

## The Binaural Advantage

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Binaural hearing, or hearing with both ears, provides several advantages over hearing through one ear only. First and foremost, our bodies were designed with two ears, allowing us to hear in stereo. Just as our two eyes focus together, making objects clearer to see, our two ears ‘focus’ on sounds in order to give us the best clarity of hearing. **Research shows that balanced hearing can improve speech understanding, helping words to sound clearer; and when both ears are working together, less overall volume is needed.**

Another important advantage of binaural hearing is the localization of sounds, which is the ability to discern from what direction a sound is coming. When a person’s hearing is unbalanced, it can be difficult to know where sounds are originating, causing frustration and even safety concerns.

When considering amplification (hearing instruments), one should make it a priority to attain balanced hearing. For example, if someone has hearing loss in both ears, two hearing aids are highly recommended, with a few exceptions. Or if there is hearing loss in only one ear, a single hearing aid should provide the proper balance of sound. For those who use hearing instruments, it is a good idea to periodically have a verification test (aided hearing test) to make sure the devices are reaching the audiometric targets and delivering the most balanced hearing possible.