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An OSRU publication

APHASIA

Saying words

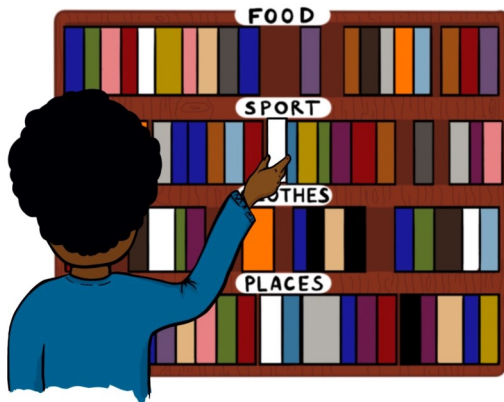
An accessible explanation to
communication difficulties after stroke

How we say words: a brief explanation

This is what **normally happens** when we try to **say a word**.

When we **see or think** of an object, picture or person, we find the **matching word**. Words are **collected** in our brain's **language store** along with their **meanings**.

The **language store** is like a **library**.



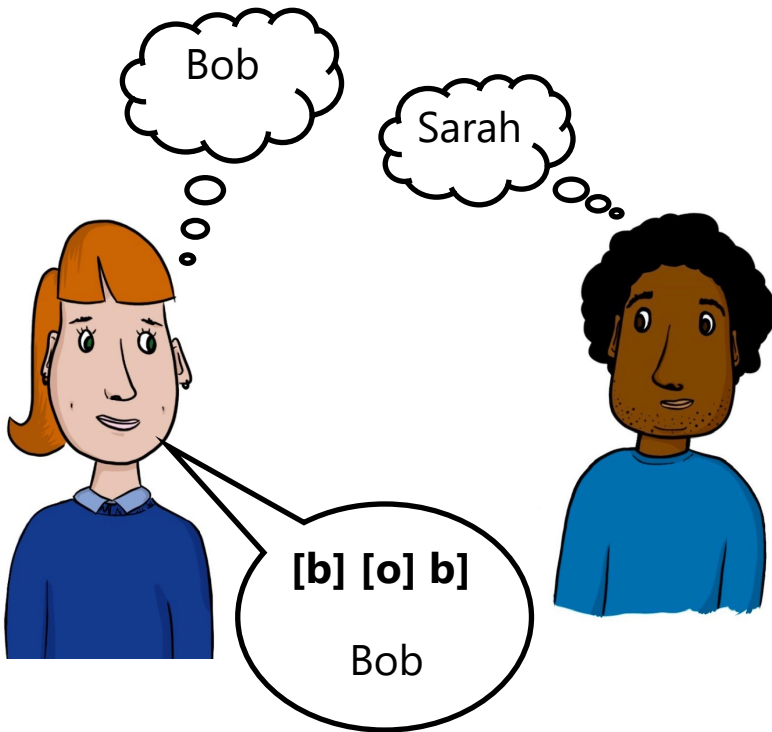
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Words are stored in **sections** and **categories**.

For example, **people's names** will be in **one section** and **sports** in **another**.

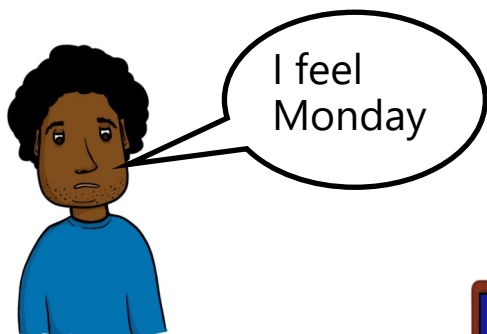
After **locating** the right **section**, the word can be **looked up**.
This is like **searching** for something in an **encyclopaedia**.

Once the word is **found** the letters and **sounds** can be accessed.
These 'letters and sounds' are put together and **shaped into spoken words**.



What can go wrong with speaking

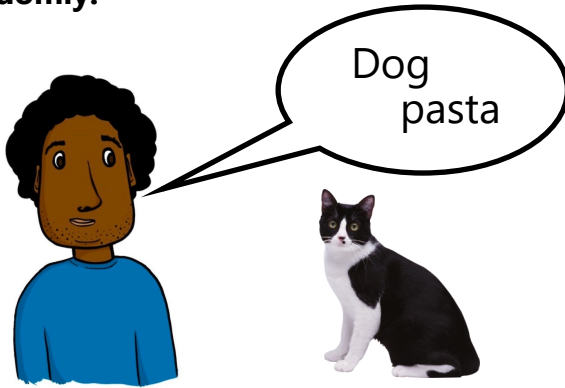
Some people with **aphasia** cannot find their way around their 'library' of meanings, so they just **grab a word** from the shelf which may not make sense.



