

7 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing Hearing Protection

An easy guide to getting the best hearing
protection for the right price

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Why Use Hearing Protection?

Noise Induced Hearing Loss is a growing problem. Many of us are aware that we need to use hearing protection, but there are so many products available on the market that it is often difficult to choose the right solution. Sometimes it is tempting just to choose the cheapest product or worse still, not bother because the choice is too hard. In this report we unravel some of the mysteries, debunk some of the myths and uncover questions you should ask your hearing protection provider to ensure you're getting the right product for you.



Bigger Isn't Always Better

People often think that because ear-muffs are big, they provide the most protection. Hearing protectors are tested according to the guidelines in the Australian/New Zealand Standard, AS/NZS 1270: 2002. Once tested, hearing protectors are given a class rating from 1 to 5, where Class 5 currently offers the greatest level of noise reduction. Ear-muffs and earplugs are both available as Class 5 hearing protectors.

Don't Overprotect Your Ears

Avoid hearing protection that cuts out too much noise. They can:

- Reduce your ability to hear warning signals
- Tempt you to remove the hearing protectors to hear what other people are saying to you

Hearing protectors should be used the entire time you are exposed to noise as removing your earplugs for even a short time drastically reduces their effectiveness. For example, removing your hearing protector for just 5 minutes out of an 8-hour day will reduce your hearing protection by a massive 40%.

Communication Breakdown

Foam earplugs reduce high frequency sound much more than the low to mid frequencies. The frequencies of speech occur in the mid to high frequencies. This is why it is often difficult to engage in conversations while you are wearing foam earplugs.

Look out for filtered earplugs (reusable and custom), which reduce the volume of the noise more evenly across all frequencies and provide better sound quality than foam earplugs. This means you can communicate with fellow workers, answer telephones and hear warning signals.

Avoid that "Closed In" Feeling

Traditional forms of hearing protection can cause you to feel "closed in" and isolated from your surroundings. The so called "occlusion effect" can make some people feel uncomfortable about wearing hearing protection as it feels like you're talking inside your own head.

By comparison, filtered earplugs (reusable and custom) are designed to minimise the occlusion effect and make outside noise sound as natural as if you weren't wearing hearing protection.

Creature Comfort

Don't buy hearing protection that is uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time. If your job depends on you wearing hearing protection all day, every day, you need to be sure it will be comfortable to wear for long durations. Otherwise you'll be tempted not to wear anything, which may result in permanent hearing loss.

For example, if you work in high temperature environments, you may consider using earplugs in preference to ear-muffs to minimise your discomfort. You may also find your ear canals get sore from repeated use of single use foam hearing protectors. Custom made hearing protectors fit your ear perfectly, making them comfortable to wear for long periods.



Don't Buy Hearing Protection on Price Alone

While disposable hearing protectors are low cost when you buy them individually, if you need to use them every day for work, the costs soon mount up.

Our conservative estimate is that tradesmen and employees typically use two pairs of foam earplugs per day, and at 25 cents per pair, this adds up to over

\$120 per year. As an example, our Elacin custom hearing protectors last for four years, and work out at **less than 30 cents per day or \$69 per year.**

Quality Control

Don't assume that all custom hearing protection is of the same quality or made to the same standard. There is a wide price variation between custom hearing protectors, so when choosing a product you should ask the following questions:

- What material are the hearing protectors made from?
- How long do the hearing protectors last for?
- Is there a choice in the level of attenuation (noise reduction) available?
- What guarantees do the suppliers offer on the hearing protectors?
- What is the after-sales service if I find they don't fit properly?

Summary

Hopefully we've given you a good idea of how to choose the right hearing protection for you. If you'd like more advice, email us at info@hearingtech.com.au or call us on 03 5985 6194.

Want to know how you can get a pair of the most comfortable, best sounding and longest lasting earplugs for less than 30 cents per day?

Visit our website at <http://www.hearingtech.com.au>