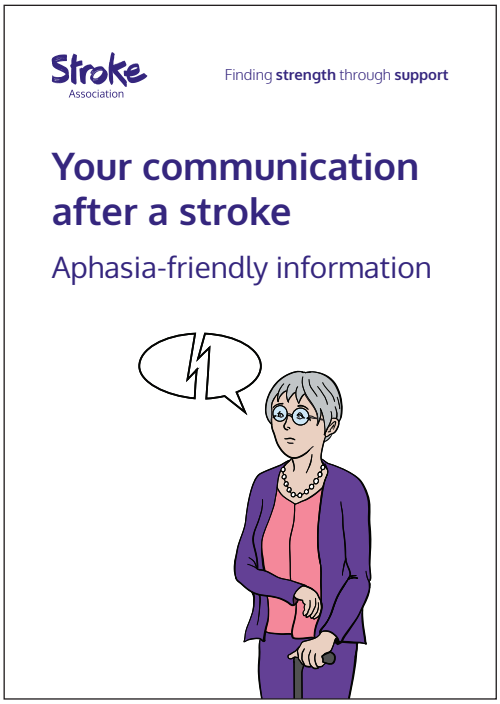
Stroke Association

Finding **strength** through **support**

Your communication after a stroke

Aphasia-friendly information

Inside this guide



This guide is about **aphasia** and other **communication problems**.

Aphasia can make it **hard** to **read**.

If you **need help reading this guide**:

- **Ask** someone to **read with you**.
- **Ask** someone to **talk** with you about the **information**.

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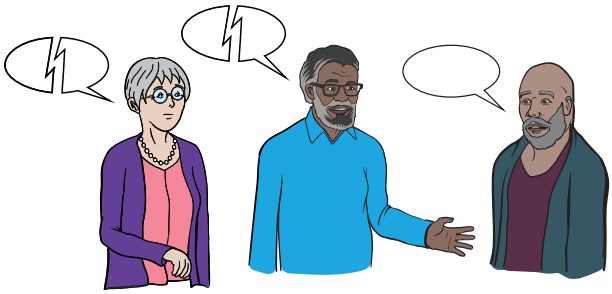
Communicating after a stroke

After a stroke, it can be **hard** to **communicate**.

- It can be **hard** to **speak** and **understand**.
- It can be hard to **read** and **write**.
- It can be hard to **use numbers**.



About **two thirds** of people have **communication problems** soon **after** a **stroke**.

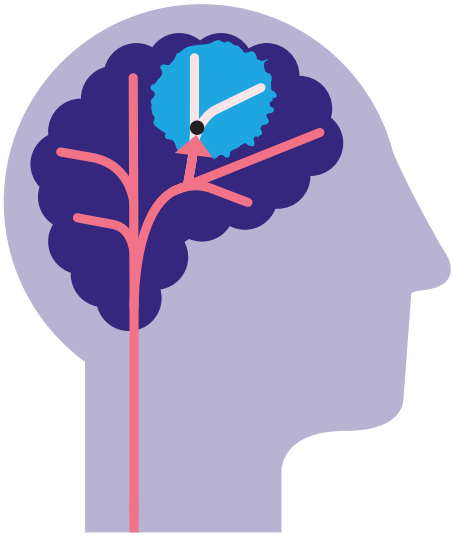
Some people will have **long-term** communication **problems**.

What is a stroke?

A stroke is when part of your **brain loses** its **blood supply**.

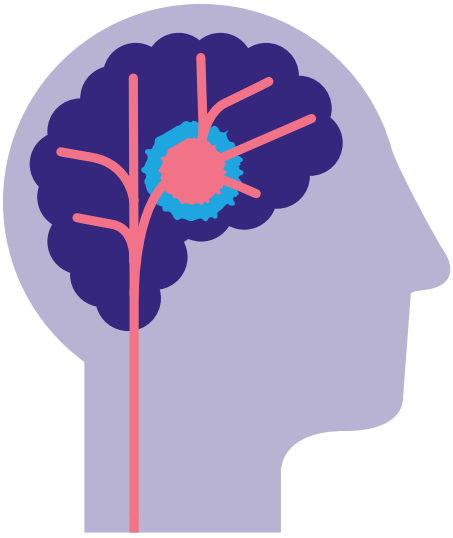
This **kills** brain **cells**.

