



THE  
**HEARING  
CLINIC** UK  
THE HEARING EXPERTS

# How to save time, money, and avoid being ripped off

A buyer's guide to overcoming  
7 common hearing aid buying mistakes

***Written by Chris Stone, Third generation audiologist***

*The Stone family have been helping the hearing needs of  
patients around the world for over 65 years*

# Welcome!

We understand, you don't like this. You dislike everything there is about buying a hearing aid. From bait and switch advertising to pushy sales people, the entire hearing aid buying process can be awful.

Sadly, our industry promotes hearing aids as if they are no different than car tires and car batteries, meaning you only think about your hearing aid when you need a new one (just like when you have a flat tire or your car won't start).

Our goal at *The Hearing Clinic UK* is to give you the best information we can about hearing aids and lay out a process for investing in the best solution to meet your unique hearing needs.

Ultimately, improving your hearing is an investment in yourself, your health and your well-being. Studies show those with improved hearing are more energetic, in better shape both physically and mentally, and happier overall.

This guide is not about us. It's about you and how you should think about shopping for a hearing aid. You see, we're on your side in this process and want you to make the best decision for your hearing needs. Should you decide to purchase from us, we'd be thrilled that you trust us enough to better your health, happiness and well-being.

If not, we hope that helping you avoid these common hearing aid buying mistakes will provide you with the best possible result no matter what you chose to do.

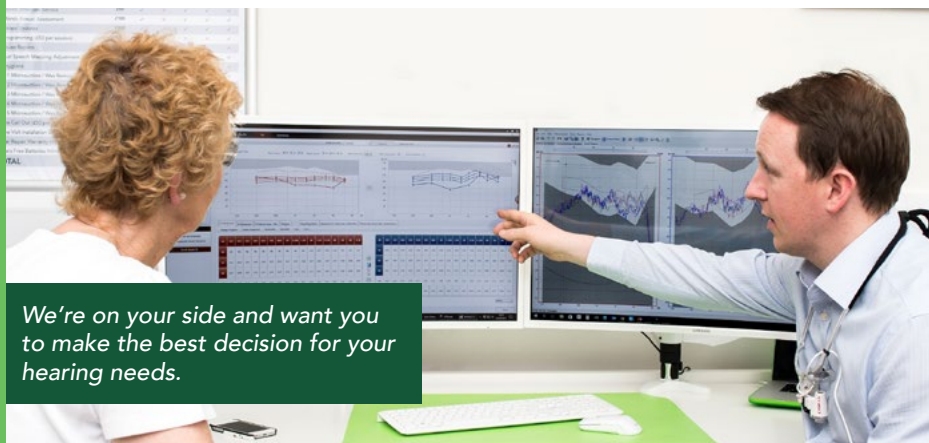
***To your health and happiness.***

# Mistake No. 1

## Not taking the time to do it right

***This statement seems elementary, but you would be surprised by the amount of people who purchase a hearing aid without undertaking an proper, evidence based assessment.***

You know the manoeuvre that many do when shopping for beds? Pushing down on the bed with their hand and expecting the heavens to open and light to shine upon the mattress in some form of affirmation. It's silly, really. People lying across the bed with feet hanging over the side.



*We're on your side and want you to make the best decision for your hearing needs.*

Sounds silly but a similar thing happens when many people buy a hearing aid – they have them placed in their ears, switched on and asked “how does that sound?” - the answer is normally “wow that’s louder”. Of course it is, but is it actually giving the maximum benefit that it possibly could? Another question is how the hearing aid will perform when there is other noises in the environment such as a car or a restaurant.

Without testing in these conditions the only way to find out would be to wear the aid and report back to the audiologist, and this takes time and energy that could be easily saved.

# Helpful Tips

Ensure the hearing aid specialist understands the environments you have trouble hearing in:

- *Consider the noisy places you go to.*
- *Ensure that the hearing aid is verified with soft, moderate and loud speech.*
- *Ask the hearing aid specialist to perform a speech clarity assessment in quiet and with noise present to ensure your aid will cope when you leave the quiet setup of a clinic room.*

Optimising your hearing may take time so ensure you visit a specialist that is happy for you to return for adjustment appointments.

