

Orthodontic Websites that Work!

Websites are a limited means of *marketing* and a major means of *selling* products or services. Your marketing lets potential patients know that you exist. This is accomplished using snailmail, email or advertising promotions to send them to your office or your website. Your internet marketing *may* be helped by website position ratings, such as Google pay-per-clicks, etc. However, when your patients get to your website *you must sell them* on your services. There are many myths and much confusion about what websites are good for. Websites are great for purchasing *brand name products*; with the only choice being which vendor gives them the best availability, the lowest price, taxes and shipping costs. Websites are not that great for purchasing *personal services*—such as orthodontics.

Some patients, particularly those with severe malocclusions, self-diagnose and seek out orthodontist on the Internet, especially when encouraged by family and friends. The majority of patients are diagnosed by their family dentist, who may refer them to you or just hand them a bunch of orthodontist's business cards. Whether referred or not, the patient will want to know more about you, and possibly your competition, before making a choice—this is where your website will help or hinder you.

Patients go to your website to get a *feel* for your practice. Yes, even patients directly referred to you will check you out on your website before making an appointment. They want to know if you have the kind of practice they might be happy with. Most website home pages are ineffective, turning off potential patients who end up going elsewhere when they have a choice. If you have a monopoly on the patients in your area, it doesn't matter, but if you have competition your website can make the difference between choosing you or choosing your competition. In general, people want to go to practices with exceptional treatment and service. Unfortunately, they won't know that you provide it until they get to your office—a place they may never get to if your website turns them off. Thus, your website should *imply* exceptional treatment and service, and it will—*as long as you make it about them*.

Your website must never be about you, your practice or services, it must only be about them.

When creating it, use simple terms they can understand along with pictures and videos as needed. When writing, always use the second person singular (you, your) and limitedly the first person plural (we, us). This is not easy to do, but if you **speak to them as if they are in front of you**, you can create a website that will get a positive reaction. When using videos make them less than 30 seconds, which is the maximum length of time to become part of their short-term memory. If you can't get your video message across in less than 30 seconds they literally won't remember it.

Always speak as if the patient is already in treatment. This makes them feel like they are already a part of your practice. This is called a “pre-close”, which helps sell the patient on your services, contact you, and make an appointment. Weave these pre-closes throughout your website.

For your website to be successful, other than speaking directly to the patient and using pre-closes, you must fulfill three criteria. **(1) You must make the patient aware that they do have a problem, (2) that their problem can be resolved, and, (3) that you can resolve it.** If you build these criteria chronologically into the pages of your website, you *will* fulfill them. Please note; examples are provided in the appendices for what is being discussed. The examples are not necessarily perfect, but they should help you to better understand the concepts behind building a better website. When I “re-worded” an entire website for a client—he had a three-fold increase in patients seeking exams *from his website* after the revised website was published.

Your website's “Home Page” is the patient's first impression of you. If properly designed, it will create a positive impression and make them want to find out more about you. If improperly designed, it will create a negative impression, causing them to look elsewhere. **Your present home page is probably a great place to start—just consider the following to clean it up:**

- Does it convey the message, “we're here for you...it's all about you, not about us”? If not, get rid of the “I and Me” references or reword them to *not* make it about you.

- Does it contain drop-down type menus for each page of your website along with sub-menus? The main menu pages are used to fulfill the three criteria above; the sub-menu pages give them the detail.
- Is it well-organized, uncluttered and fulfill the **three criteria above**? This will be discussed below.
- Does it look like a billboard ad (for Invisalign, SureSmile, Damon, etc.)? If so reorganize it and tastefully included that information on Page-5 (Specialty Services) of your website or unobtrusively at the bottom of your home page.
- Does it contain a smiling photo of the doctor and possibly an attractive photo of the outside or inside of your office to humanize it?
- Does it contain a 15 to 30-second video; a series of smiling before and after treatment patient photos (1.5 seconds each) to help fulfill criterion (3); i.e., that *you* can resolve their problems.
- Does it contain links to social websites (Facebook, etc.)? Be careful, these links can be both positive and negative and are best left off of your home page (put on Page-4 if necessary).

