

Cochlear Family

Keeping you supported, connected, inspired

April 2023



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Practical advice for phone and online communication

Tips to help build your confidence on phone and online calls ▶





- ◀ Getting comfortable with speaking on the phone and on video calls can take some time. It's important to remember that using the phone is a task that relies on the ability to understand what is often a very poor quality sound, and some people with hearing loss can find this extremely difficult.

But working on your hearing and listening rehab can go a long way toward building on the skills you already have. Below are rehab exercises you can do in the comfort of your room or home environment, and some practical tips to help you gain more confidence having conversations on the phone or online. ▶

1 Optimise your technology

Check that you are using the sound processor program and setting you hear best with before starting. If you are using external speakers for your listening exercises, set the volume at a moderate level and try not to use built-in laptop speakers – they tend to distort sound which will affect the quality and clarity of the speech.

2 Find a Rehab Partner

You will get the best results from phone rehab when you work with a supportive family member or close friend. This is especially important when you are doing the practise phone call exercises. When you are first getting started, we recommend that you work with someone whose voice you are very familiar with. You could even try developing a script that you can role play with your rehab partner. This may be a good way to ease into things and help practise your listening.

3 Practise regularly

Listening practise should be broken up into short, but frequent sessions. We recommend practising for around 10 - 15 minutes per day, five days a week. We have shared some phone exercises you can do below. Alternate the days when you do rehab with a partner and when you do independent rehab.

4 Set and revise listening goals

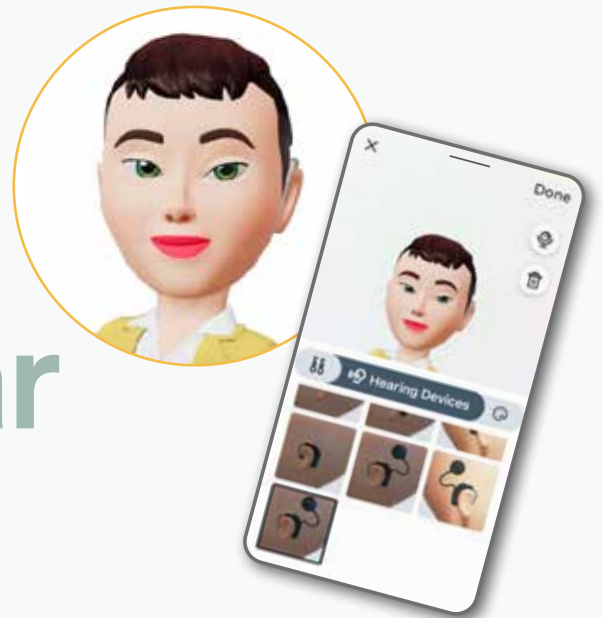
You can track your progress by setting yourself some listening goals. You can set realistic goals with the help of your hearing healthcare professional. But remember not to put too much pressure on yourself, your goals can always be revisited over time and adapted.

5 Be an advocate and educate others

Don't be afraid to remind family, friends and colleagues about the phone and online call communication strategies that will make listening easier for you. For example, request that they speak clearly and at a moderate pace. If they are taking the call in an environment with a lot of background noise, ask if they can move to a quieter area or re-schedule the call to a time when they may be in a quieter setting.

For video calls, encourage communication partners to face the camera so you get extra visual cues and to use headphones with a microphone, so their voice sounds clearer.

WhatsApp avatars now with cochlear implants



Did you know that you can now customise your WhatsApp avatar to display your sound processor?

Your avatar is a digital version of you that can be created from lots of combinations of eye shapes and colours, hair styles, facial features, and clothing – and now hearing devices.

WhatsApp is the messaging service owned by Meta, the global technology giant that also owns Facebook, so you can control how you appear when using the App.

For Cochlear, and cochlear implant recipients this is a crucial move to help build awareness and normalise the role cochlear implants play in treating moderately severe to profound hearing loss.

Rob Beenders, Director of Global Public Advocacy for Cochlear, says that Cochlear works with organisations to build awareness, promote inclusion and improve community-wide knowledge about hearing loss and the life-changing role of cochlear implants for many.

