



The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

WIRED FOR SOUND

To Hear When Traveling, Educate Your Smartphone

Part 1: Some useful Apps

Stephen O. Frazier, Hearing Loss Support Specialist

I've come to agree with Mark Twain when he remarked that, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do," so I don't let age or hearing loss keep me from the grand adventure that travel can and should be. I grab my trusted smartphone and head out on new adventures.

My trusted smartphone is actually now my super smartphone. I've educated it with so many apps that it should qualify for an advanced degree. It knows so many things to help me overcome a serious hearing loss! If they've not already done so, traveler or not, people with or without a hearing loss should get a smartphone and download some of the great apps now available. They'll face far fewer challenges when traveling and even in their daily lives with the help of a smartphone.

There are many different Bluetooth devices and applications available to help a traveler. If that traveler has a hearing loss, Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids can be paired with a compatible smartphone for use with a variety of terrific apps. Not all hearing aids are Bluetooth-enabled, though. For those who have telecoil-equipped hearing aids, most of those apps will work with varying degrees of quality, by connecting a neckloop to their phone. But what are telecoils and neckloops?

Telecoils are small copper coils available in a majority of hearing aid models available to residents in the U.S. and all but one model of



cochlear implant (CI) processors. Telecoils act as receivers for silent electromagnetic waves that carry audio signals generated by a hearing loop or neckloop. A neckloop is a version of earphones for the person with hearing loss. Plug it into a smartphone instead of earbuds, and it will silently transmit the sound from the telephone to the telecoils in hearing aids or cochlear implants. If you're a person with hearing loss and your hearing device has a telecoil, a neckloop is worth much more than the \$50 to \$75 it costs. It's best to buy a neckloop with a built-in microphone and amplifier, as you will need that extra boost with some apps, and the mic also makes it possible to talk hands-free on the telephone. For those without hearing loss, they can use earphones, earbuds or Bluetooth-enabled earbuds for the same purpose.

My old hearing aids did not have Bluetooth, so I used the old devices and an amplified neckloop when first testing and using some of these apps. I own an Android phone, so I cannot speak to the actual performance of any iPhone apps mentioned here. I'm only relaying the information posted by their developers and found at Apple's App Store.

Speech to Text

When traveling, as well as in everyday life, Google's **Live Transcribe** is the most heavily used app in my now highly educated Samsung phone. It converts

continued on page 3

WIRED FOR SOUND

is published by the
HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER
Providing support and advocacy for
people with hearing loss

P. O. Box 36792,
Albuquerque, NM 87176
HLAAbq@gmail.com

Home page: hearinglossabq.org

Hearing Loss Association of America
– Albuquerque chapter



Mention of goods or services in articles or advertisements or meetings does not mean endorsement by Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter, nor does exclusion suggest disapproval.

ABQ Chapter Board:

President:
VACANT

Treasurer: Bobbi Rodríguez
TreasurerHLAAbq@gmail.com

Editor: A. E. "Rod" Rodríguez
EditorHLAAbq@gmail.com

Membership & Web Master: Jim Dillow
catchJimmy@comcast.net

VP Programs: Olivia Fadul
OFadul@unm.edu

Publicity Chair:
VACANT

Hospitality Chair:
VACANT

Professional Advisor: Dr. Carol Clifford
CClifford@abqhearing.com

Past Pres./Advisor: Mary Clark
Mary@mandgclark.com

Past Pres./Advisor: Dr. Norm Dawson
DrNorm@gmail.com

The Albuquerque HLAA Chapter is
affiliated with the



www.hearingloss.org
6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320
Rockville, MD 20852
phone: (301)657-2248

21 Oct Meeting 10:00 AM To Noon—**on Zoom****Hearing Aids and Your Hearing – Learn the Latest**

We are trying out the idea of viewing a video of an enlightening HoH topic available via Zoom. The intention is to follow the video with a discussion and Q&A among all of our Zoom participants. This is our first attempt, so please join us and then give us your feedback on how well it works for you.

Jeff Grama is an audiologist from California who has had a strong relationship with the HLAA chapter in Los Angeles. He has that great knack of being able to explain technology in terms that make sense to even those who are less “techy” or technology oriented. At the same time, he is able to share the latest features from multiple companies who use their own terminology, and he can clarify what features are alike, but just being called different things.



