

## VIDEO CALLS

If you are at home caring for a person living with dementia, it is likely you are experiencing less social contact as a result of the measures taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

It is really important to keep you and the person you are caring for as physically and mentally active as you possibly can while at home.

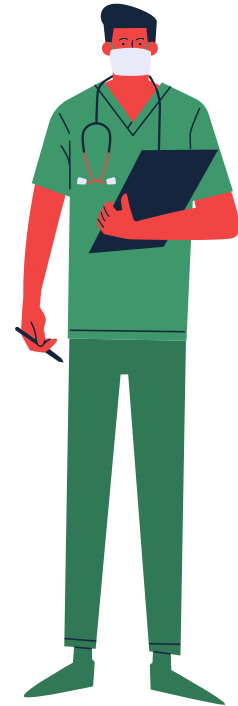
We have prepared a collection of resources which you might find helpful during these times of uncertainty.

We hope that you find the resources we have listed useful. We have no affiliation with any of the providers/organisations and we apologise for any omissions.

We are all in this together and can all play a part in this effort in our communities.

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Dementia Services Information and  
Development Centre  
April 2020



**DSiDC**

Dementia Services Information  
and Development Centre

# VIDEO CALLS

Technology can be especially useful in these times of social distancing. The use of devices such as smartphones and computers can help to ease feelings of loneliness and isolation. This technology can provide entertainment via films or TV programmes, radio stations, podcasts, music streaming and games. It can also help people living with dementia to maintain meaningful contact with family and friends via text messages, email and voice and video calls.

To make a **video call** you will need:

- Two people.
- Two devices.
- Internet or mobile data connection.
- A program or app on each device which the two people can use to connect with each other.



## What devices can I use?:

- Desktop computer.
- Laptop or netbook.
- iPad or tablet.
- Smartphone.

Most modern devices will have an inbuilt microphone and camera. You will need these to make a video call. Some computers may have a webcam attached. Headphones will help keep the conversation more private.

## Internet or mobile data connection:

The two devices need to be connected to the internet to make a video call, Some devices such as smartphones will need a SIM card and a connection to mobile data to make a video call.

## What programmes or apps can I use to make video calls:

Skype, FaceTime, GoogleDuo, Jitsy meet, Whatsapp, Signal, Viber, Facebook video chat, WeChat, Wire are examples of programmes or apps that enable video calls. There are many more available but it is essential that the two people who want to connect with each other have the same app or programme.



## **Making technology accessible to older people and people with dementia.**

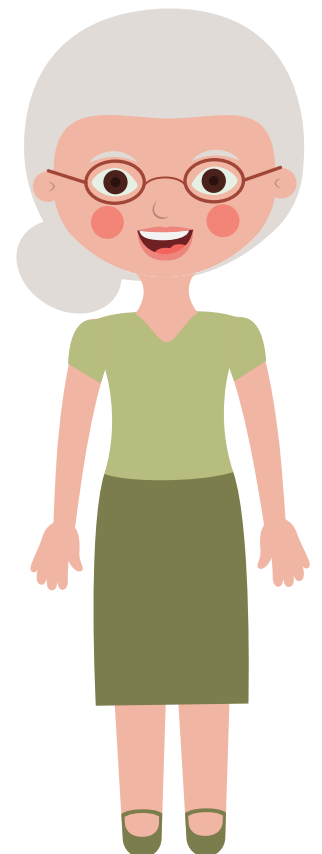
Many people wonder if those with dementia can learn something new. In principle, yes, but the ability to learn and the interest can vary. It is certainly worth a try, and the approach is most important.

We should assess what abilities they have retained and encourage their use.

Simplicity, repetition, being smart about learning and having fun will aid the person's ability to operate these devices.

It is important to fit video calls into a routine and to make them stress free.

Plan the calls – set times for calls that don't conflict with other activities such as personal care, meals or nap hours, but allow for exceptions when required. It is also important to consider if the time is right. Sometimes we are just not in the mood to see or talk to anyone.



