

Earplug Fix-a-Fit

A guide for earplug selection, size and fit.



Proper
Earplug Insertion

Select the
Right Earplug

Earplug
Size Guide

Eliminating
Discomfort

Fixing
Hidden Leaks

Addressing
Under-Protection

Too Much
Earplug Showing

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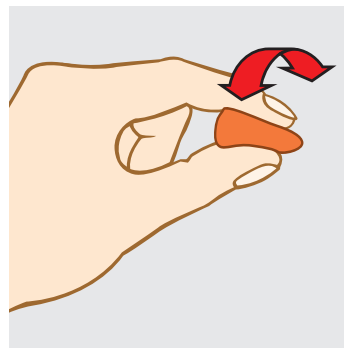
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Step 1: Roll

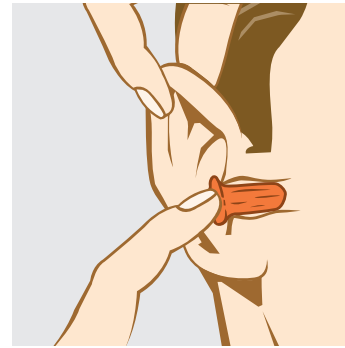


For roll-down foam earplugs, start rolling the foam gently to avoid creases. Then roll as hard as you can to make the

cylinder as small as possible.

- Rolling the earplug into a tight cylinder makes it easier to fit around the bends in the ear canal.
- After rolling, move quickly to the next step so that the earplug doesn't expand before insertion.

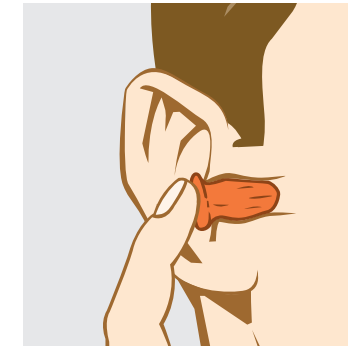
Step 2: Pull



Reach over the head to pull OUT (or for some people, pull UP or BACK) on the ear flap, called the pinna.

- Observe the worker's ear: which direction opens the ear canal the most? Give feedback to the worker about which pull-direction is most effective. For many people, pulling OUT away from the head is most effective in spreading open the ear canal for a better earplug fit.

Step 3: Insert



Insert the earplug far enough so that it goes around bends in the ear canal. This often feels sensitive (not painful), or may

trigger a cough reflex. This is normal.

- Let go of the pulled-back ear after the earplug is fully inserted.
- For foam earplugs, hold the earplug in place for several seconds while the foam expands to fill the ear canal.
- For removal, it's often easier to use the same EAR-PULL technique that was used for insertion.



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Size

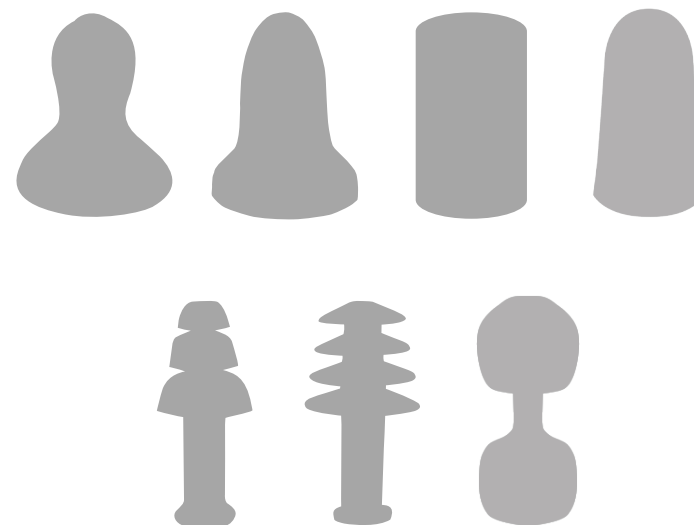
Like a cork in a bottle, an earplug that is too large or too small will never achieve an acoustic seal. Have someone look into your ear canal opening to determine if a different size would be helpful. Yes, earplugs do come in different sizes, and there is no such thing as a “one-size-fits-all” earplug. What would be a recommended mix of sizes or styles to optimize the fit of earplugs at a worksite? Results from thousands of fit-tests conducted at several worksites shows that the following four earplug styles would be a good place to start:

- Large Foam: MAX[®] Large
- Smaller Foam: MAX[®] Small
- Large Reusable: SmartFit[®] Large
- Smaller Reusable: Fusion[®] Green Small

Shape

In addition to different diameters, ear canals come in different shapes too. While many ear canals are round (well fitted with a pre-moulded earplug), many have a distinct oval shape (or even a slit opening) best fitted with an expandable foam earplug.

