

Acceptable Numbers for Orthodontic Fees

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It make no sense to set fees using numbers that are naturally unacceptable, when you can set fees that are naturally acceptable. About 30 years ago a research group conducted a study of the fees of about 20 dental practices. They took every fee quoted for each practice over the life of each practice; they had hundreds of thousands, if not millions of fees and thus, a significant data sample. They used only one criterion for the study, was the fee accepted or was it rejected by the patient. From that study came a remarkable understanding of which numbers are naturally acceptable and which numbers are not. *Why* certain numbers are not acceptable and why certain numbers are, are not important; what is important is that they are acceptable or not. Below is an extrapolation of these findings.

- **Fees between \$1 and \$9**, the numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 are *acceptable* with numbers 1 and 5 *less* acceptable and the number 9 *unacceptable* alone or at the end of any number. Thus, *avoid* using 9 (and avoid any other number ending in 9, for example, \$99, \$169, \$1,489, \$5,999, \$8,589, etc.).
- **Fees between \$10 and \$99**, multiples of 25 (25, 50, 75, 100) are *unacceptable*, multiples of 10 (20, 30, 40, 60, 70, 80) are less unacceptable than multiples of 25 and multiples of 5 (15, 35, 45, 55, 65, 85) are less unacceptable than multiples of 10. Numbers ending in 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 are acceptable. Thus, *use* miscellaneous fees ending in 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8, and always avoid 9.
- **Fees between \$100 and \$999**, multiples of 250 (250, 500, 750) are *unacceptable*, multiples of 100 are *unacceptable*, multiples of 50 (150, 250, 350, etc.) are a *less* unacceptable than multiples of 100, and multiples of 25 (125, 275, etc.) are *less* unacceptable than multiples of 50. Thus, for fees between \$100 and \$500, end with: 15, 20, 30, 35, 40, 45, 60, 65, 70, 80, 85, for example, \$115, \$130, \$135, \$245, \$360, \$370, \$485, etc. Also, acceptable fees between \$500 and \$999 are best ended with: 20, 30, 40, 60, 80, for example, \$520, \$530, \$740, \$860, \$580, \$780, etc.
- **Fees between \$1,000 and \$9,999**, multiples of 500 (1000, 1500, 5500, 8000, etc.) are *unacceptable*. Acceptable fees between \$1,000 and \$9,999 are best ended with: 20, 30, 40, 60, 70, and 80, for example, \$1,020, \$1,530, \$2,740, \$3,860, \$5,270, \$6,780, etc.

To play it safe, I recommend that treatment fees end in 30 and 80. I also recommend that fees over \$1,000 be increased in \$50 increments, thus avoiding the unacceptable fees that may arise when you increase fees by a percentage. For example, a fee of \$4,680 might be increased by \$50 to \$4,730 (1%) or be increased by \$100 to \$4,780 (2%) or be increased by \$150 to \$4,830 (3%) or be increased by \$200 to \$4,880 (4%), etc. As you can see, \$50 increments allow you to choose the percentage within limits still making the fees acceptable.