

What I Wish I Knew When I Got My First Hearing Aids

1. Partner With Your Hearing Health Professional. Be sure to tell your audiologist your priorities for hearing better. Do you work and need a captioned phone? Do you have trouble hearing in meetings or one on one at home? Attend the theater often? Dine out frequently? The more you explain, the more appropriate solutions can be offered. Most often the best solution will be a combination of hearing aids and other things.

2. Start with realistic expectations. Everyone wants hearing aids to work like glasses — you put them on and suddenly your hearing is back to normal. But we all know it doesn't work that way. It will take work and time by both the audiologist and by the hearing aid wearer to get things working smoothly. See your hearing care professional for as many follow-up visits as you need to fine-tune the sounds you're hearing, adjust the fit in your ear and talk about the situations that are most challenging for you.

3. Be persistent. It takes time for your brain to adjust to and relearn listening skills. Work up gradually into full time use. Be patient. Adjusting to hearing aids takes time. Some people only need a day or two but most people need a few weeks to a few months to adjust to using hearing aids. The important thing to remember is to wear them, even if just for a few hours the first day, an hour longer the following day, and so on until you are wearing hearing aids all day.

Start by wearing them at home or in other quiet listening environments and focus on having one-on-one conversations. As you gradually increase the number of places where you use your hearing aids, don't be discouraged by background noise. Let your friends and family know you're using your new hearing aids so they can help you stay committed to better hearing as you wear your aids in more challenging environments.

For extra practice with your hearing aids, try to locate the sources of all the sounds in your environment, or listen to audio books or talk radio while you're home alone.

At first, you will be aware of hearing aids in your ears and your voice will sound "funny." The quicker you ramp up to wearing them all day, like you would wear a pair of eyeglasses, the faster your brain will re-program itself to ignore the sounds that are meaningless to you. Before you know it, you'll only be able to hear the refrigerator humming if you concentrate and listen for it.

4. Include the family. Hearing loss impacts the entire family so include them whenever possible in these discussions. Family involvement increases the likelihood of success.

5. Embrace Innovation. Incorporate hearing assistive technology or HAT. The most effective hearing solutions combine hearing aids with other technologies. Stay current on new devices and apps that are developed to help people with hearing loss watch TV, enjoy dining out, attend a lecture or live performance so you can integrate them into your hearing loss tool kit. HAT can be confusing. Be sure to include the Hearing Loss Association of America in your tool kit; they can get you jump started. You can find HLAA at www.Hearingloss.org.

Learn how to use T-coils. Hearing Aids with T-coils can be life changing when attending the theater, riding in a taxicab and at lectures and museums. As more venues install loops, T-coils will only become more useful. Make sure you know how to use this feature on your hearing aids

Try the devices yourself. Try out the hearing aids and other assistive listening technology in various listening situations (you can borrow them at Florida AAST to try). Use captions readers at the movies or a Roger pen at your next family dinner. Real life experience with the products will help you better understand what will work for you.

8. See Beyond The Technology

Learn communication tricks and tips. For instance, getting the attention of the person first, and making sure the speaker's mouth is visible.

Learn self-advocacy skills. Many people with hearing loss are shy about asking for the accommodations they need. You need to try asking, for instance, for captioned phones at work or to use caption readers at the movies. Asking for what we need is difficult at first, but it gets easier every time we do it.

Join the hearing loss community. Attend meetings of the local HLAA chapter or similar group. Meeting other people with hearing loss can make a big difference. Meet people who understand your frustrations and from whom you can learn useful tips to help you hear your best. The Jacksonville chapter of HLAA is meeting currently via Zoom. Contact mwjarrett@comcast.net to find out about virtual meetings and programs.

Be a hearing ambassador. Protect the hearing you still have. Be an ambassador for hearing health wherever you go — loud restaurants, concerts, etc. You can make a huge difference for others who may not know how important it is to protect their hearing.

