

Carer guide: Using simple communication tools

As speech changes, you can help set up, support, use, and advocate for everyday communication tools.

Use this guide to learn quickly about:

- a variety of simple communication tools
- why these are useful for a person living with MND when speech gets harder
- how you can help them stay connected
- where to get support.

Start with the simplest tools

- Try others to find what works best.
- Change tools as speech and fatigue change.



Pen and paper or whiteboards

- Help try notepads, whiteboards and boogie boards, along with different pens.
- Keep a few in easy-to-reach spots (living room, kitchen, bedside).
- Keep a backup in the car or in a hospital bag.
- Use a whiteboard for quick back-and-forth chats.



Communication boards

- Boards with letters, words, phrases, pictures or symbols (e.g. comfort, food and drink).

Partner-assisted scanning (PAS)

You point to, or read out, letters, words, or symbols on a communication board or device. The person with speech difficulty signals “yes” when the right one is reached. This is simple and reliable.



Messaging and notes

- Suggest text or notes instead of phone calls if speech is tiring.
- Help save useful phrases in the phone’s Notes app.



Help with documents

- Print out a few copies of the I have MND wallet card.
- Offer to help prepare important documents like ‘My care needs’.
- Offer to write for them.

A speech pathologist and occupational therapist will help choose the best communication devices and methods. They also offer training for you.



Set up text to speech apps

- Download and set up the app on their phone/tablet.
- Pre-load common phrases (like “Please wait” or “I’m tired”).
- Make sure the device is charged and nearby.



Set up smart devices

- Set up voice assistants (Siri, Alexa, Google) for simple commands.
- Show others how to use apps or switches if speaking is hard.



Support voice amplifiers

- Help put the microphone in the right place (close to their mouth).
- Check the battery before outings.
- Turn the volume up slowly to avoid squealing feedback.

Your wellbeing matters. Take short breaks, share tasks when possible, and look after your own mental health. This helps you stay steady, patient, and safe while supporting the person you care for.

Support for you

MND Associations: 1800 777 175 support groups, carer education, equipment

Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737 counselling, respite, coaching

Lifeline: 13 11 14 24/7 crisis support

About this guide

This guide is designed for carers to use **when speech gets harder**. It is part of the *speech and communication in MND* series of guides and practical tools. This series was developed by MND Queensland, people living with MND, and their carers to help prepare for and adjust to speech changes, get support, and stay connected.

You might also like to look at these guides:

- *Partner assisted scanning and communication boards*
- *Mental health and wellbeing*
- *Carer guides:*
 - *When speech gets harder*
 - *Staying connected without speech*

Scan here for more

