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Raising Confident Teens

Practical Advice for Parents

Thriving at school



Your child is growing up and entering their teenage years. This can be a new and exciting experience, but also a challenging one requiring adjustment and occasionally, a good measure of patience.

While there are many unknowns when it comes to raising a teenager, there is one fact that can be universally acknowledged. Parents want the best for their child and have a desire to raise confident children with a bright future ahead of them.

In this guide, we share practical ways you can help build your child's confidence, ease their transition into a new school environment and explore their interests in sport, academics or the creative arts.

How to select a school for your child

Choosing a high school can be challenging. The school environment can be unpredictable and can vary from class to class and teacher to teacher. There are also practical realities that you need to factor in, such as getting to and from school every day. But most importantly, you need to consider how the school can support your child's individual needs. We share 6 steps to help you navigate the school selection process.

1 Start the school selection process early

It's never too early to start thinking about high school options for your child, and it's a good idea to begin formally investigating school options at least 3 years before high school begins. We recommend finalising a short-list of two or three schools at least one year out and to attend campus tours and information sessions. Remember to look into school systems that cater to children with special needs as there may be additional funding they can access to support children with hearing loss.

Alternatively, if there aren't a selection of high school options available, we recommend reaching out to your designated local school early. It's a great opportunity to get to know the teachers and what support they may be able to offer your child.

A way to start fostering confidence in your child is to involve them in the school selection process. Take them with you to visit the schools on your short-list, or in your designated school district. Encourage them to provide you with feedback and remember to acknowledge any concerns they raise with you.

2 Meet the Principal

Principals have significant influence in most schools, and much of the accountability and responsibility for the school's performance comes back to them. By meeting the principal and outlining your child's needs, you can get a good sense of the attitude and responsiveness of the school. A supportive and engaged principal can better ensure a willingness to meet the needs of your child.

3 Meet the teaching team

It's important to familiarise yourself with key staff members. If there are learning and disability support teams within the school, they will be a great place to start. They can help support your child's learning and help with coordinating adjustments needed for the classroom and assessment tasks on a whole school basis.

If support teams are not available within the school, we recommend arranging a time to speak with the teachers your child will spend the most time with. This may be a great opportunity to understand how they can support your child's learning and if they need additional information about your child's hearing needs.

4 Investigate the school's experience with students with hearing loss

While it is exciting to be a trailblazer, it may require a bit more work. Schools that have had children with hearing loss can be more familiar with the adjustments and technology required

to optimise learning in the classroom. However, there are also some positive aspects to being a trailblazer. In many cases school staff are keen and willing to learn, and won't have any assumptions around the limitations of your child and their hearing devices. We recommend asking if there is access to additional hearing support from teachers that have specialised training in this area.

5 Consider school and class sizes

If the option to select a school for your child is available to you, two important things to consider is the size of the school and the number of children in each class. Small schools may offer a better learning environment than larger schools, despite the perception of more resources and academic achievement. Smaller class sizes can also help reduce background noise levels.

Alternatively, if the option to select a high school is not available, we recommend talking to your child's teachers to understand how the classroom environment is set up. For example, it can be more challenging for your child to hear in open-plan classrooms versus a traditional classroom set up.

You may also wish to discuss where your child is seated in the classroom. The ideal seat in a traditional classroom layout is close to the teacher and in a position where they can clearly see the teacher's face and gestures. However, it's important to remember that there is no one perfect position for every class. During classroom exercises or group discussions, it may be equally or more important to see the faces and gestures of peers.

6 Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions

To evaluate the suitability of a school and how well educators will be able to support your child, you may need to ask some very specific questions. In addition to questions about learning, we recommend investigating the school's view on communication with parents, inclusion, accessibility around the school and staff training¹.

Here are some questions you can ask when you meet with school personnel:

1. How many teachers are trained in inclusion and learning support for children with hearing loss?
2. What does the school do to help build social connections among students?
3. How will my child with hearing needs be included in classes where there is significant background noise, such as music or physical education lessons?
4. Are there any areas of the curriculum that are heavily reliant on listening? How can my child be supported from an inclusive access perspective? E.g closed captioning or early access to learning material.
5. How do you communicate with parents?
6. Are you interested in speaking with my child's primary school about the learning support that has worked well?
7. What is the school's approach to bullying?

Educators may not have all the answers from the outset, but it is important to understand if they are open to finding solutions to include your child.

