




Cochlear Family Guide



**Practical advice for
starting work**



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Introduction

Starting work and exploring your future career path can be incredibly exciting. It's a time where you will get the opportunity to use your skills, build your capabilities and meet new people.

However, like with most new experiences, there can be a few nerves that arise from not knowing what to expect. The Cochlear Family want to support you as you embark upon this important milestone.

Whether you are starting work straight out of high school, while you are studying, or after years of education or training, we want you to feel prepared. No matter where your career takes you and what profession you decide upon, we share tips to help you prepare for your interview and get ready for your first day at work.

We also share the experiences of others with hearing implants from across the world and advice on how to optimise communication, productivity, and hearing in your new work environment.

Practical advice for starting work

Starting work is a big step, and it can take time to become familiar with the various hiring stages. Depending on the role that you are applying for, the hiring stages may be: Applying for a job, being selected for a screening interview, and then followed by two to three rounds of further interviews or skills-based assessments.

There is a wealth of information online about how to ‘nail your interview’ or ‘succeed in the first 90 days of starting a role’. However, there isn’t much information on how to approach the job application process when you have hearing loss.

In addition to looking for roles that align with your interests and skills, you may also have to consider how your hearing loss may be accommodated in the hiring process and within the workplace. You might also have questions around how and when to disclose your hearing loss.

It may seem daunting at first, but it’s important to remember that it will all be worthwhile when you find the role that suits your interests and future aspirations. We want to support you in these early stages and answer some of the important questions you may have. Below are tips on applying for jobs and practical advice to help you prepare for interviews.



Practical tips for job applications

Ask if the role is right for you

- 1 When first applying for jobs, it can be tempting to apply for a countless number of roles to increase your chances of getting a response from recruiters. However, we recommend doing your research and consider if the roles you are applying for will suit your skill set and future goals. Additionally, look into the company culture, what your work environment may be like and if the company has any guidelines on providing assistance for employees with hearing loss.

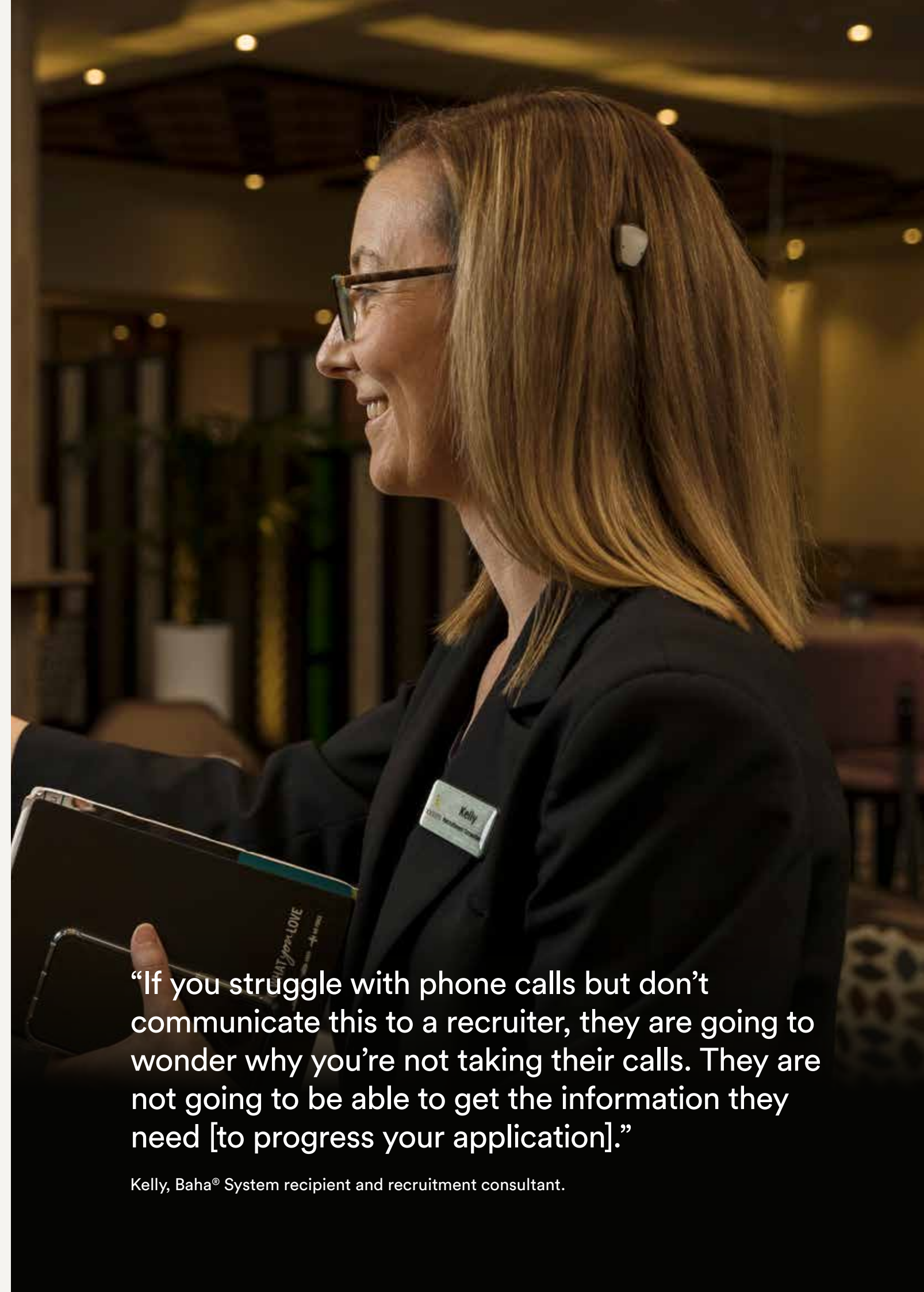
Consider the right time to disclose your hearing loss

