

The Human Ear

Terms and definitions

anvil (also called the incus) a tiny bone that passes vibrations from the hammer to the stirrup.

cochlea a spiral-shaped, fluid-filled, inner ear structure; it is lined with cilia (tiny hairs) that move when vibrated and cause a nerve impulse to form.

ear canal the tube through which sound travels to the ear drum.

ear drum (also called the tympanic membrane) a thin membrane that vibrates when sound waves reach it.

Eustachian tube a tube that connects the middle ear to the back of the nose; it equalizes the pressure between the middle ear and the air outside. When you “pop” your ears as you change altitude (going up a mountain or in an airplane), you are equalizing the air pressure in your middle ear.

hammer (also called the malleus) a tiny bone that passes vibrations from the eardrum to the anvil.

nerves these carry electro-chemical signals from the inner ear (the cochlea) to the brain.

pinna (also called the auricle) the external part of the ear that collects soundwaves.

semicircular canals three loops of fluid-filled tubes that are attached to the cochlea in the inner ear; they help us maintain our sense of balance.

stirrup (also called the stapes) a tiny, U-shaped bone that passes vibrations from the stirrup to the cochlea; this is the smallest bone in the human body (0.25 to 0.33 cm long).

Protect your ears. If the noise is too loud, walk away, turn it down (*Turn it to the Left*), or use ear plugs.