Transitioning from primary to high school

Starting high school is a big change and children with hearing loss may require more support than their hearing peers. To ensure a smooth transition and make the adjustment to a new environment a bit easier here are some tips to help you in the lead up to the first day and throughout the year.

Before the first day:

1 Have a formal transition plan

To make this move as seamless as possible, we recommend preparing a transition plan². A transition plan is simply a tool for sharing information about your child with secondary school staff. It can include:

- Your child's diagnosis.
- Past school reports, including your child's learning preferences, strengths and challenges.
- Health and medical reports, including your child's current medical needs and information about the level of hearing and expected listening abilities.
- Key dates, like orientation days or student support group meeting dates.
- Timelines for each step of the transition process.

2 Arrange a transition meeting and attend orientation

Most schools will have an orientation day for new students to explore the school and become familiar with it. If possible, arrange for your child to have a transition meeting in addition to the orientation with relevant staff and an individual tour of the school where their specific questions can be answered. Alternatively, if it is difficult to attend a face-to-face meeting, perhaps you can work with the school to set up a virtual or online call. This is a good opportunity for your child to become visible in the eyes and minds of the school staff before they formally start school.

3 Consider their social network and friends

One of the key factors for a successful high school experience is being social and having friends. One factor that might influence your decision-making about a school is if your child has some good friends going to a particular school who can support this transition. Older siblings can also be a source of support and good role models. You may also wish to consider the extracurricular activities offered by the school and which ones your child might be interested in, such as drama, dance or sport. Involvement in these activities is a great way to broaden your child's friendship groups and get them involved with the school



During the school year:

Once the school year begins, it is important to ensure your child is keeping up with the pace and routines of high school. This includes being organised with homework, and monitoring dates for assessment tasks and exams.

1 Be visible at school

Parents who are regularly visible at the school and have a relationship with teachers and principal may experience better outcomes for their child with hearing loss. Ask your child's teacher about what is being taught and what is being assessed. Don't be afraid to speak up if the school environment is not working for your child.

2 Reach out for support when needed

Always ask for help when you need it. Find out if you have access to a specialised teacher who can support your child's learning at school. They can be a strong advocate and assist both in and out of the classroom with schoolwork and assessments.

3 Regularly check-in with your child

Remember to check in with your child throughout the school year to get a better understanding of how they are coping and keeping up with lessons. If they are struggling and falling behind in class, ask them if they need extra support and discuss using wireless technology.

4 Use wireless technology

High school can be a challenging time for students when it comes to using their wireless accessories in the classroom. Often a student with hearing loss doesn't want to stand out from their peers when they start high school and may avoid using wireless technology.

For your child to get the most benefit out of using wireless technology, it requires co-operation and partnership between the teacher and your child. Some teachers may require additional training and guidance on the optimal use of wireless technologies, and your child also needs to feel comfortable using these technologies in the classroom.

You can find out more about wireless streaming at [cochlear.com](https://www.cochlear.com).

Ways that you can approach this is to:

- Ask your child to consider trying the wireless technology and see if it helps to relieve pressure and reduce fatigue from having to listen for extended periods.
- Work with your child and their teachers to develop a plan for using wireless technology in a way where both parties feel comfortable.

Extra-curricular activities



Nese, Cochlear™ Nucleus®
System recipient, Australia

Becoming a teenager is often a catalyst for change which arises from increased self-awareness and discovery. It is a time where most young people seek to establish their independence, discover what interests them and explore ways to identify themselves outside of their role in the family unit.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities can foster confidence, provide teenagers with opportunities to develop important interpersonal skills and help them build meaningful social support networks rooted in common interests.

Research suggests that extra-curricular activities can also significantly predict future independence and the pursuit of tertiary or vocational education³. We've prepared some helpful tips on how to select, prepare for and get the most out of extra-curricular activities.

Getting the most out of extra-curricular activities

Selection

1 Consider your child's interests and involve them

Think about what your child is demonstrating interest in and let this guide your research on clubs, sports teams, social groups and classes. As parents, it's natural to want the best for your child. Sometimes, this can translate into choosing what you think is best and not necessarily what your child wants. Listen to your child and involve them in the decision-making process. This is a great step toward building self-advocacy and confidence in communication.

2 Don't be afraid to think outside the box

Piano, soccer and dance lessons are some of the more traditional and popular extra-curricular options. But don't be afraid to consider more specialised classes. Why not consider cooking classes, book clubs, coding, astronomy or even horticulture classes at the local nursery!

Also consider looking for activities that involve other children who also use hearing devices. This is a great way to start building connections within the deaf community.

