

# Humor Me

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## "Getting to the Root of Your Dentist's Oral Communication"

Like tin foil on a filling, these are the torturous words of dentistry. When we hear them, we're consumed with such dread; we ignore the problem in hopes that it will simply go away. As one who came from Southwestern Virginia, where there wasn't one good set of teeth to be found, I know that philosophy just doesn't work.

While most of us enjoy visiting the dentist about as much as hemorrhoid surgery, it's a necessary requirement for total cranial health. Perhaps if we just understood the secret language of dentistry better, the experience would be less nerve-wracking.

To make your next visit to dental hell a little more *gumforting*, here's my very own Dental Dictionary. Refer to it the next time you're having a *dental* breakdown.

**blah, blah, blah** \ˈblɑh, ˈblɑh, ˈblɑh\ **1:** the sound of the dental hygienist's incessant talking while 100% of the patient's attention is focused on the grinding drill that's bouncing off the inflamed nerve poking through the top of his molar. **2:** anything the hygienist says after the word "floss".

**floss** \ˈflɑs\ *v* **1:** the act of ramming a woven strip of nylon in between the teeth and gums to remove plaque (a buildup of gnarly gunk) and keep the gums pink. Hygienists recommend flossing every day although no one in history is known to have followed that advice. An underground anti-flossing organization called Gummers Against Dental Destruction (GADD) suggests only flossing two weeks prior to the dental appointment thus fooling the hygienist into thinking the patient has flossed daily.

**Garblah Urt Tuhk Slard** \????????\ **1:** the language used to answer every question the dentist asks when the mouth is full of cotton, suction tubes, tiny mirrors, cleaning apparatus, drills, fingers and latté flavored cleaning grit. Dentists and hygienists study Garlah Ut Tuhk Slard as their required second language in dental school. Most are proficient at understanding the language and many use it to speak to one another. Patients under the influence of nitrous oxide also understand this language with amazing clarity.

**numb** \ˈnʌm\ *n* **1:** the total lack of feeling in the lip, cheek, and tongue resulting in an inability to enunciate words beginning with f, b, p, m, v and w. This lack of

sensation, accompanied by increased secretions from the drool gland, is typically caused by injecting the anesthetic lidocaine deep into the nerves of the mouth. If too much anesthetic is given, the numbness can extend into the sinus cavity, the eyes and portions of the brain. When this occurs, the only remedy is to listen to Grateful Dead albums until the effect wears off, dude.

**pain** \pān\ *n* **1**: the result of every dental procedure. **2**: the response of any contact between a dental instrument and a nerve. Since the toothal nerves are positioned very close together and extend to other parts of the body, a misdirected dentist's drill can be felt in the groin area and between the second and third toes. **3**: a word that is not understood by dental professionals nor taught in dental school.

**rinse and spit** \rin(t)s and 'spit\ *v* **1**: a process used to empty the mouth of leftover dental debris such as cleaning grit, plaque, blood, popcorn hulls and calcified Butterfingers. The procedure is performed over a tiny swirling toilet fondly reminding patients of early morning weekend rituals in college. Note: When numb, this procedure is not possible.

**scraping tool** \skrā-ping tül\ *n* **1**: a sharp-edged stainless steel hook used to scrape excess plaque off of the same teeth patients are told to brush every day using "soft bristles". **2**: a device used to elicit information from individuals held in secret CIA prisons.

**uh-oh** \ə-ō\ **1**: a sound or phrase uttered by a dentist indicating that something is amiss within the mouth. The phrase is usually heard upon the discovery of a cavity, an abscess or impacted Butterfinger. If this phrase is uttered and the dentist is smiling, it means thousands of dollars of dental work will be required to fix the problem. – see also THIS DOES NOT LOOK GOOD.

**wisdom teeth** \wiz-dəm tēth\ *n* **1**: teeth found in the back of the mouth that originate from the same family of anatomical anomalies as the tonsil and the appendix. These teeth serve no apparent purpose, create other problems and most often are removed by an oral surgeon (see COST, more).

You may now rinse and spit.

Until next time, just humor me.

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*Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so*

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