



Communication Choices

For deaf or hard of hearing people



bt.com/includingyou

Foreword



If you've a hearing loss or wear hearing aids, you might sometimes find communication more of a challenge. But you're not alone.

Around ten million people in the UK are deaf or have a hearing loss. And while our research shows that hearing loss can leave people feeling distanced from friends and family, technology is helping to change this.

Every day, organisations like Action on Hearing Loss and service providers like BT are working on innovative ways to make it easier for you to connect with people over the phone or internet.

We're especially pleased to see that BT is making sure that its information is as accessible as possible by increasing the number of BSL user videos on its website at [bt.com/includingyou](https://www.bt.com/includingyou).

While we don't endorse specific products, we recommend this booklet to anyone who wants to find out more about overcoming barriers to communication.

Paul Breckell

Chief Executive, Action on Hearing Loss

[actiononhearingloss.org.uk](https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

**ACTION ON
HEARING
LOSS**

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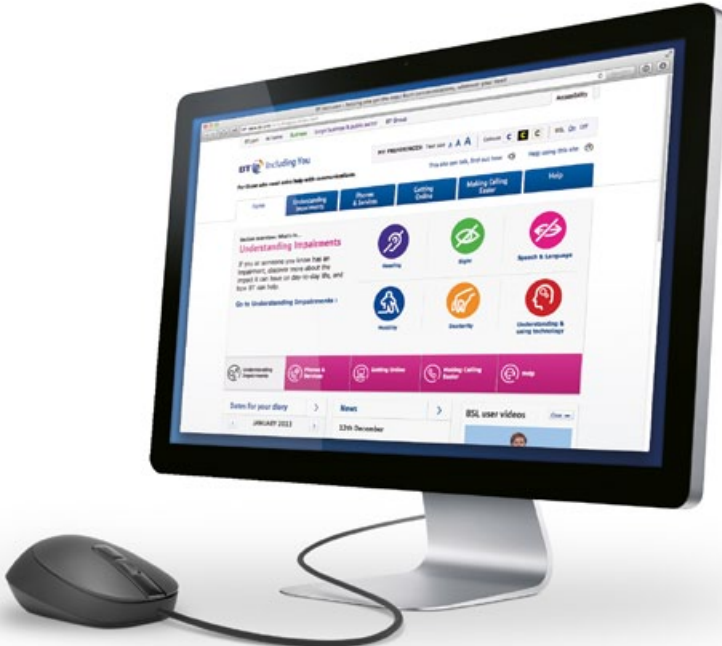
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Introduction

Throughout our lives, our hearing changes. If you've a hearing loss or are concerned that your hearing isn't what it used to be, this guide will help you find out about some of the ways that modern technology can help you communicate more easily.

Of course, it's not just hearing loss that can make communication a challenge. So we've brought together lots of information about our products and services, help and support, news, advice, information – and much more – all in one place, at bt.com/includingyou.

We'd like to thank Action on Hearing Loss for their help with this guide. We hope you find it useful.



Communicating on the phone

Using a phone can be frustrating if you're hard of hearing. But these days, many landline and mobile phones have features that make it easier to hear them ring, easier to hear incoming speech and easier to use.

Home phones

Hearing speech on the phone

Your hearing is as individual as you are and what helps one person might not be so useful to another. But here are some features of modern phones that can help you hear your caller's voice:

- incoming speech amplification
- hearing aid compatible (which means the phone works with the 'T' or loop setting on your hearing aid). Look for this symbol:



See 'Using a hearing aid with your mobile' on [page 13](#).

- hands free operation so sound reaches both ears at once



- a keypad in the base rather than the handset so you can keep the handset near to your ear to make it easier to hear any automatic announcements as you dial
- a headset can be useful if you want to reduce background noise

Cordless phones

Virtually all new cordless phones are DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) and have better sound quality than analogue cordless phones. While only a few are hearing aid compatible, most will have a volume control. Many also have an in-the-ear earpiece and headset socket, which you can use with other headsets, plug-in inductive loops or ear-hooks.

If you wear hearing aids, you could find it helpful to use a neck loop or similar equipment, as you might be able to reduce interference from the ear piece.

For more information on which phones might suit you, go to bt.com/shop/accessible_products.



Hearing the phone ring

If you have trouble hearing your phone ring, you might find it helpful to get a new phone with a choice of ring tones and volumes. Or it might help to choose a phone with a visual call indicator, such as a flashing light.

But if you still miss calls, you might find that an extra visual or audible alert is useful.

The BT ToneCaller

A BT ToneCaller makes it easier to know when your phone's ringing, with an extra sound alert to let you know you've got a call.

If you're a BT home customer and can't hear the phone ring due to a hearing loss, we can supply a ToneCaller, free of charge, with a socket doubler for easy self installation next to the phone.

