

# FAQs

## **FAQs Pertaining to Gruv Button™ Retrofit**

Q: What is Gruv Button™ Retrofit?

A: A simple hearing aid Retrofit that provides a no-slip “groove” in the surface of the hearing aid, so the fingertip does not slip off during attempted insertion. The Retrofit is a small, plastic sleeve that slides over the existing speaker, which is inserted into the ear canal. Crucially, the award-winning innovation provides the positive, no-slip interface – the groove – between the fingertip and the speaker end-surface. This interface facilitates sufficiently deep insertion.

Q: Why was Gruv Button™ Retrofit developed™?

A: To help the millions who experience difficulty every day inserting their hearing aids. Frustration associated with insertion causes many to abandon their hearing care program entirely. This can lead to social isolation, cognitive decline, and other health, safety, and lifestyle related consequences. Hearing aid manufacturers could offer the Retrofit as a simple, inexpensive accessory to their hearing aids, solving their widespread user-experience problem.

Q: What are its key attributes?

- A:
- It's an award-winner. The *Gruv Button™ Retrofit* is the winner of the global *2024 Hearing Technology Innovator Award*, announced in September, in the Hearing Device Accessories category. An earlier version, called *Gruv Button™*, also won the *2022 Today's Caregiver Friendly Award*.
  - It's needed; see [comments by users, users' families, caregivers, hearing care professionals](#).
  - It's proven; [prototypes demonstrated Gruv Button's™ bona fide efficacy](#).
  - It's easily understood; see [comments by users, users' families, caregivers, hearing care professionals](#).
  - It's a “reasonable accommodation”; estimated retail price is \$15 or less.
  - It's ergonomically designed. Everyone uses a finger to insert their hearing aid speakers. *Gruv Button™* is comprised of [three components, that together, interface with the fingertip](#): a *Fingertip Support™*, *Fingernail Gruv™*, and *Fingernail Backstop™*.
  - It's universally designed because it makes insertion easier for all hearing aid users.
  - It's inclusive; due to its universal design.
  - It's instinctive; no user training is needed.
  - It's the answer to the hearing industry's pressing user-experience problem; see [“Are You Among the 40% Who Struggle to Insert Your Hearing Aids?”](#)
  - It's a barrier buster; see [“Are You Among the 40% Who Struggle to Insert Your Hearing Aids?”](#)
  - It's an example of why the industry needs to “Get Back to Basics”: all of the industry's impressive sound processing technology is not as effective as it's intended to be, if the hearing aid speaker is not sufficiently deep in the ear canal.
  - It's humane. Access to *Gruv Button™ Retrofit* is a human right, under the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Articles 9 and 21](#). The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
  - It's a vital improvement in sound therapy because it facilitates the delivery of the prescribed amplification.

The term *Gruv Button™* refers to the original “built-in” delivery system, in which the “groove” is built into the speaker during manufacture. It is designed for accessibility and designed for all, and is the easiest way for hearing aid users and their caregivers to insert the speaker into the ear canal. Information about this option was first published in *The Hearing Review* in 2016. Because it improves the user experience with easy, instinctive, and sufficiently-deep insertion, *Gruv Button™* benefits the entire industry – including users, caregivers, hearing care professionals and manufacturers.

Inexplicably, the industry has not adopted the “built-in” delivery system for *Gruv Button*™, so *Each Ear LLC* invented the *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit*.

The term *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* refers to the just introduced “retrofit” (or second) delivery system for this technology, as a simpler, less expensive alternative to the earlier, “built in” design. The *Retrofit* makes it easier for hearing aid manufacturers to monetize it, produce it, and distribute it through their vast network of hearing aid clinics.

*Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* is the winner of the global 2024 HEARING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATOR AWARD from the Hearing Health & Technology Matters organization.

With an estimated retail price of \$15 or less, *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit*, by definition, is a “reasonable accommodation,” because it ensures that persons with disabilities experience functional hearing aid insertion on an equal basis with others.

Q: How do *Gruv Button*’s™ three components interface with the fingertip?

A: The three components (*Fingertip Support*™, *Fingernail Gruv*™, and *Fingernail Backstop*™) collaborate synergistically to effectively interface with the fingertip. They hold the fingertip in place in order to provide “fingertip control” over the speaker. Their simple, yet sophisticated arrangement is of both ergonomic and universal design. *Gruv Button*’s™ technology is essential in solving the problem of hearing aid insertion difficulty.

Q: Why is the use of this technology essential to solving the industry’s pervasive insertion problem?

A: The use of *Gruv Button*’s™ technology – its unique and proven design, its ergonomic qualities, its flexibility, its universal application – is absolutely essential to any serious effort to solve the industry’s widespread and persistent insertion problem. Its symbiotic combination of features and benefits makes it unique and irreplaceable. There can be no substitutes.

This is exactly why *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* has been lauded with a major, global hearing-industry innovation award. Many top hearing care experts have attested to its obvious value to society.

Q: A Question for the inventor, Jeffrey Szmanda: Why did you invent *Gruv Button*™?

A: “I invented this assistive device because I’ve been seeing, firsthand, my patients and their caregivers struggle with insertion during my 12 years of fitting hearing aids. During *Gruv Button*’s™ development and evolution, I took advantage of my [previous seven years instruction and experience in ergonomic design](#).”

Q: How have other hearing care professionals reacted?

A: The reaction has been uniformly positive. Besides receiving two prestigious awards, the product has received numerous positive [comments](#). When we first displayed *Gruv Button*™ at the 2016 annual meeting of the Wisconsin Alliance of Hearing Professionals, [they immediately understood its efficacy and important benefit](#).

