

Deaf Telephone

The deaf and hard of hearing can sometimes feel isolated if they are not able to communicate. People without hearing difficulties take this for granted. Modern technology has devised ways of improving the quality of life for many deaf people with the invention of deaf telephone techniques. This has changed social interaction and business communication for the deaf community.

There are two main ways of using this technology. Textphones have been around for a while now and are simple to use. Some of them are portable and can plug into any phone. All the deaf person has to do with this deaf telephone is to plug the minicom in, turn the device on and dial the number after placing the receiver on. Then type the message to be relayed on the keyboard. There is a recognized code of abbreviations that is used to indicate certain breaks in the conversation, including letters to denote the caller has paused for a response or has ended the call. If the deaf person wants to make a call to someone without a minicom, they can use a telephone relay service, which interprets between the minicom and the person at the other end of the telephone line.

The alternative to the textphone is the videophone, a more recent innovation. The deaf person can see a sign language interpreter over the videophone. A webcam could be used instead. The interpreter communicates the conversation, using standard signing between the person making the call and the respondent at the other end. It's also possible to use the videophone method through computer-mounted cameras. Many people prefer this version of deaf telephone to textphones as it offers easier and quicker conversation. Some countries, including America and Australia have set the cost of this type of service at the normal rate per minute for calls.

Deafness is a matter of degrees. In fact, not many people suffer from total deafness and people with partial hearing sometimes require a different sort of help to a deaf telephone. Many hard of hearing phone customers have equipment which amplifies the sound of the telephone conversation and it's also possible to use a mechanism that cuts down background noise. These settings can be adapted for mobile phones too.

Sign language is the preferred choice of many deaf people throughout the world. It's not a uniform language however, and different countries have their own versions. Even regional differences can occur, as in the United States. People who use sign language have welcomed it being incorporated into deaf telephone technology.