“However, the next and bigger challenge is to make sure that communities not only recognise that the avatar has a cochlear implant, but they also understand what cochlear implants can do to transform the lives of people with moderately severe to profound hearing loss. We will only achieve ‘normal’ when cochlear implants are both recognised and understood.”

So, what can you do?

“If you use WhatsApp to message your friends and family, and you have a cochlear implant, can you create your own avatar and proudly display your sound processor”, says Rob.



“I love how the avatar empowers me to talk about my Cochlear implants and sound processors. It makes me feel included. It is a great way to start conversations. I think it helps spread awareness about hearing health and issues - in such a cool way.”

Smriti, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.



Why Bernie thinks the latest technology is “fantastic and so much easier”

Bernie, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.

Sport has been a major part of Bernie's life since he was 7 years old – as a player, someone who enjoys watching myriad sports and as a long-time sports journalist. Bernie believes that this love of sports is the

reason he lost his hearing, having been hit in the head by a cricket ball as a teenager and experiencing a steady decline that led to getting hearing aids in his 20s and eventually Cochlear implants in both ears. ▶

- ◀ Now that he is using two Cochlear™ Nucleus® 8 Sound Processors, Bernie is loving ForwardFocus[®]. Whenever he's struggling to hear in noisy situations, Bernie simply turns it on manually using the Nucleus Smart App on his smartphone.[#]

Imagine Bernie is interviewing a renowned international cricket or rugby player in the locker rooms at half time. The players, coach and staff are talking and moving around in the background, and Bernie is trying to hear both his cameraman's direction and the player's answers to his questions live on TV.

"ForwardFocus is fantastic and for work, it's great," says Bernie. "I can switch it on if I'm doing an interview which I did recently [with a key rugby league player] and I could hear him perfectly. The cameraman couldn't hear the answers, and I could, which is an example of how well it works."

It's also a feature he uses socially in cafes, bars and restaurants.

"I can't recommend it enough, particularly in noisy places when you want to cut out noise behind you. [When] you're talking to your mates who are in front of you, it will just focus on them and makes a massive difference." ▶



Bernie, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.

"It was a dramatic change for me because at the time I was working in the media and there were times I couldn't even hear on a telephone. I wouldn't be able to work in the media at all if I didn't have my Cochlear implants."

Bernie, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.

- ◀ A difference Bernie has also noted compared to his previous Nucleus 6 Sound Processors is the clarity of sound when directly streaming phone calls to his sound processors.

“What’s great about the Nucleus 8 [Sound Processor] are the features that come with it – the audio streaming from the phone to allow you to make phone calls, talk to people, and obviously listening to music,” says Bernie.

