

What is Aphasia?

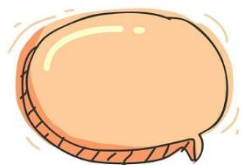
Aphasia is language difficulty after brain injury. This can be from:

- **stroke**
- **brain injury**
- **tumour**
- **infection in the brain**
- **Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) – a type of dementia**

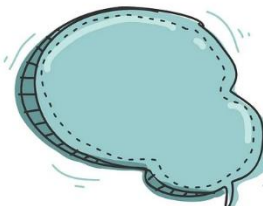
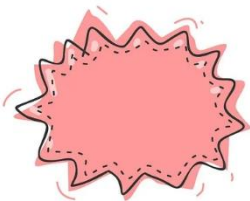


Aphasia usually happens after damage to the left side of the brain.

Aphasia can affect many aspects of communication including:



- **speaking**
- **finding words**
- putting words into **sentences**
- **understanding** what others say
- **reading** and **understanding written information**
- **writing** and **spelling**
- **gesturing**
- using **numbers**



Aphasia affects people differently:

- Aphasia can vary in **severity** (from **mild** to **very severe**)
- Aphasia can vary in **type** (**receptive** or **expressive**, **fluent** or **non-fluent**)

Aphasia makes communication **very difficult**.

- This can be **very frustrating** for people with aphasia, and for their **family and friends**.
- Aphasia affects **relationships, jobs** and **hobbies**.
- However, **aphasia does not affect intelligence**.
- People with aphasia often **know what they want to say** but **have difficulty getting messages in and out**.

Aphasia can **improve** over time. **Speech therapy** can help. It is also great to **meet other people with aphasia** with similar experiences.

It is important that other people **know how to communicate** with a **person with aphasia**.

The next leaflets will provide **tips to help people communicate with a person with aphasia**.

Tips for Communicating with a Person with Aphasia



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These leaflets are **not** about helping a person with aphasia talk perfectly – they are about **helping them to communicate successfully**.

These tips can help a person with aphasia to:

- **get their message across**
- **understand what you say**
- **understand written information**

Aphasia is **different for everyone**. Different tips work better for different people. This may depend on the **type and severity of aphasia**, and on **personal preference**. A speech pathologist can help to advise which tips might be most useful for you.

General Communication Tips

- People with aphasia often find it easier to speak **one on one**. They may find it **hard** to participate in a **busy group conversation**.
Don't all talk at once in a group situation!

- Find a **quiet place to talk**.

- Always **give a person with aphasia time to:**

- **process what you say**
- **formulate their reply**



- Be aware that people with aphasia may:
 - Say a word **they don't mean to say**. This could be the **wrong** word, a **made-up** word, or a **swear** word.
 - Get **stuck** on a word and say it over and over.
 - Say **'yes'** when they mean **'no'**, or vice versa.
- Be **patient!** Don't judge a person for saying the wrong word.
- Always **double check** that you have **understood correctly**.

The next leaflet will provide **more specific tips** about helping a person with aphasia to **get their message across**.

Helping a Person with Aphasia Get Their Message Across





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- **Always acknowledge that they are a competent person**
 - **Acknowledge** that they **know what they want to say** but can't say it (e.g., "I know you know what it is").
-
- **Be patient!** Give the person **time to talk and respond**.
 - **Ask clarifying questions** that can be answered with **yes or no** (e.g. *Are you talking about someone in your family?*).
 - **Give two (2) choices**, e.g. *Do you want an apple or an orange?*
Show each option and let the person choose the one they want.
 - **Accept all communication attempts.**
 - Pay attention to their **facial expressions, body language and tone.**
 - **Do not finish the person's statement** for them.

