

MINI GUIDE #2

Ortho Vocabulary for Beginners

Plain-English orthodontic terms for new hires, assistants, front desk, records, treatment coordinators, and office teams.

Bracket

Small attachment on a tooth.

Archwire

Wire that helps guide movement.

Debond

Removal of braces/attachments.

Retention

Keeping results after treatment.

White-label training mini guide

Beginner-friendly / office-ready / client-ready

How to Use This Mini Guide

Learn the language before you try to master the job.

MINI GUIDE

The goal is not to memorize everything overnight.

Beginner mindset

New hires often feel behind because the office language moves faster than they do. This guide gives plain-English meanings, office examples, and safe new-hire notes so the reader can listen better, ask better questions, and grow faster.

Use it before work

Read one section each morning. Pick five terms you expect to hear that day. Listen for those words in context.

Use it during training

Keep a notebook. When you hear a word, write the word, who said it, and what was happening in the room.

Safe use reminder

Vocabulary helps you understand the office. It does not authorize clinical duties. Always follow your state rules, office protocols, doctor direction, and trainer sign-off before performing any task.

The 5 Word Buckets

A simple way to organize orthodontic language.

Most ortho words fit into one of five buckets.

When a new hire can sort a word into a bucket, the word becomes less intimidating. Use this map before jumping into the glossary.

1

People + Roles

Who does what inside the office.

2

Teeth + Bite

How teeth, jaws, and the bite are described.

3

Braces + Appliances

The parts, tools, and devices patients wear.

4

Appointments + Flow

What happens during visits and handoffs.

5

Safety + Admin

The words that protect patients, team members, and records.

Quick study rule

If you cannot explain a word to a nervous patient in one simple sentence, you do not own that word yet. Keep practicing until the meaning becomes calm and clear.

People + Team Role Words

Understand who does what before trying to do everything.

Orthodontist

A dentist who completed additional specialty education in orthodontics and plans treatment for tooth and jaw alignment.

Office example:

The orthodontist diagnoses the bite and gives clinical direction.

New-hire note:

Do not answer diagnosis questions for the doctor.

Orthodontic Assistant

A clinical team member who supports the doctor, patient, room setup, chairside flow, records, and patient instructions within state scope.

Office example:

The assistant helps prepare for an adjustment and documents completed steps.

New-hire note:

Scope can vary by state and office.

Treatment Coordinator

The team member who guides the new patient consultation, explains the process, supports treatment acceptance, and connects clinical and financial conversations.

Office example:

The TC introduces the patient to the treatment path and next steps.

New-hire note:

The TC supports clarity, not pressure.

Records Technician

A team member who helps gather photos, scans, X-rays, impressions, and other records used for evaluation and treatment planning.

Office example:

Records are often collected before the doctor finalizes recommendations.

New-hire note:

Know your state rules for radiographs.

Sterilization Technician

The person or role responsible for safe instrument processing, clean/dirty flow, room reset support, and infection-control habits.

Office example:

Sterilization keeps clinical rooms moving and protects patients.

New-hire note:

This role is never minor.

Financial / Insurance Coordinator

A team member who supports benefit verification, estimates, claims, contracts, payments, and financial communication.

Office example:

They may explain an estimated patient portion after insurance review.

New-hire note:

Avoid guaranteeing benefits.

Appointment + Flow Words

The words that explain what kind of visit is happening.

New Patient Consult

The first major visit where the office learns the patient's concerns, collects information, and reviews possible treatment direction.

Office example:

A consult may include photos, scans, X-rays, a doctor exam, and financial review.

New-hire note:

Keep language welcoming and clear.

Records Appointment

A visit focused on gathering images and documentation such as photos, scans, impressions, and radiographs.

Office example:

Records help the doctor evaluate treatment needs.

New-hire note:

Accuracy matters more than speed.

Adjustment

A routine orthodontic visit where progress is checked and braces or appliances may be updated by the clinical team within scope.

Office example:

A wire change or elastic instruction may happen at an adjustment.

New-hire note:

Use the office's appointment terminology.

Repair Visit

A visit for a loose bracket, poking wire, broken appliance, or similar issue.

Office example:

A patient calls because a wire is irritating the cheek.

New-hire note:

Triage with office protocol.

