



The California Association of Dental
Assisting Teachers, Inc.

Guide to Candidate Success

Tips and Recommendations for
Examination Candidates
Seeking Licensure as a
Registered Dental Assistant



The CADAT Guide to Candidate Success—2nd Edition

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A Message from the CADAT President

Congratulations! On behalf of the Board of Directors of CADAT and the hundreds of dental assisting educators of our organization, we congratulate you for making the commitment to becoming a licensed allied dental healthcare provider. As a Registered Dental Assistant, you will have the opportunity to provide extraordinary care to so many dental consumers in California who deserve the best the profession has to offer.

You have chosen to take a big step—you are applying for the State licensure examinations and there are many questions you probably have about the process and what to expect. We are pleased to provide you with this Guide to Examination Success—a tool for providing examination candidates with answers to the most commonly asked questions about the RDA written and practical examination process.

Testing is hard enough! Our goal is to help provide you with information that we hope will assist you to make good choices about when to test, what to expect when you test, and how to best prepare yourself for the test. Not everyone goes through the same experience when dealing with State agencies, applications, kit rentals and other elements of the RDA licensure process; we hope that this Guide will provide new information so that your exam and licensure experience is the best it can be.

We will start with the beginning of the process and conclude envisioning you with a license in your hand! Our best advice to you at this stage is paramount to examination success—BEING PREPARED! This Guide is a great place to start preparing.

We hope you benefit from all the information our Guide provides and wish you the best of luck, great success, and a long and prosperous career as a licensed Registered Dental Assistant.



Colleen Kirby-Banas, CDA, RDA, BS
President, CADAT

I. From the Beginning

In case you have not yet begun the process of applying, you may want to take a few minutes to review this section to make certain that you have obtained the correct application. What does that mean? Effective in 2011, the Dental Board, which we will refer to as the “Board” from here on, developed two different applications for the RDA licensure process:

- 1) An application for Formal Education Pathway candidate
- 2) An application for Work Experience Pathway candidate

What’s the difference in candidate type?

Formal Education Pathway: This pathway applies to those who have graduated or are preparing to graduate from a Board-approved RDA program in California. Those who graduated *after* July 1, 2009 will have different documentation requirements to submit to the Board with their application than those who graduated *prior* to July 1, 2009. The new RDA application for the formal education pathway will clearly define what documents are required to submit with the application based on when you graduated from your RDA program.

Work Experience Pathway/Those Completing Dental Assisting Coursework: This pathway applies to those who have not completed a Board-approved RDA program but have worked 15 months as a dental assistant. This application

pathway also includes those who may have graduated from a dental assisting program in a postsecondary institution approved by the Department of Education or in a secondary institution, regional occupational center, or regional occupational program that is ***not approved by the board***. The new RDA application for the work experience/non-Board approved coursework pathway clearly defines what documents are required to submit with the application including proof of your work experience and certification of your completed coursework in a dental assisting program. If you are uncertain whether the coursework you completed is from a Board-approved program, you should either check with the teaching institution where you completed your coursework or check the Dental Board's website for a listing of Dental Board-approved programs in the State.

If I completed coursework from a non-Board approved dental assisting program, how many of my course hours qualify to meet the 15-month requirement?

Applicants who have graduated from a dental assisting program in a postsecondary institution approved by the Department of Education or in a secondary institution, regional occupational center, or regional occupational program that is ***not approved by the board***, shall be granted credit equal the total weeks spent in classroom training and internship on a week-for-week basis. Verification of hours completed must be demonstrated and certified by the program.

How will the Board calculate my hours worked in a dental office as a dental assistant toward the work experience requirement?

If you are qualifying by work experience, a certification that you have 15 months of experience as a dental assistant with a dentist licensed in the United States must be supplied by obtaining the signature of the employer. The entire 15 months must be completed ***prior*** to the date of your exam application to the Board. The 15 months of experience will be calculated as follows:

- Working 20 hours or more per week will be calculated weekly and must equal at least 64 weeks.
- Working 19 hours or less per week will be calculated as hourly and must equal at least 1,280 hours.

The work experience will be considered qualifying (eligible toward the requirement) ***only*** if the experience was comprised of performing the duties of an unlicensed dental assistant in California as specified in law. For a current listing of the duties an unlicensed dental assistant in California may perform, refer to the Table of Allowable Duties that accompanies this Guide.

Is there a certain time period that I am supposed to file my application to the Dental Board?

Yes. This is called the "Filing Period." Each year, the Board publishes its examination schedule and indicates on that schedule what time frame you must submit your application to sit for the next available practical examination. This is an important element to understand, because the schedule is based on the practical examinations, not the written examinations. Even though you are applying to take ***all*** the necessary examinations (written and practical), the scheduled "Filing Periods" are based on the four (4) practical examinations administered by the Board each year. It is important to refer to the current year's examination schedule to find the "Filing Period" that best meets your needs.

If you are currently in a RDA program and have not graduated by the final filing date, but your school expects you to complete program 30 days or more before the next available published practical examination date, the school may certify on the application that you ***will*** complete program by a specified date.

However, it is your responsibility to make sure that the school certifies, not less than 30 days before the next published practical exam date, that you did in fact successfully complete program. If the Board does not receive proof of actual completion and graduation by this date, you will ***not*** be allowed to take the exams until such time as verification of graduation has been filed with the Board. All certifications ***must*** contain original signatures and be submitted within the specified time frame.

What if I completed a dental assisting program outside California?

