THE RETAINER RESCUE CARE GUIDE

A simple, printable reference for caring for your orthodontic retainer.

KEEP YOUR SMILE ON TRACK | Clean gently • Store safely • Know when to call your orthodontist

1 Know your retainer

- Clear removable retainer: A transparent, tooth-shaped tray. Remove it for eating and follow your orthodontist’s wear schedule.
- Hawley retainer: A removable acrylic plate with metal wires. Clean both the acrylic and wires gently.
- Fixed (bonded) retainer: A thin wire attached behind the front teeth. It stays in place; brush and clean carefully around the wire.

2 Your everyday routine

- Wash your hands before handling removable retainers.
- Remove and rinse your removable retainer with cool or lukewarm water after wear.
- Clean gently with a soft brush and a cleaner approved for your retainer material and by your orthodontist. Rinse thoroughly before wearing.
- Brush and floss your teeth before putting a clean removable retainer back in.
- Store it in a ventilated protective case when it is out of your mouth, as directed by your orthodontist.

Wear time is individualized. Follow the schedule your orthodontist prescribed; do not reduce wear because your retainer feels comfortable.

CLEANING & STORAGE

Simple habits protect the appliance and help prevent damage.

3 What to avoid

- Hot or boiling water: Heat can warp many removable retainers.
- Abrasive toothpaste or hard scrubbing: These may scratch acrylic or clear plastic.
- Bleach, harsh household cleaners, or alcohol: Do not use unless your orthodontic professional specifically instructs you to.
- Wrapping a retainer in a napkin: It can easily be thrown away.
- Leaving it in a hot car or direct sun: Heat can deform the appliance.
- Trying to bend wires or reshape plastic: Home adjustments can damage the retainer or teeth.

4 Safe storage & travel

- Keep a labeled protective case in your bag, not loose in a pocket.
- Carry the case when eating away from home; never place a retainer directly on a restaurant tray.
- Keep removable retainers away from pets, which may chew them.
- Pack your approved cleaning supplies and follow your prescribed wear schedule while traveling.

5 Special note for fixed retainers

- Brush along the gumline and around the bonded wire every day.
- Use floss threaders, interdental brushes, or other tools recommended by your dental professional to clean beneath the wire.
- If a bond loosens or the wire bends, contact your orthodontist promptly; do not pull or rebond it yourself.

If your retainer has a manufacturer-specific care label, follow those instructions along with your orthodontist’s guidance.

WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Use these steps as a starting point, not a substitute for professional assessment.

6 Quick troubleshooting

- Cracked or broken: Stop using a sharp, damaged, or broken appliance. Save the pieces in a case and contact your orthodontist for advice.
- Lost: Contact your orthodontist promptly about replacement. Teeth can shift without retention.
- Tight or no longer fits: Do not force it into place or bite it down. Contact your orthodontist to discuss fit and next steps.
- Bad odor or buildup: Clean using an approved method. If odor or buildup persists, ask your dental team for guidance.
- Fixed wire loose: Avoid picking at it. Contact your orthodontist; seek prompt help if the wire is cutting your mouth.

7 When to call your orthodontist

- A retainer is cracked, warped, sharp, loose, or missing.
- It no longer seats fully, or wearing it causes significant pain.
- A bonded retainer breaks or a bonding pad detaches.
- You notice tooth movement, persistent sores, swelling, or bleeding.

Seek urgent dental or medical evaluation for severe pain, significant swelling, injury, or symptoms that may indicate infection. For trouble breathing or swallowing, seek emergency care.

For more retainer questions, visit retainerrescue.com and open Retainer Help.

YOUR DAILY CARE CHECKLIST

Print this page or save it to your phone.

Removable retainers

- ☐ Follow my prescribed wear schedule.
- ☐ Rinse my retainer after removal.
- ☐ Clean gently with an approved method.
- ☐ Brush and floss before reinserting.
- ☐ Put my retainer in its case when not wearing it.

Fixed retainers

- ☐ Brush around the wire and bonding pads.
- ☐ Clean between teeth and beneath the wire as instructed.
- ☐ Check for any loose or rough areas.

My retainer details

Retainer type: _____

My prescribed wear schedule: _____

Cleaning product approved by my orthodontist: _____

Orthodontist / office phone: _____

Next check-up: _____

REMEMBER | A retainer only works when it fits properly and is used as directed. If something changes, contact your orthodontic team.

Retainer Rescue • Educational information only. This guide does not diagnose conditions or replace personalized advice from your orthodontist or dentist.