

- ✓ Allow the person plenty of time to write – being rushed or excited will only make writing more difficult.
- ✓ Be aware of how much we rely on writing. Think of how often we jot down a note, write a cheque or sign our name. Keep in mind that the person with aphasia may no longer be able to do these things and may need your help.
- ✗ Unless the person asks you to, don't be picky with their writing. If they don't dot their "i's" or cross their "t's", it doesn't really matter – you will still understand their message.

*One in a series of pamphlets about
Speech-Language after
Illness or Injury to the Brain*

*This series written by Justine Hamilton and Deidre Sperry, speech-language pathologists. Adapted with their permission for use by OSLA.
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LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

Writing



LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

Writing

Some illnesses or injuries can cause damage to part of the brain. A stroke is an example of one of these injuries. A stroke happens when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

A stroke or other brain injury can result in many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.

One effect that can result from damage to the brain on speech is called aphasia. The word 'aphasia' can mean many different things. Aphasia can affect a person's ability to speak, understand, read or write, or any combination of these.

This pamphlet explains the effect on writing.

- The writing problems caused by aphasia have nothing to do with using your hand or holding the pencil. Having to use your left hand instead of your right does make it more difficult. But even if the muscles in your hand work perfectly, the aphasia will still show in your writing.
- Some people have severe aphasia and cannot even write a single letter. Other people have mild aphasia and may only have difficulty writing full sentences or spelling certain words.
- When a person with aphasia writes, the words may come out wrong, even though they're thinking of the right words. Sometimes the word is close to the one they want – they may write “shoe” instead of “sock” or “char” instead of “chair”. Or the word may be completely unrelated – they may write “foot” instead of “window”, or write a made-up word, such as “kerchump” instead of “supper”.
- Aphasia affects a person's ability to write words and sentences. It does not affect a person's intelligence.
- The illness or injury has just made it difficult for the person's brain to “translate” thoughts into written words and sentences.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Check with the speech therapist to see how well the person with aphasia can write. The speech therapist can then give you specific ideas about how to help the person.