GENERAL EARPLUG SHAPES



Ease of Insertion

Some workers have difficulty rolling or inserting foam earplugs due to restricted dexterity or arthritis, or because they are wearing gloves. Try a no-roll foam or reusable earplug (example: Quiet, Fusion). An earplug with a stem may be easier for some workers to insert (example: TrustFit).

Other Factors

In addition to size, shape and ease of insertion, there are many other options available in earplugs that factor into proper selection:

- Corded /uncorded
- Disposable or reusable
- Push-in foam
- Detectable earplugs
- Uniform attenuation across frequencies



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FOAM DISPOSABLE

MAX®



FirmFit™



MAX® Small



Multi Max®



MaxLite®



Laser Trak® Detectable



Laser Lite®



LARGE REUSABLE

SmartFit®



Fusion®



SmartFit® Detectable



Fusion® Detectable



Quiet®



Airsoft®



Clarity®



SMALL REUSABLE

Fusion® Small



Quiet® Small



Clarity® Small



PUSH-IN FOAM REUSABLE

Trust Fit™



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Discomfort



An uncomfortable earplug potentially reduces wear time, and is often a sign of an improper fit or incorrect sizing. Take the time to find the proper earplug style and fit that are best for you and will provide adequate protection the entire work shift.

	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Foam Earplugs	Earplug is too firm.	Try a soft-foam earplug, or a low-pressure foam earplug.
All Earplugs	Earplug is too large.	Try a smaller earplug.
	Earplug is too firm to comfortably bend in the ear canal.	Try a foam earplug that can conform more to the bends of the ear canal.
	Earplug is hitting the bend in the ear canal.	Before inserting, straighten the ear canal by reaching over the head to pull OUT (or for some people, pull UP or BACK) on the pinna.



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Hidden Leak



A hidden leak can significantly reduce protection levels. The earplug may appear to be inserted correctly, but improper sizing and selection or even a crease in the earplug may cause an acoustic leak that is not readily visible.

	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Foam Earplugs	Creases in earplug may be allowing noise to leak through.	Do not twist or squeeze down the earplug. Properly roll it—gently at first to avoid creases—then roll firmly to make the cylinder as small as possible.
	Earplug hits wall of ear canal and bends back on itself.	Removal sometimes shows a U-shaped earplug. Reach over the head to pull OUT on the pinna to straighten the ear canal. Try a reusable earplug with a firmer stem to maneuver around the bend of the ear canal.
All Earplugs	Earplug is too small.	Try a larger earplug.
	Round earplug may not fill oval ear canal.	Flanges of a pre-molded earplug may not completely fill an oval-shaped ear canal. Try a foam plug that can expand to fill the oval.



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Underprotection



Having an earplug in the ear is no guarantee of adequate protection. Fit-testing often reveals poor protection levels that can be corrected with simple steps.

	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Foam Earplugs	Not rolled down small enough.	Start rolling gently to avoid creases, then roll firmly to make the cylinder as small as possible.
		Roll down the entire earplug, even the flanged end. This will allow a deeper insertion.
All Earplugs	Angle of insertion is incorrect.	Observe the worker's ear: which direction opens the ear canal the most? Give feedback to the worker regarding which pull-direction is most effective.
	Round earplug may not fill oval ear canal.	Flanges of a pre-molded earplug may not completely fill an oval ear canal. Try a foam earplug that can expand to fill the oval.
	Earplug is too small, does not seal ear canal.	Try a larger earplug.



