

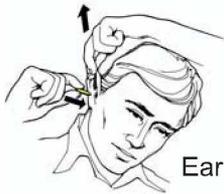
# Fitting Formable Plugs

**Size Matters** To fit properly, a formable plug should be inserted so that most of the plug fits into the ear canal. While many formable plugs are “one size fits most,” different sizes are available. If you can’t get at least half of the plug into the ear canal, or if the plug can’t expand enough to stay firmly seated, you need a different size.

- 1 ROLL** the formable plug between your thumb and forefinger(s) to compress it into a small, smooth, round cylinder.



- 2 REACH** over top of your head and pull up or back on the top of your ear. This straightens out your ear canal so the plugs can go in far enough.



Ear Pull

- 3 INSERT** tightly rolled plug into straightened ear canal.

- 4 HOLD** the ear plug in place for a few seconds after inserting to give it time to expand and seat itself in the ear canal.

**Remember**, the plug must be rolled down tightly before you try to insert it into your ear canal. You shouldn’t try to push a formable plug into your ear if you have not rolled it tight enough.



**Correct**



**Incorrect**

This plug needed to be rolled down more tightly.



**Good fit**



**Poor fit**

When you remove the plug, check to make sure there is a slight bend. (See the drawings above.) The bend means the earplug was inserted deeply enough to reach the bend in the ear canal. There should be no creases in the earplug.

Although considered disposable, formable plugs can be washed and used repeatedly.

# Fitting Premolded Plugs



## Correct

This plug completely seals the ear canal opening.



## Incorrect

This plug is too large or has not been fully inserted, leaving gaps where noise can leak through.

Premolded plugs may come in different sizes or as “one size fits most.” Try out different sizes to find the ear plug that fits you best.

- 1 REACH** over top of your head and pull up or back on the top of your ear. This straightens out your ear canal so the plugs can go in far enough.



Ear Pull

- 2 INSERT** premolded plug into straightened ear canal.

With a **premolded** plug, you can perform the “tug test.” To do this, gently pull in and out on the stem of the earplug. As you do so, you should feel pressure changes in your ear canal to confirm you have a good fit. Do not pull hard enough to break the seal.

Premolded plugs are **reusable**. Most can be easily washed using mild soap. Make sure they are completely dry before storing them in their case or using them in your ear. Using wet plugs can irritate ear canals.

# Fitting Canal Caps

Canal caps are formable or premolded earplugs attached to a headband.

Depending on the design, headbands may be worn over the head, behind the neck or under the chin. The headband allows canal caps to be hung around the neck when not being used. This makes them convenient to use when noise is not constant and you are taking your earplugs in and out frequently. Fitting and using canal caps is otherwise similar to fitting and using formable and premolded plugs.



## Tips on Using Hearing Protection

- ✔ When an earplug is properly inserted your voice will sound deeper or louder.
- ✔ To check your fit, cup your hands over your ears and make a good seal. Count out loud while slowly cupping and uncupping your ears. If you have a good fit, your voice should sound about the same as you cup and uncup your ears. Try this with and without plugs. Hear the difference?
- ✔ Use clean hands when inserting ear plugs, especially when rolling down formable plugs. Dirt can irritate your ears. When clean hands are not possible, ear muffs or premolded plugs with stems can be a better option.
- ✔ When removing an earplug, slowly twist the plug to break the seal. If you pull the earplug out quickly without first gently breaking the airtight seal, you could harm your ear.

**“I expected to lose my hearing....  
but I thought it would be quiet.”**

If you are around noise at work, at home or doing the things that you enjoy, you need to protect your ears. If you don't, you can expect to develop permanent hearing loss. You may also develop a permanent **ringing, buzzing** or **roaring** in your ears known as **Tinnitus**.

## **They're your ears PROTECT THEM**

For additional copies, questions, or comments related to this brochure, e-mail [farm.noise@cdc.gov](mailto:farm.noise@cdc.gov)

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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## **Buying Hearing Protection**

Hearing protection is available from many sources including on the internet and in home improvement and farm stores.

Remember, **size matters!** Not every earplug fits every ear. You may even need a different size for each ear. If you can't get at least half of the plug into the ear canal, or if it can't expand enough to stay firmly seated, you need a different size.

Earmuffs may work well for you. These are often worn during hunting and shooting. Some have a built-in radio as well as electronic circuits to limit the noise. They allow you to listen to your favorite sports or music. They are usually easy to fit and convenient to put on and take off. They can also make great gifts. However, if you wear glasses, earrings or have facial hair, ear plugs may be a better choice to ensure proper fit and sound reduction.

### **Formable**



### **Earmuffs**



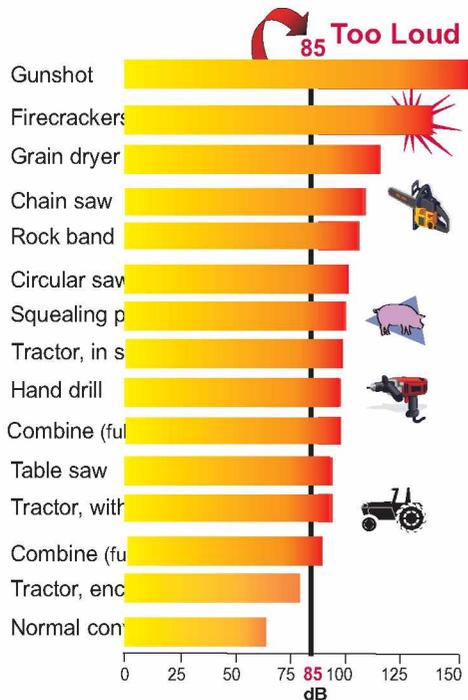
### **Premolded**



Replace your ear plugs or the seals of your ear muffs when they look worn or feel different.

# Common Noise Levels

Exposure to noise above 85 dB can cause hearing loss and tinnitus.



A "decibel" is the unit used to measure the loudness of sound. Decibel levels for each item shown in the graph may vary.

*If you need to raise your voice to be heard an arm's length away, the noise is probably loud enough to damage your hearing.*

## Have you Heard?

### Hearing Loss Caused by Farm Noise is Preventable



### Young Farmers' Guide for Selecting and Using Hearing Protection

