

HEARING AID USERS' GUIDE



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HEARING AID USERS' GUIDE



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Many of life's important activities involve learning. Although not always easy, learning combines desire, practice and a belief that if you keep trying, success and enjoyment will eventually occur.



This is true of your hearing. When you were young, you learned how to listen. Your brain learned to focus on specific sounds and concentrate on voices, even in the midst of many other noises. As your hearing gradually diminished, so did that ability to select sounds.

Now with the help of your hearing instrument, you're about to relearn the selective hearing process. Just as the battery is your hearing instrument's power source, a positive attitude is your brain's "power source" for learning.



Hopefully, your hearing instruments will be extremely effective - so much that you become dependent upon them. However, they will not restore your hearing to previous levels, nor will they prevent or correct a hearing impairment. Therefore, don't judge their effectiveness too soon.

Likewise, others' experiences with hearing instruments - good or bad - have no bearing on your success and shouldn't affect your attitude.

Also, don't assume that you will hear and understand all speech with your hearing instruments. It will take time and patience as you learn to adapt to this new way of hearing. Inconsistent or infrequent use will prevent you from receiving the full potential benefit from your instruments.

Hearing is only one part of how we exchange thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Effective communication combines listening, understanding, attention, concentration, interest, and visual, or non-verbal cues.

You may have relied on these ever-present cues as your hearing loss gradually impaired your understanding of speech. Now, they are equally important as you learn to hear with hearing instruments. Reading the lips, facial expressions and gestures of others can enhance the learning process, and supplement what amplification alone may miss.

If necessary, your Hearing Professional may provide additional auditory training and lip-reading assistance.





Your instruments and their controls are smaller than most other regularly handled items. It is expected that changing batteries, inserting, removing, and adjusting your instruments are new experiences that will take some practice to perform correctly.

Minor irritation and inflammation may occur as your ear becomes accustomed to having an object in it. This is normally caused by pressure from the earmold on a particularly sensitive area, and may easily be corrected through trimming and polishing by your Hearing Professional.

If an actual allergic reaction occurs, alternative earmold materials are available. Severe reactions, discharge from the ear, excessive wax, or other unusual conditions warrant immediate consultation with a physician.

From the moment you get them, it may be tempting to wear and use your hearing instruments constantly. However, this can lead to discomfort, fatigue, and disappointment - all factors that can prevent successful learning.

The level and complexity of sound environments 'out in the real world' make it a less than ideal place to hear in, even if you had normal hearing. It is best to begin your instrument usage gradually, until it is fully integrated into your daily life. The amount of patience and practice – combined with a positive attitude – will most likely determine the degree of success.



start in quiet, familiar places



At first, use your instruments only in familiar, quiet surroundings, where you can identify and locate simple background sounds - running water, doors closing, birds singing - that you may not have heard for awhile.

Other sounds, like your own voice, will sound different. In the same quiet environment, practice listening to and conversing with someone facing you, who has a familiar voice and understands your needs.

Don't be alarmed if you can't immediately understand everything. A low, comfortable volume level is preferable as you adapt to the new sound quality, even if you occasionally miss soft sounds or parts of conversation.

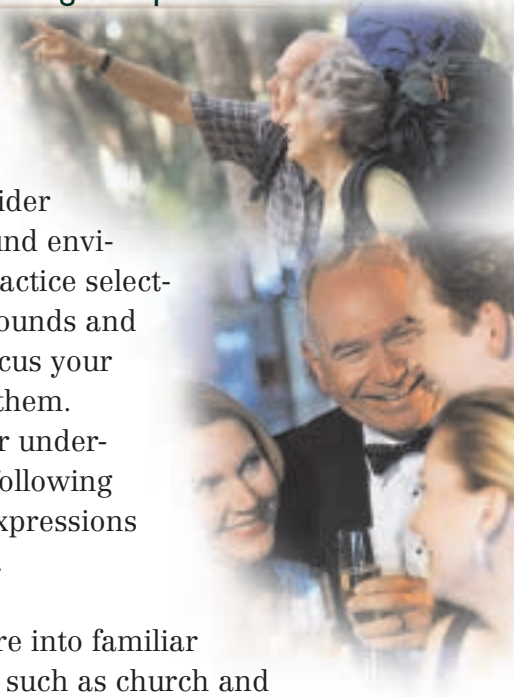


focusing on specific sounds

As you wear your instruments in a wider variety of sound environments, practice selecting specific sounds and voices and focus your attention on them. Enhance your understanding by following non-verbal expressions and gestures.

