

Using hearing instruments successfully

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A learning program for
using and getting
used to hearing systems

PHONAK

hearing systems

“When you lose your eyesight,
you lose contact with things.

When you lose your hearing,
you lose contact with people.”

(Helen Keller)

Phonak

Phonak is one of the world's leading manufacturers of hearing systems. Based in Stäfa, Switzerland, the company develops, produces and distributes Phonak high-tech hearing systems dedicated to helping people with impaired hearing participate in everyday life.

The company is committed to improving speech understanding in all environments, especially noisy ones, putting an end to the frequent complaint, "I can hear but I don't understand what's being said!"

Phonak is a driving force in the development of innovative technologies. Find out more about the Phonak product range from your hearing-care professional or visit

<http://www.phonak-us.com>

In order to get the most out of your hearing instruments take the time to follow a short training program. We have put together a 10-step program to allow you to enjoy all of the benefits your high-tech hearing system offers. Each step represents a progression. Through a better understanding of speech you will gain renewed confidence and a better quality of life.

You are not alone. Each year 6 million hearing instruments are fitted. In the industrial nations every 10th person has a hearing loss.

Hearing instruments have become communication systems. They are available in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors and incorporate a whole range of different technologies. These developments encourage people with hearing loss to find a solution. After all, human relationships revolve around communication.

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Talking to each other is a vital part of living.

Getting used to your hearing instruments



Step 1: Gain Experience

Begin your training program in familiar surroundings in your own home. After you have read the operating instructions carefully and have familiarized yourself with your instruments, put them on and start conversing with one person. Step-by-step you can then add to the complexity of your surroundings, although very noisy environments are to be avoided initially.

Step 2: Continually increase your wearing time

On the first day you should not wear your hearing instruments for more than 2-3 hours. Increase this time gradually until after a few weeks you are at the stage when you can wear your hearing instruments all day without noticing them. Remember to wear your hearing instruments at home too, so you will be able to hear the telephone ringing, the doorbell, etc.

Step 3: Adapt the volume to the situation

Modern hearing systems automatically select a pre-programmed, acceptable volume level when they are switched on. Many modern instruments do not need any further adjustment which is why they do not have a volume control function. If you have a volume control, don't set the volume too high. This can result in distortion rather than improved understanding. Don't try to understand soft voices over a great distance. Remember that people who hear well cannot do that either. As you get used to your hearing instruments you can adjust the volume controls when you need increased loudness.

Step 4: The hearing instrument – an extension of your body

Ideally your hearing instruments should become a natural extension of your body, similar to glasses or contact lenses. This should happen naturally as you get used to your new hearing system. Should you continue to experience discomfort, consult your hearingcare professional.

Make allowances for the effects of fatigue

Wearing hearing instruments and hearing a greater range of sounds may tire you or make you irritable at first. If this happens, take a break. You can train yourself to get used to hearing instruments but you can't force yourself. A positive attitude and a desire to better understand what is being said are decisive factors in your success.

Learn to be an effective listener

With your hearing instruments it is now easier to hear well and communicate effectively in both quiet and noisy situations. It is still necessary however for you to be an effective listener. Even people with perfect hearing often have to concentrate on what they want to hear and ignore or suppress other sounds.

You can learn to be a more effective listener:

Try to identify any sounds you don't recognize when you first start wearing your hearing instruments.

Practice concentrating on the sounds and voices you want to hear, ignoring those that are less important.

When there are a number of different sounds around you, practice shifting your attention from one to another.

Adjust to your own voice

At first you may not recognize the sound of your own voice. It is, however, very important to hear your own voice so that you can control and correct the diction and volume of your voice properly.

Learn to deal with difficult hearing situations

Step 5: Living with noise

The world is a noisy place. Often people with perfect hearing are able to suppress interfering noises by concentrating on the sounds they wish to hear. If, however, you have had a hearing impairment for some time you may have lost this ability. Furthermore your hearing instruments will reintroduce you to many sounds you may have forgotten, e.g. the ticking of a clock, paper being crumpled, the clicking of heels on the floor, birdsong, children laughing ... Not all of the sounds are pleasant of course. You can also learn how to ignore unwanted sounds again. Practice concentrating on what you want to hear. If you have multi-program instruments, practice choosing the best program for the situation.

