

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

Level 2: Intermediate

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. Proof
2. Debates
3. adaptable
4. Autism
5. injury
6. Long-term effects
7. source
8. Blocking out
9. concerned
10. Background noise
11. diagnosed
12. Audiologists

- 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. audiologist
2. concerned
3. injury
4. background noise
5. block out
6. adaptable
7. source
8. proof
9. autism
10. debate
11. diagnosed
12. long-term effects

3. Comprehension check

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

Key:

1. *F – Audiologists are concerned that using them too much might affect people's hearing. While the technology has clear benefits, such as helping people listen to music at lower volumes, some experts worry that blocking out background noise may have negative effects.*
2. *T*
3. *F – This condition, known as auditory processing disorder (APD), is usually diagnosed in children, so the rise in adults with similar problems surprised Almeida. She believes that frequent use of noise-cancelling headphones could be the cause.*
4. *T*
5. *T*
6. *F – APD affects around three to five per cent of school-age children. It is linked to low birth weight and ear infections.*

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4. Key language

- a. Students work individually or in pairs to choose the correct option. You may want to review the modal verbs *might, should, must, may, need to, have to* and *ought to* 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. b
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. a

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 to 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 phones 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 and autism may face.