

Enjoying TV

You'll find this factsheet useful if you have hearing loss and sometimes struggle to follow TV programmes and films. We explain how to get the most out of your TV and which assistive listening devices can help. We also tell you how to make a complaint to broadcasters if a programme has poor sound quality.

Contents

- What can help me hear the TV? **2**
- How do I make a complaint about poor sound quality on TV? **4**
- How can I get subtitles on TV? **4**
- Does every channel subtitle its programmes? **5**
- What can I do if I'm having problems getting subtitles? **5**
- What are video-on-demand services? **6**
- Can I get subtitles on DVDs and Blu-ray? **7**
- Where can I send my feedback about TV and on-demand services? **8**
- Where can I find out more about products to help with hearing loss? **11**

i If you'd like this factsheet in Braille, large print or audio, please contact our Information Line – see last page for contact details.

What can help me hear the TV?

If you have hearing loss and struggle to hear dialogue (speech) when watching TV, try adjusting the sound settings and using an assistive listening device. An external loudspeaker (or 'soundbar') can also help. Some have speech-enhancement features.

Sound settings

Many TVs allow you to adjust the treble and bass levels you hear. Treble refers to the high-frequency (high-pitched) sounds – in music, treble corresponds to 'high notes'. Bass refers to low-frequency (low-pitched) sounds.

If you have a high-frequency hearing loss – for example, age-related hearing loss – consonants like 'S' and 'T' tend to sound muffled. The ability to boost the treble may help. It may also help to reduce the bass, as excessive bass can mask high-frequency sounds.

Many modern TVs also have advanced sound settings that give you even more control over the tonal qualities of the sound. For example, an 'equalizer' – basically, an advanced tone control – allows you to boost or cut a number of different audio frequencies (frequency bands). This means that if you struggle to hear a specific pitch of sound, you can boost the sound in that pitch to make it easier to hear.

Your TV may also have a speech enhancement setting. This should make it easier to hear dialogue over background music and sound effects.

TV manufacturers call this setting by different names such as 'Clear voice', 'Voice enhance' or 'Dialogue clarity'.

Some TVs allow you to listen through the TV speaker and headphones (if connected) at the same time and have separate volume adjustments for each. This can be very useful for when you're watching TV with others. Some TVs also have a left/right volume balance control – although this is more for when headphones are used.

You will be able to access your TV's sound settings through on-screen menus, using the remote control.

TV listeners

TV listeners let you listen to your TV at a volume level you are comfortable with, independently of the volume level of the TV loudspeaker.

They may also have a number of features to help you hear the sound more clearly, including tone control, left/right volume balance and speech enhancement.



TV listeners consist of:

- a base unit (transmitter), which you connect to the audio output sockets on your TV using the cables supplied
- a wireless receiver – this is usually a neckloop if you use hearing aids, or a stethoset if you don't use hearing aids.

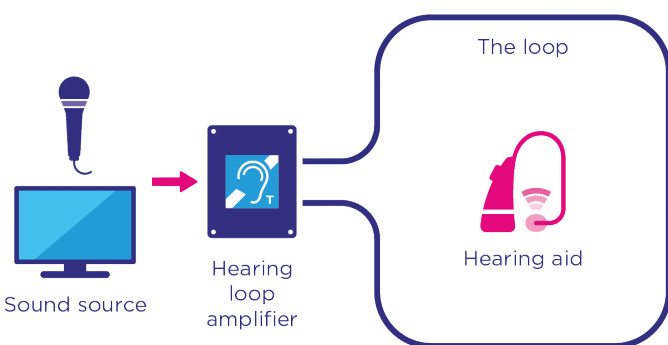
The image above shows a stethoset receiver resting in its base unit while not in use.

Important note: Depending on how the TV listener is connected to your TV, and the make and model of your TV, the sound from the TV loudspeaker may cut out when you plug in the listener. Before you buy a TV listener, seek advice about this from a reputable retailer's customer services team.

As well as the direct audio connection for the TV, some TV listeners and home hearing loops have a microphone on a long lead (supplied or optional extra) that can be placed near the TV speaker, providing an alternative connection. However, this feature is becoming less common.

Home hearing loop systems

A hearing loop (sometimes called a 'loop' or 'induction loop') can help you hear the TV more clearly through your hearing aids when they are on the loop setting. Your audiologist may need to activate the loop setting on your hearing aids before you can use it – ask them if you're unsure.



