

Dr. Ryan Tamburrino

How To Confidently Choose An *Orthodontist*



Tamburrino Family Orthodontics

Welcome Letter from Dr. Ryan Tamburrino

Dear Friend,

Orthodontics goes way beyond simply putting on braces or handing out clear aligners. Honestly, with enough practice, anyone can learn how take some glue and stick a brace on a tooth, digitally set up teeth on a computer, or just click a button to approve treatment. Those mechanical acts are actually not difficult!

What is difficult is finding someone who can do it correctly, knows what moving a tooth to a certain spot means, knows how that placement affects the overall result you want, effectively communicates that knowledge to you as the parent, and makes the entire experience exceptional. In other words, you need an experienced advisor who can be trusted.



While there are lots of options for orthodontic treatment out there, this process is an investment both in time and money. You only want to do it once, and you want to be sure you are getting the best team for the job!

Once families hear or realize they should have their child see an orthodontist, often the first place they go to look for information is on the internet, and, honestly, that's where I would go first as well. By searching for "orthodontist in (your town)", you'll likely get the choice of several offices as well as links to their Google reviews. These are a great starting point. An orthodontic office's success is built on a backbone of ethics and earned trust. Therefore, you'll want to look for honest, well-written reviews that discuss a patient's specific experience in specific detail, not in generalities. These will give you nice insight into the office, especially if the sentiments are consistent!

A word of caution about online reviews: some unethical providers will have their friends, staff, or others write reviews to just "pad" their numbers, or, worse, use third party sites to "boost" the number of reviews but the reviews will not actually provide any text or helpful information. These methods to game the system can often be picked out easily and should be discounted. If the office is questionable with their ethics in getting reviews and confusing with their outward appearance to the public, it likely won't be any better once you are a patient.

Also, some providers may have one-star reviews. Don't dismiss this or think they are a "bad" office. Go read them, as they offer valuable information. An occasional negative review is not a bad thing and just shows they are human. No office can please everyone, and reading those negative reviews can give you a lot of insight. A quick read can easily tell you whether that review is "credible" or if it is a one-off rant by an unreasonable person. If so, and they are isolated, the office may have had a bad day or there was a misunderstanding. However, if there are multiple poor reviews consistently highlighting the same concerns, you may want to avoid that office.

How To Confidently Choose An *Orthodontist!*

Welcome Letter (continued)

Once you read reviews, you'll likely check out a few websites to see the differences among the providers. Here you will want to look for which office best provides answers to your questions and has a warm, friendly feel. If the office took the effort to be helpful and let their personality show on their website (instead of just using stock content), this is usually a good indication your experience with that office will also be good!

After you narrow your choice to the provider you feel would best fit your family's needs and ideals, the next step is to schedule an appointment with that office and meet the team! This the time to then get all your questions ready for them to answer.

The following 10 questions are really common ones parents ask me about my own office, and ones I feel are worthwhile to get solid answers for no matter where you go.

By having these questions answered to your satisfaction, this will be a quick test that you likely are getting a well-qualified team to give your child the best smile in the safest, most efficient, most convenient, and most FUN way possible...because, really, that's what this journey is all about!

Sincerely,

Dr. Ryan Tamburrina



When you are ready to experience our 5-star orthodontic care, schedule your complimentary TFO Smile Assessment by calling **484-406-1033** or by visiting **TFOOrtho.com** to use our online scheduling form. Your appointment includes meeting our team, a complete exam and 3D imaging, a personalized treatment plan, a financial plan, and a copy of my book, "I Think My Child Needs Braces" – all for FREE!

We proudly offer same-day appointments and treatment starts for your convenience. We look forward to helping you achieve your happiest, healthiest smile!

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How To Confidently Choose An *Orthodontist!*

1. Are they a licensed orthodontic specialist?

The answer should be YES - hands-down, absolutely, no questions asked, no hesitation, and with no other qualification – just YES! Plain and simple.

Moving teeth and working with jaw structures are the only things licensed orthodontists do. We don't perform cleanings. We don't fill cavities. We don't remove wisdom teeth. We don't make dentures. We ONLY correct misalignment of the teeth and jaws on kids and adults.

