



## **NADL Guide to Careers in Dental Technology: Pathways and Opportunities**

### Introduction

Dental technology offers a rewarding career path with diverse job opportunities, hands-on work, and a critical role in patient care. Dental laboratory technicians (DLTs) combine artistry and precision to create dental prostheses, crowns, bridges, and other restorations, helping patients regain confidence in their smiles and quality of life. Whether you're just beginning to explore dental technology as a career or looking for advancement within the field, this guide will help you understand training options and potential career pathways.

### **Career Pathways in Dental Technology**

#### Training Options for Aspiring Dental Technicians

There are multiple ways to train and gain the necessary skills to succeed as a dental technician:

#### Formal Dental Technology Programs

Formal dental technology programs, typically offered at technical schools and colleges, provide structured education and training in dental materials, anatomy, and lab techniques. Graduates receive a certificate, diploma or associate degree, which can increase employability and open doors to specialized roles. Find a dental laboratory technology program at <https://nbccert.org/directories/institutions/>.

#### On-the-Job Training

Many dental laboratories offer on-the-job training, where new hires learn directly from experienced technicians. This pathway provides hands-on experience in a real-world setting and allows individuals to earn while they learn. On-the-job training may be ideal for those who prefer practical learning over traditional classroom settings. Find a dental laboratory near you by visiting the NADL Directory at <https://www.nadl.org/nadl-directories>.

#### Apprenticeship Programs

Some regions offer dental technology apprenticeships, allowing candidates to work and learn under the supervision of skilled technicians. Apprenticeship programs combine classroom instruction with hands-on experience, typically culminating in certification, which can enhance a technician's career prospects. Contact an educational institution or a local laboratory and see what type of apprenticeship programs they may offer.



### Continuing Education and Certifications

For those already in the field, pursuing certification as a Certified Dental Technician (CDT) or additional continuing education courses can provide opportunities for career advancement. Specialized training in digital dentistry, CAD/CAM technology, and other areas can also help technicians expand their skills. Find a continuing education course at <https://dentallabfoundation.org/CEsearch>.

### **Career Opportunities in Dental Technology**

Once trained, dental laboratory technicians have various job settings and roles to consider, including:

#### Commercial Dental Laboratory

Many dental technicians work in commercial dental laboratories, fabricating dental appliances for dental offices. These laboratories provide a dynamic work environment, exposure to a range of cases, and the opportunity to specialize in areas like ceramics, orthodontics, or crown and bridge work. Find a dental laboratory at <https://www.nadl.org/nadl-directories>.

#### In-House Dental Laboratory

Larger dental practices and some dental chains operate their own in-house laboratories. Dental technicians in these laboratories work closely with dental professionals, providing quick turnaround times and custom solutions for patients. In-house positions allow technicians to work in a patient-centered environment and develop close partnerships with clinical staff. <https://www.nadl.org/nadl-directories>

#### Educational Roles in Dental Technology Schools

Dental technology schools offer dental technicians the chance to share their expertise with the next generation. Teaching positions involve instructing students in lab techniques, dental materials, and industry best practices. Experienced technicians who enjoy mentoring may find this pathway rewarding. Find an NBC recognized dental technology school at <https://nbccert.org/directories/institutions/>.

#### Dental School Laboratories

Dental schools often employ dental laboratory technicians to support student training and provide prosthetic services. Dental technicians in dental schools work alongside dental students and faculty, contributing to an academic setting and engaging with future dentists. Additionally, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) is the national programmatic accrediting agency for dental and dental-related education programs at the post-secondary level. CODA employs a rigorous, collaborative peer review accreditation process to evaluate



## National Association of Dental Laboratories

the quality of more than 1,400 dental and dental-related education programs. Find a CODA accredited program at <https://coda.ada.org/find-a-program>.

### Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers

The VA operates specialized dental laboratories to provide care to veterans. Dental technicians employed by the VA work in a structured environment with competitive benefits, focusing on providing quality prosthetic care for veterans. VA laboratories are excellent options for technicians seeking stable, meaningful work.

### Dental Technology Research and Development

With advancements in digital dentistry and materials science, some dental technicians move into research roles, working for dental product manufacturers or in academic settings. These technicians contribute to developing new materials, tools, and techniques, helping shape the future of the field.

### Dental Supply and CAD/CAM Equipment Companies

Some dental technicians transition to roles within dental product companies, where they may provide technical support, training, and demonstrations for dental laboratories adopting new technologies. This role combines technical knowledge with communication skills, ideal for those who enjoy teaching and technology. Find an NADL supplier member at <https://www.nadl.org/nadl-directories>.

## **Why Choose a Career in Dental Technology?**

A career in dental technology offers a unique blend of art and science, combining precision work with patient impact. Dental technicians have the satisfaction of seeing their work transform lives, restoring function and aesthetics for patients of all ages. In addition to being a fulfilling career, dental technology provides diverse career paths and the chance to specialize or advance based on one's interests and skills. More information on becoming a dental technician can be found at <https://www.nadl.org/become-a-dental-laboratory-technician>.

### Next Steps

If you're interested in pursuing a career in dental technology, consider reaching out to a local dental laboratory or educational institution to learn more about training and career opportunities. Explore programs offered by technical schools or inquire about on-the-job training at dental laboratories in your area. NADL is here to support you with resources, guidance, and information as you begin your journey in this exciting field.



For More Information, please visit the following links:

- <https://www.nadl.org/become-a-dental-laboratory-technician> - The Become a Dental Laboratory Technician page offers comprehensive guidance for individuals interested in pursuing a career as a dental laboratory technician.
- <https://www.nadl.org/nadl-career-center> - The NADL Career Center provides career resources for those seeking to become a dental technician include a job board, tips for resume writing, interviewing and negotiating.
- <https://dentallabfoundation.org/> - The Foundation for Dental Laboratory technology offers grants and scholarships for continuing education and certification. Additionally, the Foundation offers online continuing education.
- <https://nbccert.org/> - The National Board for Certification provides both individual and laboratory certification programs. The extensive knowledge gained by certified individuals during the required continuing education process assures the laboratory owner, dental customer and the public that this individual is a true student of the profession with a solid commitment to remain at the cutting edge of his or her field.