

Assistive Listening Devices

Hearing is a big part of communicating with others. Not hearing well can make it hard to enjoy social activities, speak with friends and loved ones, or participate in classes. Many people wear hearing aids to help them hear well.

Other types of devices also help you hear well. These are called assistive listening devices or hearing assist technology (HAT). An assistive listening device helps overcome hearing problems caused by distance, background noise, or poor room acoustics. These devices can be used with or without hearing aids.

Transmitters

A personal FM system is like your own radio station. It includes a transmitter microphone for the person who is speaking and a receiver for the listener. The receiver is in the listener's ear. This system:

- Reduces the effects of background noise.
- May be used alone or with a hearing aid.
- May be used in public places, such as churches or theaters.
- Can be used to allow private listening to TV and radio without having to turn up the volume.

Infrared systems are often used at home with TV sets. They work the same way as the personal FM system except that sound is transmitted by light waves instead of sound waves. Infrared systems can also be used in settings such as theaters.

An audio loop system uses a wire on the floor that connects to a microphone used by the person speaking. The person talking into the microphone creates a current in the wire which makes an electromagnetic field in the room. A hearing aid can pick up the electromagnetic signal from the microphone.

Text Devices

Closed captioning is a text device that has been standard for TV since 1993. It shows text subtitles at the bottom of the TV screen.

Computerized speech recognition software allows a computer to change spoken messages into text documents so you can read what is being spoken.

Text telephones allow phone conversations to be typed and read rather than spoken and heard. This is called TTY. Phone amplifiers may also be helpful. They can be portable or built in.

Alerting devices

Alerting devices include bed vibrators, loud signals, or flashing lights. These can be hooked up to alarm clocks, doorbells, telephones, smoke detectors, or baby monitors.

For more information, call the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at 800-638-8255. Their Web site is <http://www.asha.org>.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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