



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

1. Preparing for your appointment



Being in the right state of mind is always important for potentially stressful situations, such as audiology appointments. Preparing yourself by thinking through your aspirations for the session will result in fewer surprises arising.

Session headlines

- **You will want answers**
There will be multiple aspects of your hearing loss that you will want answers to and advice on. Think about your situation and what you want to know.
- **Focus**
Being focused on the different aspects of your hearing loss, and being able to identify examples to share with the audiologist, will help them to provide solutions to support your situation.
- **Reflection**
Take time to analyse what difficulties you are having. This will assist you when formulating the questions that you want to ask.
- **Peer support**
If you choose to have a friend or family member support you at the appointment, then take time to discuss your hearing loss with them, along with the key things you wish to take away from the appointment.

THE 7 Cs

According to The 7 Cs, communication needs to be:

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Clear | 3. Concrete | 6. Complete |
| 2. Concise | 4. Correct | 7. Courteous |
| | 5. Coherent | |



CALL TO ACTION: What to do with this information?

- Visualise yourself going to and being in your appointment. Make it a success.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Think about who you would like to accompany you. Check they are available, and run through your plan with them.
- Familiarise yourself with the location of your appointment, how to get there, and where to park.

Useful links

(These links open external sites. We are not responsible for content on these sites.)

Mindfulness description – hearingdogs.org.uk/mindful

Five ways to be calm – hearingdogs.org.uk/5calm

Tips for everyday living – hearingdogs.org.uk/dailylife



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2. Planning your appointment

Effective communication is key to getting your point across. Consideration should be given to what you wish to communicate along with how you are going to communicate.

1. How things sound

Consider and reflect on what things sound like to you. Decide on a clear and concise way of describing them to aid the audiologist's understanding of your hearing. Use descriptive words where possible.

What are sounds like?

Harsh or loud sounds might be: abrupt, piercing, grating, jarring, rasping, or pulsating. Or they might: beep, blare, clank, clink, croak, rasp, rumble or shriek.

How about describing soft or subtle sounds?

Gentle noises can be challenging to describe. Are they breathy, droning, whooshing or fizzing? Do sounds chime, glug, gurgle, jingle, sizzle, swish, swoosh, tinkle, trill, wheeze, or whirr?

2. In addition to hearing loss

Tinnitus

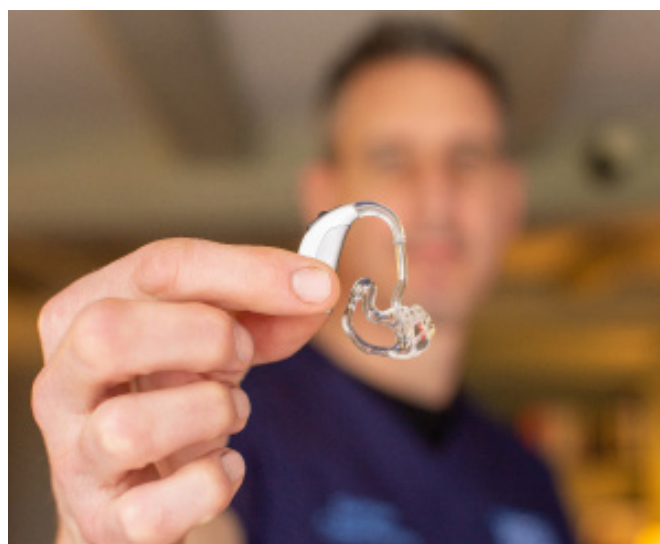
Many people experience tinnitus. Consider and reflect on how it affects you. What form does it take? Use descriptive language regarding the pitch, volume and the level it distracts you at.

Can you describe the pitch and volume? What does it mask or cover? Does it sound like static, crickets, sirens, ocean waves, or ringing?

Is it whooshing, buzzing, clicking, humming, murmuring, rumbling, ringing, or whistling? Is it constant or pulsing?

Balance

If your hearing affects your balance, when do you notice it the most? Consider times of the day, before or after doing something in particular, or if you are tired and hungry. How do you mitigate it, how long does it last?



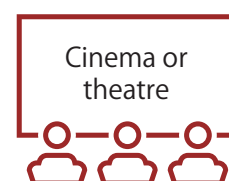
3. What you can and can't do

Consider different environments and appliances and explain what your issues are with them. Can you hold a telephone conversation? Do your family complain about the television volume?

Are there environments (open plan offices, restaurants or bars) that present challenges?

Are there aspects of your lifestyle, hobbies or employment that are challenging?

Knowing and mentioning these will help your audiologist build a picture of who you are and what you want to achieve.



4. Lifestyle

Medication

Be prepared to explain and list any medication and supplements that you are taking as some medication can aggravate hearing loss. To save time in the appointment, take along copies of your prescriptions so the audiologist can advise.



