

Definitive Guide To Hearing Aids & Better Hearing

How To Avoid A Costly Mistake By
Choosing The Right Technology &
The Right Professional...

Terry Ball, M.Aud., CCC-A

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Need The RIGHT Information about Hearing Loss & Hearing Aids from a Qualified Audiologist?

We invite you to contact us personally at:

www.AspenHearing.net

www.Hearing-Aids-Denver-CO.com

Or call (303) 722-0886

You may also visit our convenient location in Denver, CO

We look forward to hearing from you and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Terry Ball, M.Aud., CCC-A





Aspen Hearing Center

By

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Terry has been fitting hearing aids and working with individuals with hearing loss for more than 20 years.

She received her Bachelor of Science Degree from Purdue University in 1985 and her Masters of Audiology from the University of South Carolina in 1990.

She has worked in various capacities in the hearing health care field including the Veteran's Administration in South Carolina and Georgia, hospitals, and Ear, Nose, and Throat practices and as a Clinical Trials Manager with a middle ear implant company.

She has been assisting patients in a private audiology setting with Aspen Hearing Center since January 2004. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology and the American Speech Language Hearing Association. She has attended numerous trainings in audiology including at the House Ear Institute in Los Angeles and the Kresge Laboratories in New Orleans.

Her expertise is in working with individuals with communication needs and fitting them with a technology and style to fit their needs.

1.

Getting The Most Out Of This Book

We wrote this book for consumers to make sure they receive information about hearing loss and hearing aids that could save them literally thousands of dollars in a costly mistake.

To get the most out of this book, read it carefully. We have highlighted what we like to call TAKEAWAYS that are important areas for you to read very carefully and possibly even write down so you can use that information in making a decision about your hearing loss and what you should do next.

TAKEAWAY—READ THIS BOOK VERY CAREFULLY!

We recommend active reading of this book. Not sure what Active Reading is? Active reading means taking notes as you read something.

This book was written based on what our patients have been telling us for many years and how they wished there was someone or something out there that could have helped them before we met.

2.

Now What Do I Do?

You have just realized you have hearing loss. You have also realized the fact that you need to do something about it. Your family and friends have probably known for years. Now what do you do? Talk to friends, look for ads in the newspaper, and research online? Where do you go? Whom do you see? What should you ask? How do you make sure you are getting the best DEAL? We will get to the answers of these questions soon enough.

In my many years of patient care we have seen and heard it all, everything from people buying hearing aids online that were actually stolen property to patients who bought hearing aids through the mail that never worked or fit. We have found that many consumers are confused, if you are thinking about buying hearing aids online (which we do not recommend), you have to sort through many different websites many of which have one goal in mind...

TO SELL YOU HEARING AIDS, that's it.

They could care less about the care, education and follow up that is required for a successful hearing aid fitting that can improve the quality of life for all who wear them. There are many different styles, models, and manufacturers to choose from. The whole research process can become rather frustrating. We do understand that you need to have the right information before making a decision. Just try to make sure you are hearing it from a highly trained professional, not a website that is trying to sell you hearing aids.

3.

Choosing A Hearing Aid Professional

TAKEAWAY—THE SELECTION OF THE BEST PROVIDER FOR YOU IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE HEARING AIDS YOU BUY!

When you do compare hearing aids, the first question is NOT whether you want to buy hearing aids or not. Or what brand or style you are going to buy or any other question about hearing aids themselves.

First, check the credentials of the person. Are they an Audiologist? They should be.

Audiologists have a Doctorate or other advanced degree and are highly trained to evaluate the entire auditory system and perform diagnostic assessments to help rule out any medical issues that can have serious consequences.

A master's level audiologist has a six-year degree and you will most commonly see M.S or M.A behind their name. A Doctor of Audiology is an eight-year degree and they will have Au.D. or Ph.D. behind their name. The other credential you should look for is a valid state license to practice.

You are embarking on an adventure toward better hearing. You need to select the professional you are going to place your trust, your money, your time and frankly your hopes. This might be something you have not given much thought, but it may very well be the most important decision you make.

You are going to be spending time with this person for years to come! It is important that it is someone you feel very comfortable around and someone with whom you can communicate effectively. You will need to trust this professional to be able to openly discuss the difficulties you have been experiencing with your hearing loss and the communication difficulties it has created for you. Being open and frank about the impact your hearing loss has on your spouse, your family and friends, as well as your performance at work, is critical to your success.

The person you select should have the educational background and the practical experience you need, but they also need to be a good communicator and a great listener, capable of translating your experiences into a technical solution to resolve important communication issues. They need to be patient and committed to helping you hear as well as you possibly can. The last thing you want is a professional who is delighted to sell you hearing aids and then avoids you if you need adjustments or coaching.

Do you trust them? Would you feel comfortable referring your friends to this person? If you can answer yes to these questions you are on the right track!

Do a bit of research on the professionals around you:

- Ask for a referral from friends you know who have been successful with hearing aids. Did they respect and trust the person they worked with?
- Ask your Primary Care physician which hearing professional they refer patients to for hearing loss and hearing aids. Remember, this person reflects either a positive light or a negative light on the physicians themselves; normally they select other professionals very carefully.
- Again, make certain they hold a valid audiology license, are in good standing, and have no dubious complaints against them. Every state has a licensing board for Audiologists. Check your state's web site for information.

If they have a business website spend some time looking around. Are they professional? Does what they say about themselves and their company fit with what you are looking for? Do they give you a clear reason why you should select them? What sets them apart from the other professionals in the area? Is their website an information resource? (This will tell you if they believe in patient education).

