

## Use Modern Techniques for Dental Appointment Confirmation

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Last-minute cancellations and no-shows can undermine your best efforts to increase production, leaving unfillable gaps in your schedule. This will always be a problem, as it is for other types of businesses, but with diligence and the right systems you should be able to reduce your no-show rate to 1% or less. Strategies for encouraging patient compliance in this area range from building value for appointments beforehand to initiating patient “re-training” afterward. All are worth implementing, but none can match confirmation techniques for immediacy and effectiveness.

### Time to Rethink the Way You Confirm Appointments?

If you haven't updated your approach to confirmation in the past 2-3 years, there's probably room for improvement. Communication technologies are changing fast, and people... including your patients... are adapting. Some older techniques such as postcards or calls placed manually to landline phones are not cost-effective, often fail to engage patients sufficiently and should therefore be replaced. At the present time, your best options for confirming patient appointments include:

- **Phone Calls to Smart Phones** – These can be made by your front desk coordinator (or another designated team member) or they can be automated. Calls to mobile phones are much more likely to be answered and, even if they're not, their voicemail systems tend to be more reliable and user-friendly.
- **Emails** – Even most late adapters of new technologies have learned to use and rely on email for timely communication. Think of this as the modern replacement for reminder postcards (which can still be useful although they're labor-intensive and costly).
- **Text Messaging** – This is the current “state-of-the-art” method for reaching busy people with a simple confirmation message. You can send texts manually, but most practices use automated systems (which also offer a number of other useful practice management tools).

By redesigning your confirmation methodology with modern tools such as these, you should be able to reduce your no-show rate to 1% or less. Keep in mind, however, that you'll inevitably need to revisit this subject whenever new communication technologies catch on with the general public.

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