

THE MASKING HANDBOOK (FOR AUDIOMETRY)

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APPENDIX A3

DETERMINING MASKING METHOD FOR THRESHOLD TESTING

There are two methods available for masking when testing hearing thresholds: they are the Plateau Method and the Optimized Method.

The Plateau Method is the traditional masking procedure and can be used for any configuration during threshold testing. This is the default method for audiometric masking.

The Optimized Method is designed only for asymmetrical hearing losses. When one ear has better hearing than the other, the Optimized Method might be an option. The Test Ear is the one that has the poorer hearing; the NTE is the better ear.

The Optimized Method is effective for both air and bone-conduction testing.

Because the Optimized Method saves time, is effective, and prevents overmasking, it is recommended to use this approach when possible. How can a clinician decide when to use the Optimized Method versus the Plateau Method?

When considering the Optimized Method, Turner recommended that the difference in air-conduction thresholds between the TE and the NTE should be at least 25 dB.

Another approach is to quickly compare the potential Initial Masking Levels (IMLs) that might be used for each method. Whichever method provides the higher IML would be the chosen masking technique for that situation.