



## Home Phone Solutions

People find it difficult to use home phones for many reasons. However, there are many phones and accessories that can make using the phone easier. To find the right phone or accessory, firstly work out what is making it difficult to use a standard phone.

### Disability Equipment Programs

Telstra and Optus have programs that enable you to rent some equipment for the same price as a standard rental phone. Items on the programs include; louder telephones with big buttons, cordless phones, and Teletypewriters (TTYs).

### Difficulty Hearing the Phone Ring

- Some phones have **louder ringers**. See the table at the end of this fact sheet for details of phones that have louder ringers.
- **Extension ringers** increase the volume and/or change the pitch of the phone ring. They plug into the phone line using a double adapter. The Telstra extension ringer is available through the Telstra Disability Equipment Program. Some extension ringers also have an inbuilt flashing light.
- **Visual indicators** flash when the phone rings. Some phones have them built in. You can also buy them separately. The Visual Signal Alert makes a lamp flash when the phone rings. It is available through the Telstra Disability Equipment Program.
- **Vibrating alarms** shake when the phone rings. You can put them in your pocket. The Bellman Visit Alarm System has a pager that vibrates when the phone rings. You can also program it to vibrate for the doorbell, a baby cry or smoke alarm. The system can incorporate a strobe light and vibrating bed-shaker alarm.
- If you still miss the phone ringing, consider an **answering machine** or **message bank** service. Message bank is a phone service similar to an answering machine. A person can leave messages for you which are stored in the telephone exchange.



## Difficulty Hearing a Phone Conversation

- **Increase the incoming voice volume.** Some phones have an extra loud incoming voice volume. See our phone matrix handout for more details.
- **External amplifiers** strap to the ear piece and increase the incoming voice volume. They are portable and therefore can be used on payphones.
- A **hearing aid coupler** limits the amount of interference that a person using a hearing aid may experience. You must have a T-Coil hearing aid. Hearing aid couplers are built into many modern home phones.
- A **cochlear implant telephone adapter** plugs into the speech processor component of the person's hearing aid. These are available through the Telstra Disability Equipment Program.
- A **teletypewriter** enables you to read the conversation. Please see the section on Teletypewriters and National Relay Service for more information.

## Difficulty getting to the Phone when it Rings

- **Cordless telephones** can be carried in a pocket, on a kitchen trolley or a wheeled walker.
- **Answering machines** and **Message bank**.
- **Call Return (Dial \*10#)** will then tell you the last missed call (charges apply).
- **Caller ID display** shows you the number of the last missed call. To use this feature, you need a compatible phone and you need to subscribe to this service with your telephone company (charges apply).
- Some phones have a **pendant** that you can use to answer a call. Some can also be used as a personal alarm call system (ask for our Personal Alarm Call Systems handout for more details).
- **Mobile Phones** are small and can be carried with you. They are also useful when you leave the house.



## Difficulty Holding the Handset

- The **Quad Phone Holder** is a U-shaped device that straps to the handset. It slips over the hand so that you don't need to grasp the handset.
- Using a phone with a **lightweight handset** can make it easier to hold the phone.
- Phones with **handsfree** mean that the user is not required to hold the handset. Many modern phones now have handsfree. Some cordless phones also have handsfree.
- **Headsets** are available for home phones including for cordless phones.

## Difficulty Dialling a Phone Number

- **Large numeral stickers** stuck onto an existing telephones can make numbers easier to see. Sticking **hook-and-loop tape** on certain keys can also help to identify the keys by touch.
- Some phones have a **talking keypad**. These speak the numbers as they are pressed. They also have a **talking caller ID** function. You need to subscribe to caller ID with your telephone provider.

- **Covering the keys** that are not needed helps with finding the right keys.
- **Larger buttons** on phones provide a bigger target to press. Keys with **big numerals in high contrast colours** makes it easier to see.
- A **one-touch dialling memory** allows commonly used or emergency numbers to be in the phone. The numbers are dialled with the touch of one button.
- **Speed dialling or two-touch dialling** is similar except a sequence of buttons is pressed to dial the stored numbers.
- **Abbreviated dialling** is a telephone exchange service similar to the speed dialling feature on phones. Using the telephone exchange memory, you can store a large number of phone numbers. This can be accessed with a one or two digit code (charges apply).
- **The automatic redial** feature on some phones means that you don't need to redial the same number. If the number you call is engaged, the phone automatically dials the same number until you hang up or the other phone answers. For people who do not have a phone with automatic redial, a similar service is offered by the telephone exchange (charges apply).
- Telstra **delayed hotline service** dials a number when the phone is off the hook for a short period of time (around four seconds). A pre-programmed number is automatically called. E.g. an emergency number, call connect (charges apply) or the National Relay Service, who can connect the user to another number. People who need the call connect feature, may be eligible for a Call Connect Service Fee exemption. For more information contact Telstra.
- **Switch adapted phones** enable a switch to be inserted into the phone. This can be used with Telstra's delayed hotline service to dial a number.



## Difficulty Speaking

- If a person's voice is quiet, there are phones with adjustable **outgoing voice volume control**, such as the Telstra Big Button Phone.
- **Three way chat feature or a conference call** allows another person to assist with the conversation.
- A **fax machine** to write messages to people.
- **Text messages** can be sent from a mobile or some home phones. Text messages are short typed messages. Some home phones can send and receive text messages. Text messages sent to a phone without this feature, are read out by a synthesised voice. You can also send text messages over the internet.
- **Teletypewriters (TTYs) and Modems** may also be helpful. See below for more details.
- The **National Relay Service** has several services that may assist such as the 'Speak and Listen' option and the 'Type and Read' option. See below for more details.

## Teletypewriters (TTY)

Teletypewriters (TTY) allow people who are deaf, blind or have a speech impairment to access a telephone service. A teletypewriter means that a message can be typed and sent via a telephone line. They also display an incoming message. Teletypewriters are available via the Telstra and Optus Disability Equipment Programs. There are also TTY pay phones available at some locations.



## Internet

You can use the internet to type to other people or make video calls. **Modems** are available through the Telstra Disability Equipment Program for eligible people. By using the National Relay Service (see below) you can also type to other people who use a standard phone.

## National Relay Service (NRS)

The NRS is an Australia-wide telephone access service provided for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. It is also available to anyone who wants to call a person using the Relay Service. The NRS is available at no additional charge. You can make calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The relay service operated as a medium between standard telephone and TTY users. Using a TTY the user can speak or type or type, and listen or read, depending on their requirements.

There is also a service if people have trouble understanding your speech over the phone. You speak directly to another person over the telephone. The relay officer can re-speak all or part of what you say that has not been understood by the receiver of the call.

For more information, see their website at [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au) or ask us for a brochure.

## Bill Options

Some phone companies have several billing options to assist people who have difficulty reading a standard bill. Options include big print bills, Braille bill, simplified bills and online bills. Online bills may enable someone with a screen reader program to read their bill.

## Priority Assistance

People who have a diagnosed life-threatening medical condition and whose life may be at risk without access to a fully-operational phone service may be eligible for priority assistance. For more information, contact Telstra.

## Contact ILC Tas for more information



Ring **1300 885 886** to speak to a health professional



Visit our website [www.iltas.asn.au](http://www.iltas.asn.au) or email us [ilc@iltas.asn.au](mailto:ilc@iltas.asn.au)



Make an appointment to visit our centre at 275 Wellington Street, South Launceston



Ring us to find out when we will be visiting your area

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