Debond

The appointment where braces or attachments are removed and the patient transitions toward retention.

Office example:

A debond often includes final records and retainer instructions.

New-hire note:

Celebrate, but stay focused.

Retention Visit

A follow-up after active treatment to check retainers, fit, wear, comfort, and stability.

Office example:

The patient brings retainers for evaluation.

New-hire note:

Retention is part of the treatment story.

Tooth Direction Words

These words tell the team where something is located.

Upper / Lower Arch

The curved row of teeth in the top jaw or bottom jaw.

Office example:

The upper arch has brackets from molar to molar.

New-hire note:

Arch does not mean one tooth.

Anterior

Toward the front of the mouth.

Office example:

The front teeth are anterior teeth.

New-hire note:

Think front.

Posterior

Toward the back of the mouth.

Office example:

Molars and premolars are posterior teeth.

New-hire note:

Think back.

Buccal / Facial / Labial

Surfaces that face the cheeks or lips. Offices may use these words slightly differently depending on context.

Office example:

A bracket is bonded on the facial surface.

New-hire note:

Ask which word your office prefers.

Lingual

The surface toward the tongue.

Office example:

A lingual retainer sits behind the teeth.

New-hire note:

Lingual = tongue side.

Mesial / Distal

Mesial means toward the middle/front center line; distal means away from the middle/front center line.

Office example:

The doctor may say a tooth needs movement mesially or distally.

New-hire note:

These take practice.

Bite + Alignment Words, Part 1

Bite words describe relationships, not just individual teeth.

Occlusion

How the upper and lower teeth come together when the patient bites.

Office example:

The doctor evaluates occlusion during the exam.

New-hire note:

Occlusion is the bite relationship.

Malocclusion

A bite or alignment relationship that is not ideal and may need correction.

Office example:

Crowding, spacing, open bite, deep bite, and crossbite may be part of a malocclusion.

New-hire note:

Do not diagnose it yourself.

Class I Malocclusion

A bite where the back molars meet properly, but front teeth may be crowded, spaced, or have other bite issues.

Office example:

A patient can have Class I with crowding.

New-hire note:

Class does not mean easy.

Class II Malocclusion

A relationship where the lower teeth and/or jaw sit back relative to the upper teeth and/or jaw.

Office example:

The upper front teeth may look more forward.

New-hire note:

Ask the doctor before explaining.

Class III Malocclusion

A relationship where the lower teeth and/or jaw sit ahead relative to the upper teeth and/or jaw.

Office example:

An underbite appearance may be present.

New-hire note:

Use careful, non-judgmental language.

Deep Bite

When the upper front teeth overlap the lower front teeth more than ideal.

Office example:

The doctor may call it a closed bite or deep overbite.

New-hire note:

Avoid scary wording with patients.

Bite + Alignment Words, Part 2

These are some of the words new hires hear constantly.

Crossbite

When upper and lower teeth do not meet in the usual inside/outside relationship. It can involve one tooth or groups of teeth.

Office example:

The doctor may describe an anterior or posterior crossbite.

New-hire note:

Let the doctor explain treatment options.

Open Bite

When teeth do not overlap or touch as expected when the patient bites together.

Office example:

The front teeth may have space when the back teeth touch.

New-hire note:

Photos help the team visualize it.

Overjet

The horizontal distance between upper and lower front teeth.

Office example:

Upper front teeth may be forward relative to lower front teeth.

New-hire note:

Different from overbite.

Overbite

The vertical overlap of upper front teeth over lower front teeth.

Office example:

A deep bite is an excessive overbite.

New-hire note:

Different from overjet.

Crowding

When there is not enough space for teeth to align comfortably.

Office example:

The lower anterior teeth may appear rotated or overlapped.

New-hire note:

Crowding is common; keep tone neutral.

Spacing

Gaps or extra space between teeth.

Office example:

A patient may have spacing in the upper anterior teeth.

New-hire note:

Spacing can have several causes.

Treatment Goal Words

These words describe what treatment is trying to accomplish.

Alignment

The process or result of positioning teeth more evenly in the arch.

Office example:

Early visits may focus on alignment and leveling.

New-hire note:

Do not promise a timeline.

Leveling

Part of treatment where teeth are guided into a more even vertical relationship.

