



Making an Impression

A step-by-step guide

Increase patient satisfaction and reduce returns by making quality ear impressions every time.

Much more than meets the ear

Your professional expertise is critical when selecting the best solution for a patient. Many factors and considerations come into play when determining if a patient is a custom hearing aid candidate, including:

- **Audiogram**

If their hearing thresholds are in a near normal range, occlusion might be an issue. The patient may prefer an open-fit product like a RIC.

- **Dexterity**

Customs may be easier to put on and remove than a standard product, but can also be small with even smaller batteries. It's a conversation to have with patients who have difficulty handling small objects.

- **Ear anatomy and history**

If the patient has narrow, curvy, or even extremely straight ear canals, a custom hearing aid may not be the appropriate solution for them. Patients who have recurrent ear infections and/or ear surgeries may not be good custom candidates either.

- **Lifestyle**

Does the patient wear glasses? Do they work in active environments? Is a noticeable hearing aid a deal breaker? Certain comfort, aesthetic, and occupational needs lend themselves better to custom devices.

Ultimately, **the patient has come to you** to weigh all considerations—physical, audiological and patient priorities—and recommend a solution that delivers both success and satisfaction.





As hearing care professionals, it's our job to decide what hearing solution is best for each patient—but the ear is the boss. It dictates what we should and should not build for custom products.



A good impression is the foundation—it will tell us everything we need to physically know about the ear.

Ray Woodworth

Center for Excellence, Starkey



Quality in... quality out

A superior custom product fitting starts with a high quality ear impression. Making a perfect impression requires proper technique, an attention to detail, and repetition.

As the custom hearing aid experts, we know a thing or two about making accurate, precision-tested impressions—and how good impressions can also be used to make earmolds, custom cases, hearing protection solutions and more.

This guide, developed with help from **Starkey's most experienced impression takers**, shares best practice tips perfected from shooting thousands of impressions in our Center for Excellence.



Scan the QR code or go to starkeypro.com for more education, including all our how-to videos.


How to make an impression

STEP 1

Examine the ear

The first thing you want to do is examine the ear, preferably with a video otoscope.

- Look for **blockage or wax** that might interfere.
- Check for **abnormalities or growths**.
- Get a good sense of the ear's **diameter**.
- Ensure it's **clean** before going any further.

 **Pro tip:** Your video otoscope is your best friend—an indispensable tool for ear cleanings, impressions and even patient acceptance.




Watch the video

STEP 2

Insert the otoblock

The size and type of otoblock you use makes a big difference in the outcome of your impression.

- In most cases, we recommend using **cotton, not foam**, and flaring it before insertion.
- Properly **brace your hand** against patient's head.
- Use your otoscope and a curette to guide the block **past the second bend** of the ear canal and place it as close as possible to the eardrum.
- Once placed, **check your work** by inspecting the perimeter of the otoblock with your otoscope to ensure there are no gaps.

 **Pro tip:** Positioning yourself level to the ear, lifting up the pinna and pulling the tragus forward all help make it easier to see what you're doing.




Watch the video

STEP 3

Take the impression

Consider the shore of the silicone you use. In general, **medium is recommended** as it allows for good definition of landmarks and is pliable enough for easy removal.

- Insert the tip and leave in for about three seconds until the silicone starts coming out around the end of the impression gun tip.
- Let the material **flow and fill naturally** — keeping tip movement to a minimum.
- Make sure to fill the helix and go up the **triangular fossa**, regardless of the product or earmold style you are ordering.

 **Pro tip:** To help eliminate gaps, voids and ridges, keep the tip of the gun buried in material as you slowly pull it out.




Watch the video

STEP 4

Remove the impression

Wait **five to eight minutes** for the impression to cure before removing from each ear.

- **Test the silicone** with your fingernail to ensure it's not wet.
- **Break the vacuum seal** before removal by gently pulling forward on the ear while asking the patient to make a chewing motion.
- Keep gently pulling on the ear while **twisting the impression** towards the nose.
- Grab the string **simultaneously** while pulling the impression out slowly.

 **Pro tip:** Don't forget to look inside the ear one more time to ensure nothing is left over or injured.



Watch the video

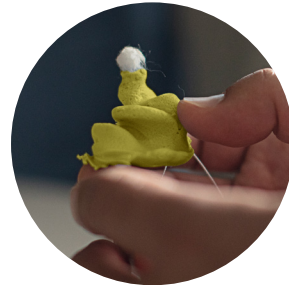
How to make an impression

STEP 5

Evaluate the impression

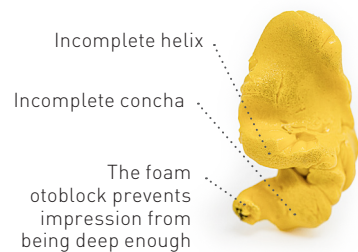
A good impression will be as deep as possible, have minimal gaps and voids, and give us as complete a picture as possible of the patient's ear.

Pro tip: Using a measuring tool may also help determine the right custom style for each patient.



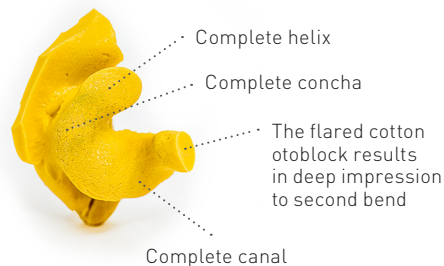
Bad impression

Poor technique doesn't provide landmark identification



Good impression

Good technique ensures smooth impression and clear landmarks



Scan the QR code to watch Ray Woodworth and Dr. Dave Fabry walk through the steps of taking a quality ear impression.

An art worth mastering

Good impression taking is an art that doesn't just benefit your patients — it provides advantages for you, too.

Patient benefits:

- A tighter acoustic seal for better feedback cancellation
- A more discreet, better fitting device
- Optimized sound direction
- Opportunity for more power and gain
- Improved comfort and satisfaction

Professional benefits:

- Differentiates you from online services
- Helps you address each patient uniquely
- Results in fewer remakes and returns
- Enables you to offer earmolds, custom-cased options, sound protection, and other specialty solutions

