

Hearing Protectors: What to Say When Friends Say, "No Way."

When your parents and other adults tell you to wear hearing protectors in noisy places, your first thought may be, "What will my friends say?" What they might say, however, is not as important as what you might lose later on. If you force your ears to deal with too much noise for too long a time, you have a good chance of losing some of your hearing. The worst thing is that hearing loss from noise does not get better. Once you have it, it lasts forever.

The solution is simple. Earplugs and earmuffs help protect your hearing from harmful noises. While it's normal for you to want to look like everybody else, there is nothing cool about hearing loss. Get comfortable with hearing protectors. Be a leader in hearing protection! Here are some tips.

Wear hearing protectors that fit your style. Be—

Low key: Earplugs that match your skin tone will be almost invisible. If your hair covers your ears, they'll be completely hidden from view.

Stylin': Hearing protectors come in great colors and designs. Match the color of your earplugs or earmuffs to your braces, your favorite team's colors, or what you are wearing.

Outrageous: Express yourself by decorating your earplugs or earmuffs to match the noisy occasion. Noisy sports event? Decorate your hearing protectors to match the team's colors or mascot. Dress up earmuffs with rabbit ears for spring and antlers for winter. Wrap them or make colorful or fuzzy covers to match your mood, outfit, or school colors.

Learn about the different kinds of hearing protectors. There are many types of earplugs and earmuffs. Some are specially designed for musicians, swimmers, hunters, or people who often fly in airplanes.

Practice wearing your hearing protectors around the house to get used to the fit. At first, you may find that they make your ears feel full. But, just as with new shoes, you'll get used to them. Then, when you are with your friends, you'll feel more comfortable when you want to quickly pop them in or on.

Take along an extra pair of earplugs or earmuffs when you go to a concert, game, or other noisy event. Share them with your friends so they can protect their hearing. Did any of them have ringing in their ears after the last noisy event? This is very common, and it's caused by—you guessed it!—too much noise. Let your friends know that hearing protectors can also prevent ringing in the ears.

Find out what your favorite musicians and celebrities are doing to protect their hearing. They may be rich, but they know their hearing is priceless. So is the hearing of their fans. Some rock, hip hop, and country music stars encourage their fans to listen to music at safe levels and to wear hearing protectors at concerts. Practice what to say if friends ask why you wear hearing protectors.

Be bold: "It's earplugs now . . . or hearing aids later."

Be funny: "My career goal is to be an underwater piano tuner. Hearing loss will kill my dream."

Be smart: "I wear a bicycle helmet to protect my head and earmuffs to protect my hearing."

Be a friend: "Hearing loss from too much noise is permanent—and totally preventable. Want to know how?"

1. What is the main idea of the text?
 - A. Hearing protectors are stylish.
 - B. Hearing protectors can prevent hearing loss.
 - C. Two types of hearing protectors are earplugs and earmuffs.
 - D. When people wear hearing protectors, others may stare or laugh.
2. Which sentence from the text tells the reader that hearing protection is more important than what others might think?
 - A. "While it's normal for you to want to look like everybody else, there is nothing cool about hearing loss."
 - B. "Some are specially designed for musicians, swimmers, hunters, or people who often fly in airplanes."
 - C. "Then, when you are with your friends, you'll feel more comfortable when you want to quickly pop them in or on."
 - D. "Let your friends know that hearing protectors can also prevent ringing in the ears."
3. Which statement supports the idea that people can express themselves with hearing protectors?
 - A. It is important to keep an extra set of hearing protectors.
 - B. People should practice wearing hearing protectors.
 - C. Hearing protectors should be worn by almost everyone.
 - D. Hearing protectors can fit anyone's style.
4. Which sentence from the text supports the main idea?
 - A. "Earplugs and earmuffs help protect your hearing from harmful noises."

- B. "You may find that they make your ears feel full."
- C. "Share them with your friends so they can protect their hearing."
- D. "They may be rich, but they know their hearing is priceless."

5. Which statement summarizes the text?

- A. Practicing wearing hearing protectors is important.
- B. Hearing protectors can be worn in any number of ways.
- C. Practice what to say when asked about hearing protectors.
- D. Hearing protectors are important to wear, despite how they look.