

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon

The surgeon for the mouth, jaws and face. Dental school first, then four to six more years, and the highest pay of any dental specialty.

TYPICAL PAY

\$352,220

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$86k to \$623k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 14 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Private surgical offices, hospital operating rooms, trauma centers,...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 9 to 12
Biology, chemistry, physics and calculus. Grades matter from the start because dental school admissions read your whole college record.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any major that covers the science prerequisites. Keep a high GPA and take the dental admission test in your third year.
- 3 Dental school** 4 years
Four years for a doctor of dental surgery or doctor of dental medicine degree. The two are the same qualification under different names.
- 4 Oral and maxillofacial surgery residency** 4 to 6 years
Four to six years, accredited by CODA (the Commission on Dental Accreditation). The six-year programs include medical school coursework and a medical degree, plus general surgery and anesthesia rotations.
- 5 Board certification** 1 to 2 years after residency
A written qualifying examination and then an oral certifying examination from the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, taken after residency.

Pros and cons

- + The highest earning specialty in dentistry by a wide margin
- + Real surgery, from routine extractions to rebuilding a face
- + More control over your hours than a hospital surgeon has
- Twelve to fourteen years of training and enormous student debt
- Residency is competitive to enter and brutal once you are in
- You give the anesthesia yourself, which is a serious daily responsibility

Optional boosts

Head and neck cancer. Craniofacial and cleft surgery. Cosmetic facial surgery. Dental implant reconstruction.

Good to know

It is the one dental specialty that can come with a medical...

Six-year oral and maxillofacial surgery residencies include medical school coursework, so graduates hold both a dental degree and a doctor of medicine degree. No other dental specialty offers that, and...

They give their own anesthesia

Oral surgeons are trained to administer general anesthesia and deep sedation in their own offices using a team they trained themselves, which requires a separate state permit. Almost no other outpatient s...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (29-1022.00)
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Commission on Dental Accreditation

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/oral-and-maxillofacial-surgeon>



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