

Text relay services

This factsheet explains how the Next Generation Text (NGT) Service, which replaced Text Relay, helps people who are deaf or have hearing loss communicate with people who use telephones, and vice versa, through a relay assistant. NGT can be used with smartphones, tablets, computers and textphones.

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What is the Next Generation Text (NGT) Service?

The NGT Service is designed to help people who can't hear or speak on the telephone. It has replaced the old Text Relay service, which provided relay assistants to help people using a textphone communicate with people using a telephone, and vice versa.

NGT provides the same relay service, which we explain in the next section. The big difference is that you can now also connect to a relay assistant when using a smartphone, tablet or computer that's connected to the internet. To do this, you need to download and install a free app (software application) called NGT Lite.

The NGT Lite app

The app works with:

- Android smartphones or tablet devices running Android 4.1 Jelly Bean or later
- Apple iPhones or iPads running iOS 6 or later
- computers with Java 1.7 or later installed - Windows XP or later, Linux, or an Intel based Mac.

You can download the app to your smartphone or tablet from:

- the Apple App Store if you have an Apple device (smartphone or tablet)
- the Google Play Store if you have an Android device.

You can either visit these online stores through the app that's pre-loaded onto your smartphone or tablet, or by going to the relevant website:

- App Store: apple.com/uk/ios/app-store/
- Google Play Store: play.google.com

If you want to download the app onto your computer or laptop, you can do so by visiting the NGT website: ngts.org.uk/?bookmark=eula

For information on how to download and install the app, visit ngts.org.uk/?bookmark=download The information is also available in British Sign Language.

How does NGT Lite work?

To start using NGT Lite, you must link the app to the phone number you'll be using to make and receive calls.

You can find videos explaining how to do this on the NGT website: ngts.org.uk/?bookmark=setup

Once you've set up the app, you can use NGT in one of the following ways to communicate with people who can hear:

- **Type and read:** If you are deaf or have hearing loss and don't use your voice, you can type your part of the conversation. A relay assistant will read this to the hearing person at the other end of the call and will then type what they say for you to read.

- **Speak and read:** If you are deaf or have hearing loss but do use your voice, you can speak your part of the conversation. A relay assistant will type the reply from the person at the other end of the call for you to read.

As long as the other person has downloaded and installed the free NGT Lite app or is using a textphone, you can also have a direct text conversation without a relay assistant.

Using a relay assistant

NGT automatically changes the way it sets up your phone call depending on the device the other person is using, so you don't need to do anything different when making your call.

If the person has a textphone or is using the NGT Lite app, you'll see the message 'NGT connected text to text' when your call is answered, and you can begin messaging each other straight away.

If the person on the other end of the call doesn't have a textphone or the NGT Lite app installed, a relay assistant is automatically connected to your call.

The relay assistant stays on the line throughout your call, or for as long as they're needed. They relay the conversation by speaking your words to the other person (if needed) and typing their words to you.

The relay assistant only relays the conversation; they take no other part in the call. All calls handled by relay assistants are private and confidential.

Personal, sensitive and confidential information is relayed securely.

Important: If you use NGT Lite in a public place, make sure the volume is turned down on your phone; otherwise the people around you might be able to hear what the person is saying to the relay assistant.

How do I use NGT Lite on a smartphone?

- Open NGT Lite and check you have the green icon at the top of the window to tell you that the app is connected. If the icon is red, check you're connected to the internet.
- Switch to your phone keypad and dial **18001**, followed by the full number of the person you want to call, including the area code.
- Switch back to NGT Lite and you'll see a pop-up window. Click 'Join'.
- The app will show announcements such as 'NGT ring ring' or 'NGT busy'.
- When the call is answered, the NGT Service will automatically connect a relay assistant to the call if the other person is using a phone.

How do I use NGT Lite on a computer or tablet?

- Open NGT Lite on your computer or tablet and check you have the green icon at the top of the window to tell you that the app is connected. If the icon is red, check you're connected to the internet.
- Use your landline or mobile phone (the one linked to the app) to dial **18001**, followed by the full number of the person you want to call, including the area code.
- Switch back to NGT Lite and you'll see a pop-up window – click 'Join' or press the space bar on your computer.
- The app will show announcements such as 'NGT ring ring' or 'NGT busy'.
- When the call is answered, the NGT Service will automatically connect a relay assistant to the call if the other person is using a phone.

How do I answer calls through the app?

It doesn't matter how the person calling you makes the call or what equipment they are using, you answer the call in the same way. They can dial a TextNumber ([see page 6](#)), use the **18002** prefix ([see page 5](#)) or NGT Assist ([see page 7](#)), and be using a telephone, textphone or the NGT Lite app.

- An incoming call will ring your phone, flash lights or trigger a pager (as normal).
- If using a phone, answer the call and open NGT Lite. Whether you're using a phone or computer, a window will pop-up displaying the call. Click 'Join' or press the space bar on your computer.
- The NGT Service will connect to a relay assistant if the other person is using a phone. If they're using a textphone or NGT Lite, you'll be able to type and/or talk to them directly.

At the end of a call, simply hang up your phone and NGT Lite will show the call has been released. If you don't close NGT Lite, it will disconnect from the NGT Service after three minutes.

Common text abbreviations

People use abbreviations when making text calls, so it's useful to learn them:

GA: 'Go ahead' – this tells the other person that you've finished what you want to say and that it's their turn to reply.

BIBI: 'Bye bye' – this is usually followed by SK.

SK: 'Stop keying' – this tells the other person that it's the end of your conversation and you want to end the call.

