Hi, guys, I am a new grad and I hate doing crown preps. I would like to lean on you to see if you guys have simple pearls, CE, videos to get better. I am not sure how people say they can do a crown prep in 15 minutes. It takes me an hour or two, which I know is too long. On Friday I had a patient in the chair for five hours for four quads SRP and #19 crown prep. Any suggestions?

Everything is hard at first. You just need reps. But you will become much better if you do things the same each time. The Scott Perkins suggestion is a good one. I’m lucky and have received a lot of one-on-one help from him. Here’s how I prep a crown:

1. Place a fender wedge on mesial.
2. Break mesial contact. (I use a coarse torpedo/flame diamond.)
3. Remove fender wedge and place into distal contact.
4. Break distal contact.
5. Wheel diamond to reduce occlusion.
7. Chamfer diamond all the way around the tooth to the cord.
8. Remove any remaining old material.
9. Build up.
10. Refine prep.
11. Second cord.
12. Wait three minutes.
13. Pull second cord and impress.

Doing it how I do it is only one way to prep a crown; there are thousands of other ways. The best tip you will ever get is to write down your steps and do it that way every time. Practice makes perfect.

Get a system and do it the same way every time. Create steps and do it one step, then the next until it’s done. Most teeth should be easily prepped in less than 15 minutes.

1. Break the contacts between adjacent teeth.
2. Reduce the occlusion.
3. Create buccal margin.
4. Create lingual margin.
5. Connect buccal to lingual in one smooth margin.

That’s really all there is to it. My advice is to do it the same way each time and work on improving each step every time you do it. Crown preps are a huge part of a general dentist’s job. Get good at them and you will start to enjoy them. Like with anything else, practice, practice, practice.

KISS: Keep it simple, stupid. Use a minimal amount of burs. Use the same burs all the time. Routine will make it easy for you and your staff. Don’t be afraid to cut the tooth—you have to. Feathering away 0.25mm of enamel with each stroke is going to take a lot of time. Get a gross
You are new. It’s normal. After 6–12 months, you will laugh at how long you took. I started out the same, 2–3 hours crown prep (30 to 60 minutes of cutting and worrying). I now do 5–10 minutes. It’s just experience and you will get there.

Things that will help you get there:
1. Timer.
2. Routine.
3. Less is more. I use only three burs to cut my crowns.
   Keep it simple. Numb, cut occlusal, chamfer sides. Chamfer with meaning. I go to the buccal three strokes and done. Don’t go in a circle 5,000 times, because you will get nowhere. Cut with meaning. Impression, temp, done. It’s mostly experience, but you have to focus. Challenge yourself in the beginning to get there. After you get comfortable, you will be great.

Two more tips: (1) Use a large enough bur. It’s easier to prep a smooth margin with a large bur. (2) Don’t be afraid to use two hands. I almost always do a final pass around the margin with a fulcrum as usual and a second hand providing support for the head of the handpiece. I think I picked this up from Lane Ochi, and it’s made my preps better.

Watch the Michael DiTolla reverse crown prep technique video on YouTube. I saw it very early when I got out of school and it has been a huge help. You need to do about 100 real-life crowns to improve your speed.

And keep in mind that you can prep a tooth fast enough to cause the need for endo. Speed is not a winning element in dentistry. Most patients do not appreciate it if you are too fast. Do not focus on that. Most patients will not appreciate it if you are too slow, either. Four hours is too much, you know it.

How to get better: Turn a big job into a small job. It will be far less overwhelming. Maybe don’t do four quads of SRP and a crown prep at the same time. Maybe do the lower SRP in one visit. Then the upper at another visit, then the crown prep on another visit?

I am 18 years out. I often tell my patients that small jobs are always simpler, faster and give better results. We usually do one quad of root planing per visit. Takes one hour.

Crown preps are by far the easiest, most predictable and most profitable procedure general dentists do. It takes a few years of repetition but once you get your systems down and learn to work with a good assistant, you will love going in and seeing that in your schedule all day every day! Be patient with yourself.

By the way, am I the only one here that uses a supercoarse bur to prep, but finishes my preps with a red stripe fine bur?

Give me four crown preps every day and hygiene checks, and I’d be happy not to do anything else.
Just finished the day with one molar RCT and 15 fills. Most of the fills were back to back mods. Give me a crown prep any day of the week! ■

Token, I use coarse green stripe. I don’t like the feeling of switching diamond burs, it “throws me off.” Plus, I imagine a rougher surface helps with cement retention. ■

Your imagination is wrong. ■

For me, a smoother margin is easier to read and just seems better all around, in terms of getting a more intimate fit from my lab. Not sure about type or cement having an impact. ■

When I see a patient who needs a crown on a molar, I will have them stay open really wide for me during the hygiene check for about 30 seconds to “look more closely at the tooth.” Often what I’m actually doing is assessing how wide they can open, how much space I have to work with, if their cheek fat/tongue is gonna get in the way, etc., so I can schedule a little more time if needed. Not 100 percent accurate, but good for a rough estimate of how to plan. ■

In my opinion, crowns are fun with the Cerec (or other chairside) crown system. It’s all the BS with impressions, temporaries, temporaries coming off, crowns not fitting, crowns wrong color, etc., that make crowns not fun.

That’s all gone with chairside crowns. Prep, do a check of impressions, design, then come back for try-in, then cementation. The staff can be trained to all the rest (image, design, process). No temps, things fit, color is decent and in your control, various material options. ■

Anyone care to share their temporary crown armamentarium, with pictures and/or materials and trays used? I am spending way too much time making temps. Pre-prep we have been using Genie putty, I just ordered Silginat. We also use quadrant trays. I find I spend too much time adjusting the temps. ■

You are using four burs. I use two. What “build-up” are you doing? If there is enough tooth to support a crown you don’t need a build-up unless you are also using threaded pins, in which case endo and a post core was probably a better plan. I don’t think a bonded composite build-up is any more retentive than a good prep, with the internal surface of the crown filling in what you are building up. If there is enough tooth remaining. I think a lot of dentists do build-ups so they can gouge a little more out of the insurance company, with very little actual improvement to the results of the procedure. ■