Audio file

Audiology.mp3

Transcript

00:00:02 Casey Ellis

Welcome to the Pre-Professional Playbook podcast, where preparation and hard work come together.

00:00:07 Casey Ellis

This podcast explores pathways in the health and law professions to help you format your future.

00:00:12 Casey Ellis

I'm your host, Casey Ellis, an advisor in the University of Georgia's Pre-Professional Advising Office.

00:00:18 Casey Ellis

Whether you're just starting out, considering your career shift, or just wanting to know more, this episode is your guide to navigating the various educational and professional options available.

00:00:28 Casey Ellis

Today, we're diving into the field of audiology, so settle in because we're covering this one from start to finish like a solid game day drive.

00:00:39 Casey Ellis

Audiologists are the standout players of all things hearing.

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They support individuals from newborn hearing screenings to caring for older adults.

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always guiding through treatment and management.

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Audiologists are healthcare professionals who specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as treatment of disorders.

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It can be difficult to understand the difference between audiologist, deaf and hard of hearing specialist, and hearing aid specialist.

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In short, audiologists are the ones who actually diagnose hearing and balance disorders.

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They can test, interpret results, and create treatment plans.

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Deaf and hard of hearing specialists work more in educational settings, especially with children.

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They focus more on communication access, accommodations, and understanding things like ADA protections or IEP plans.

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They may support people who are culturally deaf and use ASL as their primary language.

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Hearing aid specialists are more focused on hearing aids with their fitting and adjustments but don't have the same depth of knowledge when it comes to diagnosing hearing loss or understanding the underlying medical causes.

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So while all three roles support individuals with hearing needs, they each play a very distinct role and work as a broad support team.

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What are the primary responsibilities of an audiologist?

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Audiologists test hearing, find issues early, and help people protect and manage their hearing.

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They have received advanced training and combine clinical expertise with patient-centered care.

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They guide and help patients who experience a number of conditions such as hearing loss, tinnitus, or vestibular issues and help patients move forward with an understanding of how these issues may affect their life.

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There are several core practice areas in audiology.

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They might be described as newborn hearing, pediatric and school audiology, adult and aging hearing, medical and diagnostic audiology, vestibular testing, cochlear implants and devices, ear health and preventive care, and even more niche work like animal audiology.

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Audiologists work in hospitals where they can help diagnose hearing issues and do early screenings.

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A key example is newborn hearing screening.

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Most babies are tested before leaving the hospital.

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If something is flagged, audiologists follow up with more detailed testing and help guide family members through the next steps.

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They can also work with patients of all ages in the hospital, such as evaluating and treating hearing and balance issues.

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One example is hearing loss after treatments, such as chemotherapy, as they collaborate with physicians as part of the care team.

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Audiologists can work in schools from early intervention through high school.

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However, they are not always in schools, and sometimes schools can bring in an audiologist on a contract basis through an agency to support students as needed.

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In K-12 settings, they can be involved in things like IEPs, helping determine what support students need in classrooms, from accommodations like FM systems where a teacher wears a microphone and the student hears more clearly through the device, to making sure equipment works properly and recommending additional support to help students succeed.

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Audiologists also commonly work in private practices like ENT clinics, which are ear, nose, and throat clinics.

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Some own their own clinics, others are employees or may be working as consultants.

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In these settings, there is a heavy focus on diagnostics.

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They work closely with physicians and help determine medical or surgical next steps if needed.

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They can counsel patients on their results and help them understand their treatment options.

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Audiologists also play a key role in dispensing hearing aids, cochlear implants, and other hearing devices, helping patients select, fit, and manage these technologies.

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Audiologists can also work in settings like nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

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They can check and adjust hearing aids, troubleshoot common issues, and make sure the devices are working properly.

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In these settings, they play a big role in education, not just for the patients, but for nurses and staff on things like how to clean hearing aids, how to prevent them from getting lost, and overall how to support patients with hearing loss in their daily care.

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This makes this setting unique in that it is not just patient care, it's helping an entire care team better support quality of life for those under their care.

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Audiologists can work in research and academic settings.

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They may teach students in audiology programs while also working in university clinics and conducting research on hearing and balance disorders, such as the connection between hearing loss and cognitive loss.

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Many balance teaching with clinical practice.

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They also may focus on developing new technologies relating to hearing aids and cochlear implants.

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Whichever path you choose in research, you are playing a part in advancing the field.

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Overall, audiologists have flexibility of where they can work and can even shift paths in the field over time.

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So what does a path look like to become an audiologist?

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While there is no specific undergraduate major required, majoring in communication sciences and disorders or related fields like psychology, education, linguistics, and even biology provide you with good foundation for the field.

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Some schools require certain sciences and speech courses if you do not major in communication sciences and disorders.

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These courses often look like statistics, biology, a physical science that usually is chemistry or physics, social sciences, and then courses in phonetics and language acquisition.