To order, call **0800 800 150**.



Textphones and Text Relay

If your hearing loss is more profound, it doesn't mean you can't use the phone. If you've a hearing loss or speech impairment, you can use a textphone to have typed phone conversations either person-to-person or via a relay assistant.

What is a textphone?

There are many different kinds of textphone. Some plug directly into your phone line and you make calls by typing on a keypad and take calls by reading the reply on a screen. Some have an integral handset, so can be used by both deaf and hearing people.



What is Text Relay?

Text Relay connects people who use a textphone with people using another textphone or other types of phone. It lets deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired people stay in touch with friends and family, and make calls to businesses.

Using a textphone with Text Relay

You can use Text Relay with a textphone, home phone or mobile. And, with the right software, you can use your PC as a textphone.

Calls between textphones

If you and the person you're calling both have a textphone, you can communicate directly by dialling a prefix code together with their full number. Your conversation will be all in text and displayed on the textphones.

Calls to other phones

If you've got a textphone and you're calling a standard phone or a mobile phone, Text Relay will automatically bring in a relay assistant to translate text to voice and voice to text. You type your conversation, which the relay assistant passes on to the person you're calling. The relay assistant will then type out replies for you to read on your display. All conversations are completely confidential.

Text Relay is available round the clock every day of the year.

Find out more at textrelay.org.

Prefixes to use

18001 – to use your textphone to call either a textphone or a voice phone.

18002 – to use a voice phone to call a number that might be answered with a textphone.

18000 – to use a textphone to call the emergency services. Just dial **18000** without adding **999**. The call is treated as a priority call and automatically connected to a relay assistant and the 999 service.

If you're a BT customer and use Text Relay, there's no extra charge for the service. As calls take longer, we automatically apply a rebate for the text portion of applicable calls. If you aren't a BT customer, contact your supplier for more information.

For more information about Text Relay, go to textrelay.org, call **0800 731 1888** (voice), **0800 500 888** (text) or email helpline@textrelay.org.

Text Relay Assist – textphone users

If you aren't confident about using Text Relay or you'd like more help, you can use Text Relay Assist. It works the same way as Text Relay but instead of dialling the prefix and the number, you call the Text Relay Assist operator on **0870 240 9598** and they'll dial the number for you. (Different call charges apply.)

Text Relay Assist – voice callers

Text Relay Assist helps voice callers use Text Relay. You just call the Text Relay Assist operator on **0870 240 5152** and they'll call the person you wish to speak to. (Call charges might apply.)

BT 1471

BT 1471 works with textphones as well as standard phones. Just dial **18001 1471** to find out the phone number of the last person who called you via Text Relay. Then dial **3** if you want to return the call.

SMS – texting over a landline

Text messaging or Short Message Service (SMS) is a quick, cheap and easy way to keep in touch and is particularly useful if you've got a hearing loss or speech impairment. It was first available on mobile phones ([see page 14](#)) but you can now send and receive texts on some home phones too.

If you're with BT, you can use BT Text, BT's landline SMS service. If you aren't with BT, check with your provider to see if they offer a similar service.

To use BT Text, you need a text-enabled phone and a Caller Display service (charges may apply).

You can get Caller Display as part of BT Privacy. For charges, see bt.com/callingfeatures.



Finding the right phone

BT has put together a guide that shows our products for people who need some extra help with communication. The guide includes a section that shows a great range of phones, with a list of the features you could find most helpful. The guide's called 'Including You, BT's guide to help you communicate' and you can see it on the help pages at bt.com/includingyou.

For phone prices and availability, go to bt.com/shop/accessible_products.



Try Before You Buy centres

If you're thinking about getting a new phone, it makes sense to check things out before you buy. Working with third-party Try Before You Buy (TBYB) centres, BT provides over 200 places where you can see, handle and try out our equipment to make sure it's right for you – without being pressurised by sales people.



To find your nearest Try Before You Buy centre, go to bt.com/tbyb.

Mobile phones

Hearing speech on your mobile

These days, more and more people use a mobile phone and we know mobiles can seem difficult or complicated to use. And they can also interfere with hearing aids.

If you're thinking about getting a new mobile phone, here are some features to look for that you might find helpful:

- compatibility with a hearing loop for use with hearing aids using the 'T' setting, see 'Using a hearing aid with your mobile' below
- volume boost button for the handset
- vibrating call or text alert
- volume control that's easily accessible
- hands free/loudspeaker
- voice dialling of phonebook entries
- headset option for privacy
- access to the internet, emails and instant messaging

Using a hearing aid with your mobile

You should be able to use a mobile phone with your digital hearing aid. But mobile phones generate radio frequency interference and electromagnetic radiation and not all hearing aids and mobiles are compatible. The combination of phone and hearing aid is really important and good mobile phone suppliers will let you try out different phones to see which works best with your aid.



