

## Headphones for Sound Design

### Minimum requirements

You need a pair of production / mix quality headphones for Sound Design. Bring them every week. The entry level pair that we recommend is the Sennheiser HD200. They are definitely not the best out there, but at the price, probably the most sensible option. They cost around R1500, but can be a bit less if you shop around. They seal well and will work both on-location and in class/studio. They are a step up from the Sennheiser HD202 that we used to recommend. (The 202 has been discontinued, but will also be sufficient if you can find a pair.)

### Stick with the big brands

Sennheiser, Shure, Sony, AKG, Fostex, Audio Technica & Beyerdynamic.  
(You can also get usable pairs from Presonus, Focusrite, Roland, and M-Audio)

### Fit

Headphones are not just about sound quality, but also how they fit. If at all possible, try a pair on before buying it. It gets very annoying (especially with extended use) if your pair does not fit your head properly.

### Avoid

Try to avoid ear buds, noise cancelling headphones, headphones that process the sound (virtual surround, etc.), and to some extent, gaming headsets. Get something with a normal 3.5mm headphone jack rather than Bluetooth, or an Apple lightning connector.

### The List

If you want to get something different / fancier, there are many other options available. For critical sound purposes (editing, mixing, recording, etc) you need headphones with a flat frequency response. Here is a list of other models that you may want to consider. This list is by no means comprehensive.

AKG: K72 K121 K171 K240 K271 K612 K702 (also K44 K77 K99)

Alesis SRP100

Audio Technica: ATH M20x ATH M30x ATH M40x ATH M50x

Beyerdynamic: DT100 DT770 DT880

Fostex T20RP

Roland: RH200 RH300

Sennheiser: HD200 HD205 HD206 HD419 HD439

Shure: SRH240 SRH440 SRH840 SRH940

Sony: MDR-7506 MDR-7509

The Sennheiser HD2xx and HD4xx series (without the Pro) are not technically made for studio use, but they will definitely be good enough for SD100 use. All these brands also have more higher end models. I tried to keep to around R2-3k maximum for the list.

### Open vs Closed

Open- or Closed-Back headphones refer to their construction, and how well they block out external sound. For best all-round use we recommend you get closed-back headphones. Please note that a number of the models on the list are open-back. That means that they will not be great for field recording or recording on a film set as they don't isolate your ears from external noise. (Models like the AKG K77, K99 and K240 are all open back.) Please check the specifications of each model if you are specifically looking for closed back headphones.

### **Favourites**

My most used pair is the Sennheiser HD380Pro. Excellent quality, great for location sound, and they fold up in a good case. For pro use, the Sennheiser HD25Pro and Sony MDR-7506/09 are somewhat of a standard. I find the AKG series the most comfortable and I really like using the K240 (open) and K271 (closed). The two most popular pairs with Sound Design major students have been the ATH M40x and the Sennheiser HD380Pro.

Where to buy :

1. Sennheiser HD 206 (R689 @ Takealot)
2. Sennheiser HD 200 pro (R1570 @ Bothners) **Recommended**
3. AKG K72 PERCEPTION (R1130 @ MiTech) **Recommended**
4. Audio Technica ATH-M20X (R1139 @ SoundSelect/AudioMart) **Recommended**
5. Audio Technica ATH-M30X (R1580 @ SoundSelect)

MiTech has a large headphone display room if you want to go try some pairs on. They are close to the Allandale offramp (N1 Midrand). You can see the building from the highway; also says Stage Audio Works.