4.

Success With Hearing Aids Is Contingent On Good Data

TAKEAWAY—EXPECT A FULL DIAGNOSTIC HEARING TEST

Good experiences with hearing aids are contingent on good data. A complete evaluation is critical in hearing aid selection as well as the accurate programming of the instruments. Very few insurance companies pay for the evaluation and Medicare will only cover part of the exam if referred by a physician and is not for the purpose of fitting hearing aids. You need to have a complete exam and you should be prepared to pay for it. Expect to pay around \$100 depending on your location.

A complete Audiological evaluation may include 2-3 of the following components:

Otoscopic Evaluation

A thorough examination of your ear canals will identify any blockage by debris or cerumen (earwax). If a significant amount of earwax is present, your ears need to be cleared of wax prior to completing the hearing testing. Some audiologists provide cerumen removal and others may refer you to your Primary Care physician or a medical ear specialist (ENT). A visual inspection of the eardrum will also reveal any abnormalities, scarring or infections.

Middle Ear Evaluation

Most commonly referred to as a Tympanogram. This evaluation looks at the mobility of the eardrum and the middle ear bones as well as air pressure inside the middle ear. This gives the audiologist information on the integrity of the eardrum and if any

perforations in the ear drum are present. Acoustic reflexes are also measured with this test and give important neurological information about the hearing system.

Audiological Evaluation

This portion of the evaluation is what most people think of as a "hearing test". It is administered in traditional earphones in a sound treated room. Eight or nine separate frequencies are evaluated to identify the amount of volume required for the tone to be barely heard. This is referred to as your *threshold*. This method of sound presentation is air conduction testing. It evaluates the entire hearing pathway from the ear canal to the auditory cortex in the brain. The frequency testing should be repeated with a second method of sound presentation. This time an oscillator is placed on the skull behind the ear, bypassing the middle ear and stimulating the inner ear (cochlea) directly.

Speech Testing

There is a big difference between hearing speech and being able to understand speech. A critical part of any evaluation is a measure of the accuracy in understanding a spoken word list. This test is administered in a "quiet" situation with each ear evaluated separately and then again with both ears working together. Because we live every day in background noise, and it causes such a disruption of our ability to understand speech, it is very important that a speech test in the presence of background noise be included in the evaluation.

Before, during and after the testing expect the audiologist to ask questions- lots of questions. Each person has a unique hearing history, medical conditions, experience with past amplification, expectations, social and work environment needs as well as budget. Any professional who does not ask enough questions to understand completely your unique situation and need is treating you like a "hearing loss" and will then recommend a hearing aid for the "hearing loss" not for YOU.

Once they have a complete understanding they are then able to link up your history, experiences, symptoms and needs and

convert that into selecting the most appropriate instrument for you.

Watch out for high-pressure tactics and sales gimmicks. A true professional will allow you to make this decision on your own time frame. Feel free to continue to ask questions about the process or the hearing aids until you are comfortable and ready to move forward with the purchase. If you need to take time to discuss it with family, you should do that.

One of the best things that can happen during your appointment is to experience what amplification is like and what you might expect to hear with hearing aids. Some audiologists will do this automatically before explaining the test results; others may schedule a follow up visit for the hearing aid demonstration.

A complete explanation of your hearing and test results is an important part of the test and your evaluation. It is not complete until you understand the results, recommendations, and all of your questions have been answered.

We recommend that you ask for a copy of your test results and recommendations, in case you travel or move out of the area. The records are your property and you have a right to have them.

5.

Purchasing Hearing Aids

TAKEAWAY—KNOW WHAT YOU ARE BUYING AND GET IT IN WRITING

It is important that you receive a written recommendation and it should include the information below at a minimum:

- The manufacturer of the hearing aid
- The specific model of the hearing aid
- The price of the instruments and any additional services
- The length of the manufacturer's repair and loss and damage warranties.
- Their satisfaction guarantee, including any requirements you must comply with, to return or exchange the hearing aids
- Fees that are withheld, if you exercise your legal right to return the hearing aids.

Should you decide to purchase hearing aids and feel comfortable with the professional and their office, you should ask some additional questions.

Ask the audiologist to tell you about their follow up policy. You should have your first follow up visit within one or two weeks of your initial hearing aid fitting and several additional visits during the adaptation period. Depending on your hearing loss, this adaptation period could be up to six months in duration.

These visits should include detailed discussion of your experiences, the positive things you have experienced as well as

any areas of difficulty. You should never feel like you are bothering your audiologist and that your comments and questions are trivial. They are there to make certain you are hearing as well as possible and you are receiving the maximum benefit from your hearing aids.

We recommend technology that uses data logging. Soon after you are fit with your hearing aids, they start collecting information that may include the number of hours you wear them each day, your volume control adjustments, noise you are exposed to and other key pieces of information.

In short, you don't need to remember everything that happens to you. Your hearing aids record much of the information that the audiologist needs to make programming adjustments.

6.

Summary

TAKEAWAY—DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE YOU MAKE A DECISION

In summary, ask questions about the entire process. Make certain you are comfortable with the audiologist as well as the office staff. Remember, you are going to be counting on them for years to come. If you find that any of the items discussed in this book are frowned upon or felt to be unimportant, you are in the wrong place. Keep looking until you find a compassionate, skilled and thorough professional who will provide the experience you deserve. It should be an enjoyable and educational process without any pressure.

Need Additional Help Or Advice?

Please visit us on the web to continue your learning:



A Personal Invitation

Sign up for a personal consultation; we can discuss what the appropriate next steps should be for your individual situation. We look forward to hearing from you.



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