

## ACCESSIBILITY

## Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs Review

# VIBES HI-FIDELITY EARPLUGS TURN DOWN THE VOLUME JUST ENOUGH



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Updated May 9, 2023

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## Vibes High Fidelity Ear Plugs

Pros	Comfortable	Comparatively affordable
Cons	Middling sound reduction	Not fit for conversation

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\$28.95 from [Target](#)


We live in a noisy world. The cacophony of cell phone conversations, microwave beeps, and car engines annoys many people. But for those of us with sound sensitivities, it can paralyze us to the point that we can't function.

I've lived with disabling chronic illness for much of my adult life, progressively becoming more overwhelmed by cognitive and autonomic components. Like those with **autism** or Long COVID, too much light or sound can quickly exhaust my mental capacity.

Especially during moments of intense concentration—like when I'm writing articles or carrying a conversation—the steady hum of street traffic or constant *thump thump* of a neighbor walking the floors above me eventually fogs my cognitive ability until I can

barely type or speak at all. To combat the crippling noise, I have a (growing) arsenal of **noise-canceling earplugs** at the ready, including Loop and Calmer Flare.

This brings me to **Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs**, (**available at Amazon**) which promise to support “your sound, your experience.”



### Vibes High-Fidelity Earplugs

These virtually invisible ear plugs sit comfortably within the ear canal to reduce loud noise levels during work, focused learning, and more.

\$23.16 at Amazon

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## How do Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs work?



The narrow, medical-grade tips on these Vibes earplugs can be customized by size so that discomfort won't be an issue during prolonged use.

Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs decrease volume without muffling sound. Unlike traditional foam earplugs—which lower only high-frequency (treble) sounds and leave us with unintelligible bass notes—Vibes lower all frequencies by about 22 decibels (dB). They do this through an earbud with comfortable medical-grade silicone tips and a protruding stem made from polycarbonate plastic with an (almost invisible) aluminum acoustic filter inside.

Vibes were designed in Minneapolis with guidance from the University of Minnesota Audiology Department and tested by an accredited psychoacoustics testing agency. They're made in Malaysia.

## What I like about Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs

There are several excellent earbud options available for those with sound sensitivity. Here are a few ways that Vibes stand out from the crowd.

### They're *very* comfortable



These earplugs feel as though they're barely there due to their nimble size and soft silicone material.

For those who use **noise-canceling earbuds** to lower sound overwhelm, Vibes are incredibly comfortable. They're so lightweight that it's easy to forget you're wearing them. The range of tip sizes promises a snug fit for various users.

And the soft silicone conforms easily to your ear shape. Unlike foam or wax ear plugs, they don't press into the ear canal to cause uncomfortable pressure. I wear earplugs for long periods while working and have not found these to bother or distract me even after hours of wear.

### They offer subtle but substantial sound reduction

Vibes reduce all sound frequencies by about 22 dB. This is not quite the 30+ dB reduction of **Loop's** Quiet earbuds but more significant than the subtle sound smoothing of **Flare Calmer** earbuds.

I tested Vibes in various spaces and found they help me retain the cognitive ability I would lose if surrounded by more sound. At my desk, I can't hear the electric kettle boiling (read: screaming) in the kitchen, but I can hear my dog barking for attention.

Outside near a busy street, doing laundry in an echoey laundry room, or driving with the windows open, the rush of noise softens. And when I listen to music through my phone's speaker, the volume lowers, but the sound comes through as less tinny—another slight adjustment that saves me some much-needed cognitive energy.



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## They're affordable

The \$30 price tag makes sense for what Vibes have to offer. They're endlessly reusable.

They come with small, medium, and large ear tip sizes and a pocket-sized carrying case. And the medical-grade silicone is **easy to clean** with a quick massage of rubbing alcohol and warm water. I've had mine for many months and haven't noticed any wear or tear.

## What I don't like about Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs

One of the most significant claims from the Vibes team is that you can carry on a conversation with their Hi-Fidelity Earplugs inserted. For my disability lifestyle, I didn't find this to be accurate.

## Their sound reduction is middling



Although these earplugs have decent noise reduction levels, there are others on the market that do a better job.

As you can see from its **FAQ page**, Vibes primarily targets its earplugs to concert-goers. From what I can see from online reviewers, those concert-goers love them for use at music festivals and other events with live music. Because they reduce the volume of sound frequencies equally, the deafening volume of a concert tones down without the listener sacrificing the sound quality of the music.

I'm not going to concerts at this stage of my sick crip life. Being immunocompromised during an enduring pandemic, I'm generally never in spaces where crowds or sounds are overwhelmingly loud. This makes Vibes' modest sound reduction lower on my priority list than it might be for others.

## Conversation isn't *easy* with them in

I've kept Vibes in when switching from private work mode to public conversation. Yes—I can hear the person or people around me speak. But in a generally quiet place, I must strain to keep up.

This effect is the opposite of helpful when trying to conserve brain energy. And when I speak back, my volume is laughably loud in response.

I don't blame Vibes for this. I've yet to find an earbud that reduces volume enough to lighten my cognitive load while keeping conversation accessible. Maybe it doesn't exist?!

## Should you buy Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs?

**Yes, if you live with a sound sensitivity and are frequently in noisy environments**



Noisy environments can be stressful and detrimental to your hearing—try using Vibes Ear Plugs to protect those precious ears.

If you're disabled by sound and spend a lot of time at loud concerts or in noisy environments, then definitely consider buying the Vibes Hi-Fidelity Earplugs as a solution for protecting your hearing. I can see how these would help those who regularly attend school, an office, or social events where they want to hear others without absorbing overwhelming volume.

For those of us who spend the majority of our time in spaces that are already quiet, Vibes are great when you want to turn down the dial without wiping out sounds almost completely.

But for my part, I reach more for my **Loop** ear plugs when I need to soothe myself with quiet or concentrate for long stretches of time. When I'm out and about, I stick in my **Flare Audio Calmer buds**, which shift abrasive sounds, like car engines or refrigerator hums, ever so slightly while keeping volume intact.



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