any way. 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...
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>в ‘to, in, into; on, at; for’</td>
<td>в ‘in, during; like’</td>
<td>в ‘in, at; at the end of’</td>
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<td>на ‘to, on, onto; on, at; for’</td>
<td>на ‘for, lasting; to’</td>
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<td>за ‘behind; for’</td>
<td>за ‘during’</td>
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<td>по ‘up to; after, to get’</td>
<td>под ‘like; to the tune of’</td>
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<td>под ‘under, toward; for use as’</td>
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<td>сквозь ‘through’</td>
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<td>чéрез ‘through’</td>
<td>чéрез ‘across, after; in, at the end of’</td>
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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 Ⅰ—в ‘in, into’**

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

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

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:

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.

A blow to the chest, to knock on a door

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:

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:
В Японии всё чаще звучит лозунг: Отбросим Европу, вернёмся в Азию.
[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.

Это должно снять основное препятствие на пути западных инвестиций в нашу экономику.
[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 посмотрел в глаза.
[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 звонить ‘call’:

Он звонил в различные организации.
[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:

Это в первую очередь проблема президента.
[This-NOM in first line-ACC problem-NOM president-GEN.]  
In the first place this is the president’s problem.

Это может усилить критику в адрес президента.
[This-NOM can intensify criticism-ACC in address-ACC president-GEN.]  
This can intensify the criticism directed toward the president.

Два года назад я посетил этот город и буквально влюбился в него.
[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:
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:

Sometimes love-NOM passes to hatred-ACC.
Sometimes love turns into hatred.

The editor renamed his publishing house “The Invisible Book.”

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 in accusative: a destination:

In past five-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 in 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 вь́двинуться в руководители [be-promoted to managers-ACC] ‘be promoted to manager’, and играть в костьи-мышьи [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 руководительей, and костьи-мышьи instead of костьек-мышек. Here is a contextualized example:

Lora joined (became one of) the manicurist’s apprentices.
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:

Ма́ленькая зме́й влеза́ла на горя́чий кáмень и поднимáла гóлову.
[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 пря́чься, поло́жив шпýльки на умывáльник под зёрка́лом.
[I-NOM brush-hair, having-laid hairpins-ACC on sink-ACC under mirror-INSTR.]
I brush my hair, having laid the hairpins on the sink under the mirror.

Он усё́лся на сóбственные очки.
[He-NOM sat-down on own glasses-ACC.]
He sat down on his own glasses.

Sometimes the motion involved is more imaginary than real:

Сли́шком рáно отпра́вля́ет 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 смотрé на её ли́чико, гла́денькое и овáльное, 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:

Президéн트 прово́дит полíтику, направлённую на поддержáние тёсных свя́зей с Китаём.
[President-NOM conduct policy-ACC, directed-ACC on support-ACC close ties-GEN with China-INSTR.]
The president is setting policy aimed at supporting close ties with China.

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

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.

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):
The Accusative Case

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

Еще когда я в первый раз поехала 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.

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 взять 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.

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):

Англичане приобрели дочь за мизерную плату у 17-летней цыганки.
[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.

Finally, in the metaphorical space of numbers, за can name a number that is exceeded, as in: набрались за сотню желавших [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.

Бралá их за длíнный рóзовый хвост и с разма́ху бýла головóй о цемéнтный 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.

Электромехáник рассказа́л, что около четырёх часóв утра́ послы́шались си́льные удáры о кóрпус кораблý.
[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.

О + ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION also provides the structure for the idiom бóк о бóк [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.

Бýло очевíдно, что егó дед привýк сто́ять по колéно в нáвóзе и шуровáть лóпáтой.
[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’).

Дирéктору назнача́ли ежеднéвно по шéсть делóвых 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.
The Accusative Case

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 таежной трассе погиб тигр, попавший под колеса 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.
Both в and на are deployed for this meaning, which is very common, especially for
days and times of day:

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

В семь часóв ве́чера она́ стоя́ла во́зле его́ до́ма в чём-то мóдном, ю́рком и
kовárном.
[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 слéдующий день по́сле подписáния контра́кта началáсь отпра́вка грúзов.
[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 пéрвый раз ‘the
first time’, в послéдний раз ‘the last time’, на э́том раз ‘this/that time’. Here’s an example:

Предвы́борный штаб постарáется опро́тесто́вать результаты выборо́в, тем бо́ле что на э́том раз бы́ло зафикси́ровано немáло наруше́ний.
[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:

Тéсячи людéй поколéния наших роди́телей по пятьдесят лет жéли вме́сте, но при э́том нерéдко бы́ли абсóлютно чужéми друг дру́гу людьмé.
[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 середи́ны январé по конéц февралé вооружёнными отрядами ислами́стов уничтоже́но свыше 600 ми́рных гражда́н, вклю́ча́я стариков и детeй.
[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.
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):

Возвраща́ясь под у́тро, она́ говори́ла себé: ла́дно, обойдётся. Ч́то-нибудь приду́маю в такси́.

