

What are Assistive Listening Devices?

An assistive listening device (ALD) is any type of device that can help you function better in your day-to-day communication situations. An ALD can be used with or without hearing aids to overcome the negative effects of distance, background noise, or poor room acoustics. So even though you have a hearing aid, ALDs can offer greater ease of hearing (and therefore reduced stress and fatigue) in many day-to-day communication situations. ***Hearing aids + ALDs = Better listening and better communication!***

What are examples of ALDs?

1. **Personal frequency modulation (FM) systems** are like miniature radio stations operating on special frequencies assigned by the Federal Communications Commission. The personal FM system consists of a transmitter microphone used by the speaker and a receiver used by you, the listener. The receiver transmits the sound to your hearing aid either through direct audio input or through a looped cord worn around your neck.

Personal FM systems are useful in a variety of situations such as listening to a travel guide or book review, in a classroom lecture, in a restaurant, in a sales meeting, or in a nursing homes or senior center.

FM systems are also used in theaters, places of worship, museums, public meeting places, corporate conference rooms, convention centers, and other large areas for gathering. In this situation, the microphone/transmitter is built into the overall sound system. You are provided with an FM receiver that can connect to your hearing aid (or to a headset if you don't wear a hearing aid).

2. **Infrared systems** are often used in the home with TV sets, but, like the FM system, they can also be used in large settings like theaters.

Sound is transmitted using infrared light waves. The TV is set at a volume comfortable for family members. The infrared system

transmitter transmits the TV signal to your receiver, which you can adjust to your desired volume. Thus, TV watching as a family becomes pleasurable for all. While it is not too loud for family members with normal hearing, the volume is just right for you because it is adjusted by you through your individual receiver.

3. **Induction Loop Systems** are most common in large group areas. They can also be purchased for individual use.

An induction loop wire is permanently installed (perhaps under a carpet) and connects to a microphone used by a speaker. (In the case of individual systems, a wire loop is laid on the floor around you and the speaker.) The person talking into the microphone creates a current in the wire which makes an electromagnetic field in the room. When you switch your hearing aid to the "T" (telecoil/telephone) setting, your hearing aid telecoil picks up the electromagnetic signal, and you can adjust its volume through your hearing aid.

4. **One-to-one communicators.** Sometimes in a restaurant, nursing home situation, or riding in a car, you want to be able to easily hear one person. Or perhaps you are delivering a lecture or running a meeting and a person in the audience has a question. You can give the person a microphone to speak into. The sound is amplified and delivered directly into your hearing aid (or headset if you don't have a hearing aid), and you can adjust the volume to your comfort level. When using the one-to-one communicator, the speaker does not have to shout, private conversations can remain private, and, when in a car, your eyes can remain on the road!

5. There are many, many **other ALDs** such as telephone amplifying devices for cordless, cell, digital, and wired phones; amplified answering machines; amplified telephones with different frequency responses; paging systems; computers; wake-up alarms.