



Navigating Unfamiliar Places and Spaces Using Sounds to Stay Safe

Sounds are everywhere. You can tell where things are by listening to their sounds. Sound helps you find the TV in your living room, the alarm clock in your bedroom, and even the dog barking in your yard.

Getting older brings changes to vision. Aging can also affect how well you hear things. With vision loss, you start to rely more heavily on your ears. So you're training your auditory system to pay more attention to how things sound. Before, there was no reason to **listen** for an open doorway because you could **see** it.

But now, listening for how sounds change when doorways are open or closed gives you information to help you confidently go through them. If you receive training from an orientation and mobility specialist, you may even learn how to make your own sounds.

The safest way to develop auditory skills is to experiment with sounds in your own hallways. Start walking down a familiar hallway. Listen to your footsteps.

Now, snap your fingers or clap your hands. Can you hear any echoes? Try keeping some of the doors open, and some of them closed. If an echo is short when you walk past an entryway, the door is probably closed.

Now try walking down the hallway when that same door is open. Do the echoes sound longer? That's because the sound has further to travel. After you've become comfortable with how sounds change in your own home, you're ready to try out your auditory skills in new places.