



Helpful Hour: How to get the most from your audiology appointment

3. What to expect – language and procedure

You're well-prepared, calm and focused, and have a list of relevant questions to ask. You also have the ability to describe how well you hear things.

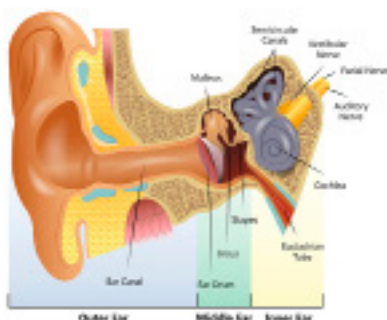
Your appointment may seem like you are stepping into a new world. Not only is the process and procedure possibly new and unnerving, but there's also a lot of new vocabulary to understand.

Take your time to learn what applies to you and your hearing test result. You won't necessarily need to know it all in one go, so build up what you need and the rest will follow.



Your ear

- **The outer ear** is the visible external part including your ear lobes and ear canal.
- **The middle ear** contains the tympanic membrane (or eardrum) and three tiny bones which vibrate to the sounds around you. The bones are called the malleus (or hammer), the incus (or anvil) and the stapes (or stirrup).
- **The inner ear** contains the cochlea which translates the vibrations made in the middle ear into electrical signals to the brain along the auditory nerve.



Type of hearing loss

- **Conductive hearing loss** affects the outer or middle ear, and in most cases is a mild to moderate hearing loss. It is rarely severe unless it is associated with a mixed hearing loss.
- Most people with **sensorineural hearing**

loss (inner ear) have it in the range of mild to moderate in degree depending on frequency. Severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss across all frequencies affects a minority of people.

- When there is both a conductive and sensorineural loss, this is called a **mixed hearing loss**.

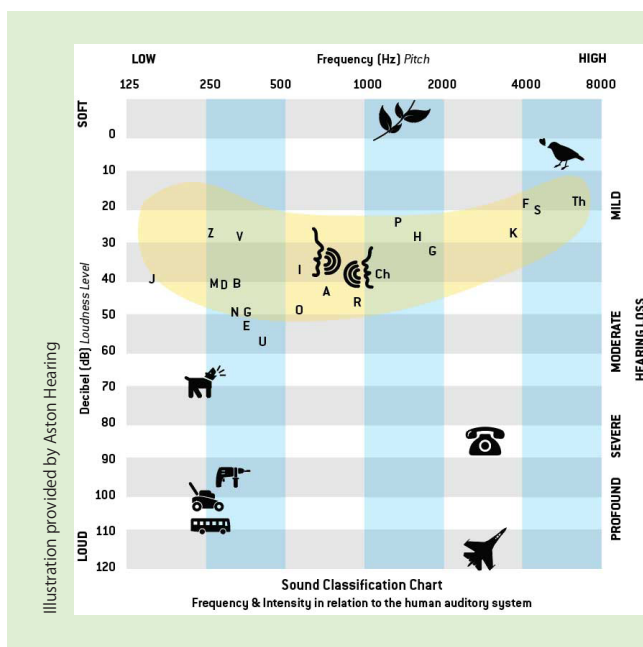
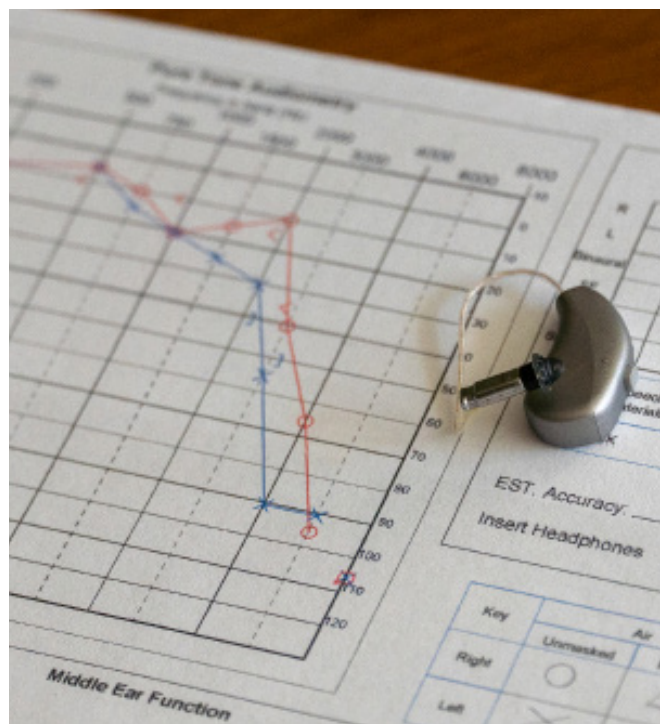
The hearing test

- An audiometer is used to measure hearing ability, in a sound-treated room.
- It is carried out using headphones or inserted earphones.
- A series of sounds (beeps) at different pitches and volume are played. The patient acknowledges sound by raising a hand, pressing a button or saying yes when the sound is heard.
- Each ear is tested separately.
- The audiologist records the responses on an audiogram.



The audiogram

- Is a grid with volume in decibels shown vertically and pitch/frequency horizontally in Hertz.
- Decibels are shown from 0 at the top, to 120 at the bottom.
- 0 = silence, 120 = so loud that you can feel the sound.
- Frequency is shown from 125 for low/deep sounds up to 5,000 for high pitches.
- Sounds heard in the test are marked on the grid.
- Left ear is identified as crosses on a blue line; right ear as circles on a red line.
- The marks show at what point you can hear. Above the marked area, sounds cannot be heard.



The speech banana

- Illustrates where spoken words are typically heard.
- Sounds above the line on an audiogram, can no longer be heard.
- Words are made up of different sounds (phonemes), for example: M= muh, D= duh, B= buh, H= huh, K= kuh, SCH= sskuh,
- With moderate loss, many sounds in the higher frequencies are hard to hear: H= huh, K= kuh, S= suh
- Deeper/male voices are sometimes easier to hear.



CALL TO ACTION: What to do with this information?

- Talk through your audiogram results with your audiologist so you are able to understand where your natural levels of hearing are.
- Write a list of the things you need to hear at home and / or at work. This will give you an idea of what you need from your hearing aids and what you can expect.

Useful links

What is a hearing test? – hearingdogs.org.uk/testing

Causes of hearing loss – hearingdogs.org.uk/causes

Sudden sensorineural hearing loss – hearingdogs.org.uk/sudden