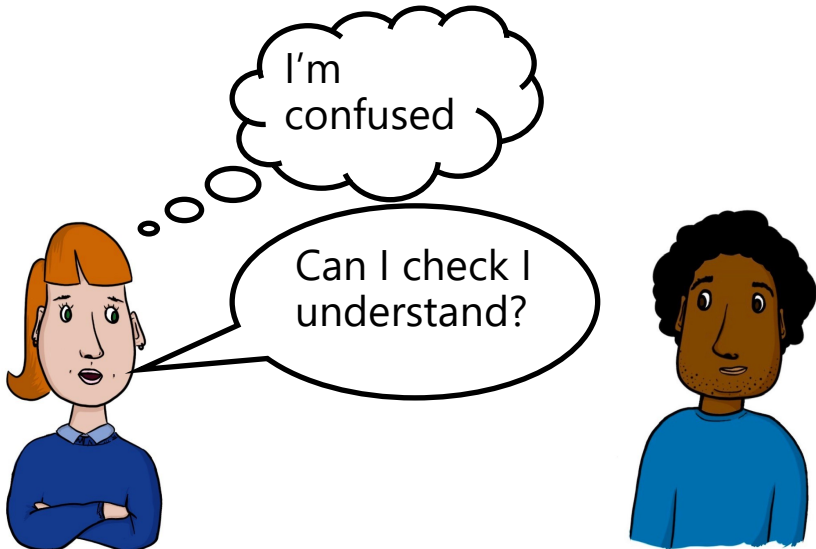
Others may find the right shelf but not know which word to select. This means they **may say nothing**.



They might choose a **related word** or choose more **randomly**.



They **may** or **may not** realise they have selected the **wrong word**. This can be **confusing for the listener**.



Things you can do to help

Talking or expressing thoughts

When talking you can help using

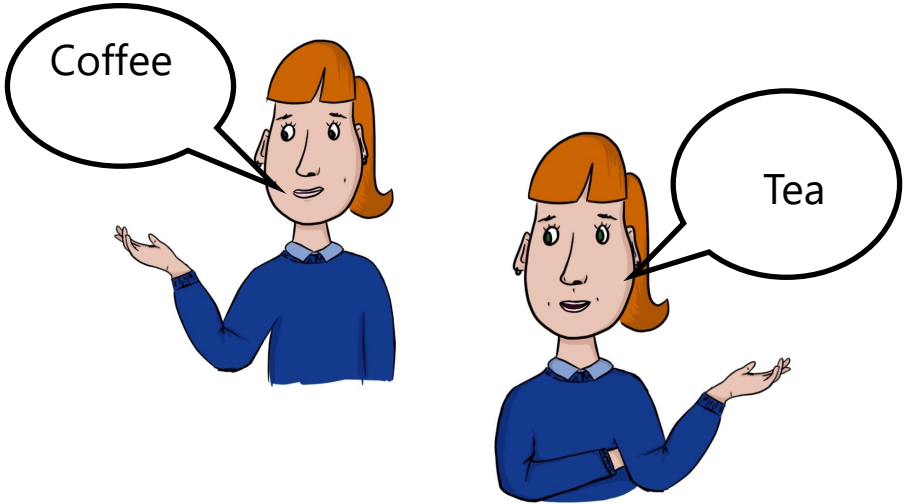
Written words - use **single words** to document your **conversations** and enable the person with aphasia to **make a choice**.



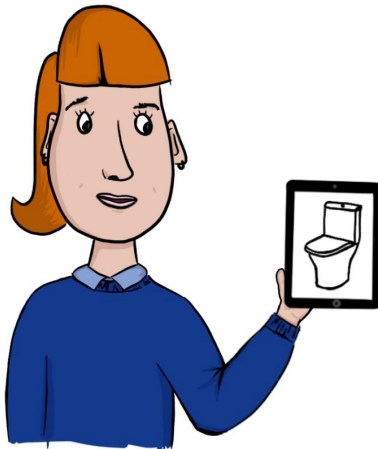
Use **pictures** - this can support the person with aphasia to **say the word** or make a choice by **pointing**.



Use questions offering **choice**: 'would you like **coffee** or **tea**?'



Use questions requiring a yes/no: 'would you like to go to the toilet?'



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For some people **speaking and pointing** are **difficult** but they can place pictures or words to indicate their choices:



apples

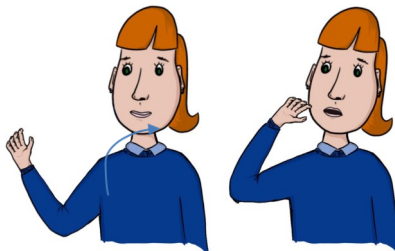


bananas

grapes

Always **check** that **you have understood** the person's communication correctly. You may need to use:

Gesture:



Pictures:



or **written** words



It is important to remember that even if a person is unable to express themselves they often 'know more than they can say'.

If you would like further information please speak to the Speech and Language Therapist.

Adapted from original publications produced by SLTs from the York Cognitive Neuropsychology Research Group.
Leaflet produced by Susannah Stobart, Speech and Language Therapist
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Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Littlemore Mental Health Centre
Sandford Road
Littlemore
Oxford
OX4 4XN

Switchboard 01865 901 000
Email enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
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