This is the first step in making your present website more effective, or, is a guideline for creating a new website. There are many people who can provide you with a great-looking website, but it's your job to make sure it fulfills the criteria noted here and that the detail is written or portrayed correctly.

An effective website homepage layout, employing all of the criteria for selling the patient on your services and making them feel they are already a part of your practice, might be arranged like the following. You don't need multiple confusing main menus on the left or at the bottom of your Home Page, just have simple drop-down menus at the top—keep it simple—they'll know what to do.

 HOME PAGE	Your Letterhead Information, Logo, Office Picture, etc.						Your Photo 
Page-2 drop-down	Page-3 drop-down	Page-4 drop-down	Page-5 drop-down	Page-6 drop-down	Page-7 drop-down	Page-8 drop-down	Page-9 drop-down
Your Orthodontic Problem? Common Orthodontic Problems Special Orthodontic Problems	Resolving Your Problem Your Fellow Patients	About Your Practice Your Orthodontist Your Treatment Team Your Treatment Offices Facebook, etc.	About Your Treatment Child Treatment Adult Treatment Your Braces Clear Aligners Orthognathic Surgery TMD Treatment Special Services	Request Your Appointment Request an Appointment Contacting Our Office	Your Initial Visits Your First Visit Your Treatment Visits	Financing Your Treatment Financial Arrangements Insurance Processing	Emergency Care We are here to help when you need it

Wirebender Orthodontics



Video

<30 seconds series of smiling pre- & post-treatment patients



The Place for Your Smiling Face

Pages 2 – 9, Information Display Area

Page-2 will help you meet criterion (1), “making the patient aware that they have a problem”. It should contain before and after treatment pictures of the teeth of “common orthodontic problems”.

Such problems include: protruding front teeth, frontal X-bite, posterior X-bite (side view), deep bite, open bite, crowding, spacing, missing teeth, impactions (including a pano), etc. If you treat special types of cases (cleft palate, Class-III surgical, etc.) include them as “special orthodontic problems”. Make sure you get a release to show patient photos (HIPAA).

Page-3 will help you meet criterion (2) “to convince them that their problem *can be resolved*”. It contains before and after photos of your treated patients’ smiling faces plus before and after photos of their front teeth. To make it *more about the patient*, get an exact quote from each patient about how they felt about their teeth before and after their treatment.

Page-4, along with Page-3, will help you meet criterion (3) “to give the patient confidence that you can resolve their problem”. It should contain sub-menus about you, your team, your office, etc. This is where you allay their fears about your ability to treat their problem and make them feel that they are already part of the practice. If worded properly, it will contain many **pre-closes and make the patients feel that they are already in treatment**.

- **Your Orthodontist:** include one sub-menu per doctor; keep it short or patients won’t read it. It is not easy to tell of your merits and accomplishments and still make it about the patient, but it is possible. For example, when explaining your extra schooling for orthodontics say something like “To provide you with exceptional orthodontic care, Dr. Wirebender went through an extra three years of rigorous orthodontic training at Braces University and is a member of the American Board of Orthodontics”. When including lists of your awards and societies say something like “In order to keep up with advances in your orthodontic treatment, Dr. Wirebender belongs to the (XXX professional society) and has been awarded the YYY.” Include local societies that you are involved with *that help their community*. In essence, every sentence on every page of your website should contain the words *you and/or your*, or possibly *we* or *us* when including yourself.
- **Your Treatment Team:** It is easy to make it about the patient when talking about your team. For each team member, have a photo of her in her work environment next to her name.” Include years of employment with the practice and the team member’s family information if desired (but keep it short). Make a statement about her position such as: “Terry is our Treatment Coordinator who assists Dr. Wirebender at your initial appointments to make them as smooth and pleasant as possible”. “Rita is our receptionist and helps you with your appointments and any concerns you may have”. “Fanny is our financial coordinator who helps you with your payments and financial concerns”. Do the same with your clinical team with one statement for all such as, “Our experienced clinical staff helps the doctor to provide you with the exceptional treatment and services that you expect and deserve.
- **Your Treatment Offices:** It is also easy to make it about the patient when talking about the office. Just show pictures (with team members and patients; otherwise it will look like a “ghost town”) and describe the area in terms of its benefit to the patient. For example, “This is your consultation area where Dr. Wirebender and Terry determine your orthodontic problem and get you ready for treatment”. “This is your comfortable reception area where your family members and friends can relax while you are being cared for”. “This is your state of the art treatment area where you receive the exceptional care you expect and deserve”. When listing your office location(s), maps, directions and office hours say something like, “To make your appointments as convenient as possible, your offices are conveniently located and your office hours are varied to suit you and your fellow patients”.
- **Social Networking:** If you feel that your patients would enjoy it, use it.