Office example:

The doctor may discuss alignment and leveling as an early phase.

New-hire note:

This is a treatment concept.

Bite Correction

Treatment efforts focused on improving how upper and lower teeth fit together.

Office example:

Elastics may be used to support bite correction.

New-hire note:

Patient cooperation often matters.

Expansion

A treatment concept related to widening an arch, commonly with an appliance such as an expander.

Office example:

A parent may ask what the expander does.

New-hire note:

Use office-approved explanation.

Retention

The stage after active treatment where retainers help maintain tooth positions.

Office example:

The patient receives retainer wear instructions.

New-hire note:

Retention is long-term.

Relapse

Movement of teeth back toward old positions after treatment, often linked to retainer wear or biological factors.

Office example:

A patient who stopped wearing retainers may have shifting.

New-hire note:

Do not blame the patient.

Braces Hardware Words, Part 1

The basic parts new hires hear during chairside flow.

Bracket

A small orthodontic attachment placed on a tooth to hold or guide the archwire.

Office example:

The archwire sits in the bracket slot.

New-hire note:

Brackets are not the whole braces system.

Band

A metal ring that fits around a tooth, often a molar, and can hold attachments or tubes.

Office example:

A molar band may support a buccal tube or appliance.

New-hire note:

Bands require good fit and hygiene.

Buccal Tube

A small part on the cheek side of a molar band or molar bracket that can hold an archwire or other appliance component.

Office example:

The back end of the archwire may sit in the buccal tube.

New-hire note:

Watch for poking-wire concerns.

Archwire

The wire that fits into brackets and helps guide tooth movement.

Office example:

A wire change may happen at an adjustment visit.

New-hire note:

Wire size and type are doctor-directed.

Ligature / O-Ring

A small elastic or tie used to hold the archwire in the bracket.

Office example:

Patients may choose colored elastic ties.

New-hire note:

Some brackets are self-ligating.

Power Chain

A connected chain of elastic rings that can hold the wire and help close spaces.

Office example:

The doctor may prescribe power chain across several brackets.

New-hire note:

Do not call it just 'colors.'

Braces Hardware Words, Part 2

Small parts can create big confusion for beginners.

Coil Spring

A small spring placed on an archwire to open or maintain space.

Office example:

A spring may be used to create space for a tooth.

New-hire note:

Never remove without direction.

Hook

A small projection on a bracket, wire, or appliance used to attach elastics or other components.

Office example:

The patient hooks elastics from upper to lower hooks.

New-hire note:

Explain only as trained.

Elastic

A small rubber band patients wear to apply extra force in ways braces alone may not accomplish.

Office example:

Elastics may support bite correction when worn as directed.

New-hire note:

Compliance matters.

Separator / Spacer

A small elastic or device placed between teeth to create space before a band or appliance.

Office example:

Separators may be placed before band fitting.

New-hire note:

Warn patients with approved comfort instructions.

Bite Turbo / Bite Block

A small buildup or attachment used to change how teeth contact during treatment.

Office example:

A patient may feel bite turbos while eating at first.

New-hire note:

Use comfort and diet guidance from the office.

Tie-In

The process of securing the archwire into brackets using ties, clips, or ligatures.

Office example:

The assistant may hear 'tie in upper 014 NiTi' depending on office language.

New-hire note:

Learn your office shorthand.

How to Explain Braces in Plain English

A beginner-friendly way to understand the system without over-teaching.

Braces are a system, not just brackets.

A simple way to think about braces: brackets are attached to teeth, the archwire goes through the brackets, and the system gives the orthodontist a way to guide tooth movement over time. Patients may also use elastics, power chain, springs, or appliances depending on their plan.

1

Bracket

Attachment placed on the tooth.

2

Archwire

Wire fits into bracket slots.

3

Tie / Clip

Holds the wire in place.

4

Adjustment

Team checks progress and updates as directed.

5

Retention

Retainers help maintain results after active treatment.

Patient-safe wording

When talking to patients, stay simple: 'The doctor is guiding the teeth over time, and today's visit helps keep the plan moving.' Avoid making promises about speed, final results, or diagnosis unless the doctor has already given approved language.

