

The “Shady Side” of the Prep Appointment

Trish Jones, RDH, BS
 Technical Advisor, Aurum Ceramic @ LVI



Two of the most important things to be accomplished at a smile design seat appointment are often the most overlooked during the prep appointment. There are many factors to consider in creating a new smile, but as a laboratory, we find the notation and communication of shade and shape is often overlooked. While we all want great preps and clear impressions to allow us to deliver incredible new smiles to our patients, shade and shape are just as, if not even more, critical to actually meeting that goal. So let’s examine a few ideas to make the “shading taking, smile design” preparation appointment special.

It is highly recommended to have a baseline shade of the patient’s existing smile on record. This can be documented by pre-operative photos. Often, the patient wears temporaries of a whiter/brighter shade for the three weeks while their final restorations are being crafted. While you may have fabricated fantastic temporaries, the patient may or may not notice a difference when the final restorations are placed. Somehow we have lost the “wow” factor. This is where it is handy to show the patient his or her original smile and point out the improvements that have been made in shade and smile design. Patients can also be disappointed if the final shade ends up being darker than the temporary shade. Again, show the patient his or her pre-op shades and they’ll see the difference that’s been achieved.

It is beneficial to take 10-15 minutes of the prep appointment prior to prepping and make it into a smile consultation. This is the time to discuss with the



Take a baseline shade prior to prepping and anaesthesia.

patient the shade desired and shape. Of course, this can be confirmed with the temporaries and adjusted as needed; however, it is not uncommon to find discrepancies between what the patient desires and what the dentist prescribes. Let’s remember that we start off an aesthetic case with verbal communication. Whatever we can do to move that discussion on to a “visual” rather than “verbal” basis is critical to a successful final result and a happy patient.

Here are a few helpful hints that we have found will help you and your patients get the results you both desire:

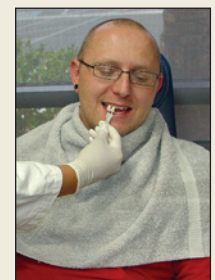
- If the patient is wearing bright colours (such as orange or yellow), drape them with a neutral grey towel when taking a shade. This helps prevent the shade tabs from picking up the yellow tones in the clothing and fooling the eyes.
- The teeth/preps should be moist when the stump shade is taken. If they are desiccated, they will appear lighter than what they actually are.
- Determine the base/main shade of the restoration, depending on stump shade and the patient’s aesthetic shade desires, and determine from that how much blending is needed.
- Determine special characteristics such as how much translucency, incisal characteristics (those on the incisal edge, such as notches), and amount of surface anatomy. Surface anatomy will have an impact on shade. A smooth surface will reflect more light, thus making the tooth appear larger and whiter. A medium surface will break up light, and heavy anatomy will make the tooth appear smaller due to less light reflecting from it.
- Make sure the desired length of the incisors is recorded on the lab prescription.
- Record the information on a colour mapping card and indicate teeth to be restored on the lab prescription.

- Utilize the checklists for appropriate patients. These are useful tools provided to you at no cost.
- If you are concerned with the shape or shade when you get the case returned to your office, try it in the patient’s mouth. If you evaluate the shade on the white stone models only, the restorations may appear yellow, while in reality this is not the case. They may also pick up hues from the die spacer, if the die model is used. The patient’s preps and tissues will give you the best try-in and evaluation of final shade.

As more and more patients are accessing aesthetic dentistry, it is important to be on the cutting edge and to be knowledgeable. But most of all, you must be able to deliver the results the patient expects, even though you may not agree. Whether it is a bleached white dazzling smile, or a natural genuine smile, as long as your patient leaves your office with a big smile on their face, we are all happy.



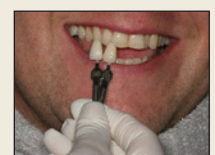
Bright clothing colours can convey false tones.



Neutralize any bright clothing by using a neutral grey towel.



This red collar can be distracting to the eye when taking a shade.



Colour perception is more predictable with neutral background.