A Guide to Understanding Hearing Loops

HLAA
Hearing Loss Association of America

GET IN THE HEARING LOOP

"For the first time in my life, I was able to hear every single word."

Get in the Hearing Loop is a communication access program of the Hearing Loss Association of America

Hearing Loss Association of America
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We dream of a world where people with hearing loss can thrive each day with communication access, full inclusion, and equal participation in all aspects of life, everywhere they go.

Through education, advocacy, and consultation services, the Get in the Hearing Loop (GITHL) program has laid the groundwork for a national movement of loop enthusiasts who are promoting communication access and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), one hearing loop at a time.

How Do Hearing Loops Work?

Hearing loops, or induction loops, are a type of assistive listening system (ALS) that transmit sound directly to a listener's telecoil-enabled hearing aids or cochlear implants for improved clarity and understanding. Hearing loops deliver intelligible, distortion-free speech and sound in environments where distance, ambient noise, and challenging acoustics otherwise make listening and understanding with hearing aids and cochlear implants virtually impossible.

Technically known as audio frequency induction loop systems (AFILS), hearing loops consist of a special amplifier and a copper wire that transmits sound via a magnetic field. Any hearing device with a manually accessible telecoil becomes a wireless receiver in the hearing loop. Hearing loops work in any size venue or location, from a large auditorium to a taxi or an elevator.

The Telecoil Imperative

Telecoils provide many people with hearing loss what wheelchair ramps provide people with mobility challenges–access. Telecoils are an essential gateway to hearing aid compatible assistive listening for most people with hearing aids and cochlear implants. Telecoils receive the magnetic sound signal from a hearing loop and also enable listening via infrared (IR) and FM systems signals with the use of a neckloop.

Most hearing aid models–more than 70 percent–either come with a telecoil or offer it as an option (all cochlear implant processors made today have a telecoil). When buying a hearing aid, consumers should always ask that a telecoil be included and also that the audiologist or dispenser activates the telecoil program at the time of fitting. The consumer should also master the simple procedure for turning on the correct hearing aid or cochlear implant program to use the telecoil when needed.

Hearing Loop Access for People without a Hearing Aid or Telecoil

Hearing loop systems serve most people with hearing loss who wish to improve their ability to understand speech and sounds. As with FM and IR systems, hearing loops also offer accessibility via portable receivers and headphones.

Hearing Loops Are a Top Choice for Hearing Access

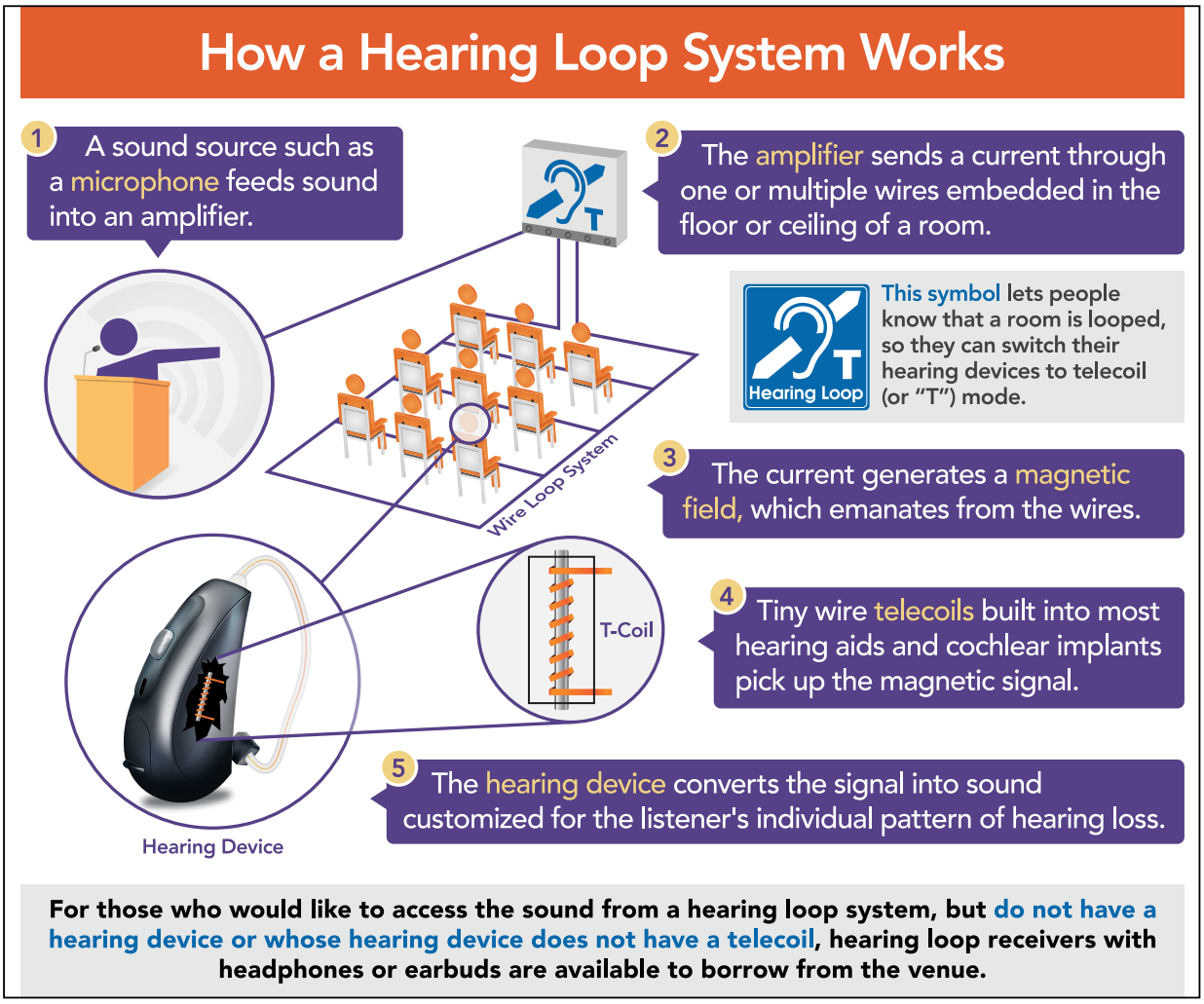
Hearing loops are the most user-friendly of the assistive listening options and the first choice for many people, offering benefits for individuals and venues alike.

