

PRESTIGE

VARIETY

CREATIVITY

*Careers in the Dental Profession*

# Word of Mouth

DENTAL LABORATORY  
TECHNOLOGY

FLEXIBILITY

SECURITY

CHALLENGES

RESPECT

ADA<sup>®</sup>



PRESTIGE

*“Your earning power is unlimited*

VARIETY

*based on your individual abilities.*

CREATIVITY

*Nothing holds you back. If*

FLEXIBILITY

*you’re good, you’ll do well.*

SECURITY

*And with experience, you can*

CHALLENGES

*become self-employed.”*

RESPECT

## Introduction

If you like doing precision work with your hands, enjoy working independently and are interested in health care, a career as a dental laboratory technician may be for you.

The dental laboratory technician takes on significant responsibility as a member of the dental health care team. Dental technicians make dental prostheses—replacements for natural teeth to help people who have lost some or all of their teeth to eat, chew, talk and smile in a manner that is similar to or better than the way they did before.

The hallmarks of the qualified dental laboratory technician are skill in using small hand instruments, accuracy, artistic ability and attention to minute detail.

*The best way to become a dental technician is to receive formal education. Studying in a Commission on Dental Accreditation accredited program provides education that is based on the latest procedures and techniques.*

Dental technicians can begin their careers without a college degree; however, continuing education is encouraged. So if a career in health care appeals to you, but several extra years of school doesn't then dental laboratory technology is a field you will want to explore.

*A career as a dental laboratory technician offers a wide range of challenges...Since each dental patient's specific needs are different, the duties of a dental technician*

*are comprehensive and varied. Technicians work with a variety of materials, as well as sophisticated instruments and equipment, to create dental prostheses — replacements for damaged or missing tooth structure.*

## *What do Dental Laboratory Technicians do?*

Since each dental patient's specific needs are different, the duties of a dental laboratory technician are comprehensive and varied. Although dental technicians seldom work directly with patients, except under the direction of a licensed dentist, they are valuable members of the dental care team. They work directly with dentists by following detailed written instructions and using impressions (molds) of the patient's teeth or oral soft tissues to create:

- full dentures for patients who are missing all of their teeth;
- removable partial dentures or fixed bridges for patients who are missing only one or a few teeth;
- crowns, which are caps for teeth that are designed to restore their original size and shape;
- veneers, that enhance the esthetics and function of the patient; and
- orthodontic appliances and splints to help straighten and protect teeth.

Dental technicians work with a variety of materials in replacing damaged or missing tooth structure. These include waxes, plastics, precious and non-precious alloys, stainless steel, a variety of porcelains and composites or polymer glass combinations.

Additionally, many technicians acquire skill in the use of sophisticated instruments and equipment while performing laboratory procedures. It is important for the technician to help create tooth replacements that are both esthetic and functional in order to improve a patient's appearance.

## *What are the advantages of a Dental Technology career?*

**FLEXIBILITY:** Dental laboratory technology is a flexible career offering several opportunities for advancement. Experienced technicians can find well-paid positions in commercial laboratories based on their technical or communication skills, become department heads in larger laboratories, where they would have supervisory responsibilities or potentially own their own laboratory. Additionally, dental technicians may teach dental technology courses in educational programs, as well as apply their knowledge to research, sales and/or marketing of prosthetic materials, instruments and equipment.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Technicians perform much of their work without close supervision. They often experience the satisfaction that results from taking an entire project from start to finish.

**CREATIVITY:** Dental laboratory technology requires the skill and touch of an artist. Technicians need to be creative when they make prostheses.

**SECURITY:** The services performed by dental technicians will always be needed. With the population growing older, there will be a continued demand for prostheses which improve these individuals' nutrition, appearance and ability to speak clearly.

PERSONAL FULFILLMENT: Dental laboratory technicians experience the satisfaction that goes along with the knowledge that they help to provide a valued health care service and positively affecting patient's oral health and self image. Technicians play a significant role in the delivery of dental health care and take pride from producing a hand-crafted product. Dental laboratory technology is both a science and an art.

## *Where do Dental Laboratory Technicians work?*

With advancements in technology and materials, there is an increased demand for restorative and cosmetic dentistry. As a result, there is currently a great demand for dental laboratory technicians. Employment opportunities will be excellent well into the next century.