Explain any allergies that you may have to your hearing aid earmould material.

Explaining what hobbies or leisure activities you enjoy, or who you have in your home or life builds a picture of who you are. The audiologist will take all this into account.

5. Prioritise

Organise your questions so that the most important ones to you are prioritised. If you are taking along a hearing buddy to your appointment, explain to them your prioritisation so that they are familiar with them on the day of your appointment.

6. Make lists



In a notebook, write your questions on one side and leave space for the answers. Be sure you understand the replies. Your hearing buddy can be your scribe if you wish.

Think about how you phrase your questions. Telling your audiologist that you are upset that you can't hear properly when you eat out can make it hard for them to think of things to help.

Instead say that you want to hear conversations in noisy places and this can lead to a practical solution.



CALL TO ACTION: What to do with this information?



- Start by building a list of questions you want to be answered.
- Take this list with you to your appointment and discuss with your audiologist.
- Keep a diary of when your hearing is most affected, when you started with new hearing aids or the function on your hearing aids. This will reassure you when you do notice progress, or it will be an accurate log of when things are harder.
- Take along details of any prescribed medications you are taking, as well as any over-the-counter medications that you take.

Useful links

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Tinnitus UK – tinnitus.org.uk

Masterclass: How to describe sounds – <http://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-describe-sounds>



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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.

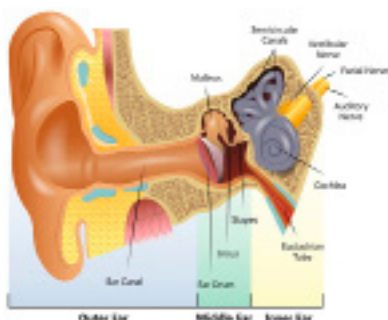
Your appointment may seem like you are stepping into a new world. Not only is the process and procedure possibly new and unnerving, but there's also a lot of new vocabulary to understand.

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**.

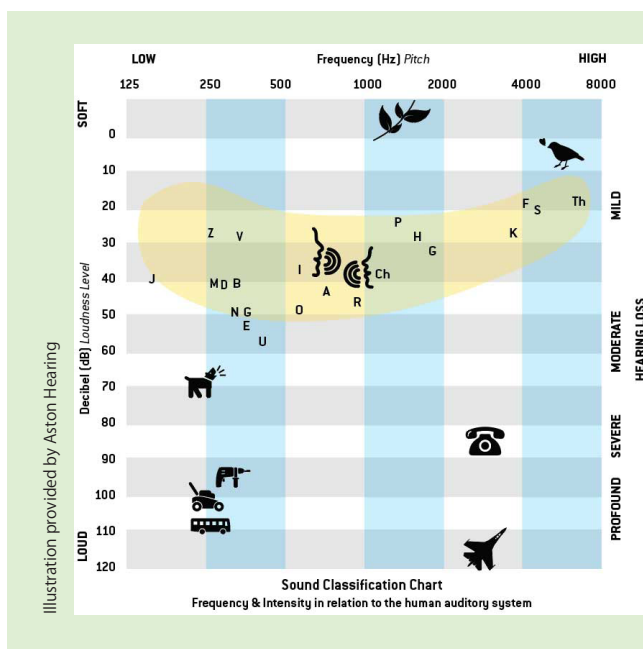
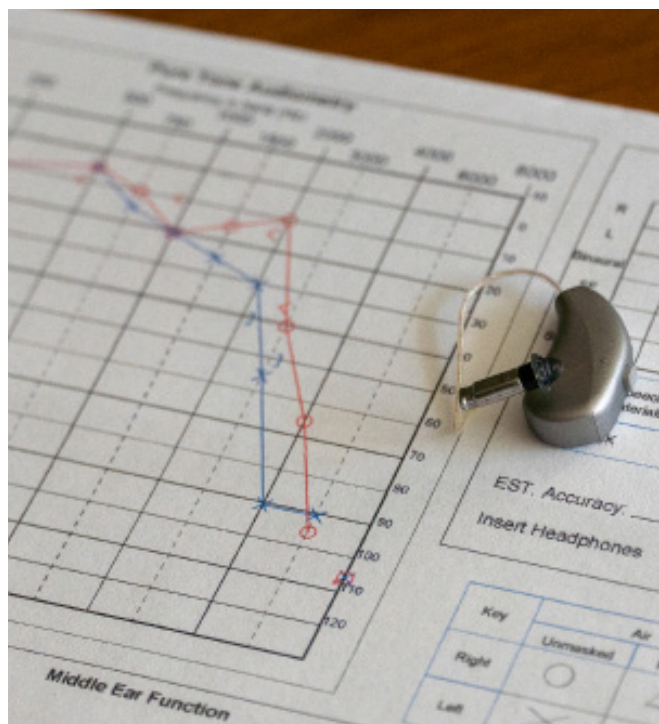
The hearing test

- 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



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4. Choices to make – your hearing aids & devices

The difference between a good and a bad hearing aid is not usually the aid itself, since most hearing aids are made by just a handful of manufacturers. What you really need in a hearing device(s) depends on your lifestyle and the type of hearing loss you have.

