The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Lifehacks for Moscow: E-Books and Swimming Pool Documents

By The Moscow Times

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Gadgets

Can I get English-language e-books in Moscow?

TMT: You mean, legally? Yes, in Moscow there are now several online bookstores that sell some. Ozon.ru has a few of them, mostly dictionaries and a few classics. Litres.ru also has a small selection, from "Pride and Predjudice" to "How to Make a Scientific Speech." And if you read in Russian or want dictionaries, the Moskva online bookshop has a great selection of Russian-language books available in nearly a dozen formats for Haali and Sony Readers, iPhones, Windows mobile, Microsoft reader and even Kindle.

But the best place is the American Center in Moscow, which has a huge library of hundreds of titles that can be borrowed in formats for virtually any device. The books range from contemporary and classical literature and kiddie lit to philosophy and business, and you can request books not yet available. Anyone who lives in Russia and signs up can borrow up

to three books at a time for a period of three weeks; you can also renew them. The only caveat: only works by American authors are available. For more information and a registration link, see amc.ru.

Officials

What's a pool spravka and how do I get one?

TMT: Remove the document and you remove the man, as it says in Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita." If you're a newbie to Moscow you may yet be blissfully unaware of the cogs of bureaucracy that keep the country in motion.

A spravka is any kind of official document. To use most swimming pools in Russia, you will need a spravka to attest that you are disease-free and won't infect the pool and other swimmers. Do you need to see a doctor to attain this? Officially — yes, in reality — no. While some swimming pools allow you to obtain a spravka on site after a once-over by the pool doc, if you want to avoid lines, hassle and the wrath of the angry babushka you're holding up, there is a simple solution.

Pop onto one of the many online spravka sites like spbas.ru or cpravki.ru. Enter your e-mail address, phone number and passport details, then set a time and a place to meet the courier. Hand over your money (usually no more than 500 rubles) and receive your spravka. It's really as simple as that. If you're not a Russian speaker, ask a friend to help you out since most sites have limited English translation.

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