

Dental Assistants

SOC: 31-9091 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$47,300

Median Salary

381,900

Employment

+6.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Postsecondary

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Medium Risk - 48.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job has some routine elements but still requires human judgment and interaction.

■■ Work-Life Balance

7.4/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.8/10	Investigative	6.0/10
Artistic	4.4/10	Social	8.4/10
Enterprising	4.6/10	Conventional	7.4/10

■ Top Skills Required

Detail oriented, Dexterity, Interpersonal skills, Listening skills, Organizational skills

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Dental Assistants provide support to dentists by **preparing patients, sterilizing instruments, and assisting with dental procedures**. They manage administrative tasks, maintain patient records, and ensure a safe and comfortable environment. Their work is critical in dental care, patient safety, and office efficiency.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy healthcare, patient interaction, and hands-on clinical work.

What Do Dental Assistants Do?

These professionals prepare patients for treatment, assist during procedures, and handle administrative and clinical tasks.

Common responsibilities include:

- Preparing examination and treatment rooms
- Sterilizing and organizing dental instruments
- Assisting dentists during procedures by handling instruments and materials
- Taking and recording patient vital signs and dental histories
- Educating patients on oral hygiene and post-treatment care
- Scheduling appointments and maintaining patient records
- Performing basic laboratory tasks, such as making impressions or temporary restorations

Key Areas of Dental Assistance

Dental assistants may focus on clinical tasks, administrative duties, or specialized procedures:

- Chairside Assistance: Supporting dentists during exams and treatments
- Patient Preparation and Education: Preparing patients and providing oral care instructions
- Sterilization and Infection Control: Maintaining hygiene and safety standards
- Administrative Support: Scheduling, recordkeeping, and billing
- Laboratory Tasks: Creating impressions, molds, and temporary dental devices

Skills and Abilities Needed

Dental assistants combine technical, clinical, and interpersonal skills.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires formal education and practical training:

- Postsecondary Certificate or Diploma: Dental assisting or related program
- On-the-Job Training: Learning office procedures, patient care, and clinical tasks
- Certification (optional but recommended): Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) credential
- Clinical Experience: Gaining hands-on exposure to procedures and office workflow
- Continuing Education: Staying current on dental practices, safety standards, and technology

Where Do Dental Assistants Work?

They are employed in organizations providing dental and oral healthcare:

- Dental Offices and Clinics
- Orthodontic and Specialty Dental Practices
- Hospitals and Public Health Clinics
- Dental Laboratories (limited roles)

- Educational or Community Health Programs

Work environments include treatment rooms, offices, laboratories, and public health settings.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires attention to detail, manual dexterity, and strong interpersonal skills. Dental assistants must manage multiple tasks, assist with procedures, and ensure patient comfort and safety.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy working in healthcare and supporting patient care
- Are detail-oriented and precise
- Have strong manual dexterity and coordination
- Can communicate effectively with patients and dental staff
- Want a career assisting dentists and contributing to oral health

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in biology, health sciences, and anatomy
- Volunteer or intern in dental clinics or healthcare settings
- Develop communication, organization, and manual skills
- Explore accredited dental assisting programs and certification options
- Gain hands-on experience through clinical practice or internships

Dental assistants support dentists by providing clinical and administrative assistance, ensuring efficient, safe, and high-quality oral healthcare for patients.

Generated by StartRight • Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics & O*NET

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-assistants.htm>