[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’l think something up in the taxi.

**ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION 8—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 нажа́л большую кр́углую кнóпку ли́фта.
[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 ввéрх, увлéкáя за собóй Бóнда.
[Helicopter-NOM went up, dragging behind self-INST Bond-ACC.]
The helicopter went up, dragging Bond behind it.

Кáждый трудáющийся соде́ржит трóих.
[Each worker-NOM supports three-ACC.]
Each worker supports three people.

Нóвый докумен́т предполага́ет откры́тие национо́льных и междунарóдных рынков.
[New document-NOM proposes opening-ACC national and international markets-GEN.]
The new document proposes the opening of national and international markets.
The four disputed islands are *important* for Russia’s security.

Я вёл двойную жизнь.

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):

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):
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 *mex*, 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 рёжут курицу, несу щую 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 *mex* ‘[they] ignore those [people] ’; these two words are inverted and the clause about who is happy in marriage is inserted to explain what *mex* 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 злобить ‘have the chills’, рвать ‘vomit’, тошнить ‘feel nauseated’, and трястися ‘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?
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 зажгло.
[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 интенсивной терапии решен продолжить.
[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 ру́ки!
[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:

Российский гражданин преступления не совершён, и Москва обязана выступить в его защиту.
[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.
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.

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

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

В бюджет 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.

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, наше 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 \textit{that}, fighting for \textit{something}, being punished for \textit{something}, or paying for \textit{something}. We have already seen за play this role in expressing transactions when we looked at the spatial destinations above.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Кажется маловероятным, чтобы такой человек планировал бороться за президентское кресло.}
[Seems unlikely-INST, that such person-NOM planned fight for president’s seat-ACC.]

\textit{It seems unlikely that such a person would plan to fight for the president’s seat.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{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?]

\textit{Will people someday be punished in our country for medical crimes and errors?}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Журналисты заплатили штраф за незаконное пребывание в пограничной полосе.}
[Journalists-NOM paid fine-ACC for illegal stay-ACC in border zone-LOC.]

\textit{The journalists paid a fine for staying illegally in the border zone.}
\end{quote}

When the preposition \textit{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:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Однако после революции церковь переделали под крематорий.}
[However after revolution-GEN church-ACC remade under crematorium-ACC.]

\textit{However after the revolution they remodeled the church to serve as \textit{a crematorium}.}
\end{quote}

The use of the preposition \textit{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:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Эти лакомства — не про нас.}
[These delicacies-NOM — not for us-ACC.]

\textit{These delicacies aren’t for us.}
\end{quote}

\begin{center}
\textit{ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION 1—Distance and duration}
\end{center}

The hallmark of the \textit{ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION} is that the action of the verb extends over some dimension. The domains invoked by \textit{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.
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:

Сатири во все времена испытывала недоброжелательство власти и во все времена питалась горячей поддержкой 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 годы всем не хватало наличных денег.
[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 неделю [time-ACC in week-ACC] ‘once a week’, три раза в месяц [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 одну неделю [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:

Врачи настаивают на скорейшем уходе в отпуск не менее чем на тридцать дней.
[Doctors-NOM insist on fastest departure-LOC in vacation-ACC not less than lasting 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 этот месяц никого в нашем доме не хоронили.
[During that month-ACC no one-ACC in our house-LOC not buried.]
During that month no one in our house was buried.
The Accusative Case

During twenty-four-hours-ACC condition-NOM patient-GEN imperceptibly changes now to better-ACC, now to worse-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’:

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

The Accusative Case 2—Size and capacity

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:

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

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:

The old rate is exactly a thousand times more than the new one.
In this domain, ḋа 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’, обязательная на сто рублей [obligation-NOM on hundred-ACC rubles-GEN] ‘a one-hundred-ruble obligation’, комната на две[х] [room-NOM on two-ACC] ‘a room for two’.

