

What is VRS?

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a telecommunication service that allows deaf and hard-of-hearing people who use American Sign Language to communicate through video equipment in real time with voice telephone users. Video equipment links the VRS user with a VRS Communication Assistant, who signs what the hearing party says and speaks what the deaf or hard-of-hearing party signs. If the deaf person prefers to speak for her/himself, the Communication Assistant will sign what the hearing party says and the deaf person will speak.

Deaf people who use a video relay service have a phone number designated “videophone,” or “VP” for short. If the person they wish to call also has a videophone, they can call the person directly and have a video conversation in American Sign Language. If the person they wish to call uses a voice telephone, the call is routed through a video relay service.

Hearing people who use a voice telephone can call a deaf videophone user. When they dial the videophone number, the call is automatically routed through a video relay service.

Receiving a call from a videophone user:

1. A video relay service Communication Assistant will tell you her/his Operator number and announce that the call is from a deaf person.
2. Speak to the deaf caller just as if you were speaking to a hearing person. In other words, do not say, “Tell him...” or “Tell her...” Instead, speak directly to the deaf person—just like you do on a regular voice call. The Communication Assistant will sign everything you say to the deaf person and will speak everything that the deaf person signs to you. If the deaf person chooses to use her/his own voice, the Communication Assistant will not speak.

Making a voice call to a deaf or hard-of-hearing videophone user:

1. Dial the Videophone number of the Deaf person that you wish to call.

If the number is outside your local calling area, dial 1 and the area code before dialing the number.
2. You will hear a recorded message similar to this: “Thank you for calling. You will now be connected to the person you dialed.”
3. The video relay service Communication Assistant will answer your call and identify her/himself by number. S/he will then inform you that s/he will connect you to the number you dialed and let you know when someone has answered.
4. If no one answers the phone, the Communication Assistant will ask if you would like to leave a message.

Video relay services operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with no restrictions on the length or the number of calls placed. Communication Assistants are required to maintain confidentiality to protect the privacy of individuals using the video relay service.

For additional information, see the FCC Consumer Facts guide to [Video Relay Services](#).