As you venture into familiar public places such as church and meetings, sit reasonably close and within easy visual distance of those speaking.

Because every area has its own sound characteristics, you may need to try different locations for the best results.

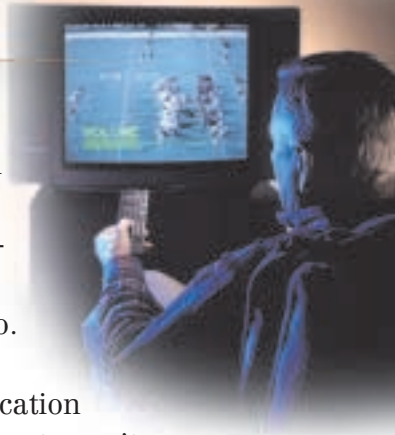


hearing the television and radio

The use of music, sound effects, and its overall pace, can make TV viewing with hearing instruments take a little longer to get used to.

Depending on the fidelity and sophistication of your TV's sound system, sit eight to ten feet in front of the screen with the TV volume set to a normal, comfortable level for others.

Adjusting to the radio will depend on the environment in which you're listening, and whether it is an AM or FM station. It will likely be more difficult to fully understand an AM station while riding in an automobile, than an FM station playing on a larger sound system in your home.



using the telephone

BTE's with a telecoil feature enable you to comfortably use the telephone without removing your instrument or earmold. The induction coil amplifies the signal emitted naturally from the telephone receiver.

To use the telephone, move the M-T-O switch to the "T" (telecoil) position.

Then place the handset over your ear and slowly move it upward, nearer to the instrument until the best signal is received.

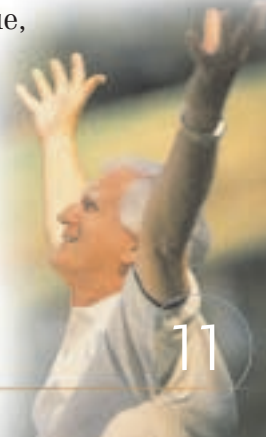
Some practice and experimentation may be necessary to find the best positioning.



In a few weeks, you will probably be able to use your instruments all day without fatigue or tension. Hopefully, you'll be like many who find themselves "forgetting" that they are even wearing a hearing instrument.

Even so, be careful not to over-practice. If you find yourself becoming tired, nervous, or irritated, don't hesitate to rest for awhile by turning your instruments off and/or removing them.

- Better hearing with hearing instruments is a learned skill combining desire, practice and patience.
- It is important to develop realistic expectations of what your hearing instruments can and cannot do.
- Hearing is only one part of your total communications process.
- Begin wearing your instruments gradually, first in quiet, familiar surroundings.
- Practice focusing on specific sounds, using both verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Over-practice can cause fatigue, tension, and disappointment. Rest when necessary.



Many people initially treat hearing problems as an individual matter, something that can be dealt with by themselves. But because communication involves more than just one person, so too does the impact of your impairment.



Constant requests to repeat, louder TV volume levels, and shifts in behavior are elements of hearing loss that those around you must live with and accommodate.

The continuing understanding and support of family and friends are crucial as you pursue improved hearing and communication. Perhaps they have already demonstrated their willingness by encouraging you to seek help.

While you are adjusting to the acoustic part of amplification, family and friends can help you with the many psychological and emotional needs that accompany the transition.

There is a tendency for those around you to speak loudly—especially if it is how they previously communicated with you. With your hearing instrument(s) on, a loud voice can actually make understanding more difficult, if not more irritating.



