

Supported Conversation Strategies

Techniques to help “Get the Message In”

Help the person with aphasia understand by:

- Use short, simple sentences
- Use a slightly slower rate of speech
- Expressive tone of voice
- Use meaningful gestures and facial expressions
- Repeat or rephrase (e.g., “Are you retired? – pause – Are you no longer working?”)
- Write down key words (use black markers and print neatly)
- Draw pictures
- Point to objects, pictures, or other communication aids
 - Such as calendars, communication books, iPads

Techniques to help “Get the Message Out”

Help the person with aphasia express themselves by:

- Ask one question at a time
- Ask yes/no questions
- Offer choices
 - E.g., “Do you want coffee or tea?”
- Write down key words for the person to choose by pointing
- Encourage the best mode of responding – speaking, writing, gesturing, pointing, drawing, etc.
- WAIT. Give the person time to respond

Verify:

- Repeat back what you understood
- Ask yes/no questions
 - E.g., “This is what I heard.... Is that what you meant?”
- Ask for a clue if there is something that you don’t understand
 - E.g., “Can you *draw* it for me? Can you *show* me?”
- Expand on incomplete messages
- Summarize the main idea of their message (write down key words) when appropriate
- Don’t forget to also verify the person with aphasia has understood *your* message
- If needed, verify comprehension in 2 ways (e.g., spoken words with written key words)

Reference:

Adapted from Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia™
Training Workshop, Aphasia Institute