

Our friendly helpline team is waiting  
to answer your call or email.

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Telephone 0808 808 0123  
Textphone 0808 808 9000  
Email [information@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:information@hearingloss.org.uk)

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[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

**ACTION ON**  
**HEARING**  
**LOSS**

## **Access to television**

**THE**  
**FACTS**

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# Access to television

This factsheet is part of our **Equipment** range. You will find it useful if you have a hearing loss and want to know how to get subtitles on TV and DVDs. When we say 'people with hearing loss' we mean people with all levels of hearing loss, including those who are profoundly deaf.

Read this factsheet to find out:

- How can I get subtitles on TV?
- Does every channel have subtitles?
- What are the main TV service providers?
- What do I do if I'm having problems receiving subtitles?
- How can I get subtitles online?
- Can I get subtitles on DVDs and Blu-ray?
- How do I adjust the sound on my television?
- How can I reduce background noise on television?
- Where can I get further information?

If you would like this factsheet in Braille, large print or audio format, please contact our helpline – see front page for contact details.

## How can I get subtitles on TV?

You can usually get subtitles on TV by pressing the 'subtitles' button on your remote control, or by pressing the 'menu' button and following the options for language and subtitles. You should be able to choose whether subtitles come on automatically or only when you select them from the remote control.

## Does every channel have subtitles?

The vast majority of channels, including all the main ones, have subtitles, but some smaller ones may not. Ofcom, the regulator for commercial television, has produced a Code on Television Access Services, which sets targets for the amount of TV subtitling, signing and audio description that broadcasters required to provide these services must provide.

To find out more, visit Ofcom's website: <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/tell-us/tv-and-radio/subtitling-signing-or-audio-description>

## What are the main TV service providers?

The following list is not exhaustive. Please note: Freeview, freesat and YouView are subscription free, but you'll need to buy the equipment to get set up. For cable TV, you'll need a cable set-top box, which will be provided as part of a subscription package.

- **Freeview** – you'll need a Freeview set-top box (prices vary) or a modern TV with a built-in Freeview tuner. [www.freeview.co.uk](http://www.freeview.co.uk)
- **Freesat** – you'll need a satellite dish and either a freesat set-top box (prices vary) or a TV with a built-in freesat tuner. [www.freesat.co.uk](http://www.freesat.co.uk)
- **YouView** – you can get YouView from BT or TalkTalk as part of a broadband package, or as a one-off payment of £169.99 straight from a retailer. [www.youview.com](http://www.youview.com)
- **Sky TV** – you can either sign up to a subscription package (prices vary depending on how many channels you want) or choose Freesat (also called free-to-view), a non-subscription option from Sky. You just pay a one-off cost of £175 for the SkyHD box, dish, viewing card and installation. [www.sky.com](http://www.sky.com)
- **Virgin Media** (cable TV) – [www.virginmedia.com](http://www.virginmedia.com)
- **WightCable** (provides cable TV in the Isle of Wight) – [www.wightfibre.com](http://www.wightfibre.com)
- **Smallworld Media** (provides cable services in Western Scotland and North West England). [www.smallworldcable.com](http://www.smallworldcable.com)

You can get set-top boxes that allow you to record TV programmes. However, not all set-top boxes will record subtitles, so please check before buying.

## What do I do if I'm having problems receiving subtitles?

If subtitles don't appear at all, or disappear during the programme, this is probably due to a temporary technical problem, so make a note of the channel, time and programme and contact the relevant channel. You can take your complaint further by contacting Ofcom (see below). The Ofcom website has an online complaints form or you can call their Advisory Team.

Ofcom doesn't regulate the BBC channels, so you should take any complaints about these directly to the BBC.

### Ofcom

Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA

Telephone 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040 Textphone 020 7981 3043

[www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

Online complaints form:

<https://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/tell-us/subs-signs-audio>

## **BBC channels**

BBC Complaints, PO Box 1922, Darlington DL3 0UR  
Telephone 0370 010 0222      Textphone 0370 010 0212  
[subtitling@bbc.co.uk](mailto:subtitling@bbc.co.uk)

## **ITV companies**

For information about ITV programmes and details for each office, contact:

ITV Viewer Services, Gas Street, Birmingham B1 2JT  
Telephone 0844 88 14150  
[viewerservices@itv.com](mailto:viewerservices@itv.com)  
[www.itv.com](http://www.itv.com)

## **Channel 4**

Channel 4 Enquiries, PO Box 1058, Belfast BT1 9DU  
Telephone 0845 076 0191  
[viewerenquiries@channel4.co.uk](mailto:viewerenquiries@channel4.co.uk)  
[www.channel4.com/4viewers](http://www.channel4.com/4viewers)

## **Channel 5**

Customer Services, 10 Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6EN  
Telephone 020 8612 7700 or 08457 05 05 05  
[customerservices@channel5.com](mailto:customerservices@channel5.com)  
[www.channel5.com](http://www.channel5.com)

For contact details for Sky, Virgin Media and other television companies, visit their websites, given in the 'What are the main TV service providers?' section of this factsheet.