Most dental laboratory technicians work in commercial dental laboratories employing from 2 to 200 people. The average laboratory employs about five to ten technicians who may provide a full range of dental prosthetic services, or specialize in producing one particular type of prosthesis (e.g., removable partial dentures, crown and bridge, etc).

Additionally, some opportunities are available in private dental offices for technicians who like close one-on-one contact with a dentist. Employment opportunities may also be available in dental schools, hospitals and companies that manufacture dental prosthetic materials. Dental laboratory technology education programs also offer some teaching positions for experienced technicians.



PRESTIGE

*“I come from a dental family.*

VARIETY

*I especially enjoy the mechanical*

CREATIVITY

*aspects of dental technology that*

FLEXIBILITY

*allows mechanical manipulation*

SECURITY

*and artistic creativity.”*

CHALLENGES

RESPECT

## *What education /training does a Dental Laboratory Technician need?*

Dental laboratory technicians may receive their education and training through a two-year program at a community college, vocational school, technical college, university or dental school. Graduates of these programs receive either an associate degree or a certificate. There are also a few programs that offer a four-year baccalaureate program in dental technology.

In most cases, an interested individual needs a high school diploma or its equivalent to apply to an accredited dental laboratory technology program. Counselors, advisors and prospective students should contact the particular dental technology program of interest for specific requirements.

## *Accreditation*

The agency responsible for accrediting dental laboratory technology programs and deciding whether or not they meet the standards for accreditation is the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association. There are approximately 24 Commission-accredited dental technology programs in the United States.

*Dental laboratory technology requires the skill and touch of an artist. Technicians need to be creative in making tooth replacements that are esthetic in order to improve a patient's appearance.*

## *Certification*

Dental laboratory technicians can become certified by passing an examination that evaluates their technical skills and knowledge. The examination is administered by the National Board for Certification in Dental Laboratory Technology. A dental technician who passes the certification examination becomes a Certified Dental Technician (CDT). CDT's specialize in one or more of five areas: complete dentures, removable partial dentures, crown and bridge, ceramics or orthodontics.

Refer to the National Board for Certification in Dental Laboratory Technology (NBC) for current certification requirements.

## *What is a Dental Technicians's earning potential?*

The salary of a dental laboratory technician depends primarily upon the skills demonstrated and responsibilities associated with the specific position and the geographic location of employment. Dental technicians can earn salaries equal to personnel in other health care occupations with similar training and experience.

Experienced technicians can realize significant satisfaction and rewards in commercial laboratories or may choose to be self-employed, opening their own dental laboratories for greater independence.

PRESTIGE

*“Opportunities for getting a job*

VARIETY

*vary with the wide variety of*

CREATIVITY

*settings—a large corporation, a*

FLEXIBILITY

*hospital, a VA, a dental office or*

SECURITY

*laboratory. This career is national*

CHALLENGES

*in scope so you can work anywhere*

RESPECT

*in the United States.”*



## *Where can I get more information?*

Contact your dentist, a local dental laboratory, the state or local dental society of the American Dental Association, or the state or local component of the National Association of Dental Laboratories in your area. Perhaps you can arrange for a brief visit to a dental laboratory to observe dental technicians at work. You can also contact an accredited dental laboratory technology program and arrange to talk with a counselor and visit the school.

For a list of accredited Dental Laboratory Technology programs throughout the country, please contact:

The Commission on Dental Accreditation  
211 E. Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60611  
TEL: 312.440.2718

The list can also be found through  
ADA.org, the ADA's Website, at  
<http://www.ada.org>

*A dental technician takes on significant responsibility in the delivery of oral health care and is a valuable member of the dental care team...With an increased demand for cosmetic dentistry, there is a great need for dental technicians. As a result, the job outlook is excellent.*

National Association of Dental Laboratories  
(NADL) and National Board for Certification  
in Dental Laboratory Technology (NBC)  
1530 Metropolitan Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

TEL: 800.950.1150 toll free  
<http://www.nadl.org>

(The NADL, which is the world's largest  
organization representing dental laboratories,  
provides career information to interested  
individuals.)

(The National Board for Certification  
provides information on the national  
certification program for dental laboratory  
technicians.)

Laboratory Section  
American Dental Trade Association (ADTA)  
4222 King Street West  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1597

TEL: 703.379.7755  
FAX: 703.931.9429

(The Laboratory Section of the ADTA is  
an organization that offers assistance in  
scheduling tours of laboratory facilities  
and job placement information.)

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