

Steps on Journey to Hearing Aids

Gabe Goldberg
gabe@gabegold.com
January 2025

Introduction

- IT career; then tech writing/editing/consulting
- Mostly retired
- No noisy workplaces; few noisy concerts
 - ...but still cranky about noise
- Annual hearing tests: saw common pattern
- Eventual recommendation for hearing aids
- Direct-to-consumer (OTC) devices not yet
- I'll cover Oticon/Apple — others are similar

Basics

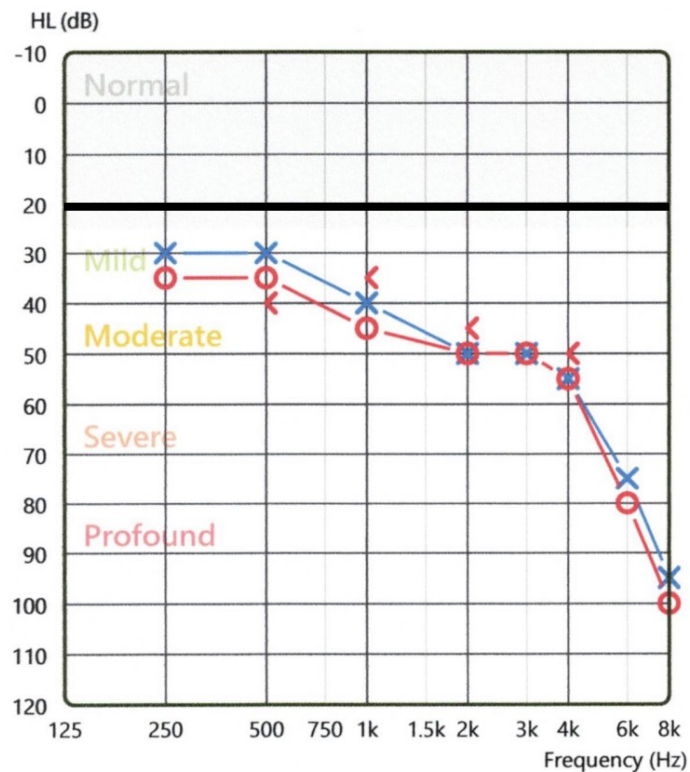
- Complex decisions (consider cereal aisle)
 - Cost/insurance
 - Device style, technology
 - Provider
 - Services
- Medical exam
- Audiogram (frequency response graph)
- iPhone Health app hearing test/data

Research

- Rapidly evolving market/choices
- Moving target, ensure current information
 - Consumer Checkbook, Consumer Reports
 - Friends
 - Advertising (really -- saved me \$2500)
 - Credible websites
 - <https://www.youtube.com/c/DoctorCliffAuD>
 - <https://www.hearingloss.org/>
 - NV Resource Center for Deaf

The audiogram

Ear Side	SRT	WR	MCL	UCL
Right	45 dB HL			
Right		100% @ 85 (55) dB HL		
Left	40 dB HL			
Left		100% @ 80 (50) dB HL		



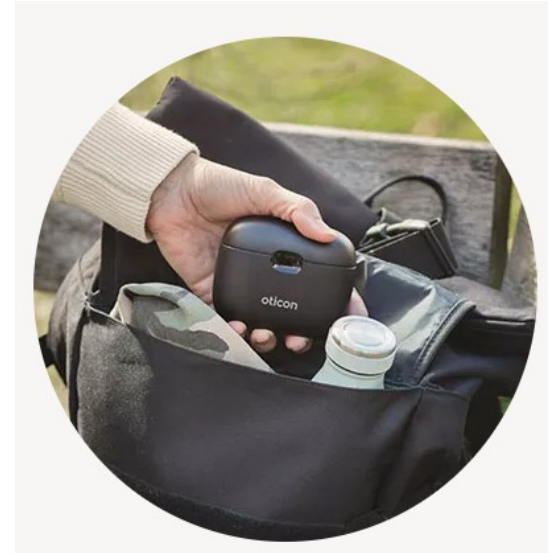
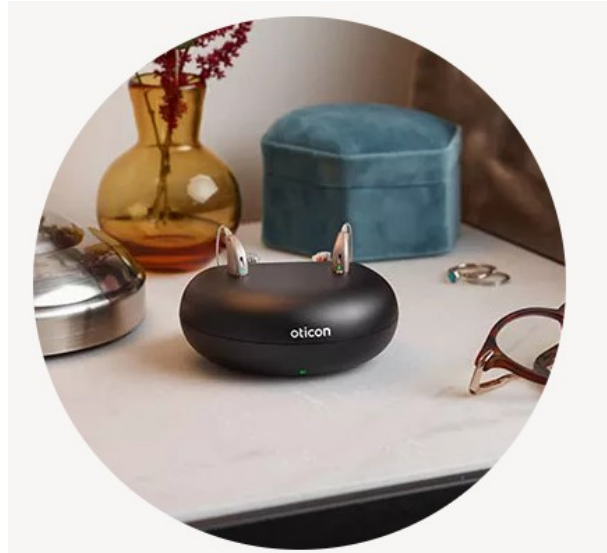
Comparison Shopping

