

In the United States, 20% of the population has some form of hearing loss. That's approximately 48 million Americans. Hearing loss is NOT just an age-related problem. It's prevalent in all age groups.

Hearing Assistive Technology, also known as HAT, helps people who have difficulty hearing connect with life. Hearing aids are incredibly advanced, cochlear implants have made monumental advancements, and Bluetooth has opened up many avenues for the hearing challenged.

### Captions

The simplest and easiest way to hear what's being said is through the use of captions, known as CC. Turn down the volume on your television and turn on the Closed Captioning. What's the difference between "Closed Captioning" and "Open Captioning"? Closed captioning is turned on and off by the viewer and is used by major broadcasters and video streaming services such as YouTube, Facebook Live, and Vimeo. However, you must click the CC link to see it. Open captioning is always on and cannot be turned off. Open captioning is burned into the video.

### Cell Phone Captions




For those of us who have difficulty hearing, the new norm of wearing masks and social distancing adds a new challenge. However, there are solutions - they may not turn out to be 100% effective, but they give us the opportunity to participate live, spontaneously, and at the moment.

When hearing aids are not enough or even if you do not have a hearing loss, what should you do if you're outside and have trouble hearing? Well, there's good news for cell phone users. The following apps are *free* and when used will provide captions on your phone. However, these particular apps do not have the ability to caption your cell phone conversations. They are used for conversations between groups one-on-one, such as a doctor's appointment or social distancing with a friend. With social distancing and masks being worn, I carry an additional microphone that can be plugged into my cell phone to pick up speech more than 6 feet away.

There are many apps, but the 3 I've tested and feel comfortable with are listed below. If you look at these apps (or others) do test drive them. There's no cost to you but there might be additional costs to upgrade.

### Captioned Phones

There are many captioned phones on the market, and if you have a hearing loss you should

| App Name | Live Transcribe  | Otter Voice   | AVA   |
|----------|--|---|---|
| Icon     |  |  |  |

NOT have to pay for one. The following are FCC certified and free with proof of hearing loss:

[ClearCaptions \(clearcaptions.com\)](http://clearcaptions.com) gives you a free home phone with a display area to read the captioning. This service uses live transcribers. [Captel \(captel.com\)](http://captel.com) was the first technology company to introduce the analog-captioned telephone in 2003. Captel advanced to using both analog and digital technology for home and cell phones.

[Sprint Captel \(Sprintcaptel.com\)](http://sprintcaptel.com) is for Sprint and T-Mobile users

### Fire/Smoke and CO Detectors

There are several smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors available for people with hearing loss. There are hard-wired and plug-ins, as well as battery operated. You can choose one that vibrates under your pillow to wake you, has a strobe light that blinks, or has a low-decibel-sound horn. All are effective enough to do the job they are meant to do. However, the cost is somewhat higher than a regular smoke-and-fire detector but clearly well worth it. High-frequency hearing loss is the most common loss in mature adults. All smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors use high-pitched-frequency alarms. When sleeping, these alarms will NOT wake you.

If you have any questions concerning hearing loss and/or technology, feel free to email me at [pearl.feder@yahoo.com](mailto:pearl.feder@yahoo.com) and make sure to put "technology" or "hearing loss" in the subject line.

*"Remember, using assistive technology is not a sign we are growing old, it means we are staying connected" - Anonymous*

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