

## Are noise-cancelling headphones impairing our hearing skills? Some audiologists are beginning to worry

### Level 3: Advanced

**Article summary:** This article discusses the effects of using noise-cancelling headphones and whether they can cause hearing problems.

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Skills:** Reading, Speaking, Writing

**Language focus:** Modal verbs

**Materials needed:** One copy of the worksheet per student

### 1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students thinking about noise-cancelling headphones and what the consequences of their use might be. Ask students to work in pairs to discuss the questions. Get feedback from one or two pairs on what they discussed.

### 2. Key words

- a. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to find the words in the article and then complete the sentences. Allow a few minutes for students to check their answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

**Key:**

- |                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>robust</i>               | 10. <i>hunch</i>       |
| 2. <i>an uptick</i>            | 11. <i>impairs</i>     |
| 3. <i>Auditory</i>             | 12. <i>Plasticity</i>  |
| 4. <i>triggered by</i>         | 13. <i>prized for</i>  |
| 5. <i>chronic</i>              | 14. <i>prolonged</i>   |
| 6. <i>comes under scrutiny</i> | 15. <i>warrants</i>    |
| 7. <i>culprit</i>              | 16. <i>segregate</i>   |
| 8. <i>din</i>                  | 17. <i>home in on</i>  |
| 9. <i>Hubbub</i>               | 18. <i>Suppressing</i> |
|                                | 19. <i>Autism</i>      |

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using the correct form of the words from the previous activity. Encourage students to read the completed sentences aloud when they give answers, so you can check their pronunciation of the key words.

**Key:**

1. *hunch*
2. *din*
3. *warrant*
4. *chronic*
5. *come under scrutiny*
6. *uptick*
7. *impaired*
8. *plasticity*
9. *was triggered by*
10. *prized for*
11. *segregate*
12. *auditory*
13. *culprit*
14. *suppress*
15. *home in on*
16. *hubbub*
17. *prolonged*
18. *autism*
19. *robust*

### 3. Comprehension check

- a. Students can work individually or in pairs. Encourage students to underline the part of the text where they found the answer and to correct any false answers.

**Key:**

1. *F – While the technology has clear benefits, not least in helping people listen to music at lower volume, some specialists suspect that constantly filtering out background noise may have unintended consequences.*
2. *T*
3. *F – The condition, known as auditory processing disorder (APD), is often diagnosed in children, so the rise in adults with similar issues struck Almeida as odd.*

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4. *F – There is no scientific evidence that noise-cancelling headphones cause APD. Nor is there any robust data showing a rise in the condition.*
5. *T*
6. *T*
7. *T*
8. *F – Prof Dani Tomlin, the head of audiology and speech pathology at the University of Melbourne, says people who use noise-cancelling headphones for prolonged periods may find listening harder when they take them off.*
9. *T*
10. *F – “the benefits should not be overlooked”, for managing sensory inputs in people with autism and helping individuals to listen to podcasts and movies on planes and trains. “Instead of suggesting abandoning noise-cancelling headphones, we need more comprehensive research studies.”*

#### 4. Key language

- a. Students work individually or in pairs to choose the correct option. You may want to review the modal verbs *must, may, should, have to, could* and *might* before students do this activity. To extend the activity, ask students to replace the modal with any other modal that fits grammatically and retains the same purpose.

**Key:**

1. *b*
2. *a*
3. *b*
4. *a*
5. *c*
6. *c*

- b. Have students write three sentences about their own lives using phrases for advice, necessity, etc.

#### 5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences whenever possible.

#### 6. In your own words

- a. This task aims to help students experience what it's like to struggle with auditory processing and develop empathy for individuals with APD and autism. It should be done in pairs or groups of three. It needs to be done in class if possible. Allow students to research online or to use their smartphones to find a sound clip that they can use as background noise.
- b. Discuss the questions as a class and encourage students to reflect on what they felt they learned about the challenges that people with APD or autism may face.