The **Memory Technology Resource Rooms (MTRR)** are HSE services for people who would like to address the difficulties they are having with memory, language, daily activities. A healthcare professional will advise if assistive technology might be able to help with those difficulties. These are closed to visit during Covid19, but can take calls. You can find the most recent list of the MTRR via this link

<https://tinyurl.com/rkwdjxf>

People's abilities to manage new technology vary widely. Some people with dementia will be able to turn on and operate a device independently whereas others will require someone to make a video call for them. Here are some further tips that might help a person to make a successful video call:



**Memory Technology  
Resource Room**

## Prior to making any calls:

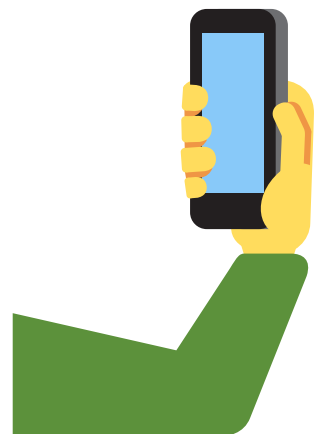
- Make sure that the volume is turned up to the required level on the device.
- Make sure that screen brightness and contrast is appropriate for the person using it.
- Make sure that there is no direct light or reflections on the screen.
- Check that the person is wearing their hearing aids and/or glasses if necessary. Make the text in the screen larger if you can.
- Keep in mind that web-based calls are harder to understand than telephone calls.
- Be aware that there is sometimes a time lag between the person hearing and responding.
- Place the device in a stable surface to minimise the chances of an unintended touch.
- Enable the person with dementia to be dressed, groomed and looking their best. Adjust the angle of the screen to the best angle of the person.
- Make sure that the person to receive the call expects it.



## **When the person with dementia can operate the device:**

### **Teaching how to receive a call.**

- Make sure the home screen of the device has as few icons as possible. This will reduce distractions and chances of mistakes.
- Start with teaching the person how to answer a call with the device. Explain where they need to touch or press the screen to take a call. There will be differences between programs or devices. With Skype, you need to touch the button on the screen. With FaceTime, you need to swipe over the screen until arrows appear. These are touchscreens – with other devices you may need to use a mouse and click when the arrow is over the button.
- Many people with dementia will know how to take a call after a couple of times trying. Repetition is key.
- A clear set of instructions with screenshots or pictures of the process near the device can be a good idea. Remember to keep these simple.



## Teaching how to make a call.

Ensure that the icon of the videocall program is visible on the home screen. Create a limited group of contacts with clear pictures in the contacts list. Touch, push or click, together with the person, on the name or picture of the person to call.

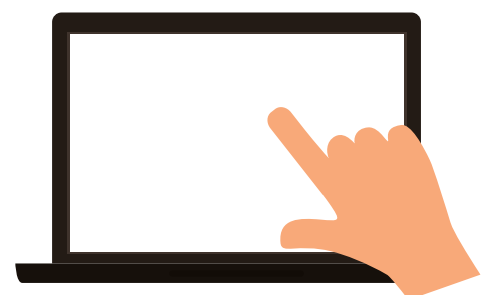
Repeat this process regularly.

## Communication basics.

Not unlike a face to face conversation with a person with dementia, a video call with a person with dementia requires that the other person understands the communication challenges that dementia may bring.

Explain that you are going to make a video call. Keep the first call short. Write down the names of people and meaningful topics to talk about.

Do not argue or contradict. Answer questions every time you are asked, even if repetitive. If asking questions, consider using open or closed questions depending on the abilities of the other person.





## **A few points of note.**

Technology can be a challenge and a cause of frustration to all of us. Be aware that the technology may be causing anxiety to the person and this will need to be managed.

If you don't have a good internet connection, the quality of the call can be poor, particularly on video calls. Test this prior to raising expectations.

Allow the person due privacy during the call. Avoid listening in unless invited to, while you try to monitor how it is going.

The interaction with technology should be enjoyable and fun where possible. Stop if this is not the case.

You will find excellent resources in the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) website following this link  
<https://tinyurl.com/qp5hrsu>