The presentation we will share is on YouTube, where the recordings from the HLAA-LA chapter have been captured. We are excited to share this presentation, and have been in touch with Jeff Grama, who MIGHT join us “live” on Zoom. Even if he declines that invitation, the YouTube video is very complete. Join us for what promises to be an enlightening program.

The HLAA ABQ Chapter could use some help to resume hybrid meetings (for example, with hospitality), as well as some new blood. You already know our dedication to providing the best information, advocacy, education and support for people with hearing loss. You can ease your way into volunteering and learn how this works. Just email one of the board members (listed on the left). You may also use the chapter email: HLAAbq@gmail.com.

speech to text and also identifies some background sounds and their intensity. I've used it to communicate with travel agents and with various airport and airline personnel both on the ground and in the air. I've even used it to understand what others were saying around the table at a meeting I recently had at Starbucks and when meeting with my doctor, whom I've nicknamed Doctor Mumbles.

At Apple's App Store, the **Speechy** app is available for converting speech to text. It can go one step further and also translate that text into a different language. Touch a link and voilà — *le texte est en français* (Translation: The text is in French).

Personal Sound Amplifier

Next on my list of needed travel apps is a personal sound amplification app. In the days of COVID-19, social distancing could put us six feet way from someone speaking to us, and some masks reduce the important higher frequencies in that person's voice by up to 12 decibels¹—perceived as more than a 50% reduction². Even those with good hearing could sometimes need help. Further, hearing aid microphones are really effective only for sounds coming from six feet or so away.³ I have my old PocketaTalker, but I don't need it with my smartphone and the **Ear Scout** app. With this app you can not only hear what's being said to you, but you can also record it and email that recording to yourself or someone else. Ear Scout has a fine-tuning feature that lets the user control which frequencies get boosted, a little or a lot. If you have a telecoil in your hearing device, this app works best with a neckloop. Be careful, though, if you're listening to a speaker some distance away and then someone right next to you speaks, that voice will blast you. iPhone users can turn to EarMachine. *Note: The Ear Machine app is no longer being updated and hasn't been for five years. It may work*

¹ [Martin, BSc, *Hearing Journal*, Oct. 2020](#)

² [Dave Meniccuci, Sandia National Labs, *Noise Primer*, 2005](#)

³ [Etymotic Auditory Research, *Lucid Hearing* 2000a](#)

Smith's Community Rewards Shop at Smith's with their Rewards card, and Smith's will make a donation to HLAA Albuquerque chapter. You get your usual rewards points.

1-800-444-8081, opt. 3 to sign up or re-enroll.

The HLAAAbq NPO number for Smith's is **NC419**.

perfectly fine, but there should be no expectation of future enhancements or bug fixes.

These apps allow individuals to use their phones as remote microphones for closer pickup of a speaker's voice and additional control for boosting higher frequencies.

There's some latency, so it works best if you use the telecoil-only setting on your hearing device rather than the mic/telecoil setting and focus on the sound coming from your phone rather than any unaided sound.

Background Sound Reduction

Sometimes amplifier apps pick up too much background noise (such as the noise in an airport concourse or a hotel lobby), making it difficult to identify the sounds that make up actual words. Believe it or not, there are apps that get rid of a good deal of that unwanted sound. They can actually identify the sounds of a person speaking and reproduce them without reproducing the unwanted background sounds. Again, using Bluetooth, earbuds or a neckloop and the telecoil (t-coil) setting on hearing aids, the creators of **Chatable** claim it can erase most of the background sounds. It identifies the voice of the person speaking and creates a new audio signal that sounds almost identical to the original while it removes the background sounds. Although it's on Google Play Store's list when I search on my desktop computer, it's not there when I do so with my Samsung smartphone,

Yearly dues are \$15 per household.
They are due in January.

so I haven't been able to download it and can't attest to its performance quality.

