

Hearing Aid Compatibility

Q&A

Q. What does hearing aid compatibility (HAC) mean for wireless devices?

A. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines HAC for wireless phones in terms of two parameters; radio-frequency (RF) emissions and telecoil coupling. To be considered HAC compliant, wireless phones must receive a minimum rating of M3 for RF emissions and T3 for telecoil coupling.

Q. How will I know if a phone is HAC-compliant?

A. HAC-compliant device packages are marked with "M" and/or "T" ratings to reflect how the wireless device will work with the hearing aid in microphone mode ("M") and in telecoil mode ("T"). Only wireless phones that are tested and meet the minimum rating for HAC, "M3" or "T3," and higher will be labeled. If you see an "M3," "M4," "T3" or "T4" on the box, then the phone has been designated as HAC-compliant. Information about wireless phones that meet the standard will also be shown on the display card by the phone in retail stores and in the product's manual or packaging insert. If you have questions about the rating of a wireless device or service, ask a sales representative, visit wireless.att.com/about/disability-resources/disabilityresources.jsp or contact the device manufacturer for more information.

Q. Which wireless phone will work for me?

A. The higher the "M" rating on the phone, the more likely it is you will be able to use the phone with your hearing aid on the microphone setting. The higher the "T" rating, the more likely you will be able to use the phone with your hearing aid on the telecoil setting.

Q. Are HAC-compliant devices tested for all frequency bands/modes for which the device operates?

A. Each HAC-compliant phone has been tested and rated for use with hearing aids for some of the wireless technologies that it uses. However, there may be some newer wireless technologies used in the phone that have not been tested yet for use with hearing aids. It is important to try the different features of the phone thoroughly and in different locations, using your hearing aid or cochlear implant, to determine if you hear any interfering noise. Consult a sales representative about phone return and exchange policies and for information on hearing aid compatibility.

Q. Do HAC-compliant wireless phones look any different from other wireless phones?

A. No.

Q. Who manufactures digital wireless devices that have been approved by the FCC?

A. All major handset manufacturers are required to offer HAC compliant devices. Some may also offer hands-free accessories to improve usability.

Q. Will a HAC-compliant wireless phone operate as well as other wireless phones?

A. Most HAC-compliant wireless phones should operate like other wireless phones. However, some GSM wireless phones that operate on PCS frequencies require you to slightly reduce the power of the phone for the phone to be HAC-compliant, which may slightly reduce your coverage relative to other phones. Power is not reduced for 911 calls. For more information about power reduction, review the packaging material with your phone or contact the device manufacturer for more information.

Q. May I try the wireless phone before I buy?

A. It's best to try several phones before buying to find the best match with your hearing aids. Visit Cricket owned and operated stores and ask to try wireless phones that have been designated as "hearing aid-compliant."

Q. Can I return the wireless phone if it does not work for me after purchase?

A. Since a wireless phone's RF emissions can change depending on your location, your listening experience outside the store may be different. Cricket's 30-day return policy will allow you to return a phone that does not work for you. It may be necessary to try a different phone with your hearing aids to get the best results. A sales representative will explain the 30-day return policy before you sign up for a wireless phone or service.

Q. Do FCC regulations guarantee that I will be able to use a wireless phone with my hearing aids?

A. There is no guarantee that HAC-compliant wireless phones will improve usability for hearing aid users. Hearing loss and hearing aids are highly individualized. So, it is still advisable to try a wireless phone with your hearing aids in the store before making your wireless phone purchase.

Q. Are HAC-compliant wireless phones more expensive than wireless phones without hearing aid compatibility?

A. No. The range of features and functions of wireless phones will impact the price, but hearing aid compatibility will not. Cricket offers a range of wireless phones with varying features and prices.

Q. Are there phones I can use with my hearing aid on the microphone setting?

A. FCC rules require large handset manufacturers and service providers to make available wireless phones that can be used with hearing aids on the microphone setting. These phones have reduced RF interference. Phones that have been tested for microphone mode and are HAC-compliant will be labeled on the box with ratings of "M3" or "M4." There are also phones on the market that work with hearing aids in the microphone setting but they may not be labeled.

Q. What is a telecoil?

A. Telecoil is a small device that is built into some hearing aids for use with the telephone as well as assistive listening devices. Not all hearing aids have telecoils. To use the telecoil, generally either the hearing aid is switched to the "T" position or a button on the hearing aid is pushed to select the telecoil setting. The telecoil picks up magnetic fields generated by telephones and converts these fields into sound. Telecoils are particularly useful for telephone communication because they permit the volume control of a hearing aid to be turned up without creating feedback or "whistling," and background noise can be reduced, especially when using wireless phones in noisy places.

Q. Are there phones I can use with my hearing aids on the telecoil setting?

A. FCC regulations require that wireless phones be manufactured for use with hearing aids while in telecoil mode. They are labeled on the box with ratings of T3 or T4.

Q. How do I know if my hearing aids will work with my wireless phone?

A. Most new hearing aids contain RF immune circuitry and about half contain a telecoil. These digital hearing aids are designed to be usable with wireless devices with lower RF emissions and magnetic coupling ability. Your hearing healthcare professional will be able to tell you if your hearing aids are immune to RF interference and may need to contact the manufacturer of your hearing aids to determine their immunity rating. Your hearing healthcare professional will also be able to tell you if your hearing aid contains a telecoil.

Q. I already have a wireless phone. May I trade it in for a new hearing aid compatible phone?

A. Consult with your service provider.

Q. What if I cannot find a wireless phone that works with my hearing aids?

A. You can check with your hearing healthcare professional to determine if there is a hearing aid option for you that may work better with wireless phones. Some telecoil users may find that accessories such as neckloops may further assist with their use of wireless devices, and for using non-rated wireless phones. Many new digital hearing aids are designed to be usable with wireless devices with lower RF emissions.

Hearing loss and hearing aids are highly individualized. While HAC requirements should improve wireless phone usability for hearing aid users, some users may still not find a wireless phone that works for them at this time. If you cannot find a wireless phone that works for you, you may wish to consider the use of an accessory device to aid your wireless phone use. Accessories may also be available from manufacturers such as inductive neckloops, inductive silhouettes, and direct-audio-input modified earbuds help to reduce interference, especially for telecoil users.

RESOURCES

Many people and organizations contribute to ensuring accessible communication is equally available for all individuals with disabilities including deaf and hard of hearing consumers. For additional information, please contact us at 1-855-246-2461, or visit our web site at <http://www.cricketwireless.com/support/Phones-and-Tablets/Hearing-Aid-Compatibility/customer/Hearing-Aid-Compatibility.html>

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