- 2 When and if you decide to disclose your hearing loss is a personal choice. However, recruitment consultant, Nina, suggests disclosing your hearing loss in your first interview, rather than in the initial written application. She recommends briefly disclosing during the interview that you have a hearing implant and encouraging your interviewer to ask any questions about cochlear implants, so they don't make incorrect assumptions.

Let interviewers know your preferred method of contact

- 3 During the application process, we recommend noting your preferred method of contact. This will make it easier for recruiters to make initial contact with you, arrange a time to discuss your application and communicate details about the interview process.

It's important to acknowledge what your capabilities are. If you have difficulty hearing on the phone, ask to have a video call and enquire about the availability of captioning.



“If you struggle with phone calls but don't communicate this to a recruiter, they are going to wonder why you're not taking their calls. They are not going to be able to get the information they need [to progress your application].”

Kelly, Baha® System recipient and recruitment consultant.

Advice to help you prepare for interviews

Practise and come prepared

1 To help you prepare for the interview, we recommend looking up questions you may be asked that relate to your role. A great way to feel confident about your interview is to role play with a family member or friend, and practise answering these questions. Some other tips:

- Request an agenda for the interview, so you know what to expect. We recommend asking how long the interview will run for, who you will be meeting and how many people will be interviewing you.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask your interviewer that are relevant to the role and company.

“There is no such thing as too much research or preparation for an interview. Being informed about the company and having good questions prepared ahead of an interview will help you succeed.”

Nina, recruitment consultant.

Be ready to discuss your hearing needs

2 Kelly, a recruitment consultant who has a Cochlear™ Baha® System believes it’s important to talk about your hearing loss early. “The first thing they will think is ‘Can you do the job?’” So, she suggests explaining your hearing loss to the interviewer and providing them with examples of how you will be able to succeed in the role.

Kelly also suggests coming prepared to discuss any adjustments you might need to help you with your responsibilities and how these adjustments might be implemented.

Nina advises asking the interviewer if they have any concerns about your application or your ability to perform in the role. “I’ve never met [any interviewer] who isn’t impressed when asked questions and it’s a really good way to finish the interview.”

Don’t be afraid to self-advocate

3 The interview is your chance to get to know your interviewer and for them to get to know you. This is your time to shine, so it’s important that you hear and answer questions correctly. Don’t be afraid to advise your interviewer that you didn’t hear their question and politely give them advice on how to help you hear. For example, you could ask them to face you when speaking, repeat or rephrase their question.

Be confident

4 We recommend approaching your interview with confidence and a positive attitude. “Stay focused on the job, not your disability,” says Julia, who has a cochlear implant. “That took me a really long time to learn.”

Nina says “being confident in your ability to do the role and being a personable, friendly well-prepared candidate is actually the best thing you can be.”



