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# HEARING AIDS

BUYERS GUIDE



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# BUYING A HEARING AID



## How to look for a hearing aid

In the past, people may have thought that hearing aids were unfashionable and a sign of age but thankfully over the last few years things have changed. Indeed, with technological advances, hearing aids have become much more discreet. It's now even possible to buy invisible hearing aids

**H**earing aids aren't always the easiest of purchases. While the NHS will usually provide behind-the-ear digital hearing aids, there is often a long wait. Instead, many people choose to buy a hearing aid with a private company to avoid the wait and to have more choice.

Before buying a hearing aid, it is important to fully research your options. Speak to family and friends who have hearing aids and get their opinion on the various options available, such as analogue or digital hearing aids. Have a look at catalogues and visit hearing aid showrooms (where possible) to see the models available.

Another option is to use Mobility Compare to help you find a suitable hearing aid. After highlighting your needs and wants, such as price and style, Mobility Compare will provide you with a list of possible devices and enable you to compare hearing aids.

### What sort of hearing aid would suit you?

A hearing aid can be an expensive item, which means that many people will want to be sure they have found a suitable device for their needs and budget. Before buying a hearing aid, however,

it is important to get your hearing checked professionally. Once you know the extent of your hearing loss, you can begin your search. Hearing aids are available in a wide range of styles and come with varying features, meaning that not every device will suit your hearing problem.

Analogue hearing aids, which are often the cheaper option, operate simply by making sounds louder. By contrast, digital hearing aids provide a more precise sound. Some digital hearing aids even allow you to create different settings for various types of surroundings. If you have mild

The first choice will usually be whether you want an analogue or digital hearing aid.

or moderate hearing loss, a very small hearing aid could be perfect for you. It is worth bearing in mind though that many companies charge extra for the more discreet in the ear (ITE), in-the-canal (ITC) and other aids that fit completely in the ear canal, although these are a great option if you want an inconspicuous hearing aid.

Other options include bone conduction hearing aids, which use bone to conduct sound, and body-worn hearing aids.

## What to expect from a sales visit?

Before arranging a sales visit, make sure the hearing aid company you are considering buying from is registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC). In the past, all reputable suppliers had to be registered with the Hearing Aid Council, but with recent legislation this requirement was transferred to the HPC.

Asking a family member or friend to come to your home when the hearing aid company is meeting you can often be beneficial. They can support you and help ensure that you don't feel pressurised into buying a particular hearing aid or even make

sure that you don't mishear something.

While the visit is taking place, the hearing aid company will ask about your hearing. They will also look inside your ears and test your hearing, including an air conduction hearing test.

You should be shown your results plotted as an audiogram. After this the company will probably discuss the various hearing aids which might suit you. Make sure to ask any questions which you think are relevant and don't feel pressurised into buying a device.



## Buying tips?

Many privately-purchased hearing aids cost anything from £600 to £3,500, depending on the hearing aid style and the features it contains. Here are some key tips

**01** One of the first things to factor in is the cost of replacing batteries. Find out how much the hearing aid batteries cost and consider how often they will need to be changed. If you need to wear your hearing aid all day, they will need to be changed more regularly.

**02** Find out about the warranty on the device and how long the hearing aid is guaranteed for. This period is often two years but can vary between one and four years. Repairs to hearing aids can be costly so the warranty will be important.

**03** Will the hearing aid company give you a trial period? Many companies offer a 28-day trial period, during which you can return the hearing aid if you aren't happy with it.

**04** Finally make sure the device is comfortable, has the features you want and need, and that it works well before buying. A year warranty is usually best.

To find a hearing aid that suit your needs, use the Mobility Compare site to compare hearing aids  
[www.mobilitycompare.co.uk](http://www.mobilitycompare.co.uk)