



## Open-back vs. Closed-back Headphones: What's the Difference?

### Question:

What is the difference between open-back and closed-back headphones?

### Answer:

The difference is in the way their housings are constructed.

For personal listening and professional applications where external noise or using your phone's speaker is an issue, a closed-back design will be a better choice.

For casual listening at home or behind closed doors, you may like a pair of open-backs.

### Open-back Headphones

Open-back headphones have a similar design to closed-back headphones with an important distinction. The outer housing has built-in gaps that allow air and sound to pass freely through the earcup. A perforated housing eliminates pressure buildup and encourages a more natural sound that's ideal for critical listening. They're lightweight and incredibly comfortable to wear for long periods of time.

The improved sound reproduction of open-back headphones comes at the expense of isolation. Open-back headphones will not block out any ambient noise, which means that anyone nearby will hear what you're listening to. However, this lack of isolation delivers a listening experience in a class of its own. Instead of sounding like you're in the isolation booth with a singer, they sound as if that singer is treating you to a private concert in the comfort of your living room. Open-backs are excellent for critical listening applications, mixing, and everyday use at home.

#### Key points

- Perforated housing lets air and sound travel freely in and out of the earcups
- Deliver a spacious, airy sound
- Provide no isolation

## Closed-back Headphones

Closed-back headphones are built exactly how the name suggests. The housing of closed-back headphones is sealed to block any sound from escaping. This has the same effect on outside noise, as well, giving you impressive isolation. These headphones can feel more substantial and chunkier than their open-back counterparts.

Closed-back headphones are so popular because they shut out the world and let the music take center stage. You'll notice a slight boost in the bass response and a certain amount of passive isolation. By providing passive noise cancellation, closed-back headphones make you feel as if you're in the studio with those you're listening to. This performance characteristic is excellent for occasions where focus and concentration are paramount. Closed-back headphones are the first choice for studio use, too. They let you track quiet instruments or voices without worrying that the sound from the headphones will get picked up by your mic.

### Key points

- Closed housing seals to your head and prevents sound and air leakage
- Provide isolation from the outside world
- Enhanced bass response



AKG K812 Open-back Headphone and AKG K872 Closed-back Headphone

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