

Making Your Fees More Acceptable

It make no sense to set fees using numbers that are naturally **unacceptable**, when you can set fees that are naturally **acceptable**. About 35 years ago a research group conducted a study of the fees of about 20 dental practices. They took every fee quoted for every practice over the life of the 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. The fact is, if the fee makes the patient dwell on the fee instead of listening to you, it is unacceptable. Another way of putting it is: an acceptable fee is heard and dismissed so they can move on to accepting your treatment. Below is an extrapolation of those findings.

Fees between \$1 and \$9: the numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8** are acceptable; 5 is less acceptable; **9** is unacceptable alone or at the end of any number. Thus, avoid using any fee ending in a 9, for example, \$99, \$169, \$1,489, \$5,999, \$8,589, etc.).

Fees between \$10 and \$99: multiples of **25 (25, 50, 75)** are unacceptable; multiples of 10 (20, 30, 40, 60, 70, 80) are less unacceptable than multiples of 25; 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)** and multiples of 100 are unacceptable; multiples of 50 (150, 250, 350, etc.) and multiples of 25 (125, 275, etc.) are a less unacceptable than multiples of 100 or 250. Thus, to play it safe:

- Your fees between \$100 and \$500 are best end with: **15, 20, 30, 35, 40, 45, 60, 65, 70, 80, 85**, for example, \$115, \$130, \$135, \$245, \$360, \$370, \$485, etc.
- Your 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 are best ended with: **20, 30, 40, 60, 70, and 80**, for example, \$1,020, \$1,530, \$2,770, \$3,880, \$5,270, \$6,720, etc. Some practices like ending fees in 25, but it is not recommended—it has too much of a “ring” to it and makes the patient dwell on the fee instead of your treatment.

TO PLAY IT SAFE: I recommend that treatment fees end in sets of 30 and 80 or sets of 20 and 70. This way, as you increase your fees in multiples of \$50, they are always acceptable. I don't recommend that you do percent fee increases, which may end up as unacceptable numbers, although you can increase your fees percentage-wise, in multiples of \$50. For example, a fee of \$5,380 might be increased by \$50 to \$5,430 (1%); or be increased by \$100 to \$5,480 (2%) or be increased by \$150 to \$5,530 (3%); or be increased by \$200 to \$5,580 (4%); etc. As you can see, \$50 increments allow you to choose the percentage within limits still making the fees acceptable.

Also, when quoting a fee, it is more acceptable to say “52-70” instead of “5 thousand, two hundred and seventy” dollars.

I hope that this fee-setting philosophy helps you to start more cases, as your patients dwell on what you have to offer instead of what it costs.