New-hire note

Your job is to understand the vocabulary, support the workflow, and ask questions when you are unsure. Do not guess in front of the patient.

Appliance + Device Words

These words often come up during consults, delivery, repair, and retention.

Expander

An appliance used to support arch expansion according to the orthodontist's treatment plan.

Office example:

A parent may ask how to turn or care for an expander.

New-hire note:

Use only office-approved instructions.

Retainer

An appliance used after active treatment to help hold teeth in position.

Office example:

Retainers may be removable or fixed depending on the plan.

New-hire note:

Retention instructions must be clear.

Clear Aligner

A removable, clear tray formed to fit the patient's teeth and guide movement as prescribed.

Office example:

The patient changes aligners on the schedule provided by the office.

New-hire note:

Patients insert and remove them.

Attachment

A small tooth-colored shape bonded to a tooth to help aligners grip and move teeth as planned.

Office example:

Attachments may be placed during an aligner start.

New-hire note:

Avoid calling them braces.

Button

A small bonded attachment that may be used with elastics or other components.

Office example:

An elastic may hook to a button.

New-hire note:

If it comes loose, follow repair protocol.

Appliance

A general word for a device used during treatment, such as an expander, retainer, space maintainer, or other orthodontic device.

Office example:

The doctor may say 'check appliance fit.'

New-hire note:

Ask which appliance is meant.

Records + Imaging Words, Part 1

Words connected to documentation and treatment planning.

Diagnostic Records

The photos, scans, radiographs, impressions, and notes used to support evaluation and treatment planning.

Office example:

Records may be taken before a consultation or start.

New-hire note:

Quality and labeling matter.

Intraoral Photo

A photo taken inside the mouth.

Office example:

The records tech captures bite and arch views.

New-hire note:

Use retractors as trained.

Extraoral Photo

A photo taken outside the mouth, often showing face, smile, and profile views.

Office example:

The patient may stand against a plain background.

New-hire note:

Keep posture and framing consistent.

Panoramic Radiograph

A broad dental X-ray view that shows teeth and jaws in one image.

Office example:

The doctor may review tooth development and root positions.

New-hire note:

Radiograph duties depend on state rules.

Cephalometric Radiograph

A side-view X-ray of the head used in orthodontic evaluation.

Office example:

A ceph may help the doctor analyze jaw relationships.

New-hire note:

AAO glossary calls this a side view X-ray.

CBCT

Cone Beam CT, a 3D X-ray used when the doctor needs three-dimensional information.

Office example:

CBCT may be used for specific diagnostic needs.

New-hire note:

Follow radiation safety rules.

Records + Documentation Words, Part 2

These terms help new hires understand why details matter.

Intraoral Scan

A digital scan of the teeth and bite used to create records, models, aligners, retainers, or appliances.

Office example:

The assistant scans both arches and bite as trained.

New-hire note:

Good isolation and accuracy matter.

Impression

A physical mold or negative copy of teeth, often made with impression material.

Office example:

Some offices use impressions for appliances or retainers.

New-hire note:

Digital scanning may replace many impressions.

Bite Registration

A record showing how upper and lower teeth come together.

Office example:

The lab may need the bite registration with the impression or scan.

New-hire note:

If the bite is off, the appliance may not fit.

Model

A physical or digital copy of the patient's teeth used for review, lab work, or appliance fabrication.

Office example:

A digital model may come from a scan.

New-hire note:

File naming matters.

Consent

Permission or acknowledgment for treatment, records, communication, or other office processes.

Office example:

The parent signs required consent forms before certain steps.

New-hire note:

Know what your role may collect or verify.

HIPAA

A federal privacy law related to protected health information. Offices should limit what is shared and with whom.

Office example:

Do not discuss patient details in public spaces.

New-hire note:

Use minimum necessary habits.

Chairside Action Words

The words you hear when the clinical flow starts moving.

Bonding

The appointment or process where brackets, attachments, or other components are placed on teeth as directed.

Office example:

A braces start may include bonding brackets.

New-hire note:

Preparation and isolation are important.

Debonding

Removing braces or attachments at the end of active treatment, followed by cleanup and retention steps.

Office example:

A debond day often includes final photos and retainers.

New-hire note:

Keep celebration and focus balanced.

