

---

## Communication and speech support

---

### Summary

- The National Relay Service (NRS) is a 24-hour Australia-wide phone service that helps people who are deaf, are hard of hearing or have a speech impairment to use the phone.
  - Professional interpreters and notetakers are widely available for deaf and deafblind people who need help with communication.
  - There are a number of personal assistive technology devices available to help people with hearing impairment, low vision and other communication impairments. These include communication boards, computer tablets and devices that speak for you.
- 

There are many disability supports available for people with a sight, hearing, speech or other communication difficulty. These include personal assistive technology devices (such as communication boards and computer tablets), interpreters and phone services such as the National Relay Service.

### National Relay Service

The National Relay Service (NRS) is a 24-hour Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf, are hard of hearing or have a speech impediment. It is also available to anyone who wants to call a person with a hearing impairment or speech impediment. The service keeps the content of all calls and the identity of callers confidential.

The NRS transmits messages via:

- internet relay
- captioned relay
- SMS relay
- video relay
- Type and Read
- Speak and Read
- Type and Listen.

When you speak to an NRS user who is deaf or hearing impaired, your words will be typed by the relay officer.

The NRS relays your calls at no extra cost beyond the cost of connecting to the service.

- For teletypewriter (TTY) or voice calls, call **133 677**.
- For Speak & Listen, call **1300 555 727**.
- For SMS relay, text 0423 677 767.

### Teletypewriter TTY

A TTY (teletypewriter) is a special type of phone with a keyboard where you can type your side of the message. It also has a small display screen where you can read what the other person has said to you.

A TTY is the most common relay service for the deaf and used by NRS users.

### Interpreters and notetakers

Professional interpreters and notetakers are widely available for deaf and deafblind people who need extra help with communication.

A number of deaf and interpreting organisations can provide Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreters either in person or remotely via videoconferencing technology (where the person appears on a screen).

---

Notetakers can keep a written record of what is said on behalf of deaf people and can be critical in situations where notes are expected to be taken, such as a university lecture. If a deaf person is watching an interpreter signing to them, it is impossible to take good notes at the same time.

Situations where interpreters and notetakers are useful include:

- conferences
- education (university courses, parent–teacher interviews)
- job interviews
- legal situations including at court
- medical appointments
- public events
- seminars
- staff meetings
- theatre and the arts
- vocational training.

To make sure the interpreter will act professionally on your behalf, check to see if they are registered with the **National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters** (NAATI).

### **Personal assistive devices**

There are a range of personal assistive devices on the market to help people with hearing impairment, low vision and other communication impairments.

#### **Hearing**

Devices for deaf or hearing-impaired people include:

- listening/hearing devices – including loop systems
- modified phones – including TTY
- voice amplifiers.

#### **Low vision**

Devices for blind or visually impaired people include:

- alerting devices – systems that sound an audible alarm or vibrate to alert a person with low vision to events in and around their home
- book alternatives (for example, large print, braille, audio books, ebook readers)
- large and other specialty keyboards
- large print equipment such as calculators
- light and colour detectors and readers – help people to detect objects around them or measure the presence and intensity of light
- talking colour detectors – hand-held devices that detect and announce the colour of a surface it is pointed to.

#### **Communication aids**

Other assistive technology devices for people with other communication difficulties include:

- communication software and apps
- speech-generating devices
- communication boards and similar devices
- voice amplifiers.

#### **Auslan Tutor**

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) Auslan Tutor is a portable video-based Auslan teaching

resource developed specifically for mobile devices. It is available for download on iPhone, iPad and iPod touch on the App Store, and Android devices on Google Play.

### Where to get help

- National Relay Service (TTY/voice calls), call **133 677**
- Scope Victoria, call **1300 4 SCOPE** (72673)
- Vision Australia, call **1300 84 74 66**
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

**Copyright © 1999/2020** State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.