3 Speak to your child's hearing healthcare professional

Talking to your child's hearing healthcare team may be useful as they can suggest activities other children are enjoying. They can also provide guidance on activities to help reduce risks to your child's hearing.

4 Be transparent and maintain two-way communication with your child

Transparency can go a long way toward building trust, especially when you are discussing what activities may or may not be possible based on family budgets or schedules.

Preparation

1 Get to know the terminologies

There can be many sounds and words unique to new activities. This is a great opportunity to learn and practise listening. Together with your child, you can watch clips on YouTube showing the activity or prepare a list of words they may commonly hear or need to use. For example, if you enrol your child in art classes you could practise words like "easel", "acrylic", or "pigment". Remember, repetition is helpful to facilitate memory and comprehension.

2 Discuss how your child can participate most effectively

It's important that you speak with teachers and coaches about your child's challenges and strengths, particularly in relation to hearing and communication. That way, they can help your child communicate and comprehend better in various situations. We suggest developing a communication plan by talking to your child beforehand. Together, you should establish what they are comfortable sharing and whether they want to speak on their own behalf or have you help them.

Tips to optimise hearing during extra-curricular activities

Sometimes, starting a new extra-curricular activity can feel a bit daunting and this feeling can be amplified when you have hearing loss. We asked some of our teens with hearing implants to share their advice and we have put together some simple tips that can help hearing during specific activities.

Water-based activities

1 Get advice from your hearing healthcare professional

Before your child commences any water-based sports, you may wish to seek advice from your hearing healthcare professional. They can help provide guidance on ways to protect your child's sound processor and ensure their hearing is not at risk.

2 Use an Aqua+

For water-based sports, it is important that you protect your sound processor/s using an Aqua+.

- With the Aqua+ your sound processor can be worn underwater to a depth of three metres for up to two hours.
- Secure your Aqua+ and sound processor using a safety line.

If your child's sound processor is not compatible with an Aqua+ and they are engaging in water-based activities, we recommend preparing some communication signals ahead of time. That way, your child can continue to communicate with you, their coach or teammates whilst in the water.

3 Use wireless accessories

If your child's swimming coach is not in the water with them, wireless technology can be helpful. As an example, this allows a swim coach's or your voice to stream directly to your child's sound processor while they are in the water. You can also use this for other sports and activities such as rowing.

“Hannah is a mermaid and she really loves swimming. When she does go into the water with her cochlear implant and her Aqua+ accessory, [Hannah] can hear us calling her ... It doesn't stop her. She can make friends with other kids in the pool.”

Maryam, mother of Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient Hannah, Malaysia