For individuals with hearing loss, hearing loops provide:

- easy, immediate and discreet communication access;
- universal hearing aid compatibility;
- opportunities for greater participation and inclusion in the community.

Hearing loops also offer significant advantages for venues:

- **Cost Effective:** Compared to other systems, a hearing loop will save money for a venue through reduced staff time, maintenance and equipment costs.
- **Instant Access:** Only a hearing loop assistive listening system (ALS) will allow a significant number of people with hearing loss to access the system without the need to borrow and return venue-provided equipment.
- **ADA Compliant:** Hearing loops are the only ALS that can meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandate for hearing aid compatibility without the need to borrow and return venue-provided equipment.
- **Universally Accessible:** Hearing loops are the universally-accepted international standard for hearing access.



Hearing loop systems provide better communication access by transmitting sound directly to telecoil-equipped hearing aids, cochlear implants or other assistive listening devices. (Graphic courtesy of OTOjOY)

- **International Standards:** Facility managers and decision makers should choose only trained and experienced loop installers who are willing to provide references. Installers should confirm that the installation meets the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standard IEC 60118-4. This standard defines the strength of the magnetic field, the frequency response, and methods of measuring these requirements. It also specifies the acceptable range of electromagnetic background noise.

The Get in the Hearing Loop Program

Many people are not yet aware of hearing loops or other technologies that can improve communication access and public engagement or how they can enrich the lives of people with hearing loss, their families, friends, colleagues, and even communities. The Get in the Hearing Loop (GITHL) program is changing that… one loop, one advocate, one ADA request at a time.

This universal symbol lets you know there is a hearing loop installed in the room or venue.

Get in the Hearing Loop, a communication access program of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), is dedicated to providing and promoting community education, advocacy on behalf of people of hearing loss, and consultation services to help venues of all kinds successfully implement hearing loop technology.

The Get in the Hearing Loop program:

- educates community and local government leaders about the need for hearing loops;
- provides information about hearing loops and hearing loss to places of worship, audiologists, public and private venues, and other organizations;
- advocates to city and state government for improved communication access for people with hearing loss;
- offers workshops, toolkits, videos, articles, and more to inspire and guide anyone interested in communication access, including event planners, installers, venue managers, decision makers, civic leaders, audio-visual techs, advocates, funders, and of course, people with hearing loss;
- requests communication access via hearing loops at a wide variety of venues;
- consults closely with installers to ensure loop installations meet universal IEC standards.

Each hearing loop helps build our nation's accessibility infrastructure, creating more hearing-friendly communities. We envision a world where hearing loops and communication access are an automatic, enduring part of our daily lives.

For more information about hearing loops and the Get in the Hearing Loop program, visit hearingloss.org/programs-events/get-hearing-loop or email GITHLinfo@hearingloss.org.

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