- Encourage them to support their talking with **other forms of communication** such as:

- **writing, typing or texting**

- **using gestures** (e.g. thumbs up , thumbs down , actions like bringing hand to mouth for 'eating')

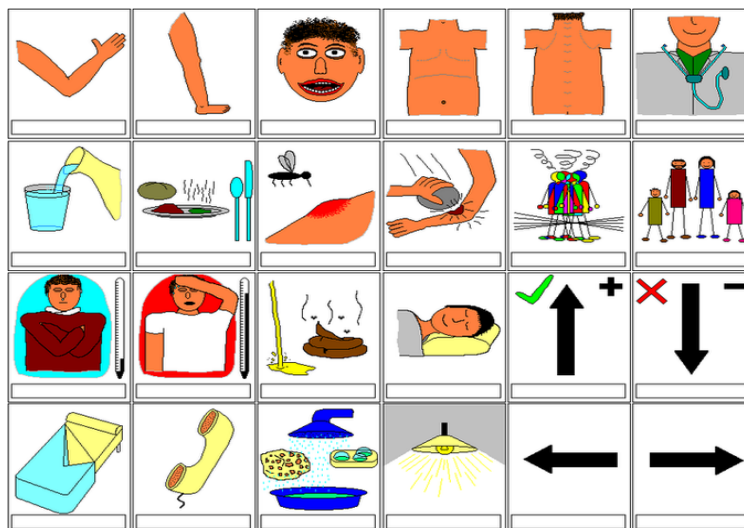
- **pointing to photos and objects**

- **drawing**

- **emojis**     

- physical objects like **calendars, maps and newspapers**

- **communication books or charts**

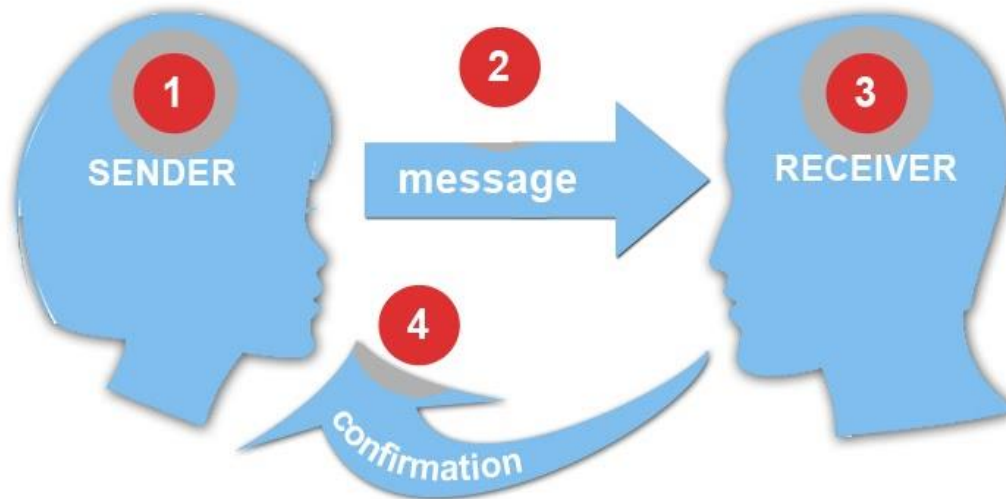


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- **Repeat back** what you heard, to make sure you've understood.

The next leaflet will provide **specific tips** about helping a person with aphasia to **understand what you say**.

Helping a Person with Aphasia to Understand What You Say



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- **Always** speak to the person with aphasia **as an adult**:
 - **Speak naturally** – just a little **slower than usual**.
 - Keep your voice at a **normal volume** (no need to yell!)
- **Reduce background noise** (turn off the TV or radio).
- **Gain the person's attention** before speaking and **give them your full attention**.
- Make sure the person **can see your face and lips**.
- Speak in **short, clear sentences** using **simple words**.

Support your talking with **other types of communication**.

