

What is a Diplomate?

Dr. Karen is a pediatric dental specialist. She has 3 years of extra education beyond dental school to learn special skills to become a specialist. Then she had to pass a board exam to be certified a pediatric dentist. Not every children's dentist is a specialist.

Diplomate is a higher level within the specialty. Not all pedodontists are Diplomates. Dr. Karen had to study and pass an extra examination to become a diplomate. It's a written exam now, but when Dr. Karen became board certified, she actually had examiners come into the office, look at her charts, and watch her work on patients! The staff was also quizzed by the examiners to see that Dr. Karen's practice was up to Diplomate standard. In fact, she had the highest score in the nation in her year! Dr. Karen has to maintain these standards by taking courses and examinations on a periodic basis, so you can be assured that she is at the top of the profession.

Q: I don't understand: What was different about your examination?

A: The site visit (clinical) was divided into 3 sections.

- 1) The examiners reviewed my charts to evaluate the quality of treatment.
- 2) Observation of patient care: The examiners actually watched me work on a patient. They watched me place local anesthetic, do a filling, place a stainless steel crown, take an x-ray, and do an exam. They wanted to know if I followed the highest standards of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- 3) Office policy and preparation
  - a. Does the office have an emergency plan?
  - b. Is the emergency equipment functional?
  - c. Are we sterilizing instruments properly?
  - d. Is everything disinfected in the operatory properly prior to the next patient?

The format under which I took the exam consisted of 2 written exams, an office visit, and an oral examination. When I was going for board certification, I had to follow this format. I had to be observed clinically performing the procedures. The old format in many ways is much more rigorous.