

WELCOME from LEADER

1. **Introduce self** and explain (briefly) what group the person leading the session represents.
 - a. **EX:** Loop Oregon history and how we are connected to the Center for Hearing Access.
 - i. **Loop Oregon committee** is a group of local volunteers, all of whom have some association with hearing loss: either they have it, their partner does, or they are advocates.
2. **Monthly participant composition:** Each month *Sound Advice* is composed of both newcomers and repeaters. While some information will be familiar to some and new to others, our shared learning builds continually on itself in light of new questions and experiences.

OVERVIEW FOR TODAY

1. We will introduce ourselves and describe our connection to hearing loss. Share only what you are comfortable with
2. We will first review how any hearing loop assistive listening system works in order to understand other systems, technologies and tools.
3. We will then move to Q & A and sharing recent experiences.
 - a. We make a point of addressing each attendee to ask if they have questions or concerns, so that everyone has a chance to talk even if they are shy about initiating!

SELF-INTRODUCTIONS [10-20 minutes]

1. [note: It is important for the Committee members and “regulars” to set the example of describing their history and why they return to this monthly gathering. The leader should also listen for any “burning questions” or significant challenges that newcomers bring up.]
2. The Leader is the last to share.

CURRICULUM [20-25 minutes]

Who this particular *Sound Advice* group represents and why we need to meet:

1. This group is a microcosm of hearing loss across the general population.
2. Hearing loss is complicated and very challenging to treat
3. Hearing loss is different for everyone, but we all need effective communication to function across our daily lives and to stay engaged with family, friends, and community.
4. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are often sold to us without our having a full understanding of their limitations.
5. Plus, we don't understand our legal rights under the ADA

The limitations – and some important facts we aren't told:

1. Hearing aids/CIs are most effective up to about 6' away from the sound we want to hear because they are designed to improve close conversation.
 - a. Ex: Friends and family, and often we ourselves, don't understand why you can't hear from across a room or around a corner..
 - b. They also pick up ALL background sounds indiscriminately, which adds to “sound clutter”.
2. This is typically not explained to us by our audiologist or hearing professional.
3. Treating hearing loss is not like getting new glasses.
 - a. With glasses, you expect to get back close to 20/20 vision.
 - b. Even with the most expensive hearing aids we will never regain full hearing.
 - c. This realization can be emotionally devastating.
4. Friends often say “why don't you just turn up your hearing aids if you can't hear?”

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- a. We don't discover until much later, that "hearing and comprehending" is **not about volume** as much as it is about clarity.
 - b. If you turn up the volume on mushy sound... you just get louder mush!!
5. These important facts are rarely explained to us when we get our new devices, or we may not be in an emotional space nor be able to digest all the information we are given at that time.

We are also rarely effectively taught that there are other technology tools that can help us hear better and must be used in many settings, such as:

1. Assistive Listening Systems, including resources that are *required* by the ADA in public and private settings;
2. Personal devices, such as individual microphones and TV connectors;
3. Bluetooth capabilities;
4. Applications on cell phones and computers;
5. All of which can deliver sound directly into your hearing aids giving amazing clarity.

In defense of audiologists and hearing instrument specialists --- it's a very challenging job.

1. Plus, we may not make the best patients: Honestly, no one really WANTS to get hearing aids!
2. Professionals want to get you fitted and wearing them without overwhelming you with too much information.
3. The terminology can be unfamiliar and scary.
4. It is challenging to get accustomed to them, especially the first set.
5. We can be overwhelmed by hearing things we haven't heard for a long time.
6. We might find technology daunting.
7. We can get frustrated when they don't meet our "back to 20/20" expectations.
8. We are shy about returning and asking for help, an adjustment, or complaining about this very expensive device that doesn't seem to be working well.
9. Consequently, a lot of useful information is omitted at the time we get our devices and is rarely followed up on unless we make a point to ask the questions!!

Mitigating the limitations

Now that we know about the limitations.....how do we achieve improved clarity??