A hearing loop consists of:

- a wire that's laid around the edge of the room (ideally under a carpet or tacked onto the skirting board to avoid any risk of tripping)
- an amplifier that's placed near the TV

- cables that connect the amplifier to the audio sockets on your TV.

When your hearing aids are switched to the loop setting, the internal microphones are turned off and only the signal from the loop – in this case, the sound from your TV – is amplified by your hearing aids.

i For more on loops, see our factsheet *Assistive listening devices*.

Headphones

There are many corded and wireless headphones available from electrical retailers.

Corded headphones plug into the headphone jack socket on the TV.

You may need an extension lead if the lead on the headphones isn't long enough.



Wireless headphones have a base unit (transmitter) that either plugs into the TV headphone socket or the TV audio output sockets at the back of the TV. The base unit also doubles up as the charger for the headphones.

You may be able to use headphones with hearing aids, but it depends on the type of headphones – whether they are on-the-ear, over-the-ear, cupped or closed.

Before you buy headphones, check they are compatible with your TV. On some TVs, you have to change settings so that you don't cut out sound from the TV's loudspeaker when watching with others.

Some TVs at the lower end of the market don't allow you to change these settings, and using the headphones may cut out the sound from the TV loudspeaker.

Other assistive listening devices

Small devices called TV streamers connect with hearing aids wirelessly and allow you to further adjust the volume and pitch of sound to your preference.



You may need to use an intermediary device for the wireless connection – either a neckloop or ear hooks – unless the streamer can connect directly to your hearing aids.

You can also use a device called a remote microphone that you place close to your TV's loudspeaker. The remote microphone picks up the sound and sends it straight into your hearing aids.

i For more information about these devices, see our [factsheets *Assistive listening devices* and *Understanding wireless technology for hearing aids*](#).

How do I make a complaint about poor sound quality on TV?

If you have hearing loss, you'll know how hard it can be to follow the dialogue in TV shows when there's poor sound quality – for example, too much background noise when people are speaking.

If you feel that you've watched a programme with particularly bad sound quality, get in touch with the relevant channel to make them aware that there's a problem, giving details of the programme title and the date and time it was broadcast ([see pages 8-9](#) for UK TV broadcasters' contact details).

If you use Twitter, it's also worth tweeting about the issue, to bring it to the attention of the channel and others watching (make sure you use the Twitter handle of the channel, and 'hashtag' the programme title).

The chances are, you're not the only person struggling to hear the dialogue, and making your complaint public may encourage others to complain too – either way, the channel will want to address the problem quickly.

How can I get subtitles on TV?

You can usually get subtitles on TV by pressing the 'subtitles' button on your remote control, or by pressing the 'menu' button and following the options for language and subtitles. You should be able to choose whether subtitles come on automatically or only when you select them from the remote control.

Does every channel subtitle its programmes?

The 2003 Communications Act requires broadcasters to subtitle a minimum percentage of programmes on their 'linear' TV channels (traditional channels with regular TV schedules, such as BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4). This percentage increases in line with the number of years that a broadcaster has been operating, and their audience share. So, for instance, new channels are required to subtitle 10% of content after a year of broadcasting, which rises to 80% after the 10th year – but only if their audience share is above 0.05%.

Since that legislation was passed, there have been huge improvements in the number of subtitled programmes available, allowing people with hearing loss to gain equal access to TV.

The way we watch TV has transformed over recent years – and it's hard to remember a time before we streamed films or watched catch-up TV. Earlier legislation did not mention minimum requirements for subtitles on these services.

That's why, since 2015, our Subtitle it! campaign has been calling on the government to change the legislation regarding subtitles on TV.

Thanks to more than 6,000 people who took action for our campaign, in April 2017, parliament passed new legislation that to ensure that on-demand broadcasters will be legally required to provide minimum levels of subtitles.

We won't see the changes straight away, but they are coming. (See also 'What are video-on-demand services?', [page 6](#).)



To find out more about our campaign, and to keep track of the government's progress, visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/subtitleit

What can I do if I'm having problems getting subtitles?

If subtitles don't appear at all on traditional or 'linear' TV, or disappear during the programme, this is probably due to a temporary technical problem, so make a note of the channel, time and programme, and contact the relevant channel ([see pages 8–9](#) for broadcasters' contact details).