Wire Change

Changing the archwire during an adjustment as directed by the doctor.

Office example:

The doctor may prescribe a different wire size or type.

New-hire note:

Do not choose wires independently.

Reposition

Changing the position of a bracket or attachment when directed by the orthodontist.

Office example:

A bracket may be repositioned to improve movement.

New-hire note:

Doctor decision.

Trim Wire

Shortening or adjusting the end of a wire to reduce irritation and fit correctly.

Office example:

A patient reports a poking wire.

New-hire note:

Follow office protocol and scope.

Check Contacts

Checking where teeth touch or how bite contacts relate during treatment.

Office example:

The doctor may ask for bite paper or a contact check.

New-hire note:

Do not interpret beyond training.

Repair + Discomfort Words

The words used when patients call with a problem.

Loose Bracket

A bracket that is no longer fully attached to the tooth.

Office example:

The patient says a brace is sliding on the wire.

New-hire note:

Schedule based on office protocol.

Poking Wire

A wire end that irritates the cheek, gum, or soft tissue.

Office example:

The patient feels scratching near the back molar.

New-hire note:

Ask location and discomfort level.

Loose Band

A molar band that may have shifted or come loose.

Office example:

The patient feels movement around a back tooth.

New-hire note:

Follow urgent repair guidance.

Broken Appliance

An appliance component that cracks, bends, detaches, or stops fitting properly.

Office example:

A retainer or expander has a broken part.

New-hire note:

Do not tell them to force it.

Orthodontic Wax

Soft wax patients can place over an irritating bracket or wire temporarily.

Office example:

Wax may help until the patient is seen.

New-hire note:

Use office-approved instructions.

Urgent vs. Routine

A triage difference between issues needing quicker attention and issues that can wait for a scheduled visit.

Office example:

Pain, injury, swelling, or trauma may require escalation.

New-hire note:

Never ignore red flags.

Safety + Infection-Control Words

Safety vocabulary is part of patient trust.

Standard Precautions

Basic infection-prevention practices used for all patient care to protect patients and dental health care personnel.

Office example:

Hand hygiene, PPE, sharps safety, sterile instruments, and disinfected surfaces are part of the system.

New-hire note:

This is not optional.

PPE

Personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, eyewear, and other protection required by the task.

Office example:

Wear the correct PPE before room turnover.

New-hire note:

PPE protects both patient and team.

Hand Hygiene

Cleaning hands at the right times using approved methods.

Office example:

Before and after patient care, after glove removal, and when indicated.

New-hire note:

CDC calls this a key infection-prevention measure.

Disinfection

Reducing or destroying microorganisms on surfaces using approved products and contact time.

Office example:

The chair and light handles are disinfected between patients.

New-hire note:

Read the product label.

Sterilization

A process designed to destroy all forms of microbial life on instruments when done correctly.

Office example:

Instruments are cleaned, packaged, sterilized, and stored properly.

New-hire note:

Do not skip steps.

Contact Time

The amount of time a disinfectant must stay wet on a surface to work as directed.

Office example:

A wipe may need the surface to remain wet for a set time.

New-hire note:

Dry too soon can mean not done.

Admin + Front Desk Words

These terms help the whole office stay organized.

Chart Note

A written record of what happened, what was discussed, what was completed, and what needs follow-up.

Office example:

Chart notes may mention wire size, patient instructions, or next visit plan.

New-hire note:

Write clearly and objectively.

Chief Concern

The main concern or reason the patient or parent is seeking care.

Office example:

The parent says the child has crowding or an overbite.

New-hire note:

Use the patient's words when appropriate.

Referral

A patient sent by another dentist, doctor, friend, patient, school, ad, or other source.

Office example:

The office tracks who referred the new patient.

New-hire note:

Referral source matters for marketing.

Confirmation

The process of reminding or verifying that a patient plans to attend an appointment.

Office example:

The front desk confirms tomorrow's consult.

New-hire note:

Use approved text/call rules.

No-Show

A patient who does not attend and does not cancel/reschedule in time.

Office example:

No-shows affect schedule flow.

New-hire note:

Use calm recovery language.

Observation / Recall

A follow-up system for patients who are not ready to start treatment but should be monitored.

Office example:

A child may return in six months for growth observation.