Recent reports suggest the success you get with hearing aids is largely dictated by the expertise of the hearing aid specialist you visit and not the particular hardware you wear on your ears.

A mid-range hearing aid that is well tuned will significantly outperform a top of the range device that has been badly tuned.

Look for specialists that encourage you to test their solutions and give the freedom to take as much time as you like.

- *Does the specialist make you uncomfortable through the consultation process?*
- *Are they pushy and feel overpowering?*
- *Do they offer demonstration sessions to let you weigh up the benefits of different hearing aids?*

If the answers to the questions above are not positive, you should consider the establishment you are in.



*Do they care about you getting the best experience, or are they just there to sell hearing aids?*

# Mistake No. 2

## Buying the feature and not the benefit

***This is easily one of the biggest mistakes you can make when purchasing a hearing aid.***

Our industry is one of the worst perpetrators of beating you over the head with technical jargon to upsell you to devices which may or may not improve your hearing ability. Input/output compression, multiple channels, zoom and adaptive microphones, and many other “names” of features.

What do all of these features mean? Just because your hearing aid has zoom microphones doesn't mean it's the right device for you. It is perhaps, if you have trouble in background noise as it can assist in helping the device select what sounds to amplify and which to leave alone, giving a benefit to the user in a noisy situation.



*Finding the best device is the key to getting the absolute maximum hearing experience possible.*

But if you don't find yourself in these situations possible you paid for a feature that was not that important. Perhaps you would have been better served with a device that delivered a more relevant benefit to you. Many weak salespeople will be quick to spout off five or six features about the hearing aid you are considering, give you a price, and ask if you would like to purchase now. That is the game.



*Evaluating your hearing needs thoroughly is what all good hearing consultants should strive for.*

You need to keep this in mind – is the hearing aid salesperson matching the device to what YOU need?

We do not view your hearing healthcare as a game. We encourage you to invest in yourself and make the most out of every day. We assess your hearing needs and listen to what it is you need out of your hearing device. As we cover later in this guide, hearing aids are no longer just analogue or digital. Today, there is so much more to consider, which is why it is important to understand the benefit of the feature, and get the most benefit from each feature.

If the salesperson you are working with is not able to communicate to you the benefit that each feature provides, run away from the store. The person in front of you is not a true hearing consultant and has simply memorized, at best, the features of each hearing aid he or she is presenting. Honestly, just read most of the signage in the catalogue you are looking at and you can do that job for them.

Your hearing aid specialist should be able to explain the feature, advantage of the feature, and benefit of each and every hearing aid you are considering. After all, you don't shop for a hearing aid often. Asking questions and identifying the features and benefits that fit you best is what we do.

Think about what is actually important to your hearing, and make sure that those needs are addressed and explained by your hearing aid professional.



# Mistake No. 3

## Selecting the wrong style of hearing aid

### ***How could this even be possible you may ask?***

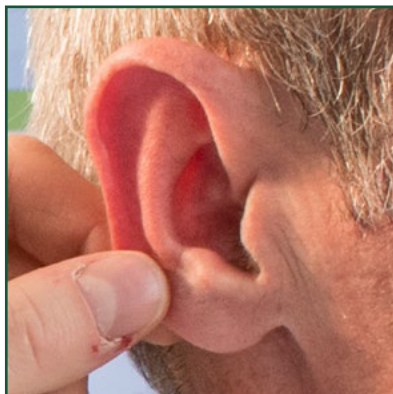
You would be surprised at just how many people order the smallest hearing aid in the store just because it's the most invisible or get sucked in by two for one deals.

Sometimes "smallest" is not best - There are many reasons to select a slightly larger style of device, not limited to the following:

- *Larger components required to suit hearing loss*
- *Additional space for more sophisticated microphones*
- *Wireless capabilities to have devices work as a pair or link to additional equipment such as tv's and phones*
- *Easier handling*

It is best to select hearing aids that can hold all the right technology to meet your hearing needs in the most situations possible. It's also essential that the hearing aid has room for further adjustment if your hearing levels change, which will be likely throughout their usable lifetime.

