

# EUHA Guideline

## **Audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics**

Guideline 10-01

# **EUHA**

Europäische Union der  
Hörgeräteakustiker e.V.

EUHA Guideline		No. 10-01	 Europäische Union der Hörgeräteakustiker e.V. <small>Fachwissenschaftliche Organisation der Hörgeräteakustiker</small>
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### Preface:

Reduced hearing not only has an impact on perception, but, as a consequence, also on personal and social health. For this reason, these issues must be taken into account and dealt with, apart from selecting appropriate devices, when fitting hearing systems. Successful hearing aid fitting, and hence successful rehabilitation, hinges on such holistic approach.

Any professional fitting of hearing systems necessarily includes elements of audio therapy. This Guideline focuses on structured and self-contained audio therapy strategies as part of hearing aid acoustics, going beyond hearing aid fitting proper. This additional offer can be made to people with impaired hearing so as to improve quality of life.

### Aim:

This Guideline is aimed at defining the extent of using audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics in order to ensure a consistent quality standard.

It also includes structural recommendations regarding the use of audio therapy in the daily routine of hearing aid acousticians.

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## Definitions

### General audio therapy

The general aim of audio therapy is to impart to people with hearing impairments as much auditory and communication competence as possible. Audio therapy strategies are required to adapt to altered personal circumstances, and handle them constructively, especially if patients experience communication deficiencies and/or uncompensated psycho-social problems (such as the threat of redundancy, rejection from family or friends, etc.) on top of hearing deficiencies. Taking account of the degree and progress of hearing loss, essentially, the therapist should offer ways and means of accepting one's life with hearing deficiencies. Patients must be picked up from where they are at due to their communication deficiencies.

Accepted methods and options from the fields of medicine, audiology, psychology, sociology, education, hearing acoustics, and self-help are joined and linked to form an overall concept. Based on its definition, audio therapy requires a multidisciplinary approach drawing on collaboration with different specialties.

### Audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics

Based on educational advice, counsel, and practical support, audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics is aimed at putting the hearing impaired person in a position to accept their hearing deficiencies and resultant personal, social, and, if relevant, occupational consequences as best as they possibly can, and to compensate for them.

Audio therapy is offered concomitantly with hearing aid fitting. It provides educational advice on hearing loss, hearing deficiencies in general, options for auditory improvement, and the fundamentals of auditory processing. Audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics raises awareness of hearing deficiencies and potential social limitations. It also comprises structured auditory training and tactics, offered as individual therapy and/or group therapy. Such guidance goes beyond the process of fitting hearing systems. It is offered to hearing impaired persons if required.

Audio therapy encourages patients to manage their situation with confidence.

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### Qualification

The following groups of persons are qualified to carry out structured audio therapy:

- successful participants of the *Audiotherapeut EUHA/biha* course
- successful participants of the *Audiotherapeut DSB* course

### Organisational fundamentals

When implementing structured audio therapy strategies, acousticians must draw a functional line between hearing aid fitting and audio therapy. This means that during dedicated audio therapy sessions as part of structured audio therapy, they should refrain from carrying out any tasks associated with fitting hearing systems. (Conversely, however, we should like to point out that isolated audio therapy techniques are required during hearing aid fitting, e.g. preparing the patient for the new auditory experience).

### Spatial setting and technical equipment

A dedicated room equipped for individual and group therapy sessions, with a quiet setting and convenient atmosphere, is recommendable. The room should have technical equipment for presentations and other tools, e.g. for auditory training, as well as facilities for demonstrating accessories such as assistive listening devices.

### Indication

In principle, audio therapy strategies make sense for every person with hearing deficiencies. Their extent, objectives, and main focus must be tailored to individual requirements.

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### Group composition

The decision on individual or group therapy is left to the therapist in each case. The results from the status definition questionnaire are to be taken into account.

- Individual therapy focuses on, and takes account of, individual circumstances. Therefore, therapy design and course are flexible and can be adapted, which also makes it possible to involve family members or colleagues.
- Group therapy should be offered for a maximum of four persons. Sessions must follow a clear schedule and a structured concept in terms of contents. The benefit associated with group therapy is that patients may find it easier to understand and accept their situation and identify with it more readily.

