

Top 10 AT for Hard of Hearing

~ Always remember no two hearing losses are alike!

The ATEL Program provides landline/home telephones and wireless devices on loan to low-income individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, have a speech disability, or have neuromuscular damage or disease that hinders them from using a standard telephone. We also provide information on purchasing equipment, short-term loans and demonstrations at our Hearing/Speech Lab. As well as, referrals to other vendors and resources that may be able to assist your residents with assistive technology. Below is a list of our **Top 10 AT (Assistive Technology) for the Hard of Hearing.** We have found that most hard of hearing individuals have no idea many of these technologies exist, so don't know to request them. For more information on the ATEL Program, either scan our QR Code, or visit our website at <https://ors.ri.gov/programs/adaptive-telephone-equipment-loan-program-atel> . Also, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the ATEL Program at (401) 486-3325, email denise.corson@ors.ri.gov.



#1 Amplified Phones

Having amplified phones available in the common areas and in individuals' rooms allows folks to maintain their independence whenever possible. As the degree of hearing loss varies there are a lot of different amplified phones available. Some phones also offer control over the tone of a call.

<https://www.diglo.com/home-and-landline/amplified-phones;d=2;c=22;s=221>



#2. Captioning Telephone Conversations

- **CapTel Landline Telephone** - These are phones that have a display. The phones will provide captions for the telephone call on the display. The FCC requires that each phone be registered to a person with hearing loss. The phones are intended for those who do not get enough benefit from an amplified phone. Having access to telephones they can communicate on allows them to keep in touch with family and other support systems they may have. <https://www.captel.com>
- **Caption mobile Apps (InnoCaption+, Captionmate, Olelo, ClearCaptions Mobile, CaptionCall Mobile)**- These are all free mobile apps, funded by the FCC, for the oral deaf and hard of hearing. It allows a person with hearing loss but who can use his or her own voice and has some residual hearing, to speak directly to the called party and then listen, to the extent possible, to the other party and simultaneously read captions of what the other party is saying. These apps can be downloaded to any smart phone, you place phone calls thru the app, then put your smart phone on speaker or use earphones, and your phone calls are captioned on your smart phone screen.



#3. TV and Video Captioning!

This is probably the cheapest and most readily accessible technology. All TVs manufactured with the past 3 decades have captioning capabilities. They just need to be turned on. If you have televisions in common areas the captioning should be enabled. Most streaming services and devices also have the capability to display captioning and subtitles. Also, you will note on this list tablets and smart phones. This is because there are several apps available that will provide captioning via ASR (Automatic Speech Recognition)

#4. Pocket Talkers and Personal FM Systems

- **Pocket Talkers** - These can be used with headphones to amplify someone talking in the direction of the attached microphone. They are best when used in situations when the person with hearing loss is close to the speaker. If the resident does not have hearing aids or a hearing aid with no tele coil a headset can be used. (Will not work without hearing aids if the resident has a severe or profound hearing loss). In the event they are using hearing aids with a telecoil they can use a neck loop. When using headphones with hearing aids it may take a few adjustments to find a fit that does not cause feedback between the hearing aids and the pocket talker. Pocket talkers are relatively easy to use and can serve as a backup depending on the degree of hearing loss. <https://www.diglo.com/personal-amplification/personal-amplifiers;d=1;c=12;s=121>



- **Personal FM Systems** (for larger groups) - Personal FM Systems are like pocket talkers except there are two devices. One transmitter for the speaker and one receiver for the person needing amplification. This allows the person to be further away from the speaker. Headphones or neck loops can be used. You can also purchase multiple receivers. These will come in handy if your facility often hosts events where there is large group and a single speaker. <https://www.diglo.com/personal-amplification/fm-and-digital-systems;d=1;c=12;s=123>



#5 Whiteboard

Sometimes the technology is not within arm's reach. Sometimes it is more practical to just write down a quick note. Keeping whiteboards with markers nearby is an easy and quick fix.



#6 Access to an internet connection.

In addition to allowing people access to social media and email to stay in touch. Some of the devices mentioned on this list use the internet such as the CapTel phone and some of the captioning apps.

#7 Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are often an overlooked tool with addressing hearing loss. Hearing aids work by amplifying sounds to a level that the person can hear. Hearing aids are only an option if the individual has some residual hearing remaining. Sometimes a person is reluctant to get a hearing aid. If a resident has a hearing loss you want to encourage them to explore if a hearing aid would help. Depending on the degree of hearing loss some of the previously mentioned devices may be of little benefit to the user unless they have a hearing aid.



#8 TV Ears (and similar)

These are devices that connect to the audio outputs of TVs and people listen via headphones or neck loops. There is also a device called a soundbox that allows people to set up speaker next to them to hear what the TV across the room is playing.



<https://www.diglo.com/personal-amplification/tv-listening-systems;d=1;c=12;s=122>

#9 Tablet devices / Smart phones (Apple and Android).

Having this available will allow you to have access to number of apps that can transcribe what is being spoken. Otter, Live Caption and Big Notes are just a few of the aps available that will use automatic speech recognition (ASR) to transcribe what is being said into text. Most of these apps will allow you to customize the size and font of the captions. Furthermore, depending on the device, you may be able to pair them with specialized microphones to enhance the quality of the captioned being generated by ASR.



More information can be found here about the microphones

<https://www.alvoxcon.com/collections/wireless-microphone-system/products/usb-wireless-microphone>

Some apps that use ASR

Otter <https://otter.ai/>

Big Note <https://appadvice.com/game/app/big-note/1448497055>

AVA <https://www.ava.me/>

Live Caption <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/live-caption/id955278049>

Recorder (only on Google Pixel) <https://recorder.withgoogle.com/>



#10 Alerting Systems

These are systems that will flash a light and/or give a tactile alert in place of an audible alert such as a doorbell or more importantly a fire alarm. Some systems have a built-in flasher or work with a standard lamp that is plugged into the system. The tactile alert is typically via a bed shaker, but some systems offer a device like a pager that can be worn.

<https://www.diglo.com/shop-by-alerting-system;d=3;c=33>



#11 Bonus!

Awareness! There is no technology or device that completely resolves hearing loss. Being mindful of someone's hearing loss is perhaps the most important thing. If planning group activities perhaps you would want to plan for smaller groups or plan to have a whiteboard at the table. If there is a presentation reserving some seats in the front for those who want benefit of seeing the speakers face up close. Background noise is a frequent challenge so being mindful and moving into an area with less background noise can help. Also remember many of these devices are dependent on a power source so be sure to keep everything charged up and a supply of batteries on hand.

Approximately one in three people between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss, and nearly half of those older than 75 has difficulty hearing. Hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition in the United States but an underappreciated health issue affecting older adults, it is twice as prevalent as diabetes or cancer. Hearing loss is caused by noise, aging, disease, and heredity. People with hearing loss may find it hard to have conversations with friends and family. They may also have trouble understanding a doctor's advice, responding to warnings, and hearing doorbells and alarms.

The mental and emotional effects of hearing loss include anger, denial, depression, anxiety, isolation, social withdrawal, and fatigue. Hearing loss can affect more than just your hearing. When people struggle to hear, communication becomes challenging and any combination of the following can be experienced fatigued, loneliness, sorrow, social isolation, anxiety, anger and depression.