



Independent Hearing Clinics
of Canada

“GOLD STAR” HEARING CLINIC STANDARDS CHECKLIST

VERSION 1.0

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“Gold Star” Hearing Clinic Standards Checklist

This checklist, provided by Independent Hearing Clinics of Canada (IHCC) is intended to be used by consumers during the hearing aid purchasing process. It may be used as a tool to evaluate hearing clinics, as well as a guide to ensure you receive the best quality hearing care available, resulting in a more satisfactory outcome with your hearing solution. The standards contained herein will form the basis of IHCC’s “Gold Star” designation for clinics. By your use of this checklist, you support IHCC’s efforts to raise public awareness and improve hearing care standards across Canada.

Hearing Clinic Independence Checklist

It is important that your hearing clinic is free from outside influences when testing and treating your hearing loss. Hearing clinics are dispense medical devices and should hold objectivity in high regard. This section will empower you to gauge how truly independent your hearing clinic is, allowing you to decide to proceed accordingly.

- My Hearing Clinic is not owned by a parent company that is a manufacturer or is associated with a manufacturer of hearing aids.

Question: Does my hearing clinic receive manufacturer discounts on hearing aids (or other rewards for purchasing a particular product) from any manufacturer of hearing aids?

- If “yes”, my hearing clinic is willing to discuss the degree of discounts and/or promotional pricing offered them by manufacturers and provide me with satisfactory proof of the clinic’s ability to dispense hearing aids in an unbiased, professional manner.

Question: Is my hearing clinic in financial debt to any corporation associated with the dispensing or manufacturing of hearing aids?

- If “yes”, my hearing clinic is willing to discuss the degree of financial indebtedness to manufacturers and provide me with satisfactory proof of the clinic’s ability to dispense hearing aids in an unbiased, professional manner.

Hearing Test Quality Checklist

Hearing Test results are crucial. They provide the measurements which influence your selected hearing solution and form the basis for verification of both the hearing aids. With hearing aid technology becoming increasingly more complicated, it is imperative that you ensure your hearing tests proceeds in accordance with best practices. This section helps you to cover all the important considerations relating to hearing tests.

- My hearing clinic documents my personal goals for rehabilitation in a structured, measurable manner.
- My hearing clinic only uses hearing test results that have been completed in their own clinic.
- My hearing clinic asked about my history (i.e. hearing loss, medications, injury, infections, pain, ringing or buzzing, noise exposure, etc.) and documented the results in my file.

- My hearing clinic visually inspected my ear canals, documenting and explaining observations (i.e. wax buildup, deformity of ear, active drainage, etc.)
- My hearing clinic measured my eardrum movement with a device (called a tympanometer) and documented and explained results of measurement.
- My hearing clinic evaluated and explained criterion (based on case history, ear canal inspection, and tympanometry, etc.) involved in deciding if I may proceed with a hearing test.
- My hearing clinic performed pure tone air conduction and bone conduction testing.
- My hearing clinic uses only recorded material for speech testing, not live voice.
- My hearing clinic uses 50-word list for word recognition test.
- My hearing clinic uses "Sprint chart" to ensure adequate word recognition presentation levels for trustworthy test results.
- My hearing clinic measures "most comfortable level" and "uncomfortable level" sound levels.
- My hearing clinic performs an "acceptable noise level test" to test my sensitivity to noise and possible greater need for noise reduction features.

Hearing Aid Selection Checklist

The Hearing Aid Selection utilizes information discovered during the hearing test with other important considerations that have to do with your unique needs and lifestyle. Take your time to understand the differences between hearing aids and styles, the pros and cons of each, and how they may benefit you in the short and long term. This section gives you an important list of considerations to ensure the best hearing solution is selected for your needs.

- My hearing clinic explains the different types of hearing loss (i.e. conductive, sensorineural, retro-cochlear) and their impact on my future hearing solution.
- My hearing clinic describes my audiogram test results and what they suggest about a future hearing solution.
- My hearing clinic explains to me how they have come to decide a hearing aid would be a good rehabilitative solution for me.
- My hearing clinic ensures I have realistic expectations of hearing aids, including their limitations in challenging environments.
- My hearing clinic informs me of their "hearing aid trial" program whereby I may try "demo" hearing aids for a limited time at no cost or obligation (where applicable).
- My hearing clinic informs me of ALL hearing aid model/style tradeoffs including, but not limited to, visibility, comfort, plugged feeling, clarity, directionality, noise reduction, feedback, adaptability for

different environments, power level, maintenance requirements, wifi/bluetooth/telephone capability, and price.

- My hearing clinic informs me of tradeoffs between typical immediate priorities (i.e. visibility, comfort, open-fit, venting, etc.) and typical longer term priorities (i.e. hearing speech in noise, noise reduction, sound fullness, etc.).
- My hearing clinic explains "speech in noise" tradeoffs between different styles of hearing aids (ex. behind-the-ear hearing aids have twice the speech in noise capability of in-the-ear, deeply inserted hearing aids do not help with hearing in noise, an improvement of 1db SNR increases comprehension by around 10%).
- My hearing clinic discusses the real-world limitations of directional technology (i.e. distance from speaker, highly reverberating environments) along with the pros/cons of different types of directional technology (i.e. first order directionality, adaptive directionality, beam forming).
- My hearing clinic discusses the importance of "noise reduction" and "sensitivity to noise" as a major predictor of whether you will wear your hearing aids consistently.