An easy way to figure out if a provider is an orthodontic specialist is to look for the seal of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). Only licensed orthodontic specialists can belong to the AAO and only those who have completed an accredited residency program beyond dental school training can legally call themselves orthodontists.

It's often hard to tell the difference in the potential for a good result or a good provider based on qualifications alone since no two cases or situations are exactly alike.

Getting a "YES!" to this first question is a good start, but the additional questions below will help differentiate your provider choices and give you clarity with making your decision on who you should trust for your family's orthodontic needs.



2. How many cases like mine have you treated before?

A well-experienced team should be able to provide examples and results of similar cases to your child's that they have personally treated to help put you at ease. Also, a well-qualified doctor will have a nice library of their own results on hand to show you how their treatment of a roughly similar bite to your child's turned out. Once a provider has been in practice for a number of years, common bite issues tend to show up over and over, and the doctor should have these results available to show you and back up their proposed plans.

Fortunately, truly bizarre and unique orthodontic issues are rare. You will be hard-pressed to have an experienced doctor say that he or she "hasn't quite seen anything like this before". Therefore, it's a good sign you are in good hands if your provider can quickly show you how similar bites to your child's finished well. At the very least, these examples will help you realize that your child's treatment and situation isn't their first rodeo.

If you are shown "stock" examples or, worse, case examples treated by someone else, do not hesitate to ask to see the doctor's own case results or ask if they have the experience to treat an issue like your child's. You have every right to know this. If the doctor does not have examples of your child's exact situation readily available, it does NOT mean they are unqualified. If that is the case, you should just ask if you can see results of other cases they have treated to get a sense of how their smiles look after the braces are removed.



3. How do you determine which treatment is beneficial for my case?

The orthodontist and their team should provide a thorough, individualized analysis of the proposed plan using images (x-rays) and/or models, not just looking in the mouth. You deserve the extra attention this process affords to make your child's smile journey totally customized!

Two of the biggest treatment concerns from parents, and most of the second opinion consultations I do involve wondering if removal of adult teeth is necessary or if jaw procedures need to happen to get a nice smile for their child. For most cases, removal of adult teeth or jaw surgery is not needed (so you can take a deep sigh of relief now!), but oftentimes when they are, the reasons for doing so were not communicated clearly to the family by the previous orthodontist, thus triggering the second opinion.

My wish in an ideal world would be to never have to recommend these procedures to parents either, but, unfortunately, the world is not ideal and we are all unique human beings. Depending on the smile goals for your child, sometimes things beyond just braces are indicated to keep your child's smile healthy for their lifetime. Doing otherwise may be dangerous, irresponsible, or just not look good. There's no "one size fits all" solution for every patient, and your family is no different! Therefore, if extractions and/or jaw procedures are indicated to reach your goals, you should clearly understand WHY they would be beneficial and have options as well as the pros/cons of doing/not doing so reviewed with you.

Since these are the two most common orthodontic "fears" of parents, some office marketing pitches and websites try to play into these concerns to generate business. They do this under the guise of false hope to get your attention and get you in their door, so be cautious of any suggestions with this intent.

During your research, you may also come across websites with slick marketing pitches that suggest using a certain brand of braces or appliances will help avoid removing teeth or even sometimes avoid jaw surgery (or orthodontics!) in the future. You may even seek out one of the "exclusive" providers on their website for this reason.

Beware of any office that says they never recommend removing adult teeth, never recommend procedures on the jaws, or say they never/only use a certain appliance to avoid having to recommend either of the above. If they've treated more than one orthodontic case in their lifetime, the provider would realize that these statements are absolutely impossible unless every case that would benefit from these procedures is simply referred out of their office and they don't have to treat them!

Also, beware of any office that suggests their treatment is "superior" because they use a specific tool, appliance, or exclusive/revolutionary methods that "traditional" orthodontists do not use or recognize (especially if it is suggested to prevent problems that your child does not or is not at risk to actually have!)

Yes, unfortunately, this stuff goes on in some offices, and less honest practitioners will often play heavily on parent's fears and emotions just to get the "sale".

(continued on next page)

3. How do you determine which treatment is beneficial for my case? (cont.)

Fact: all orthodontists have the same access to all the tools/methods, and every orthodontist could use them as they see fit.

