

Improving understanding watching the television:

How well you understand a program on television can depend on a number of factors.

Some of these you have control of and can use to help you understand more clearly.

- 1) Your listening Environment: When you have a regular face-to-face conversation you are normally about a metre from the person you are talking to.

When watching television we are often sitting several metres from where the sound is coming from.

Sound travels through soundwaves in the air. The further we are from where the sound is coming from the softer it will be.

Increasing the volume of the television helps to an extent but when sound travels a distance it is also more likely to be distorted (due to the reflection of soundwaves off the floor, walls, furniture and ceiling).

As a general rule, you will hear television more clearly when sitting closer to the TV.

- 2) The speaker on the television: The clarity of the sound coming from your television may not be ideal. The size of speakers on newer thin television can mean the sound quality can be tinny.

Some televisions have a special speaker mode which can help even out the balance between voices and loud explosions or music. 'Night mode', 'automatic volume' or 'dynamic range compression' are all features that can help turn up the voices and tone down the louder noises.

If you're interested in clearer dialogue from the television, a sound bar speaker may be helpful. A sound bar is basically a large centre channel-style speaker which sits below your television. It can help to compensate if your super-thin television features feather-weight speakers. Sound bars generally include night mode options for beefing up the dialogue.

What to do if you are still having problems hearing?

Turn on Captions: Captions are the text version of speech and other sound that can be provided on television.

Captions are available on all TV programs shown between 6.00am-midnight, and all news and current affairs programs, on the primary channels of all free-to-air networks (ABC1, SBS1, Seven, Nine and Ten and regional channels).

There are different rules for ABC2, ABC3, ABCNews24, SBS2, 7Two, 7Mate, GO!, Gem, One HD and 11. The only programs which must be captioned on these extra channels are repeats which were originally captioned for screening on the same network's primary channel.

There will generally be a button on the remote control which activates the captions. If there is no caption/ text button you will need to go to the setup menu.

Captions are also available on Foxtel (71 channels on Foxtel are currently required to be captioned). You access the captions through the System settings.

Wireless headphones:

Wireless headphones allow the transmission of the sound from your TV straight to your ears, overcoming the problems of distance and distortion. They can be plugged into the headphone jack of the TV (which will cut out the sound from the speaker) or at the back of the TV (which will allow others to hear as normal).

You can purchase wireless headphones from a variety of stores: JB HiFi, Harvey Norman (electrical Department), Jaycar, even ALDI have them in their catalogues at times.

If you have a significant hearing loss, you should look for a reputable brand and make sure they have sufficient volume for you to hear well.

Streaming device for Hearing Aid users:

Most hearing aid manufacturers have wireless or Bluetooth streaming devices which can allow your hearing aids to work a little like wireless headphones with the advantage that you can still hear other people around you from your hearing aid.