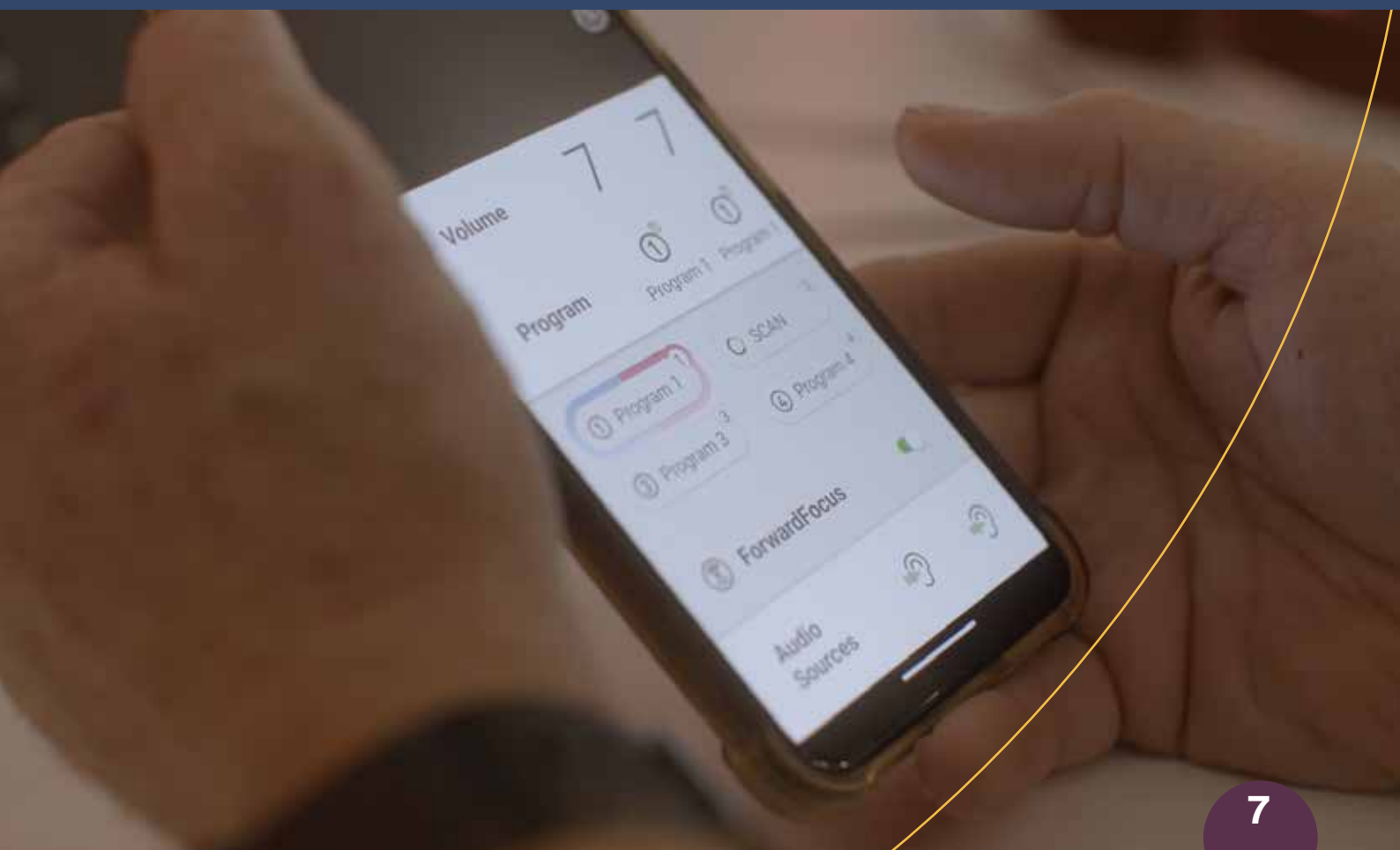
“They’ve made a huge difference, particularly in phone conversations. The clarity is so much better than holding it to your ear or holding it to the processor. It’s like someone’s talking directly into your ears. It’s fantastic and so much easier.”

When Bernie’s at home watching sports on TV with his friends, he currently uses the TV Streamer to stream audio to his sound processors. But he’s also excited about the new connectivity options that are to come in the future.*

Updating his sound processors has been an important part of Bernie’s ability to work as a journalist, as well as his enjoyment of life. Having started with the Freedom® Sound Processor, before using the Nucleus 5, Nucleus 6 and now Nucleus 8 Sound Processors, Bernie has noticed a significant improvement each time.

“The continual upgrades have always had a positive effect on my life, whether it be at work or socially, because with every upgrade there’s always something that makes it better,” says Bernie. “I just can’t wait for the next thing they bring along.”

**What could a new sound processor mean for you?
Learn more about the Nucleus 8 Sound Processor.**





**Enjoy TV your
way with Amazon
and Cochlear**

◀ Would you like an easier way to watch and hear TV to enjoy live sport, movies and your favourite shows to your sound processor?

You can now stream audio from your favourite platforms and local channels, directly to your compatible* sound processor through the Amazon Fire TV products.

Amazon has collaborated with Cochlear to offer recipients more accessibility options. It means you can direct-stream audio without needing a smartphone or accessory, offering the ability to hear better audio when captions are limited or unavailable.

We hear from our recipients that being able to stream and listen to commentary during live broadcasts of sporting events adds to their enjoyment enormously due to the mixed quality of live captioning. Using direct streaming through Amazon devices, you can watch and enjoy major sports events and movies with friends and family, with your own personal hearing experience.

Through the collaboration, Cochlear is the first to offer hearing implant recipients streaming with compatible Amazon Fire TV products.

According to Amazon, improving TV sound quality was one of the most requested features among people with hearing loss who use hearing aids.²

What is an Amazon Fire TV product?