## **How can I get subtitles online?**

### **Online TV services**

You can watch lots of TV programmes for free on the internet (usually for a limited time after they are broadcast) using 'on-demand' or 'catch-up' services such as:

- BBC iPlayer – [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer)
- ITV Player – [www.itv.com/itvplayer](http://www.itv.com/itvplayer)
- Channel 4 on-demand (4oD) – [www.channel4.com/4oD](http://www.channel4.com/4oD)
- Demand 5 – [www.channel5.com/demand5](http://www.channel5.com/demand5)

Only BBC iPlayer has subtitles on every programme. There is also some British Sign Language (BSL) signed content in the BBC sign zone section. 4oD has subtitles on all programmes except for US imports. Some programmes on ITV Player and Demand Five are also subtitled.

You can access online TV services through a computer or TV that's connected to broadband internet. Or you can watch online using a games console, tablet device or smartphone. With the exception of BBC iPlayer, subtitles are usually only available when you watch through a computer or TV.

## **Subscription services**

In the last few years, subscription-based film and programme services have become more popular. They allow you to order or download the latest films, box sets and dramas for a small monthly fee. However, not all of them carry subtitles, so do always check before signing up.

## **Can I get subtitles on DVDs and Blu-ray?**

Many films and TV programmes on DVD and Blu-ray (a high-definition DVD format) have subtitles. Some DVDs have subtitles that describe a particular noise or the type of music playing, so it's easier for you to follow the film. Check the back of the DVD or Blu-ray box to see what subtitles are available.

## **How to access subtitles on DVDs**

When you play a DVD, an introduction menu will usually appear on screen, showing the title. If subtitles are available, select the 'subtitles' or 'languages' option before you play the film. Another menu may appear if there are subtitles in more than one language. You may also be able to switch the subtitles on using the subtitles button on the DVD or Blu-ray player remote control.

'Bonus' material does not always have subtitles. You may find the website [www.dvd-subtitles.com](http://www.dvd-subtitles.com) useful. It gives detailed subtitling information for many popular DVD releases.

## **What if the DVD doesn't have subtitles?**

If you're unhappy that the DVD you are watching doesn't have subtitles, you can complain to the British Video Association.

### **British Video Association**

167 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5PE

Telephone 020 7436 0041

Fax 020 7436 0043

[general@bva.org.uk](mailto:general@bva.org.uk)

[www.bva.org.uk](http://www.bva.org.uk)

## **How do I adjust the sound on my television?**

All TVs have a volume control and many also have treble and bass adjustment. Increasing the treble boosts the high-frequency sounds and may make consonants like 's' and 'f' easier to hear.

Many TVs have advanced sound settings for more precise control over the tonal qualities of the sound, such as an 'equalizer', which lets you increase or decrease different audio frequency 'bands'.

The TV may also have various 'sound modes', such as 'Clear Voice', 'Voice Enhancer' or 'Dialogue Clarity', which emphasise speech over background music and sound effects, and 'Amplify', which increases high-frequency sounds.

Other adjustments may include independent speaker and headphone volume adjustment, and left/right balance, where the volume difference between the left and right TV speakers (or headphones if connected) can be adjusted. On most TVs, the speaker/s cut out when headphones are connected; however, this can be overridden on some sets so that sound comes from both. Access to all the above settings and adjustments is usually through the TV's on-screen menu using the remote control.

It is possible to connect external listening equipment to the TV, such as wireless headphones and home hearing loop systems. For more details, see our factsheets *Listening equipment* and *Hearing loop and infrared systems for people with hearing loss*.

## What about background noise on television?

Background noise can make it difficult for people with hearing loss to follow dialogue during a programme. If you have problems with background noise during a programme, get in touch with the relevant channel, giving details of the programme title and the date and time the programme was broadcast. By doing this, you can make programme-makers aware of the problem. See the 'What do I do if I'm having problems receiving subtitles?' section of this factsheet for a list of TV companies.

You can also contact our helpline for details about our campaign on access to the TV and web.

## Where can I buy products that may help?

We sell a range of equipment for people with hearing loss and tinnitus. Visit our shop to buy items of equipment online, or you can request a copy of our products catalogue by contacting us directly:

1 Haddonbrook Business Centre, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6YX

Telephone 01733 361199

Textphone 01733 238020

Fax 01733 361161

[solutions@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:solutions@hearingloss.org.uk)

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop)

## Further information from Action on Hearing Loss

Our helpline offers a wide range of information on many aspects of hearing loss. You can contact us for further copies of this factsheet and our full range of factsheets and leaflets – see the cover page for contact details.

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