Like ḋа, ḋа 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 ḋа:

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 ḋа 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 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 ḋа 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 стоит ‘cost’, although, as this example illustrates, other verbs can occasionally serve this purpose:

Обычно перезапуск карток 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.
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 $v$ 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 разбить 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, softball... [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:

На + ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION in the domains of various activities expresses locations and opinions.
The preposition под indicates an activity that accompanies another one, most commonly involving music, as in танцевать под музыку [dance under music-ACC] ‘dance to the music’, петь под гитару [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 свирельную воркотню гардеробщица оставляю свои сумки на полку, поднимаюсь наверх и срываюсь в кресло.
[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.

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 всё знаем друг про друга.
[We-NOM all-ACC know other-NOM for other-ACC.]
We know everything about each other.

Я забыл про царевну-лягушку.
[I-NOM forgot for queen-frog-ACC.]
I forgot about the frog-queen.

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:

Заразительная поэтика великой книги заставляет смотреть сквозь её обнажённые вещи.
[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 прокрутили 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 удается передать через случайно встреченных российских журналистов запись 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 1**

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 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.
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 accusa-
tive: 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 чéрез. В is relatively infrequently used to locate items at a given distance, but here is one
eample:

В одýн скача́к он очути́лся у дья́рì.
[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 нёсколько киломéтров до гýрода автóбус сорвáлся с опбыá в réку.
[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, чéрез ‘across’ locates something at the opposite edge of an
item as in клуб — чéрез дорóгу [club-NOM — across street-ACC] ‘the club is across the
street’. Usually, however, чéрез 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 пишáть
чéрез стрóчку [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 чéрез кáждую фразу слóво подчёркивали: У России в кóсмосе всё хоро́шó.
[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 однá недёлå [one week-ACC] ‘one week’ as our unit of time:

### Time expressions associated with ACCUSATIVE:: AN ENDPOINT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time running forward: in, after, later</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>в однá недёлå</td>
<td>[to one week-ACC]</td>
<td>in/ by the end of a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>за однá недёлå</td>
<td>[to one week-ACC]</td>
<td>after a week, a week later; every other week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>через (однá недёлå)</td>
<td>[across (one) week-ACC]</td>
<td>one week, a week later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>однá недёлå погодå</td>
<td>[one week-ACC later]</td>
<td>one week after that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>однá недёлå после тогó</td>
<td>[one week-ACC after that-GEN]</td>
<td>one week later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>однá недёлå спустå</td>
<td>[one week-ACC later]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time running backward: ago, before</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>однá недёлå до тогó/пёрëд тем</td>
<td>[one week-ACC until that-GEN/before that-INST]</td>
<td>one week before that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>за однá недёлå до тогó/пёрëд тем</td>
<td>[one week-ACC until that-GEN/before that-INST]</td>
<td>one week before that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>однá недёлå назад</td>
<td>[one week-ACC ago]</td>
<td>one week ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 роди́лся в семьé музыкáнтов и ужé в пять лет нау́чился игра́ть на фортепиáно.
[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.

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 мёсяц Дйма превра́тился в обыкновéнного человéка.
[To month-ACC Dima-NOM transformed to ordinary person-ACC.]
By the end of a month Dima had become an ordinary person.
The Accusative Case

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

Он постáвил им ультимáтум: сдáться чéрез недéлю.
[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.

Буквáльно чéрез час к ней приёдет расстрéльная бригáда.
[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 кáждый ‘every’), then you get the temporal equivalent of what we saw with чéрез and intervals of space: things that happen at regular intervals of time:

Чéрез кáждую недéлю — медицíнский осмóтр.
[Across every week-ACC — medical examination-NOM.] There’s a medical examination every other week.

The postposition спустá ‘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 гóда спустá, в 1904 году на играх в Сент-Лóисе, жéнщины стáли мерíться сýлами в стрельбé из лóка.
[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 назáд is probably the most common Russian equivalent for ‘ago’. Here are a couple of examples to show how it works:

Мéсяц назáд я забыл у негó очки от сóлнца.

Недéлю назáд я слéпала по ráдио передáчу о счаéтье.
[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, назáд has a variant, томý назáд, which also means ‘ago’ and is also preceded by accusative: an endpoint.
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.