Fire TV products, like the Amazon Fire TV Cube, are a range of streaming media players that connect to your TV. You can connect compatible sound processors directly to the Fire TV Cube for private listening without needing a smartphone or accessory. This gives you the ability to enjoy audio from streaming services, apps, games and even “ask Alexa” via voice command.

What sound processors are compatible?

The following Cochlear™ sound processors can be paired with Amazon Fire TV products:

- Nucleus® 8 Sound Processor
- Nucleus 7 Sound Processor
- Nucleus Kanso® 2 Sound Processor
- Baha® 6 Max Sound Processor





Massimo, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.

Musician creates online program to connect recipients with music

When you're a professional musician, hearing loss can be devastating, but for cochlear implant recipient Massimo Tonson Latour, it was just the start of a whole new adventure – to help other recipients who are musicians reconnect with music. ▶

- ◀ Massimo is the Australian creator of an online music training program to help people with cochlear implants regain their appreciation of music and understand the benefits of music to improve speech perception.

“It’s well-proven that music pitch rehabilitation also improves our abilities in the everyday speech world, allowing the recipient to experience and enjoy not only music, but also the many aspects of a full and healthy social lifestyle,” he says.

A professional musician, Massimo has been performing for many years and has completed formal studies in electric and classical guitar.

But when Massimo lost his hearing due to Meniere’s disease, and despite the success of his cochlear implant, his world turned upside down: “I completely lost the ability to correctly pitch music notes, nor could I recognise the music I had played for more than 40 years, or the music of other musicians.”

With perseverance, the guitarist created an online program called Playing Music After Deafness using techniques he developed to help others reconnect with music.

“There would be a lot of musicians around the globe that have lost their hearing and have

given up music completely, not realising that the cochlear implant can offer them the opportunity to continue their musical journey, certainly with limits but not without true rewards.

“I have been able to regain my ability to pitch notes correctly that I had lost completely and, encouraged and inspired by my more than positive results, I strongly felt I had to share my techniques with others,” says Massimo.

In his program, Massimo shares rehab techniques he found effective, as well as videos and free online chat advice.

“My findings are purely based on my own research on how human hearing works and how the brain has stored this huge library of musical sounds, frequencies and correct pitches.

“For example, we know that the complexities of musical frequencies are very different from the ones normally found in everyday speech, so the program offers information on the way certain instruments and their natural acoustic sounds are more suited than others to the process of rehabilitation. Thanks to my rehabilitation efforts, I can correctly perceive music that is rich with melodies and sound complexities.” ▶

“There are no limits to the power of music, and not just for musicians but also for music amateurs, given its beneficial effects in our lives.”

Massimo, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient.

Here are Massimo's tips to help you enjoy music

1 Use quality equipment to listen to music

Use a quality stereo player and quality monitors and speakers. Start with very low volumes and reduce the bass frequencies while adding mid tones and treble ones.

"Generally, cochlear implant recipients can be sensitive to loud sound, so very soft melodic music is the answer. The best scenario is to use quality media players, very good speakers and be in control of the mix by reducing low frequencies and incorporating more mid-frequencies and highs."

2 Listen to familiar music and songs

Listen to lyrics and music you know to help your brain recognise and process the sounds: "Listeners can be helped if they know the melody or the words of a song, allowing the brain to use music information that has been stored previously."

3 Keep track of your listening achievements

"Keep the sessions short – and time them or record them. Write down the name of the song and include the amount of bass, treble and mid tones that you used. Continue to listen and, once you're comfortable, make the task harder by increasing the tonalities to allow the brain to gently adapt."

4 Practice

Practice daily and rest between sessions, but try to practise three times a day – every morning, afternoon and evening – to challenge the brain.

"Never despair from the initial results because in order to make improvement, it is necessary to make a proper commitment, apply the required changes and do the work that is necessary. In short, little effort equals poor results."

5 Challenge yourself

Once you've achieved good results, set bigger challenges such as listening to the radio in the car while surrounded by driving and traffic noises.

"It is essential to try to obtain good results within your limits and then gradually push outside your boundaries of comfort."

[Click here to find out more about Massimo's online program.](#)

6 simple tips to help you in the workplace

Workplace situations and environments can be challenging with hearing loss – whether you work in an open-plan office, busy retail outlet or noisy workshop.

As well as physical challenges, many people with cochlear implants also find it hard to know when or how to talk to colleagues about their implant, especially if you are new to a role or an organisation.