This information is adapted from [How Can Audiologists Help Their Patients Hear Their Best](https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2018/05/08/how-can-audiologists-help-their-patients-hear-their-best/), written by Shari Eberts, which first appeared on her website [Livingwithhearingloss.com](https://livingwithhearingloss.com). You can read the original post at: <https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2018/05/08/how-can-audiologists-help-their-patients-hear-their-best/>

You CAN Go To The Movies When You Have Hearing Loss

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By: Shari Eberts

<https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2017/02/28/you-can-go-to-the-movies-when-you-have-hearing-loss/>

Going to the movies can be challenging for people with hearing loss. The soundtrack is often deafeningly loud but the dialogue is too soft, making it hard to follow the plot. You can't really ask the actors to repeat themselves and your companions get annoyed when you ask "What did he say?" a hundred times during the film. Not surprisingly, my family rarely went to the movies, waiting for the new releases to become available for home use where we could watch them with captions.

But recently my son has been asking to go to the movie theater. He is getting older and wants to enjoy his favorite action flicks (like the latest Star Wars movie) on the big screen. Who can blame him?

I didn't want to miss out on the experience — I really do enjoy a big screen Star Wars flick myself — so I experimented and found a way to enjoy going to the movies again. It has become a regular Sunday afternoon activity for our family.

There are two important elements: Noise canceling headphones to block out the overly loud soundtrack and caption readers to enhance the dialogue.

Noise Canceling Headphones

I love my noise canceling headphones and use them often. I wear them when I travel on airplanes, at concerts, and I even sported them on some of the attractions at Disney World. They not only help protect my ears from sounds that are unsafe, but also help me cope with situations that I find disturbingly loud, even if the decibel level is within normal limits.

At the movies they work great! They not only ratchet down the volume, but when I use the noise canceling feature, the background noise recedes and the dialogue is much easier to understand. This works well at loud Broadway shows too, where the music can sometimes overpower the voices.

In the case of Star Wars, a small flick of the noise canceling switch and I was able to hear the rebels' calls for help over the diminished roar of the Empire's fighter planes. Excellent.

Caption Readers

Many movie theaters now offer captions readers, and most of the time they work quite well! Two years ago, when I first tried using one, the cinema staff was not familiar with the device and it took some time to get one. But more recently, the folks at guest services have become much more efficient. This must mean the devices are being used more frequently!

There are two basic types of caption readers that I have seen. The most common (at least in my experience) is Dolby CaptiView®, which according to their website “consists of a small OLED display on a bendable support arm that fits into a theatre seat cup holder.”

The screen is small, but the captions are clear and easy to read. Built-in privacy visors prevent the captions from bothering those seated around you. The adjustable arm lets you position the viewer anywhere you like. I try to center it at the bottom of the screen like my closed captions at home. The captions often work for the previews too, but not for the ads, which is fine by me.

The second type is Sony® Access glasses. I have only had the chance to try these once, and the captions were blurry so I could not read them. I should have exchanged them for a different pair, but they felt so heavy on my face, I wasn't sure I wanted to wear them anyway. Other people I know use them frequently with much success, so I may need to give them another try.

Find theaters with caption readers at CaptionFish.com. Enter your location and you can then search by theater or movie times. Or simply ask at your local theater. Most larger chains now offer them.

Readers, will I see you at the movies?

Resources – A Few Places to Get Started

Learn More about HAT (Hearing Assistive Technology)

Hearables – a new alternative to hearing aids. <https://www.wearables-hearables.com/hearables/>

Article on HAT from the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA):
<https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/hat/>

Technology for Leisure Time Video

In this video, learn how hearing assistive technology can help you stay active in your community and with friends and family. The [video](#) is produced by the Hearing Loss Association of America

See more [videos on Hearing Assistive Technology](#).

HLA- Jacksonville Chapter is a place to meet others with the same challenges – learning from each other and getting support is invaluable – Monthly meetings are on Saturdays at 1:30, usually the second Saturday at a local library. Meetings are now hybrid so you can join in person or on zoom. Contact mwjarrett@comcast.net for more information.

HLAA – Florida Chapter provides 4 or more monthly virtual programs on hearing issues and has a large library of excellent video programs you might find helpful.

Attend the HLAA Convention -June 23 – 25, 2022 for many programs on improving communication – it's in Tampa this year!

