

# What Is an Audiologist?

**Audiology is a highly recognized profession and has been consistently ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the Best Careers.<sup>1</sup>**

**Au-di-ol-o-gists:** Audiologists are the primary health-care professionals who evaluate, diagnose, treat, and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in adults and children.

Audiologists:

- evaluate and diagnose hearing loss and vestibular (balance) disorders prescribe, fit, and dispense hearing aids and other amplification and hearing assistance technologies are members of cochlear implant teams
  - perform ear- or hearing-related surgical monitoring
  - design and implement hearing conservation programs
  - design and implement newborn hearing screening programs
  - provide hearing rehabilitation training such as auditory training and listening skills improvement
  - assess and treat individuals, especially children, with central auditory processing disorders
  - assess and treat individuals with tinnitus (noise in the ear, such as ringing)
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- Audiologists manage all types of hearing loss in patients of all ages from infants to the elderly.
  - Most hearing loss can be treated by an audiologist with hearing aids, assistive listening devices and alerting systems, and hearing rehabilitation.
  - Audiologists work in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, clinics, private practice, ENT offices, universities, K-12 schools, government, military, and Veterans' Administration (VA) hospitals.
  - Most audiologists earn a doctor of audiology (AuD) degree. Some audiologists earn a doctor of philosophy (PhD) or doctor of science (ScD) degree in the hearing and balance sciences.

Audiologists must be licensed or registered for practice in all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.



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<sup>1</sup> <http://money.usnews.com/careers/best-jobs/audiologist>

For more information on audiology and hearing loss, visit [www.HowsYourHearing.org](http://www.HowsYourHearing.org)

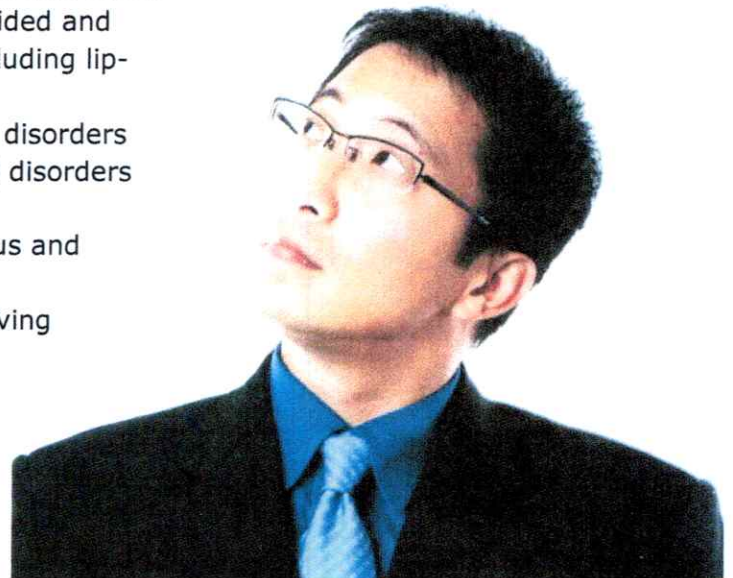




**Q: What is the difference between an audiologist and a “hearing aid specialist”?**

**A:** One key difference between an audiologist and a “hearing aid specialist” is the minimum amount of education required. Audiologists must currently earn a professional degree (the Doctor of Audiology, or Au.D.) which typically involves 4 years of academic and clinical training in audiology, following a traditional 4-year bachelor’s degree. By contrast, very few educational requirements need to be met (they vary by state) before a non-audiologist can sell hearing aids; in fact, in many states, the minimum requirement is a high school diploma, passing a license exam, and some form of brief apprenticeship with a licensed hearing aid specialist. Another major difference between an audiologist and a hearing aid specialist lies within their scopes of practice. Audiologists are licensed and trained to manage many areas of hearing healthcare including:

- Comprehensive audiological evaluations including tests of hearing sensitivity, speech understanding, middle ear function, inner ear and auditory nerve function
- Diagnostic tests for balance/dizziness disorders
- Auditory processing evaluations for infants, children and adults
- Design, selection, fitting and verification of hearing instruments and assistive listening devices
- Design, selection, installation and monitoring of classroom amplification systems
- Rehabilitation therapy for hearing disorders which might include strategies to improve aided and unaided hearing, speech-reading (including lip-reading) and sign language
- Rehabilitation for auditory processing disorders
- Rehabilitation for vestibular (balance) disorders
- Cerumen (earwax) management
- Evaluation and management of tinnitus and hyperacusis
- Patient and family counseling about living with hearing loss
- Development of hearing conservation programs
- Research and development of new evaluation techniques and rehabilitation strategies



By contrast, the scope of practice for hearing aid specialists is very limited. They perform the following services:

- Basic hearing tests exclusively for the purpose of selling hearing aids to adults
- Hearing aid fitting and sales