How to make the most of your hearing aids

When you first start using a hearing aid(s), it is important to keep these points in mind:

Hearing aids won't fix your hearing

Hearing aids can't restore your hearing to normal levels, but they can improve your hearing by amplifying soft sounds.

Allow time to get used to the hearing aid

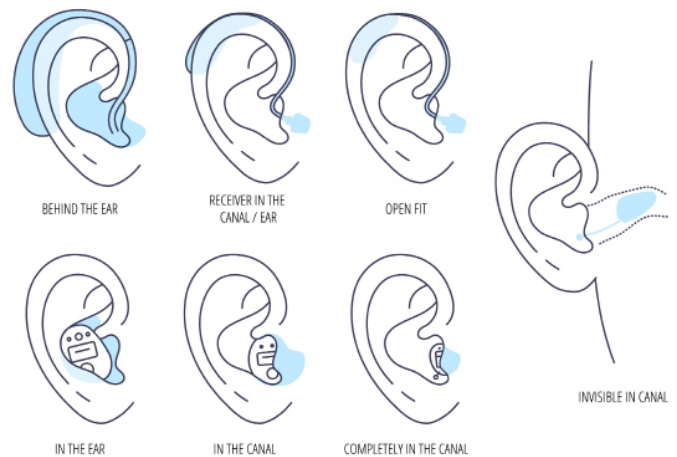
It takes time to adjust to your new hearing aid(s), but the more you use it, the more quickly you'll adjust to amplified sounds.

Practice using your aid in different environments

Your amplified hearing will sound different in different places. Keep a list of your experience to report back to your audiologist at your follow-up appointment.

Seek support and try to stay positive

A willingness to practice, and the support of family and friends, will help to determine your



success with your new hearing aid(s). You may also consider joining a support group or lipreading class to share your experience with peers and get useful tips.

Go back for a follow-up appointment

If you require any adjustments, or to ensure that your new hearing aid is working for you, make sure you have a follow-up appointment booked.

Useful links

Types of hearing aids

hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-types
hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-guide

Profound hearing loss

hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-profound

Earmoulds and domes

hearingdogs.org.uk/moulds

Hearing aid features

hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-features
hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-which



CALL TO ACTION: **What to do with this information?**

- Wear your hearing aids consistently – be patient on how you feel about them.
- Research assistive listening devices and apps that can connect to your hearing aids.

Assistive listening devices

hearingdogs.org.uk/ha-accessories
hearingdogs.org.uk/al-devices
hearingdogs.org.uk/alertdevices
hearingdogs.org.uk/phones

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5. Post-appointment

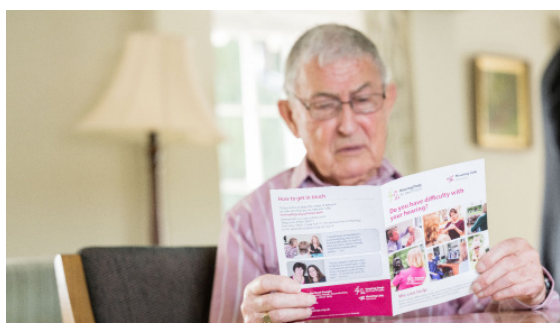
After your appointment, there may be a rush of emotions. Happiness you finally got diagnosed? Sadness that your hearing isn't as good as you thought it was? Somewhere in between..?

Some people tell of suffering a sense of bereavement. It's important to reflect on what has happened and start your research on what else can help with your hearing journey.

Be kind to yourself during this period of transition.



1. Take time to consider what was discussed at your appointment and refer back to any notes you may have taken or been provided with by your audiologist.
2. Prepare for your follow-up appointment and ask any additional questions. Do you understand your audiogram? Do you have a copy of your audiogram?
3. Be solutions focused. Investigate the network of organisations in your area or groups that can help.
4. Research which sensory/assistive listening technology might help you to achieve your goals for living with your hearing loss better.
5. Consider the other services that Hearing Link Services can offer. They are free to access and we are here to help.



CALL TO ACTION:
What to do with this information?

Go back to your notes to see what help you can organise for yourself – research, research, research! Make it an adventure, not a chore.

Useful links

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Helpdesk – hearingdogs.org.uk/helpdesk

Online shop – hearingdogs.org.uk/products

Useful organisations –
hearingdogs.org.uk/usefulorgs

Employment –
hearingdogs.org.uk/support/living/work/atw