

PATIENT GUIDE

Attachments, and the small things that help aligners work

What the tooth-coloured bumps are for, why we sometimes polish between teeth, and the other helpers you may be given. · 30 Aug 2026

A smooth plastic tray on its own cannot grip a tooth well enough to rotate it or pull it down. Attachments give it something to push on. A little enamel polishing between teeth makes room where teeth are crowded. Neither is unusual, and both are planned before your first set is made.

Attachments

Attachments are small bumps of tooth-coloured filling material bonded to chosen teeth at the start of treatment. Each one is a handle: the aligner has a matching pocket that presses on it to move that tooth in a particular direction. They feel prominent for a few days and then you stop noticing them. They are polished off at the end of treatment and leave no mark on the enamel.

If one comes off, the tray will feel different on that tooth and may not seat fully. Message us; replacing it is a five-minute visit.

Space between teeth

Where teeth are crowded, we sometimes create room by polishing a small amount, usually less than a quarter of a millimetre, from the sides of a few teeth (interproximal reduction, or IPR). It is done with a fine strip or disc, is not felt, and removes only surface enamel. The plan tells you which teeth and when. Teeth are not weakened by it.

Other helpers you may be given

HELPER · WHAT IT DOES

Buttons and elastics

A small button on a tooth and a rubber band running to the tray or another tooth, to adjust how the top and bottom teeth meet. The elastics guide covers wear.

Chewing cushions

A soft roll you bite on for a few minutes after inserting a tray, to seat it fully.

A removal tool

A small hook that lifts the tray edge without stressing your fingernails.

Bite ramps

Small platforms built into the front of some trays that stop the back teeth touching for a while, so a deep bite can open.