

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

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You've worked hard to earn your credentials as a registered dental hygienist. You are a clinical provider and a crucial member of a dental office team. It's important that you find a dental office that complements your professional skills and personal needs.

This guide is designed to help you think through topics to raise while researching and interviewing for your next role, so you can find your dental home.



RESEARCHING EMPLOYERS

There are several types of offices you can work in: solo, group, or an office supported by a Dental Support Organization (DSO). Whether you are starting your career or looking for a change, it can be overwhelming to determine which path is right for you.

More and more job seekers are learning that a patient-centric, small office feel can be found in a DSO or group, which may also bring high-quality equipment, benefits, continuing education, and a broad network of hygienist peers for mentorship and collaboration.

Everyone has different priorities for their career, so think about what is most important to you. Do you want to stay with a company long-term and have opportunities for growth? Do you want to expand the services you're trained to provide? Do you need flexible hours? Benefits? Knowing your "why" will help you bridge the gap between expectations and job selection.



INTERVIEWING

Typically, after applying for a job, you will have a phone screen, an in-person or virtual interview, and either an office visit or working interview. Working interviews are a fairly common practice and a great opportunity for you to see a doctor's treatment philosophy in practice, meet the team, and get a sense of the office culture. In a working interview, you will also get paid for your time.

During each stage of the process, keep in mind that you, the doctor, and the hiring manager(s) share the same goal: ensuring you are the right fit for the office and the role. Be transparent and honest in your answers – and bring a list of questions of your own.

Remember, you are interviewing the practice as much as they are interviewing you!



HYGIENIST/DOCTOR PARTNERSHIP

When hygienists and doctors work together, the entire office thrives. As the clinical providers in the office, this partnership is critical to having a high-performing team and delivering world-class patient care. As you interview, you'll want to understand how the practice supports building that partnership by helping the doctor and hygienist identify working styles, define communication expectations, and set personal and office goals.

- What does the partnership look like between hygienist(s) and doctor(s) in the office?
- How often do doctor(s) and hygienist(s) meet to review the alignment of goals, patient care, and communication expectations?
- How many doctors and hygienists are in the office?
- How many operatories do you run?
- Do you have assisted hygiene?
- How long is the average patient visit?
- Do doctor(s) and hygienist(s) attend CE courses together?
- What does your perio program look like?

WHY ASK: Your philosophy of care should not be compromised by your prospective employers' philosophy. Seek out a strong and aligned partnership in a culture that values the contributions of hygienists.



PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

It may seem odd to think about your next job while still in the interview process, but it's always good to keep your long-term career development in mind. Is this a job just for now or somewhere you could grow into new opportunities, clinical or otherwise? You'll also want to think through who will help you on your career journey – the doctor(s) will, of course, but you may also want to seek out an opportunity that includes mentors and/or a broad peer network.

- Are hygienists assigned mentors? If yes, is the mentorship program formal or informal?
- Are there promotion opportunities for hygienists into more elevated clinical roles?
- How are promotions structured in the office?
- Is there ever potential to step outside of the clinical / chairside setting?
- Are there opportunities to transfer to a different location?

WHY ASK: It's important to understand if this role will lay a foundation for your future and give you opportunities for personal and professional growth over time.



OFFICE & TEAM DYNAMICS

Day-to-day job satisfaction for many comes down to coworkers, office culture, and of course, patients. Whether private practice, small group, or DSO-supported, each office will have its own vibe. In addition to important foundational questions about office hours, lunch breaks, and average work week, you'll want to understand the practice's values, how disputes are managed, and how the team pauses to celebrate. Some offices have team members focused on supporting hygienists and making their lives easier, such as call centers for patient follow up or hygiene assistants to help with prep.

- What are the office's operating hours?
- How many hours on average do hygienists work?
- Are hygienists required to clock out if a patient no-shows?
- What kind of support do hygienists get with patient scheduling and/or follow up?
- How would you describe the team dynamic / culture?
- Beyond hygiene, what roles exist among the full office team, including clinical and administrative personnel?
- Does the full office team ever go through training and development together?
- If there is ever an issue between team members, how is it resolved? Is there a formal process?
- Can you give me an example of how you celebrate as a team?

