

Helping Families Accept Technology PART 2

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC THINGS we can do to assist families in accepting technology?

Parents need to believe that technology will help.

Parents need to understand that the ears are the pathway to the brain, and that audition is critical for auditory brain development, which results in both spoken language and academic learning. They need to understand that children learn language by overhearing. Unless they are hearing soft speech all day long, they are going to miss out on incidental learning. They need to know that auditory access leads to reading. Parents are anxious to have their children be successful. Helping them understand the relationship between hearing, language, reading, and learning is critical in helping them understand the importance of wearing technology on a full time basis.

Parents need to see that the technology is working optimally.

The most encouraging thing for a parent is seeing the child respond to sound. On the other hand, if a child does not seem to be responding, it is difficult for parents to fight with kids to keep the equipment on. When a parent first sees a child alert, turn to sound or search for a sound, they feel hopeful. They think, "Maybe this will be okay," and they are more willing to work on being sure the technology is kept on.

How do we know if technology is working optimally? It is not guesswork. We need to test. With tiny ones, we start off with an auditory brainstem response (ABR), but we

need to move to behavioral testing quickly. We cannot use ABR to monitor hearing aid performance, but we can use behavioral testing. Behavioral observation can be used to test infants under six months of age.^{1,2}

VRA and conditioned play can be used for children between 6 and about 36 months. Testing with hearing aids will let us—and parents—know if the hearing aid is providing sufficient gain throughout the frequency range. Real ear testing will tell us what is reaching the ear drum but not what the child is hearing. While real ear testing is critical, it is not sufficient. Aided thresholds can be accurately obtained by starting below threshold and presenting short duration warble tones or noise bands. This should not set off compression and should provide reliable results. If the child is not hearing softly enough, hearing aid settings can be corrected.

Once a child is old enough, speech perception testing should be added at normal and soft conversational levels in quiet and in competing noise. This information is useful both for parents and for therapists in understanding performance and planning remediation.

Parents need to help keep the technology on the head.

Parents sometimes have difficulty keeping technology on. It is important to know why in order to make the appropriate suggestions. Children sense their parents' discomfort and may remove hearing aids for that reason. Parents need to understand that they must give a very clear message to their children indicating that the hearing aids may not be removed. If the child takes them off, the hearing aids have to go right back on. I expect children to be using the hearing aids full time after two weeks. Parents need to understand that it will be a difficult two weeks, but once accomplished, the child is on his or her way.



Keeping the child entertained helps. Children are less likely to take technology off while they are being read to and more likely to remove it when alone in the back seat of the car. (FM can help in that situation.) A bonnet covering the ears and tied under the chin will help in keeping hearing aids on during the early weeks.

Being optimistic will help parents be optimistic. Our job is to keep them from giving up. [Inpm](#)

REFERENCES

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3. Robertson, L. (2009). *Literacy and Deafness: Listening and Spoken Language*. Plural Publishing, San Diego.



Jane R. Madell, PhD, CCC-A/SLP, ABA, LSLC Cert AVT, is a pediatric audiology consultant. For more information: 917-767-8366, www.JaneMadell.com, Jane@JaneMadell.com.

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