Is there a better way to accomplish anything? The answer is probably YES! I have had the privilege of practicing dentistry for 47 years and during those years have seen so many remarkable changes in our profession. These continuous advancements, made to improve the treatment of our patients, are what keep me very excited about going to work each Monday. I think this is the absolute best of all times to be a dentist. Gosh, I wish I were able to practice at least another 25 years, but at age 72, I know my time left to be a good dentist is limited. However, I still try to improve on everything I do and that is the reason I am writing this article. I have been introduced to a better way to prepare lower anterior porcelain veneers and I want to share my thoughts with you.

Like many of you, I have been a continuous student of our profession all my career and I have never heard or read where any of our major clinicians suggested the following technique, but I can tell you, it certainly is beneficial for both you and the lab technician you are using. In fact, when I first saw it prepared on a stone model, I had reservations about it, but I had the courage to try it. Now I believe it to be an improvement over the technique used on many lower veneers I have done in the past.

What is the major change I have made in my veneer preparations? I now create a beveled shoulder from mesial to distal on the lingual surface, about 2 to 3 mm below my incisal reduction. Why is this better??? Good question and the answer is……it will give you and your lab technician a much more solid foundation to work with. Imagine the firm seat that you will have when placing the veneers as well as how much easier it will be for your lab technician to fabricate them.

My favorite lab was thoughtful enough to send me a stone model showing the results of this preparation technique. I tried following this design two months ago and will never go back to my old technique. I have to say for helping to make me a better dentist."

Let’s review the technique from beginning to end. I prefer to start my veneer preps with a rounded-end cylinder diamond bur.
I lay the diamond on the labial surface and start the reduction of the labial surface from mesial to distal. Although great for labial reduction, there is a big problem with round-ended diamond burs for margins that we all need to be aware of. They will create a “J” shape on the prepped margin. For that reason I have changed to using beveled cylinder diamond burs for all my margins. I want a margin that has beveled shoulders like the diagram shown here.

After labial reduction, I now change to a beveled cylinder bur for the gingival margin and for the mesial and distal margins. What I am suggesting is that a ¾ crown preparation will always be better for lower anteriors. I resisted this suggestion at first when I saw it on the model Dennis sent me, but now I believe it is better.

After you make the mesial and distal slice it is now time for the incisal reduction of about 2 mm. Then take the beveled diamond and connect the mesial and distal to create a lingual beveled shoulder. You have now created a preparation that you and your laboratory technician can easily and accurately work with. You will then receive a restoration that is easy to place and is also very strong. Try it; you will like it!

As a result of this learning experience I decided to now use a beveled shoulder finish for all veneers and crown margins. I would suggest you consider this technique as well. You really can “teach an old dog new tricks”. Thanks