If these “revolutionary” techniques were truly that good, everyone would use them, but clearly every orthodontist does not! If this type of “sales pitch” is ever proposed to you, or your parenting sense feels that a certain treatment method sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Remember this: an appliance or technique is just a tool in the orthodontist's toolbox to get your child a great smile. You would not care to ask your hairstylist which brand of scissors they use, your plumber which brand of pipe sealant they use, or your surgeon which brand of hip replacement they use. You just want the result, safely and efficiently, regardless of what is used to get there. Orthodontics is no different! The braces and appliances should be the brand choices the orthodontist feels comfortable using and this choice should be left to your provider. These tools inherently do not have a brain and are not treating your child, the orthodontist using them is. Let the orthodontist feel comfortable using the tools they are comfortable using!

Having been in practice for many years and been there/seen it/used that, I can promise you with a 100% straight face and looking you directly in the eyes, that NO appliance or technique is a substitute for an appropriate diagnosis and an individualized, conservative treatment plan.

Do not hesitate to exercise your right as a parent and ask as many questions as possible (or seek a second opinion) until you feel comfortable that a proposed plan is truly beneficial and, most importantly, appropriate for your child!

Again, please remember...there is no one-size-fits-all solution for everyone (nor can a certain brace brand or appliance manipulate Mother Nature better than another). Your child is unique and should be treated as such.

Whatever plan is proposed, it should meet 100% of your needs in the most conservative way possible, and you should be 100% comfortable that the reasons for doing so were explained clearly by your orthodontist. I cannot stress this sentiment enough! If you are not comfortable or are confused, do NOT start treatment with that office...and seek a second opinion!

4. Are you actively involved with any teaching, lecturing, or current research projects?

Orthodontists who stay up-to-date with continuing education, or better yet, are the ones who **provide** education through authoring books, writing scientific articles, or lecture to other doctors are usually abreast of the latest innovations and techniques in orthodontics.

Doctors who lecture are held accountable for their material by their peers, so they often will look deep at their own work and methods to ensure their presentations are truthful and accurate - which then translates to improved care for your family!

Additionally, orthodontic offices that participate with research projects, either independently or in conjunction with a university, show that they are constantly learning and seeking out better ways to deliver care for their patients. This mindset is wonderful to have, and should make you comfortable to know your doctor is constantly looking for better ways to great smiles! If you get asked to participate in a project by your doctor, this should be considered a great honor and you should be very comfortable knowing they are seeking to improve the entire orthodontic profession!



5. Do you offer customized, flexible financing options, and payment plans?

The answer should be YES! There should not be any reason why getting a great smile should not be made affordable for every family's budget. Rigid payment terms, credit checks, and budget-stretching monthly payments need to be things of the past. Today's families need and demand financial flexibility, so your orthodontist should give you options to customize the payment structure to best fit your needs.

At TFO, we never want you to delay necessary orthodontic care due to cost. That's why we offer various payment options so you don't have to sacrifice expert care for affordable treatment. We offer 0% financing on all payment plans for your convenience. We also give you the option to customize your treatment by choosing one of our Smile Packages and save on your family's treatment with our Family Plan.

Learn more about your options by visiting **TFOrtho.com!**



6. Is the initial visit complimentary?

It should be!

I realize that some orthodontists still do charge a nominal fee in order to reserve the time for an initial visit with them. That is their choice to do so, and I respect it. However, I've realized that a small charge just to meet with them will never make or break an office's balance sheet and, to me, starts the relationship off with a money-focused mindset instead of being patient and results-focused. Some practitioners may disagree with me, but I see these nickel-and-diming "fees" as just a barrier to potentially helping as many people as possible, and promote exclusion rather than inclusion.

I honestly believe you should have total freedom to evaluate the doctor and the team without any mental pressure or financial strings attached to do so, and extending this courtesy (with imaging included) at the beginning should speak volumes and set the tone for how the rest of the journey will go!



7. How often will I have to miss school or work during the process?

Office hours should be convenient for your schedule to minimize any out of school time or time away from work.

From what I've observed in multiple offices, nothing is more frustrating and creates more friction between the staff and parents than struggling to schedule orthodontic visits around work schedules while trying to also juggle school and other activities your kids are involved in!

