

WHO's app for hearing screening: WHOears

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

About WHOears

1. What is the WHOears app?

WHOears is a tablet-based software application that is freely available on Android and iOS platforms. It can be used for hearing screening by anyone who is trained in its use.

2. When should I use WHOears to screen someone's hearing?

Use WHOears during routine community visits, school screenings, or when an individual reports hearing difficulties, or ear problems. Adults exposed to loud noise and older adults should also be screened periodically.

3. How should I prepare before providing the test?

Ensure a quiet environment. Check that the tablet, DAC, and headphones are properly connected and functioning. Explain the process clearly and confirm the person understands how to respond when they hear a sound.

3. What should I do if someone fails the screening?

If a participant receives a "refer" result, repeat the test after checking the equipment and environment. If they still receive a "refer" result, advise them to visit the nearest ear and hearing care facility or specialist for a full diagnostic assessment.

4. Can the app be used for adults as well as children?

Yes. WHOears can be used for individuals aged five years and above. It helps identify hearing difficulties early.

5. What advice should I give to parents/caregivers or individuals if they or their children fail the test?

Explain that the result does not confirm hearing loss but indicates the need for further testing. Encourage them to seek medical evaluation. If their child has failed the test, advise them to protect the child's ears from loud sounds and adopt good ear care practices to avoid ear infections. [Read the Tips for healthy ears flyer.](#)

6. How often should hearing screening be done?

Children should be screened at school entry and periodically during school years. Adults, especially those aged 50 years and older or with risk factors for hearing loss, should be screened periodically or whenever there are symptoms such as difficulty following conversations or frequent ear problems. For more detailed information, read WHO's [Hearing screening: considerations for implementation.](#)

7. What if the environment is noisy during the test?

Noise can affect accuracy. Move to a quieter space, reduce distractions, and ensure

headphones fit properly. Avoid testing near busy roads, playgrounds, or during community events.

8. How should I record and report the results?

Reports cannot be saved within the app. Share and save them externally according to your programme's reporting protocol. Always ensure data confidentiality and obtain consent before recording or sharing information.

9. Who should I contact for help or feedback related to the app?

For technical support or to report issues related to the app, contact:

 whf@who.int

Preparing for screening

10. How should I explain the test to adults?

Say something like:

“You’ll hear a series of soft beeps through the headphones. Please raise your hand whenever you hear one, even if it’s faint.”

Ensure they understand before starting.

11. How should I explain the test to children?

Use simple, friendly language:

“You will hear beeps through these headphones. Each time you hear one, raise your hand like this.”

Ensure they understand before starting.

During the test

12. What if the person does not respond to the tones even during a practise session?

- Check headphone placement and DAC (Digital-to-analog converter) connection.
 - Ensure they have understood the instructions.
 - Retest after a brief pause.
- If still no response, the person needs to be referred to a specialist.

13. Can WHOears be used for people of all ages?

The app is validated for individuals aged 5 years and above. Younger children require specialized paediatric methods.

14. Can I screen older adults ?

Yes. WHOears is suitable for older adults. Speak clearly and confirm they understand the task before beginning.

Interpreting results

15. What does “pass” mean?

The individual responded correctly to at least two out of three tones presented for all frequencies tested in both ears. No need to send the person for a complete audiometry test.

16. What does “refer” mean?

“Refer” means that one or more tones were not detected in one or both ears. It does not confirm hearing loss but signals possible difficulty that needs further evaluation. The person needs to be sent for a complete hearing test.

17. What if only one ear shows “refer”?

This may indicate a unilateral hearing issue/ hearing issue in one ear only. Record it and refer the person for further testing.

18. Should I repeat the test if the results are unclear?

Yes. You may repeat the test after checking that headphones are positioned correctly and the person is focused. If the result is still unclear refer the person to a specialist.

Next steps after screening**19. What should I do if someone fails the test (shows “refer”)?**

- Confirm the environment was quiet and retest once.
- If still “refer,” explain that they should visit a health facility for a detailed check-up.
- Provide a referral slip or contact information for the nearest ear and hearing care service.

Troubleshooting and technical support**20. What should I do if the app freezes or doesn’t play tones?**

Close and reopen the app. Check DAC and headphone connections. If the problem continues, restart the device or reinstall the app.

21. What if background noise is unavoidable?

Try testing during quieter hours (early morning or indoors).

22. Can I use WHOears for large community or school screenings?

Yes. WHOears is suitable for group or mass screenings when used by trained personnel following standardized procedures. Always ensure data privacy and proper record-keeping.