

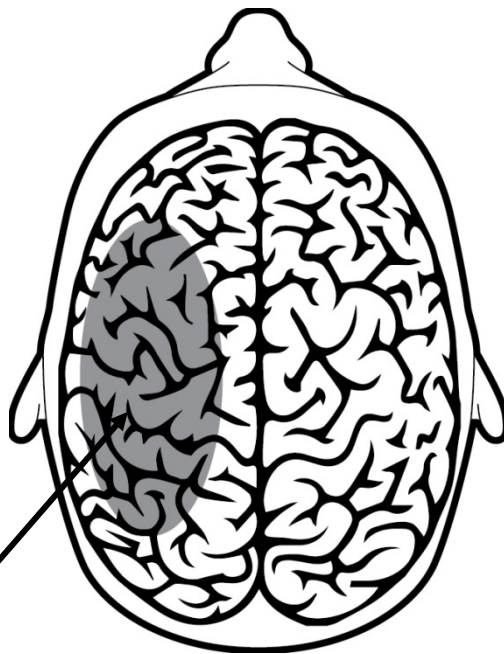
# Learning about Aphasia: Reading

## Speech after Stroke

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A stroke is damage to part of the brain. It happens when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

A stroke can cause many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.

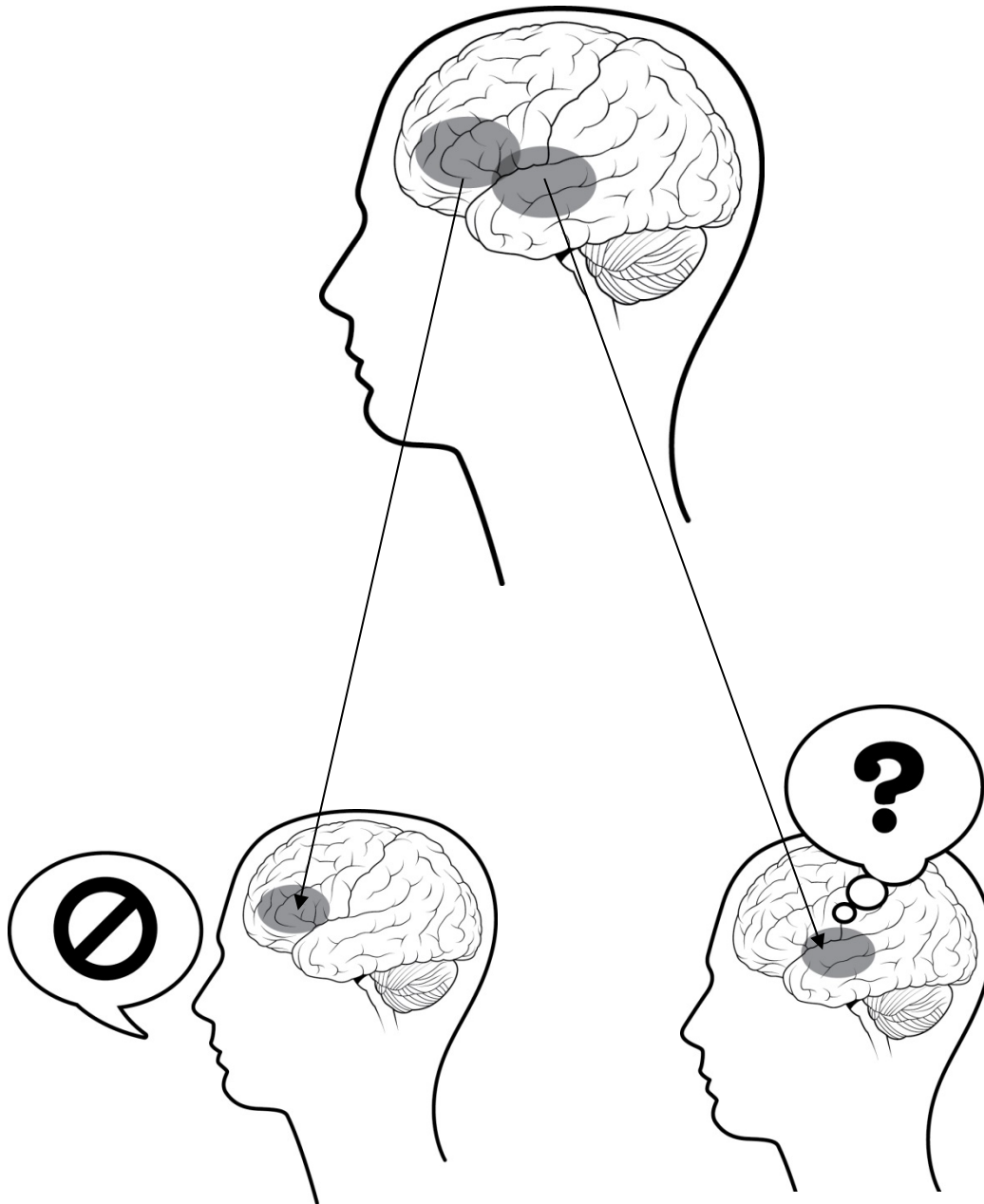


Part of the brain  
that is damaged

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One effect on speech is called aphasia. The word “aphasia” is like the word “stroke” – it can mean many different things.

Aphasia can affect a person’s speaking and understanding.



**Difficulty speaking**

**Difficulty understanding**

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Aphasia can also affect a person's reading or writing.



Reading



Writing

This handout explains a stroke's effect on reading.

It is important to mention that being able to read out loud does not guarantee being able to understand what was read. These are 2 different things.

Some people have severe aphasia and can hardly understand any written words or sentences. Other people have mild aphasia and may only have difficulty understanding long or difficult material, like a magazine article or a book.

Aphasia affects a person's ability to understand words and sentences. It does not affect a person's intelligence.

The stroke has just made it hard for their brain to "translate" the written words and sentences into thoughts.

To help you understand what this is like, imagine yourself trying to read a newspaper in a foreign language. You will have a lot of trouble understanding the articles. But you certainly would not think you had suddenly lost your intelligence!

## So what can you do to help?

Because people usually read by themselves, there really is not a lot you can do to help. However, simply understanding what the person is going through can help a lot.

Check with the Speech-Language Pathologist to see how well the person with aphasia can read. The speech-language pathologist can then give you specific ideas about what type of reading material would be good practice.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

- ✓ Remember that the person with aphasia is an adult and still thinks like an adult. Even though they have trouble reading, they may feel humiliated if you give them children's books to read.
- ✓ Be aware of how much we rely on reading. Think of how often we read street signs, menus, newspapers or grocery labels. Keep in mind that the person with aphasia may no longer understand a lot of this material and may need your help as a "translator".
- ✓ A picture is worth a thousand words! You would be surprised how much information you can get by looking at a picture and only reading 1 or 2 words. So, instead of writing a letter to someone who has trouble reading, send pictures with some key words written down.

If you would like more information, please call the Speech-Language Pathologist below:

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