

# Scripting Phone Conversations for Dental Patients

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In spite of all the remarkable advances in communications technology, ordinary telephones still serve as a lifeline for dental practices. Most patient-practice relationships begin with a phone call, and how you handle that first interaction will probably have a profound effect on what follows... or doesn't. This new patient call illustrates the vital importance of a telephone script.

## How Telephone Scripting Works

As soon as the front desk coordinator realizes that a call is from a prospective new patient, she should automatically get on script, shaping the conversation to achieve several objectives. The actual script includes all the key elements but is not meant to be memorized and delivered verbatim. Instead, the front desk coordinator familiarizes herself with the script—both what it includes, and why—and then trains in how to use it. The most practical training technique is role-playing, in which she takes “calls” from other team members in the roles of new patient callers.

Mastering the script and translating it into her own words, the coordinator will become highly proficient at:

- Projecting warmth and enthusiasm
- Indicating that the practice welcomes new patients
- Praising the dentist and team, which builds value in the mind of the caller
- Gathering not only information for the patient file but also personal facts about the caller
- Establishing rapport to begin building the patient-practice relationship
- Finding out who referred the patient or how he or she found out about the practice otherwise
- Explaining (in a positive way) practice policies regarding appointments, payment, etc.
- Describing what will happen during the first visit (actually an opportunity to bring a number of practice “selling points” into the conversation)
- Setting up an appointment within seven days
- Saying she’s looking forward to meeting the new patient

## The Same Principles Apply to Handling Other Calls

Every type of phone conversation will have its own requirements and goals from your practice’s standpoint, so each should be scripted accordingly. Whether the subject is collections, reactivation, case presentation follow-up or any other recurring scenario, you’ll get better results by preparing scripts and training your staff to use them effectively.

## Author



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