Land-based activities

1 Get advice from your healthcare professional

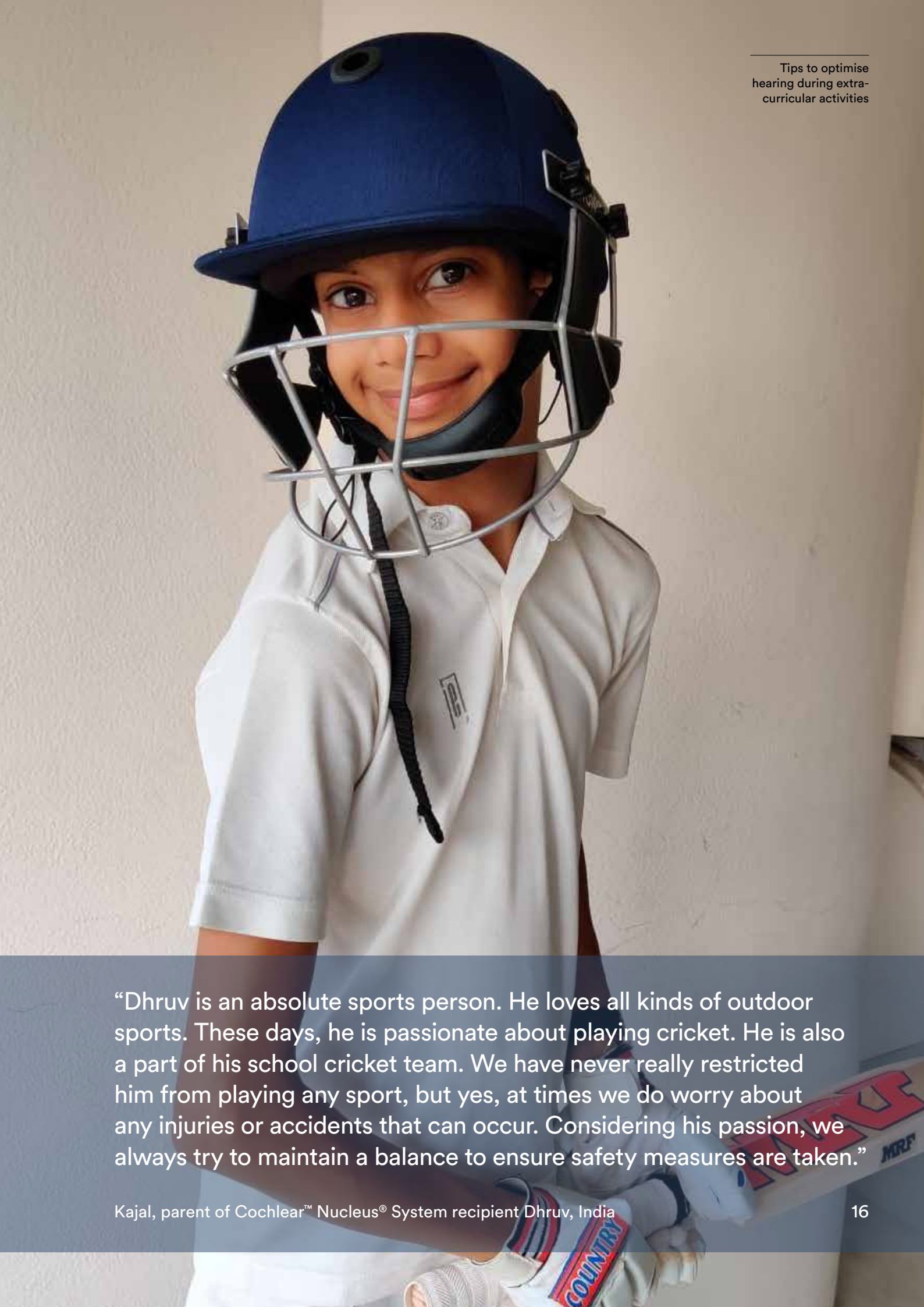
Before commencing with your child's chosen sport, you may wish to seek advice from your hearing healthcare professional. This is particularly important for more vigorous contact sports like rugby. Your hearing healthcare professional will be able to share advice on any safety measures that can be taken and discuss any potential risks.

2 Explore sound processor retention options

Cochlear™ sound processors are designed to fit comfortably and securely. But for extra peace of mind, we suggest securing your child's sound processor if vigorous activity or if movement is expected during participation.

3 Use the correct headwear

If the activity requires specialised headwear such as helmets, check that your hearing healthcare professional is confident that your child can participate safely. If a helmet is required, it is important that you use one that is specific to your sport. For example, a hard helmet for cycling or horse-riding. You may also need to consider a specialised helmet fitting for your child while they are wearing the device to ensure that feel comfortable.



“Dhruv is an absolute sports person. He loves all kinds of outdoor sports. These days, he is passionate about playing cricket. He is also a part of his school cricket team. We have never really restricted him from playing any sport, but yes, at times we do worry about any injuries or accidents that can occur. Considering his passion, we always try to maintain a balance to ensure safety measures are taken.”

Creative class-based activities

1 Educate teachers on clear communication strategies

Similar to traditional classroom settings, it is important to adopt clear communication in group classes to optimise listening. Often, creative-based classes encourage active participation and provide opportunities for self-expression, so it's vital that your child feels confident communicating and can keep up with the discussion.

