

THE MASKING HANDBOOK (FOR AUDIOMETRY)

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APPENDIX A1

THE PLATEAU METHOD

The plateau method is based on two ideas: we choose an initial masking level (IML) based on the hearing threshold of the Non-Test Ear (NTE) and then proceed to confirm which ear is hearing the test signals.

1. Initial Masking Level (IML)
 - a. The IML delivered to the NTE is referenced to the hearing threshold (HTL) of the NTE. The NTE threshold is the first correction or compensation factor.
 - b. (A second correction factor for the occlusion effect [OE] may be added for bone-conduction testing.)
 - c. A pre-determined amount of active masking noise (AML) is then added.
 - d. The three elements together consist of the IML:
 - $IML = NTE\ HTL + OE + AML$
 - e. The initial masking noise is presented to the NTE.
 - f. An initially-masked hearing threshold is then measured from the Test Ear (TE.)
 2. The plateau
 - a. Once the initial, masked threshold is completed, the masking level to the NTE is then increased in steps.
 - b. After each step-increase in masking, a hearing threshold is measured.
 - c. This allows us to confirm whether it is the Test Ear that is hearing the stimuli or the NTE.
- Try to identify the plateau region:
 - Increase the masking level by 5 dB and retest.
 - Do this three times, for a total increase of 15 dB; retest threshold each time.
 - [Alternative: use 10 dB steps and increase two times for a total 20 dB increase.]
 - If the threshold remains stable, then you have the proper, masked threshold.
 - If you increase masking and the patient does not respond, then increase the test signal to the TE until they respond.
 - Any time a threshold shifts with a masking increase presentation to the NTE, a true hearing threshold from the TE has not yet been determined.