

# Top tips for supporting someone with an acquired brain injury (ABI) and their communication



Due to the unique nature and impact ABIs can have on a person's communication, any strategies, guidelines or recommendations made by a speech and language therapist (SLT) specific to that individual should be followed. However, some general communication support tips are provided below. This list is not exhaustive and serves only as a guide.

- Ask the person what makes conversation easier and follow any strategies or guidance already in place.
- Be patient and positive. Encourage communication, but don't pressure them.
- Allow extra time. Processing information and responding may take longer.
- Be a good listener. Give the person time to find their words and express themselves.
- Talk directly to the person, not over them. Try to sit at the same level and make eye contact, to support with attention as well.
- Speak clearly. Use simple words and short sentences, and don't rush. Avoid giving large amounts of information all at once. Instead, break information it into small, manageable chunks and use clear, direct language.

- Check they have understood. Avoid making assumptions, even if instructions or information are written down. You could ask them to repeat the information in their own words back to you, to check they have understood. You could summarise the key points of the conversation and/or write down important information.
- Stick to one topic at a time. Avoid changing topics suddenly. Talking about familiar topics may be easier than talking about new topics.
- Use written and visual supports. Notes, pictures, photos, gestures, calendars and visual reminders can help with understanding and supporting the conversation.
- Avoid noisy environments. Background noise can make it harder to focus. Use the person's name to gain their attention first, before speaking to them.
- Avoid interruptions. Let the person finish their thoughts. Don't rush them.
- Keep conversations short. Fatigue can make communication more difficult.
- Provide feedback. This can help the person increase their awareness and improve communication. Make sure feedback and information are given in the moment to aid understanding.
- Provide structure. Establish a consistent routine and environment. Provide gentle reminders about conversation rules eg turn-taking.
- Right time. Choose the right time to have conversations. It will be harder to follow, understand, take part in and remember a conversation if they are tired, upset or anxious.
- Be patient. Be supportive. Communication is more than words.

For further support, seek a referral to your local speech and language therapist via your GP. Individuals should access speech and language therapy at any point, as their needs and goals will change over time.

For more information, see [RCSLT ABL pages](#) for more details