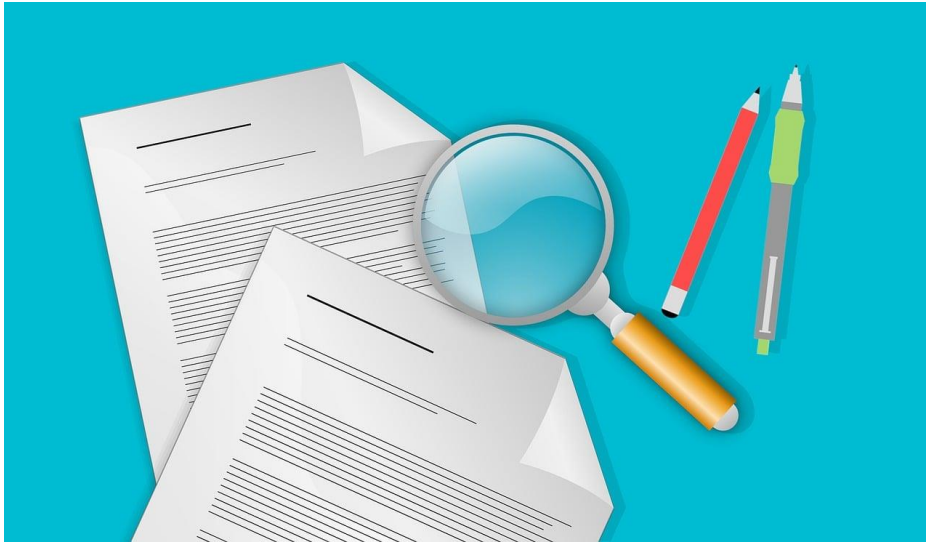
For example:

- **Write down key words.**
- **Draw simple pictures or icons**
- **Point** to relevant **objects, people or locations**
- **Use gestures** that show what you're saying (e.g. hand beside head to indicate 'phone')
- Use aids such as **communication boards or books**
- Use relevant items **such as calendars** (to explain upcoming events), **maps** (to explain where someone is from, or where you are going), **or newspapers** (to discuss recent events)

- Be as **specific** as possible.
- **Let the person know** when you are **changing the topic**, and stick to **one topic at a time**.
- **Repeat what you have said** when necessary.

The next leaflet will provide **specific tips** about helping a person with aphasia to **understand written information**.

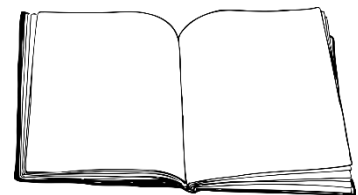
Helping a Person with Aphasia to Understand Written Information



Reading is a great source of **pleasure**, but **it is difficult** for many **people with aphasia**.

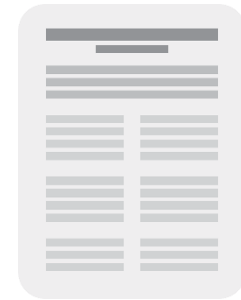
For texts that are already published, people with aphasia may find it helpful to:

- **Highlight, circle or underline key words.**
- Purchase **large-font editions** of books.
- **Enlarge the font size** on their phone or tablet.
- **Enable slowed rate text-to-speech** on their phone or tablet.
- Try **listening to audiobooks**.



For texts that you are preparing yourself:

- Use a **sans serif** font (fonts without the small lines at the tops and bottoms of the letters) such as **Arial** or **Calibri**.
- Use at least **size 14 font**.
- Make sure you have a **clear message**.
- Make your sentences **short and simple**.
- Make sure you have only **one point per sentence**.
- Use **everyday words**.
- **Check the reading level** of your text. You can use **Flesch-Kincaid** in Microsoft Word. Aim for a **level of 6 or below**.
- Ensure there is lots of **white space** around your message. Use **1.5 or 2.0 line spacing**.
- Use **bullet points**.
- Support the words with a **picture**
- Separate sections or important information using a **box**



This is the **final leaflet** in our Aphasia Awareness Month Communication Tips series. Please **share all 5 leaflets** with your friends, family and community!