GA or SK: 'Go ahead or stop keying' – this allows the other person to choose whether to end the call or carry on the conversation when you want to end the call.

What is a textphone?

A textphone has a keyboard and display screen and needs a telephone landline to work. You type what you want to say (rather than speak into a mouthpiece) and can read the reply on the display screen.

If you prefer, you can still use a textphone to communicate using text in real-time through an NGT relay assistant.

Note: Although textphones have been around for many years, their use is now in decline, as newer technologies such as NGT Lite and speech-to-text applications are becoming more widely used. Currently, only one textphone model is available in the UK.

How do I use a textphone to contact someone else with a textphone?

- Dial **180015**, then the full phone number of the person you want to call, including the area code (a relay assistant will not be part of your call).
- Once the other person has answered, anything they type will appear on your screen and anything you type will appear on theirs.
- It's important to take turns so that the text doesn't get jumbled up and unreadable. Use GA (go ahead – see box, [page 4](#)) to tell the other person it's their turn.
- When the call has finished, hang up.

How do I use a textphone to contact someone with a telephone?

- Dial **18001**, then the full phone number of the person you want to call, including the area code.
- When the person you're calling answers, they will receive an automated message telling them it's an NGT call and there will be a short delay while a relay assistant joins the call.
- Each person takes it in turn to type or speak. When you've finished typing your message, type GA, which means 'go ahead'.
- Remember to allow enough time for the relay assistant to read your message to the person you're calling and type their response back to you.

How do I use a phone to contact somebody through NGT?

- Dial **18002**, then the full phone number of the person you want to call, including the area code. Alternatively, you can call the person's TextNumber if they have one ([see page 6](#)).
- If the person you're calling picks up using a textphone or is using the NGT app, you will hear an NGT greeting message while you wait for a relay assistant to join the call.

- Each person takes it in turn to speak or type. When you've finished saying something, say 'go ahead'.
- Remember to allow enough time for the relay assistant to type your side of the conversation to the person you're calling and read their response back to you.

Note: You cannot use NGT prefixes to call a UK textphone from abroad. Instead, hearing callers should dial the international number **+44 151 494 2022** to reach a relay assistant, who will ask which number you are trying to reach and then connect you.

If the person you are calling has a TextNumber, you can use that instead. You don't need to use the 18002 prefix.

What is a TextNumber?

A TextNumber is a unique 11-digit NGT access code that you can associate with your home or mobile number and is an alternative to the **18002** prefix. Once you've set up a TextNumber, you can give it to anyone that you want to call you.

Please note:

- your callers can still use the **18002** prefix even after you set up a TextNumber
- your callers don't have to use TextNumbers to use NGT
- you can answer calls using either the NGT Lite app or a textphone.

You can find out more at ngts.org.uk/textnumber_index.php

How do I call the emergency services?

If you need emergency services – police, fire, ambulance, coastguard or mountain rescue – use the NGT Lite app or your textphone to dial **18000**. This is the textphone equivalent of the 999 emergency number.

When you get the message 'Emergency, which service? GA', type which service you need. You will then be connected to the right emergency service and a relay assistant.

emergencySMS

You might also consider the emergencySMS service for mobile and smartphone users, which covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If you've registered your phone for the emergencySMS service, you can contact emergency services by texting a message to 999. You will need to register your mobile phone before using the emergencySMS service.

To find out more and to register, go to emergencysms.org.uk

Can I access automated call options when using NGT?

Many companies have automated call options that give callers a list of numbers to press to get to the right department.

This service may be difficult for you to use, because the recorded messages don't give the relay assistant enough time to type what is being said. Also, the messages don't leave enough time for you to make your choice.

If you experience this problem, try Text Relay Assist (see below) or call the NGT team ([see page 8](#)). They can contact the company to tell them about the problem.

Can I get help to make a call?

Yes. You can call NGT Assist. A relay assistant will answer and can help you to make the call.

There are two ways to get help:

- If you are deaf or have hearing loss, deafblind or have speech problems, and you use a textphone or NGT Lite, dial **0870 240 9598**. Calls to this number cost 1p per minute plus your phone company's Access Charge.
- If you are hearing and use a telephone, dial **0870 240 5152**. Calls to this number cost 1p per minute plus your phone company's Access Charge.

How NGT Assist can help

- The relay assistant will ask who you would like to call and their telephone number. You can either type or speak to the operator. You can also give the operator additional information about the call.
- The relay assistant will dial the number you want and will tell you if the number is engaged or unavailable.
- If your call is connected, the relay assistant will confirm you are speaking to the person you have asked for and you can continue your conversation.
- At the end of the call, the relay assistant will end the call.

How much do calls cost through NGT?

All telephone service providers must offer a rebate scheme to people who use a relay service because they are hearing or speech impaired.

People calling you should pay the same charge they would pay for any other number with a UK area code or mobile telephone call.

You should contact your telephone service provider – for example, BT, Virgin Media, Sky, TalkTalk, and so on – for details of its rebate scheme. They will be able to help you with any questions about your bill.

Where can I get more information about NGT?

Next Generation Text Service

NGT Team
c/o Internal Box 14
Telephone House
170-175 Moor Lane
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 1BA

Telephone: **0800 7311 888**
Textphone or NGT Lite app:
0800 500 888
Online contact form:
ngts.org.uk/contact.php
Website: ngts.org.uk
[hintstips_index.php](https://ngts.org.uk/hintstips_index.php)

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

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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.

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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.

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

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