ome people leave their healthcare profession-
al’s office confused by what was said. Did you
ever feel that you were confused by abbrevi-
atations and acronyms (abbreviations made by
combining the initial letters or syllables of sev-
eral words)? Unfortunately, some professionals
use confusing abbreviations that do not help
the communication process between patient
and professional.

A working explanation for each abbreviation should be given
by your audiologist, because many of the abbreviations involve
complex concepts. A list of all the abbreviations used in audi-
ology would be very lengthy, but a simple classifying of basic
hearing test areas where technical abbreviations are typically
used may help patients. Here are four basic hearing and/or ear
test classifications that you may experience when being seen by
an audiologist with a few commonly associated abbreviations
within each classification:

1. **Hearing testing in using pure tones:** Pure tone testing
   provides information about the faintest tones a person hears at
   selected low to high pitches (frequencies).
   - AD: right ear
   - AC: air conduction audiometry
   - BC: bone conduction audiometry
   - AS: left ear
   - dB: decibel
   - dBHL: hearing level
   - dBSP: decibel sound pressure level
   - dBHTL: hearing level threshold level
   - HF: high frequency
   - HL: hearing level
   - HTL: hearing level threshold level
   - Hz: hertz (and kHz: kilohertz)
   - LF: low frequency
   - PTA: pure tone audiometry
   - SPL: sound pressure level

2. **Hearing testing using speech:** Speech audiometry pro-
   vides information about discriminating spoken words.
   - AP: auditory perception
   - APD: auditory processing disorder

3. **Middle ear functioning:** Immittance or tympanometry is
   basically an examination used to test the condition of the ear-
   drum, middle ear and Eustachian tube.
   - AR: acoustic reflex
   - ART: acoustic reflex threshold
   - TM: tympanic membrane
   - PVT: physical volume test
   - SPL: sound pressure level

4. **Otoacoustic Emissions:** Otoacoustic emissions are sounds
   that are produced by healthy ears in response to sound stimu-
   lations.
   - OAE: otoacoustic emissions
   - TEOAE or TrOAE: transient-evoked OAE
   - DPOAE: distortion product OAE

Abbreviations are shortcut letters that are used to commu-
nicate complex clinical audiology concepts. While they are
commonly used by professionals, they can sometimes confuse
patients. It is important to ask your audiologist to explain abbre-
viation in order fully understand the meaning of professionally
used abbreviations.

**REFERENCES**
2. University of Rochester Medical Center: www.stronghealth.com/
services/Audiology/glossary.cfm

Jonathan R. Brown, PhD, CCC-A, CED, is a professor at Clarion Univer-
sity in Clarion, PA.