“If you attend the interview and let them know that there is nothing extra you need or you [come prepared with], three things that would make the job easier for you, you’ll have a much better chance of succeeding.”

Kelly, Baha® System recipient and recruitment consultant.

“You need to package yourself as strong and sell your resilience.”

Julia, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient, economist and communications specialist.



Preparing for phone or online interviews

Practise and test your technology

- 1 We recommend role playing the interview with a family or friend over the phone or using a similar video platform to what the interview will be conducted on.

Practising ahead of time can help you become more familiar with the technology, reduce stress on the day of your interview and help you anticipate how the interview may run on the day.

Optimise your technology

- 2 Testing your technology includes ensuring that your sound processor program settings are optimised to hear over the phone and during video calls. If your sound processor allows for direct streaming to a compatible** mobile device or pairing with wireless devices, make a few test calls. This will help minimise any technical issues on the day of the interview and make it easier for you to hear conversation over the phone and on video calls.

Consider your environment

- 3 Check the acoustics and lighting in the room where you are doing your interview. We recommend finding a space with minimal background noise that has good lighting. This will help you recognise visual cues on video calls and good room acoustics can reduce listening effort.

Don't be afraid to self-advocate

- 4 For phone interviews, we recommend requesting a video call instead of a phone call. Not only will video calls give you more visual and lip-reading cues, they can help you build familiarity and rapport with your interviewer.

Don't be afraid to advise your interviewer that you didn't follow what they were saying and politely give them advice on how to help you hear. For example, you could ask them to face the camera while they are speaking or, move to an area with less background noise.

You could also ask for captioning options, even if you don't typically need them. Captions can help if the audio signal is not completely clear.



Preparing for your first day

There are things you can do in the lead up to your first day of work that can help give you a head start. Whether your workplace is in an office environment, a shop, on a building site or in the great outdoors, there are tips below to help ease your transition into a new environment.

We share advice on the strategies you can adopt to help set yourself up for success and the various ways you can self-advocate for your needs and educate your new colleagues about hearing loss.

Setting yourself up for success

Be transparent with colleagues

1 The best communication happens between people when they understand each other’s communication needs. However, you may feel you want to get to know your colleagues before you tell them about your hearing loss and hearing needs. Many people feel that disclosing a communication challenge may work against them. For others, transparency helps to build relationships, even in the workplace.

“My advice is to be transparent. Talking about my hearing loss is not the most important fact about me, but it’s something that’s part of me. I know that if I ever need help understanding someone or something, my co-workers will be there.”

Ana, Cochlear™ Baha® System recipient and hospital receptionist.

Ensure your settings are optimised

2 A great way to feel prepared for your first day is to speak to your clinician about sound processor settings that may help you hear more clearly in challenging listening situations.

Take time to prepare

3 It helps to be prepared for your first day at work or for new situations that you find yourself in. For example, you could research workplace jargon that will be commonly used throughout the day.

For example, Cochlear Nucleus recipient, Fernando travels internationally for his job. “To learn the words that are widely spoken in a country, I watch YouTube and make some notes so I can understand some of the local phrases.”

Remember to take breaks

4 Starting a new job can feel quite tiring and you may find yourself exposed to unfamiliar sounds. Having hearing loss may require additional listening effort, leading to listening fatigue. So, remember to take some time for yourself to adjust and take a break.

Check funding options

5 Depending on and your circumstances, you may be able to access funding for additional support and assistive technology for the workplace. We recommend looking into government, disability, and philanthropic funding.



“To learn the words that are widely spoken in a country, I watch YouTube and make some notes so I can understand some of the local phrases.”

Fernando, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient, economist and Head of Treasury.

“Often times you will be in communication with different co-workers or in meeting environments or even phone calls and you’ve got to let people know what you can and cannot do. Developing self-advocacy skills from a young age has really improved my life in many ways. As an adult I’m able to do a variety of things on my own terms and in an independent manner.”

Alana, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient and travel show host.



How to self-advocate in the workplace

Educate others about your hearing needs

- 1 Don't be afraid to educate your colleagues or customers about your hearing loss and your hearing needs. Remember to be specific about what will help you to hear. For example, if people are talking simultaneously, let them know that it helps if they speak one by one. You will find that people are happy to accommodate your needs, provided they are aware and know how.

