



Helpful TTY Information

What is a TTY? A TTY (Teletypewriter) is also known as a TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf).

How it works: This device “rings” via flashing light or the more recent vibrating wrist band that resembles a watch. The TTY consists of a keyboard, which hold somewhere from 20 to 30 character keys, a display screen, and a modem. The letters that the TTY user types into the machine are turned into electrical signals that can travel over regular telephone lines. When the signals reach their destination (in this case another TTY) they are converted back into letters which appear on a display screen, are printed out on paper or both. Some of the newer TTY's are even equipped with answering machines.

Who uses it: The TTY has 4 million users nationwide. 3 million of these users are hearing impaired and the other 1 million have severe speech impairments.

Advantages: Without a means of Telecommunication, the deaf were, in a sense, isolated from many people and services. Life without a telephone substitute involved many miles of driving to deliver and relay messages. (Which was very time consuming and frustrating.) The TTY gives deaf people the luxury of just being able to pick up the phone and chat. It also provided an easier way to connect to police and fire stations in case of emergency. And with the later creation of MRC's (message relay centers) the TTY users could connect to any phone anywhere in the world.

Disadvantages: TTY users must know how to type. The alarmingly high spelling error rate of 5-6% (10% of which is TTY machine related as in the malfunction of a key) sometimes causes a problem in communication. One half million of TTY users communicate using ASL (American Sign Language) or which there is no written counterpart. ASL also has a grammatical system which differs greatly from that of Standard English. If a TTY user is especially "chatty", the other party must just sit quietly until the "chatty" person sends the message, which they must then read and respond to. A conversation such as this would end up taking much longer than the average phone call.

Common TTY Courtesies

- o Allow TTY phone to ring at least 10 times.
- o Check TTY with a message "Hello" or "This is ____ GA", before hanging up on a call if you hear nothing or only a series of beeps.
- o Omit unnecessary punctuation - uses spaces between sentences; use "Q" to indicate a question.
- o Correct misspelled word by typing XXX and repeating the word rather than backspacing. Misspelled words that are close to correct spellings within the context of a sentence do not need to be corrected.
- o Identify all parties to your conversation as soon as possible.
- o To end a conversation, type SK (stop keying) 2 or 3 times. "Bye SK SK" is appropriate. Your caller may conclude with "SK SK".
- o Discard printouts of TTY conversations immediately. Notes that the caller wants you to maintain should be copied elsewhere. Recordings should never be kept without the knowledge and consent of parties involved.
- o Spell out numbers to avoid confusion.

Relay Services

Telephone companies offer a nationwide network of relay centers to facilitate calls between TTY users and persons without TTY's.

Maryland

Maryland Relay <http://www.mdrelay.org>

Pennsylvania

TTY users calling a person without a TTY can call 1-800-654-5984.

To call a person who uses a TTY, someone using voice phone should call 1-800-654-5988.

West Virginia

West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing <http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh>

TTY Abbreviations

To make your TTY conversations move faster, several generally accepted abbreviations have been developed. Consider using words from the list below to make you fingers work faster.

Conversation Control:

GA = GO AHEAD (used to indicate that you want the other person to begin typing)

SK = STOP KEYING (use to end a conversation)

Q GA = QUESTION GO AHEAD (used to show you have asked a question)

Common Abbreviations:

ABT = ABOUT

AM = MORNING

ANS = ANSWER

BEC, CUZ = BECAUSE

CA = COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT (Relay Operator)

CD, CU = COULD

CN = CAN

CUL = SEE YOU LATER

FYI = FOR YOUR INFORMATION

GA = GO AHEAD

GM = GOOD MORNING

GN = GOOD NIGHT

GOVT = GOVERNMENT

HAND = HAVE A NICE DAY

HD, HLD = HOLD

INFO = INFORMATION

ILY = I LOVE YOU

INTERP = INTERPRETER

KIT = KEEP IN TOUCH

LTR = LETTER

LV = LEAVE

MIN = MINUTE

MIN PLS = MINUTE PLEASE

MSG = MESSAGE

MTG = MEETING

N = AND

NBR = NUMBER

NITE = NIGHT

NP = NO PROBLEM

NOYB = NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS

OK = OKAY

OIC = OH I SEE

OPR = OPERATOR

OXOX = HUGS AND KISSES

PLS = PLEASE

PM = AFTERNOON

Q, QQ, ? = QUESTION MARK

R = ARE

RD = READ

REC = RECEIVE

RPT = REPEAT

SHD = SHOULD

SK = STOP KEYING

SL = SO LONG

SMILE = LAUGHING

THNK, TKS, THX = THANKS

THOT = THOUGHT

THRU = THROUGH

TY = THANK YOU

TMW, TMR = TOMORROW

U = YOU

UR = YOUR

WD, WUD = WOULD

XX = ERRORS