Q: So *Gruv Button*’s™ benefits are obvious to hearing aid users, their caregivers, and hearing care professionals?

A: Yes. This is documented in numerous [testimonials](#) and [verified comments](#).

Additionally, *Caregiver Media Group* (a leading provider of information, support and guidance for family and professional caregivers) awarded *Gruv Button*™ its [2022 Today’s Caregiver Friendly Award](#). And, in September 2024, the *Hearing Health & Technology Matters* organization awarded *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* the global 2024 *Hearing Technology Innovator Award*. Some of the best ideas come from the shop floor!

Q: Will *Gruv Button*™ reduce the current stigma resulting from insertion frustration and hearing care abandonment?

A: We are confident it will. A successful user experience creates positive word-of-mouth. [Practitioners who actually work with hearing care users know this](#).

Q: Is *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* compatible with, and will it fit onto, all hearing aid speakers?

A: The universe of hearing aid speakers is diverse, since the manufacturers produce them in many different shapes and sizes. This is a key reason why the developer, *Each Ear LLC*, does not have the capability to produce the plastic sleeves in the variety and volume needed to meet expected demand in the marketplace. This is also a key reason why it would be most efficient for the hearing aid manufacturers to take on the production of the sleeves, so they can easily fit their own particular speaker designs.

Q: What is a retention tail?

A: It's a plastic tail that attaches to the end of a hearing aid speaker, usually by means of a plastic sleeve. Its purpose is to help keep the speaker in the ear canal.

Because hearing care professionals have utilized retention tails for years, they are familiar with the *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* retrofitting process.

Q: How easy would it be for hearing aid manufacturers to produce the *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit*?

A: It's designed to be easy, so there would be no technical barriers to manufacturers producing *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* and making it available through their numerous hearing care clinics. And clinic staff are already familiar with the concept of using sleeves – for attaching a retention tail to a speaker, for example. (*Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* is designed to be produced either with or without a retention tail. Either way, the sleeves would be produced to fit a manufacturer's own specific speaker designs.) For more information on retention tails, see: *FAQs a Hearing Care Professional May Ask*

## **FAQs Pertaining to the Important Role of the Hearing Aid Manufacturers**

Q: Are the hearing aid manufacturers, and the *Hearing Industries Association*, aware of the difficulties hearing aid users are having with insertion?

A: They should be. [A 2022 \*Hearing Industries Association\*-commissioned \*MarkeTrak\* survey](#) revealed 40% of new hearing aid users find it difficult to insert their hearing aids.

And, a [patent application addressing insertion difficulty, was filed by a hearing aid manufacturer – in 2009](#). An article on the original *Gruv Button*™ [was first published in a leading trade publication](#) in 2016.

Over the years, *Each Ear LLC* has reached out with [several requests to the hearing aid manufacturers](#).

In April 2024, *Each Ear LLC* [notified hearing aid manufacturers](#) that its new *Retrofit* delivery system was available to improve their user experience.

Q: What is the *Hearing Industries Association*?

A: It is a [major trade association](#) that represents hearing aid technology and serves as a forum for hearing aid manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, and hearing health professionals. Their members are responsible for the majority of the over 4 million hearing aids that are purchased in the United States annually. It's located in Washington, D.C.

Q: Why is it important for the hearing aid manufacturers to get involved? Why doesn't the developer, *Each Ear LLC*, produce and distribute the *Retrofit* directly to the hearing aid clinics?

A: Both for efficiency and price. Production by the manufacturers would benefit from their massive production capacity and extensive networks of retail clinics. These efficiencies would permit the low estimated retail price of \$15 or less. Also, manufacturers produce their hearing aid speakers in many different shapes and sizes; it would be most efficient for them to produce the *Retrofit's* plastic sleeves to fit their own particular speaker designs. They could then monetize and distribute the *Gruv Button*™ *Retrofit* through all the clinics, as an accessory to their hearing aids.

Q: Don't the manufacturers have a duty – a responsibility – to make this available to help their consumers?

A: We think they do. It's a "reasonable accommodation."

Q: Why haven't they done this?

A: We don't know why, and we do not want to publicly speculate. But we hope to be able to work with this important industry to make this industry-award-winning innovation widely available to consumers everywhere.

## **FAQs a Hearing Care Professional May Ask**

Q: Does *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit* improve retention (reduce speaker migration out of the ear canal)?

A: Yes. *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit* helps ensure that the receiver is sufficiently deep in the canal which, of course, contributes to improved retention.

Q: What if my patient still needs a retention tail, to help hold the speaker in place?

A: *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit* has been created to be produced in two versions, one without a retention tail and one with a retention tail, so as to better meet the needs of each individual.

Q: If the *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit* can have an optional retention tail, wouldn't it be easier to just replace the current retention tail with a *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit*?

A: Yes, absolutely; it wouldn't make sense not to do it. The product can therefore provide all the benefits of both the *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> and the retention tail. And because it can be made available with or without a retention tail, it provides flexibility to both hearing care professionals and hearing aid users.

Q: How far does *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit* protrude (stick out)? Is it visible?

A: Because the speaker is now positioned sufficiently deep in the ear canal, it will likely be [less noticeable](#) than it would be without *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup>.

Q: How do hearing care practitioners benefit from *Gruv Button*<sup>™</sup> *Retrofit*?

A: Practitioners benefit because if it's easier for the patients, it's easier for practitioners to help their patients. Practitioners can provide more efficient and effective service because the "[insertion difficulty](#)" issue is mitigated, if not eliminated. Finally, happier and more successful patients result in reduced returns-for-credit, increased positive word-of-mouth, and more referrals.