



Hearing Aid Compatibility for Wireline Telephones and Wireless Handsets

The Hearing Aid Compatibility Act and other federal laws require the Federal Communications Commission to ensure the availability of wireline telephones and wireless handsets that are compatible with hearing aids and cochlear implants. For simplicity, we refer to hearing aids and cochlear implants, collectively, as “hearing aids.”

When people with hearing aids use a telephone or a wireless handset that is not hearing aid compatible, they often hear lots of unwanted noise. Wireline telephones and wireless handsets that are certified as being hearing aid compatible under FCC requirements should minimize unwanted noise and be compatible with the magnetic coils (telecoils or T-coils) in many hearing aids. Wireline telephones and wireless handsets also provide volume control within prescribed amplification limits.

Hearing aids that have telecoils can receive sound signals directly from hearing aid compatible telephones and handsets, often eliminating other sounds that could be heard through those hearing aids. Many hearing aid users consider direct telephone-to-telecoil or direct handset-to-telecoil sound to be superior to the sound they hear when they hold a telephone or handset to their ear.

Wireline Telephones

What types of wireline telephones need to be hearing aid compatible?

Telephones that are connected to traditional wireline telephone service must be hearing aid compatible.

All wireline telephones that are intended to be used with a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service and are manufactured or imported for use in the United States on or after February 28, 2020, must be hearing aid compatible. VoIP is an advanced communications service.

What’s the difference between “wireline” and “landline”?

Many people refer to traditional telephone service provided to homes and businesses as “landline” service. The FCC often refers to telephone service provided over copper wires or fiber cables as “wireline” service. Thus, “wireline” is a broad term that includes both traditional telephone service and wireline VoIP service.

What are the requirements for hearing aid compatibility for wireline telephones?

FCC rules require that wireline telephones that are connected to the Public Switched Telephone Network (the telephone network) must:

- Produce a magnetic field of sufficient strength and quality to permit coupling with hearing aids that have telecoils; and
- Provide an adequate range of volume.

Wireline telephones allowing high volume levels must automatically reset to a lower volume each time the telephone is hung up. Telephone manufacturers may request a waiver of this requirement, which would permit certain telephones to remain at the high-volume setting.

These requirements for wireline telephones connected to the telephone network apply to wireline telephones that are intended to be used with a VoIP service and are manufactured or imported for use in the United States on or after February 28, 2020.



Are there labeling requirements for wireline telephones?

Yes. Wireline telephones that are hearing aid compatible must be labelled as "HAC." If you pick up a wireline telephone that is connected to the telephone network and look at the labels that may be on the bottom of the telephone, you will likely see a "HAC" label.

Wireless Handsets

Are all wireless handsets hearing aid compatible?

No. Unlike wireline telephones, most of which have been hearing aid compatible for decades, not all wireless handsets need to be hearing aid compatible. In general, handset manufacturers and service providers must ensure that a certain percentage of the wireless handset models they offer are hearing aid compatible. Handset manufacturers and wireless service providers that offer six or more wireless handset models must ensure that at least 85 percent of the handset models that they offer comply with the FCC's wireless hearing aid compatibility requirements. Handset manufacturers and wireless service providers that offer five or fewer wireless handset models meet a reduced obligation.

How does the FCC determine whether a wireless handset is hearing aid compatible?

The FCC uses a technical standard to determine whether a handset is hearing aid compatible. The newest technical standard is known as the 2019 ANSI Standard, and handsets that meet it will be labelled as "hearing aid compatible." Older ANSI standards used a M and T rating system that the 2019 ANSI Standard does not use. The "M" rating is for reducing interference with hearing aids operating in acoustic mode—from M1 to M4, with M4 being the best. The "T" rating is for their ability to operate with hearing aids that contain a telecoil (a tightly wrapped piece of wire that converts sounds into electromagnetic signals) and operate in inductive coupling mode—from T1 to T4, with T4 being the best. The FCC considers a handset to be hearing aid compatible under this older standard if it is rated at least an M3 (for acoustic coupling) and at least a T3 (for inductive coupling).

Do wireless handsets that are hearing aid compatible have to meet a volume control requirement?

The 2019 ANSI Standard for the first time includes a volume control requirement that ensures that hearing aid compatible handsets meet certain amplification requirements that benefit both consumers with hearing loss who use hearing aids and consumers with hearing loss who do not use hearing aids. This amplification requirement is referred to as conversational gain.

Does the FCC have package labeling requirements?

Yes. Handsets that meet the FCC's requirements for hearing aid compatibility must state so on their package label. If these handsets meet the requirements of the 2019 ANSI Standard, the package label must also provide the handset's conversational gain both with and without the use of hearing aids.

What information does the FCC require a handset's package inserts and user manual to provide?

A handset's package insert and user manual must provide the following information:

- (1) That the handset is hearing aid compatible;

- (2) The ANSI standard used to determine the hearing aid compatibility of the handset model's air interfaces (compatibility with providers' services) and frequency bands;
- (3) For handsets that meet hearing aid compatibility requirements under standards that are older than the 2019 ANSI Standard, the lowest hearing aid compatibility rating assigned to any of the covered air interfaces or frequency bands;
- (4) If a hearing aid compatible handset contains air interfaces or frequency bands that are not certified as hearing aid compatible or have been determined to be hearing aid compatible under special testing circumstances, this information must be disclosed;
- (5) An explanation of the ANSI rating system, including an explanation that the 2019 ANSI standard does not use the M and T rating system used by older versions of the ANSI standard; and
- (6) An explanation of the handset's volume control capabilities, including conversational gain both with and without hearing aids, if the handset meets hearing aid compatibility standards under the 2019 ANSI Standard.

Does the FCC have an in-store testing requirement?

Yes. All wireless service providers must make their handsets available for consumers to test in their stores. Consumers are encouraged to try out wireless handsets with their hearing aids in the store before making their purchase, and should look for handsets labeled as "hearing aid compatible."

Where can I find information about available wireless handsets that are hearing aid compatible?

Handset manufacturers and wireless service providers must post information about their hearing aid compatible wireless handset offerings on their websites. In addition, consumers may determine whether a handset has been certified using the 2019 ANSI Standard and, if not, its M and T ratings, by reviewing the handset manufacturers annual compliance filings found here:

<https://www.fcc.gov/wireless/systems-utilities/universal-licensing-system/hearing-aid-compatibility-status-reporting-0>.

Filing a Complaint

Complaints about the hearing aid compatibility of wireline telephones and wireless handsets may be submitted through the FCC's online [Consumer Complaint Center](#). You may also email your complaint or request for assistance to dro@fcc.gov or call us at (202) 418-2517. Individuals who use videophones and are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) may call the FCC's ASL Consumer Support Line at (844) 432-2275 (videophone).

To Learn More

For more information about FCC programs to promote access for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's Disability Rights Office website at fcc.gov/accessibility.

Alternate Formats

To request this article in an alternate format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

Last Reviewed September 27, 2023