Page-5 will enhance meeting criterion (3), “giving them confidence in your ability to resolve their orthodontic problems” by containing information about your treatment services. It should contain sub-menus about the types of treatment you do, to resolve their problems as noted below.

- **Child Treatment:** see Appendix-A example below, which shows you how to make it about them while using pre-closes.

- **Adult Treatment:** see [Appendix-B](#) example below, which shows you how to make it about them while using [pre-closes](#).
- **Your Braces:** To make this about the patient, include the statement: “We use many types of braces to make your treatment as comfortable and successful as possible”. It is not necessary to discuss the various types of bracket systems, since the patient doesn’t care what you use as long as it works and isn’t too painful. A photo of a full set of braces on plastic model will suffice. If you use a lot of auxiliary appliances, use a separate sub-menu stating: “Sometimes you will need what are called auxiliary appliances to treat your particular problem”. Pictures and animations always help.
- **Invisalign/Clear Aligners:** If you do a lot of Invisalign or clear aligner treatment you can have a separate sub-menu—prefix the page with something like “If you prefer, you may choose clear aligners to have your treatment without metal braces” and then show your ads.
- **Surgical Orthodontics:** If you do surgical orthodontics, you can have a separate sub-menu—prefix the page with something like “When necessary, we will work with your oral surgeon to correct problems that cannot be treated with braces alone”.
- **TMJ Treatment:** If you don’t do a lot of TMD treatment, then don’t do it at all. But if you do it, you can have a separate sub-menu—prefixed with something like “If you are experiencing jaw pain, we offer special splint treatment along with your braces treatment to alleviate that pain.”
- **Special Services:** Unless these services are crucial for the patient to know about (e.g., apnea appliance treatment, etc.), leave it out. If included, state it in terms of how it helps the patient. For example, “If you have sleep apnea we will work with your sleep center to help alleviate your problem”. Then give a description of your sleep apnea treatment, using “you” and “your” in your language to make the patient feel like they are already in treatment.

Page-6: Now that pages 2 through 5 have helped you to meet the three criteria for a successful website, other pages may be added to get them started.

- **Request a Consultation:** The patients need a simple, convenient method of contacting you for an exam appointment. Good method: Have them email you, requesting an exam appointment and leave a note. Better method: Use the good method, but give them a list of actual open exam appointments (updated daily) to choose from and request in their email. Check those emails daily and call, text or email the patient to make or confirm the requested appointment.
- **Contacting the Office:** It should contain the office names, addresses and hours, and the phone numbers and email addresses of the various staff they may need to contact. You might also include a photo of your receptionist(s).

Page-7: Now that you have appointed them, they need to know what to expect on their initial visits and you have another opportunity to make it about them and use [pre-closes](#): see [Appendix-C](#) example below. You might also include a photo of your TC.

Page-8: Now that they know what to expect when getting started, they need to know about your policies on financing and insurance to help allay their financial fears about starting: see [Appendix-D](#) example below. You might also include a photo of your Financial Coordinator.

Page-9: To help allay other fears about getting started you need to address Emergency Care: see [Appendix-E](#) example below. You might also include photos of your clinical team treating an emergency patient.