<https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/convention/>

FAAST, Inc. (The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology): Florida's number one resource for assistive technology and provides training on HAT and device lending library. www.faast.org. Try out hearing technology before you buy!

This is the link for the lending library,: <https://faast.org/services/short-term-device-loans/>

Sign up for webinars on assistive technology for all types of disabilities, including hearing loss, mobility needs, etc.

Also money loans are available to help you buy expensive assistive technology such as hearing aids and mobility devices. This is the link for the financial loan program. It has information and Frequently asked questions about the program <https://faast.org/services/financial-loans/>

The Regional Demo Center in Jacksonville is at ILC Jacksonville – you can try out and borrow devices to see if they work for you – free!

Florida Division of Rehabilitative Services: Provides services to help with employment, including HAT, and sometimes free hearing aids so you can work.
www.rehabworks.org/docs/hearingloss.rtf

Hearing Health & Technology Matters newsletter: <https://hearinghealthmatters.org/>

The Hearing Review newsletter: <http://www.hearingreview.com/news/>

Hearing Tracker: <https://www.hearingtracker.com>

Dr. Cliff Olsen AudD: provides excellent videos on hearing aids and related subjects on YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpikvbsbLd6tMcuN7AEJ-1A>

Sign up to follow blogs/email newsletters

Healthy Hearing
<https://www.healthyhearing.com>

HLAA- Florida newsletter
<https://www.hla-fl.org/author/bilodeaul/>

Living with Hearing Loss
www.livingwithhearingloss.com

Hearing Loss Help
<http://hearinglosshelp.com/>

Join the Hearing Loss Community

Hearing Loss Association of America – www.hearingloss.org

HLAA- Jacksonville Chapter: Contact JudyGMartin@gmail.com

Financial Assistance for Hearing Assistive Technology

No Cost Captioned Telephones: <https://www.nocostcaptel.com/>

<https://www.listentech.com/grants-for-assistive-listening-devices/>

https://www.needymeds.org/copay_diseases.taf?_function=summary&disease_eng=Hearing%20Loss

<https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/financial-assistance/>

FAAST provides loans to buy hearing aids;

<http://www.infinitec.org/insurance-medicare-and-medicaid-funding-for-assistive-technology>

Text to 911

To download an app for the text to 911:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cabmatch.help911&hl=en_US&gl=US

Obtain a placard for your car to communicate with law enforcement

info@CILJacksonville.org

Vendors of Alerting Devices/HAT:

www.silentcall.com

www.sonicalert.com

<http://www.teltex.com/> (State Programs noted, iAccessibility Program offered)

<https://bellman.com/en/our-solutions/mobile-phone-alert/>

www.harriscomm.com

<https://www.harc.com/> (free shipping)

<http://soundalert.co/index.html> (Smartphone app \$45.65; purchase optional accessories)

<https://www.absoluteautomation.com/applications/disabilities/deaf/index.html>

Siren Detectors: To find out where to get a siren detector, contact National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (via link in below website).

<http://www.infinitec.org/alerting-systems>

<http://sirensensorusa.com/>

<https://haasalert.com/>

Emergency Alerts – Weather Alerts

N-CHATT

Most mobile phones have wireless emergency alerts (WEA) based on cell location. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are alerts for severe weather emergencies, imminent threats to life or property, AMBER alerts, and Presidential alerts are sent to all WEA-enabled devices in the impacted region. Both the phone and network need WEA for it to function. Check your phone's settings or packaging for a WEA symbol and search for a list of WEA compatible devices on your mobile carrier's website. You may need to enable WEA in the phone's settings. Learn more at: <https://www.ctia.org/consumer-resources/wireless-emergency-alerts>

Some communities have an emergency notification system for emergency voice and TTY calls if you sign up with your contact info. To see if your local government offers this type of emergency notification, contact your area NON-EMERGENCY police number.

Neighbors, family and friends could also be asked to alert you as a backup.

NOAA weather alert radios feature lights and vibration alerts. Learn more from the national weather service at this link:

<https://www.weather.gov/wrn/dhh-safety>