There are **two main types** of **stroke**:



1. **Ischaemic** stroke:

due to a **blocked blood** vessel in the brain. It is often called a **clot**.



2. **Haemorrhagic** stroke:

due to **bleeding** in or around the brain.

Effects of stroke

A stroke can **damage** the **language** areas of your brain.

This makes it **hard** to **communicate**.

A stroke can also **affect** how your **body** works.

It can **change** how you **think** and **feel**.

A stroke can **change** your **relationships**.

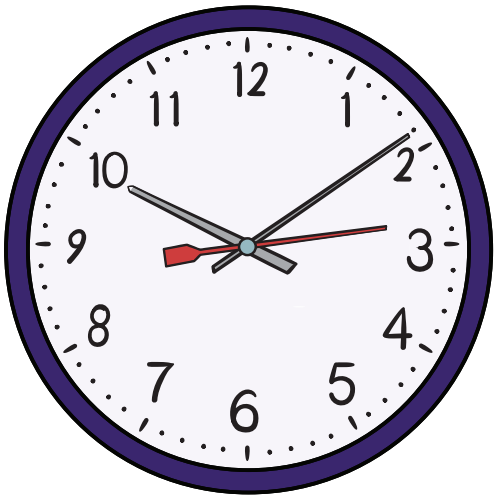
It can be **hard** to **communicate** with your **family** and **friends**.

You might feel **isolated**.

Will my communication improve?

Recovery begins **soon after** a **stroke**.

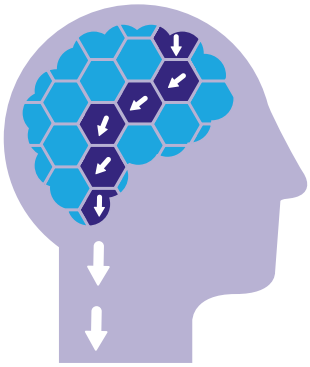
You can **keep recovering** for **years**.



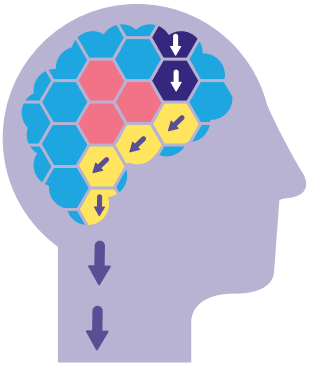
Communication problems can **last** a **long time**.

You will recover at your **own speed**.

How does recovery happen?



A stroke **damages** the connections between brain cells.



Your brain can **rebuild** the **connections**.

Therapy activities can **help** your recovery.

What does recovery mean?

You might not go back to how you were **before** the **stroke**.

But many people can:

- Learn to **communicate** in **new ways**.
- **Relearn communication** skills.
- Regain **confidence**.

How is my communication affected?

It is **different** for **everyone**.

It depends on:

1. **The part** of your **brain** that is **damaged**.

2. The **size** of the **damaged area**.

The **main types** of **communication problem** are:

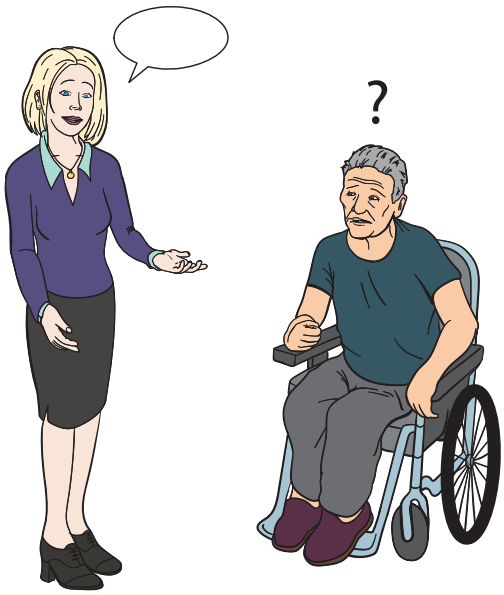
- Aphasia.
- Dysarthria.
- Apraxia of speech.