“Be open and tell people about it. If people don’t understand that you have hearing loss, they can’t help you. They are generally more than interested and happy to accommodate you.”

Kelly, Cochlear™ Baha® recipient and recruitment consultant.

Don't be afraid to tell others when your struggling

- 2 It's completely normal to feel overwhelmed with new information when you first start a new job. Speak to your manager about what accommodations can be made to support you in the workplace. They will be one of your biggest supporters in the workplace and want you to succeed.

“If you are always eager to learn things, it makes it much easier. And never give up, never be afraid. We always grow in adverse environments.”

Fernando, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient, economist and Head of Treasury.

Brush up on communication strategies

- 3 Learning how to handle misunderstandings and improve clarity can help strengthen communication in the workplace. It will also help you better educate your colleagues about the specific things they can do to help you. For more information, refer to the *Starting Tertiary Education and Work Communication Guide* in this series.



Practical tips for optimising hearing in an office setting

If your new role requires office or desk-based work, there are a number of things you can do to optimise your hearing and maximise productivity. Let's look at some helpful strategies you can adopt when you are in the office, in face-to-face meetings or when you are working from home and taking online calls and meetings.

In the office and in face-to-face meetings

Request a meeting agenda beforehand

- 1 Ask for an agenda from the meeting organiser. While this is generally good business practice, it helps you to prepare background information on the topics to be discussed and provides some boundaries on what might be said during the meeting.

Nominate a person to take notes

- 2 We recommend asking another attendee to take notes about what is discussed during the meeting and list any follow-up actions. This is a great way to keep all meeting attendees on the same page, but it will also help fill in any gaps that you may have missed. If any presentation materials are shared during the meeting, it is a great idea to check if the presenter is happy to share their materials.

Consider the location for your meetings

- 3 When having face-to-face meetings, choose a location with minimal background noise. If you have dedicated meeting rooms in your office, book these ahead of time or put the request to the meeting organiser. Alternatively, find a quiet place in the office to have your meeting and have your back facing a wall, rather than the noise source. A catch up over coffee in the communal kitchen or in an open plan office may make it harder for you to follow conversation.

Use wireless or assistive listening technology

- 4 In larger group meetings, it can be hard to follow what each person is saying.

If you have a wireless assistive listening device place it in the middle of the group discussion. This may help improve speech clarity and understanding.

If your sound processor has direct streaming capabilities, depending on the type of smartphone you have, you can pair it to stream sound directly to your sound processor.

Strategies for online meetings or remote work

Optimise your environment

- 1 Check the acoustics in your home office or workspace and consider introducing some soft furnishings into the space. Hard surfaces can create reverberation and distort sound quality.

Another thing to check is that your workspace has good lighting and check the settings on the device you are using to join online meetings. Good lighting can help you more easily access the visual cues to supplement your hearing.

Use direct streaming

- 2 Depending on your sound processor and how you access video calls, direct streaming without an intermediary device can be achieved using compatible Apple® and Android™ devices**. Refer to your user manual for more information.

Request video calls and meetings

- 3 Video calls are particularly helpful during group meetings. Ask fellow participants to turn on their cameras. Not only does it promote engagement, it can make communication much easier. It will allow you to draw upon the visual cues, such as the speaker's lip or facial movements, gestures and body language. It will also make it much easier to follow the conversation and identify who is speaking at any given time.

- Don't be afraid to encourage others to face the camera when speaking, speak one at a time, speak up or speak more slowly. Another thing that will help, is to ask participants to go on mute when they aren't speaking. This will help cut down background noise.



Ask others to use a microphone

- 4 This can help improve speech clarity on phone and video calls. Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient, Bec advises, “Hearing loss isn’t just about volume, it’s also about clarity. Ask [conversational partners] to use a personal microphone close to their face. This can really improve the sound quality. They simply need a pair of earphones with a microphone that they would normally use with their mobile phone. Any kind of lapel microphone worn on the collar can also work.”

Use the other functions

- 5 We recommend making use of complementary technologies such as the chat function and instant messaging in video calls to supplement verbal communications. Usually, the platforms for video calls will also have other functions such as a hand raise function. This can stop people from talking over each other. You may also find it helpful to adjust the settings so that other participants’ video automatically spotlights the person speaking. This can help you identify who is speaking at any given point and see any non-verbal or facial cues more easily.

