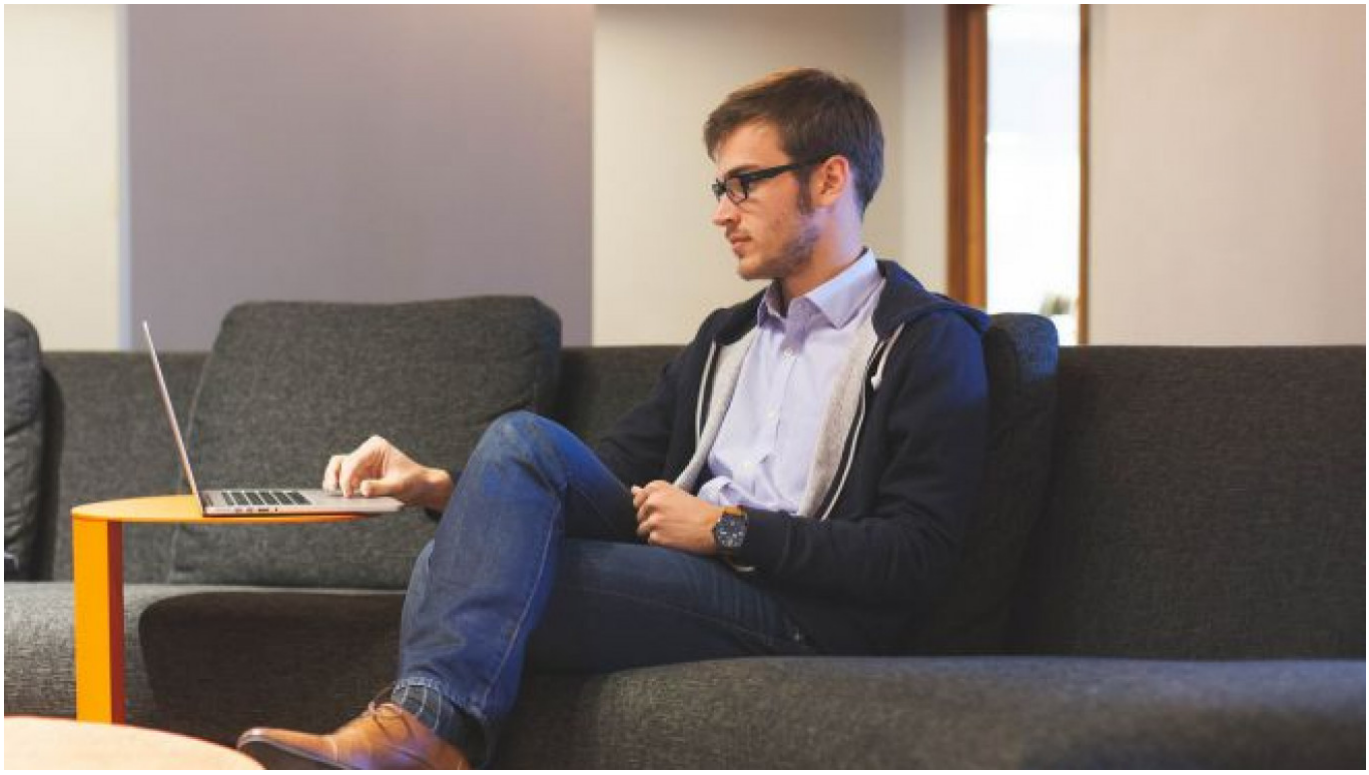
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All the Russian Words You Need to Sit Down

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Сиде́ть на шее́: to live off someone

If you, like me, have come to realize that you lead сидячий образ жизни (sedentary lifestyle) — now blamed for every ailment known to humankind — it may come as something of a relief to learn that there are lots of ways to sit in Russian that do not cause premature death. True, some are not fun and others are arduous. But in Russian, sometimes a long period on your bottom produces inspiration and comfort.

But let's start with the easy stuff. Сидеть is to sit, usually on a chair. Much the way some Americans call sitting cross-legged "sitting Indian-style," Russians call it сидеть по-турецки (literally, "to sit like a Turk"). Now everyone calls it сидеть в позе лотоса (to sit in the lotus position).

Sometimes сидеть means being in a place for a while, often because you are stuck there. The classical version of this is: Я сижу в пробке! (I'm stuck in a traffic jam.) In other cases, you're sort of stuck, but definitely not sitting. Take this example, which is ludicrous in literal translation: Целый день сижу дома с детьми. (I'm sitting at home all day with the kids.)

Sometimes people sit in one place for several years: Он сидел три года. Here the key phrase "в тюрьме" (in prison) is left out but clearly understood: He spent three years in jail.

And sometimes people sit on other people, and not in a nice way: Взрослые дети продолжают сидеть на шее у родителей. (Grown children continue to live off their parents, literally "sit on their parents' neck.")

But sitting can be productive, too. In Russian, сидеть can be translated as doing some work or activity: Она сидит за газетой. (She's reading the newspaper.) Он сидит за компьютером. (He's working at the computer.)

Adding prefixes to the basic verb gives you additional sitting-around options. Засидеться can mean sitting for a long time because you're having way too much fun to get up. Засиделись мы, пора домой. (Oh, we're overstaying our welcome. Time to go home.)

Or засидеться can mean being in a rut: Никуда не ездила, засиделась. (I haven't gone anywhere, I've become a homebody.)

Засидеться can also be used for people stuck in a state — usually the state of being unmarried. Traditionally this describes women: В девках засиделась, а ей уже 27. (She's an old maid — she's already 27.) But occasionally it is applied to men: Её любимый сын, засидевшийся в холостяках, наконец-то женился. (Her beloved son, who was a confirmed bachelor, finally got married!)

And then there's высидеть (to hatch), used for birds and geniuses: Все они прикладывают усилия для того, чтобы высидеть гениальную идею. (They all do everything in their power to hatch a brilliant idea.)

But when your sitting produces less lofty results, you use the verb насидеть. This is what you use to describe the chair worn down to your body specifications — насиженное место (a well-worn seat). Or the place where you feel at home: Люди потянулись с насиженных мест в города. (People left all that was dear to them and moved to cities.) But sitting all day can produce some bad things, too: За последние 18 лет конторской работы насидел себе хронический радикулит. (Sitting for the last 18 years at a desk has given me chronic back pain.)

You get the idea. I'd write more, but I've got to get up and do some stretches.

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