



M & M

Mills & McKinney  
Hearing Practice

# Getting used to your hearing aids

**Most people find that it takes some time to get used to hearing aids. Do not despair – below is an outline of what happens as you get used to your hearing aids, and some handy hints for getting best results.**

[You may also find our other Resources helpful.](#)

## The Hearing System needs to get used to new sounds

Research shows that an ear fitted with a hearing aid gets better at processing sounds gradually over a period of time - typically over a 12-week period.

When the hearing aid is first fitted, you will probably find that sounds appear louder, that the sound quality seems a bit strange, and that your voice sounds different to you. As you get used to the hearing aid you will notice these differences less and less – the hearing aid will begin to sound normal to you. You may even find that it is a bit too soft. This is quite normal, and at your follow up visits, the Audiologist will re-set the hearing aid to your optimum level.

You will get best results if you wear your hearing aids for as much of the time as possible, however if you are having difficulty doing this in the early stages try to build up your wearing time gradually. Put simply, the brain has to learn a new sound language, and the more practice it gets, the better it will do.

## Take it easy

It will help you if you start off wearing your hearing aid in “easy” listening situations, for example listening to sounds around your house, listening to one person speaking in a quiet room, listening to the news on TV. Some people say “I don’t need my hearing aid in that situation”, however getting used to listening to familiar, easy sounds will make it easier for you to tackle more difficult listening situations.

More difficult listening environments are anywhere that has background noise and or reverberant sound – the more noise, the more difficult the situation. Common difficult listening environments are busy offices, lectures, theatres, supermarkets, halls and noisy social events.

## Background noise is difficult

Everyone finds it more difficult to hear when there is background noise, whether his or her hearing is normal or not. Just think how difficult it is to hear one person speaking in a meeting whilst others are speaking at the same time, or to hear a train announcement in a busy station. Anything you can do to minimise background noise will make it easier for you to hear.

It is possible to get used to listening to speech in noisy situations and find it easier to hear over time. Our premium hearing aids also provide tailor-made programmes for cutting out background noise and use specialised sound processing strategies that aim to make speech easier to hear in background noise.

## Watch that body language

When we “listen” to someone, surprisingly little of what we “hear” comes from what the person says. Studies have shown that 50% of communication is related to sound (words, intonation) and the remainder is related to body language (facial expression, gesture, body language and so on). Even people with normal hearing rely on these non-verbal aspects of communication, and how often have you heard someone say “I can’t hear without my glasses”? Even with your hearing aids you need to see the speaker’s face to hear well. You should also take advantage of lip-reading. Always try to make eye contact with the person speaking and ask them to face you when they speak to you. However, even the best of lip-readers are only 30% accurate, so you are not alone if you find this difficult to do.

## The closer the better

advantage of lip-reading and non-verbal communication. However, they should not be too close. The optimum distance is between 3 and 6 feet. This obviously can be difficult in certain situations, for example busy offices, lectures and meetings, however, do encourage people not to shout at you from across the office or from another room!

## Familiar voices are easier

You will probably find that accented or unfamiliar speech is more difficult. This is because the hearing system copes best with what it is familiar with. You can take advantage of this by asking a relative or friend to read out loud to you. Start with familiar passages, and then move on to unfamiliar passages (for example a news summary from the newspaper). Remember, the more you practice, the easier it will be.

## Don't listen to every word

You don't have to hear every word to understand! Many words are not vital to the meaning of the sentence. It helps to know the subject that is being talked about, and then try to pick out key words. It will be easier if you practice this with a familiar speaker first.

In general conversation it is helpful to ask the speaker to make the subject of the conversation as clear as possible. Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat or rephrase something that you have not heard. You can always work this into the conversation by asking someone "Did you say X?", or "If I understand you correctly you are saying Y". These types of techniques are often taught to people who are learning good listening skills!

## Handy hints

- Try to reduce background noise – a room with soft furnishings (carpets, curtains, armchairs), or a tablecloth during dinner will absorb a lot of these in the home
- Remember that very noisy places such as streets, large shops, hospitals and railway stations will be more difficult to hear in
- Ask others to get your attention before speaking, face you, and to speak clearly, a little slower and a little louder than normal – mumbling, shouting and exaggerating facial movements will make it far more difficult to understand
- Make sure the room is well lit, and that your back is toward the light source (e.g. the window), so that the light falls on the speaker's face
- Make sure you can see the speaker's face clearly – dark glasses, hands in front of faces, beards, cigarettes and papers don't help!
- The ideal distance between you and the speaker should be 3 – 6 feet. Try to discourage people from talking to you from another room.
- Don't let yourself get too tired or tense – you will be able to communicate far better if you are relaxed.

## Wireless and Induction Loop systems

There are two systems which can be very helpful when listening to speech in background noise. The first is a wireless microphone system. If your hearing aid is compatible, a microphone can be held by the person speaking, or placed on a table facing them. The microphone will transmit sound directly to your hearing aids, cutting out background noise. This system is also compatible with your TV.

The second system is the induction loop. The induction loop consists of a wire loop with a remote microphone. The loop can vary in size, so, for example it can be worn round the neck, fitted round a group of seats in the theatre, or fitted round a meeting or living room. Sound from the remote microphone is transmitted to the loop, which sets up a magnetic current within the loop. Many hearing aids have a "T" setting, and if you are sitting in an area where an induction loop system is fitted, if you switch your hearing aid to "T" you should be able to hear sounds via the loop, without hearing background sound. The quality of the loop system and your position within it can make a huge difference to the quality of sound that you hear, however. Please make sure to ask your Audiologist to activate the T setting on your hearing aid.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### **Further information**

[You may also find our other Resources helpful.](#)

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