Nominate a meeting chair and note taker

- 6 During group calls, it’s a great idea to nominate a meeting chair. They can help keep the meeting on track and follow the agenda. They will also be able to help moderate the chat, and ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to speak. During group calls, you could also request for one of the attendees to record the meeting and take meeting minutes to send to the group afterwards.

Request meeting materials

- 7 Similar to face-to-face meetings, it’s a great idea to request the meeting agenda ahead of time so you know what topics will be covered during the call. If there were presentation slides shared during the meeting, ask for the meeting organiser to share this with attendees.

Take regular breaks

- 8 It’s important to remember online meetings and phone calls requires a lot of listening concentration. This can be especially tiring when you have hearing loss, as it requires additional listening effort. So, it’s important to take regular, short breaks and step away from your computer screen.

If you are in control of your work calendar, we recommend scheduling short breaks between your meetings. We also suggest trying to have your meetings earlier in the day when the effects of listening fatigue may be less.

“If you are straining from listening, take a short break to relax and take a rest from intensive listening whenever you can. Stepping away and tuning out for a short while helps to reduce overstimulation as well as helping to de-stress and refresh.”

Katie, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient and research manager.



“Hearing loss isn’t just about volume, it’s also about clarity. Ask [conversational partners] to use a personal microphone close to their face. This can really improve the sound quality.

Bec, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient

“Even in the best circumstances, sometimes there is a word that I just can’t understand. The word could be repeated 100 times, but it won’t make a difference – I just can’t hear the sound. Let others on the call know that if they are repeating a word or sentence more than two or three times, it will help you if they jump in and type it in the live chat function.”

Bec, Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient and mentor at a support group for teens with hearing loss.

Practical tips to optimise hearing in non-office settings

If your new role requires non-office-based work, there are a number of things you can do to optimise your hearing. Below are some helpful strategies you can adopt when you are working in more dynamic and ever-changing listening environments.

Use wireless technology or streaming

- 1 Wireless technology can help improve speech clarity when speaking with colleagues, clients or customers. There are many innovative ways that you can use wireless technology. Visit cochlear.com for information on accessories, streaming options for the workplace and how to pair your sound processor. Another great source of information for practical tips from others is to join Cochlear social media channels such as Facebook or Instagram. You can ask questions of others with hearing implants and learn from their real-world experiences.

Talk to your manager

- 2 Many recipients report that it can be useful to arrange a time to speak to your manager about how they can support you in the workplace. To help facilitate discussions, we recommend coming prepared to discuss your concerns and some of the solutions that may help. Some examples are:

- Arranging to have a personal alerting device that lights up or vibrates when there is an emergency or when a customer comes through the door.
- If you work on a building site, you could ask your manager to dictate established routes for heavy vehicles and machinery. That way, you know to be more careful and attentive in these areas of the site.
- You could also ask your manager to arrange additional training for your colleagues on inclusivity and communication in the workplace.

Entering the workforce is a significant milestone. It will open the doors to many new experiences, opportunities to expand your skills and the chance to meet new people. However, starting work can take some adjustment.

The Cochlear Family is here to support you as you embark upon this exciting chapter of your life. Our objective is to provide resources to help you prepare for your first interview and your first day. We also want to continue supporting you in the early stages of commencing your new role and help you thrive.



For more information on Cochlear resources to help support you, visit cochlear.com or contact your local customer service team.

Cochlear Family

Hear now. And always

Cochlear is dedicated to helping people with moderate to profound hearing loss experience a world full of hearing. As the global leader in implantable hearing solutions, we have helped more than 700,000 people of all ages to hear and connect with life's opportunities.

We aim to give people the best lifelong hearing experience and access to next generation technologies. We collaborate with leading clinical, research and support networks to advance hearing science and improve care.

That's why more people choose Cochlear than any other hearing implant company.

www.cochlear.com

Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always follow the directions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

Views expressed are those of the individual. Consult your health professional to determine if you are a candidate for Cochlear Technology.

** For compatibility information, visit www.cochlear.com/compatibility.

Cochlear™ Nucleus® implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderately severe to profound hearing loss. Baha implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderate to profound hearing loss. Cochlear, Hear now. And Always, the elliptical logo, True Wireless, Nucleus, ForwardFocus*, Kanso and Baha are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Cochlear group of companies. Apple, iPhone and iPad are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

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