Your home page and pages 2 through 9 should be sufficient to get them to your practice. It is probably not a good idea to include games, contests, patient account data, etc., which detract from your message—less is more. You don’t need a login; keep your site clean and only utilize it for marketing and selling. Forget the “Opt-In” choice; you’ll know who they are when they ask for an appointment or contact you. If they don’t contact you, you didn’t sell them and they don’t want to hear from you.

Whether you are building a new website or cleaning up an existing one, always make it all about the patient, never about you, as you consider how to best fulfill the three criteria of successful website design and make the patient feel as if they are already a part of your practice before they even get there.

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Helpful examples that show both **pre-closes** and the **you** and **your** words to make your statements “patient-centered”

Appendix-A: Example of “Patient-Centered” Treatment of Children page-5

When is the best time to begin orthodontics on **your child**? Though an orthodontist can enhance a smile at any age, there is generally **an optimal time to begin your treatment**. Beginning treatment at the optimal time ensures the best result for **you** with minimal time and expense. The American Association of Orthodontists recommends that **you** schedule an orthodontic evaluation at the first sign of an orthodontic problem, typically around the age of seven, since **your child’s** six-year permanent molars will allow us to evaluate front-to-back and your side-to-side tooth relationships, indicating possible orthodontic problems.

At this early age, orthodontic treatment is unlikely (about 20% of children), although it allows us to monitor and schedule the most advantageous time to begin **your child’s** treatment and to circumvent problems that become more serious with growth. Growth will also change the degree of crowding and spacing of **your child’s** permanent teeth, which may be advantageous during early treatment.

Should **your child’s** problems be serious enough, we will recommend a two-phase program to get the best possible result. Two-phase treatment means that **your child** will have a Phase-I *interceptive* treatment to correct serious problems, followed up by a Phase-II treatment from one to three years later, to align all of **your child’s** permanent teeth in their ideal, healthy and most esthetic positions.

To minimize **your child’s** treatment time and expense, we only do two-phase treatment when there is a risk of damage to the teeth or soft tissue should we wait. Such problems include: Severe Overjet, Anterior Crossbite, Narrow Palates with posterior Crossbite, and Class-III problems (lower jaw jutting out). Show labeled photos of the problems or use animation.

When early interceptive treatment is not evident, we can examine **your child** at any age and start your treatment at the optimal time. Should **your child’s** dentition be fully developed, **you** can start immediately. Should it not be fully developed, **we will monitor your development and start at the optimal time**. In any case, we can only start treatment at the optimal time if we examine **your child** soon enough.

Appendix-B: Example of “Patient-Centered” Treatment of Adults page-5

Your teeth can be aligned at any age if **your** gums and bone structures are healthy. We offer a variety of treatments designed for all age groups. Orthodontic treatment at later stages in life can dramatically improve **your** personal appearance and self-esteem. However, improving the health of **your** teeth and gums is equally important. Crooked teeth and a bad bite can contribute to gum and bone loss, tooth decay, and abnormal wear of **your** tooth enamel. **Your** bad bite may trigger headaches and jaw joint (TMJ/TMD) pain when **you** clench or grind.

The new techniques and appliances **we use in your treatment** greatly reduce discomfort levels, decrease the frequency of visits, shorten **your** treatment time and allow **you** to choose from several options. **Your** options include metal braces, translucent braces, Clear Plastic Aligners, and behind the teeth “hidden” braces.

During **your** initial examination, we will outline **your** treatment plan, expected length of treatment and the approximate cost. A large percentage of our patients are adults who agree that it’s never too late to improve their smile.

Appendix-C: Example of Your Initial Visits page-7

Your first visit will last about 60 minutes and include information gathering and an oral examination by Dr. Wirebender; there will be no needles or drills, just an evaluation of your teeth and supporting structures. Terry, your Treatment Coordinator, will assist Dr. Wirebender at **your** initial visits and will call **you** a day or so before **your** visit to address **your** concerns and answer any questions. You will receive a Health History Questionnaire after **you** make **your** appointment, to fill in, in the comfort of your home.

