



HEARING LOOP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a hearing loop system? How does it work?

A hearing loop is an assistive listening system that magnetically transfers a microphone or TV sound signal to hearing aids and cochlear implants that have a tiny receiver called a “telecoil” (often referred to as a “t-coil”) thus creating a “loudspeaker in the ear” that delivers sound customized to an individual’s hearing loss.

Why isn’t my hearing aid enough to enable me to hear in a large setting?

Today’s hearing aids enhance hearing in conversational settings but for many people with hearing loss the sound becomes unclear in larger settings. For example, in an auditorium, when the context is noisy, or when the acoustics in a room reverberate sound hearing aids don’t accommodate for the noise. Hearing loops make up for this deficiency in larger spaces.

Does my hearing aid have the telecoil (t-coil) receptor for receiving hearing loop input?

Your hearing aid may or may not have a t-coil. If you are unsure, you can ask your audiologist. Often times, hearing aid wearers have a t-coil but have not been shown how to turn it on and off. A discussion with your audiologist will quickly clarify the type of hearing aid you are currently fitted with and if necessary, you can replace it with a hearing aid that has a t-coil. In general, the greater an individual’s need for hearing assistance, the more likely they have a hearing aid with a t-coil.

I have a cochlear implant. Does that have a t-coil?

Almost all new model cochlear implants have t-coils. Again, your audiologist can confirm whether or not you have a t-coil.

Can people without t-coils or even without hearing aids benefit from hearing loop systems?

Yes, if an individual has difficulty hearing but does not have a hearing aid or a hearing aid with a t-coil, the hearing loop systems come with portable receivers and headsets that act just as a t-coil does for enhanced hearing. In our travels, we have found that often these units, regardless of the type of assistive listening technology in place, sit in closets unused. Individuals may choose to purchase their own portable receiver and headset to have available for their personal use wherever a hearing loop has been installed. Generally, public venues keep two to four portable systems on hand to loan to patrons.

I don’t have a t-coil – are they expensive to get?

For the end user, the telecoil cost is nominal and typically does not add to the hearing aid price.

Is interference a potential problem since hearing loops harness magnetic energy?

Generally not. While some older technology (ie nonflat computer monitors, old fluorescent lighting, and some old dimmer switches generate interference, as do some cars and all airplanes) generally in tens of thousands of venues in both the US and Europe there has been little to no interference with proper installation.

Are hearing loops new technology? I've never heard of it.

Actually the technology has been around for decades, and has been used widely and with great success throughout Europe, particularly in the UK and Scandanavia but it is only fairly recently that venues in the United States have recognized the relative low cost benefits of this technology and only recently that advocates for the hearing impaired have begun to speak up in support of hearing loop installations in public venues.

Where else in the world are hearing loops being utilized?

Europe, particularly the UK and Scandanavia have widely recognized the benefits of hearing loops and installed the systems throughout the national public's infrastructure, including in airports, cabs, bank windows, etc. The New York City Transit Authority is installing hearing loops at 488 subway information booths. In such venues, where checkout equipment is not realistic, the only possible assistive listening device is one's own hearing aid or cochlear implant.

What about Bluetooth and other connective technologies? Do they work better than hearing loops?

Bluetooth is helpful for some things such as binaural phone listening but it isn't the answer for assistive listening. It requires significant battery power and has limited range. Hearing loops are inexpensive, drain little battery power, and are universally accessible.

Can hearing loops be used in adjacent rooms?

Yes, with a professional design that controls sound spillover.

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