

There are several main considerations when you are looking to source headphones for schools and colleges. We'll go through these in turn.

1. Do you need a Microphone? If so, what type?
2. What device(s) are the headphones to be used with? What Connectivity is needed?
3. What age are the users?
4. Do you want a Volume Control on the device?
5. How long does the cable (if any) need to be?
6. Quality of Earpads
7. Will students get their personal headphones / earphones?
8. Budgetary Considerations
9. How to find the ideal headphones for your needs
10. Sample Sets of Headphones

1. Do you need a Microphone? If so, what type?

Headphones can be purchased with or without built-in microphones. If you don't want children to record sounds or speech, then headphones without a microphone may be ideal.

Headphones with built in microphones can have the microphone discreetly built into the cable, or attached to an ear-piece as a 'boom microphone'.

The boom microphones are easy to adjust if they are flexible, whereas rigid ones are sometimes hard to get correctly positioned for children with different head sizes. However, the flexible boom microphones do give students something to fiddle with.

Whilst the boom microphones are ideal if children will be speaking

Headset with 'boom' microphone



into them a lot; if they aren't using the microphones regularly then the boom microphone can be something that children have a tendency to play with, in which case you would be better with the discreet microphone.

The discreet microphone is ideal if you occasionally need to record sounds or children's voices.

Discreet microphone



with clip

They are much less obtrusive, and if they come complete with a clip, they can be loosely clipped on to a tie or lapel, positioning the microphone in the ideal place to pick up a child's voice.

2. What device(s) are the headphones to be used with?

There are a number of different audio connectivity options for headphones, including 3.5mm connectivity, 2.5mm, 6.3mm, USB and Bluetooth.

3.5mm Connectivity (most Common)

There are a wide range of devices that the headphones may need to connect to, and sometimes you may hope to find headphones that can connect to a range of different devices. Laptops and PCs commonly come complete with 3.5mm socket(s), as do many chromebooks and iPads. The iPad Pro range don't include this—so you may need an adapter to connect to the USB C port of the iPad, to add a 3.5mm socket.

However, not all 3.5mm sockets are the same, as I'll explain. There is the standard (older) type, and a newer type (called a 4 pole connection!).

Older-style devices, such as PCs, usually came with two 3.5mm sockets, one for the audio out, and one for the microphone input.



So if you wanted to connect headphones with a microphone to such a device, you would need the headphones to have two 3.5mm jacks (as well as having a microphone)!



What is "4 Pole"

While the term '4 Pole' might seem like complicated jargon to some people, it's also a connection type that many people are very familiar with.

If you think of a mobile phone, the current standard adopted by many devices is for them to have one 3.5mm socket, which can transmit both the audio, and microphone functionality (such as when you are talking on the phone using headphones).



The name '4-pole' basically means a connection that can transmit both audio and microphone through it, and the 3.5mm jack looks subtly different.

If you have a device with only one 3.5mm socket for both audio and microphone, then if you need a microphone, you will need headphones with a microphone and a '4-pole' connection.

However, if you only need the sound (audio) to work, and don't need a microphone, then any headphones with a 3.5mm audio connection would work.

You can [buy audio adapters](#) to make older headphones (with both microphone and audio jacks) convert into a single 4 pole jack.

What about 6.3mm? 2.5mm?

6.3mm audio connections (pictured) are not common these days.



Some schools may still have older devices such as Coomber boxes, that used these older connections. It is also possible to [buy audio](#)

[converters](#) to convert a 3.5mm headphone jack to a 6.3mm jack, for use with such older devices, rather than have to buy additional, older style headphones.



2.5mm audio connections are not very common just yet, but are increasingly being introduced to small devices such as phone handsets. Again, they often include a 4-pole connection to include both audio and microphone functionality.

USB Connection

Some devices (such as laptops and tablets) may not come with an audio socket at all, with audio working via an internal speaker, or via either USB or Bluetooth.



Another reason some customers have to buy USB headphones is if they want to remove the headphones after each use, and the socket(s) are not easily accessible, but a USB port is easy to access (such as on older desktop PCs).

USB headphones will work in any device that has a USB port, and can come with or without a microphone.

Bluetooth Connectivity

A small number of our customers have enquired about Bluetooth headphones. Whilst they are a great technology for individuals (such as connecting apple airpods or wireless headphones), in a classroom setting there are a number of issues to consider.

Firstly, the headphones will need charging regularly, and more importantly, you need to find a way to be able to identify each set of headphones to a specific device that it is 'paired' with. Finally, you need to ensure that there is no interference if you're hoping to have multiple users accessing similar Bluetooth devices in the same room.

