

# Getting Started with Speech-to-Speech for Practitioners and Users



CALIFORNIA RELAY

The California Speech-to-Speech (STS) service enables people whose speech is difficult for others to understand to communicate by telephone. With this service, you can make calls by yourself, independent of the availability of your assistant or caregiver.

When you make a call using STS, a specially trained STS Communications Assistant (CA) will be on the line with you to assist you during your call. The CA can repeat what you are saying to the person on the other end. You and the person on the phone with you can decide how much of your speech will be repeated: only particularly difficult words or every word you say. People without a speech disability can also initiate an STS call by dialing 711 or the numbers listed below and providing the CA the number of the person they wish to call.

The California STS service is part of the Relay Service, a program of the California Public Utilities Commission.

## Getting Started with Relay Services, Speech-to-Speech Calling

### How to Get Started:

#### Call the Relay Service

- English: 1-877-632-9095
- Spanish: 1-877-419-8440

#### Set Up Your Customer Profile\*:

- A representative will assist by explaining the Customer Profile options and submit your requested preferences for you. Some preferences include:

CHOICES	DESCRIPTION
<b>Gender</b>	Choose a male or female CA to relay your call. Please note your preferred gender may not be available at the time of your call.
<b>Frequently Used Numbers</b>	Set up a list of frequently called numbers. For future calls simply state the name or speed dial number and the operator will dial that number.
<b>Long Distance Carrier</b>	Pre-select long distance carriers for toll calls. If you do not choose a long distance company, then your call will go automatically to AT&T Long Distance.
<b>Standard Message</b>	Create a standard message to use when the call is connected to an answering machine. The message may include your name, a callback number, and other pertinent information.
<b>Opening/Closing Message</b>	Create a personalized opening/closing message to use during conversations.
<b>Location(s)</b>	Register different phone numbers and days/hours of availability. Calls will be directed appropriately.

Consider using CTAP equipment to support your calls. You can find more information at [caconnect.org/speech](https://caconnect.org/speech)

*\*Even if you don't have an STS Customer Profile, you can still personalize your call by giving instructions to the CA before your call is connected.*

## Making a Speech-to-Speech (STS) Call

### Make a Practice Call

- Make a practice call by calling the relevant number below and requesting the STS Training Line:
  - English: 1-877-632-9095
  - Spanish: 1-877-419-8440
- Ask any questions you might have about Speech-to-Speech or Visually Assisted Speech-to-Speech (VA STS)
- Get comfortable using tools like Mute so that the person on the other end of the line only hears the CA's voice, or practice informing your CA on which equipment you're using to facilitate this call.
  - Set up an STS Customer Profile using the options listed on page 1. You may also do this independently or with the assistance of family, friends, or a Speech-Language practitioner.

### Make a Speech-to-Speech Call

- **Dial 1-800-854-7784 or dial 711 and request STS.**
- **Once you're connected with a Communications Assistant (CA)**
  - The CA will ask if you are familiar with STS. The two of you can review how you would like the call to go including things like: instructions for announcing who is calling, how much the CA should re-voice your conversation, etc.
  - Once you're ready, you can share the phone number, including area code, that you would like to call.
- **When the recipient picks up:**
  - The CA will announce that the call is a Speech-to-Speech relay call and can explain what that means.
  - Then you can begin your conversation and the CA will re-voice what you say and the recipient will speak to you directly.
- **When the call ends:**
  - The CA will ask if you want to place another call. If you do, you can share another telephone number and make another call.

## What Role Does a Communications Assistant Play?

Communication Assistants (CAs) are specially trained to facilitate communication for people whose speech is difficult for others to understand. During your STS call CA's responsibilities include:

- Working with you to convey your message to the other party.
- Asking you to repeat, spell a particular word or rephrase your sentence.

The CA may offer you a variety of call handling options. Depending on the purpose of your call, and the type of call you are making (personal, business, medical, etc.), you can instruct the CA to follow the options that will be best for your call.

Please note that federal regulations specify very strict confidentiality requirements for CAs of all relay services. No part of the conversation that takes place between callers is revealed or recorded in written, verbal, or any other form.

## Speech-to-Speech Equipment and Resources

There are plenty of accessible resources for those looking to learn more about California Relay's Speech-to-Speech services and specialized equipment.

- Website: [caconnect.org/relay/sts](https://caconnect.org/relay/sts)
- STS Training Line:
  - English: 1-877-632-9095
  - Spanish: 1-877-419-8440
- Equipment: [caconnect.org/speech](https://caconnect.org/speech)
- Equipment Application: [caconnect.org/apply](https://caconnect.org/apply)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### How does STS work?

When you call 1-800-854-7784 and request STS you will be connected with a specially trained Communications Assistant. After agreeing upon the logistics of the call (re-voicing, introductions, etc.) the CA will dial the recipient's number. Once the recipient picks up you can begin your call and the CA will re-voice your message. The recipient will respond directly to you. When the call ends you will have the option to place a second call or hang up.

### Do I need any specialized equipment?

There is no special equipment required to be able to use the STS service. However, if you would like to use equipment like a Speech Generating Device (SGD), or an Alaryngeal Device (ALD), the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP) provides specialized telephone equipment that may make using the telephone easier for you. The program's accessible products and services are fully subsidized, removing financial barriers. You can find more information at [caconnect.org](http://caconnect.org)

### I'm interested in receiving specialized equipment. What should I do first?

There are two primary ways to access specialized equipment.

- Visit [caconnect.org](http://caconnect.org) to apply to receive specialized equipment.
- You can talk with your Speech Language Pathologist or a medical doctor about how to apply for the specialized equipment through California Connect

### What is the STS Training Line?

The Training Line is available to make it easy to set up STS Customer Profiles, make an STS test call, or ask any questions you or your family and friends might have about STS or VA STS

### Are there any costs associated with making an STS call?

There is no charge to use this STS service; you pay only for the cost of the call from your phone service provider, if any.

### What does the CA do?

A CAs main responsibility is to convey your message to the other parties on the line. Prior to the call, the CA will review your call preferences. During the call, they will listen to you and re-voice your message. In the instance that they do not understand, they will ask for clarification.

### Will my calls remain private?

Federal regulations specify very strict confidentiality requirements for CAs of all relay services. No part of the conversation that takes place between callers is revealed or recorded in written, verbal, or any other form.

### What happens if the CA doesn't understand me?

CAs are trained to understand speech that may be difficult to understand. If a CA doesn't understand something you say they may ask you to (1) repeat yourself (2) spell certain words or (3) rephrase your message.