If you notice that a channel you like to watch has a low number of subtitled programmes, it's worth getting in touch, as channels can sometimes respond positively to requests for subtitles on particular programmes. Many channels also monitor and log all complaints relating to subtitles, so will be able to see where improvements can be made.

If you're unhappy with the response you get from the channel, you can take your complaint further by contacting the Office of Communications, commonly known as Ofcom, which is the independent regulator of the UK's broadcasting industry ([see page 11](#) for contact details). However, Ofcom doesn't regulate BBC channels – you should complain directly to the BBC.

If you use Twitter, it's also worth tweeting channels that do not provide subtitles on many of their programmes, explaining that you would like to watch their channel but can't due to the lack of subtitles. Try encouraging others to do the same. Where broadcasters aren't legally required to provide subtitles, public pressure is the best method of encouraging them to take action.

What are video-on-demand services?

Video-on-demand is any video content that viewers can access at a time of their own choosing; for example, catch-up TV, streamed films and box sets.

BBC iPlayer and ITV Hub are examples of on-demand services, as well as Amazon Prime and Netflix. You can access these TV services through a set-top box for your TV, or through a TV, computer, mobile device (smartphone, tablet) or games console that's connected to the internet.

Catch-up services

Most of the UK's main broadcasters offer an online catch-up TV service, which lets you watch shows you've missed, usually for a limited time after they are broadcast. These services include:

- BBC iPlayer – bbc.co.uk/iplayer
- ITV Hub – itv.com
- Channel 4 On Demand (All 4) – channel4.com
- My5 – channel5.com

BBC iPlayer has subtitles on every programme. ITV Hub and All 4 subtitle more than 80% of their programmes.

Subscription TV and film services

For a monthly fee (subscription), you can watch a wide range of films and TV programmes online through on-demand services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Instant Video.

Before signing up for any of these services, check whether they have subtitles – not all of them do. Many Netflix programmes are subtitled, as are more than half of the programmes on Amazon services. Sky and BT are also working to improve the level of subtitling on their on-demand services. We are working with the main subscription-service providers to increase the number of subtitled programmes that are available.



Ofcom has a service showing how many video-on-demand programmes are subtitled per TV channel, device and subscription service. Visit ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-1/on-demand-accessibility/interactive-data

Can I get subtitles on DVDs and Blu-ray?

Many films and TV programmes on DVD and Blu-ray (a high-definition DVD format) have subtitles. Some DVDs have subtitles that describe a particular noise or the type of music playing, so it's easier for you to follow the film. Check the back of the DVD or Blu-ray box to see what subtitles are available.

How to access subtitles on DVDs and Blu-rays

When you play a DVD or Blu-ray, an introduction menu will usually appear on screen, showing the title. If subtitles are available, select the 'subtitles' or 'languages' option before you play the film. Another menu may appear if there are subtitles in more than one language. You may also be able to switch on the subtitles using the subtitles button on the DVD or Blu-ray player remote control.

Although many DVDs and Blu-rays contain 'Bonus' material, this does not always have subtitles.



For detailed subtitling information on many popular DVDs, visit dvd-subtitles.com

What will the future look like?

Action on Hearing Loss is always looking at ways to help in the innovation and development of technology for people with hearing loss and tinnitus.

The technologies we outline below are still at the concept stage, and will take years to test and develop before you'll be able to take full advantage of them. But we think they'll transform the TV experience for people with hearing loss – and that's something we're passionate about.

Right now, most subtitles are the result of someone typing out the speech – or speech-recognition software that types out the speech, which is then edited. Both methods can lead to mistakes and delays. We're excited about the development of technology that can automatically translate speech into text. In particular, we hope it improves the quality and timeliness of subtitles for live broadcasts.

The other area in which we expect to see major developments is in how you control the sound of your TV. Researchers are investigating 'object-based audio', which could enable you to control the type of sound you want to hear, how much and the direction from which it comes.

You'd be able to increase the volume of the dialogue, reduce foreground and background noise, or completely switch it off, if you prefer. We will continue to support the research and development of this kind of technology to ensure that it meets the needs of people with hearing loss.

Where can I send my feedback about TV and on-demand services?

