

Pure Tone Hearing Screening in Schools: Revised Commonly Asked Questions Notes

Q: What if my school uses different screening procedures than the ones shown in this video?

A: The video is based on ASHA 1997 guidelines. However, the basic procedures for hearing screening for most school systems are similar. You may have to adjust some procedures. For example, if your school tests 500 Hz, you need an extremely quiet room to screen or many children with normal hearing will fail the screening. If your school system uses equipment/procedures for tests other than pure-tone tests, ask your supervisor for help.

Q: How do I test very young kids or kids who are difficult to test?

A: Ask your supervisor, in advance, how the school system/health department would like you to proceed when you cannot screen a student. The student may need to be referred to an audiologist or a follow-up screening may be scheduled. See the video for suggestions for ways to test young children, such as the use of toys during the screening process. If a child has limited mobility, find a response he/she can do consistently.

Q: What should I do if I'm not sure if a student heard the tone or he/she didn't understand the instructions?

A: Try to reinstruct the child first. For young children, see the video for possible ways to test. Consider putting the earphones on the desk, presenting a loud sound, and asking the child if he/she heard it. If the child responds positively, then demonstrate the hand raising technique and ask the child to raise his/her hand with you. If you cannot condition the child to respond then he/she should be referred for further testing.

Q: What do I do if a student only fails to respond at one frequency?

A: If child fails to respond at one frequency that child needs to be referred for further testing.

Q: What is the difference between frequency and intensity?

A: Frequency is perceived as pitch where intensity is perceived as loudness.

Q: What do the screening results mean?

A: If child passes screening it is most likely that the child does not have a hearing loss. If child fails screening, he/she may have a hearing loss. However, hearing screening is not always accurate for every student. Children with normal hearing can fail a screening if

there is too much background noise, the equipment isn't working, the screener does not use the correct procedure, the child is not paying attention to the test, or the child does not understand the test. Many children who fail the screening have a temporary or permanent hearing loss that needs to be confirmed or ruled out with further audiologic testing.

Q: What should I do if the equipment does not work?

A: Check to make sure the audiometer is plugged into an outlet. If the unit is plugged in but does not turn on, check another outlet to see if the outlet is the problem. Check the power cords to be sure they are not frayed. If all cords are fine, check to see if the tone button is pressed in firmly. Check also to make sure that the earphone cords are snugly inserted into the unit. If the unit appears to be fine and there is power coming from the wall outlet, the audiometer needs to be repaired.

Q: How are the parents notified if their child is referred or fails the screening?

A: Notification for parents varies based on school system. Check with the school system to see if you need to contact the parents or if that is done by someone else.

Q: What do I do if I'm not sure if the child heard the tone or not?

A: Reinstruct child and try tone again. Make sure the child is aware he/she needs to make a clear hand raise or other signal when the tone is heard.

Q: What about earwax? Could it cause a problem? What do I do if I see a lot of wax?

A: Earwax in the canal is usually normal. In healthy ears, wax travels down ear canal and out of the ear where you can see it. In some cases, earwax becomes impacted and can clog the canal. If wax blocks entire ear canal but does not cause child to fail, check your school district to see if these children are referred for a medical evaluation. If in doubt, refer the child to the school nurse.

Q: If a child does not pass the screening, does it mean that he/she has a hearing loss?

A: If child does not pass a hearing screening it means he/she is at risk for hearing loss but does not always mean that child has a hearing loss. Without an audiologic evaluation it is impossible to say.

Q: How do I know if the screening room is too loud?

A: Best practice is to test room with a sound level meter according to ANSI S3.1 standards. However, it is very expensive to do so. Instead, follow the steps shown in the video to do a listening check. Remember to test the room in worst possible condition (if

the air conditioner will be going on and off, be sure to do a listening check with the system on). If you can, turn the system off for the entire screening. Be sure to check periodically to be sure that background levels remain constant because of changing of classes, lunch time, traffic outside a window, and heating/AC systems can change the background noise level.

Q: If a student does not pass, what do I do next?

A: On your end, testing is complete. However your responsibility is not over. It is important to mark “fail/refer” on the student’s paperwork and to follow the steps in your school system/health department so the child receives appropriate follow-up testing.

Q: What do I do if the child doesn’t speak English?

A: Have the child watch other children during hearing screenings. You may also be able to teach screening procedures using gestures.

Q: Can I hurt the child if I mess up and give a tone that is too loud?

A: A loud sound next to a child’s ear will be uncomfortable to the child and may result in refusal to take the test. Be careful to avoid doing this; however, if you accidentally present one loud sound to a child for a few seconds, the sound will probably not cause any permanent damage to the child’s hearing.

Q: If room is too loud can I make the tone louder?

A: **NO**. Under no circumstances should you increase the tone to make up for a noisy screening location. If you cannot find a quiet screening room, reschedule the screening and talk to the school officials about the need for a quiet screening location.

Q: What do I do about students with hearing aids?

A: Students with hearing aids have already been identified as having a hearing loss and have received audiological management. Do not place earphones over hearing aids, cochlear implants or other ear-level devices. If report forms do not include a place to indicate that hearing aids are worn, find a place to write the information onto the form and ask your supervisor for the correct procedure.

Q: Do I need parental permission to test a student?

A: Usually, students in public schools are required to undergo periodic health screenings, including hearing screenings. If parents refuse permission for their child to participate in the screening, and this refusal is supported by the school system/health

department, this information should be on file with the school system. Check with your supervisor or the school nurse to see if any students should not be screened.

Q: Am I ready to go after watching this video?

A: It is strongly recommended that all screeners participate in hands-on learning in conjunction with this video. Ask your supervisor or the school's educational audiologist if a hands-on learning session can be arranged for hearing screeners. If hands-on learning is not available, watch video several times and practice with adults prior to testing children. Find out who contact person is in the school system or health department so that you may ask questions as needed.

Q: What if students, parents, teachers or administrators have questions about hearing screenings?

A: For general questions, it is best to have informational hand-outs available. If these are not available from your school system, look into online resources. A list of resources is available on the website with this video at www.towson.edu/ASLD/Emanuel