For these reasons, there is very little uptake of standard Bluetooth headphones in educational settings at this time.

3. What age are the users?

Most sets of headphones can be adjusted to fit users of different ages (and different sizes of heads!) to some extent, but not all 'adult' headphones are suitable for the youngest users.

If you are looking to buy a class pack of headphones, it can be useful to [order a free trial set of headphones](#) before committing to a larger purchase.

Some headphones are specifically designed for younger children, and would be too small for older users.

Such [specialist headphones](#) sometimes also include a 'volume limiter', limiting the maximum volume of the headphones to just 85 or 90 decibels, to protect the hearing of younger students, especially in the foundation stage (aged up to 5 years old).

4. Do you want a Volume Control on the device?



A volume control is great to enable users to turn up the volume if what they are listening to is too quiet, or turn it down if it's too loud.

Volume controls are found either built into the headpiece, or discreetly built into the cable.

Whilst for many users such a volume control is useful, there are also many users who specifically ask for headphones without a volume control. This is because some people think a volume control gives children something else to fiddle with!

The choice is yours!

5. How long does the cable (if any) need to be?

Again, this is very much a personal decision for yourselves when looking to buy headphones.

There are times when you need a longer cable (such as to plug into the back of a desktop PC), but times when a long cable would be a trip hazard. Our web site lets you filter to find headphones of the length that you require.

Again, if you are looking to buy a class pack of headphones, it can be useful to [order a free trial set of headphones](#) before committing to a larger purchase.

6. Quality of Earpads

The quality of earpads on headphones is often linked to the budget that you have for purchasing new headphones.

The most comfortable and durable option is to buy headphones which have substantial, padded earpads. These are most popular with schools. If these are also made of leather (or 'leatherette'), then they are much more durable than cheaper, plastic alternatives.



Many schools have purchased headphones with foam ear pieces. Whilst these earpieces are small and lower-cost, they mean that children can sometimes hear more background noise from around the classroom (which can distract them).



Unfortunately, many children love picking at the foam earpads, or even ripping them apart! This means they don't last as long, but the trade-off is they don't cost as much.

7. Will students get their personal headphones / earphones?

One alternative that a growing number of schools have investigated is the use of ['In-Ear headphones'](#) or 'Ear-Buds'. As these fit inside each child's ears, from a hygiene perspective, each child would need their own personal set, so they're not a piece of equipment that you can leave for all users to share, but is a cost-effective way of giving all students their own earphones.



8. Budgetary Considerations

Each establishment is unique in terms of its' budgetary restraints, the needs of its' students, and the devices that headphones need to connect to, but one common frustration is spending many minutes of valuable teaching time troubleshooting headphone issues.

There are a number of very robust headphones available, and if you are looking to buy a class pack of headphones, it can be useful to [order a free trial set of headphones](#) before committing to a larger purchase.

Alternatively, we supply low-cost headphones that cost well [under £50 for a class set of 30!](#)

9. How to find the ideal headphones for your needs

The web site at <https://wishtrac.com/headphones> includes a way to filter the available headphones to find ones that suit your needs.

You can filter to find headphones

- ◆ that fit your budget
- ◆ with (out) a microphone
- ◆ With (out) a volume control
- ◆ For 4 pole devices, or standard audio headphones
- ◆ By earpad type
- ◆ Etc....etc....

10. Sample Sets of Headphones

If you are looking to buy a class pack of headphones, it can be useful to [order a free trial set of headphones](#) before committing to a larger purchase.

Most Popular Headphones we Sell

All of the following headphones would be suitable for students of all ages.

For over ten years, our most popular headphones are the [Stereo Headphones with Built In Mic.](#) These are durable, with a discreet microphone in the cable, and two 3.5mm jacks (audio and mic)



For customers needing a 4-pole connection for tablets etc, the [Multimedia headphones with Inline Microphone](#) do a similar job for 4 pole devices, and are growing in popularity as more establishments are using tablets.

For users who require very durable and comfortable headphones with no microphone, the [Robust Stereo Headphones](#) are our best seller. As they have no microphone, they work well with all devices that have a 3.5mm audio socket.



Finally, our most popular low cost option are our [Economy Headphones](#) without a microphone, that work with all devices with a 3.5mm audio socket. These cost well under £50 for a class set of 30 headphones!

For Headphones Advice, please call our helpful and knowledgeable Sales Team free on 08000 80 77 80