

Orthodontist

Move teeth and jaws into place with braces and aligners. A dentist first, then two or three more years of training.

TYPICAL PAY

\$289,140

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$100k to \$416k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

10 to 11 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Orthodontic practices, group dental clinics, hospitals, universit...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Strong grades in biology, chemistry and math. Anything that builds steady hands helps too.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major is allowed, but you must finish the science prerequisites and keep a high GPA. Sit the dental admission test in your third year.
- 3 Dental school** 4 years
 Four years for a DDS (doctor of dental surgery) or DMD (doctor of dental medicine). The two degrees are equivalent. Schools must be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation.
- 4 Licensing exams** Final year of dental school
 Pass the written national board exam plus a clinical exam accepted by the state dental board where you want to work.
- 5 Orthodontic residency** 2 to 3 years
 An accredited advanced program in orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics. Two to three years, often ending with a master's degree.

Pros and cons

- + Among the best paid jobs in health care
- + Almost no nights, weekends or emergency calls
- + Patients are mostly healthy and the results are visible
- Ten or eleven years and very large debt before you earn
- Residency places are few and the competition is fierce
- Repetitive work, the same adjustments many times a day

Good to know

The oldest specialty board in dentistry

The American Board of Orthodontics was founded in 1929 and was the first specialty board in dentistry anywhere. Certification is still voluntary, and the board says about 69% of orthodontists in the nati...

It is a small profession

The American Association of Orthodontists represents a little over 18,000 members across the United States, Canada and abroad. For comparison there are well over a hundred thousand general dentists...

Optional boosts

Board certification. Clear aligner systems. Surgical orthodontics. Cleft and craniofacial teams.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Orthodontists (29-1023.00)
 American Association of Orthodontists
 American Board of Orthodontics
 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/orthodontist>



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