

How to Read an Audiogram

The first step to understanding your hearing, or the hearing of a child or family member, is a complete evaluation by an audiologist. An audiologist will present sounds in a sound-proof room and will record the reaction to the sounds on a chart called audiogram.

Regardless of the type of hearing testing used, an audiogram will display the degree and type of hearing loss.

What to Know

Circles represent the right ear. Xs represent the left ear. You may also see brackets when the test used is bone conduction, which helps to differentiate between sensorineural hearing losses and conductive hearing losses.

The numbers going across the top refer to the frequency or pitch of sounds presented (think of the low notes and high notes of a piano).

The numbers down the side refer to loudness from the softest sound the ear can hear to very loud sounds. Sound is measured in decibels; the larger the number, the louder the sound.

Every Hearing Loss is Unique

Make sure to ask your audiologist to explain your audiogram to you.

Your audiogram reveals the degree and type of hearing loss present. Speech discrimination scores indicate how clear or distorted your hearing of speech may be. Speech discrimination (also known as the speech recognition score) is a good indication of how well you can expect to do with a hearing aid. For example, if a person has an 80% speech recognition score, it is reasonable to think that the person will do well with a hearing aid. However, if a person has a 20% speech recognition score, it is not reasonable to think that the person will hear speech clearly with a hearing aid. The hearing aid may still be helpful but will not enable a person to hear most speech clearly without visual information as well.

Each person is different. The more you understand about the test, the better a consumer of hearing health care you become.