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You should build a strong clinical emphasis early, whether that's volunteer work, shadowing, or internships in newborn hearing screening, pediatric testing, and device fitting to align with speech pathology service areas.

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To become an audiologist, you'll complete an accredited Doctor of Audiology program post-undergrad.

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These programs last about three to four years.

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After obtaining an AUD, you will typically complete a certification process which involves passing the Praxis exam and meeting state licensure requirements.

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While some states may require certification as part of the licensing process, the certification itself is usually completed after completing the doctoral program.

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If you're interested in research, you can pursue a PhD in audiology or hearing science.

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It usually starts with a bachelor's degree in fields like communication sciences and disorders, neuroscience, biomedical engineering, or psychology.

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You should also have an early involvement in research labs, including undergraduate research assistantships, to build laboratory skills and familiarity with audiology.

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Within the PhD program, you will develop a dissertation relating to hearing function, speech and language development, device technology like hearing aids, cochlear implants, vestibular systems, auditory neuroscience, or related areas.

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After that, you can pursue a postdoctoral fellowship to deepen expertise and seek multidisciplinary collaboration across fields like engineering, psychology, pediatric development, and artificial intelligence and machine learning for diagnostics.

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Within academia, you can obtain faculty roles combining teaching and lab-based research, or work with industry-affiliated labs like research and development roles in hearing aid and cochlear implant manufacturers or medical device companies.

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At UGA, there are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved and build your experience in audiology.

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You can join student clubs and organizations, including the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Odd Dogs, which is a UGA student audiology club that offers guest speakers and career exposure, augmentative and alternative communication clubs,

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American Sign Language student groups that offer study abroad or language exchange opportunities, and destination dogs which partner students with other students who have an intellectual disability and gain skill in career development at UGA.

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While there are no particular audiology-related research opportunities at UGA, you can also join undergraduate research labs in communication sciences and disorders or related departments focused on language development.

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Clinical shadowing and volunteer experiences will also give you a real-world exposure to the field.

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UGA Speech-Language Hearing Clinic, which is a clinic affiliated with the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program, often welcomes student volunteers or observers.

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Local ENT and hospital audiology departments, as well as clinics in Athens, will also allow you to observe tests, counseling, and patient care.

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Additionally, you can gain a global perspective on audiology by studying abroad and participating in language immersion programs.

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Be sure to consult with the Office of Global Engagement Advisors to select programs that align with your audiology career goals.

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To apply for a graduate program in audiology, you will most likely need to take the GRE.

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The test is divided into 3 sections, verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing.

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You can do it in Clark Howell Hall or from the comfort of your own home online with a live proctor.

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This test can be taken multiple times and then super scored.

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It is $220, though there are fee reduction programs that can be used.

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Another test that may be required is the CASPER exam.

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The CASPER exam is required of a few schools and consists of dilemmas and ethical questions to judge how a student will behave in certain situations and assesses their critical thinking skills.

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This is not a pass or fail test and each school determines how they use the scores and what is competitive for one school may not be for another.

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This is an online test with 14 stations and a different evaluator for each station.

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You will need to apply through a centralized application known as the CIDCAS application.

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If a school does not use the centralized application, then you will apply to that school directly.

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The CIDCAS application opens in July and each school within the application will have their own deadlines.

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The price can change, but in 2025, the application charged $150 for the first program you applied to and $60 for each additional program.

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There are fee waivers based on income or service.

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The application allows you to enter all your experiences from college, as well as grades, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and test scores that will help programs decide whether they want to interview for admission to their program.

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Audiology is a doctoral-level profession, so after undergrad, it's about four more years of training, including a full-time clinical year at the end.

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Years one through three are coursework along with clinical rotations in different settings.

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You can think of year four like residency.

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This will be a full-time clinical externship where you work under the supervision of an audiologist.

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The Praxis for Audiology is a national board exam that you take near the end of your AUD program or right after graduating.

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It tests your knowledge of hearing, balance disorders, diagnostics, and treatment and is required for licensure in most states.

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According to the U.S.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the median salary for audiologists was $92K.

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According to ASHA member surveys, the salaries can vary depending on education, work setting, and location, with salaries ranging from $75K all the way up to $122K for audiologists who hold a PhD.

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The job outlook for audiology shows that the number of positions is expected to grow by over 9% over the next 10 years.

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That's faster than average, and it reflects a growing demand for audiologists.

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From cutting-edge research to everyday clinical decisions, audiology is always evolving, and the next generation of audiologists will help shape where it goes next.

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It's a field where the playbook is always expanding and the game is never static.

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Remember, the field of audiology is about being part of a team that innovates and shows up day after day.

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Don't forget to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode with your teammates and colleagues.

00:12:23 Casey Ellis

Catch you next time on the Pre-Professional Playbook podcast.