

FAQ

*About talking books and other services
for those who cannot read standard print*

Who is eligible to borrow talking books?

Generally, talking books are available to individuals who cannot read standard print due to a visual or physical disability. Georgia residents must be certified as eligible by a certifying authority. Those eligible include:

- Anyone who is unable to read or handle standard printed materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical disability
- Persons who are legally blind or cannot see well enough or focus long enough to read standard print, even with glasses
- Persons who are unable to hold or turn pages of print books
- Persons who are certified by a medical doctor as having a reading disability

How can I receive an application?

To obtain an application for yourself, a family member, friend or client, please visit your local public library, call 1-800-248-6701 or visit www.georgialibraries.org/public/glass.html.

Who is a “certifying authority”?

To borrow talking books and to qualify to receive this special library services, you must complete an application. The application includes a section that requires the signature of a “certifying authority.” People with certifying authority include:

- doctors of medicine
- doctors of osteopathy
- ophthalmologists
- optometrists
- registered nurses
- therapists
- professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or private welfare agencies (e.g. social workers, case workers, counselors, rehabilitation teachers and superintendents)
- professional librarians

Can people use the program if they are in a residential care facility or retirement home?

Yes. They may receive direct individual service in care of the facility, or if the institution has a deposit collection, individuals may use these materials without going through the process of signing up to receive individual service. Direct service is always available and this option can ensure that readers receive materials that they specifically want to read.

What types of library materials are available for check-out?

- **Books:** Talking books and Braille books from a national collection that includes a variety of popular interest writings such as bestsellers, classics, mysteries, biographies, westerns, children's books, and foreign language materials. Titles on health and fitness for seniors as well as books on retirement activities and the rights of older adults may also be borrowed.
- **Magazines:** Library patrons can also subscribe to over seventy popular magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *National Geographic*.
- **Equipment and Accessories:** Special playback equipment is needed to listen to talking books. This equipment is lent to eligible users free of charge for as long as the individual is a user of the reading material provided by NLS and its cooperating libraries. Accessories are available which will help readers with limited mobility or hearing impairment use the equipment.
- **Book Reviews and Catalogs:** Registered borrowers learn about new books added to the collection through two bi-monthly publications, Talking Book Topics and Braille Book Review. These are available in large print, recorded, or Braille format.
- **Music:** Recorded music is not available through the NLS library program. However, such material is often available from local public libraries. A collection of musical scores in Braille and large print; textbooks and books about music in large print and Braille; and elementary instruction for voice, piano, organ, guitar, recorder, accordion, banjo and harmonica are available in recorded form directly from NLS.

How are talking books different from books on tape?

Talking books are specially recorded through the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). Talking books are recorded using a special four-track, half-speed format. While most ordinary cassette tapes play for 60 to 90 minutes, a talking book cassette tape can play for six hours. This means that an unabridged recording of a book requires far fewer tapes, making a talking book easier to use and circulate. The special playback equipment also allows a talking book listener to adjust the playback speed, so that a listener can "read" at his or her own pace. Also, the special format makes the talking books unusable by the public, a requirement under the U.S. copyright law that permits NLS the free use of copyrighted material.

How are books selected?

The Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) selects the same types of books available through public libraries to be produced as talking books. Titles are considered when they are favorably reviewed in nationally distributed publications or included in authoritative bibliographies. The object of selection is to provide standard classics and information reading, along with popular recreational works that appeal to children, young adults and older readers. Subjects such as science fiction, mysteries, romances and westerns are represented, as are bestsellers, standard religious works, and some foreign-language materials.

Who narrates/records talking books?

The majority of talking books are recorded by professional narrators to ensure high quality. Only a small percentage of talking books are recorded in volunteer studios.

How long does it take for an individual to begin receiving service after submitting an application?

The goal of Georgia's Talking Books Centers is to send playback equipment within three working days of receipt of a properly certified application. An initial shipment of books and catalogs is usually sent within an additional two working days.

How are materials received from and returned to the library?

All talking books and playback equipment are mailed to the reader free of charge as "free matter for the blind" and may be returned the same way. There is no postage charge for returning the materials. Talking books arrive in a mail-ready case with a removable address card. When the reader has finished a talking book and is ready to return it to the library, he or she simply places the talking book cassettes to their case, removes the address card, flips the address card over, reinserts the card in the case so that the library's name and return address are showing, and places it in the mail.

As a reader living in a rural area, will I have access to the same number of titles as readers in urban areas?

Yes. All of Georgia's Talking Book Centers use the same automation and lending system. This means that a reader in Irwinville has access to the same talking books and materials as a reader in Atlanta.

How can I select the titles I want to receive?

There are several methods. Web-savvy readers may use an online catalog and ordering system to order specific titles or to browse for titles that may match their interests. Readers' friends, relatives or caregivers can also use this online catalog to order books on their behalf. For readers who do not use the Internet, they may call their local Talking Books Center or the statewide tollfree number to request specific titles. In addition, when submitting an application, readers may ask the library to select titles for them that match their reading interests, for example war stories or westerns, and send them automatically.

Is the playback equipment easy to use?

Yes. And, special accessories, such as headphones, amplifiers and remote control units are available to readers with special needs. There's even an "easy machine" that plays talking books with the touch of a single control. Playback equipment and accessories are loaned for free and there is no cost for repairs or replacements.