

Glossary Terms for Simplifying Posterior Dental Anatomy

Anatomical Pertaining to anatomy. Life like, real. Having a certain form. In dentistry, having all the features of natural teeth..

Anatomist A skilled artist who analyzes and understands the relationships, structures and functions of natural teeth.

Anatomy The form or structure of an object. The features that define the shape of a tooth. Dental anatomy can be thought of as a series of convexities and concavities that form the light reflective surfaces that create the apparent shape of the tooth.

Auxiliary Serving a supporting role or purpose

Auxiliary groove A secondary groove which branches off another occlusal groove, usually another secondary groove. Auxillary grooves may or may not be found on natural teeth.

Bicuspid A tooth generally having two cusps. The frontmost of the posterior teeth in each arch. the fourth or fifth tooth from the midline.

Buccal Referring to the cheek

Buccal Surface The surface of a posterior tooth facing the cheek.

Canine A cuspid, so called because of its canine shape (like a dog's tooth)

Carabelli Cusp A raised protrusion on the mesio-lingual cusp of an upper molar, usually only found on the upper first molar.

Cemento-enamel junction The line on the surface of a tooth that marks the meeting of the cementum and the enamel. The cervical line.

Cementum The hard, bony layer covering the dentine on the root of the tooth.

Central Pertaining the middle of an object. A central incisor.

Central Incisor One of the two anterior teeth in the middle of each arch. The tooth next to the median line.

Central dissectional grooves A groove in the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth that runs from the mesial to the distal and dissects the tooth into buccal and lingual parts.

Central Fossa A shallow depression found approximately in the middle of the occlusal surface of a molar, bordered by the cusp ridges and the occlusal table. Sometimes used to describe the linguo-middle fossa of a lower second bicuspid.

Concavity A hollowed or rounded inward shape. Causes shadows on the surface of teeth.

Convexity Curved or rounded outward like the surface of a sphere. The area that reflects light from a tooth, giving it shape.

Cusp A cone shaped elevation on the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth. A point or peak.

Cusp Ridge A raised part of the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth that runs from a cusp tip to the central dissectional groove.

Cuspid A tooth having a single cusp. The most distal of the anterior teeth in each arch. The third tooth from the midline. The cuspids are primarily for tearing.

Dental Referring to the teeth.

Dentine The hard tissue which forms the main body of a tooth. It surrounds the pulp and is covered by the enamel and the cementum.

Dentition The teeth of the dental arch. Typically used to describe the natural teeth.

Depression A concavity on a surface.

Dissect To divide into parts

Developmental Groove The slight depression dividing the lobes on an anterior tooth and running parallel to the long axis.

Diastema A space between two adjacent teeth.

Distal Facing away from the median line, following the curve of the dental arch.

Distal Fossa A shallow depression found in the distal third of the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth, bordered by the cusp ridges, the marginal ridge and the occlusal surface.

Distal Surface The surface of the tooth facing away from the median line, following the curve of the dental arch.

Enamel A hard, glossy coating. The smooth, translucent hard substance which covers the crown of a tooth over the dentine.

Fossa A rounded or angular depression in the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth bordered by the cusp ridges and the occlusal table.

Fossae The plural of fossa.

Imbrication Lines Small semi-circular lines or depressions in the gingival third area that diffuse light reflected from the surface.

Incisor A tooth with a narrow biting edge, located at the front of the dental arch.

Lateral Incisor The anterior tooth to the side of the central incisor. The second tooth from the median line of the dental arch.

Lingual Referring to the tongue.

Lingual Surface The surface of the tooth facing the tongue.

Mandible The lower jaw

Mandibular Pertaining to the mandible. Lower.

Marginal Pertaining to a margin or border of an object

Marginal Ridge An elevation of enamel which forms the mesial and distal border of the lingual surface of an anterior tooth or the occlusal surfaces of a posterior tooth.

Maxilla Either of the two halves of the upper jaw, fused at a suture line, that contain upper teeth. Commonly used to describe the entire upper jaw.

Maxillae The two halves of the upper jaw, containing the upper teeth.

Maxillary Pertaining to the maxillae. Upper

Median Line An imaginary line which extends vertically through the middle of the face. Also the midline of a model through the centrals

Mesial Towards the median line, following the curve of the dental arch.

Mesial Surface The surface of a tooth facing the median line, following the curve of the dental arch.

Midline An imaginary line that extends vertically through the middle of the face. Also the median line of a model through the centrals.

Molar A tooth generally having four cusps. the six most posterior teeth in each arch.

Ness Teeth A set of large, anatomic study teeth created by John C Ness, CDT, founder of PTC

Oblique Running at an angle, slanting.

Oblique Ridge A ridge that runs at an angle to the central dissectional groove across the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth.

Occlude To come together or close. when the opposing teeth come together.

Occlusal Referring to occlusion.

Occlusal Anatomy The physical features of the biting surfaces of posterior teeth.

Occlusal Groove A groove on the occlusal surface of a posterior tooth. We generally refer to three types of grooves: dissectional or primary grooves, secondary or “S” grooves, auxiliary grooves.

Occlusal Surface The surface of a posterior tooth that comes into contact with the opposing teeth. Occlusal table the perimeter of the occlusal surface. the sharp edge where the outside surfaces of the tooth meet the occlusal surface.

Occlusion The relationship between the teeth of the opposing arches when in contact

Pit The deepest part of an occlusal fossa. All other occlusal anatomical features derive from the pit.

Posterior Referring to the back. The back of the mouth.

Posterior Teeth The premolars and molars of either arch.

Posterior tooth A tooth having an occlusal surface. A premolar or molar.

Premolar A bicuspid

Primary The first or the fundamental.

Perikymata Very small horizontal ridges on the surface of a tooth caused by the formation of the enamel prisms. Perikymata diffuse light reflected from the surface, and become less noticeable over time, due to wear of the enamel surface.

Primary Plane On an anterior tooth, the flat plane inside the mesial and distal lobes which is in alignment with the long axis. These planes are shown on the Primary Ness Teeth.

“S” Curve A curving depression on the labial surface of an incisor in the shape of a lazy “S”. The curve starts in the disto-gingival area and blends into the central lobe, causing a pleasing visual blending of the tooth tissue. The “S” curve tends to accentuate the length and fullness of the mesial lobe and shorten the distal lobe, enhancing the long axis of the tooth.

Ridge A long, narrow, elevation.

Secondary Anatomy The features of a tooth that come after the primary anatomy. On a posterior tooth, the secondary grooves.

Stable Reference A source of information which never changes.

Transverse Ridge A cusp ridge running at a 90 degree angle to the central dissectional groove.