

# How can a carer communicate with a person with dementia?

Communicating together can become more difficult over time, as the person's dementia gets worse.

They may:

- struggle to find the right word
- repeat things out loud
- not understand what others are saying
- get confused about words and what they mean.

This can be very frustrating for both of you. Many carers find it hard to stay calm. Don't be too hard on yourself if this happens. You might need to take a break.

There are lots of ways to communicate clearly and calmly, together:

- Get the person's full attention before you start. The room should be quiet. For example, turn off the TV or radio.
- Make sure you are where you see and hear each other as clearly as possible.
- Keep hearing aids and glasses clean. Keep prescriptions up to date.
- Listen carefully. Repeat what is said if the person does not understand.
- Go at a slightly slower pace than usual if the person can't follow you. Use short, simple sentences.
- Don't talk to the person as you would to a child – be patient and have respect for them. Do not speak to others as though the person is not there.
- Try to make sure your body language is open and relaxed.
- Try to avoid speaking sharply or raising your voice. If you become frustrated, leave the room until you feel calmer.
- Sometimes there is a language barrier. An interpreter, translation or app on a smartphone or tablet can help.
- Allow the person plenty of time to respond – it may take them longer to work out their response.
- Try not to interrupt the person – even to help them find a word – as it can break the pattern of communication.
- Use physical contact to show the person you care. Don't underestimate the reassurance you can give by holding the person's hand or putting your arm around them, if it feels appropriate.



Factsheet 500, **Communicating** has more information. To read it, go to [alzheimers.org.uk/communicating](https://alzheimers.org.uk/communicating). For more information about our helpsheets, go to [alzheimers.org.uk/helpsheets](https://alzheimers.org.uk/helpsheets)



Alzheimer's Society is here for you. If you are worried about dementia, call us on **0333 150 3456**. We can arrange to speak with you in any language.



Join Talking Point, our online community of people affected by dementia – go to [alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint](https://alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint)  
To find support in your area, go to [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiadirctory](https://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiadirctory)