### Extent and assignment of responsibilities

Audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics exclusively includes strategies to improve auditory and communication competence. We should like to point out that rehabilitation of chiefly medical, psychological, and psycho-social issues is the domain of medical specialists, specialist hospitals, psychologists, or psychotherapists. To complement audio therapy strategies, acousticians should be prepared to put patients in touch with hospitals, clinics, and/or specialists. They should have the relevant contact details ready, including those of psycho-social outpatient clinics for emergencies.

### Content and time frame

The content and time frames are important factors affecting the success of audio therapy strategies. It is essential that the appointments offered are easy to keep. Moreover, limitations resulting from too little time spent or too much effort caused by too much time required, should in any case be avoided. Please adhere to our recommendations:

- Dedicated appointments – separated from those for hearing aid fitting
- In the case of group therapy: a total of 3 to 6 sessions with structured content on variable days; a session should not exceed two hours.
- Individual therapy allows for individual planning, based on the patient's specific situation and personal requirements.
- The chronology of sessions should be logical (e.g. discussing fundamentals – identifying options – defining and implementing targets).
- Sessions should be graded from easy to difficult, based on the participants' growing knowledge.
- Contents and targets should have practical relevance, and be viable, for the participants.

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- A structured approach based on a schedule planned beforehand is compulsory.
- To support the contents of the sessions, therapists should offer additional materials (e.g. sound samples and simulation of ambient sounds, illustrations, devices for the presentation of technical equipment such as phones, TV, etc.).

### Content

The focus of "audio therapy in hearing aid acoustics" should be on issues that will result in a direct benefit with a view to a successful fitting of hearing systems, such as:

- Status definition based on structured procedures – e.g. questionnaires (may be performed individually before group therapy starts); this Guideline comes with a sample status definition questionnaire recommended by the EUHA (see appendix).
- Establishing and reviewing the therapy target
- Information on individual hearing deficiencies and their consequences
- Support in coping with, and accepting, one's hearing impairment
- Information on possibilities and limitations of improved hearing
- Distinction between hearing and intelligibility
- Consultation and information for family, friends, colleagues, etc.
- Counselling on, and presentation of, assistive listening devices
- Hearing tactics\* and communication tactics\*
- Communication training\*
- Functional auditory training\* (including assisted auditory training; evidence-based methods are recommended)
- Interdisciplinary counselling, putting patients in touch with cooperating professional groups
- Legal advice
- Working out how to arrange one's private life with hearing deficiencies
- Working out how to arrange one's professional life with hearing deficiencies

\* Definition of terms: cf. page 7

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### Feedback routes / communication with hearing aid fitter

On the one hand, a clear distinction must be made between hearing aid fitting and audio therapy. On the other hand, to generate synergies, adequate flow of information must be guaranteed. We therefore recommend that the flow of information, especially in those cases where different persons, or even different providers, are dealing with the two fields, be formally defined (e.g. based on evaluation questionnaires).

### Evaluation of audio therapy strategies

As soon as audio therapy sessions have been completed, their success as well as any further measures required will be determined based on a standardised procedure. We suggest using an evaluation questionnaire.

### Effectiveness and quality assurance

Six months after completing audio therapy, another follow-up is required. The patient's development or progress will be checked based on another status definition. (We recommend using the EUHA status definition questionnaire attached to this Guideline.) As part of the follow-up, any relevant audio therapy strategies may be added or continued.

### Costs

Every audio therapist should assess costs based on his/her calculations as an entrepreneur.

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## Addendum: Glossary

- Functional auditory training

Functional auditory training is defined by the use of specific tools. These may range from simple stand-alone measures used in single sessions of auditory training to self-contained structured training units relying on equipment that guides the patient during individual training sessions performed at home. As a rule, evidence-based methods should be used.

- Hearing tactics and communication tactics

Hearing tactics and communication tactics refer to strategies and procedures that improve the general conditions and development of a communication situation.

- Communication training

Communication training comprises fundamental knowledge of communication psychology and models of communication, geared to the needs of people with hearing deficiencies, as well as familiarisation with the resulting procedures and behaviour patterns aimed at confidently implementing goal-oriented and unambiguous communication strategies.

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