- Evaluate multiple providers (including Costco)
- Location (for ongoing services)
- Credentials
 - Ear/Nose/Throat MD
 - Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.)
 - Licensed hearing aid provider
- Don't buy first devices from first place
- Like buying used car, resist pressure

Shopping (Continued)

- Hearing needs are unique, like fingerprint
- Evaluate multiple brands/devices
 - Behind ear, open fit, in-ear, in-the-canal, completely-in-the-canal, Apple AirPods, cochlear implant
 - Replaceable/rechargeable batteries
- Take notes to track experiences
- Try onsite or take loaner
- Understand operation

Oticon Hearing Aid & Chargers



Shopping #1-- Nearby Office

- Convenient, pleasant setting
- Great ear/nose/throat MD
- Great Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.)
- Full/lifetime service
- Expensive
 - Insurance paid \$2500, pair cost \$4000-\$7000
 - Earlens introduced, \$12000, no insurance

Shopping #2 –TruHearing

- Magazine ad for TruHearing
- <https://www.truhearing.com>
- Puzzling referral service for big savings
- Doesn't work with all insurance
- Nearby office with disadvantages
 - Dumpy/minimal office, terrible follow-up
 - Offered only one brand
 - Licensed HA provider, not Au.D.

Shopping #3 –TruHearing Again

- Not quite as convenient
- Professionalism of #1 with savings of #2
- Chose then-top-line Oticon 1 hearing aids
- Paid ~\$2000 for devices \$7000 list price
 - \$2500 insurance, \$2500 TruHearing discount
- Compromise: one year vs. lifetime service
- Cost saving easily justifies minimal fees
 - \$65/visit

Alexandria Hearing Centers

- <https://alexandriahearing.com>
- Walker Lane location
- Extensive pre-purchase discussions
 - Options, services, costs
- Great delivery and usage instructions
- VERY responsive to follow-up questions
- Helpful with pairing HAs with iPhone/iPad

Technology Digression

- Awesome progression – my background
 - Room-size IBM mainframe computers
 - iPad!
 - iPhone!!
 - Apple Watch!!!
 - Hearing aids!!!!