Custom Earmold Checklist (if required)

In the event that you choose a custom hearing aid, you will need an earmold impression. Many hearing aid clients become frustrated by their hearing aids falling out, especially when they talk. To avoid such frustration, consider the points below with your specialist.

- My hearing clinic measures my ear canal movement as I open and close my mouth.
- My hearing clinic discusses the difference between closed, relaxed, and open-mouthed earmold impression techniques and why they believe the selected technique is right for you.

Hearing Aid Fitting Checklist

At this stage, you will now experience your hearing aid (and accompanying devices) for the first time. You need to trust its feels and operates exactly as expected. By working through these points with your specialist, you ensure you are not fitted with a hearing aid that will disappoint.

- My hearing clinic shows me results of electroacoustic testing, performed by the clinic upon receipt of the hearing aid to ensure my hearing aid meets published technical specifications.
- My hearing clinic ensures my hearing aid or custom earmold fits securely in my ear.
- My hearing clinic performs measurements with my hearing aid in my ear to ensure it meets my hearing thresholds (i.e. aided sound-field testing, real ear measurements, measuring in-situ thresholds)
- My hearing clinic makes adjustments to eliminate feedback if my hearing aid is making a high-pitched noise when inserted securely in my ear and explains to me why feedback is occurring.

My hearing clinic trains me on the use of my hearing aids, hearing aid accessories, and any other assistive devices, as well how I can keep my devices clean through basic maintenance (i.e. wax guards, domes, and batteries).

Ongoing Service Checklist

Ongoing services ensure both your ears and your hearing aids remain in good condition after your purchase has been made. Addressing these points with your specialist will give you an indication of their willingness to commit to your long term satisfaction with your hearing solution.

My hearing clinic provides me with results of electroacoustic tests after every repair to ensure my hearing aid meets published technical specifications.

My hearing clinic continues to schedule regular adjustments and consultation appointments until I have met my personal goals for rehabilitation.

My hearing clinic contacts me (unless requested otherwise) for regular cleanings, prior to my trial period for new or demo hearing aids expires, and prior to the expiry of my hearing aid warranty, for the purpose of cleaning or repairing my hearing aids, and to solicit my personal feedback.

Hearing Clinic Transparency Checklist

Good communication builds trust and trust is the cornerstone of a long term service relationship. If you are dealing with a quality hearing clinic, they will be transparent throughout every stage of your relationship. This value is important enough to warrant its own section.

My hearing clinic offers at least three hearing aid quotes from three different manufacturers.

My hearing clinic provides "unbundled pricing", meaning they separate the manufacturer cost of a hearing aid from all clinical services.

My hearing clinic divulges any existing manufacturer discounts for any quoted hearing aids.

My hearing clinic divulges cost of warranty repair, non-warranty repair, and loss-and-damage fees, along with duration of warranty and loss-and-damage coverage.

My hearing clinic describes what happens when a hearing aid needs to be repaired after warranty expiry.

My hearing clinic describes service plan details, including cost of plan and included coverage.

My hearing clinic describes the duration of trial period and any fees associated with returning a hearing aid during this period.

My hearing clinic describes various any regional subsidies available and thoroughly describe the process of acquiring them.

Trust and Ethical Operations Checklist

Even through selling hearing aids is a high priority for any hearing clinics, they should never forget that customer service and satisfaction should always take precedence. The way in which they conduct their business speaks volumes about their level of commitment to trust, quality, and objectivity.

- My hearing clinic did not prematurely ask me to divulge my budget for hearing aids (before or during hearing test). This speaks to the proper prioritization of the clinic.
- My hearing clinic described cases where spending more money would not result in a better value hearing solution. This speaks to their focus on value at the expense of overselling.
- My hearing clinic did not use intimidation or other pressure tactics to promote their products or services. This shows respect for my right to make a buying decision at a time that is right for me.
- My hearing clinic commits to not sell or divulge my personal information to any other party, without my expressed permission and is able to explain to my satisfaction how they will keep my information secure.
- My hearing aid clinic will contact me only through existing employees of my local clinic (i.e. no call centres or strangers) and will do call me during clinic hours of operation.
- My hearing aid clinic owner is highly active in my local community.

Thank You

We, at Independent Hearing Clinics of Canada (IHCC), trust you have found this document helpful. By downloading and using this checklist you not only have improved hearing solution outcomes for yourself or a loved one, you've proven to yourself and others that better hearing is possible through the promotion of trust, quality, objectivity, and fair pricing.

We'd love to hear your feedback, questions, or suggestions relating to this document. Contact us anytime at the email address provided below. Thank you for your support.

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