Here is a guide to the hearing aid styles and some of their suitability's:



#### **IIC – Invisible in the canal**

- *Excellent for concealing the hearing aid deep inside the ear canal*
- *Can comfortably handle up to moderate hearing losses but can struggle with severe or profound losses.*
- *Limited to single microphone technology and unable to link wireless to a partner device in your other ear.*



#### **ITE - In the ear**

- Can be made with directional microphones for superior performance in noise
- These handle down to severe hearing losses comfortably and some can cover up to profound losses
- Often visible in the ear but have the benefit of nothing "over the ear" so can work well with glasses
- Wireless abilities to link with partner hearing aids and other wireless solutions.



#### **RITE - Receiver in the ear, or slim tube behind the ear**

- Excellent for concealing the hearing aid deep in the ear canal
- Can comfortably handle up to moderate hearing losses but can struggle with severe or profound losses.
- Limited to single microphone technology and unable to link wireless to a partner device in your other ear.



#### **BTE - Behind the ear**

- The most powerful hearing solution available
- Can cover the most challenging ranges of hearing losses
- Extremely durable and easy to handle



# Mistake No. 4

## Consider carefully the hearing aid specialist or care company you are trusting with your hearing care

***In our opinion, analogue and digital are very dated terms when speaking of hearing aids. research has shown that simply buying the most expensive hearing aid on the market does not guarantee a successful outcome for the wearer.***

There was a time that the only choices you had when shopping for a hearing aid was analogue or digital.

Now we have so many solutions on the market it can be extremely confusing, some manufacturers have ranges and options that can be configured in thousands of different ways adding to the confusion.



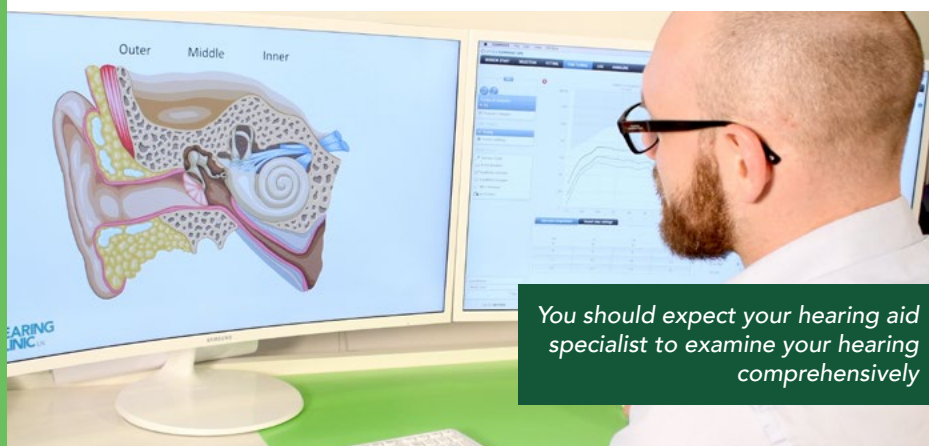
*Remember - the hardware is only a small piece of the puzzle*

The idea that a hearing aid is a hearing aid and they are all the same is simply untrue. It has been proven that the skills and expertise of the hearing aid specialist is critical to the outcome for the patient.

A mid-tier hearing aid that's been well selected, fitted and tuned will outperform a higher specified hearing aid that's been badly fitted or tuned.

Modern hearing aids often have many features which work under the surface to correct and filter the sound before presenting it into the wearer's ear. These features can come to life automatically or in some cases with a user selecting the feature to activate.

Most hearing aids are fitted in quiet clinic or office environments which don't mimic the real world or the sound environments that the wearer experiences as troublesome.



Because of this patients have to go through an often longwinded period of trial and error – coming back to the hearing aid specialist on many occasions for further adjustments and tweaks until either the hearing aid specialist gets it right or the patient gets fed up and leaves.

This is made even more challenging when the hearing aid is sold at home through a company offering home visits, once the aids are fitted it can be difficult to get the hearing aid specialist back for tune ups.

We work hard to ensure the sound you receive is correct for you in quiet environments and in noisy situations – to do this we incorporate surround sound in our clinics and can simulate the specific places you struggle to hear in.

