



When your child is diagnosed with a hearing loss, you will meet with a team of professionals who will likely use words that you've never encountered. Keep this glossary of terms handy as you go through the process. Before you know it, many of these words will become part of your own vocabulary.

“When I’m working with parents of young children, it’s important to me that the parents understand what is being said. So much of the hearing testing process involves words that are not part of our everyday experiences. It is important that parents stop and ask questions so that they can fully understand each step.”

— *Pediatric Audiologist*

A Guide to Understanding Hearing Loss Terminology

Ninety percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents. For most people, the science of hearing is a new experience. Keep this glossary of terms with you as you meet with hearing health professionals and use the blank space to take notes as you go.

Air Conduction Test: measures hearing by placing earphones over the child's ear or placing "insert phones" (soft foam ear plugs) in the child's ear. With this test, sound travels through the outer, middle, and inner ear.

Amplification: a) to make louder, increase volume; b) a term that may be used to refer to hearing aids.

Analog Hearing Aid: Sound is picked up by a small microphone, converted into electrical impulses, and then made louder for the user to hear.

Assistive Devices: can be divided into two basic categories: alerting devices and assistive listening devices. An alerting device indicates that something important is occurring, whereas an assistive listening device facilitates the reception and understanding of spoken language.

Atresia: absence or malformation of the outer or middle ear.

Audiologist: a clinician trained and certified to diagnose, evaluate, and treat hearing loss.

Auditory/Oral Therapy: speech/language therapy and educational programming to develop maximum use of residual hearing, oral language, and intelligible speech.

Auditory Steady State Response Test (ASSR): measurement of brainwaves in response to sound; can provide objective information regarding hearing sensitivity when this information cannot be obtained reliably through behavioral measures. This test may be able to provide greater frequency-specific information regarding hearing as compared to ABR testing. This test also has the capability to be more specific in diagnosing the degree of a more significant hearing loss.

Audiogram: a graphic description of hearing.

Bilateral hearing loss: hearing loss in both ears.

Binaural hearing aids: hearing aids in both ears.

Bone Conduction Test: measures hearing by placing a small oscillator (vibrating device) behind the ear and measures sound traveling directly to the inner ear.

Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response Test (BAER) or Auditory Brainstem Evoked Response Test (ABR): measurement of brain waves in response to sound; can provide objective information regarding hearing sensitivity when this information cannot be obtained reliably through behavioral measures.

Cochlea: the hearing organ within the inner ear.

Cochlear Implant: An electronic device that may benefit those who are not obtaining adequate benefit from hearing aids. The implant consists of a microphone and receiver, a processor that converts speech into electronic signals, and an array of electrodes that transmit the signals to the auditory nerve in the inner ear.

Conductive Hearing Loss: a hearing loss caused by damage or disease of the outer or middle ear.

Congenital: existing at or dating from birth, but not necessarily hereditary.

Cued Speech: a visual communication system using eight handshapes in four different placements near the face in combination with the mouth movements of speech to make the sounds of spoken language look different from each other.



Digital Hearing Aid: sound is picked up by a small microphone, analyzed by a computer chip, and then made louder through special signal processing for the user to hear.

Earmold: a custom-made product that fits in the ear and connects to a behind-the-ear hearing aid.

FM System (auditory trainer): an assistive listening device utilizing wireless technology. This can be used alone or in conjunction with hearing aids to provide the best signal-to-noise ratio for better hearing in adverse listening situations.

Geneticist: a medical professional who reviews a family's medical history, recommends testing, and determines the presence of genetic links to hearing loss.

Hearing Aid: a device that amplifies sound. Hearing aids are available in a variety of sizes and levels of technology; candidacy may be, in part, determined by the results of a hearing test.

Immittance (Impedance) Testing: a test that measures the functioning of the outer and middle ear systems. This test consists of a tympanogram (measurement of ear drum mobility) and acoustic reflexes (presence and level of middle ear muscle contraction).

Middle Ear: portion of the hearing mechanism between the outer ear and the cochlea, consisting of the eardrum, the ossicles (bones), the opening of the Eustachian tube, the oval window, and the round window.

Mixed Hearing Loss: a combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing loss.

Monaural: referring to one ear or one hearing aid.

Neurologist: a medical doctor skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the nervous system.

Otoacoustic Emissions Test (OAE): a test that measures how the hair cells within the cochlea work.

Otolaryngologist (Otolologist or ENT): a medical specialist of the ear, nose, and throat.

Peri-Natal: occurring at birth.

Pinna: outer ear.

Post-Natal: occurring after birth.

Pre-Natal: occurring before birth.

Residual Hearing: remaining hearing.

School Psychologist: A professional trained to perform educational and developmental evaluations to assess areas of strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss: a hearing loss caused by damage to the inner ear (cochlea, auditory nerve, or central auditory pathways).

Sign Language: a language that uses a system of manual, facial, and body movements as the means to communicate.

Speech/Language Pathologist: a clinician trained and certified to evaluate, diagnose, and treat speech, language, and communication problems.

Speechreading (Lip reading): using visual cues to supplement hearing to understand spoken language.

Tinnitus: phantom auditory perception when no external sound is present. It is often described as ringing or buzzing in the ears.

Unilateral Hearing Loss: hearing loss in one ear.

Visual Reinforcement Audiometry (VRA): a method of evaluating a child's responses to sound by conditioning the child to respond by turning their head. This response is rewarded by the presentation of a visual stimulus (ex: video, mechanical toy).

***“Thought is the blossom;
language the bud;
action the fruit behind it.”***

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Connect To Life™

New York

50 Broadway
New York, NY 10004
917.305.7700 (V)
917.305.7999 (TTY)
917.305.7888 (F)
postmaster@lhh.org

Florida

2800 W. Oakland Park Blvd.
Oakland Park, FL 33311
954.731.7200 (V/TTY)
954.485.6336 (F)
postmaster@lhh.org

www.lhh.org

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