WHY ASK: You want to be on a team that helps you succeed and makes you feel celebrated. Should conflict arise, as it sometimes does, there should be systems you can trust to ensure issues are taken seriously and addressed impartially.



TECHNOLOGY & SUPPLIES

Dental technology is changing the game, leading to improved diagnoses and shortened treatment times. Technology is perhaps the single most important factor that will influence future patient experience, from the first touchpoint through treatment. Having modern technology in your office to screen for disease can even save lives. Similarly, labs and supplies continue to improve, giving doctors, hygienists, and patients more options for oral hygiene and dental health than ever before.

- What technology do you use in patient care?
- What is your process for evaluating and purchasing new technology?
- When there is new technology in the office, what is the process for training the team?
- Is the office aligned with any specific products?
- Who decides on the products and supplies the office buys? Are hygienists allowed any input?
- Does your office have sales quota agreements?
- How are supplies / products vetted for quality?

WHY ASK: Patients trust you for your expert advice and care. You want access to tools and technology to provide them the very best treatment. And you want to be able to recommend products to help them – not push something you don't believe in.



CONTINUING EDUCATION & TRAINING

Dentistry is one of the most exciting spaces within healthcare. Keeping up with this rapidly evolving industry is challenging, but also brings tremendous opportunity for hygienists. When you look at what you can do today and what is trending for the future, the opportunities to maximize your clinical and personal skills will also continue to grow.

- What Continuing Education (CE) classes are available?
- Is there an established curriculum or learning track specifically for hygienists?
- Can I take classes to expand the services I can provide, such as learning aesthetics?
- Are CE classes paid for by the practice?
- Will I receive paid time off while taking CE?
- Will I receive my hourly wage while taking CE classes?
- Are there opportunities for virtual or on-demand classes? In-person workshops?
- Do non-clinical training opportunities exist, such as leadership development or business classes?
- Are there opportunities prior to or after attending a class to engage with the instructor? With other class participants for peer support?

WHY ASK: Some practices will not only sponsor continuing education classes, but they will also pay your hourly wage while you complete the course. You may also be given opportunities to connect with classmates after class to help fine-tune your skills.



"I was able to attend classes on how to communicate with patients. That's something I wasn't taught in hygiene school."

Eunice Valdez
Heartland Dental
supported hygienist



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

You have specialized clinical skills and deserve to be fairly rewarded for your work. While it is always tempting to jump at the offer that has the highest hourly wage, you want to ask some questions to understand if there's more to the story. In addition to an attractive starting salary, understand if there are clear tracks for promotion, opportunities for supplemental bonuses, and benefits.

- Do you offer an hourly wage, a production-based wage, or a hybrid: hourly wage with production bonus?
- How often are hygienists eligible for a raise and/or promotion?
- Beyond production, are there other bonus opportunities, such as employee referrals and/or office profit-sharing?
- Do you offer medical coverage? Dental? Vision? Life insurance? Retirement savings? College savings?
- Does the practice pay for liability insurance?
- Do hygienists get access to any product and/or supply discounts?

WHY ASK: Several practices don't offer paid vacation or benefit coverage – even for full-time employees – while others pay for things that would be out-of-pocket elsewhere, like CE classes. You'll want to understand the full picture to best evaluate your offer.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO FIND THE RIGHT FIT

At Heartland Dental, we know that a strong team makes a practice run. Our mission is clear: we support you – so you can focus on patient care, exceptional experiences, and building a career you'll love.

- **COMPETITIVE PAY**

Earn a guaranteed hourly rate with opportunities to bonus, along with a comprehensive benefits package and paid time off

- **CAREER GROWTH**

Choose your educational pathways, from ongoing CE to advanced aesthetic dentistry, with mentorship to help you succeed.

- **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

Have freedom to focus on patient care along with time to spend with friends and family.

Surround yourself with people invested in your success. Discover how you can launch a career that's rewarding in every sense of the word: professionally, financially, and personally.

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