Your hearing aids can be adjusted to ensure that speech clarity and comfort in noise is optimised before you leave the clinic.

# Mistake No. 5

## Expecting everything to be pitch perfect straight away

***Although modern technology allows us to achieve much better accuracy of fitting quicker than ever before, it takes time to adjust to your new hearing aid.***

Unless you have suffered a sudden hearing loss, your hearing will have been changing over many years. As such you will have become somewhat comfortable with a world where the sounds are subdued.

Enhancing your hearing should be done in a controlled manner to allow you time to re-familiarise to environmental sounds before pushing on to give you optimised speech clarity.

You will need time to get used to not just the sounds around you but also the feeling of having devices in your ears.

We like to explain that its somewhat like a pair of new leather shoes. Not always perfectly comfortable at first, but at the leather becomes more supple and your foot gets used to the new shape they will stop feeling unusual and often wearers completely forget that they have them on.

The same thing happens with your new hearing aids but this process can be dramatically sped up by using a specialist who has had years of experience sizing and fitting hearing aids.

In addition to the physical feeling of hearing aids it's essential that the sounds are correctly balanced to ensure that the amplification is perfectly suited for your loss.

There are many factors that can affect the sound reaching your eardrum and the effect of these can result in sound that's can be under amplified which means you won't hear enough, and over amplified which can make the aids uncomfortable – interestingly this can happen at the same time!

## Factors your specialist will have to consider will involve:

- *The softest level you can naturally hear in each ear over a range of different tones.*
- *The loudest sounds you feel comfortable with in each ear across a range of tones.*
- *Your initial comfort level.*
- *The shape, size and style of your ear canals – this can dramatically change the volume of sounds at your eardrum.*
- *The positioning of your hearing aids.*
- *The necessary venting to help fresh air to enter and leave your ear canal, and assist with overcoming any blocked sensation you may encounter.*
- *The adaptive features (if available) on your hearing aids which will be called upon when you encounter complex or noisy situations.*

If your hearing aid specialist does not consider these factors correctly there is a heightened chance that the outcome you are looking for may not happen and you will end up disappointed.

We highly recommend working with specially trained audiologists and for the hearing aids to be fitted using "real ear measurements" which ensure the sounds you should receive at your ear drum are getting there correctly.

Our specialists have a unique "sound optimisation" process which we have developed to do all this and more. Ensuring you have the most accurately fitted hearing aids at all times.



*Consider all factors before committing to a hearing device*

# Mistake No. 6

## Forgetting that the long term benefits require regular check up's

***Unlike glasses, hearing aids are adjustable so when your hearing changes, which it is most likely to do throughout the lifespan of the hearing aids – you don't require to purchase new devices every time.***

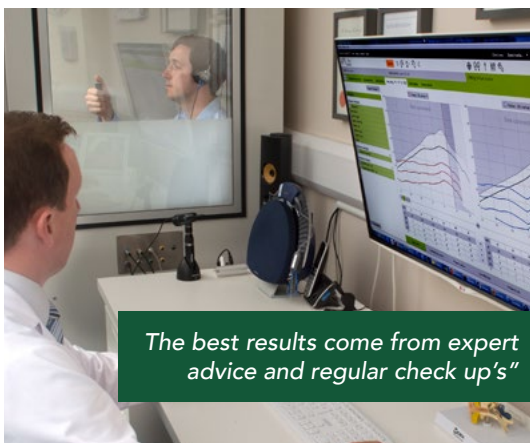
Your hearing aids are programmable and also serviceable so should last you and serve you for many years.

A worrying trend with many hearing aid retailers is to stack 'em high and sell 'em cheap, encouraging you to upgrade every year or two.

This is an often unnecessary expense as hearing aids should last between 4 – 6 years.

Some patients look after them so well that they last much longer and we would always recommend routine check-ups (once every 6 months) to ensure that your aids give you the best service they can.

Its also important that your hearing levels are rechecked at least once a year and your aids are reprogrammed to accommodate for any changes.



*The best results come from expert advice and regular check up's"*

This will ensure that you get the very best from your hearing devices at all times.

