

# APHASIA CAMP: HOW TO GUIDE

This guideline was developed to help the growth of aphasia camps in Australia. It provides an overview of the process for preparing and running an aphasia camp. This guideline can be used by anyone interested in starting or improving an aphasia camp.



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This guide is based on facilitator experience and an international survey of practice (Heggie et al., 2024).

The contents of this guide and associated resources may be reproduced and amended for camp education and/or facilitation with acknowledgement of the AAA.

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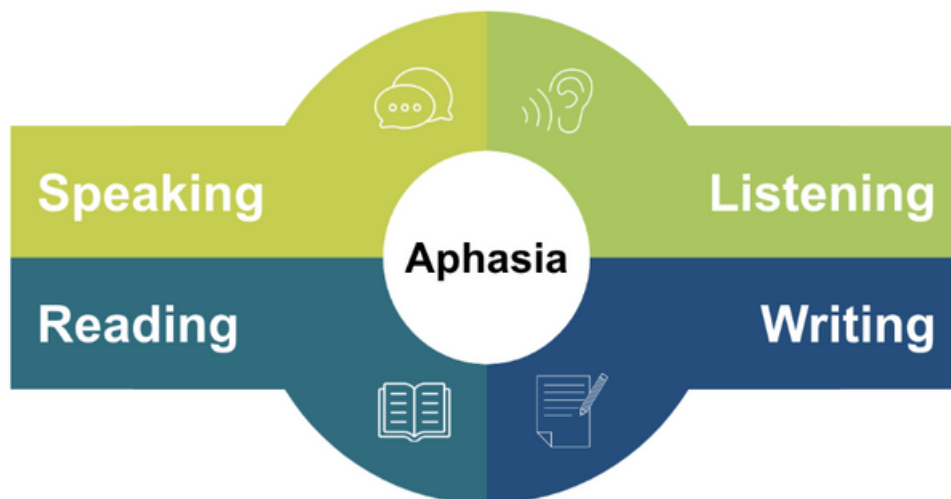
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# BACKGROUND

Aphasia is a communication disorder, most often a result of stroke or brain injury (Berg et al., 2020). The impact of aphasia is highly variable, and can affect some or all forms of expressive and receptive language (i.e., verbal and written) (Berg et al., 2020; Flowers et al., 2016).

Aphasia can affect the quality of life of both people with aphasia and their loved ones (Berg et al., 2020; Code & Herrmann, 2003; WHO, 2001). It can impact psychological wellbeing due to difficulties building relationships and connecting with others (Code & Herrmann, 2003; Hilari, 2011; Laures-Gore et al., 2020).



## APHASIA CAMPS

Aphasia camps focus on enhancing quality of life and psychological wellbeing for people with aphasia and their loved ones. The camps provide opportunities to communicate, socialise and participate in meaningful recreational activities in a supported, naturalistic environment (Chapey et al., 2000; Fox et al., 2004; Hoepner et al., 2018; Kagan et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017; WHO, 2001; Worrall et al., 2010).

# THE EVIDENCE



Aphasia camps align with the Life Participation Approach to Aphasia (LPAA) (Chapey et al., 2000). The approach focuses on functional goals to achieve meaningful and real-life outcomes (Fox et al., 2004; Hoepner et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017; Worrall et al., 2010).

Early studies have established the benefits of aphasia camps for attendees: positive impacts on quality of life, participation, and overall wellbeing (Fox et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2017). Aphasia camps provide opportunities for allied health students to volunteer and participate in meaningful learning experiences (Hoepner et al., 2021; Kim & Garcia, 2019; King et al., 2020). More camps are needed to achieve better outcomes for more people with aphasia and their loved ones (Fox et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018).



# OBJECTIVES OF APHASIA CAMPS

Aphasia camps provide a supported environment where people with aphasia and their carers can:

- Re-engage in and/or explore new recreational and social activities
- Connect with, learn from, and share with other people with aphasia and their carers
- Socialise and communicate with others
- Practise communication skills and strategies with others
- Provide and trial resources for living successfully with aphasia that can be used in everyday life
- Improve wellbeing and gain confidence
- Promote health and wellness
- Provide respite and support for carers
- Provide motivation for changes to continue to occur after camp



# 'TYPICAL' APHASIA CAMP

- Facilitated by allied health professionals and community members. Student volunteers also support the running of the camp.
- Run over three days and two nights; however, some may run as a day program or over a longer period of time.
- Include more than 20 people with aphasia.
- People with aphasia are aged from 9 to 98; however, most are between 60 to 69.
- They have been living with aphasia for more than six years.
- People with aphasia bring a support person, which is commonly their spouse or partner.
- Accommodation includes shared cabins, dorm-style rooms, or hotel/motel rooms.
- Supported by universities and relevant associations.