Applicants graduating from a ADA-Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) accredited program outside California must show evidence of having successfully completed the following California Dental Board-approved courses in the identified subject areas at the time of submitting an examination application:

- Infection Control (8-hours)
- California Dental Practice Act (2-hours)
- Basic Life Support – CPR - American Heart Association (AHA)/American Red Cross (ARC)
- California Radiation Safety Certificate (32-hours) **
- Coronal Polishing Certificate (16-hours) **
- Pit and Fissure Sealant Certification (16 hours) - *optional* for non-RDA program graduates (see page 17)*

Each of these required courses (except CPR) must be completed by Board-approved course providers. CPR courses must be AHA or ARC certified courses and you cannot complete CPR certification using an on-line training mechanism. Be sure your CPR card carries the Heart Association or Red Cross symbols; otherwise, the card will not meet eligibility requirements.

** Requirement may be met if graduation from a CODA-accredited program can be verified by Board staff report. Contact the Dental Board regarding potential qualifications, if applicable.

What happens if I submit my application for the RDA examinations and some or all of my documentation is found to be incorrect or ineligible?

Regardless of the pathway you are using to qualify to take the examinations, the documents you submit along with your application are critical to your qualifying to sit for the examinations or to be issued a license. This is a very important element of the process and you need to review these guidelines carefully.

The Board staff will review your application upon receipt. If you provided a postcard with your application, the staff will return it to you indicating that your application was received. A Board-recognized postcard is enclosed in this Guide and must be self-addressed and stamped in order to receive it back from the Board. The postcard acknowledges only that your application was received, **not** that you have been approved to sit for the examinations.

Upon review, the Board staff will determine whether two different criteria have been met:

- 1) Has the candidate met the legal requirements for eligibility to apply for the examinations?
- 2) Has the candidate met the regulatory requirements to be issued a license once all examinations have been completed?

It is important to understand that these are two very different elements of the process and have a very different outcome. Specifically, if your application is submitted on time (within the Filing Period), includes all the correct fees identified on the application, and you have met one of the two pathway requirements (formal education or work experience), you have met the legal requirements to **apply** for the Board examinations.

The law states that the Board has to allow you to take your examinations if you meet the **application requirements**—those requirements only address eligibility to apply, not to obtain a license. The Board sets policy for the issuance of a license. This is called regulation (different than laws), and current regulation states that the Board will not issue a license, even if you have completed all of the State examinations, without the required documents being submitted accurately. What the law requires and what the regulations require are different but the total sum of each ultimately lead to whether you can sit for the Board examinations and whether you can be issued a license.

What could be considered a “deficiency” with my documents I submit to the Board?

There are several possible reasons the Board could find your application “deficient”; upon review of the application, if the Board staff find a problem, there will be a deficiency letter sent to you indicating what the error or problem is with your application and a coded reason for the deficiency. Some of the possible deficiencies could be:

- If you did not meet the requirement to submit certificates for each required certification course as a condition of licensure.
- The provider of the course or courses may not be recognized by the Board as an approved provider.
- You did not submit certain documents as required by the type of pathway you are using to apply for the examinations.
- Documents submitted fall short of all the required information on the application.

Upon successful completion of all application requirements and all examinations, you should receive your paper license within 30 days of completion of all requirements. If you do not, you need to contact the Board office and find out when your license will be issued to you. If you are told at that time that there was a deficiency found that is delaying the issuance of your license, you need to find out why you did not receive a deficiency letter regarding the matter and speak to the Dental Assisting Program Manager immediately. If told you were issued a letter and you did not receive it, you do have reason to address this with the Manager. If you did receive the letter and chose to ignore it, well, that’s another matter and the Board will not license you until such time as the deficiency is resolved.

REMINDER: *Even if you have been notified that you have passed your examinations, you are not considered a Registered Dental Assistant until such time as the license number is issued! You may not work as, hold yourself out as, promote yourself as, or perform the functions of a RDA until you are in possession of the license, regardless of your examination results.*

What are the application fees and what form of payment do I use?

You will be paying the Board only for the application filing fee of \$20 and the practical examination fee of \$60. These fees **do not include** the examination fees to take the RDA written exam and the RDA Law and Ethics exam. Each of those examination fees must be paid directly to PSI (see below).

The Board application and practical exam fees can only be paid by check or money order. The Board does not accept credit cards and the payment must accompany the application or it will not be processed.

What is PSI and what will I be receiving from them?

PSI is the contracted company assigned to administer the State written examinations. Once your exam application is deemed eligible, you will receive a candidate booklet from PSI describing the procedures you must follow to register, pay for, and reserve your testing date(s) for your written exams. There are two (2) written exams administered by PSI (the RDA written and the RDA Law and Ethics). You may take both exams on one day or separately— it’s your choice. But before you can schedule your written examination you have to register and you cannot do so until the Board notifies PSI that your application has been processed and you are now eligible to sit for your examinations. Your PSI handbook will describe in detail each of the three ways (money order, credit card or personal check) you can pay for your written examination fees. You can also register on-line, over the phone, by fax scheduling and US mail.

I know I have to complete a fingerprinting process. When do I do that and where?

Regardless of which pathway you are using to apply, each RDA exam application contains a LiveScan fingerprint form that contains the necessary data from the Board. This form is a required element of the application process and the staff want you to complete the process BEFORE you submit your application.

There is a fee you will have to pay at the fingerprinting location. The fee depends on the location and you should ask the location prior to scheduling your appointment what their fees are, what form of payment they will accept, and what their requirements are to have this process completed successfully.

What type of fingerprints am I required to submit with my RDA examination application?