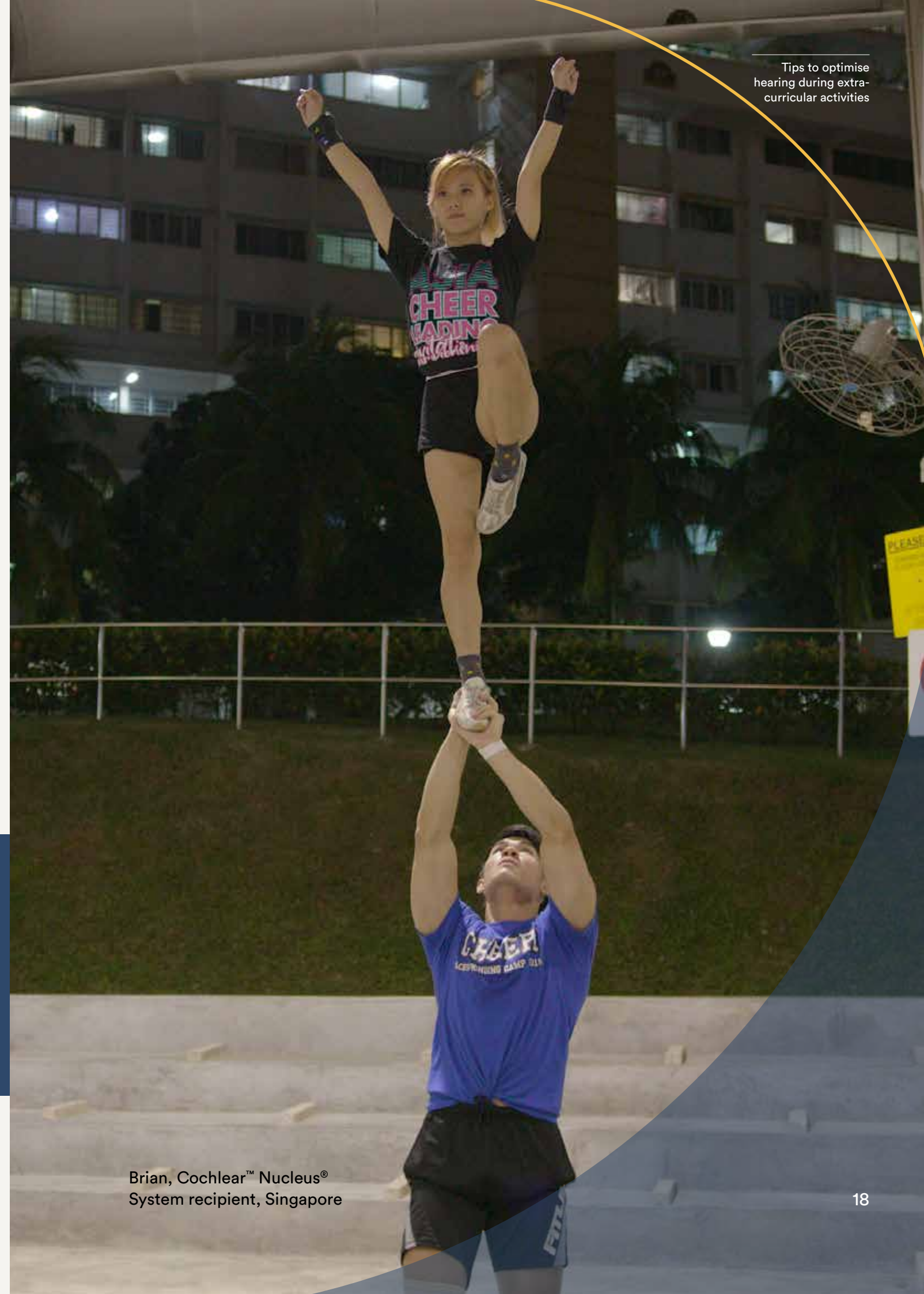
- For group lessons like art, cooking or book clubs, small adjustments to seating arrangements, lighting, and how teachers deliver instructions can make a world of difference when it comes to hearing clearly.
- Arrange a time to speak with the teacher before the first lesson. Remember to include your child on these discussions and print off a copy of the *Practical Advice for Teachers* guide in this series and bring it with you to the meeting.

“I love cheerleading because I used to see it as a sport that I couldn't do. As I grew up, I realised that we are not bound by our physical limits as we can find options and safeguards to allow us to pursue our passions.”

Brian, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient, Singapore

2 Use wireless technology

Encourage the use of wireless technology to make listening easier. Technology that allows teachers to stream their voice directly to your child's sound processor via a microphone can make a world of difference. This can be particularly helpful in classes where significant background noise is present or where distance listening is required, e.g. music, dance and drama classes.



Brian, Cochlear™ Nucleus®
System recipient, Singapore

Rehabilitation

“Anything to do with the creative arts is my happy place! I love that I can push the boundaries, discovering that I’m constantly getting better and growing stronger with everything I can do. I wanted to teach [my classmates] how to deal with me [as a deaf person] and to educate the community as well.”

Tallulah, Cochlear™ Nucleus® System recipient, Australia

Rehabilitation is an important part of the hearing journey that encourages continued language development. In the lead up to your child’s first day of high school, we recommend speaking to your hearing healthcare professional to check if additional rehab may be of use prior to the start of the school year. Additional rehab at home may help to give your child a boost in confidence to communicate with new peers, discuss their hearing loss and advocate on behalf of their needs in the classroom.