# Mistake No. 7

## Purchasing on price only

***By far this is the most important part of our guide, and why we saved this section for last. Just like mum used to say, "You get what you pay for".***

We began this guide by saying you should view your hearing aid as an investment in yourself. An investment that will pay dividends to you with new levels of happiness, energy, quality-of-life and improved emotional and physical state.

As an industry, we perpetuate the myth that a basic digital set will solve all. At most, a £300 hearing aid will provide an adequate increase in amplification in a quiet surrounding, but it will only be comfortable for a very short period of time.



*Purchasing on price only may not necessarily mean a cheap deal being a good one*

Regardless of what the warranty says, the sound quality of a £300.00 hearing aid will be very poor in a complex and noisy environment. It will no doubt "last" the warranty period of 2 to 5 years. But warranties simply cover workmanship and materials, not clarity and quality of sound.

Don't mistake the length of the warranty to be the same as the success in terms of hearing quality.



After all, a hearing aid contains components that will eventually wear out. It's the quality of the components that will dictate just how long it takes to start feeling that wear and tear.

Additionally, enquire with retailers about what type of financing offers they have available. Often times you can spread out your purchase over a period of 3 or 4 years, taking some of the "bite" out of your monthly budget.

Stepping into a higher quality achieves not only better clarity of sound and more comfort, but longer lasting clarity and comfort. And with everything we need to accomplish each day, and the stresses it puts on our bodies, the question really should be, "Can you afford not to hear well?"

I'm **Chris Stone**, co-owner of The Hearing Clinic UK and third generation Audiologist. If you're reading this, you probably know a little bit about The Hearing Clinic UK, but I'd love to take a few minutes of your time and share a bit more of our story.



You see to us, selling a hearing aid is not just a job or something we take lightly. You are our local neighbours. Our friends and even our family.

Your hearing care, and ultimately your health and well-being are important to us. If I expect you to trust your hearing care to us, you need to know who we are, and I'm happy to share.

My grandfather began his career in audiology in 1948 after leaving the parachute regiment – he was the signaller and understood a great deal about "sound, electrics and valves".

He set up a chain of private clinics throughout Scotland and with the help of my dad and mum they added several more locations throughout the Costa Del Sol in Spain and also Gibraltar. My sister was also involved for a while and now they have all retired or moved on its now myself and my brother who carry on the tradition.

We've been locally, family owned and operated since 2012 in our new business, and being a small business owner in tough economic times, I fully endorse supporting locally owned businesses and I strongly encourage you to do the same with your next hearing aid you purchase.

My staff and I strive to do our very best for you, unlike the big-box chain store down the road just trying to get your money. Our prices are competitive, our selection is unparalleled, and our service is superior. You have my word.



*Good hearing healthcare is the  
primary aim of all The Hearing  
Clinic UK staff*

But this isn't about us, we're all about helping you enhance and maintain your hearing, to communicate as easily as possible and to enjoy life to the fullest. We have some helpful tools and information to help you through this sometimes daunting process. The "Hear for Life" program is a market leading approach to finding the right hearing aid for you and getting the maximum value from it for many years.

Our "try before you buy" and unique "sound optimisation" technique ensures you get the right solution first time. You can find out more at [\*\*www.thehearingclinicuk.co.uk\*\*](http://www.thehearingclinicuk.co.uk).

To your better health through better hearing

**Chris Stone, Managing Director  
and 3rd generation Audiologist**

I am honoured that you are taking the time to read our guide and would love for you to visit one of our clinics to help you pick the best possible hearing aid for you.

Hearing is the one thing everyone practices daily in life and hardly anyone does as well as when he or she began life.

We have improved in our walking, talking, eating, seeing, and other acts of skill and habit; but, few of us have improved in hearing. Remember what it was like to hear like a child and enjoy easy stress free conversation?

If you're not hearing well, or finding listening to tv or telephones challenging we can help you!

We are a local business which serves your neighbours and friends and we would love to serve you and give you the gift of easier hearing.

## **BONUS GIFT**

**Bring this guide to one of our clinics and we'll give you a valuable free bonus gift, just for visiting us.**

**Thank you and we look forward to helping you enjoy life to the fullest.**

**Call: 0333 320 7788**

**Locations Across England and Scotland**

Visit our website for more information about our clinical locations.