

## 53 - Dental Braces

Nobody likes having a crooked smile -- which is why the Egyptians wrapped animal intestines around their teeth! Luckily, braces were invented. But how do braces work? And why are our teeth so crooked in the first place?

In the early 1900s, orthodontists would wrap bands around every single tooth and run a wire through the bands. The wire would then have to be adjusted frequently to apply pressure in order to straighten the patient's teeth. Fast forward to the 1970s and some huge breakthroughs in orthodontics!

Orthodontists began using dental adhesive — a very sticky, glue-like substance — to anchor brackets onto each tooth! The adhesive did away with the need to use wire. To keep braces set and tight, orthodontists also began using smaller materials like elastic ligatures, bands and tie wires.

Another breakthrough actually took away the bling from braces. No more use of gold or silver. Instead, orthodontists began using stainless steel to make braces. Stainless steel was both a more effective and more affordable way of straightening crooked teeth.

Nowadays, there's a wide variety of braces to choose from; it really depends on the condition of your teeth and what needs to be fixed. There's stainless steel braces, which you can get in your favorite color! There's also lingual braces — which are designed to go behind your teeth. Those are better for specific types of misaligned teeth. And then there are ceramic braces, which are the same idea as stainless steel but are clear in appearance. But the braces that are super popular these days — especially for adults — are the ones that look like clear retainers called Invisalign.

## What You'll Learn

1. How and when were modern dental braces invented?
2. Why do so many people have crooked teeth? (It's not our teeth that are the problem - it's our jaws!)
3. What's the difference between a Dentist and an Orthodontist?

## Activities

1. Do you need braces? [Here](#) are some fun ideas to help make getting braces more fun.

2. Not sure if it is time for braces? [The Mayo Clinic](#) has some suggestions for you!
3. Need more information? [Here](#) is some great information, including resources in case your family needs assistance with the cost of braces.

## Additional Resources

What does it look like to get braces? How do the brackets stay on? Why don't your fake vampire teeth stick on the same way? Watch [this](#) video of someone getting braces!

## Kid News

Do you love winter or are you ready for spring? The people of Punxsutawney, PA hold a festival every year to find out if there will be an early spring. A groundhog named Phil is held up and officials decide if he sees his shadow or not. Does a groundhog know what a shadow is? [Read](#) more about Punxsutawney Phil and his weather report!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast [www.WhoSmarted.com](http://www.WhoSmarted.com)