1. **Two critical goals:**
 - a. Eliminate the distance.
 - b. Minimize background noise.
2. There are a number of strategies to achieve these goals, ranging from physical acoustic treatment of a room to a variety of technologies.
 - a. The answer is not one or the other – it is *everything* that we can bring to bear on the problem.
3. Today we are going to focus on one technology to fully understand how and why it works so well, and so that you can expand on these principles as you contemplate other strategies and devices.

HEARING LOOPS

The "gold standard" of assistive listening systems

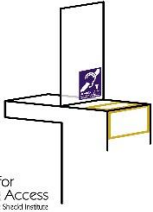
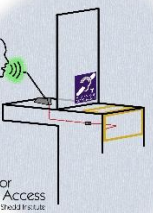
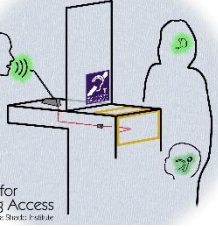
1. We will come back to why we consider hearing loop technology as the gold standard.
2. Meanwhile, we need to understand
 - a. how a hearing loop overcomes the distance between your hearing aid and what you want to hear, and,
 - b. how it can minimize the distracting ambient noise around you.
3. EX: You are all listening through a hearing loop right now. I can turn my back to you; walk 20 feet away; whisper into this microphone; and you will hear me – clearly.

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The 4 COMPONENTS OF ANY LOOP SYSTEM

All hearing loops consist of 4 elements: 3 of which are provided by the loop system itself and one which is brought to it by you, the user. *(use the slides or placards to depict these elements)*
Understanding the role of each of these 4 components also helps you trouble-shoot any problems you encounter when assessing why a system “isn’t working” for you.

The 4 components are:

1	A copper wire loop <i>slide 1.</i>  Center for Hearing Access at The Shedd Institute	This image is a simple business counter loop example, where the teller is behind the dreaded Plexiglas window. <i>explain:</i> In this room (i.e. where the group is) the loop is much larger and.... [e.g. runs round the room under the carpet.]
2	Microphone(s) <i>slide 2:</i>  Center for Hearing Access at The Shedd Institute	For any sound that you want to hear, there must be a microphone dedicated to “capturing” that sound in order to get it through the loop system to you.
3	An electrical source, or “driver” <i>slide 3:</i>  Center for Hearing Access at The Shedd Institute	When turned on, it sets up an electro-magnetic field in the area and sends the sound signal from the microphone through the loop.
4	A telecoil <i>slide 4:</i>  Center for Hearing Access at The Shedd Institute	This is a tiny wire and program choice in a hearing aid or cochlear implant. When you enter the electro-magnetic loop field and turn on your telecoil program, it receives and transmits the signal directly into your device. - It eliminates any factor of distance from the source. It works indoors or outdoors. It is not affected by glass or Plexiglas barriers. - Many telecoil programs allow the user to choose to turn off their hearing aid microphones completely to eliminate background noise. - The user can choose to just hear through the loop or to select the balance they want of microphone + telecoil in order to continue to hear and participate in side conversations.

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	c) If you don't have a telecoil, the venue will loan you one in the form of a transistor-sized "receiver" with an accompanying earphone.
	Each of these 4 components must be in place in order to complete the system. If the copper wire is broken or not hooked up, if no microphone is used, if no electrical source is turned on, if the user isn't within the loop field, or if the user doesn't have a working telecoil, the system won't "work".

The all-important TELECOIL and ADA-access ready hearing aids

There are 3 ADA-compliant assistive listening systems: hearing loop, FM [or RF/radio frequency], and IR [infrared].

