

Hearing Aid Comparisons

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02/26/2025



Behind-the-Ear hearing aids.

Hearing aids are small electronic devices designed to improve hearing for individuals with hearing loss. They work by amplifying sound and delivering it directly into the ear, making speech and other sounds clearer. Modern hearing aids consist of three main components: a microphone that picks up sound, an amplifier that increases the volume, and a speaker that transmits the enhanced sound into the ear. Some models also feature advanced technology like noise reduction, speech enhancement and Bluetooth connectivity.

Hearing aids are beneficial for people with various types and degrees of hearing loss, from mild to severe. They are especially used with people with sensorineural hearing loss, which is damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve, but anyone with hearing loss that can be improved by hearing aids can benefit from these devices.

There are many factors to consider when choosing a hearing aid. Different types are designed for different degrees and types of hearing loss, so not every model will be suitable for everyone. Some hearing aids offer advanced features and are more noticeable, while others prioritize discretion and comfort with a simpler design.

Cost can also be a factor for choosing the right hearing aid. At the Utah Assistive Technology Program, we offer financing options such as [low-interest loans](#) and [small grants](#) to help increase access to assistive technology.

Take a look at the benefits and considerations of different types of hearing aids to see what might be the right fit for you.

Behind-the-Ear (BTE) Hearing Aids

BTE hearing aids are for those with mild to severe hearing loss. A plastic case holding the technology is connected to tubing or a custom ear mold.

Benefits

- Parts are easily cleaned and replaced.
- More affordable than other types of hearing aids.
- Longer-lasting battery life.
- Room for additional features such as Bluetooth connectivity or rechargeable batteries.

Considerations

- Can be more difficult to insert properly.
- Less discreet.
- Greater likelihood of picking up external noise, such as wind.

Receiver-in-Canal (RIC)/Receiver-in-the-Ear (RITE)

RIC aids are similar to BTE in that they still have hard plastic cases that fit behind the ear and connect to an earpiece or mold. However, with RIC hearing aids, the receiver, or speaker, sits in the ear instead of with the other technological components.

Benefits

- Less prone to feedback because the microphone and speaker are at a greater distance apart.
- Can be smaller than BTE.

Considerations

- Will require more maintenance than BTE.
- Can cause more blockages from earwax build-up.



Image (above): In-the-Ear hearing aids in case.

In-the-Ear (ITE)

ITE hearing aids are an in-between option from BTE and ITC (In-the-Canal) hearing aids. While they sit in the ear, they are larger than ITC hearing aids and can work for those with mild to severe hearing loss.

Benefits

- Custom made, making them comfortable.
- With skin tone match, they are less visible than other styles.
- Their custom shape makes them easier to insert correctly.
- Won't be disrupted by glasses or masks.
- Easier to use with phones and headsets.
- Less likely to pick up wind noise.

Considerations

- Requires more cleaning and maintenance than BTE.
- More prone to feedback.
- Can cause more blockages from earwax build-up.

In-the-Canal (ITC) Hearing Aids

ITC hearing aids are best for those with mild to moderate hearing loss. They are custom made to fit inside the ear and are smaller than BTE and ITE aids.

Benefits

- Custom made, making them comfortable.
- With skin tone match, they are less visible than other styles.
- Their custom shape makes them easier to insert correctly.
- Won't be disrupted by glasses or masks.
- Easier to use with phones and headsets.
- Less likely to pick up wind noise.

Considerations

- Requires more cleaning and maintenance than BTE.
- More prone to feedback.
- Shorter battery life.
- Less powerful than BTE aids.
- Can cause more blockages from earwax build-up.

Conclusion

With a wide range of options available and continuous advancements in hearing aid technology, more people than ever can find an effective solution for their hearing loss. As technology improves, these devices are becoming more personalized, accessible, and capable of enhancing not just hearing but overall quality of life.