

How the Ear Works

The ear has three main parts: the outer, middle and inner ear. The outer ear (the part you can see) opens into the ear canal. The eardrum separates the ear canal from the middle ear. Small bones in the middle ear help transfer sound to the inner ear. The inner ear contains the auditory (hearing) nerve, which leads to the brain.

Any source of sound sends vibrations or sound waves into the air. These funnel through the ear opening, down the ear canal, and strike your eardrum, causing it to vibrate. The vibrations are passed to the small bones of the middle ear, which transmit them to the hearing nerve in the inner ear. Here, the vibrations become nerve impulses and go directly to the brain, which interprets the impulses as sound (music, voice, a car horn, etc.).