The Whispered Voice Test is a quick, simple, and accurate test for hearing loss that general practitioners can use in a primary care setting. This test can help identify patients who may need to be referred to a specialist. No special equipment is needed to perform this test; in fact, it compares favorably with using a portable audioscope.

Author: Herman Snellen, MD

Performing the Whispered Voice Test:
1. Stand behind the patient's field of vision. This eliminates the possibility of lip-reading.
2. Gently occlude and rub the external auditory canal of the non-tested ear.
3. Ask the patient to repeat a set of 3 different random numbers (e.g., 6, 1, 9) presented to the tested ear at four decreasing levels of loudness:
   - conversational voice at 6 inches and at 2 feet from the ear, and
   - whispered voice at 6 inches and at 2 feet from the ear. Exhale completely prior to testing with whispered voice.

Scoring:
Passing score is given if the patient can repeat all three numbers correctly at each level of loudness or achieve greater than 50% success over three successive triplet sets.
Failure to pass at each level of voice testing is considered a positive test for hearing impairment.
Failure to hear a whisper at 2 feet indicates hearing loss and may be the most discriminant test of the set.