

Hearing Aids Finding the Perfect Fit



Layne Turner has been the program manager at Hear Quebec for over a year. She is passionate about staying active and being a great mom. Layne's mission is to stay engaged with our members about what matters to them.

The best hearing aids are the ones that you wear happily everyday, reaping the benefits that this technology provides, such as improved cognitive health, better communication, and increased quality of life. That said, choosing the right hearing aids can seem daunting, even if opting for those covered by RAMQ. I know that our community consists of savvy consumers who like to do their research and try out hearing aids before they commit. I recently learned about Soundly.com, a website that researches and tests hearing aids, allowing you to compare products. I reached out to Blake Cadwell, one of the co-founders of the website to gain his perspective on choosing the right hearing aids and to learn more about his motivations for the work he does.

Can you tell us a bit about your "Hearing Journey?"

I have hereditary hearing loss, shared by my mom and brother. My mom got hearing aids when I was in middle school, and my brother got hearing aids when he was in middle school. I knew I would get hearing aids at some point, but I wasn't ready.

For years, I asked friends to repeat themselves and got very good at reading lips.

When everyone around me put on masks in 2020, I lost my ability to lip-read. I knew I had to do something, and like so many people, I opened my laptop and started researching. What I found was incredibly confusing. It took me 10-15 hours to figure out which steps I should take first.

I felt there needed to be an easier way to research

my options, test my hearing, and get started. That experience became the spark for Soundly.com.

What motivated you to start this website?

Hearing health impacts over 40 million people in the U.S., but the topic gets surprisingly little attention. As someone with hearing loss, I felt like a site like Soundly could make the experience more welcoming.

Can you describe your testing methods?

Our lead audiologist, Dr. Amy Sarow, and I have collectively tested 50+ products, from cheap amplifiers to the most premium products on the market.

I often spend weeks or months testing hearing aids before I review them. My goal is to find out how each pair manages background noise in my daily life. I also test all the extra things like app features, streaming, and phone calls.

Soundly also has state-of-the-art equipment that we use to test products objectively. We use a recording device from Ahead Simulations to gather real sound samples for the site. We also use a Verifit audiological test box to measure noise reduction and amplification during our reviews.

Our goal is to go deep with the products we review but ultimately share digestible and relatable content.

What questions should I ask my Hearing Aid provider

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before we discuss my options?

Getting smart before your first appointment is a big confidence boost. We recently published a 60-minute beginners guide (www.soundly.com/blog/beginners-guide) that covers everything you need to feel informed before you head in for an appointment.

What information should I make sure I have before I leave with my new hearing aids?

Getting a new pair of hearing aids is exciting, but it also takes some setup. Here are a few things to think about:

Adjustment

I suggest new wearers get their provider's tips on the hearing aid adjustment period. We recently published a piece on this topic on our website (www.soundly.com/blog/getting-used-to-hearing-aids).

Follow-up communication

Make sure you schedule your follow-up appointment before you leave the office to prevent wait times. Those first follow-ups are crucial to a successful long-term outcome.

Apps and steaming

It's easy to wave off help with app setup and Bluetooth connection. My advice? Just do it. Hearing aids are more complex than headphones or TVs, and it's worth getting everything fine-tuned with the professional in

the room. Bluetooth connection issues are some of the most common frustrations among our readers.

Do you have a top 5 list of must-haves when shopping for hearing aid?

1. **Customization** - Your hearing aid should be customized to match your one-of-one hearing loss. I've tried PSAPS and presets and they never work well.
2. **Comfort**- Comfort is big for me. I prefer RIC-style devices because I can wear them for a full day without ear fatigue.
3. **Remote adjustments**- Most leading manufacturers now have this option, which is a must. I love texting my hearing provider and opening the app to find new settings ready to download.
4. **Bluetooth streaming** - I regularly take phone calls throughout the day. The option to pick up and talk without reaching for my AirPods is essential.
5. **Rechargeability** - Rechargeable batteries are not essential, but they are a nice perk.

What do you hope people will take away from your website?

I hope that visitors of Soundly feel more confident. Our hope is that the site experience and content give them what they need to take the first step toward hearing better. That first step took me a long time, and I'm glad I finally made it.