New-hire note:

Do not let these patients disappear.

Insurance + Financial Words

Words that help new hires avoid overpromising.

Eligibility

Whether a patient appears to have active insurance coverage according to available benefit information.

Office example:

The insurance coordinator checks eligibility before the consult.

New-hire note:

Eligibility is not a guarantee of payment.

Benefits

The plan details that may describe covered services, limits, waiting periods, maximums, or exclusions.

Office example:

Orthodontic benefits may have a lifetime maximum.

New-hire note:

Use estimate language.

Lifetime Ortho Maximum

A maximum orthodontic benefit amount that may apply over the life of the plan/member rather than renewing yearly.

Office example:

A plan may have a \$1,500 lifetime orthodontic maximum.

New-hire note:

Verify carefully.

Claim

A request submitted to a dental benefit plan for payment or review of covered services.

Office example:

The office submits a claim with required codes and attachments.

New-hire note:

Claims can be delayed or denied.

EOB

Explanation of Benefits: the payer's explanation of how a claim was processed.

Office example:

The EOB shows payment, denial, patient responsibility, and plan notes.

New-hire note:

It is not a bill by itself.

Pre-Treatment Estimate

A request sent before treatment asking the plan to estimate how benefits may apply.

Office example:

Some offices submit one before a full orthodontic contract.

New-hire note:

Still not a guarantee.

Patient Communication Words

How to speak clearly without stepping outside your role.

Vocabulary is not just what you know.

It is also how you communicate what you know. The strongest new hires learn how to be helpful without guessing, diagnosing, or overpromising.

When you are still learning

I am still learning that part, so I am going to check with the clinical team and make sure I give you the right answer.

When a patient asks diagnosis questions

The orthodontist will be the best person to explain exactly what that means for your treatment plan.

When a parent asks about timing

Every treatment plan is different. The doctor and treatment coordinator can review the expected timeline with you.

When you need a warm handoff

I am going to connect you with the right team member so we can answer that accurately.

The safest phrase in the office

Use this often: 'Let me verify that for you.' It protects the patient, protects the team, and shows professionalism. Beginners do not lose respect by checking; they gain trust.

Commonly Confused Words

Pairs that beginners mix up all the time.

Overjet

Horizontal distance between upper and lower front teeth.

Overbite

Vertical overlap of upper front teeth over lower front teeth.

Disinfection

Used for surfaces and items according to office protocol.

Sterilization

Instrument process designed to destroy microbial life.

Retainer

Maintains tooth position after active treatment.

Aligner

Moves teeth during active treatment when prescribed.

Consult

First treatment conversation and evaluation flow.

Records

Photos/scans/radiographs/impressions used for evaluation.

Repair

Problem-focused visit for loose/broken/poking items.

Adjustment

Routine progress visit.

Observation

Monitoring a patient not ready to start.

Recall

Scheduled follow-up/revisit system.

The 1-Minute Vocabulary Method

A simple way to actually learn the language.

Do not just read the word. Use the word.

For each new term, fill in five tiny pieces of information. This turns vocabulary into office confidence.

1

Term

What word did you hear?

2

Plain meaning

What does it mean in simple language?

3

Where I heard it

Consult, chairside, records, front desk, or lab?

4

Office example

What was happening when the word was used?

5

Question to ask

What do I still need clarified?

Trainer tip

Ask the new hire to bring three vocabulary words to each weekly check-in. This turns the guide into a live learning tool instead of a one-time handout.

7-Day Vocabulary Practice Plan

A beginner study rhythm for the first week.

Day 1

Learn the roles

Write down who handles consults, records, sterilization, insurance, financials, and clinical flow.

Day 2

Learn tooth direction

Practice upper/lower, anterior/posterior, buccal/facial/labial, lingual, mesial, distal.

Day 3

Learn bite words

Review occlusion, malocclusion, Class I/II/III, overbite, overjet, crossbite, open bite.

Day 4

Learn braces hardware

Identify bracket, wire, band, buccal tube, elastic, power chain, spacer, hook, and bite turbo.

Day 5

Learn records words

Review photos, scan, impression, bite registration, panoramic, ceph, CBCT, model, consent.

Day 6

Learn safety words

Review standard precautions, PPE, hand hygiene, sterilization, disinfection, contact time, sharps.

