



O*NET OnLine

Summary Report for: 31-9091.00 - Dental Assistants

[Updated 2010](#)



Assist dentist, set up patient and equipment, and keep records.

Sample of reported job titles: Dental Assistant, Registered Dental Assistant (RDA), Certified Dental Assistant (CDA), Expanded Duties Dental Assistant (EDDA), Orthodontic Assistant, Certified Registered Dental Assistant, Oral Surgery Assistant, Surgical Dental Assistant, Expanded Dental Assistant, Expanded Duty Dental Assistant

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Tasks

- Prepare patient, sterilize and disinfect instruments, set up instrument trays, prepare materials, and assist dentist during dental procedures.
- Expose dental diagnostic x-rays.
- Record treatment information in patient records.
- Provide postoperative instructions prescribed by dentist.
- Assist dentist in management of medical and dental emergencies.
- Take and record medical and dental histories and vital signs of patients.
- Instruct patients in oral hygiene and plaque control programs.
- Order and monitor dental supplies and equipment inventory.
- Clean and polish removable appliances.
- Make preliminary impressions for study casts and occlusal registrations for mounting study casts.

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Tools & Technology

Tools used in this occupation:

Dental dam supplies — Molar clamps; Rubber dam clamp forceps; Rubber dam punches; Rubber dams

Dental forceps — Cotton forceps; Hemostatic forceps; Splinter forceps; Tongue forceps

Dental hand pieces or accessories — Dental handpieces; Electric endodontic handpieces; Electric surgical handpieces; Rotary handpieces

Orthodontic pliers — Contouring orthodontic pliers; Dental crimping pliers; Dental pliers; Intraoral detailing pliers

Steam autoclaves or sterilizers — Autoclaves; Steam cleaning equipment; Steam sterilizers; Sterilizers

Technology used in this occupation:

Accounting software — Intuit Quicken software

Medical software — Henry Schein Dentrix software; Kodak Dental Systems Kodak SOFTDENT Practice management software PMS; Patterson Dental Supply Patterson EagleSoft; The Systems Workplace TDOCS

Office suite software — Microsoft Office software

Spreadsheet software — Microsoft Excel

Word processing software

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Knowledge

Medicine and Dentistry — Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.

Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.

English Language — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.

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Skills

Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.

Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.

Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.

Service Orientation — Actively looking for ways to help people.

Critical Thinking — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.

Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

Monitoring — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.

Social Perceptiveness — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

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Abilities

Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.

Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

Speech Recognition — The ability to identify and understand the speech of another person.

Near Vision — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

Arm-Hand Steadiness — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.

Speech Clarity — The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you.

Finger Dexterity — The ability to make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.

Written Comprehension — The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

Category Flexibility — The ability to generate or use different sets of rules for combining or grouping things in different ways.

Control Precision — The ability to quickly and repeatedly adjust the controls of a machine or a vehicle to exact positions.

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Work Activities

Assisting and Caring for Others — Providing personal assistance, medical attention, emotional support, or other personal care to others such as coworkers, customers, or patients.

Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates — Providing information to supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates by telephone, in written form, e-mail, or in person.

Performing for or Working Directly with the Public — Performing for people or dealing directly with the public. This includes serving customers in restaurants and stores, and receiving clients or guests.

Getting Information — Observing, receiving, and otherwise obtaining information from all relevant sources.

Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work — Developing specific goals and plans to prioritize, organize, and accomplish your work.

Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships — Developing constructive and cooperative working relationships with others, and maintaining them over time.

Inspecting Equipment, Structures, or Material — Inspecting equipment, structures, or materials to identify the cause of errors or other problems or defects.

Interpreting the Meaning of Information for Others — Translating or explaining what information means and how it can be used.

Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events — Identifying information by categorizing, estimating, recognizing differences or similarities, and detecting changes in circumstances or events.

Making Decisions and Solving Problems — Analyzing information and evaluating results to choose the best solution and solve problems.

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Work Context

Wear Common Protective or Safety Equipment such as Safety Shoes, Glasses, Gloves, Hearing Protection, Hard Hats, or Life Jackets — How much does this job require wearing common protective or safety equipment such as safety shoes, glasses, gloves, hard hats or life jackets?

Physical Proximity — To what extent does this job require the worker to perform job tasks in close physical proximity to other people?

Contact With Others — How much does this job require the worker to be in contact with others (face-to-face, by telephone, or otherwise) in order to perform it?

Face-to-Face Discussions — How often do you have to have face-to-face discussions with individuals or teams in this job?

Work With Work Group or Team — How important is it to work with others in a group or team in this job?

Spend Time Using Your Hands to Handle, Control, or Feel Objects, Tools, or Controls — How much does this job require using your hands to handle, control, or feel objects, tools or controls?

Importance of Being Exact or Accurate — How important is being very exact or highly accurate in performing this job?

Exposed to Disease or Infections — How often does this job require exposure to disease/infections?

Spend Time Making Repetitive Motions — How much does this job require making repetitive motions?

Telephone — How often do you have telephone conversations in this job?

