



Self Help for Hard of Hearing People



The official website for Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (Australia) Inc

1334 Pacific Highway, Turrumurra, NSW 2074
Phone (02) 9144 7586 (Voice and TTY) Fax (02) 9144 3936
Email: shhh@netspace.net.au Website: www.shhhaust.org

Information Sheets

SHHH's Information Sheets are provided as a service to members and those in the community at large who have an interest in hearing impairment. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, SHHH accepts no responsibility for any adverse consequences arising from the contents of these sheets.

If you wish to reproduce these Information Sheets you may do so for personal use only, and only if the entire document is copied. No partial copying or editing of them is permitted. Should you have any questions about them, please contact SHHH.

© SHHH Australia Inc.

Information Sheet Number 5

TELEPHONE TACTICS

Most people with hearing impairment – including those with profound hearing loss – are able to communicate by phone. A range of assistive listening devices can be used with or without hearing aids to improve your ability to hear both the phone ringing and the incoming voice. Accommodation can be made for phones used on the job as well as in the home.

IF YOU DO NOT WEAR HEARING AIDS:

Volume control phones can be obtained from various suppliers to allow you to amplify the incoming voice.

A small pocket-sized portable telephone amplifier or coupler which attaches to the phone earpiece by means of an elastic strap can also be used. There are a number of brands, all battery-operated.

If these do not give enough amplification for you to understand incoming calls, you should consider having a full hearing assessment – you may need to wear a hearing aid.

IF YOU WEAR HEARING AIDS WHICH DO NOT HAVE A TELECOIL (OR T-SWITCH):

When using the phone while using a behind-the-ear hearing aid, the earpiece of the phone should be held high so as to be close to the microphone of the hearing aid – usually near the top of the aid. If the signal is still not loud enough, a phone fitted with a volume control can also be used. Again the earpiece of the phone should be held close to the microphone of the aid.

Where an in-the-ear aid or in-the-canal aid is worn, any attempt to use the phone with the aid in position may produce whistling (feedback). A small pad of foam, about 8mm thick, placed between the earpiece and the ear may reduce feedback. Alternatively, hold the phone away from the hearing aid.

IF YOU WEAR HEARING AIDS WITH A TELECOIL (T-SWITCH):

When the telecoil is activated (or the aid is switched to the T position in older models) the aid then responds only to electro-magnetic signals through an induction coil. Because the microphone is not operating, background noise is not picked up. Most Telstra phones for home use – and most public phones – now have an inbuilt induction coil. Other phones may not have inbuilt induction coils.

Using phones with an induction coil should enable you to hear a clear incoming signal by activating your telecoil. You may find that you also need to increase the hearing aid volume. The earpiece of the phone should be moved about to find the position giving the best signal – usually when held near the top and slightly behind the aid. Because not all telephones from other manufacturers have an inbuilt induction coil you should enquire before making a purchase. When buying a cordless phone, ask for one with a coil or hearing aid compatible. Many hearing impaired people find it harder to hear over a cordless phone.

For more volume, a volume control phone and/or portable telephone coupler can also be used.

IF YOU ARE PROFOUNDLY HEARING IMPAIRED:

A TTY (Telephone Typewriter) used in a standard phone socket will provide access to other subscribers with similar equipment. A limited number of TTYs for use with public telephones have been installed by Telstra. A call to Freecall 1800 068 424 (voice) or 1800 808 129 (TTY) will give you their location, as will their website:

<http://www.telstra.com.au/disability>

Consider also a fax machine or a computer with a modem.

The Federal Government supports the National Relay Service run by the Australian Communications Exchange to connect people using a TTY to other people using an ordinary voice phone. Contact TTY/Voice 133 677 or Speak and Listen 1300 555 727. Internet relay calls can be made by going to www.relayservice.com.au.

EQUIPMENT PROVIDERS

Telstra – you must be a Telstra customer to be eligible to receive special assistive telephone and communication equipment and alerting devices under normal Telstra services to residential users. Contact the free Telstra Disability Equipment Hotline on 1800 068 424 (voice) or 1800 808 981 (TTY) to discuss eligibility, or visit their website for information: <http://www.telstra.com.au/disability>. Certification of impairment will be required only with the equipment for Cochlear implants and TTY. Maintenance of such equipment is available under this program.

Some of the special Telstra devices which may help and about which you should enquire are:

- **Extension Ringers** which provide variable volume, tone (pitch) and rate of ring. You can select the tone which you hear most easily and maximum volume should be loud enough for most users.
- **Visual Signals** connect to the phone socket and to a 240 volt outlet. A lamp can be plugged into the unit and the flashing light indicates that the phone is ringing. Each of these devices is supplied with a plug for connection to the phone socket. A telephone double adaptor is required so that the phone and alerting device can be used with the one socket. This can be done by the householder and no special installation is required.
- **Assistance with TTY, fax and computer modem equipment** may also be available.

There are many other phone suppliers and services currently selling phones which may or may not be suitable for hearing impaired users. It is essential that you identify your needs before purchase – inbuilt induction coil, volume control, ringer volume control. If possible, try the phone in your own home before buying. These suppliers may also have accessories available such as Extension Ringers, Visual Signals – ask before you purchase.

Digital mobile phones may cause interference with hearing aids. Some manufacturers provide a compatible hands-free accessory to enable the phone to be placed at least a metre away from the hearing aid to reduce this interference. Unfortunately many retailers do not understand the special needs of hearing impaired customers. Make sure you tell the

retailer that you do wear a hearing aid and insist on trying out any model you are considering before completing the purchase. Always ask whether the phone you are interested in can be used with a telecoil (T switch). The 3-G alternative digital phones are considered to cause less interference than GSM digital phones and may be worth considering. Bluetooth technology can also help if your hearing aid is fitted with this technology.

Mobile phone technology is changing all the time. It is worth contacting the SHHH office for the latest details.

SOME GENERAL PHONE TIPS:

- When using the phone, tell the caller that you have a hearing problem and ask them to speak more slowly. This will reduce stress for you.
- When only a part of a sentence has been understood, it is helpful to the caller if you repeat the part you heard and then ask for clarification.
- Always confirm important points such as meeting places and times by repeating the arrangements as you have understood them. The caller can then confirm or correct.

(Revision 3)