When you arrive at your first visit, you will be greeted by our receptionists, who will notify Terry. We will take some photos of **your** face and teeth, review **your** Health History Questionnaire, gather additional information and address **your** specific concerns. Because we want our patients to be fully involved in their treatment right from the start, Terry will speak directly with the patient (or **you** if an adult patient) when gathering information.

Dr. Wirebender will perform a comprehensive orthodontic examination; explain the nature of your orthodontic problem and the best way to proceed. If treatment is required, **you** will need additional diagnostic records, unless **you** are young and **your** teeth are not developed

enough to start treatment now. If so, you will be placed on our Pre Orthodontic Guidance Program and start treatment at the best possible time in the near future.

After Dr. Wirebender has answered all of your questions, Terry will review your problems and treatment in more detail, discuss your treatment fee and possible financial arrangements, and make your necessary appointments. Your diagnostic records will provide Dr. Wirebender with a comprehensive understanding of your orthodontic problems and the treatment required to resolve them.

Your second visit will be about 30 minutes; at this visit Terry will review your orthodontic problems, finalize your financial arrangements and schedule your appointments to start treatment, if not already done. Your braces will be inserted at this visit or at the next and will take about 90 minutes.

Once you start treatment, your appointments will vary from 20 to 90 minutes and will be anywhere from four to eight weeks apart.

Appendix-D: Example of Financial & Insurance page-8

Your comprehensive orthodontic treatment takes about two years of active treatment and a year of retention treatment. Your fee and financial arrangements are structured to allow you to pay an initial payment of about 30%, with the balance paid monthly throughout your active treatment. If this arrangement doesn't work for you, you have other options:

- *Cash PIF* plan: Pay the entire fee by cash or check and you will receive a 5% courtesy
- *Credit PIF* plan: Pay the entire fee by Credit Card and you will receive a 3% courtesy
- *Low monthly payment* plan: An initial payment of about 50% and your balance paid with lower monthly fees
- *Spread out initial payment*: your initial payment is spread out over three months and the balance is paid monthly over active treatment
- *Practice financed* plan: you pay no initial payment with payments spread out over an extra 12 months, with a \$15/mo processing fee
- Bank, Flexible Payment Plan: you pay no initial payment and have up to 60 months to pay
- There are also courtesy discounts for your family members after you start
- Your monthly payments can be paid by cash, check, Visa/MC credit card or bank draft at any time

If your insurance specifically covers orthodontic treatment, with a stated lifetime benefit, your fee is reduced by that benefit amount. Insurance policies vary; we will review your insurance to get you the maximum benefit. We accept direct payment from most Dental insurance companies and help you to obtain your maximum benefits.

If you have any questions regarding your insurance coverage, Franny, our financial coordinator, will be happy to assist you:

Phone: (555) 555-5556 Fax: (555) 5552-5557 E-mail: financialcoordinator@willwirebender.com

Appendix-E: Example of Emergency Care page-9

During your first week with your new braces and after routine adjustment appointments, you may feel some tightness or discomfort while chewing—taking over-the-counter pain relievers should help.

Sometimes spacers fall out before they are due to be taken out. Lost spacers will probably need to be replaced immediately, or the space they create will close up. Please avoid sticky foods to prevent this problem. If you lose a spacer, call the office to see if it needs to be replaced.

If you have loose or broken braces, call our office for an emergency appointment. Please *do not* come directly to the office—you may have to wait a while to be seen. Calling first, allows us to schedule time with the doctor so you don't have to wait. If your problem is not too serious and you already have an appointment in the near future, you can probably save yourself a trip and have the problem resolved at your scheduled appointment.

Your discomfort may be caused by a poking wire and can be resolved by moving the wire away from the irritated area with a Q-Tip or eraser. If that doesn't work, try covering the end of the wire with a small amount of wax. If the wire is still painful, you may be able to cut it with nail clippers or scissors that have been sterilized with alcohol. If not, please call our office immediately and we will see you ASAP. If an extreme emergency, you can reach Dr. Wirebender's cell after office hours at (555) 555-5555.

We are here to make your orthodontic experience as pleasant and successful as possible.