

ELECTROAIR SERVICES

Information Sheet 4

Understanding mono and stereo sound in aviation headsets

Monaural sound, usually referred to as “mono”, is when both ears hear the same thing.

Stereophonic sound, usually referred to as “stereo”, is when each ear hears a different sound ‘channel’.

In the case of music the left and right sound channels might transmit different instruments at different volumes in each channel, to give the listener a more realistic impression of the position of each instrument and richer sound, as they would hear them ‘live’.

In an aviation headset the ‘stereo - mono’ switch (usually marked S – M) allows each earphone speaker to operate on a separate channel when the switch is in the ‘stereo’ position, and switches both earphone speakers on to the one ‘mono’ channel when in the ‘mono’ position.

When the switch is in the ‘M’ mono position, both earphone speakers will emit sound regardless of whether the input to the headset is from a mono or stereo source.

When the switch is in the ‘S’ stereo position for stereophonic sound, sound will be emitted by both earphone speakers if there is a 2 channel input from a stereo source, but only one earphone speaker will emit sound if the sound source is a single channel mono source (which most general aviation intercoms and radios are).

Most aircraft intercoms, and radios are MONO. Your headset will only work on both earphone speakers if the switch is set to ‘M’ to match the mono intercom or radio type.