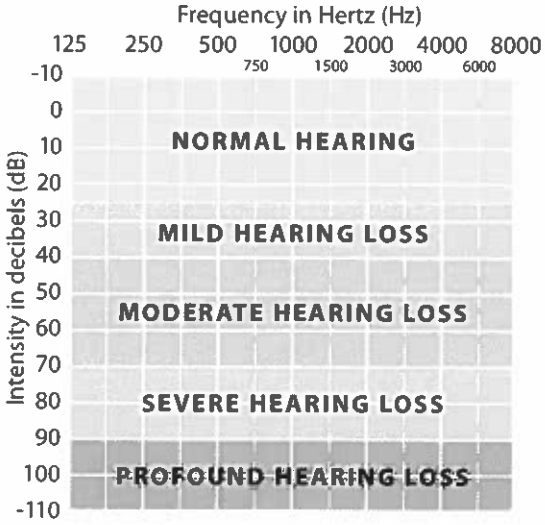
What is an Audiogram?



Hearing is measured in decibels (dB); the louder a noise is, the greater the number of decibels. The level at which a person can just hear a sound is the *hearing threshold.* The higher up an audiogram chart a person's threshold is, the quieter the sounds they can hear. The lower down the chart the threshold is, the louder the sound needs to be, in order for them to hear anything.

Different pitches (frequencies) of sound are measured across the graph from left to right. The low pitch sounds (vowel sounds) are on the left and the higher pitch sounds (consonant sounds, more important for recognising words) on the right. Pitch (frequency) is measured in Hertz (Hz). One thousand Hertz is a Kilo-Hertz (KHz). Most audiograms measure information between 250Hz and 8KHz although most people can hear sounds at both lower frequencies (the rumble of thunder) and higher frequencies (the rustle of leaves). What we measure are the sounds that are important for everyday life.

The audiogram on the right above is divided into different colour bands:

Normal hearing within 20dB	yellow
Mild hearing loss, within 40dB	blue
Moderate hearing loss 40-70dB	green
Severe hearing loss 70-95dB	pink
Profound hearing loss more than 95dB	light red

(With thanks to N Murrant)