Today's orthodontic treatments often allow for extended intervals up to 8-12 weeks between visits, unlike in the past where patients were typically seen every 4 weeks. The actual appointment interval is up to the provider and will vary depending on what is being done, but in general, the appointment intervals are increasing!

An office that is truly patient-centered will likely have evening/weekend hours and not place restrictions on how/when you can be seen for visits. Since every office is different, though, be sure to ask about their policy for appointments to make sure the visits are able to fit your lifestyle before you get started!



8. What will my experience be like with your team?

There is a unique human being attached to those 28 teeth! You should never feel like you are in a “factory” or just a “number” at anyone’s office. Every office has a unique experience and does things differently, so it is impossible to suggest or imply what your experience “should” be like, other than it needs to make you feel special. The specifics are a great question to ask your potential doctor!

Also, it is extremely easy to pull up ratings and reviews from patients describing their experience with a certain orthodontist. Simply go to Google and search for orthodontist reviews and ratings in your town and read the testimonials for yourself.



9. Do you offer options besides just metal braces for treatment?

The answer should be - absolutely! There are a number of options to move the teeth available now that are esthetic and discreet, but traditional metal braces are still the most common choice for and by kids. Options such as clear aligners, tooth-colored braces that blend in, and braces behind the teeth also are popular. We proudly offer metal and clear In-Ovation self-ligating braces, which are small, sleek, and offer pristine results in less time. With self-ligating braces, we can finally say goodbye to railroad tracks, elastic rubber bands, and painful metal tie wires!

Additionally, we offer clear aligner therapy with SureSmile[®] and Invisalign[®] which use 3D imaging, treatment planning, and customized clear aligner trays to reduce treatment time by up to 29% compared to that of conventional braces. These virtually invisible aligners are comfortable, easy to use, and can be removed to eat or brush your teeth.



10. Would you do the same recommended treatment on your own family member if they had the same issues?

If this is not an immediate and un-hesitating YES, then you should definitely seek a second opinion! This is a non-negotiable in my mind without any grey area! Any provider who would recommend a treatment method for YOUR child that they wouldn't do to their OWN family member is not someone I would trust. Period, and I mean, PERIOD.

After reading these 10 questions, you may have ones that weren't answered here. However, the actual questions you need to have answered aren't ones I suggest but are the ones that matter most to you and your child.

So, maybe there should be a bonus #11...



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Bonus: Does the doctor have patience with you, are they happy to answer any and all questions, and do they make you feel 100% satisfied that you are making a good decision for your child?

If you ever feel like you were just rushed through their process without ample opportunity to have your questions answered, or felt you were an inconvenience to a doctor's day, you, without any doubt, should seek a second opinion! There is absolutely no reason to ever feel that you and your child aren't the most important person in the orthodontist's world at that moment whenever you visit with them, especially if you don't get that vibe on the initial visit! What do you think is going to happen a year or so down the road?

Additionally, be wary of anyone that belittles other doctors to "pump themselves up" or describes accepted methods other doctors may use for treatment as "old-fashioned" or "outdated". These discussions are childish and have no place in the realm of professionalism or bearing on your child. There are dozens of ways to accomplish a beautiful orthodontic result. NO ONE has the answer for the ONLY right way.

Your conversation with the doctor should only be on what they are going to do to help your child. If the conversation shifts or becomes unprofessional, you have every right to ask them to get it back on track and refocus.

Starting orthodontic treatment is a BIG decision and should never be taken lightly or for granted by any doctor or their team. Your family and their dental well-being are too important for you to ever feel uncomfortable, even for a second.

Make certain you get all your questions answered by the orthodontist or practice's treatment coordinator. Don't hold back. Put them on the spot. Be assertive – it's your family's well-being at stake.

In this report, I've tried to highlight common concerns from parents and patients and even some concerns that aren't explicitly asked but I know are going through their minds. My own goal is to have every patient and every patient's parent fully knowledgeable about every aspect of the treatment so that they have zero anxiety. However, if you have a specific concern not answered anywhere in this report, or have a personal and confidential question, you can—with complete assurance of privacy and courtesy—email me directly at ryan@tfortho.com. I'm happy to respond to you personally if it will help you make a good decision for your family.

To your healthy smile

Dr. Ryan Tamburrina

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