



## Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,  
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**Q: I was reading an advertisement in a local "Woman's Newspaper", and saw a dentist that listed many affiliations with orthodontic societies, but I am not sure if he is an orthodontist. How can I tell if someone is a true orthodontic specialist?**

**A:** There are many organizations that just about anyone can join, but mean absolutely nothing. With regard to the orthodontic specialist community, **there are only two recognized organizations for true orthodontic specialists. They are the American Association of Orthodontists, and the American Board of Orthodontics.** You must have graduated from an accredited orthodontic post graduate dental program to be a member of the first. You must take a special exam later on to be a member of the second. Being a member of the second is elective, as it is not required to be an orthodontic specialist. It is helpful to have this 2<sup>nd</sup> credential in some states that do not require a state licensing board exam, to distinguish yourself from non specialists. Illinois has it's own board exam for orthodontists, so it is not so essential to have the extra ABO credential here. *!Never confuse those organizations with the American Orthodontic Society, or the Academy of Gp (general practitioner) Orthodontics.* These are smoke screen organizations designed and so titled to confuse the general public about the level of training a general dentist has in orthodontics. Taking some weekend courses in orthodontics, does not qualify a dentist as an orthodontic specialist. The following is essential information; **in the state of Illinois, to be a specialist in orthodontics you need two state licenses. One is a regular dental license, the other is a state specialty license in orthodontics.** Then, and only then, are you a licensed specialist. So, when you see "credentials" touting Academy of this or that, or anything with GP (general practitioner) in the title, be alert. Call ahead and ask if the dentist has an Illinois State License in Orthodontics. If the answer is no, then you are not dealing with a true orthodontic specialist. It's that simple.

Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**