Some other things worth knowing:

- if your hearing aid has a 'T' (telecoil) and an 'M' (microphone) setting, it's probably also got a T and M rating, from 1 to 4. The higher the rating, the less likely you are to get interference
- using the 'T' setting is usually best for keeping interference down when you're using your mobile – but it's worth trying it on 'M' as this can work just as well with some mobiles
- magnetic interference from the backlight on the display and keypad of many mobiles is a common problem. See if you can turn it off
- if your mobile's got a hands free feature and volume control, try turning up the volume and holding the mobile phone far enough away from your hearing aid to avoid interference

You might also be able to buy an inductive neck loop for your mobile phone. These fit either around your neck or hooked between your aid and your ear. They plug into the phone and come with a microphone that you can keep away from your hearing aid to avoid interference.

Find out about mobile phones' accessibility features

The Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI) is a project designed to help you learn more about the accessibility features of mobile phones, helping you identify the phone that best suits your needs. Go to mobileaccessibility.info.

Texting

What we usually call 'texting' started out as the Short Message Service (SMS) a popular and easy way to communicate between mobile phones (and now, some home phones too, [see page 11](#)).

Sending a text is easy, using your mobile's keypad. Charges vary but you might get some texts included with your subscription – check with your provider.

It's worth remembering that texting isn't always a real-time conversation – while you can probably set your phone to let you know your message has been delivered, you can't be sure it's been read.

However, some new smartphones can show you that a message has been read and can even show you when the other person is typing a reply.



Emergency SMS

If you've a mobile phone and can't use the voice 999 service, you can contact the emergency services by sending a text message to 999. You need to register your mobile phone before you can use the service.

For more information, go to emergencysms.org.uk.

More information – mobile phones

Action on Hearing Loss can supply a range of fact sheets, including one on mobile phones, and has an information line that gives free advice and information for anyone with hearing loss. For more information, go to actiononhearingloss.org.uk.

Communicating on the internet

The internet has changed our lives. And it's changed the way you can stay in touch if you're deaf or hard of hearing.

Getting online

BT Broadband offers a choice of packages to get you online, all with security protection, unlimited free BT Wi-fi, online storage and lots of free help if you need it. Find out more at bt.com/broadband.



Email

You get a choice of email addresses as part of your internet service and you can send email whenever you're online. It's as easy as typing a letter, with the added benefit that you can include documents, pictures and other files with the message.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging (IM) is real-time text-based communication between two or more people who are online at the same time. Once you know someone's IM address, you type messages in a special window on your computer screen and hit return or send – the message instantly goes to the recipient, who can read it and reply in the same way.

You can choose from various IM services, including Skype, Yahoo! and Google Talk. You can communicate by text, voice (see VoIP below) and even video using a webcam. Not all IM services work with each other, but you can have several on one computer.

Some organisations and businesses now offer IM as a way to 'chat' with them for support or information on a product. For example, BT offers 'Live chat' on the help pages at bt.com/includingyou.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

With VoIP, you can hold voice conversations over the internet using your computer. Or you might be able to connect a VoIP-enabled phone directly to a broadband modem/router. Either way, it's an easy way of having a virtual second phone and a separate phone number.

Check with your ISP to see if you can use a VoIP phone as a dedicated textphone.

Webcams

A webcam is a small video camera connected to your computer. Or you might have an integral webcam in your monitor, laptop or tablet. A webcam allows the person you're communicating with to see you as you chat online and, if they have a webcam, you can see them too. Webcams are popular in the deaf community for signing over broadband using British Sign Language (BSL) or lipreading.

You might find it useful to try one of the online sign language interpreting services, where a member of staff translates your conversation to a third party, such as staff at local authority offices. You can see an example of this at signvideo.co.uk.

SignVideo Interpreting Service

If you use BSL, you can use the SignVideo Interpreting Service to contact a BT advisor for help with BT's products or services. It's free and you can use the service on weekdays from 8am to 6pm. For more details, go to bt.com/bsl.



Social networking

Social networking is a way for you to share your interests, ideas and what you get up to, with friends and family. You can also contact some organisations, including BT, on social network sites such as Twitter and Facebook.



Twitter

If you use Twitter, you can contact us via [@BTCare](https://twitter.com/BTCare) and we'll tweet you back with help or suggestions. A lot of people find this a quick and easy way to contact us for help.



Facebook

We're also on Facebook at facebook.com/BTUK.

Further contacts

Action on Hearing Loss (the new name for RNID)

actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Deafness Research UK

deafnessresearch.org.uk

Hearing LINK

hearinglink.org

SENSE

sense.org.uk

The National Deaf Children's Society

ndcs.org.uk

Organisations wanting to improve their communication with hearing impaired customers who prefer to make contact by text, can also find useful information at textrelay.org.



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