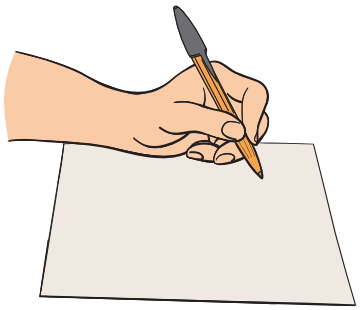
You can have **more than one type** of communication problem.

Aphasia

Aphasia is when the **language areas** of your brain are **damaged**.

About **40%** of people have aphasia **soon after** a stroke.





Aphasia can cause **problems** with:

- Speaking.
- Understanding what people say.
- Finding the right words.
- Reading.
- Writing.
- Using numbers.

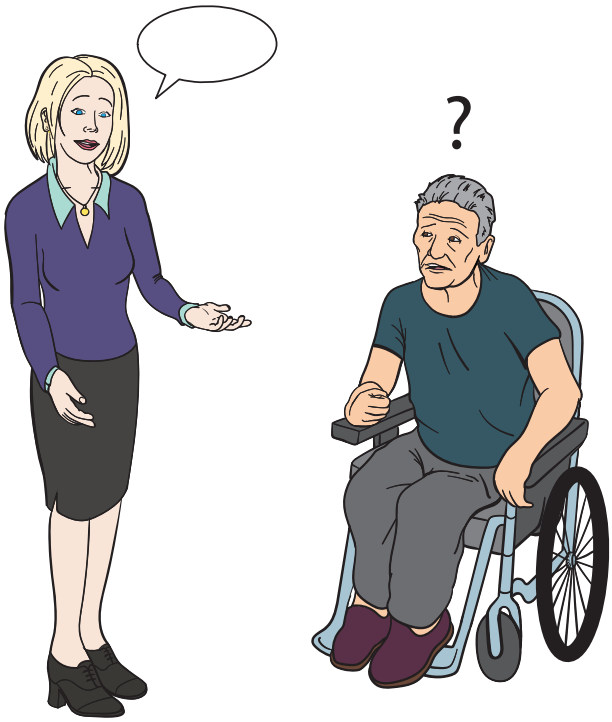
Aphasia means you have a **problem** using **language**.

It does **not** mean you are **less intelligent**.

Different types of aphasia

There are **two main types**:

Expressive: it is **hard** to **speak** and find the right words.

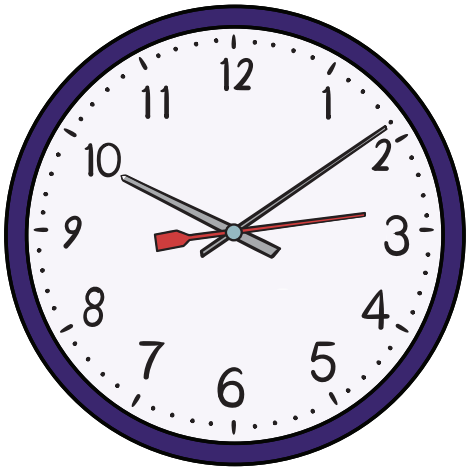


Receptive: it is **hard** to **understand** words.

You might:

- Know what you want to say but **cannot find** the **right word**.
- Get words in the **wrong order**, or use the **wrong words**.
- **Not** be able to say **many words**.
- Only make **one word** or **sound**.
- Find it more **difficult** to **understand** what people say.