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Job Zone

Title Job Zone Three: Medium Preparation Needed

Education Most occupations in this zone require training in vocational schools, related on-the-job experience, or an associate's degree.

Related Experience Previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience is required for these occupations. For example, an electrician must have completed three or four years of apprenticeship or several years of vocational training, and often must have passed a licensing exam, in order to perform the job.

Job Training Employees in these occupations usually need one or two years of training involving both on-the-job experience and informal training with experienced workers. A recognized apprenticeship program may be associated with these occupations.

Job Zone Examples These occupations usually involve using communication and organizational skills to coordinate, supervise, manage, or train others to accomplish goals. Examples include food service managers, electricians, agricultural technicians, legal secretaries, interviewers, and insurance sales agents.

SVP Range (6.0 to < 7.0)

There is 1 recognized apprenticeable specialty associated with this occupation:

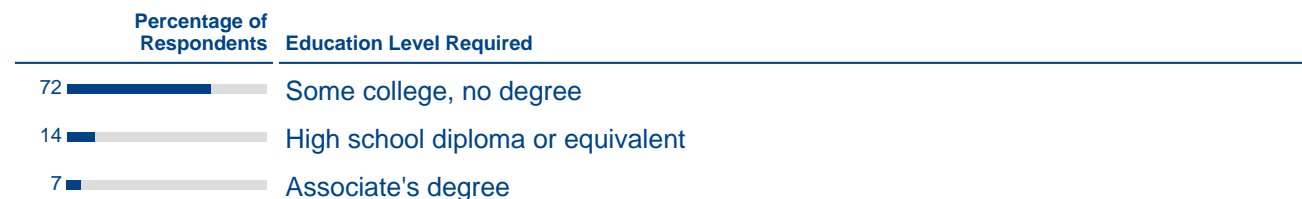
Dental Assistant

To learn about specific apprenticeship opportunities, please consult the U.S. Department of Labor [State Apprenticeship Information](#) website.

For general information about apprenticeships, training, and partnerships with business, visit the U.S. Department of Labor [Office of Apprenticeship](#) website.

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Education



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Interests

Interest code: **CRS**

Conventional — Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

Realistic — Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

Social — Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

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Work Styles

Concern for Others — Job requires being sensitive to others' needs and feelings and being understanding and helpful on the job.

Dependability — Job requires being reliable, responsible, and dependable, and fulfilling obligations.

Cooperation — Job requires being pleasant with others on the job and displaying a good-natured, cooperative attitude.

Attention to Detail — Job requires being careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.

Integrity — Job requires being honest and ethical.

Stress Tolerance — Job requires accepting criticism and dealing calmly and effectively with high stress situations.

Social Orientation — Job requires preferring to work with others rather than alone, and being personally connected with others on the job.

Adaptability/Flexibility — Job requires being open to change (positive or negative) and to considerable variety in the workplace.

Self Control — Job requires maintaining composure, keeping emotions in check, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behavior, even in very difficult situations.

Initiative — Job requires a willingness to take on responsibilities and challenges.

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Work Values

Relationships — Occupations that satisfy this work value allow employees to provide service to others and work with co-workers in a friendly non-competitive environment. Corresponding needs are Co-workers, Moral Values and Social Service.

Support — Occupations that satisfy this work value offer supportive management that stands behind employees. Corresponding needs are Company Policies, Supervision: Human Relations and Supervision: Technical.

Working Conditions — Occupations that satisfy this work value offer job security and good working conditions. Corresponding needs are Activity, Compensation, Independence, Security, Variety and Working Conditions.

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Related Occupations

29-1023.00	Orthodontists  Bright Outlook
29-1024.00	Prosthodontists 
29-2021.00	Dental Hygienists 
29-2034.01	Radiologic Technologists
29-2034.02	Radiologic Technicians
29-2055.00	Surgical Technologists 
39-2021.00	Nonfarm Animal Caretakers 

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Wages & Employment Trends

National

Median wages (2009) \$15.98 hourly, \$33,230 annual

Employment (2008) 295,000 employees

Projected growth (2008-2018) ■■■■ Much faster than average (20% or higher)

Projected job openings (2008-2018) 161,000

Top industries (2008) [Health Care and Social Assistance](#)

State & National



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics [2009 wage data](#) and [2008-2018 employment projections](#). "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period (2008-2018). "Projected job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

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Sources of Additional Information

Disclaimer: Sources are listed to provide additional information on related jobs, specialties, and/or industries. Links to non-DOL Internet sites are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.

- [Dental assistants](#). Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition*.
- [American Dental Assistants Association \(ADAA\)](#), 35 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 1730, Chicago, IL 60601. Phone: (312) 541-1550. Fax: (312) 541-1496.
- [American Dental Association \(ADA\)](#), 211 E. Chicago Ave., Suite 1814, Chicago, IL 60611. Phone: (312) 440-2500.
- [Dental Assisting National Board \(DANB\)](#), 444 N Michigan Ave., Suite 900, Chicago, IL 60611. Phone: (800) 367-3262. Fax: (312) 642-1475.

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