

Assistive Devices for the Telephone

KEY POINTS

- Telephone assistive devices help you hear better when you are on the phone.
 - There are several kinds of devices that can let you increase the volume, amplify the sound, have the sound go into your hearing aid, or use typed messages.
 - If you need help to hear on the phone, make sure to use a phone that is specifically made to work with assistive devices.
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What are telephone assistive devices?

Telephone assistive devices help you hear telephone conversations better. You may need one if you have problems with your hearing. It can keep you from missing information when you use the phone.

What kinds of devices are available?

There are many kinds of telephone assistive devices.

- Controls on the telephone. Most telephones have volume and tone controls. Adjusting the volume can make the person who is speaking to you sound louder. Adjusting the tone may make the conversation clearer. You can get phones with an extra loud ring or lights that flash when the phone rings.
- Telephone amplifiers. You can get small snap-on telephone amplifiers to put over the earpiece of the phone. Some amplifiers plug into the base unit of your phone. You can also get Bluetooth amplifiers that you wear on a necklace.
- Hearing aids that have a built-in telephone coil. A telephone coil is a small coil of wire in most hearing aids. The wire is activated by a switch. It lets the hearing aid pick up a phone signal directly. The coil also prevents feedback and cuts out background noise when you make a phone call. Telephones that are designed to work with a hearing-aid telephone coil are called hearing aid compatible (HAC).
- Hands-free attachments for cell phones. Some cell phones can cause static or feedback when used with hearing aids. Look for a label on your cell phone that says it is hearing aid compatible (HAC). You can get hands-free attachments. You can also get cell phones that have a TTY option.
- TTY. A TTY (or TDD) is a portable device that lets you type your part of a phone conversation. The device connects to the phone with a cable using the phone's audio jack. Someone who also has a TTY can read what you type and type a reply. If someone calls you who does not have a TTY device, they can speak to a telephone relay service (TRS), which sends the information to your device. Your typed response is then read back to the caller. To use TRS, dial 711.

- Text display phones. You can get a telephone that displays every word the caller says on a screen as well as letting you listen to them.
- Visual telephone. This uses your personal computer to let you see someone when you speak to them. Two types of applications include conventional electronic mail or real-time two-way communication.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact:

- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)
800-241-1044 (voice) or 800-241-1055 (TTY)
<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>
- The National Association of the Deaf
1-301-587-1788 (voice) or 1-301-587-1789 (TTY)
<https://www.nad.org/>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
800-638-8255 (voice) or 301-296-5650 (TTY)
<https://www.asha.org/>

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