Aphasia can change



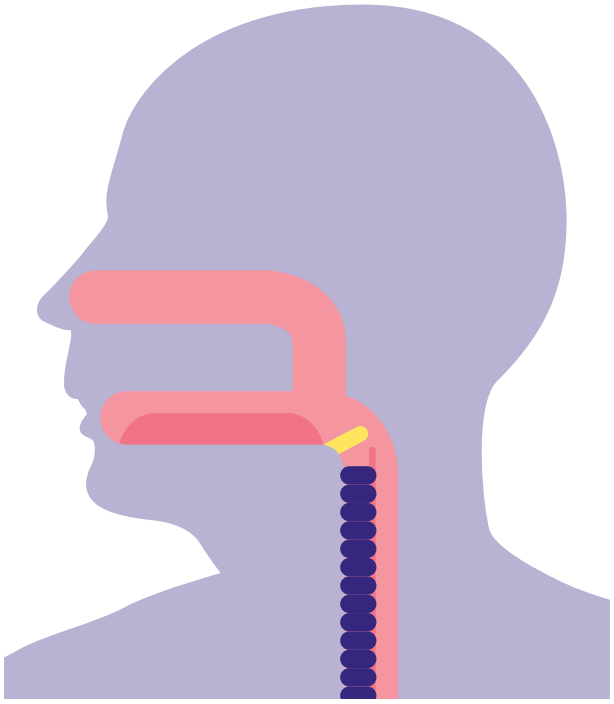
You can **recover over time**.

Aphasia can be **better** when you are **relaxed**.

It can be **worse** when you are **tired** or **stressed**.

Some days will be **better** than others.

Dysarthria



A stroke can cause **muscle weakness** in your **mouth** and **throat**.

This can make it **hard** to **speak**, **eat** or **drink**.

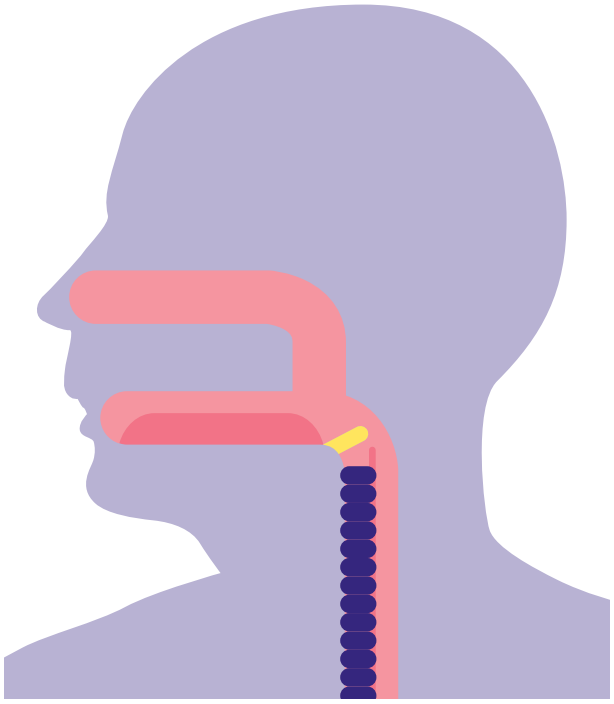
Your speech can be **slurred**.

It can be hard for **others** to **understand** you.

After a stroke:

- More than **half** of **people** have dysarthria.
- About a **quarter** of people have both **aphasia** and **dysarthria**.

Apraxia of speech



Apraxia can make it hard to **coordinate** the movement of your **mouth** and **tongue**.

When you speak, **words** can **sound wrong**.

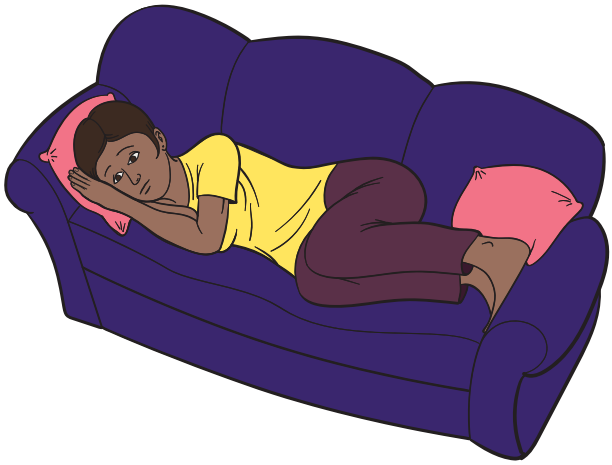
You might **know a word**, but **not** be able to **say** it.