Although aphasia 'camps' may look very different, they all foster an environment of comradery and connection.

See the aphasia camp checklist to help you develop your own!

# PREPARATION

It is best to start planning early. It can take between four and 12 months to organise a camp. This is often due to the time taken to schedule a variety of camp offerings. Preparations predominantly relate to the venue, activities and participants.



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# FUNDING

Camps can be supported by a variety of funding sources, however, are most commonly funded by ticket fees. On average camps cost approximately \$195 per person.

Forms of funding include:

- Community grants
- Fundraising
- University/association grants
- Health clinics
- Sponsorships
- Ticket fees



The cost to attend a camp will depend on the funding methods, cost of activities and the items included in the cost.

The cost may include:

- Dinner/independent meals
- Accommodation
- Certain activities (e.g., excursions)
- Transport

# FINDING THE RIGHT VENUE

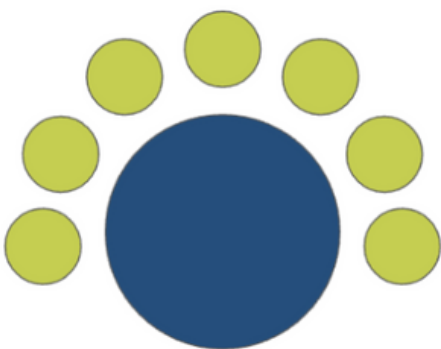


Things to consider:

- Cost – A large portion of your budget will go to the venue (unless it can be obtained through other means such as associated universities/associations or via donated space).
- Location – A central location that can be easily accessed by public transport or has accessible parking facilities.
- Number of rooms or outdoor spaces – If conducting concurrent activities this may be a requirement to ensure the group can separate.
- Catering – It may be an easier option if catering is provided by the venue rather than organising an external caterer (an external caterer, however, may be more cost-effective).

## ACCESSIBILITY

Semi-Circle



- Ensure wheelchair access, comfortable seating, and audiovisual support (if required).
- Education of venue staff to promote aphasia awareness and the use of communication support strategies.
- Clear signage to support orientation and to direct attendees to the relevant areas.
- Set-up/orientation of the room to facilitate communication and participation (e.g., semi-circle versus boardroom seating).

# ADVERTISING

Consider using:

- Word of mouth
- Social media
- Online (e.g., websites, community pages)
- Emails (e.g., to past attendees, clinics)
- Paper-based flyers and pamphlets
- Universities, associations, health services
- Local news outlets (e.g., TV, newspapers, radio)



See the camp brochure and tips on writing aphasia friendly information

## REGISTRATION

Registering usually occurs during ticket 'purchase', or shortly after. It is important to gather basic information (e.g., dietary or accessibility requirements) prior to the camp to ensure any necessary arrangements can be made. Consider the need for liability waivers and media release forms.



## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Communication (e.g., communication boards/iPads, access to paper and pens, information presented in accessible format)
- Mobility (e.g., handrails, chair/seat supports)
- Mental health/well-being supports (e.g., safe spaces)
- Medical (e.g., basic medical supplies, emergency procedures)
- Food modifications (e.g., for dysphagia, allergies)
- Transport (e.g., coach if going off site)
- Activity-specific adaptations and environmental modifications

# STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Volunteers can be critical in providing communication support to the attendees and ensuring the smooth running of activities and camp logistics. Training will need to be modified for the recipient (e.g., session facilitators, student volunteers, accomodation staff).

See camp basic tips for communicating

The type of education and training provided to volunteers will vary depending on their previous experience working with people with aphasia. The Introduction to SCA™ eLearning Module (Kagan et al., 2025) is a free online training that can be accessed via the Aphasia Institute website ([Self-Directed eLearning Options – Aphasia Institute](#)).



Initial orientation/training may provide an introduction to aphasia, an overview of communication support strategies and their role/expected contribution to the camp. This session can be completed online or face to face and may be delivered by camp facilitators, people with aphasia or family/carers. The camp can also raise emotive topics for attendees. It may also be beneficial to discuss the best ways to navigate these situations.