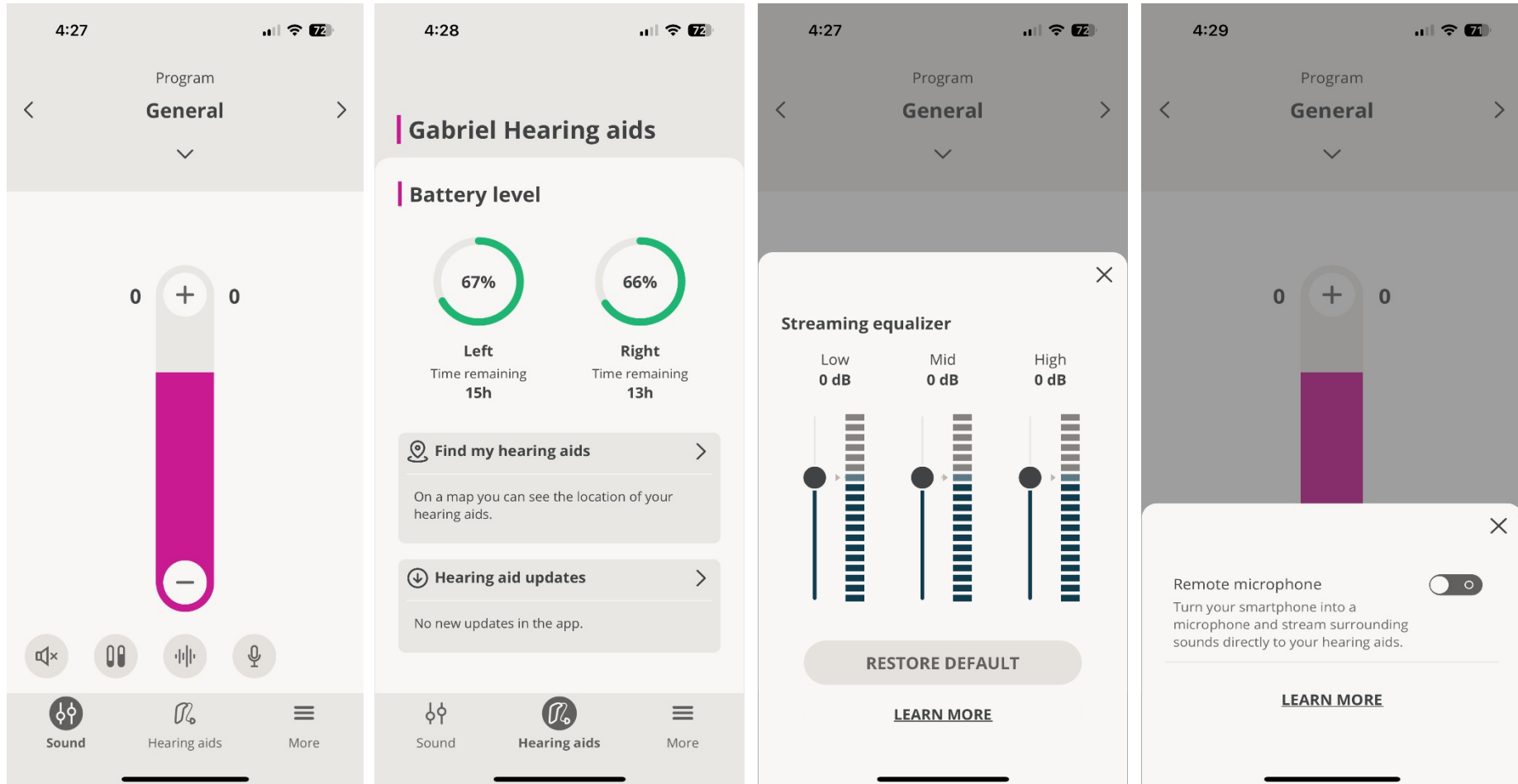
Oticon Technology

- Multiple excellent HA manuals(!)
- Bought additional charger: battery, lid
- Minor irritation HA pairing iPad/iPhone
- Pairing with TV needs expensive device
- Listen Zoom, YouTube, phone calls
- Update iPhone/iOS/app/firmware -- helps
- Occasionally must re-pair to iPhone/iPad
- iPhone Settings / Accessibility / Hearing

