



Tips and Hints!

Felicity Bleckly lived deaf for 15-20 years and received her first cochlear implant in 2003. Today, she's an active member of the Cochlear Awareness Network in Australia, and shares her tips for using the phone with a cochlear implant.

Tips and Hints for using the Telephone

What accessories do you use with landline and mobile phones?

I have to use many phone kinds because I work under contract and every place is different. At work some go through switchboards and others don't. At home I have both fixed and cordless phones and my husband and I both have mobiles. It is important I get clear and stable sound so I have experimented with a number of ways to use the phone, all of which work well in some situations but not necessarily in all situations.

T'Switch

All phones I use are compatible with t'switch technology. This means I can quickly switch my Freedom™ speech processor to t'switch, pick up and answer and hear on all my phones including my mobile. However, the difficulty with just using the t'switch is keeping the phone ear piece in the correct position over my microphones. I find I wriggle around, and have to take notes and so on and if the ear piece isn't in the right position the sound fades and it's not always easy to find the 'sweet' spot while my caller is talking.

One thing I do is hold the ear piece and place my forefinger on my processor helping to keep the telephone receiver stable and in position.

T'Switch buzz

The t'switch or telecoil is an electronic pick-up and can be affected by electronic interference from computers, faxes or even fluorescent lights. The buzz can often be eliminated by turning away from the device causing the interference.

T Link

A T Link is more or less a t'switch extension cord. You can plug the T Link into the headphone socket on your phone and place the ear hook over your ear. Switch your

processor to T'switch and the cord works in the same way as simply using the t'switch. This



works extremely well with my hands free cordless phones at home and has the benefit of eliminating any buzzing which comes from the phone itself. It also allows me to be hands free because I am not holding the phone to my processor microphone. I can put the phone on the desk and write notes or type into my computer. The thing to look for is the socket size on your mobile phone making sure it is the same size and type as the plug size and type on the audio cord. (There are different plugs and sizes available) The picture shows my hands free phone

with the t'link plugged into it. The small black 'bulge' on the cord is the microphone.

Audio cord

The audio cord does not have a speaker microphone on it so a Cochlear Implant audio cord can be only be used with phones where the phone will allow you to use the phone microphone. When I plug the audio cord into my Samsung mobile it allows me to choose either 'headset' or 'earphone'. By choosing earphone it tells me I am using the phone microphone. I plug the audio cord straight into the base of my processor and can make and take phone calls with the sound coming directly into my processor. Using this approach the sound is the clearest I ever get because there is no outside interference. Once again check the size and type of the plug on the cord and socket on the phone.

Telstra Cochlear Implant Telephone Adaptor



This adaptor needs to be used with a fixed landline phone and is plugged into the phone and the handset plugged into the adaptor with a cord plugged directly to my processor.

The sound using this device is again extremely clear. A volume control on the adaptor allows even more control of sound. Look for a landline phone which has the correct kind of sockets for the adaptor to plug into. You need to get

approval from your clinic and apply for the adaptor which, when approved, is free of charge. The photo shows me using the Telstra phone adaptor. As you can see I must use the handset microphone but I do not need to put it up to my ear.

Computer phoning

For computer phoning, you need a good computer and computer sound system, preferably broadband internet connection (although it can be used over dial-up connections), a computer microphone and a computer camera. You need to download a phone program from the internet. Skype is one such program. You can dial any phone number using the

Skype program. If the person you are calling is on Skype you can connect through Skype and this is free – anywhere around the world. If the person you are calling is on a mobile or landline phone you can still call using Skype, however you need to pre-pay an amount to Skype before you can connect. They recommend a small fee (mine was \$16). When you use that up you simply pay a little more. Skype calls to non-Skype numbers are around ½ the price of any other call of the same type in Australia.



The picture shows the Skype video phone screen – my video is shown the bottom left hand corner and my caller is shown in his own window.

The fabulous thing about Skype is making a video call. My daughter lives in the USA. We talk via Skype, free, for hours. She also has a video camera so we can see each other. The sound through my computer sound system is almost as good as when she's in the same room but the video quality can often be delayed so there is no lip reading help. Skype to Skype calls in Australia are usually good quality and there is often enough video to allow some lip reading if you need it. You can also plug a phone headset into your computer and use it to make computer calls.

What advice would you offer to other implant recipients?

Using a telephone can be daunting, even stressful at first, but it doesn't take long to get confident again. If you are having trouble, tell your caller. I find most are astonished that I am a totally deaf person making a phone call and couldn't be more helpful.

Position the handset or mobile at the top of your processor, near the microphone, to optimise the volume. Then get the right telephone and accessories, and practise by calling friends until you're really comfortable. It does take some getting used to. You just have to give yourself a chance.... Practice makes perfect!

Do you have any other useful comments?

The telecoil function needs to be programmed into your map by your audiologist. Some people don't know they can choose either telecoil alone (cuts out all environmental noise) or microphone and telecoil functionality (which gives a % of environmental noise and the telecoil function), so ask your audiologist what has been set up for you. I tried blue tooth technology as well as a couple of other t'switch links and none of these worked well for me although I know other recipients love them. Go to someone's home where they have these devices and try them out for yourself. You'll be so glad you did.

Felicity Bleckly - felicity@bleckly.com

Cochlear – customerservice@cochlear.com.au OR phone 1800 620 929