If you reside in California, you are required to use the LiveScan fingerprinting process. This is an electronic process that, once the fingerprints are taken, electronically transmits the images to the State Department of Justice (DOJ) who then submits them to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). You do not have to handle or mail the fingerprints to anyone and the fingerprint location you use will manage all data electronically for you at the time of service.

What is the best location for me to go to when I need to have my fingerprints taken?

The Board staff recommends using a law enforcement location for obtaining LiveScan fingerprints. Law enforcement agencies and providers with a lot of experience in LiveScan fingerprinting will produce the best results including properly completed forms, correctly sequenced fingerprinting, and a higher quality result. For example, if the prints are not rolled in the proper sequence, they can be rejected by the DOJ which can delay the licensure process. It is highly recommended that you seek out a law enforcement agency before a private provider.

What documentation regarding my LiveScan fingerprints do I need to copy, complete, and submit with my application for the RDA examination?

A copy of the LiveScan form, once completed by the facility, must accompany the RDA application. Complete the personal information section of the form, take three (3) copies before going to the location, and present all copies to the facility when you arrive. The bottom of the form will be completed by the fingerprinting agent. You will be given two (2) completed copies of the form with all the necessary data completed; the facility will keep one copy. One copy is yours for your personal records.

You will submit one (1) copy of the completed LiveScan form to the Board with your RDA application. This will provide the Board with the necessary information regarding your ATI number and how to find your prints in the system, if necessary.

Will the Board notify me when they receive my proof of fingerprinting?

No. The Board will only notify you if your fingerprints are rejected. Reasons for rejection could be:

- Quality of the prints
- Sequence out of order
- The information entered by the fingerprinting agency was not accurate

If you are required to re-print, you need to present a copy of the rejection notice to the fingerprinting facility so that the facility has the original ATI number in order to resubmit the new fingerprints.

If I had to have fingerprints taken for another reason, such as bonding for a job or teaching in a school, do I still have to have fingerprints taken for my RDA application?

Yes. The Board must have a set of prints specific to the licensing process. Since you are obtaining a dental-related license for the first time, current LiveScan prints are required regardless of any other reason you may have been fingerprinted previously.

When I received my Candidate Handbook from PSI, it said I had to go get my fingerprints done. I already completed my fingerprints. Does this mean I have to do it again?

Not if you completed the LiveScan process just prior to submitting your application. The fingerprinting process only needs to be completed once - the new RDA examination application explains this very well. It is highly recommended by the Board staff that you complete your LiveScan process PRIOR to submitting the application so that your fingerprinting paperwork is included in your application records from the beginning.

The Candidate Handbook may not reflect the most current changes to the RDA application, so you can disregard the instructions to obtain fingerprinting provided you already completed the process. If you did not, then fingerprinting will have to be completed before a license can be issued.

II. The Paperwork is Done—Application Sent—Now What?

Now you need to prepare for your examinations! Regardless of how you have qualified for the examinations, it's never a bad idea to think about preparations. There are several things to think about as you go forward from here:

- Should I consider taking an RDA review course?
- Is there a handbook or manual available that I can purchase that will focus on the content of the examination?
- What types of questions are on the examination and where can I find out what subject areas I will be tested on?
- How do I compile the necessary equipment for the practical examination?

These are all great questions and there is really no one right answer other than what is best for you. A lot depends on how much time you have to prepare. If you have given yourself plenty of time and don't wait until the last minute, then you have several options to consider and take advantage of in preparing for the exams.

I understand that the Board does not provide the practical exam testing equipment and materials. How do I obtain the equipment and materials I need for the practical exam?

There are really only two options available here—either rent a kit from one of several companies who provide exam kits or compile the equipment and materials yourself. The second option has been done by many examinees successfully but you will need time and money to put all the materials together and learn how to work with the equipment; overall this option may not be very cost effective. The up-side to this is that the equipment is yours and can be used for other purposes later. If you are a graduate of a RDA program that required you to purchase your own typodont and bench mount, you are already half-way there and might consider looking into completing your own kit.

Seeking a reputable kit renter takes a bit of time and often your school or local dental assisting program will have recommendations to provide to you for kit renters in your area. Several of the kit renters bring the reserved kits to the examination facility the day of the examination and are there to assist you with your needs. This is always a good way to go just for the assurance that if something breaks, is missing, or goes wrong with a piece of equipment, your kit renter is on-site to assist you with the problem. Either way, getting familiar with the equipment ahead of time is really very important and a great reason why going to a practical prep course is quite valuable.

What's the average cost of a practical examination rental kit?

Statewide, the rental fees range from \$70—\$150. This fee may or may not include exam review materials.

What procedures do I have to perform on the practical examination and how much time do I have to do them?

The practical exam requires that you acceptably perform three (3) designated procedures to minimum competence on a fully articulated typodont that must be bench-mounted to the examination table in your assigned seated area. You will be given 1 ½ hours to complete the exam; however, the entire examination process including registration, grading, and clean-up will take approximately five (5) hours.

The three procedures are:

- 1) Fabricate and adjust an indirect provisional restoration—this is a temporary acrylic crown on tooth #8
- 2) Cement an indirect provisional restoration—you will temporarily cement the same temporary crown into place
- 3) Place, adjust, and finish a direct provisional restoration - this is a multi surface temporary filling on either tooth #19 or #30

What is the general performance criteria for the three (3) tested procedures?

The following information is what is published by the Board at the present time. The general grading criteria used by the examiners to determine each candidate's minimal competence for licensure is as follows:

1. Fabrication of a Temporary Crown

An appropriate temporary crown on tooth #8 has been directly fabricated that recreates proximal contact and proper occlusion, but does not extend beyond the margin of the crown preparation. Candidates may either bring an impression to the examination, or may take an impression during their test time. No additional time will be given to make the impression during the 1 ½ hour test time and no water will be available in the exam room. The Dental Board will provide the prepared tooth once inside the exam. Candidates must present a typodont with a normal typodont tooth #8.

2. Cementation of a Temporary Crown

Cement temporary crown on tooth #8.

3. Placement of a Temporary Restoration

Placement of a temporary restoration on tooth #19 DO or tooth #30 MOD. The appropriate material is smooth, has sealed margins, and recreates the occlusal anatomy and proximal contact areas of the natural tooth/teeth. Candidates must present a typodont with a Board-approved prepared tooth inserted for tooth #19 DO and/or tooth #30 MOD. If you perform restorations on both tooth #19 and #30 you will fail that procedure.

What should I plan to bring and is there anything I cannot bring to the practical examination site?

You will receive a Notice of Admission from the Board regarding your practical examination—bring this paperwork with you to the exam location. Your notice contains the location, date and time of your practical exam.

NOTE: Your assigned exam date and time are final; no changes in scheduling will be made by the Board. Failure to appear at the examination will result in forfeiture of your examination fees.

Besides your equipment kit or reservation form for your rental kit, a current, valid driver's license or other official government photo identification, such as a passport, must be presented at check-in to be admitted to the examination

area (California driver's licenses must be current or have a current extension).

No notes, books, notebooks, pictures, tape recorders, other written materials, or extra typodont teeth may be brought into the examination area. Extra teeth or an extra typodont will be confiscated. No persons are allowed into the testing area except scheduled examinees and test administrators. **Cellular phones are prohibited in the examination area.**

Kits are subject to search for any reason and we always suggest leaving back-packs or large purses behind. If you need to carry a purse or medical bag, be sure to keep it very small, with very few items inside. If you must carry a medical bag for some reason, be sure to declare this to the examination staff when you arrive. We also recommend advising a Board staff person by letter at the time of application in the event a special accommodation must be made.

What should I wear to the practical exam?

Examinees are required to wear a uniform, lab coat, and close-toed shoes. A uniform is considered clinical scrub tops and pants. A lab coat is generally a knee-length white lab coat, a scrub-type clinic coat or a disposable gown that is knee length and ties in the back. All lab coats/gowns must be long-sleeved and cuffed. You will not be admitted into the examination without the proper clinic attire.

You are also required to bring and wear disposable gloves, mask, safety goggles with side shields or a chin-length plastic face shield to be worn in conjunction with the face mask. We highly recommend that you bring extra gloves and masks in the event you need to change either or both during the several-hour examination. You will not be able to ask a proctor, examiner or another examinee to “borrow” anything, including disposable items, so come prepared with everything you need. A good practice is to fill a large plastic zip lock bag (gallon size or larger) with all disposable items including your goggles. A plastic face shield can be carried in using a separate plastic bag. Each bag will be visible to the staff upon inspection and this will make your admittance into the examination that much easier.

What are the “Required Materials” for the practical examination?

1. **Typodont:** This is a fully articulated maxillary and mandibular typodont with soft flexible gingivae. The allowable models (series #) as listed below. All teeth must be present and in a condition that will not interfere with your ability to successfully complete the examination.

- Columbia Dentoform M-PVR660
- Columbia Dentoform SM-PVR-860
- Kilgore Model D95 DP-200

2. **Bench Mount:** The mounting clamp must be the appropriate size for the type or model of typodont and must have an adjustable heavy-duty ball joint in the upright rod. The pole can be 4", 6", or 8" in length and base clamps to a bench top or table edge. Suggested models are:

- Kilgore Compact Bench Mount Model CBM-3
- Kilgore Bench and Glide Bar Mount Model CBM-3A
- Columbia Dentoform Bench-clamp Model M-8-1

3. **Prepared Teeth:** Specially prepared teeth used in the exam will become the property of the Board. Typodonts must be presented with approved prepared teeth for the temporary restoration (tooth #19 or #30), and all other original un-restored typodont teeth in place. A specially prepared tooth for the temporary crown (#8) procedure will be supplied by the Board at the exam once inside the testing facility. The specially prepared teeth for the RDA practical can be purchased by each of the typodont manufacturers listed. If you rent an exam kit, the kit renters will provide the prepped teeth as part of the typodont kit.

If a typodont or bench mount is deemed unacceptable by an examiner at any time, it is the examinee's responsibility to provide an acceptable replacement.

4. Other Materials:

Temporary Crown Fabrication Material: For the temporary crown, only temporary resin acrylic NON-monomer material may be used. No Snap, Trim, Jet or similar products are allowed.

Cement for Temporary Crown: For cementation of the temporary crown, you may use products such as Temp Bond or the IRM Temporary Filling material used for the restoration on #19 or #30. No light-cure materials are allowed and the kit renters do not provide curing lights for such materials.

Temporary Restoration: IRM is really the best material to use for this purpose. Do not use light-cure materials or materials that may not work well on the typodont (ivorine) teeth. IRM has been used for many years and is very predictable for this examination.

To Adjust and Trim Crown: The kit renters are using Dremmel handheld battery operated trimmer with a series of trimming and polishing burs. This device is working very well on the examination. The battery packs need to be charged prior to going into the exam and a battery pack will last many hours without failure if fully charged. Electrical or cordless trimming devices are acceptable. Used on a slow speed, the Dremmel handtool is the best product for this purpose.

Note: The Board is not responsible for malfunction of handpieces and no additional time is given to candidates if there is equipment failure. **The use of emery boards is prohibited.**

Putty Impression Material: You may bring an impression for the typodont you will be using, OR take the impression just prior to entering into the exam OR take during the exam. NO water is available in the exam room and no additional time will be given for impression taking. We recommend making a silicone putty impression tray for the #8 just prior to going into the examination. This allows you plenty of time while in the examination and there is no concern over shrinkage of the impression. No alginate impressions allowed.

We have provided a list of additional instruments and materials that you can consider if compiling your own exam kit. See the back of this Guide for a listing of suggested items to add to the Required Materials.

What are some of the practical exam guidelines that I will have to follow once inside the testing area?

At check-in, typodonts must be presented with all original teeth and approved prepared teeth for the procedures to be tested.

You are solely responsible to ensure that your typodont, bench mount, and armamentarium meet the criteria defined by the Board (see Required Materials) and that everything is in proper working order. We strongly urge you to arrive in plenty of time to check-in with the kit renter, if used, and go through the entire kits contents to become familiar with it and check the equipment before entering the testing area. Once there, you will not be able to leave for “kit reasons” without just cause and examiner approval.

You will be required to set-up your own typodont and armamentaria (supplies). Be sure to maintain a clean and organized area and get your typodont and bench mount set-up as quickly as possible. This is why it is important to keep the amount and size of your personal items to a minimum. You will not have enough room and you cannot “spread out” because each assigned area is limited in size.

An examiner will come to check the type and size of the typodont—this assures that it is on the accepted materials listing for the Board and that they have the correct prepped tooth #8 for the specific typodont. If a typodont and/or bench mount is deemed unacceptable by an examiner at any time, it is the sole responsibility of the examinee to provide an acceptable replacement. Failure to do so will result in failure of the exam.

Instructions about the procedures that must be performed will be provided in the examination area.

The following protocols must be followed by all exam candidates; failure to do so is cause for dismissal from and failure of the exam:

1. The maxillary and mandibular arches may not be separated from each other.
2. The procedures may not be performed in any other manner than would be performed on a patient. For example, the typodont may not be worked on when it is upside down, opened flat or the jaws separated, or as though working from the throat.
3. Examinees will not be allowed to use the equipment, instruments, or materials belonging to other examinees or the testing facility.
4. Examinees may not talk or in any way help each other.
5. Examinees may not leave their work areas or the exam room without permission, and shall occupy the space assigned to them throughout the exam.

Once I finish the procedures on the practical examination, what happens next and how are my procedures graded?

After performing the designated procedures, you will be asked to wait in a designated secured area during grading. Once completed, everyone will then return to the examination room to clean-up and you will then retrieve your kit materials and equipment. You will **not** be allowed to leave the secure area to make phone calls, obtain snacks, etc. This would **not** be a good time to take out that cell phone and try to call anyone or text anyone. Leave the cell at home or in the car—do not take it into the testing facility!

After all the examinees are escorted from the exam area, two grading examiners will independently evaluate and score each of the tested procedures without observing or discussing each other's evaluation.

For each procedure, you will be issued one of two grades: either 55% (fail) or 75% (pass). In order to pass, you are required to achieve a score of 75% on each of the tested procedures. If not, you must file another application to take the entire exam again during the next open Filing Period and pay the required fees.

When will I know the results of my practical examination?

Results are mailed to the candidate about six (6) weeks after the examination takes place. It is very important that the mailing address on file is accurate as this could delay the notification process. Do not call the Board offices regarding your results! The staff are not allowed to divulge exam results over the phone and will likely not have access to your results anyway.

Once I receive my Candidate Handbook, when can I schedule my appointment to take the written RDA examination and the Law and Ethics written examination?

Depending on how you pay the examination fees, PSI will inform you either electronically or by letter that your registration process with them is completed and both examination fees have been processed. You then will receive a confirmation number and this is what you will provide to the testing facility when you schedule your appointment to test.

What happens if I need to cancel a written examination appointment?

You may cancel and reschedule a written examination appointment without forfeiting your fee if your cancellation notice is received by PSI two (2) days prior to the scheduled examination date. For example, for a Monday appointment, the cancellation notice would need to be received on the previous Saturday.

NOTE: PSI does not consider voicemail messages left after business hours to be proper notification of need to cancel an appointment. You will have options available to you for managing a cancellation such as an internet notification

process or speaking directly to a PSI representative to cancel an appointment without risk of losing fees paid. If you miss your appointment, you will not be able to take the examination as scheduled. You will forfeit your exam fee if:

- You do not cancel your appointment two (2) days before the scheduled examination date;
- You do not appear for your examination appointment;
- You arrive after examination start time;
- You do not present proper identification when you arrive for the examination.

If I have a disability that requires a special accommodation for either the written or the practical, what should I do?

You will need to go through the Dental Board for that request. Contact the Board offices (916) 263-2300 and request a form for special accommodations. Currently the form is not available for download from the Board's website.

What should I expect when I arrive at the written examination test facility and what are some of the rules of conduct once I am at the facility?

The Candidate Handbook will outline many of their protocols and procedures. Here are some important things to know before you attend the written examination:

All candidates will have their thumbprint taken during examination check-in and re-entry into the testing room after an approved absence. If a candidate passes the examination, the thumbprint record will be destroyed. If a candidate is unsuccessful, the thumbprint record will be retained by PSI to ensure proper identification on any subsequent examination attempts. If the thumbprint doesn't match upon exit and re-entry, the candidate shall be disqualified from the examination, his or her test results invalidated, and the Board will be notified of the occurrence. The taking of the thumbprint is an additional measure to enhance examination security. The California Office of Examination Resources will ensure that the appropriate safeguards for the storage and destruction of the thumbprint records are in place.

Only one candidate will be allowed to take a restroom break at a time. You will be required to sign out when you leave the room and when you return. If your restroom break takes longer than five (5) minutes, a proctor will check on you and will notify the Board of the occurrence, which may cause the Board take appropriate action up to and including dismissing you from the examination.

What can I bring into the written examination?

It's probably better to ask what you **cannot** bring! The following items are **not** permitted in the examination rooms:

- Cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), recording devices, cameras, pagers, purses, notebooks, notebook computers, reference or readings material, music players, radios, electronic games, calculators, or briefcases.
- Personal items including watches, backpacks, wallets, pens, pencils, or other writing devices, food, drinks (unless prior approval is obtained by the Board) and good-luck items.
- Hats, baseball caps, or visors (with the exception of religious apparel), coats, shawls, hooded clothing, heavy jackets or overcoats.

During the check-in process, you will be asked if you possess any of the prohibited items and all candidates will be asked to empty their pockets. If prohibited items are found during check-in, you must take these items to your vehicle or other place of safekeeping. Neither PSI nor the Board shall be responsible for the items. Any candidate possessing the prohibited items in the examination room shall have his or her test results invalidated, and PSI shall notify the Board of the occurrence.

What should I wear to the written examination?

The temperature in the testing room is maintained at a moderate level. Candidates are advised to layer clothing. Acceptable layered clothing includes lightweight shirts, sweaters, and pullovers without pockets. These items must be worn upon check-in, while you wait to enter the testing room, and during your initial seating for the examination.

Watches and other timing devices **are not** permitted in the examination area! There are timing mechanisms available at the test site and on the computer console to help you keep track of time during the test.

When will I receive my results from the written examinations?

You will receive the results of your written examinations at the test center. You do not have to wait for written exam results—everything is computerized and you will know as soon as you complete the examination. The results will be sent to the Board electronically.

III. Licensed and Ready to Go! - Now What?

By this point, we hope that you have reached the mountain top and have been successful in accomplishing State Board licensure. But your responsibility is just beginning—your education doesn't stop just because you have reached this level. There are regular responsibilities to manage as a Registered Dental Assistant license, so let's make sure you know what they are and the professional organizations available to you now and throughout your career.

What will I receive from the Board once I have passed all of my examinations and completed all of my requirements?

Assuming your fingerprinting process does not return a negative report that may delay or cause your license to be delayed, suspended or revoked, you will receive a wall license and a pocket license. Your wall license is obviously too large to carry with you to show potential employers or others that you are a licensed allied healthcare provider in California; but, your pocket license is the perfect size and you are required to carry it with you always.

Your pocket license will show an expiration date—this date will indicate your renewal period every-other year for as long as your license is valid. The Board wants to make your license renewal period consistent with the month and year of your birth. For example, if you were born in June of an even-numbered year, your license renewal will be in June of the next even-numbered year and will be up for renewal every other June from that point forward. Your first renewal period may not be a full two (2) years from the date you are issued your license. It may be shorter by several months or even as much as a year, but the law requires that the Board must provide you a “grace period” for your first license renewal period. Even though you are not required to obtain continuing education units for the first renewal period, or grace period, you will be required every two (2) years thereafter.

Once I obtain my RDA license, do I need to renew it ever?

Yes. You are required by law to renew and obtain continuing education every two (2) years. The first renewal period does not require you to take continuing education (CE) courses, but you are required every two years afterwards. The Board will send, about 60 days in advance of your expiration date, a renewal notification. You will be asked whether you want to continue your license as an “active” licensee or an “inactive” licensee (we'll get into that important difference in a little bit)! If you are working chairside and want to keep doing your job, you better stay “active” !

Next, you will be asked to inform the Board of how many continuing education credit hours you obtained in the last two (2) years. As a RDA, you are required to complete 25 units of continuing education every two (2) years and must include the following required courses:

1. At a minimum, a Board-approved course in Infection Control shall include all content of Section 1005 and the application of the regulations in the dental environment—2-hour course by a Board-approved provider; and
2. At a minimum, the content for a course covering the Dental Practice Act shall instruct on acts in violation of the Dental Practice Act and attending regulations, and other statutory mandates relating to the dental practice. The required content includes utilization and scope of practice for auxiliaries and dentists; laws governing the prescribing of drugs; citations, fines, revocation, and suspension, license renewal, and the mandatory reporter obligations set forth in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act and the clinical signs to look for in identifying abuse—2-hour course approved by the Board; and
3. The mandatory requirement for certification in Basic Life Support shall be met by completion of either:
 - (i) An American Heart Association (AHA) or American Red Cross (ARC) course in Basic Life Support (BLS) or,
 - (ii) A BLS course taught by a provider approved by the American Dental Association’s Continuing Education Recognition Program (CERP) or the Academy of General Dentistry’s Program Approval for Continuing Education (PACE).

Can I take continuing education courses online or through home study courses?

Yes, but only 50% of your total required units can be taken through the internet, audio, video, newsletters or home-study articles/courses. At least 50% of your coursework has to be completed through live education. We encourage you to look into becoming a member of your professional dental assisting association so that you can obtain much, if not all, of your professional development/continuing education courses through local/state dental assisting society meetings and conferences.

How do I show proof to the Board that I have completed my continuing education requirements?

The license renewal process works on an honor system, unless your notice indicates that your license is being audited and then you will have to send proof of compliance to the Board. If you are not being audited, you will enter the total number of units obtained during the renewal period just past, and submit the renewal form by the deadline to the Board with your license renewal fees. If you are audited, you will have to submit copies of your continuing education verification slips for the entire renewal period for which you are being audited.

What are CE verification slips and how long do I have to keep them?

A CE verification slip is a certifying form you will receive following each course of study you complete for CE units. The form is provided to you by the Board-approved provider of CE like the dental society, the convention or the home study course provider. Each slip or form identifies the type of course, the provider data, the number of units, a state-Board eleven digit verification number and a place for your name and license data. Each provider is aware of the Board’s CE verification requirements and must meet those document requirements for their courses to count toward continuing education.

The Board’s regulations for CE require that all licensees maintain their CE records for three renewal periods—or six (6) years—and this needs to become a habit for you as a new licensee. Be sure to make folders for your coursework and be sure to keep your CE slips labeled and stored in a safe place so that you can access them at any time.

What does it mean to have my license be “inactive”?

You may place your license into “inactive” status with the Board at any time; however, be advised that if you do, you may no longer perform the functions of a RDA. You are then considered an unlicensed dental assistant and may only perform DA duties. The purpose of having an “inactive” category is for those who may, for example, need to take a

leave of absence from dentistry, decide to go back to school, or leave California indefinitely but want to maintain their license. An “inactive” license still has to be renewed and you will pay renewal fees, but you do not have to take CE units while the license is in “inactive” status. Once you allow your license to expire, reinstatement is not easy and may only be done so after a specific amount of time before you must re-apply and go through the licensure process all over again.

The Guide mentions the “optional” Pit & Fissure Sealants certification. Based on my application pathway and when I became eligible to take the RDA examination, I did not have to take the course before I applied. What is the difference and what do I have to do now that I am a Registered Dental Assistant?

The requirement is a bit confusing but we hope this explanation will help:

For those who graduated from a Board-approved RDA program after 7/1/2009: You received your required education in Pit and Fissure Sealants within your program curriculum (as required by law effective 7/1/2009). Your program’s Certificate of Completion was considered “all inclusive” of all the required education including X-Ray Certification, Coronal Polish Certification, Sealant Certification, Infection Control and Dental Practice Act. Therefore, you did not have to submit separate certificates for each required area, only your Certificate of Program Completion or Program diploma and your CPR card. You do not have to complete a course in Sealants because you are already licensed as an RDA to perform the function.

For those who graduated from a Board-approved RDA program before 7/1/2009: You may not have received education in Pit & Fissure Sealants as part of your program curriculum. It was not required by law when you went through your program and your program’s Certificate of Completion was not required to include all certification areas of study. Therefore, you had to submit several documents when you applied and had the option to either take a Board-approved course in Sealants before you submitted your application or after you become licensed—however, that means you must take a certification course during your first renewal period requiring continuing education in order for you to renew your license. This is very important to remember and we cannot be sure whether or not your license renewal notice will indicate that you must take this course as a condition of renewal.

If you qualified for the RDA examinations by the Work Experience pathway, and did not submit a Certificate of Completion for a Board-approved course in Pit & Fissure Sealants, then you will have to take a course and submit your certificate by the first renewal of your RDA license which requires CE or risk revocation of your license.

Since I am licensed as a Registered Dental Assistant but am still required to take a certification course in Sealants, will I get to use the course as continuing education for my license renewal?

Maybe. You have to take a course that is Board-approved, but in order to be issued CE units (credits) for the course, the provider of the course has to be licensed as a CE provider. If you want to receive CE credit for the course, be sure to ask the course provider if they are licensed by the Board to issue CE units. If they are not, you will not receive CE for the course. If you want to verify whether a provider of a course is approved to issue CE credits, you can visit the Board’s website to check the providers status, or you can contact Board staff member by email.

Professional Associations and Organizations you should know:

American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA)
www.dentalassistant.org

California Dental Assistants Association (CDA)
www.cdaa.org

American Dental Association (ADA)
www.ada.org

California Dental Association (CDA)
www.cda.org

Dental Assisting National Board (DANB)
www.danb.org

Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP)
www.osap.org

IV. Examination Resources

Now that we have addressed most, if not all, of the most commonly asked questions about the examinations and the process, we wanted to provide you with certain resource listings to help you with your preparations.

RDA Written Examination References

As published by the Dental Board of California

The following is a list of publications that may help you prepare for the written exam. The list does not include all dental assisting textbooks nor is it intended to be an endorsement of the publications listed.

Bennett, J. D. & Rosenberg, M. B. (2002). *Medical Emergencies in Dentistry* (1st ed.). ISBN-13: 978-0-7216-8481-9, St. Louis, MO: Saunders (Elsevier Publications).

Bird, D. & Robinson, D. (2009). *Torres and Ehrlich Modern Dental Assisting* (9th ed.). ISBN-13: 978-1-4160-4245-7, St. Louis, MO: Saunders (Elsevier Publications).

Boyd, L. (2008). *Dental Instruments* (3rd ed.). ISBN-13: 978-1-4377-0308-5, St. Louis, MO: Saunders (Elsevier Publications).

California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5193. (2004). *Bloodborne Pathogens Standard*. Title 8, Section 5193. Sacramento, CA: Department of Industrial Relations.

California State Department of Health Services. (1995). *California Radiation Safety Control Regulations*. Sacramento, CA: Department of Public Health.

Chernega, J. B. (2002). *Emergency Guide for Dental Auxiliaries* (3rd ed.). Albany, NY: Delmar.

Dental Board of California. (2005). *Dental Board of California Minimum Standards for Infection Control*, Section 1005, Title 16: Professional and Vocational Regulations: Division 10, California Dental Practice Act, Sacramento, CA: Department of Consumer Affairs.

Dietz-Bourguignon, E. (2006). *Materials and Procedures for Today's Dental Assistant* (1st ed.). ISBN #: 1401837336, Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning.

Dietz, E. (2002). *Safety Standards and Infection Control for Dental Assistants*. Albany, NY: Delmar.

Hatrack, C. (2002). *Dental Materials* (1st ed.). ISBN-13: 978-1-4377-0378-8, St. Louis, Mo: Saunders (Elsevier Publications).

Miller, C. H. & Palenik, C. J. (2009). *Infection Control & Management of Hazardous Materials for the Dental Team* (4th ed.). ISBN-13: 978-0-323-05631-1, St. Louis, MO: Saunders (Elsevier Publications).

Phinney, D. J & Halstead, J. H. (2009). *Delmar's Dental Materials Guide* (1st ed.). ISBN #: 1418051993, Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning.

Roberson, T., Heymann, H., & Swift. E. (2006). *Sturdevant's Art and Science of Operative Dentistry* (5th ed.). ISBN-13: 978-0-323-03009-0, St. Louis, MO: Mosby (Elsevier Publications).

Short, M. (2002). *Head, Neck and Dental Anatomy* (3rd ed.). ISBN #: 0766818896, Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning.

RDA Practical Examination: Ideas for Instruments and Materials to Add to the Required Equipment List

If you should decide to try and put together your own practical examination kit, here is a listing of the common items used by dental assisting students and practical examination kit providers. Remember, this is not everything or may be more than you need; this is only a suggested listing and does not include the typodonts, examination teeth, bench mount and other items referred to on pages 9 and 10 of this Guide—the Board’s required materials listing. We have identified some of the items that our students have found to be very helpful as they mastered these procedures—you may find them comfortable to work with as well. There are several options for you to choose from and you need to be comfortable with the selection of instruments you choose to work with when creating your own exam kit.

Hand Instruments:

- Standard Mouth Mirror
- Lighted Mouth Mirror
- Standard cotton pliers (forceps)
- Double ended explorer (pigtail/Shepherd’s hook)
- Metal mixing spatula
- Carvers:
 - * Hollenback carver
 - * Discoid-Cleoid carver—very helpful item
 - * Tanner carver
- Woodson instrument—very helpful item
- Burnishers:
 - * Football burnisher
 - * T-Ball burnisher—very helpful item
 - * Acorn burnisher—very helpful item
- Metal composite placement instrument
- Smooth or serrated condenser (plugger) - very helpful item
- Interproximal condenser
- Curved sickle scaler
- Articulating paper forceps

Small Equipment/Material Items:

- Dremmel 7700 cordless or Dremmel 7300 MiniMite cordless rotary tool and extra fully charged battery
- Selection of acrylic burs and finishing discs with mandrel—mandrel needs to fit into rotary tool
- Tofflemire retainer and metal matrix bands—sizes 1 and 3
- Hemostat—short handled
- Wooden wedges of various sizes
- Dispensing gun—automix style for BIS-acrylic c/b material
- Dispensing gun tips—at least 10 tips
- Small sharp scissors to trim acrylic
- Pencil light or small mag-light
- Mechanical pencil
- Waxed paper pad
- Can of compressed air or toothbrush—removes carving debris
- Small bottle of rubbing alcohol
- Small container of petroleum jelly

Cements/Restorative Materials:

- IRM cement for direct provisional restoration #19 or #30
- Temp Bond to cement indirect provisional #8
- BIS-acrylic c/b material
- VPS putty impression material—for #8 pre-test impression

Miscellaneous/Disposable Items:

- Q-tips or cotton tip applicators
- 2 x 2 gauze
- Articulating paper strips
- Floss
- Cotton pellets
- Interproximal finishing strips—fine and super fine
- Facial tissue
- CSR wrap or patient napkins for work area counter top
- Bottled water for personal use
- Small package of peanuts or almonds
- Energy bar
- Small paper bag for trash
- Masking tape to secure table cover and trash bag
- Large tackle box for all items

Along with the required equipment identified earlier in this Guide, you are required to bring gloves, masks, goggles with side shields or chin-length plastic face shield and lab coat/disposable gown. We recommend bringing several extra sets of gloves and an extra mask and gown. Carry with you in a large zip lock bag into the testing area.

Additional Important Tidbits!

A few items the Dental Board staff would like you to know:

- Don't be afraid to ask a question during the practical examination. The Board staff are here to assist you in successfully completing the licensure process. If you have questions during the examination, just raise your hand! The examiners are pleased to assist your needs.
- OSHA stuff: For those attending the practical who wear prescription glasses, your glasses are not considered protective eyewear! You are required to possess and use side shields or a chin-length plastic face shield, or overgoggles when wearing prescription glasses during the exam procedures—just like in a real dental office!
- Licenses: Once you receive your license, review the information of the pocket license for accuracy. If your pocket license does not list sealants as a certification you have earned, you need to contact the Dental Board to request this be corrected or to address why you may not have qualified.

That's it! We've just about covered everything we can think of to help make your path to licensure a great success. We wish you the best of luck and hope that your future in the profession will be a bright, positive experience!



The CADAT Guide to Candidate Success—1st Edition

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