Broadcasters

BBC

BBC Complaints
PO Box 1922
Darlington DL3 0UR

Telephone: **0370 010 0222**
Textphone: **0370 010 0212**
Website: bbc.co.uk/complaints

ITV

Viewer Services
Gas Street
Birmingham B1 2JT

Telephone: **0344 881 4150** (option 4)
Text relay service available: **0370 010 0212**
Email: viewerservices@itv.com
Website: itv.com/contactus

Channel 4

Channel 4 Enquiries
PO Box 1058
Belfast BT1 9DU

Telephone: **0345 076 0191**
Website: channel4.com/4viewers/contact-us

Channel 5

Viewer Enquiries
Channel 5
17-29 Hawley Crescent
London NW1 8TT

Telephone: **020 3580 3600** or **03457 05 05 05**
Email: viewerenquiries@channel5.com
Website: help.channel5.com/hc/en-gb/articles/200830651-How-do-I-contact-Channel-5-Customer-Services-

UTV

Ormeau Road
Belfast BT7 1EB

Telephone: **028 9032 8122**
Fax: **028 9024 6695**
Website: itv.com/news/utv/2016-05-25/about-utv-and-how-to-contact-us

S4C

STV Enquiries
Pacific Quay
Glasgow G51 1PQ

Telephone: **0370 600 4141**
Textphone: **01766 514410**
Website: s4c.cymru/e_contact_form.shtml

STV

STV Enquiries
Pacific Quay
Glasgow G51 1PQ

Telephone: **0141 300 3704**
Email: enquiries@stv.tv
Website: www.stv.tv/info/contact

UKTV

UKTV Viewer Enquiries
PO BOX 6996
Cardiff CF15 5DS

Telephone: **020 3752 7707**
Email: viewers@uktv.co.uk
Website: corporate.uktv.co.uk/about-uktv/article/contact-us

Platforms

BT TV

BT Correspondence Centre
Providence Row
Durham DH98 1BT

Telephone: **0800 800 150** (landline)
Textphone: **0330 123 4150** (mobile)
Website: www.bt.com/help/home/contactus/#/home
Or for customer complaints, try Live chat online every day 8am–9pm at bt.custhelp.com/app/complaints/queue_id/460

Freesat

PO Box 6296
London W1A 3FF

Telephone: **0345 313 0051**
Website: freesat.co.uk/help/contact

Freeview

DTV Services Ltd
27 Mortimer Street
London W1T 3JF

Telephone: **03456 505050** (from landlines typically costs up to 12p per minute, and 5p–40p from mobiles, depending on your provider)

Email: help@freeview.co.uk
Website: www.freeview.co.uk/#kocUFR5VROwO37dH.97

Sky TV

Sky also provides subscription on-demand services. Sky TV programmes and films are also available on subscription through Now TV ([see page 10](#) for details).

Customer Complaints
Sky Subscriber Services Ltd
PO Box 43
Livingston
West Lothian EH54 7DD

Telephone: **03442 410 265**
Email: viewerR@bskyb.com
Website: sky.com/help/articles/how-to-make-a-complaint

Virgin Media

Customer Complaints
Virgin Media
PO Box 333
Matrix Court
Swansea SA7 9ZJ

Telephone: **150** (from your Virgin home phone or mobile) or **0345 454 1111** (any other phone) or **18001 0345 454 1111** (Text Relay)
Video relay service: my.virginmedia.com/customer-news/articles/Sign-Solutions.html
Website: virginmedia.com/contact-us.html

YouView

YouView TV Ltd
3rd Floor
10 Lower Thames Street
London EC3R 6YT

Telephone: **0333 313 2278**
Email: info@youview.com
Website support: support.youview.com/useful-contacts (click 'YouView Email' to complete a contact form)

Netflix

22 Torrington Place
3rd Floor Suite C
London WC1E 7HP

Telephone: **0800 096 8879**
Website: help.netflix.com/contactus

Amazon

60 Holborn Viaduct
London EC1A 2FD

Telephone: **020 7084 7911** (stay on the line to speak to an adviser)
Website: amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/contact-us (email, phone and live chat details show after you have selected options for questions one and two).

iTunes TV

2 Furzeground Way
Stockley Park
Uxbridge UB11 1BB

Telephone: **0800 107 6285**
Email: contactus.uk@euro.apple.com
Website: apple.com/uk/contact

TalkTalk

Customer Relations Department
TalkTalk Group
P.O. Box 346
Southampton SO30 2PW

Telephone: **0345 172 0088** or **18001 0345 172 0088** (Text Relay)
Website: help2.talktalk.co.uk/how-do-i-make-complaint

