“I’m interested in anything that can help my older patients be more independent. The phone is such a lifeline.”

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A phone solution for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment

An Australian Government Initiative
Using the phone is important

If someone can’t hear clearly over the phone or has trouble being understood, it can be hard to do ordinary things like calling a friend, making a doctor’s appointment or booking a taxi. They may have to rely on others to make calls for them – losing privacy, independence and control over what is said. They may start to lose contact with friends and family, and feel isolated. It could be hard for them to get help in an emergency.

The National Relay Service provides a solution

Using specially trained staff called relay officers, the National Relay Service can help people with hearing or speech impairments to:

• have good phone conversations – with less misunderstanding and repetition
• get things done – making appointments and business calls
• keep in touch with family and friends
• contact a neighbour or emergency services if they need help.

The relay service also makes it easier for other people to keep in touch.

Training is free and it’s easy to learn. No more relying on friends or relatives to make calls!

“How a relay call works

Relay officers are the central link in the phone call, relaying exactly what is said or typed. They stay on the line throughout each call to help it go smoothly, but do not change or interfere with what each person says.

Seven good reasons to team up with the NRS

1. It’s easy to use – thousands of people use the service each week
2. Users can make calls to anyone, anytime, anywhere in Australia – including to mobile phones
3. Other people can still make contact – they just use their regular phone
4. The service itself comes at no extra cost – each relay call is about the cost of a local call
5. In most cases the cost of renting a TTY is about the same as an ordinary handset
6. All calls are confidential – privacy is protected by law
7. If there is an emergency users can contact police, fire and ambulance through the NRS.

Plus, training is FREE, and can be done at home.

Calls can be made on the internet

People with access to a computer can make a relay call through the internet to any voice or TTY user. They just go to www.relayservice.com.au and follow the links. They type their side of the conversation and the relay officer types the responses back for them to read. With internet relay, NRS users don’t need to have a TTY – they’ve got all the mobility of using a computer or laptop.

“I only became deaf recently and started using the relay service. People are getting to know it’s me that’s calling. They think it’s marvellous that I’m not letting the deafness get in the way of doing things.”

Jim, South Morang

“Not being able to use the phone was very stressful. When the TTY arrived, I thought I would never be able to use it, but I had one lesson and I couldn’t believe how easy it was.”

Jan, Geelong

To make a relay call most users will need a special phone called a textphone or TTY. Depending on their needs, they read what is said to them and/or type their side of the conversation.
Four ways to make a relay call

PICK THE BEST WAY FOR YOU

‘I CAN SPEAK BUT NOT HEAR’
SPEAK AND READ

In this relay call you speak directly to the other person – no typing! You read their responses, typed by the relay officer, on your textphone/TTY.

‘I CAN’T HEAR AND DON’T USE MY VOICE’
TYPE AND READ

You type your side of the conversation and read the responses on your textphone/TTY or computer.

‘I CAN HEAR BUT NOT SPEAK’
TYPE AND LISTEN

In this call you type your side of the conversation to the relay officer who speaks it to the other person. You listen as the other person responds directly to you.

‘I’M HARD TO UNDERSTAND ON THE PHONE’
SPEAK AND LISTEN

You speak directly with the other person. The relay officer is on the line to re-speak any of your words as required.

I've got a question about my phone bill, please.

Hello Sweetheart, thanks for ringing.

Can I make an appointment on Monday with Dr Mathews?

I’d like to find out more about that holiday flat you are advertising.

Monday's all taken I'm afraid. Would Thursday be OK? At 11.30?

Yes it's still available. What do you want to know?

Re-speaks if needed

Yes of course. What is the account number?

Speaks

Speaks

Speaks

Speaks

Types

Types

Types

Types

Yes it's still available. What do you want to know?

Relay officer listens

Relay officer listens

Relay officer listens

Relay officer listens

It's 11.30.

I'm afraid.

Well, I'm sorry.

I'll see you.

Goodbye.
Mrs Helen Taylor is 85 years old. She began to lose her hearing later in life and is now profoundly deaf. As a result she became quite dependent on her husband to make all the phone calls.

In order to give Mrs Taylor back some of her independence, Annabel, a National Relay Service information officer arrived at the Taylors’ house last Monday to conduct training for Mrs Taylor on using the relay service and her new textphone. Annabel found her at home with her daughter, very upset and shaky, and listened while Mrs Taylor talked of her ordeal over the weekend.

On Saturday, her husband had gone out at lunchtime for an appointment and didn’t come home in the afternoon as she expected. She nervously waited for him and proceeded to cook dinner to try and get her mind off her worries. Soon she had dinner ready and waiting, but Mr Taylor still hadn’t come home.

It was now late at night – and still he hadn’t arrived. At this point Mrs Taylor was very worried and tried calling family members. However her hearing is so poor that she couldn’t hear if her phone was ringing or even, when she rang out, if the phone was being answered at the other end.

“Bill hasn’t come home!” she called out over and over into the handset, yet she didn’t know if there was anyone at the other end of the line. She doesn’t drive and was too polite to wake up her neighbours in the middle of the night for help.

Mrs Taylor stayed awake all that night worrying.

It wasn’t till 7am the next morning when she went and asked a neighbour to make some calls for her. They then discovered that Mr Taylor had had a car accident and was in hospital. He wasn’t badly hurt but the hospital had wanted to keep him overnight for observation. The hospital had tried calling Mrs Taylor to let her know, but of course she couldn’t hear the phone ringing.

If Mrs Taylor had already been using the National Relay Service she wouldn’t have had such a frightening and distressing time. Now Mr Taylor has a caller card in his wallet with, “In case of emergency call my wife via the National Relay Service…”, so this situation will never happen again.