



**American Stroke Association**  
A division of the American Heart Association.

# Aphasia

communicating through the barriers

## What is aphasia?

Aphasia is a language disorder that impairs the ability to communicate. It's most often caused by stroke-related injuries to areas of the brain that control speech and language.

### I have aphasia.



**Take your time**  
It may take a while to get the words out.



**Let people know what works best for you**  
Do you want a question asked in multiple ways or repeated? Let them know.



**Use assistive devices**  
Bring photos, diagrams, pen and paper or other helpful tools.



**Frustration is OK**  
Don't blame yourself if you get stuck or stumble over your words. Be patient with yourself as you learn what works.

### What to do if you get stuck:

1. Admit you're struggling.
2. Recap what you've discussed so far.
3. Decide whether to continue or come back to the subject later.
4. Try a different method of communicating such as drawing, hand gestures, etc.

### I need to communicate with someone who has aphasia.



**Keep it simple**  
Speak in short, simple sentences.



**Be patient**  
Allow plenty of time for a response. Talk *with* the person who has aphasia, not *for* him or her.



**Remove distractions**  
Turn off radios and TVs and focus on the person with aphasia.



**Be creative**  
Try writing, gesturing, drawing pictures or using devices such as smartphones and tablets.



**Confirm**  
Repeat what you think they said or meant.

### Facts about people with aphasia:

1. They communicate differently but are as smart as they were before they developed aphasia.
2. Their hearing is usually fine, so speaking loudly doesn't help.
3. Their condition means you'll have to communicate differently with them.



Learn more at [stroke.org/Aphasia](https://stroke.org/Aphasia)