Many other things can affect communication

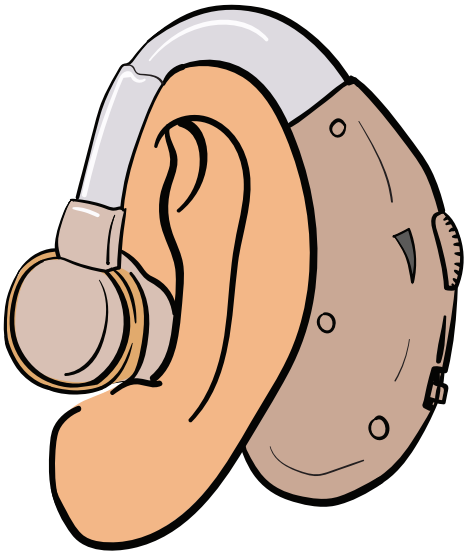
Concentration problems can make it hard to **follow** a **conversation.**

Memory problems can make it hard to **remember** things.

Vision problems can make it hard to **see**, **read** and **use screens**.



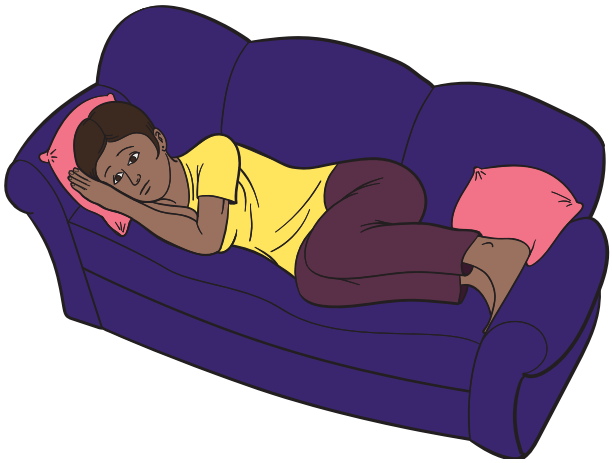
Fatigue can make it harder to **think** and **speak**.



Hearing problems make it hard to follow a conversation.

Feeling anxious or depressed can make you avoid speaking.

Fatigue



Fatigue is **tiredness** that does **not** get **better** with **rest**.

Most people have **fatigue** after a **stroke**.

It often gets **better over time**.

Fatigue can make it **harder** to **communicate**.

Give yourself **time** to **recover**.

Take breaks when you are speaking, reading or writing.

If you have fatigue, contact your **stroke nurse** or **GP**.

Treatment for communication problems

The main **treatment** is **speech** and **language therapy**.

It can help you **communicate better**.

Therapy can **help** your **family learn** how to **communicate** with you.

How can I get speech and language therapy?

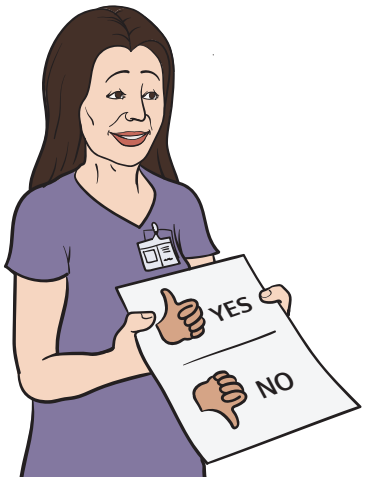
You should have **speech** and **language therapy soon** after a stroke.

It might happen **in hospital** or after you leave.

You carry on practising at **home**.

If you **did not** get therapy, or **need more** therapy, **contact** your **GP**.

What happens in speech and language therapy?



Your **therapist** will **assess** you.

Together you **agree** your **goals**.

The therapist gives you **activities** to **practise**.

The **activities help** you reach your **goals**.

The therapist will work with **you** and **your family** to help you communicate.

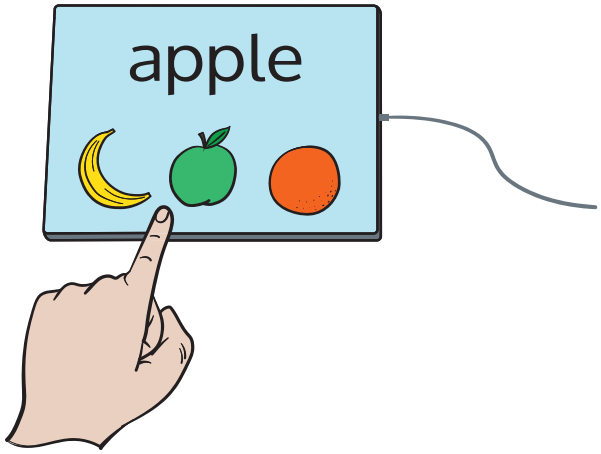
What will your goals be?

