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Assistive Listening Devices FAQ

Find answers to your questions about assistive listening devices (ALDs) here.

Read this page to find answers to some common questions about Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). You will also find a lot of answers to your questions in our page on [ALDs \(http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/\)](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/).

How ALDs can help

Q. Will a sound field system help my child who wears hearing aids?

A. Yes, it can. It can make the teacher's voice louder than other noise in the room. A sound field system may help other children in the room, too.

Q. Can FM systems only work for people wearing hearing aids?

A. No, they can also work for children with cochlear implants and children who don't wear hearing aids.

Q. I've been told the FM system is helpful for reducing noise for my child. Yet he has complained that it is noisy at school and he can't hear the teacher. Which is right?

A. In a noisy classroom, the FM system can reduce noise if the teacher wears a microphone used to make her voice louder, and if she is far away from the noise. Most FM systems are attached to a hearing aid. That means the sound of the teachers voice is sent right to your child's ear.

The hearing aid has a microphone, too. Your child can keep the microphone on his hearing aid on, or turn it off. If the students in class are noisy, the hearing aid microphone will pick up that sound and make it louder. And, if there is a lot of noise near the teacher's microphone, that, too, will be louder.

In a noisy classroom, your child may want to turn off the microphone on his hearing aid. That will let the teacher's voice sound louder. The teacher may need to control that switch for a younger child.

Q. My child has an FM device on his hearing aid. When he goes outside to play, I wear the microphone. How far away can he be and still hear me when I talk?

A. If he's indoors, he can usually hear you when you are 40 to 60 feet away. Outside, if there is nothing in the way, he may be able to hear you from as far as 300 feet away. That's the length of a football field! Different FM devices have different ranges. So check with the company that makes his.

Q. Is it a problem if my child gets used to the FM system in noisy situations? I'm worried he will depend on it too much and won't be able to hear anything without it.

A. If the FM helps him hear better in the classroom, he should wear it. Classrooms are frequently too noisy, and children with hearing loss who are learning new vocabulary words and new material need speech that is louder than the noise by at least 15 dB. Your child will likely develop some skill listening in noise as he grows older and learns more language.

Using an ALD at school

Q. How do I find out what sound field system would be best for my child's school?

A. There are lots of makers of sound field systems. Some systems are portable and some are installed in classrooms. What is best for your child will depend on her hearing loss and the room. Some rooms are more noisy because they have a lot of hard surfaces. Sound can bounce off of hard surfaces. Rooms with softer surfaces, like carpeting, may be quieter. Sound field systems work better in these rooms.

A portable sound field system would be useful if your child changes classrooms throughout the day. Your educational audiologist should give you some guidance. If a system will be installed in a room, the audiologist should talk to them about what your child needs. Try contacting [International Deaf/Tek Inc.](http://www.deaftek.org/) (<http://www.deaftek.org/>) (voice/tty: 508-620-1777 or on the web at deaftek@deaftek.org).

Q. Does the school have to provide assistive technology, such as an FM device or sound field system if my child needs it?

A. Only if [your child's IEP](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/rights/iep.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/rights/iep.jsp>) says an FM device or sound field system is needed for your child. The school doesn't have to buy a new one. They can get one that is used or borrowed.

Q. I'm concerned that my child's teacher does not use the FM in school. How can I check this?

A. Talk to the teacher. Ask her how often she is using the FM system. You can also ask the educational audiologist for help. She can visit the classroom and see how much the FM system is being used. She can also train the teacher and other staff on how to use and check the FM system. She might set up a schedule for using and checking it. Just by visiting the classroom, the educational audiologist can make the teacher more aware of your child's hearing needs.

If your child's IEP doesn't say she needs to use the FM device in school, ask for an IEP review. Then you can make sure the device is part of the plan.

Q. When I was talking to my child's teacher, I noticed she had the microphone on, so my daughter must have heard us talking. Shouldn't the teacher be aware of that?

A. Yes. This is a common mistake for teachers who are just beginning to use an FM system in class. Remind the teacher to turn it off whenever she's not talking to your child or the class.

Q. My son has lost his FM "boots" at school. Isn't the school responsible?

A. If the FM is on your child's IEP, then the school must replace them. There may be insurance that they can use to make a claim. New hearing aids and FM systems often come with insurance coverage by the manufacturer if they are lost within 1 or 2 years. And some medical insurance provides coverage for such a loss. In some states, Medicaid may also cover FM systems if you qualify for Medicaid.

Using an ALD outside of school

Q. The school has gotten an FM system for my child that has really helped. We would like to use it at home too. Can we?

A. Yes, if it is written into her IEP that she needs it at home and at school. Learning goes on both at home and at school. If it helps her at school, it may also help her at home.

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/faq.jsp>