# ACTIVITIES



Example schedule:

Time	Activity
7:00am-8:00am	Tea/coffee and/or volunteer meeting
8:00am-9:30am	Breakfast
9:30am-12:00pm	Morning activities: 1-2 sessions (with breaks), single stream or selection from multiple activities
12:00pm-1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm-5:00pm	Afternoon activities: 1-3 sessions (with breaks), single stream or selection from multiple activities
5:00pm-7:00pm	Dinner
7:00pm onwards	Free time or scheduled activity/campfire

In Australia, aphasia camps typically include recreational activities, presentations and/or workshop-based sessions. However, in the USA and Canada, the schedules often focus more on recreational activities such as archery, games, painting and yoga.



# TIPS FOR ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULING

Example activities:

<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yoga/tai chi</li><li>• Stretching</li><li>• Walks/hikes</li><li>• Swimming</li><li>• Water activities</li><li>• Golf</li><li>• Fishing</li><li>• Field games (e.g., frisbee golf, lawn bowls)</li><li>• Adapted activities (e.g., archery, canoeing, bike riding)</li></ul>	<p><b>Education and Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group discussions</li><li>• Support sessions</li><li>• Communication sessions</li><li>• Presentations</li><li>• Guest speakers</li><li>• Team building</li><li>• Storytelling</li><li>• Information and resources</li><li>• Spreading awareness</li></ul> <p>Sessions can be done together as a larger group, or split up people with aphasia and loved ones into separate groups</p>
<p><b>Recreation and Hobbies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arts and crafts (e.g., painting, drawing, writing)</li><li>• Games (e.g., bingo, scavenger hunts, board games)</li><li>• Music (e.g., drum circles, singing)</li><li>• Excursions/tours</li><li>• Technology (e.g., iPads, apps, movies, games, social media)</li><li>• Special interest (e.g., gardening, baking, cooking, photography, woodwork)</li></ul>	<p><b>Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mindfulness</li><li>• Relaxation</li><li>• Meditation</li><li>• Stress management</li><li>• Pampering (e.g., manicures, pedicures)</li><li>• Massage therapy</li><li>• Animal assisted therapy</li><li>• Counselling</li><li>• Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)</li><li>• Music therapy</li></ul>

Key tips:

1. Provide enough breaks between sessions
2. Provide name tags to allow for easy interactions
3. Provide 'aphasia-friendly' schedules for attendees
4. Not all sessions need to be highly structured
5. Ask people with aphasia and their family/carers what they want- gain feedback and include them in preparations
6. Be flexible with scheduling – consider 'soft' starts/finishes
7. Establish a time for facilitators to informally meet and de-brief
8. Information (both verbal and written) should always be presented in an 'aphasia-friendly' format

# WELCOME SESSION

The welcome session gives attendees a chance to interact with each other, understand the logistics of the schedule and align their expectations of attendance and participation.



Key tips:

- Distribute name tags and complete forms
- Discuss expectations and establish a 'safe space' to share and connect
- Provide logistics (e.g., evacuation procedures and facilities)
- Review the schedule and conduct 'ice-breaker' activity
- Volunteers can identify the best ways to support their partner with aphasia
- Discuss the goals/what attendees want to achieve during the camp (e.g., I want to learn more about..., I'm excited about...)

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# WRAP UP SESSION

The wrap-up session is a vital part of the aphasia camp experience and provides attendees with a summary and lasting impressions of their time at the camp.



Key tips:

- Opportunity to take a group photo or share contact details (this may include establishing a group on social media)
- Attendees can reflect and/or present on their experience and what they achieved
- Gain feedback on the camp (e.g., what did you like? what should we change or add?)- this can also be collected via email/phone if running out of time

# RESOURCES

It is beneficial to provide the attendees with information on where to get further support after the camp. This may include organisations, community groups and social supports.

The Australian Aphasia Association is a good place to start, and more information can be found on the website: <https://aphasia.org.au/>

The following resources have been mentioned above, and you can find them on the Australian Aphasia Association website: <https://aphasia.org.au/what-we-offer/aaa-camps/>

- Aphasia Camp Checklist
- Example Registration Form
- Tips on Writing Aphasia Friendly Information
- Basic Tips for Communicating
- Example Aphasia Friendly Schedule
- Example Feedback Form
- Aphasia Camp Brochure

## FINAL TIPS FROM CAMP FACILITATORS...

### Just do it!

Start out small, do what you love, and just get involved

### Preparation is key

Start preparing early, think about resources, and act on feedback

### Have a good team

Get lots of people involved, and create a passionate team

### Make it meaningful

Choose meaningful activities, new experiences, and make it fun

### Focus on connection

Allow everyone to connect freely, and make sure activities all focus on this

### Reach out

Talk to others for ideas, do research, and start obtaining funding

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