Your **goals** will be **personal** to you.

They could include:

- **Phoning** a friend.
- **Writing** a shopping list.
- Following **directions**.
- **Reading** a book.

In therapy, you will relearn language skills



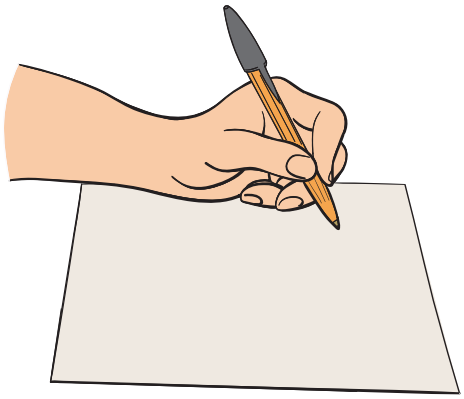
You might do **exercises** like:

- **Matching words** to pictures.
- Putting words into **categories**.
- Finding **rhyming words**.
- Making **sentences**.
- Having **conversations**.

Learning new ways to communicate

Communication is more than just speech.

In therapy, you might **learn** to **communicate** using:



- Drawing.
- Reading.
- Listening.
- Gesture.
- Technology.
- Eye contact.
- Touch.
- Body language.
- Tone of voice.
- Facial expression.
- Writing.

Emotions and relationships

After a **stroke**, many people feel:

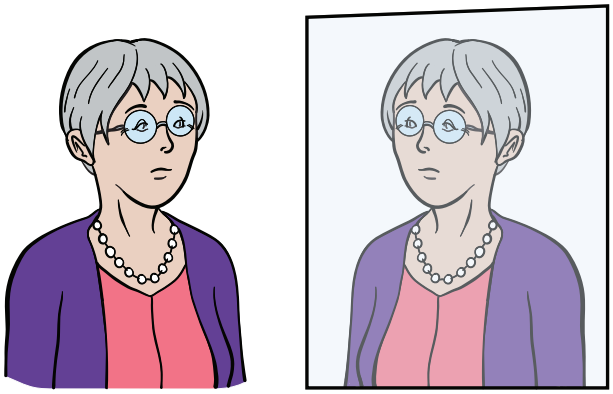
- **Sad** or **low**.
- **Angry** and **frustrated**.
- A sense of **loss**.
- **Grief**.

It is **common** to feel this way after a stroke.

But if you have these feelings for a **long time**, you should ask for **help**.

Contact your **GP** or your **stroke nurse**.

How you see yourself



Communication problems can **change** your **life**.

But you are still the **same person**.

With support, you can find **new ways** to **communicate**.

You can find new ways to **enjoy life**.

Your relationships

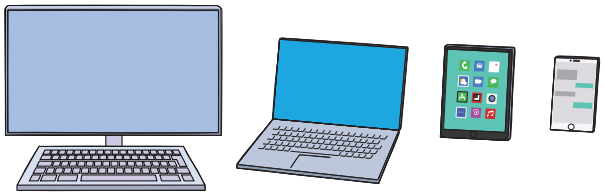
Having communication problems can **affect** your **relationships**.

You might **feel isolated**.

You could **try** some of these things:

- **Family** or **friends** can help you **practise** communication.

- **Meet** other **people** affected by stroke.
  - Join a **Stroke Support Group**.
  - Visit our **Online Community**.



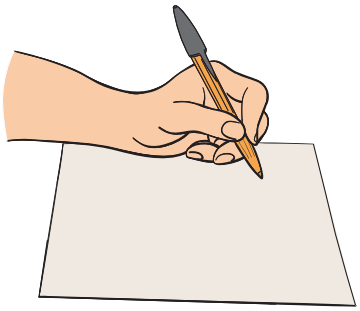
- **Use technology** to keep in touch with family and friends.
  - Use phone calls, emails, texts or video calls.