1. We strongly favor hearing loops because users need no additional equipment besides the telecoil in their hearing instrument. Users can access any loop, large or small, from taxi cabs to cathedrals, anywhere in the world, just by switching to telecoil mode.
 - a. Additionally, the technology has been in use for over 60 years and meets essential international standards.
2. Alternately, both FM and IR systems require the user to borrow an intermediary piece of equipment from the venue. Prior to the event, the user ascertains where to obtain a transistor radio sized receiver, along with a "neckloop", upon arrival. The user then places the neckloop over their head, plugs it into the receiver to set up a personal electromagnetic field, and then turns on their telecoil. Following the event, the equipment must be returned to the venue.
 - a. If a person does not have a telecoil, they instead plug a one-sided earpiece or headphones into the receiver, such as some of you are using today.
 - b. The facility will have pre-programmed the transmission frequency (FM) or positions the receiver to align with the line-of-sight infrared transmission.
3. **These three systems are ADA-compliant** because they do not require the user to remove their hearing instrument or to put headphones on top of them. The telecoil transmits the sound directly to the instrument electronically, with no latency.
4. If you were not fitted with a telecoil, or if your specialist is counseling you out of including one in your new device, ask them *"how will I be able to access any of these three assistive listening systems?"*
5. **ADA-access ready hearing aids:** The Center for Hearing Access has coined the term "ADA-access ready hearing aids" to refer to current hearing instrument models on the market that include a telecoil AND and Auracast Broadcast capability. This list is in your handout and is kept current on the CHA website.
 - a. Unless YOU make a conscious and informed choice NOT to have a telecoil, you are being deprived of your ADA rights, which stipulate that you *must* be able to receive sound in public places directly into your prescribed, customized hearing instruments.
 - b. *[detour discussion:* Not all hearing instruments include telecoils these days because consumers have asked for "invisible" hearing aids, so some manufacturers have removed them from new product design or have moved the telecoil to an accessory device, such as a partner microphone. It is up to the consumer to refuse to purchase these instruments.]
 - c. *[detour discussion:* Audiologists and hearing instrument specialists have been known to state "You don't need a telecoil because you have Bluetooth." Or "You don't need a telecoil because nothing is looped where we live." See Point 4 above for what the consumer's response should be!]
 - d. *[detour discussion:* What about Wi-Fi and Auracast Broadcast? See CHA chart that compares the 5 different systems]

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Q&A and PRACTICE with portable loops: [20-30 minutes]

Then let participants ask questions, share their experiences both good and frustrating, etc. This time leads to many interesting and sometimes poignant discussions about individual challenges with their hearing loss.

1. This section also often leads to discussions about other tools and strategies to hear better in more places, such as “mini-mics” or Roger devices, Bluetooth TV and phone connections; speech-to-text apps; personal hearing loops, etc.

Resources

Why Assistive listening /understanding the need

- [What do assistive listening systems sound like?](#) (a collection of 1-minute videos)
- [Personal stories](#) (videos and quotes)
- [What Assistive Listening Systems mean to me](#) (animated photos)

Telecoils

- [Telecoil instructions](#) (1 page) to **take to your audiologist or hearing instrument specialist to add a “telecoil program”**
- [“ADA-Access-Ready” Hearing Instruments List](#) (pdf)
- [All things telecoils](#) (webpage)



Hearing Loops

- [How hearing loops work: Describing the invisible](#)
- “Loop Your Life”: An introduction to the personal hearing loop concept (coming later)
- [Lists of hearing loops](#) across the country, by state and Canada



All assistive listening systems

- [Getting Started-Hearing Better in Public Places](#) (simple)
- [Assistive Listening Systems Quick Guide](#) (3 pages) Easily compare 5 assistive listening systems on a grid that starts on page 2
- [A Consumer Guide to Auracast™ Streamed Assistive Listening Systems](#) (1 page, graphical)
- [Auracast-What is needed for Auracast streamed ALS to be available and usable](#) (2 pages)

About

- [About the Center for Hearing Access](#) (more videos, graphics, and info)

About the Center for Hearing Access

Founded in 2024, the nonprofit Center for Hearing Access is a national advocacy and education initiative of The John G. Shedd Institute. We champion and educate users, facility staff, audiologists, and hearing instrument specialists about all ADA-compliant assistive listening systems and other strategies to increase access to theaters, libraries, conferences, government offices, courtrooms, places of worship, and other public and private spaces. Effective hearing access can be life-changing for people with hearing loss to maintain community engagement.

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