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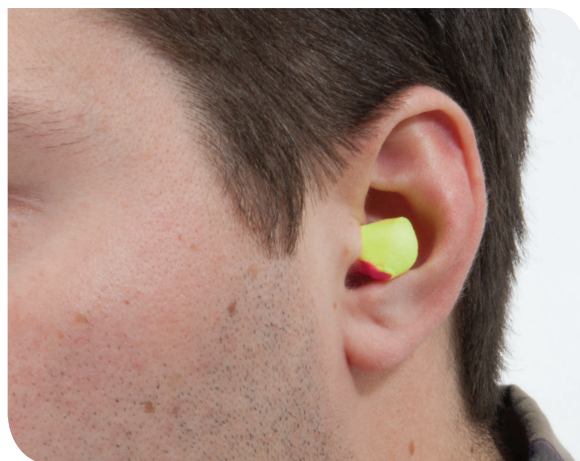
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Too Much Earplug Showing



To effectively block noise, nearly all of the earplug needs to be inside the ear canal. Too much earplug showing outside of the ear canal is a sign of a shallow insertion, not deep enough to adequately block noise.

Foam Earplugs

CAUSE

Not rolled down small enough.

SOLUTION

Start rolling gently to avoid creases, then roll firmly to make the cylinder as small as possible.

Roll down the entire earplug, even the flanged end. This will allow a deeper insertion.

Earplug expanded before insertion.

After rolling, move quickly to insert before earplug expands.

[more](#)



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Too Much Earplug Showing, cont.

	CAUSE	SOLUTION
All Earplugs	Insertion not deep enough.	Need to insert past bend in ear canal. This often feels sensitive (not painful), or may trigger a cough reflex. This is normal.
	Bend in ear canal is blocking a deeper insertion causing earplug to “back out” of ear (earplug may have a visible bend when removed from the ear).	Reach over the head to pull OUT (or for some people, pull UP or BACK) on the ear flap, called the pinna.
	Angle of insertion is incorrect.	Use a pen-light to look at the ear canal to see which direction to insert (give direction to “aim the earplug toward your nose,” or “aim the earplug a little upward,” etc.).
	Earplug too large.	Try a smaller earplug.



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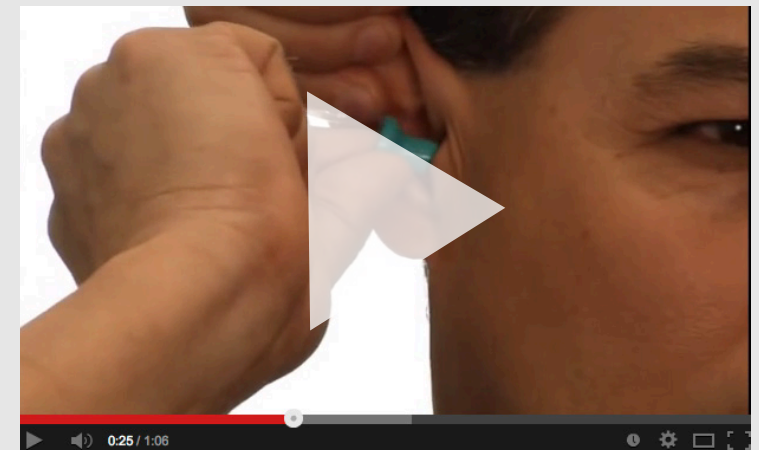
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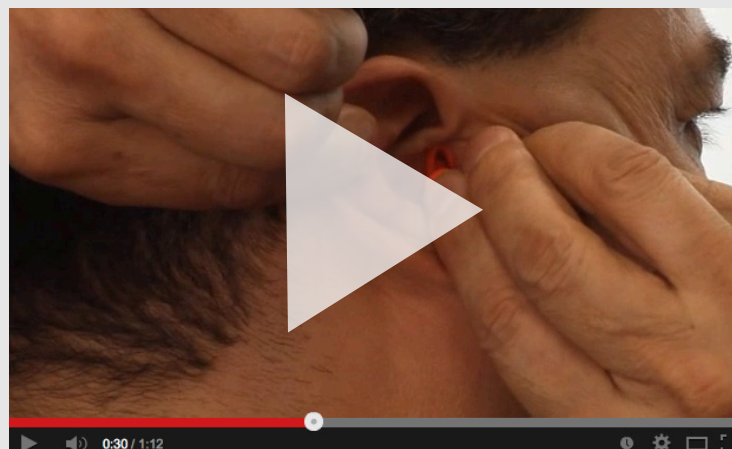
How-To-Fit Videos



▶ How to fit single-use roll-down foam earplugs.



▶ How to fit single-use and multiple-use no-roll foam



▶ How to fit multiple-use earplugs



▶ How to fit multiple-use detectable earplugs



▶ How to fit banded earplugs



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