

## Essential Skills and Abilities – Dental Hygiene

An **applicant/student** must have the abilities and skills necessary to provide competent patient care. Skills and abilities typically performed by a dental hygienist include: observation, communication, motor ability, conceptualization, integration and quantification, and behavior/social acceptability. Technological compensation can be made for some handicaps in certain areas, but an applicant/student should be able to perform in a reasonably independent manner. The use of a trained intermediary is not acceptable, in that an applicant's/student's judgment must not require mediation by someone else's power of observation and selection.

In order to perform these skills, the student must have the ability to or possess:

### A. Observation

1. Normal vision and focusing abilities (corrective lenses if needed), including transfer vision and peripheral vision.
2. Ability to read small letters and numbers on gauges, dials, and instruments.

### B. Communication:

1. Hear to normal range (correction if needed).
2. Communicate effectively and with sensitivity with people of all professional and social levels in writing and verbally.

### C. Motor:

1. Maintain normal balance.
2. Perform fine motor hand skills, including bilateral arm, hand, and finger dexterity.
3. Sit for extended periods of time.
4. Operate dental chair foot controls with varied pressures.
5. Normal back, neck, hand, and wrist strength (i.e., not prior problems, such as arthritis, carpal-tunnel syndrome, etc.).
6. Move about in the limited space of a dental operatory.

### D. Behavior:

1. The ability to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation are all personal qualities necessary for members of the health profession.
2. Maintain composure when subjected to high stress levels.
3. Respond quickly and in an emotionally-controlled manner in emergency situations.