Day 7

Teach it back

Pick 15 terms and explain each in one calm sentence without reading the guide.

Quick Reference Cheat Sheet, Part 1

50 beginner terms to review fast.

Orthodontist

Specialist who plans orthodontic treatment.

Assistant

Clinical support team member.

TC

Treatment coordinator.

Records

Photos, scans, X-rays, impressions, notes.

Arch

Curved row of teeth.

Anterior

Front.

Posterior

Back.

Lingual

Tongue side.

Buccal

Cheek side.

Mesial

Toward center/front.

Distal

Away from center/front.

Occlusion

How teeth bite together.

Malocclusion

Bite/alignment issue.

Overjet

Horizontal front-tooth distance.

Overbite

Vertical front-tooth overlap.

Crossbite

Teeth meet inside/outside usual relationship.

Open bite

Teeth do not touch/overlap as expected.

Crowding

Not enough space.

Spacing

Gaps between teeth.

Midline

Center alignment reference.

Bracket

Attachment on tooth.

Archwire

Wire that guides movement.

Band

Ring around tooth.

Buccal tube

Molar tube for wire/appliance.

Ligature

Tie that holds wire.

Quick Reference Cheat Sheet, Part 2

Another 50-second review page for new hires.

Power chain

Connected elastic rings.

Elastic

Rubber band for extra force.

Spacer

Creates space before band/appliance.

Bite turbo

Bite-opening buildup/attachment.

Expander

Appliance for arch expansion.

Retainer

Maintains teeth after treatment.

Aligner

Clear tray used for movement.

Attachment

Tooth-colored aligner grip.

Button

Small bonded hook point.

Bonding

Placing brackets/attachments.

Debonding

Removing braces/attachments.

Adjustment

Routine progress visit.

Repair

Problem-focused visit.

Poking wire

Irritating wire end.

Loose bracket

Detached/sliding bracket.

Panoramic

Broad dental X-ray.

Ceph

Side-view head X-ray.

CBCT

3D X-ray.

Scan

Digital tooth record.

Impression

Physical mold of teeth.

Bite registration

Record of how teeth meet.

Standard precautions

Basic infection prevention for all care.

PPE

Personal protective equipment.

Disinfection

Surface infection-control step.

Sterilization

Instrument infection-control process.

Vocabulary Self-Check

Use this as a worksheet, quiz, or trainer review page.

Can you explain these without guessing?

1

What is the difference between overjet and overbite?

2

What is the difference between disinfection and sterilization?

3

What does an archwire do in the braces system?

4

What appointment is used to remove braces and transition to retention?

5

What is a power chain?

6

What does 'lingual' mean?

7

What is a cephalometric radiograph?

8

Why should new hires avoid guaranteeing insurance benefits?

9

What does 'contact time' mean for disinfectants?

10

What is one safe phrase to use when you are not sure?

Pass standard

A strong beginner can explain the meaning, identify where the term shows up, and know when to ask for help.

Source Notes + Educational Disclaimer

Use this guide with local office protocols and legal scope rules.

Source notes

American Association of Orthodontists (AAO)

Used for orthodontic glossary language and treatment-option context, including terms like buccal tube, cephalometric radiograph, power chain, Class I/II/III malocclusions, crossbite, CBCT, braces, aligners, retainers, archwires, and elastics.

DANB State Dental Assisting Requirements

Used for the reminder that dental assistant job titles, allowable duties, education pathways, and exams vary by state.

CDC Dental Infection Prevention and Control

Used for the Standard Precautions and infection-prevention language, including hand hygiene, PPE, sharps safety, sterile instruments/devices, and clean/disinfected environmental surfaces.

Office protocol reminder

Every office may use slightly different shorthand. This guide teaches common language, but the office's doctor, manager, trainer, and written SOPs should control actual workflow.

Educational disclaimer

This mini guide is for vocabulary training and onboarding support only. It does not replace formal training, professional clinical judgment, state law, OSHA/HIPAA policies, CDC guidance, or the supervising doctor's instructions.

Public reference URLs: aaoinfo.org/resources/glossary-of-orthodontic-terms/ | danb.org/state-requirements | cdc.gov/dental-infection-control/