The good news: you can feel more confident when communicating with colleagues or customers. Try these simple tips and strategies to help you get the most out of your technology no matter what your working environment.

We asked three Cochlear Family members – Greg, Tom and Lynn – to share their top tips to help you effectively manage phone calls, online meetings which are more commonplace these days, face-to-face meetings and other workplace interactions based on their own personal experiences. ▶



Tom, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient

1 Be open about your hearing loss

Let your colleagues and any other people you interact with in the workplace, such as customers, know you have hearing loss.

Also let people know what types of situations are challenging for you, such as people talking to you on the phone hands-free using the phone speaker or talking simultaneously.

“People can be very accommodating, provided they are aware of your challenges,” says Greg, an electrical engineer who uses the Cochlear™ Nucleus® System.

2 Ask for an agenda ahead of meetings

It’s a simple request, but this can make all the difference for you to help fully understand the context of a meeting, what to expect and topics to plan for. Altogether, you’ll hopefully feel more confident when contributing to the conversation.

“While this is generally good business practice, it helps you to prepare background information on the topics to be discussed and provides some boundaries on what might be said during the meeting,” says Greg.

3 Use your smartphone[#] rather than landline to stream calls

For Tom, who works in search and rescue, communicating on the phone is a critical part of his job.

“I’m on call 24-7. It could be a search and rescue; it could be a bad accident. Streaming calls right from my iPhone to my processors... I can hear the phone over the noise of the engine,” says Tom who also uses the Nucleus System.

4 Use video conferencing when working from home

If your employer uses video conferencing software that’s can connect with Bluetooth®, use your compatible[#] Apple or Android™ phone to directly stream the audio to your Nucleus 8 Sound Processor.

If Bluetooth is not available, you can still stream the audio from your computer to your processor using the Cochlear Wireless Mini Microphone 2+.

“Being able to stream and hear clearly is an absolute game-changer for me as much of my job is handling and dealing with people,” says Tom.

5 Think about where you sit in meetings

“Choose a place to sit where you have a clear view of the people you’ll talk with the most. Switch on the ForwardFocus[†] feature via your Smart App to reduce the noise coming from behind you. Otherwise sit at a table with your back to a wall,” says Greg.

6 Follow up work calls with a text or email message

“I follow up with an email or a text just for clarification to make sure that nothing else was missed or misunderstood in the conversation,” says Lynn, an assisted care administrator who uses the Nucleus System.

Other tools, such as instant messenger apps, also allow you to supplement your verbal communications with follow-up written communication.

Visit our website for more tips on workplace communication.



Share your story with Cochlear Family

Cochlear Family wants to hear from you. Share your story, tips, tricks, advice, ideas and any questions you might have.

Get in touch >

Hear now. And always

As the global leader in implantable hearing solutions, Cochlear is dedicated to helping people with moderate to profound hearing loss experience a life full of hearing. We have provided more than 700,000 implantable devices, helping people of all ages to hear and connect with life's opportunities.

We aim to give people the best lifelong hearing experience and access to innovative future technologies. We have the industry's best clinical, research and support networks.

That's why more people choose Cochlear than any other hearing implant company.

■ **Cochlear Ltd** (ABN 96 002 618 073) 1 University Avenue, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia

www.cochlear.com

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2. Amazon Fire TV Blog. Fire TV launches hearing aid pairing. Available at <https://amazonfiretv.blog/fire-tvlaunches-hearing-aid-pairing-423d56625683> [last accessed December 2022].

*For information regarding the compatibility of Cochlear's Sound Processors with Amazon devices, visit www.cochlear.com/compatibility

± ForwardFocus is a clinician-enabled feature that can be user controlled or automated.

#The Nucleus 8 Sound Processor is compatible with Apple and Android devices. The Cochlear Nucleus Smart App is available on App Store and Google Play. For compatibility information and devices visit www.cochlear.com/compatibility

¥ As Bluetooth LE Audio compatible devices become available, a sound processor firmware update will be required to use certain features.

Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always follow the instructions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

Views expressed are those of the individual. Consult your health professional to determine if you are a candidate for Cochlear technology.

The product images shown are for illustrative purposes only and may not be an exact representation of the product.

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