- Get **professional help** with relationship problems.
  - Look for relationship **counselling** and family **therapy**.

Communication tips

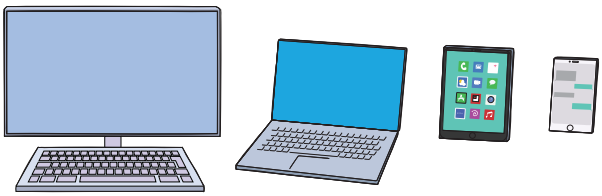
Use different ways of communicating

- Use **gestures**, like pointing.



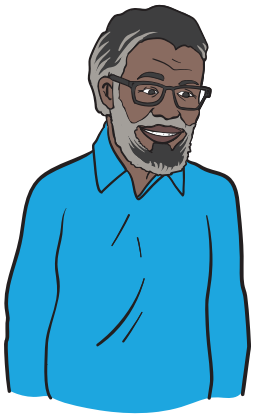
- Use a pen and paper to **write** and **draw**.

- **Show pictures**.



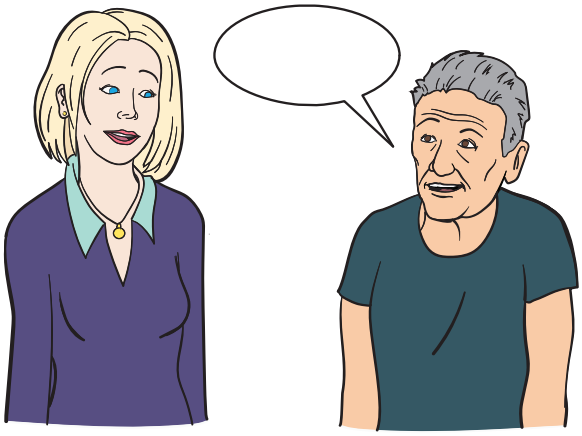
- Use **technology**.

What can help you



- Find a **quiet place**.
- Pick a **time** when you have some **energy**.
- Conversation is tiring: **take breaks**.

How other people can help you

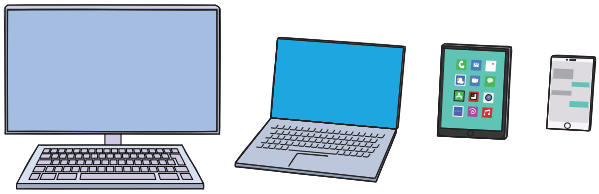


When you are **talking** to someone, they should:

- Check you **understand**.
- Check '**yes**' and '**no**' responses.
- Give their **full attention**.
- Give you **time** to speak.
- **Speak clearly** but not shout.
- Talk about **one idea** at a time.

They should remember that aphasia does **not** make you **less intelligent**.

Using technology



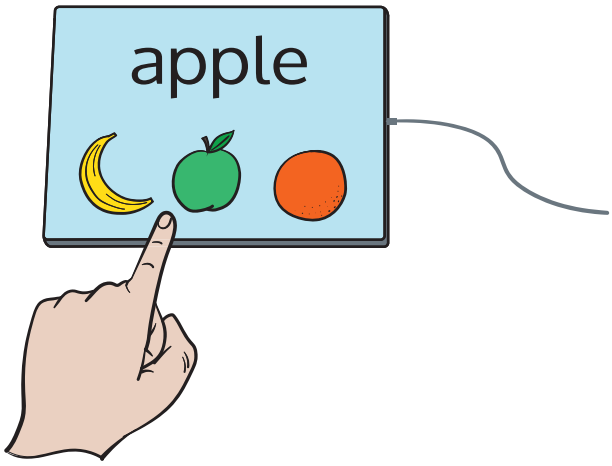
Soon after a stroke, you might find it **hard** to **use technology**.

