

Auditory Processing Disorder: Fact Sheet for Studying at Home

For a person with auditory processing disorder (APD) who studies at home: completing assignments, sitting online assessments, watching recorded lectures, and working without a teacher in the room. Also for the family member or support person helping them.

What is going on

APD, also called central auditory processing disorder, is when the brain has trouble making sense of sounds, even though the ears and hearing are typical (Raising Children Network, 2025). The sound arrives, but the brain processes it less clearly, especially in noise or when speech is fast.

In study, this shows up as:

- Trouble understanding speech with background noise or in echoing rooms.
- Asking for repetition often, mishearing, and slow responses.
- Trouble following spoken instructions, especially long or complex ones, and remembering them.
- Confusing similar sounds, such as “k” and “g”.
- Difficulty with reading and spelling, which depend on hearing sounds in words.
- Doing better in subjects which rely less on listening.
- Tiredness from the effort of listening.
- Frustration, anxiety or withdrawal (Bellis, n.d.; Choi, 2025; Raising Children Network, 2025).

APD looks like ADHD, hearing loss or a language disorder, and often occurs with them. Only an audiologist diagnoses it (Bellis, n.d.).

Strengths to build on

- Often strong with visual and written information.
- Good at subjects with less listening.
- Learns well with diagrams, text and demonstrations.

Use them: turn spoken content into written and visual content wherever possible.

Setting up to study at home

Studying at home brings a real advantage for APD: control over the sound environment and over recorded content.

- **A quiet room.** Close windows and doors. Turn off the television, radio and fans.
- **Good headphones** for lectures and videos. Closed or noise-cancelling headphones block background sound.
- **Captions on everything:** recorded lectures, videos, online meetings.
- **Transcripts** of recorded lectures where available.
- **Playback control.** Slow lectures to 0.75 speed, pause after each idea, replay unclear sections.
- **Written copies of all instructions,** never spoken only.
- **A remote microphone or personal amplification system,** if recommended by an audiologist, for live online classes (Raising Children Network, 2025).

Doing an assignment, step by step

1. **Get the instructions in writing.** If a task was explained in a live session, email the teacher for a written copy.
2. **Read the instructions,** rather than relying on a spoken briefing.
3. **Use transcripts and captions** to collect information from lectures.
4. **Take notes from text, not speech,** where possible.
5. **Use visual planning** such as mind maps.
6. **Check spelling carefully.** APD affects hearing the sounds inside words, so spellcheck and text-to-speech help.
7. **Ask questions in writing** by email or discussion board, so the answer comes back in writing too.

Doing an assessment or exam at home

Before

- Request all instructions in writing.
- Ask about adjustments: a quiet room, written instructions, captions on any audio, extra time for listening tasks (Bellis, n.d.).
- Test the platform's audio, captions and headphones before the day.

During

- Use headphones in a quiet room.
- If a question includes audio or video, turn on captions and replay if allowed.
- Read written questions twice.

After

- Rest. Listening effort builds fatigue.

When the person is stuck

What you notice	What to try	Why it helps
Missed or misheard instructions	Ask for the instructions in writing.	Removes reliance on hearing.
Cannot follow a recorded lecture	Turn on captions, slow playback, pause after each idea and write a one-line summary.	Gives the brain more processing time.
Struggling in a live online class	Use headphones. Ask the teacher to share slides and a recording. Request a remote microphone if suitable.	Clearer signal and a second chance to hear.
Background noise is making it worse	Move to a quieter room, close doors, or use noise-cancelling headphones.	Noise is the main barrier with APD.
Tired and irritable after listening	Stop and rest. Switch to reading or visual tasks.	Listening with APD takes extra effort.
Asking for repetition again and again	Repeat without frustration, or give the information in writing.	Repetition is a core accommodation, not a burden.
Confusing similar-sounding words	Check the written spelling and use a dictionary.	Text removes sound confusion.

Tools which help

- Captions and auto-transcription in video platforms and meeting software.
- Playback speed controls.
- Closed or noise-cancelling headphones.
- Remote microphone systems, recommended by an audiologist (Raising Children Network, 2025).
- Text-to-speech and spellcheck.
- Note-taking apps.

Adjustments to ask your course provider for

In Australia, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 apply to schools, TAFE, universities and training providers. Providers must consult with the student and make reasonable adjustments (Department of Education, n.d.). Adjustments used for APD include (Bellis, n.d.; Raising Children Network, 2025):

- All instructions and information in writing.
- Captions and transcripts for all recorded material.
- Recordings of live sessions.
- Slides and notes shared before or after classes.
- A quiet room for exams.
- Remote microphone systems for live teaching.
- Extra time for tasks involving listening.
- Written alternatives to spoken participation.

Treatment from an audiologist or speech pathologist sometimes includes auditory training and strategies to build listening skills (Bellis, n.d.; Choi, 2025).

How a support person at home helps

- Keep the home quiet during study and exam times.
- Face the person and speak clearly, at a steady pace, when explaining.
- Repeat without frustration.
- Write down important information.
- Help set up captions and headphones.

Avoid

- Spoken-only instructions.
- Talking from another room or over background noise.
- Long spoken lists.
- Treating repeated questions as not paying attention.

Sources

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