



Independent Hearing Care Services

Hearability information sheet

LOOP SYSTEMS

What is a loop system?

A loop system is designed to assist a person with a hearing aid to hear more clearly in a room by switching their hearing aid to the T position. This arranges for the sound they hear to come from electromagnetic waves from the loop rather than sound waves direct to the aid microphone. The loop is a kind of radio aerial, which transmits the sound signal to anyone situated within it. All NHS hearing aids and many private aids have a T position, which allows the user to receive the signal. or Audio Frequency Induction Loop (AFIL) enables

How will it help?

The sound heard will be clearer and free from distracting background sounds and room echoes that get in the way. But a loop user cannot tell which direction the sound is coming from, and in some situations such as committee rooms the use of some form of visual signalling, or spoken identification by name, may help loop users to tell quickly who is speaking.

Where can they be found?

Loops can be used in three different environments: in the home, at a counter and in public places.

At home

This type is typically a thin wire around a room connected to a small box mounted near the television to enable the viewer to hear the TV without having the volume too loud for other viewers. It costs about £75 and can be installed without technical knowledge. The signal strength is adjustable separately from the TV volume control.

Counter

Banks, cinemas, railway booking offices and some shops have thick security glass between the assistant and the customer. This, combined with background noise, can make communication difficult for a hearing-impaired person. Many establishments fit a loop at one or more of their counters so that by switching to the T position, the cashier's voice should become a lot clearer.

Public places

Many theatres, cinemas, community centres, GP practices, churches and other public buildings now have a loop, would usually installed by professionals. Their effectiveness varies; the best systems make sure that microphones are near to each speaker. Radio microphones can be very useful.

There is a British Standard that applies to the installation of loop systems (BS 7594), and installation can be arranged by The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association.

What should I do if I think the loop isn't working?

If after putting your aid to the T position, you cannot hear anything or the sound is distorted, you should inform the person responsible for the establishment. Often the loop just hasn't been switched on! Or it may be that there are 'spaces' in a room where the loop doesn't work which should be avoided by a hearing aid wearer.

My local meeting place does not have a loop. What can I do?

Many people without a hearing loss are unaware of loops. In older buildings before the Disability Discrimination Act there was no requirement to have one fitted. It is up to hearing aid wearers to make those responsible aware of their communication needs.

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