AmiHear Hearing Amplifier is a similar app and, unlike with Chatable, Google didn't play with me—it let me find and download this app. It's marketed as a Pocketalker wannabe that is "perfect for people with hearing loss who do not want to use prescription hearing aids!" They say AmiHear turns your headphones into hearing aids and also provides unlimited recording, something that traditional hearing aids cannot provide. Using your phone's microphone to pick up sound, AmiHear can de-noise, amplify and record sound around you simultaneously. Use it for a doctor visit as I have, and when you get home you can review what was said and write it down to help you remember. Use it to hear a tour guide, and you'll have the "official description" of the sites you visited along with the

snapped photos you took. This app can reduce background sounds to some degree, so I use it in certain settings where ambient noise is a problem. Otherwise, I use Ear Scout because it works with either a neckloop or Bluetooth while AmiHear will work only with my neckloop. The latter are working on a revision to the app that will allow it to recognize Bluetooth hearing aids as well as Bluetooth earbuds or earphones. With Ear Scout, I've found it best to use Bluetooth rather than a neckloop and let the person I'm talking to hold the phone, which can be challenging if using a neckloop.

Disclaimer: HCAA and the author of this article do not endorse any specific product or app. This article does not include all the apps available to people with hearing loss.

For the full article, see [Hearing Life](#), Spring 2022, [HearingLoss.org](#), 23

National News and Info

Flying With Hearing Loss Can Be Challenging

Lise Hamlin, HCAA director of public policy

A recent news story about a senior woman's air travel nightmare highlights problems many of us with hearing loss may experience when we fly. Often announcements and even safety information aren't accessible.

Main points:

1. Discrimination against travelers with disabilities is illegal.
2. Self-identifying can help.
3. Airline agents are responsible for providing accommodations.
4. A call for more awareness, education and empathy.
5. Plan ahead and know your rights.

Clinical Trials of Potential New Therapies for Hearing Loss Are Out There. Here's How To Find Them

Julie Upboff, Senior Manager of Clinical Operations

Clinical trials play a critical role in bringing new medicines to people who may benefit from them. With hearing loss, clinical trials of therapeutics are a very recent development – only in the last few years have we been testing potential *medicines* (not devices) to restore hearing to those with certain types of hearing loss.

A few ways to stay informed on new clinical trial opportunities:

1. Visit ClinicalTrials.gov, an online resource maintained by the National Institutes of Health
2. Talk to your ear, nose and throat doctor or audiologist.
3. Grow your network by joining advocacy organizations like HCAA.

Both in [HearingLoss.org](#) as of Sep 24, 2023

Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

Platinum \$400+

Adelaide Zabriskie

Gold \$200 - \$399

Rosalin Cohen

Michael Lieberman

John Simmons

Ginevra Ralph

Silver \$100 - \$199

Barbara Armstrong

Gloria Inlow

Mike Langner

Bronze \$50 - \$99

Carol Emerson

Barbara Fix

Kim Granzow

Linnea Hendrickson

Bette Jean Ingui

Don Johnson

James & Sharen

Koch

Fran Neil

Rod & Roberta

Rodríguez

Marge Weitzel

Friends - up to \$49

Gail S. Anastasio

Geraldine Boden

Margie Collins

Norm Dawson

Don Degasper

Judy Elder

Elisabeth Endean

Shirley Furen

Andrew "Bo"

Gamboa

Rita D. García

Patricia Gonzáles

Roy & Helen

Johnson

Richard Johnson

Ralph & Barbara

Kaplan

Barbara Kerr

Richard & Pushpa

Knottenbelt

Dirk & Arlene

Knowles

Victoria L. Magown

Deanna & Bob

McMain

Barbara Pierce

Mary J. Rajé

Lindasue Romero

Mara Saubers

Carol Sliney

Harriet S. Smith

Steve Smith

Tan Va

Tim Taylor

Richard Tuschhoff

Special

Smith's

Community

Rewards

Frontstream

NM HLAA chapters are 501(c)3 nonprofits and all donations are tax deductible.

Support the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Become a member TODAY!

The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Membership in the national organization is by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly publication Hearing Life.



Albuquerque Chapter Membership

New

Renew

Name:

Date:

Address: Please mail Newsletter rather than email.

City:

State:

Zip:

Email:

Phone(s):

voice? text? VP? caption?

Mail to: HLAAAbq Treasurer, P. O. Box36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

Payment: Membership amount: \$..... Donation: \$..... Total: \$.....

Dues: \$15 per household per calendar year (Includes newsletter subscription)

Online: <https://www.hearinglossabq.org/electronic-pay>

Wired For Sound



P.O.Box 36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