Now that the hearing instruments provide the amplification, others should speak clearly at a normal level, without rushing or slurring their words. Be sure they have your full attention before they begin speaking. It's often preferable to rephrase rather than repeat the same words over and over, as you may find it easier to understand different words.



minimize distractions

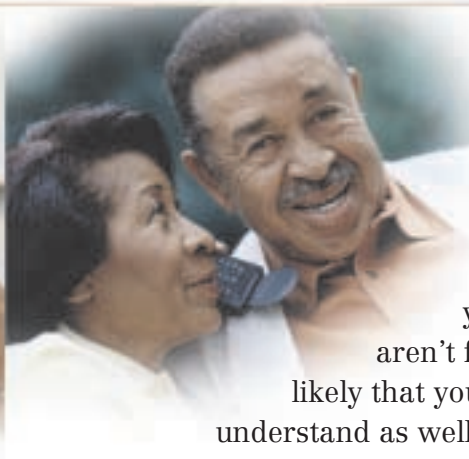
Many people unconsciously create distractions as they speak. Talking with their mouths full, hands covering mouths, as well as unexpected, sudden head and body movement all make it harder to understand. Make certain you can see their faces, expressions and gestures clearly as they speak to you.

Background sounds can be distracting as well. As you are learning to select and sort specific sounds, it is wise not to attempt conversations while watching the TV, for example.

time for added consideration

There are times when hearing may be even more difficult. When you are tired or aren't feeling well, it's likely that you won't hear or understand as well, either. This is when the patience and understanding of others are especially appreciated.

Everyone adjusts to hearing instruments and develops listening skills at their own pace. The common sense and attitudes of your family and friends are as important as the instruments themselves. Their encouragement and support gives you a significant advantage as you become reacquainted with the world of sounds.





Remember that most people don't know you, and cannot "see" your hearing problem. There are ways of non-verbally encouraging others to face you when speaking and talking more slowly. Most won't mind helping you, but you have to let them know what you need. The way you ask – verbally or non-verbally – determines how they respond.

- Your family and friends are equally affected by your hearing problem.
- Be sure others have your full attention and you can see their faces when they speak.
- Have them speak normally, naturally, and clearly - rather than louder.
- Rephrase rather than repeat word for word if you don't initially understand what is said.
- Don't hesitate to ask others for help - their support and encouragement are just as important as your desire to improve.





Your hearing instruments represent the ultimate in miniaturized sophistication - especially when you consider the environment they must function in. Heat, moisture, and foreign substances can accumulate and degrade performance, or interrupt operation entirely.

Proper preventive care and maintenance will go a long way ensuring trouble-free performance of what is a significant hearing investment. This includes daily cleaning on your part, as well as regular comprehensive examinations by your Hearing Professional.



When not wearing your BTE, turn it off and open the battery compartment door to prevent excessive reduction of battery life. An instrument left "on" can produce feedback that might attract curious pets - possibly resulting in hearing instruments chewed beyond repair.

For similar reasons, it is best to store your instruments where you can easily find them, but safely out of reach of pets and children. It is not nearly durable enough to survive being used as a toy or snack.

If your instrument(s) will not be used for an extended period of time, remove the battery completely, place the instrument(s) in the pouch and store in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight or heat.



Your earmold should be cleaned on a regular basis using a soft, damp cloth. Periodically, you may wash it in warm soapy water. Be certain that the instrument is detached and far away from any moisture before cleaning. A brush may be provided to remove earwax or other particles that may have accumulated around switches and the battery compartment of your instrument. Never use solvents, cleaning fluids or oil to clean your instrument or earmold.

It is a good idea to perform all cleaning and battery changes above a soft cloth or towel on a desk or table. This will keep the instrument from potentially damaging falls to hard surfaces if you drop it.



Your instruments may be so comfortable that you forget you have them on. So develop the mental habit of checking your ears before going swimming, taking a shower or applying hair spray. And do the same with pockets of clothing before they are washed.

Should it get wet, do not attempt to dry your instrument in an oven, microwave or with a hair dryer - the heat will most certainly damage it. Instead, dispose of the battery and set the instrument on a towel in a safe place, leaving the battery compartment door open to promote air drying.



If, for any reason, an instrument fails, do not attempt to fix it yourself. Not only does it likely violate any applicable warranties or insurance, you could easily cause extensive damage.



Should your instrument(s) fail or perform unsatisfactorily, first check the guide on the next page for possible solutions. If problems persist, your Hearing Professional is the person to contact for assistance. Even if you are away from home, most professionals are willing to help. They are able to solve many common problems right in the office. If you are uncertain who provides service in your area, write to the address shown on page 27.

Symptom: Dead

Cause: Depleted battery

Solution: Replace battery

Symptom: Dead

Cause: Blocked earmold

Solution: Clear tube blockage

Symptom: Dead

Cause: Defective instrument

Solution: See your Professional

Symptom: Not loud enough

Cause: Low battery

Solution: Replace battery

Symptom: Not loud enough

Cause: Blocked earmold

Solution: Remove blockage and clean

Symptom: Not loud enough

Cause: When was hearing last checked?

