

Frequently Asked Questions

National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

- **What Is NLS?** NLS is a free library service for people with a temporary or permanent visual impairment, reading disability, or physical disability that prevents them from easily reading standard print. NLS offers books and magazines in braille and audio that can be instantly downloaded, played on your personal smart device, or mailed to you free of charge.
- **Am I eligible for NLS?** Any U.S. resident or citizen living abroad who is unable to read or use regular print materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual, physical, or print disability may receive service through NLS. Eligible veterans of the U.S. military receive priority service.
- **How do I apply for service?** Service is provided by libraries in each state that are part of the NLS network. They will be happy to discuss your eligibility, help you apply, and get you started! To locate the NLS network library that serves your area, visit www.loc.gov/ThatAllMayRead (select "Contact Us") or call 1-888-NLS-READ.
- **How do I receive and return books and magazines?** There are two ways: through BARD, the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download service, or through the U.S. Postal Service. Books, magazines, and equipment sent to and returned by readers through the mail qualify as "Free Matter for the Blind" and require no postage.
- **What kind of device do I need to play talking books?** Audio books and magazines downloaded from BARD can be read using the BARD app on a personal iOS or Android device, an NLS talking-book player, or a third-party player. Braille downloads on an iOS device can be read on a personal refreshable braille display with a Bluetooth connection. To play talking books sent through the mail, you will need to request a free NLS talking-book player (photo at left) when you sign up for service. Some commercially available players also can play NLS-produced talking books.
- **How do I find the books I want?** The NLS collection has more than 150,000 titles and offers the same types of books that are available through public libraries: romances, biographies, best sellers, classic fiction, Westerns—you name it! The complete catalog can be searched online at loc.gov/nls. NLS also produces bimonthly catalogs highlighting the latest additions to the collection. In addition, staff members at NLS network libraries can help you select books of interest.

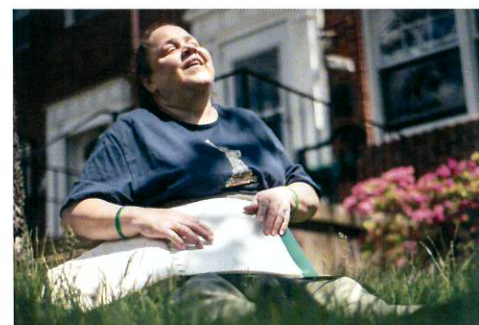
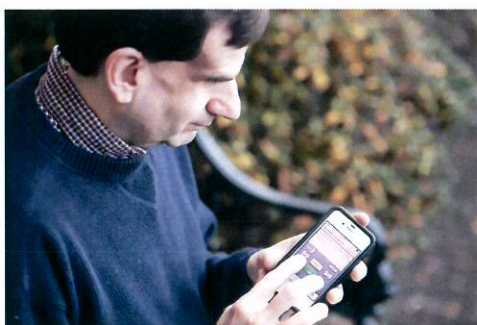


- **Does NLS have large-print books and other materials?** NLS does not produce large-print books, although some NLS network libraries have large-print collections.
- **Does NLS offer music?** NLS does not offer music for listening, but it has the world's largest collection of musical scores and music instructional and appreciation materials in ebraille, braille, audio, and large print (sometimes known as bold note). Any NLS patron may receive music services. For more information, please call toll-free 1-800-424-8567.
- **Is there a special device to help people who are hearing impaired?** Yes. NLS has developed a high-volume version of its talking-book player that is paired with an NLS headset and has an amplified volume up to 120 dB.
- **Can my school or residential care facility use the program as an institution?** Yes. Institutions may apply to hold deposit collections to provide ready access to braille and audio books and magazines for eligible students, residents, or patients who can share equipment or who require temporary service. Students and residents within those institutions are allowed to apply or to keep their individual service as well.
- **What other services does NLS offer?** The NLS Reference Section produces a variety of publications on issues about or related to blindness, visual impairment, and physical disabilities. And NLS partners with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to provide free currency readers to people who are blind or visually impaired.

To learn more about NLS, visit www.loc.gov/ThatAllMayRead or call 1-888-NLS READ (1-888-657-7323)

"The BARD Mobile app for the iPhone has been so wonderful since it makes it so easy to take books with you anywhere. I truly cannot imagine my life without the NLS program."

—Peggy C., NLS patron since 1962



"It's huge to be able to have access to the same books all your friends are reading. It's one of those things that brings us all together and it is hugely important."

—Brian M., NLS patron since 1985