We have shared some exercises below as starting point, but the suitability of the exercises are dependent on your child’s speech, language and communication skills. Speak to your child’s hearing healthcare team about the listening and speech exercises they can recommend.

Rehab that you can do at home

Rehab should be incorporated into your child’s everyday routine and can be done in as little as 10 minutes. Below are some language and listening exercises that your child can start doing in the months leading up to high school. We also have a list of suggested apps that can be downloaded to make rehab fun and interactive.

1 Practise high school vocabulary at home

For this exercise, work with your child to create a list of a list of 50-100 words that you think will be commonly used in the high school environment. This may sound like a lot, but once you get started, you will find your list grows each day. Try to make the words specific to the school. For example, if it is a religious school, include terminology associated with that religion. Include some slang terms that teens may be likely to use. Remember with each of these words, it is important to practise usage and context, as well as pronunciation. So, practise using them in sentences and focus on introducing a maximum of 5 words per day. Here are some words to get you started:

Assembly	Chemistry	Economics	Locker
Assessment	Debate	Homeroom	Semester
Attendance	Essay	House	Student Council
Biology	Exam	Lunch period	Timetable

Note: Exercises such as this need to be appropriate to a child’s individual speech, language, communication and cognitive skills.

2 Download Cochlear's Home-Based Auditory Training Guide

Cochlear has developed a Home-Based Auditory Training Guide containing several modules designed to build speech recognition, understanding and improve overall communication. These training guides are targeted towards adults who are in the early stages of listening. However, there are a number of exercises contained with the guide that you may find beneficial. We recommend working with your audiologist or speech language pathologist to build your teen's auditory training plan.

Select the correct resource for when your child's hearing loss occurred.

- Post-Lingual Hearing Loss – Deafness occurred after spoken language was developed
- Pre-Lingual Hearing Loss – Deafness occurred after spoken language was developed

The exercises can be done at home with your support and that of your audiologist. Remember these exercises are designed to be flexible, so timing and difficulty can be adjusted according to your child's skill level.

Targeted Rehab to help with peer relationships




Pop culture and peer relationships can play a significant role in shaping a teenager's identity. Modern culture is arguably built on the consumption of media in all its forms, whether that be on social media platforms, online gaming, music, video calls and films. Hearing loss can make it harder to interact with all of these types of media and "keep up" with hearing peers. As part of the *Raising Confident Teens Toolkit*, we have produced three rehabilitation resources focusing on the areas of phone confidence, music appreciation and communication skills training.

You can find these resources online at www.cochlear.com under 'Ongoing Care and Support':

- Cochlear Confidence Guide: Phone Rehab
- Cochlear Confidence Guide: Music Rehab
- Cochlear Confidence Guide: Communication Rehab

Helpful rehab resources

Apps to get started

1.  **Hearoes:** Interactive auditory training app
2.  **i-Angel Sound:** interactive auditory training program
3.  **Breathe:** App for focused attention and listening to environmental sounds

Websites

1. **Ida Institute (www.idainstitute.com)**
Independent, non-profit organisation working with clinicians, academics, and people with hearing loss around the world. They help people develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to better manage hearing loss. On their website, you can find videos, tools and exercises designed to help recipients articulate needs, involve family and friend in rehabilitation.
2. **Hear For You (hearforyou.com)**
An independent organisation established to specifically support young people with hearing loss. They offer a number of practical online programs for teens which cover real world topics such as, communication and conflict resolution, school subject selection and social media. They also have a mentorship program which connects your child to trained mentors who all have hearing loss. In particular, they run sessions called Primary2Secondary – a program designed specifically for kids with hearing loss moving into high school.
3. **ESL Lab (esl-lab.com)**
A series of short audio stories on a wide variety of topics. Your comprehension will be tested via a series of questions and told where you answered correctly and incorrectly. Includes listening exercises and vocabulary activities. This site is divided into 'easy', 'medium' and difficult content.
4. **Angel Sound (angelsound.tigerspeech.com)**
An interactive auditory training and hearing program. Rehab focusses on practicing how to discriminate and identify sounds and speech components through a series of self-paced modules. The level of difficulty is automatically adjusted to match developing listening skills.

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

References

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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.

The Aqua Accessory and the Aqua+ sleeve are dust and water resistant to level IP68 of the International Standard IEC60529 and can be continuously submerged under water to a depth of up to 3 metres for up to 2 hours. Refer to the relevant User Guide for more information.

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.

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