Solution: See your Professional

Symptom: Inconsistent performance

Cause: Low battery

Solution: Replace battery

Symptom: Unclear, distorted performance

Cause: Low battery

Solution: Replace battery

Symptom: Unclear, distorted performance

Cause: Defective instrument

Solution: See your Professional

- Proper care and maintenance can help ensure trouble-free operation.
- When not in use, store your instrument in a safe place, away from medications, pets and children.
- Never allow liquids to enter the instrument - internal damage will likely occur.
- Keep instruments away from excessive heat and direct sunlight.
- Avoid dropping your instruments - perform cleaning and battery changes over close, soft surfaces.
- Never permit cleaning solvents, hair spray or perfume to come into contact with instruments.
- Do not attempt repairs - always consult your Hearing Professional for service.



Be assured that, together with your Hearing Professional, we are prepared to do all that we can to help achieve the highest possible level of hearing satisfaction.

Even if it's when you visit for batteries, be sure to have regular, periodic examinations of both your hearing instruments and your ears. Both are subject to constantly-changing factors that can significantly impact our efforts to provide better hearing.

You may have friends and relatives who also experience hearing difficulty. Encourage them to have their hearing tested by the Hearing Professional listed on your warranty card.

No one should neglect their hearing, especially as more people may benefit from today's new hearing technology.

The following additional information is provided in compliance with U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations:

Warning To Hearing Aid Dispensers. A hearing aid dispenser should advise a prospective hearing aid user to consult promptly with a licensed physician (preferably an ear specialist) before dispensing a hearing aid if the hearing aid dispenser determines through inquiry, actual observation, or review of any other available information concerning the prospective user, that the prospective user has any of the following conditions:

- i. Visible congenital or traumatic deformity of the ear.
- ii. History of active drainage from the ear within the previous 90 days.
- iii. History of sudden or rapidly progressive hearing loss within the previous 90 days.
- iv. Acute or chronic dizziness.
- v. Unilateral hearing loss of sudden or recent onset within the previous 90 days.
- vi. Audiometric air-bone gap equal to or greater than 15 decibels at 500 Hertz (Hz), 1,000 Hz and 2,000 Hz.
- vii. Visible evidence of significant cerumen accumulation or a foreign body in the ear canal.
- viii. Pain or discomfort in the ear.

Important Notice For Prospective Hearing Aid Users. Good health practice requires that a person with a hearing loss have a medical evaluation by a licensed physician (preferably a physician who specializes in diseases of the ear) before purchasing a hearing aid. Licensed physicians who specialize in diseases of the ear are often referred to as otolaryngologists, otologists, or otorhinolaryngologists. The purpose of the medical evaluation is to assure that all medically treatable conditions that may affect hearing are identified and treated before the hearing aid is purchased.

Following the medical evaluation, the physician will give you a written statement that states that your hearing loss has been medically evaluated and that you may be considered a candidate for a hearing aid. The physician will refer you to an audiologist or hearing aid dispenser, as appropriate, for a hearing aid evaluation.

The audiologist or hearing aid dispenser will conduct a hearing aid evaluation to assess your ability to hear with and without a hearing aid. The hearing aid evaluation will enable the audiologist or dispenser to select and fit a hearing aid to your individual needs.

If you have reservations about your ability to adapt to amplification, you should inquire about the availability of a trial-rental or purchase-option program. Many hearing aid dispensers now offer programs that permit you to wear a hearing aid for a period of time for a nominal fee after which you may decide if you want to purchase the hearing aid.

Federal law restricts the sale of hearing aids to those individuals who have obtained a medical evaluation from a licensed physician. Federal law permits a fully informed adult to sign a waiver statement declining the medical evaluation for religious or personal beliefs that preclude consultation with a physician. The exercise of such a waiver is not in your best health interest and its use is strongly discouraged.

Children With Hearing Loss. In addition to seeing a physician for a medical evaluation, a child with a hearing loss should be directed to an audiologist for evaluation and rehabilitation since hearing loss may cause problems in language development and the educational and social growth of a child. An audiologist is qualified by training and experience to assist in the evaluation and rehabilitation of a child with a hearing loss.

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