



# HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE NDIS – ACCESS STAGE

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The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the disability support system in Australia.

For information about what the NDIS is and what it may be able to offer you, go to:

[summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/What-is-the-NDIS-and-is-it-for-me.pdf](http://summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/What-is-the-NDIS-and-is-it-for-me.pdf)

This hints and tips guide is for you if you would like to access the NDIS, but you don't know where to start.

The guide is based on our experiences of the NDIS, and shares some of the ways we have found to be useful in linking with the NDIS.

## Before you call

### Check eligibility

*I want to apply for the NDIS.*

*Who do I call?*

First, put the phone down. You'll need to check a few things before you call the NDIS. We recommend that you take time to check the NDIS access requirements and make sure you meet them.

[ndis.gov.au/people-disability/access-requirements](http://ndis.gov.au/people-disability/access-requirements)

### Put the kettle on

*I'm sure I meet the access requirements.*

*Can I phone the NDIS now?*

Not yet. There is one phone number for all NDIS phone calls, so there can be lengthy wait times, especially during business hours. Phone hours are from 8am to 11pm, so you might find it easier to call in the evening.

Our advice? Take a few minutes to make a coffee and find a good book or put the TV on quietly. Wait times are unavoidable, so make sure you have everything you need to make your wait more enjoyable.

### Identify a supporter

It's a good idea to nominate another person that you trust to speak to the NDIS about you and your supports. This may come in handy if you're not able to speak with the NDIS directly or cannot be present for the phone call.

## Make a list of questions

*How do I make sure I get all the answers I need?*

There's nothing more annoying than thinking of an important question after you speak to the NDIS. We recommend sitting down with a friend or family member and writing down everything you'd like to know about the NDIS. You might find some of the answers to your questions on the NDIS website, but you might prefer to ask these questions when you speak to an NDIS staff member on the phone. The NDIS staff member will go through your list of questions with you until you are satisfied that you have all the answers you need to put together your application.

## Making the call

*What information will I need to provide?*

When you are ready, call the NDIS and tell them that you are interested in accessing the NDIS. The phone number is 1800 800 110.

If you are currently or previously receiving disability services the NDIS will likely know your information and you will simply need to confirm it all.

If you are a person with a newly acquired disability you will need to ask for an Access Request Form. You will need to provide your name, date of birth and address.

If you are living in residential aged care, let the person on the phone know, so that you can have a specialist planner to conduct your planning meeting.

*I don't enjoy talking on the phone.*

*Is there anyone I can speak to in person?*

Yes. If you'd like to speak to someone face-to-face, you can visit your Local Area Coordinator office. Local Area Coordinators are community organisations that can provide information about the NDIS, and can support you to access the NDIS.

To find details of the Local Area Coordinator in your region, go to: [ndis.gov.au/communities/local-area-coordination#state](https://www.ndis.gov.au/communities/local-area-coordination#state)

For hours and locations of your closest office, go to: [ndis.gov.au/about-us/locations](https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/locations)

## Have an NDIS journal

*How do I make sure I remember everything the NDIS tells me?*

When you get through to the NDIS, you may find that the conversation can move quickly and suddenly you're off the phone and wondering what to do next. Have a pen and paper ready when you get through to a staff member. Firstly, ask for the name of the person you are speaking to and write that down. Then, write down their answers to your questions and their instructions for you. Don't be afraid to ask the NDIS staff member to explain their answers. You've waited for this time, so don't feel as if you need to rush off the phone before you're ready.

Our advice? If you have all details of your communication with the NDIS in one place, it will help you to form a timeline for what you need to do and when. Buy an exercise book, and set it up as your NDIS journal. We suggest you record:

- The date of each communication (each phone call, letter, email)
- The person you spoke to
- The information or instructions you were given
- Action items - write down things that you need to do, or that the NDIS needs to do, with a due date.

## After the call

### Start your NDIS paperwork folder

*How do I organise all my NDIS paperwork?*

You might also find it useful to have all your NDIS paperwork in one place, so you can easily put your hands on documents that might be requested by the NDIS. Take a photocopy of your completed Access Request Form and keep it in the folder, with a record of when you sent it. Keep copies of all the supporting evidence that you send in with your application, as well as any paper copies of letters that you receive from the NDIS.

*I'm really not a fan of keeping hard copies.*

Make yours an electronic folder. Scan copies of reports, letters and your Access Request Form, and save it all in one place. Some people like to set up an email address just for NDIS correspondence, so they can easily track their application without sifting through hundreds of emails. You might also think about how your nominated support person might be able to access your NDIS correspondence if you are unable to do so (for example, if you are in hospital).

## Got a better idea?

You might have your own ideas for how to get the best out of the NDIS. Think of small, manageable strategies that might work for you, and try them out. Be bold enough to share your ideas with people that you know – we are all learning about the NDIS at the same time, so sharing your ideas might make a big difference to other people navigating the system.

For more information about accessing the NDIS, see the NDIS website: [ndis.gov.au/people-disability/access-requirements](https://www.ndis.gov.au/people-disability/access-requirements)



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We value your feedback about this resource – please contact the Summer Foundation at [info@summerfoundation.org.au](mailto:info@summerfoundation.org.au), or 1300 626 560.

#### Connect with us: