

Seven Steps for Shade Matching

1 TAKE THE SHADE FIRST, BEFORE INJECTION OR PREPPING

All teeth dramatically change color during prepping, including surrounding and adjacent teeth, as they become dehydrated after treatment resulting in the finished crown being too light. Therefore it's best practice to take your shades prior to any work on the patient.

If the shade is not taken at the beginning of the procedure, have the patient return after 24 hours for shading. This will allow the teeth to regain moisture and true color.

2 TURN THE OPERATORY LIGHT OFF, NOT JUST POINTED AWAY

Operative lights make things look yellow, natural light is the best source for shade taking.

3 SET THE CHAIR AT A 45° ANGLE

This uses 50% of your color-corrected florescent light, and 50% of available daylight.

4 NO SHADOWS

Have an assistant hold back patient's lips with their hands very close to the face, so as not to cast shadows on the teeth being shaded. Ideally use cheek retractors. Also, have patient remove any lipstick.

5 POSITION THE SHADE TAB

When selecting the shade, pay most attention to value. High value makes restorations stand out more than any other shade error. Don't let the pursuit of the correct hue or chroma blind you to value. Try to take a shade of a specific tooth, not a general shade. Place the incisal of the shade tab against the incisal of the tooth being matched. Keep the facial surface of the shade tab in the same plane as the patient's teeth.

6 TAKE A PHOTO

If possible, take a digital photo with the tooth to be restored, the adjacent or contralateral teeth, and the two closest shade tabs in the photo.

7 TAKE A STUMP SHADE

Of the prepared tooth for all anterior metal free cases

Additional Tips for Shade Matching

COMPONENTS OF COLOR

There are three components to color

HUE | The actual color. Munsell, who first articulated this system, divides colors into 5 principal hues: Red, Yellow, Green, Blue and Purple.

CHROMA | The saturation of the color. Brick red has high chroma, while pale pink has low chroma.

VALUE | Where the color falls on a scale from black to white. Black is low value, white is high value. The human eye is most sensitive to value.

Think of these components when shade-taking.

THE SHADE-TAKING OPERATORY

- Create a good shade-taking environment
- Color-correct bulbs (5500K, CRI of 100)
- Indirect, measured lighting of teeth. If too bright, the rods will be inactivated. If too dark, the cones can't measure color
- Neutral colors on the walls
- Neutral gray drape for patient
- Manage the amount of daylight

MORE TIPS

- Invest in all kinds of shade guides. The more you have, the more likely you are to find one that matches the patient's teeth. Basics include Vita Classic, Vita 3D Master, Chromascope, and Esthet-X. Be sure to have an assortment of bleach guides as well.
- When taking a difficult shade, once you have some guides that are close, look at an 18% neutral gray card, then glance back at the tooth and guide. The one that immediately looks the most accurate is the best one. Shade-taking accuracy decreases after 5 seconds of staring at the tooth.
- Get the patient involved, once you have some good choices. More buy-in will ease the seat appointment.
- Use a shade tab from any available guide that looks good. If you send the shade tab to your DSG lab, we can replicate that guide in the final restoration.



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