

# Continuing Education for California Dentists

Understand the rules  
and requirements  
for licensure and permits.



## TOTAL C.E. UNITS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL

- **Active Dentist:** 50 C.E. units every 2 years
- **First-time Renewal After Initial Licensure:** 0 units
- **Retired Active Dentist:** 30 units
- **Retired Inactive or Disabled Dentist:** 0 units
- **RDA, RDAEF:** 25 units
- **RDH, RDHEF:** 25 units
- **DA with a specialty permit:** 25 units
- **RDHAP:** 35 units
- **Unlicensed DA:** 0 units

*Retired Active Dentist and Retired Inactive or Disabled Dentist license categories require application, and C.E. is required to restore active license status.*

## MANDATORY COURSES

Included in total C.E. units.

- **California Infection Control:** 2 units
- **California Dental Practice Act:** 2 units
- **Basic Life Support (BLS):** Must be current; includes hands-on component
- **Prescribing Schedule II Opioid Drugs** (for dentists only): 2 units

*These mandatory courses count toward the 50-unit total required for license renewal. Providers must be Dental Board-approved.*

## DENTISTS HOLDING PERMITS

- **Elective Facial Cosmetic Surgery:** 24 units in elective facial cosmetic surgery-related courses
- **General Anesthesia:** 24 units in general anesthesia and advanced cardiac life support courses
- **Moderate Sedation:** 15 units in moderate sedation and medical emergencies courses
- **Pediatric Endorsement:** current PALS and airway management certificate or equivalent training
- **Oral Conscious Sedation:** 7 units in oral conscious sedation courses
- **Pediatric Minimal Sedation:** 7 units in pediatric minimal sedation courses

*These units count toward the 50-unit total required for license renewal.*

## What courses are eligible for C.E.?

### Examples of unrestricted courses include:

- Preventive services, diagnostic protocols and procedures (including physical evaluation, radiography and dental photography), comprehensive treatment planning, charting of the oral conditions, informed consent protocols and record-keeping.
- Nutrition and nutrition counseling of the patient.
- Aesthetic, corrective and restorative oral health diagnosis and treatment.
- Dentistry's role in individual and community health emergencies, disasters and disaster recovery.

**Courses considered to be primarily of benefit to the licensee may not make up more than 20% of the total units required for renewal.** These are limited to 10 units for an active dentist and 5 units for RDA, RDH, and course types include:

- To improve recall and scheduling systems, production flow, communication systems and data management.
- In leadership development and team development.
- In teaching methodology and curricula development.
- In human resources management and employee benefits.

**Courses considered to be of direct benefit to the licensee or outside the scope of dental practice in California are not C.E.-eligible.** Course types include:

- Money management, the licensee's personal finances or personal matters such as financial or estate planning and personal investments.
- General physical fitness, weight management or the licensee's personal health.
- Purchase or sale of a dental practice, business or office; transfer of practice ownership, acquisition of partners and associates, practice valuation, practice transitions or retirement.

## Where can I find an approved C.E. provider?

Eligible courses must be provided by entities approved by:

- Dental Board of California
- American Dental Association Continuing Education Recognition Program (CERP)
- Academy of General Dentistry Program Approval for Continuing Education (PACE)

*Basic Life Support providers include the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI) or courses taught by a provider approved by the ADA's Continuing Education Recognition Program (CERP) or the Academy of General Dentistry's Program Approval for Continuing Education (PACE).*

## Can I earn C.E. as a volunteer?

- Up to 3 units may be credited for providing direct patient care for unpaid volunteer work in specified settings.
- Licensees can earn limited credit through participation in specific dental board activities.

## How can I stay compliant with C.E. requirements?

- Ensure all C.E. courses are completed within the two-year renewal period.
- Maintain documentation of all completed courses for three license renewal periods and for potential audits.
- Verify that course providers are approved by the appropriate accrediting bodies.

## C.E. deadlines and helpful answers to FAQs

- C.E. units must be earned in the two-year renewal period that starts on the first day of the month following the license expiration date.
- The license and/or permit expiration date is determined by the individual's birth month and year. A license and/or permit expires on the last day of the individual's birth month.
- One unit of C.E. is granted for every hour of contact instruction and may be issued in half-hour increments.
- Eight units of credit is the maximum allowed to be earned in one day.
- No more than one-half of the total units required for license or permit renewal may be earned through correspondence or non-live instruction.
- No more than 20% of the total number of units required for license or permit renewal may be earned from courses deemed by the Dental Board to be primarily of benefit to the licensee.
- Retain C.E. certificates for a minimum of three renewal periods. This is a requirement.
- Completion of a course does not constitute authorization for the attendee to perform any services that they are not legally authorized to perform based on their license or permit type.

Learn more about C.E. requirements and  
explore high-quality courses at [cda.org](https://cda.org).

SCAN HERE



This guide is intended to provide a summary of C.E. requirements for California dentists. For comprehensive details and updates, please refer to the Dental Board of California.