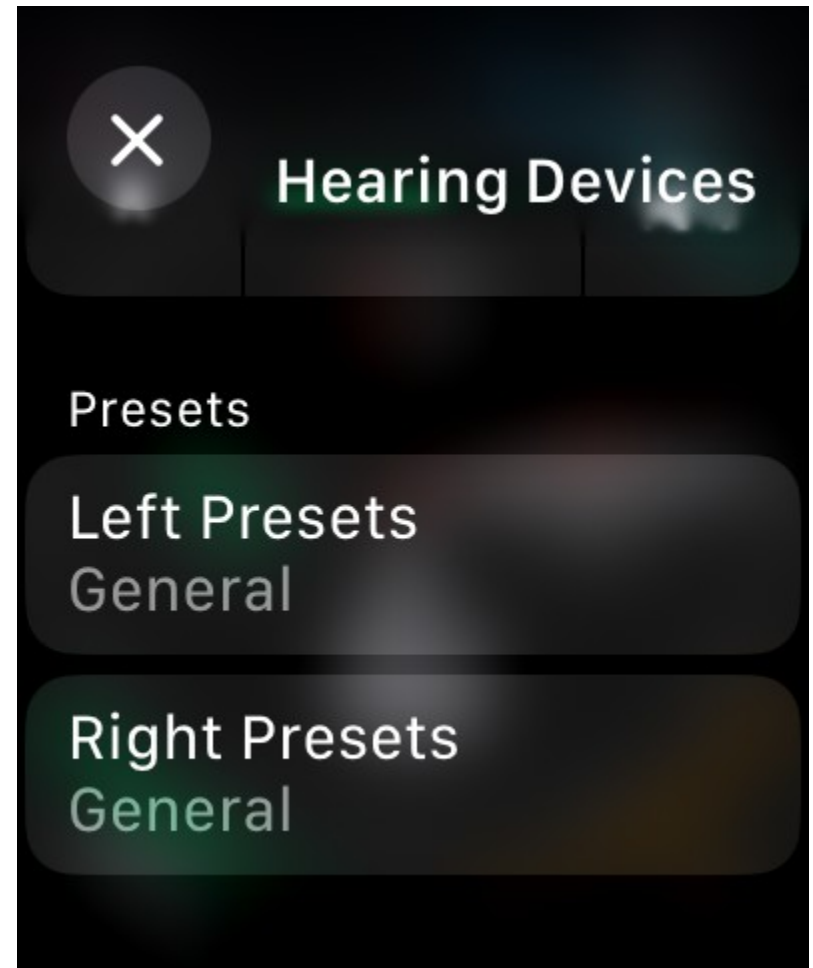
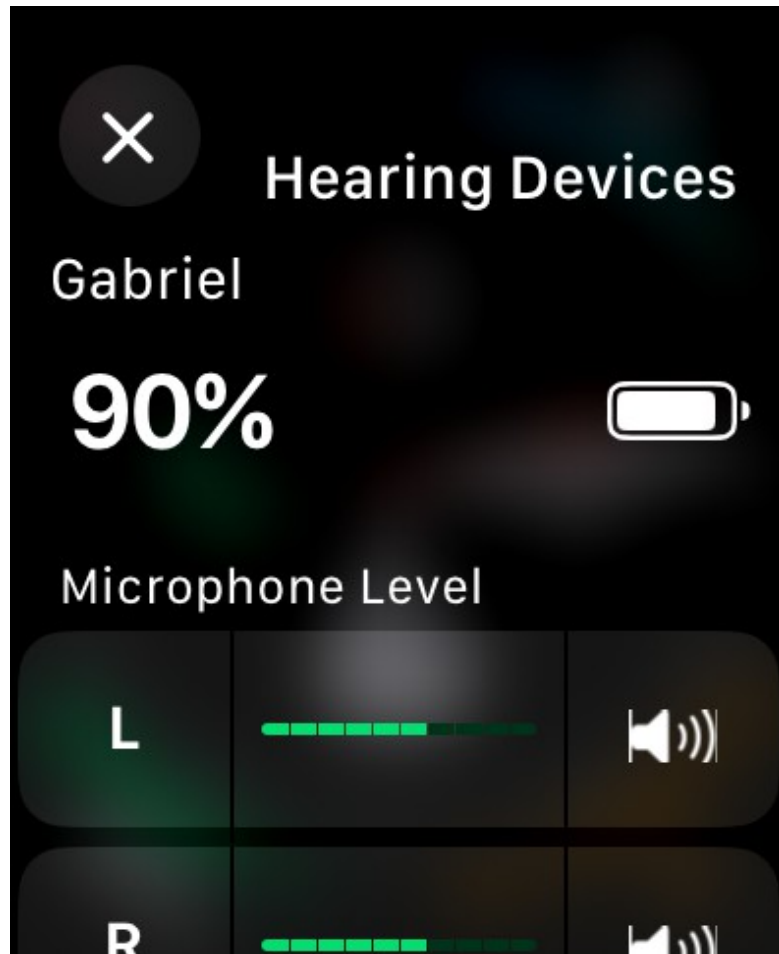
Oticon Technology (Cont.)

- HAs work with Oticon iPhone/iPad app
- On/off, volume, mic, equalizer, programs:
 - Off/volume very handy in noisy settings
 - Normal
 - Telecoil (connects to venue sound system)
 - Speech-in-noise
- “Find my hearing aids”; equalizer
- New app version lost Watch “complication”
- Minor annoyance: Telecoil setting buzzes

Oticon Companion App



Oticon Watch App



Experiences

- Recommendation: wear all day, train brain
- Beware exercise sweat
- Various domes affect hearing and fit
- Push harder for better fit/hearing
- Retention tails help
- Supplies: domes/filters clog
 - Free during support period; buy on Amazon
 - Clean domes with microfiber or alcohol pad

Uh Oh

- Outside chores, realized HA missing
 - Couldn't find, though Find My said close
 - Found next day in grass, after mowing/rain
 - Still OK
- Recently, in house
 - Missing, never found, Find My said it's close
 - \$350 one-time replacement fee

And so...

- Check hearing annually, save audiograms
- Track hearing changes
- Act when history and experience suggest
- Research brand/device/provider/services
- Understand insurance coverage, discounts
- Comparison shop; note OTC plus/minus
- Explore technologies
- <https://tinyurl.com/GGpickles>
- <https://tinyurl.com/GGdoonesbury>