

Considering a Portable Desktop Loop?

Providing assisted listening systems is all about considering what practical improvements can be made to provide equal access or to enhance to experience of hearing aid users¹.

Portable loops are typically all-in-one with a built-in microphone and rechargeable battery power, sometimes referred to as “handbag loops” due to their physical appearance.

These devices often fail to provide acceptable performance for the average hearing aid user in typical applications. This means that they may not be a suitable solution to provide equal access to hearing aid users. You can easily check this for yourself: position a portable desktop loop device on a reception counter or meeting table following the manufacturer’s instructions, then ask a hearing aid user to listen – the test is whether the talker’s voice is clearer via the loop unit than just their own hearing aid normally? So, try before you buy.

Most situations where portable loop devices are found could be better served by making minor practical adjustments at the location. Examples: remove the source of background noise; relocate the welcome point away from a busy entrance to a quieter location; and/or provide a space where you can talk face-to-face with the hearing aid user.

Remember that a loop system will only benefit the hearing aid user if it provides better separation of the talker’s voice from background noise than the listener’s own hearing aid can achieve on its own.

Alternatives

Reception counters are best served with a permanently installed loop system; these have a microphone positioned close to the talker but must be installed correctly. Their loop output must be tested to ensure compliance with IEC standard – this ensures compatibility with standard hearing aids, allowing users to directly benefit from the loop system without need for adjustment. If there is a glazed divider then consider a through-the-glass loudspeaker system in addition to the loop.

One-to-one wireless links are available where the engagement is for longer periods; a building tour, safety induction or personal training session. They provide the talker with a microphone (e.g. head-worn or tie-clip) and the hearing aid user with a neck-worn personal loop – this provides the necessary sound separation for the hearing aid user to clearly hear the talker. See our website for more details on FM wireless and infra red assisted listening systems.

Contact Us

Apple Sound is a sound engineering business and has been specifying and installing induction loop systems for over 30 years. Call us for advice on 01244 457589.

¹ Hearing aid devices fitted with a Telecoil (“T” position).