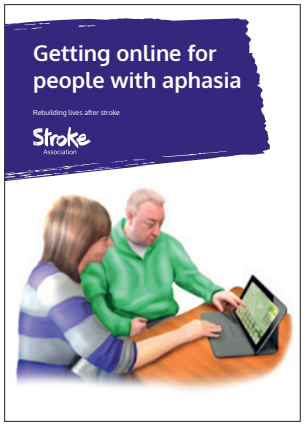
- Websites can be **hard** to **read**.
- Phone **screens** can seem too **bright**.
- **Fatigue** might make it harder to use technology.

You might need to **relearn** how to **use technology**.

Many people say that **technology helps** them.

- **Videos** help you **learn** about stroke.
- **Meet** other **stroke survivors** online.
- **Look** for **support** and treatment online.
- Get **financial help** online.
- **See friends** on video calls.
- Use **therapy apps**.





Get **more ideas** in 'Getting online for people with aphasia'
stroke.org.uk/getting-online

Use a communication card

I have had a stroke
and find it difficult to
speak, read or write

Please give me time to communicate. Speak clearly, taking your time and write down key words. Your help and patience would be appreciated.

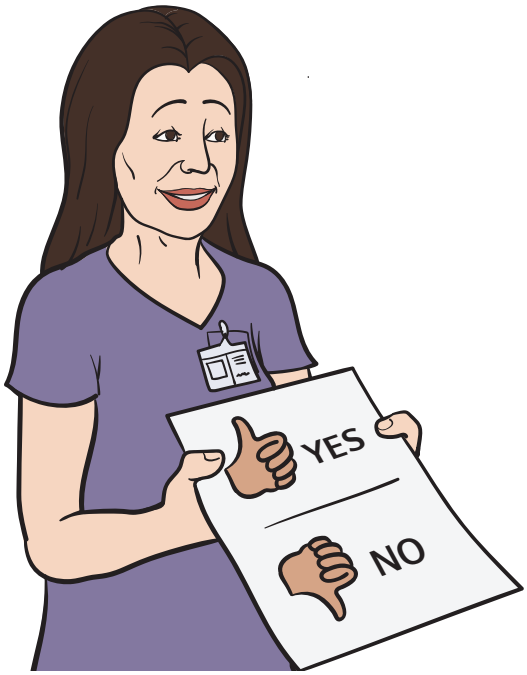
A **communication card** fits in your wallet or **pocket**.

You can use it to **tell people** about your **communication problem** after a stroke.

Use the card when you **go out**.

To order more cards, visit
stroke.org.uk/aphasia

How to get more information about aphasia



Speak to your **speech and language** therapist.

The **Aphasia Alliance** includes all the **aphasia** organisations in the **UK**.

aphasiaalliance.org

Visit **stroke.org.uk** for **videos** and **resources**.

Using this guide for other conditions

This guide is about **communication problems** due to a **stroke**.

But it may also **help** you if you have **aphasia** due to:

- **Dementia** or primary progressive aphasia.
- Brain **tumour**.
- Head **injury**.

Helping someone to read this information?

Here are some tips.

After a stroke, people can find it **hard** to **read** and **understand** things.

You can **help** by:

- **Talking** to them about this **information**.
- **Reading** it **aloud**.
- Looking at the **pictures** and **words** together.
- **Writing notes** on the pages.
- **Check** they **understand** with a 'yes or no', or thumbs up, thumbs down.

If you are **not sure** how to help, **ask** them.

About our information

We create our information with **help** from **people affected** by **stroke** and **experts**.

We work hard to keep our information **up-to-date**. If we make a **mistake** we will **correct** it.

We **do not** control the information given by **other organisations** or websites.

This guide gives you **general** information.

If you have a **problem**, **speak** to your **health professionals**.

You can:

Ask a **professional** like a GP or pharmacist.

Contact our **Stroke Support Helpline**:
0303 3033 100

To **tell us** what you **think** of this guide, email **feedback@stroke.org.uk**

Accessible formats

To ask for audio or braille, email **helpline@stroke.org.uk**

Notes:

Notes:

Remember, you are **not alone.**

We are here to **support you** throughout your **recovery**, whenever **you need** us.

Contact us

Stroke Support Helpline: **0303 3033 100**
Textphone: **18001 0303 3033 100**
Email: **helpline@stroke.org.uk**
Website: **stroke.org.uk**

Stroke Association

Finding **strength** through **support**

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