NOW TV

Sky Plc
Grant Way
Isleworth TW7 5QD

Website: help.nowtv.com/get-in-touch

EE

EE Corporate Head Office
Everything Everywhere Ltd.
Hatfield Business Park
Hatfield AL10 9BWGBR

Website: ee.co.uk/help/safety-and-security/security/complaint-form

Google Play

Google UK Ltd
Belgrave House
76 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9TQ

Telephone: **0800 328 6081**
Website support: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/7100415>
(click 'Contact us' for contact options including live chat)

Regulators

Ofcom

Ofcom regulates the UK's TV, radio and video-on-demand sectors, fixed-line telecoms, mobiles and postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. It makes sure that people get the best from communications services and are protected from scams and sharp practices.

Ofcom complaints

PO BOX 1285
Warrington WA1 9GL

Telephone: **0300 123 3000** or
020 7981 3040

Telephone (Welsh):

0300 123 2023 or **020 7981 3042**

Fax: **020 7981 3333**

Textphone: **18001 01925650744**

Video RelayService (click link on page):
ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/contact-us

Website: ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint/complain-about-tv-radio-ondemand

Where can I find out more about products to help with hearing loss?

The other factsheets in our **Products and Technology** range are:

- *Alerting devices*
- *Assistive listening devices*
- *Communicating online*
- *Home telephones*
- *Smoke alarms*
- *Text relay services*
- *Understanding wireless technology for hearing aids*
- *Using mobiles and smartphones when you have hearing loss.*

You can order these from our Information Line ([see last page](#) for contact details) or download them from our website at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/how-we-help/information-and-resources/publications/products-and-technology

You can also find lots of useful information on our website at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/how-we-help/information-and-resources/publications/products-and-technology/

Join our online forum

There are more and more products to help with hearing loss. Are you having problems with any? Which couldn't you live without? Join the debate in our **Products and Equipment** online forum: community.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/products-and-equipment/f/forum

Information you can trust

The Information Standard certifies us as producers of high-quality, evidence-based information.

Our **Product Technologist, Kevin Taylor**, reviewed and updated this factsheet, published September 2017.

Did you find this factsheet helpful?

We'd love to know what you think of this factsheet – please email us at reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk

If you'd like to join our Readers' Panel, to help us create new publications and improve existing ones, please let us know.

Products to help with hearing loss

The Action on Hearing Loss online shop features the latest products and technology to help with hearing loss and tinnitus, including home telephones, and our experienced Customer Services team is here to support you to choose the product that's right for you. All proceeds from product sales go back into supporting Action on Hearing Loss.

Shop online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop

To order your free catalogue, or to find out which products could help you, look online or contact our Customer Services team:

Telephone: **03330 144 525**

Textphone: **03330 144 530**

Email: solutions@hearingloss.org.uk



Further information from Action on Hearing Loss

Our expert information covers everything you need to know about:

- hearing loss and deafness
- tinnitus
- ear problems and treatments
- hearing aids and cochlear implants
- useful products and technology
- communication tactics and support
- benefits and grants
- your rights.

Visit our website actiononhearingloss.org.uk or call our Information Line ([see last page](#)) for information, support and publications. You can also find out about services in your area, our hearing research, and how you can get involved.

Please help us support others

We provide our leaflets, factsheets and Information Line service free of charge to anyone affected by deafness, tinnitus or hearing loss in the UK. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to help us do this. We would be very grateful if you would consider making a donation – of as little or as much as you can afford.

Please send a cheque, payable to Action on Hearing Loss, to:

Freepost RTLX-CZKX-BTTZ
Action on Hearing Loss
1-3 Highbury Station Road
London N1 1SE
(No stamp needed)

Donate online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/donate
Or make a donation over the phone by credit or debit card:

 **0203 227 6182**

 **0203 227 6185**

Thank you.

Our purpose is to help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to **actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

Action on Hearing Loss Information Line

Telephone **0808 808 0123**
Textphone **0808 808 9000**
SMS **0780 000 0360**
(standard text message rates apply)
Email **information@hearingloss.org.uk**

Join us



Action on Hearing Loss



@ActionOnHearing

Publication date: September 2017. Review date: April 2018.

Action on Hearing Loss is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.
A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926). A1205/0917