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Communicating With Someone Who Has Alzheimer's Disease

[Español](#)

[Alzheimer's disease](#) can make communication difficult for both caregivers and the person with Alzheimer's. This page covers how Alzheimer's can change how a person communicates and provides tips for how to manage these changes.

How does Alzheimer's change communication?

People with Alzheimer's may struggle with:

- Finding the right word when speaking
- Understanding what words mean
- Paying attention during long conversations
- Organizing words logically
- Keeping their train of thought when talking
- Blocking out background noises from the radio, TV, phone calls, or conversations in the room



Alzheimer's causes some people to get confused about language. For example, the person might forget or no longer understand English if it was learned as a second language. Instead, they might understand and use only their first language, such as Spanish.

Helping a person who is aware of memory loss

Alzheimer's is [being diagnosed](#) at earlier stages. This means that many people are aware of how the disease is affecting their memory and may feel anxious or upset. If this is the case, take time to listen. The person may want to talk about the changes

they are noticing. Try to be open, empathetic, and

Tips to cope with communication challenges

Keep the following suggestions in mind to make communication easier:

- Make eye contact and call the person by name.
- Be aware of your tone, volume, facial expressions, and body language. Try to avoid appearing angry or tense. Show a warm, loving, and matter-of-fact manner.
- Encourage a two-way conversation if the person is able.
- Be open to the person's concerns, even if they are hard to understand or address.
- Be patient with angry outbursts. Try a distraction, such as offering a favorite snack or a walk outside. If you become frustrated, take some time to calm down.
- Allow more time for the person to respond. Be patient and try not to interrupt.
- Don't talk about the person as if they are not there.
- Don't talk to the person using "baby talk" or a "baby voice."
- Use methods other than speaking to help the person, such as gentle touching to guide them. Hold the person's hand while you talk.



[Read and share this infographic](#) about how to communicate with a person who has Alzheimer's disease.

When speaking to a person with Alzheimer's, try to ask questions with a yes or no answer, and if the person does not understand what you say the first time, try rephrasing what you said with different words.

Here are some examples of how to change what you say to the person with Alzheimer's to make communication easier:

Avoid saying	Say this instead
What do you want for dinner?	Do you want fish or chicken for dinner?

Avoid saying	Say this instead
That's not how you do it.	Let's try it this way.
How do you feel?	Are you feeling sad?
Are you hungry?	Dinner will be ready in five minutes.

Be aware of nonverbal communication. As people lose the ability to talk clearly, they may rely on other ways to communicate their thoughts and feelings. For example, their facial expressions may show sadness, anger, or frustration.

Feeling overwhelmed with caregiving?

Caregiving can be rewarding, but it can also be demanding, difficult, and stressful. The changes in communication that come with Alzheimer's can be particularly challenging to handle. It's important to ask for help and to take time to care for yourself. Explore NIA resources to learn how to [get started with caregiving](#), [take care of yourself as a caregiver](#), and [find respite care](#) when you need it.

You may also be interested in

- Getting [tips for managing personality and behavior changes in Alzheimer's](#)
- Learning [ways to adapt activities for people with Alzheimer's](#)
- Finding [resources for getting help with Alzheimer's caregiving](#)

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For more information

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.gov

www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Alzheimers.gov

www.alzheimers.gov

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

info@alz.org

www.alz.org

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

866-232-8484

info@alzfdn.org

<https://alzfdn.org>

Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.org

www.caregiver.org

National Respite Locator Service

www.archrespite.org/respitelocator

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