Step 6: Taking part in discussions

Even people with good hearing have problems understanding speech if several people speak at once. It will help if you move closer to the person you want to hear and concentrate on him/her. With practice you will achieve excellent results in this type of situation.

Step 7: Visiting public places

Theatres, places of worship, conference rooms and other public places present a challenge for the hearing instrument user. It is helpful to sit where the acoustic conditions are best.

Normally this is not too close to the speaker but so that you can see his/her face.

Many public buildings have technical installations to make it easier to hear. A telephone call prior to the visit will clarify what is available.

Step 8: Listening to radio and television

Concentrate on trying to follow the overall meaning rather than each individual word.

Certain accessories can be helpful in this situation. Take a look at the section on wireless communication systems on the last page of this brochure or consult a hearingcare professional.

Step 9: Using the telephone

There are a number of ways of better understanding speech via the telephone for hearing instrument users. Your hearingcare professional can help you to find the solution best suited to your needs.

Using the telephone with your hearing instrument microphone

If you have Behind-the-Ear (BTE) instruments, the microphone is at the top of your ear. If you have In-the-Ear (ITE) instruments, the microphone is in the area of your ear canal. If feedback (whistling) occurs, hold the telephone receiver a little further away. You can find the position where the signal is clearest and strongest by experimenting with the receiver while listening to one of the recorded information services e.g. the speaking clock or the weather forecast.

Using the hearing instrument's built-in telecoil

Many Behind-the-Ear (BTE) instruments and some In-the-Ear (ITE) hearing instruments have a built-in telecoil circuit. This is activated manually by selecting the "T" position on the switch or the remote control.

A telecoil allows an electromagnetic signal to be picked-up. You may need a special telephone in order to have one that produces an electromagnetic signal, as well as the usual acoustic signal. With this type of "hearing instrument compatible telephone" your hearing instrument can receive the telephone signal via magnetic induction if you switch to the "T" position.

To operate the telecoil:

1. Switch your hearing instrument to the "T" position via the switch or remote control.
2. Increase the volume if necessary.
3. Place the receiver over the hearing instrument where the signal is strongest.
4. After your phone call remember to switch back to the microphone position.

Built-in telephone amplifier

Many telephone companies have telephones available with built-in amplifiers and a volume control. You can adjust the volume of the signal produced by the telephone and hold the receiver over the hearing instrument microphone.

Step 10: Two ears are better than one

The use of two hearing instruments for people with a hearing loss in both ears has many advantages. It offers a new dimension in hearing – after all, it is not by chance that nature gave us two ears.

The benefits of hearing with both ears:
More natural hearing because our auditory system is designed to receive sound input from two ears.

Improved ability to determine the direction from which sound is coming – e.g. knowing which way to look when you hear a truck approaching.
Greater ability to hear and understand in noisy environments.

Richer, smoother sound quality.
Easier, more relaxed listening.
Less volume required for each ear.

Further information on this subject is available in the Phonak brochure "Two ears are better than one" available from your hearingcare professional.

At the end of the learning program ...

Your success with your hearing instruments in the initial stages is the foundation of your hearing lifestyle. Once you have completed this training course you will be ready to get the best out of your hearing instruments.

Be sure to read the instruction manual carefully and do not hesitate to contact your hearing-care professional should you have any further questions.

Phonak is Swiss technology

The correct choice of hearing instrument is influenced by anatomical features of the ear, individual hearing loss and technology. Medical practitioners and hearingcare professionals can advise you on the various solutions available. The following explanations may be useful to you.

Easier listening through wireless communication systems

There are effective wireless communication systems which enable you to communicate with another person over a considerable distance. These accessories from Phonak remove the barriers of difficult hearing situations. You can obtain valuable information on the various possibilities of wireless communication systems from your hearingcare professional.

The following Phonak information brochures in the series “**Hear better – participate in life**” are available from your hearingcare professional.

- 1 Hearing and hearing loss
- 2 Using hearing instruments successfully
- 3 Caring for your hearing instruments
- 4 Two ears are better than one
- 5 Tips for communicating with hearing instrument users

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