

Invisalign vs Braces vs Lingual Braces: Which Orthodontic Treatment Is Right for You?

Canonical: <https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/dental-orthodontic-services/specialist-orthodontics-smile-makeovers-melbourne-cbd/invisalign-vs-braces-vs-lingual-braces-which-orthodontic-treatment-is-right-for-you/>

Details:

Now I have sufficient research to write a comprehensive, well-cited article. Let me compose the final piece.

Invisalign vs Braces vs Lingual Braces: Which Orthodontic Treatment Is Right for You?

Choosing an orthodontic treatment is one of the most consequential decisions in your dental health journey — and it is rarely as simple as picking the option that looks most appealing in an advertisement. The three primary treatment modalities available to patients at Smile Solutions Melbourne CBD — Invisalign clear aligners, conventional fixed braces, and lingual (behind-the-teeth) braces — each represent a genuinely different clinical philosophy, not merely a cosmetic variation on the same theme.

Each modality has distinct strengths, limitations, and ideal patient profiles. Getting this decision right from the outset reduces the risk of extended treatment, unexpected refinements, or outcomes that fall short of what was planned. This guide provides a structured, evidence-based comparison across every dimension that matters to real patients: aesthetics, comfort, oral hygiene demands, clinical suitability, treatment duration, and cost. It is designed to help you arrive at your consultation at Smile Solutions already informed — so that conversation can focus on the finer points of your individual case rather than the basics.

What Are the Three Options? A Clinical Overview

Before comparing them, it is worth understanding what each modality actually is — and why all three require a registered specialist orthodontist to deliver safely and effectively (see our guide on **What Is a Specialist Orthodontist? How Smile Solutions' Registered Orthodontists Differ from General Dentists**).

****Conventional Fixed Braces**** consist of metal or ceramic brackets bonded to the front surface of each tooth, connected by archwires that your orthodontist adjusts at regular intervals. They have been the most established system in orthodontics for decades and continue to deliver reliable results for patients of all ages. At Smile Solutions, self-ligating Empower brackets are available as an alternative to traditional elastic-tie systems, offering reduced friction and potentially smoother tooth movement.

****Invisalign Clear Aligners**** use a series of custom-fabricated, removable thermoplastic trays — made from Align Technology's proprietary SmartTrack material — to progressively reposition teeth. Invisalign has been available since 1999 and offers not only the advantage of better aesthetics but also the convenience of removal during food and beverage consumption, as well as oral care. Smile Solutions is Australia's Blue Diamond Invisalign provider, with more than 9,000 completed cases — a volume that places it among the most experienced Invisalign practices in the country (see our guide on **Invisalign at Smile Solutions: How Australia's Blue Diamond Provider Delivers Clear Aligner Treatment**).

Lingual Braces are fixed appliances bonded to the *inner* (tongue-facing) surfaces of the teeth rather than the outer surfaces. Lingual braces are completely invisible, fixed, and require zero daily compliance. Lingual braces were first introduced by Dr. Kinya Fujita in Japan and Dr. Craven Kurtz in the United States in the 1970s. Modern systems — including those available at Smile Solutions — are custom-manufactured using CAD/CAM technology, producing brackets precisely contoured to each individual tooth's lingual anatomy.

Head-to-Head Comparison: The Seven Dimensions That Matter

1. Aesthetics During Treatment

This is the dimension most patients prioritise first, and the differences are stark.

- **Conventional braces:** Metal brackets and wires are fully visible on the front of the teeth. Ceramic (tooth-coloured) brackets improve aesthetics considerably but are not invisible. For many working professionals and adults, this remains a significant barrier (see our guide on *Adult Orthodontics in Melbourne: Why More Adults Are Choosing Braces and Invisalign at Smile Solutions*). - **Invisalign:** Aligners are nearly transparent when worn. They are the most aesthetically discreet option for patients whose primary concern is appearance *during* treatment, though they are not completely invisible at close range. - **Lingual braces:** Because lingual braces are bonded to the back of the teeth, they are invisible from every angle in normal social and professional interaction. For patients who require the clinical power of a fixed appliance but cannot accept visible hardware, lingual braces represent the only option that delivers both.

Verdict: Lingual braces and Invisalign are both effectively invisible; lingual braces are arguably more so because they are fixed and cannot be removed (or forgotten to be replaced). Conventional braces — even ceramic — remain the most visible option.

2. Clinical Suitability: Mild, Moderate, and Complex Cases

This is the most clinically important dimension, and it is where patient self-assessment most frequently goes wrong.

There is substantial consistency among studies that the Invisalign system is a viable alternative to conventional orthodontic therapy in the correction of mild to moderate malocclusions in non-growing patients that do not require extraction. A 2024 systematic review in the *Journal of Pharmacy and Bioallied Sciences* (Aref et al.) reinforced this finding, reporting that both techniques demonstrated remarkable success rates in malocclusion treatment, with 88–90% success rates.

However, the evidence draws a clear line at complexity. For specific tooth movements within mild-to-moderate cases, Invisalign performs well on some movements but not others — it can predictably level, tip, and derotate teeth (except for cuspids and premolars), while limited efficacy was identified in arch expansion through bodily tooth movement, extraction space closure, corrections of occlusal contacts, and larger antero-posterior corrections.

For complex cases, the evidence consistently favours traditional fixed appliances. Clear aligners had an advantage in segmented movement of teeth and shortened treatment duration, but were not as effective as braces in producing adequate occlusal contacts, controlling teeth torque, and retention.

Lingual braces occupy a unique clinical position: lingual braces are effective in treating a wide range of orthodontic issues, including complex malocclusions and more severe dental concerns. Importantly, lingual appliances were associated with increased intercanine width and significantly decreased anchorage loss of the maxillary first molar during space closure — a clinically meaningful advantage in extraction cases. A systematic review showed encouraging results on the clinical outcome of lingual

orthodontic treatment, especially in regards to the achievement of individualised treatment goals and the reduction of decalcifications on the bonded surfaces of the teeth.

****Verdict:**** For mild-to-moderate cases without extraction, Invisalign is clinically appropriate. For moderate-to-complex cases — including significant bite correction, extraction cases, or large rotations — fixed braces (labial or lingual) deliver more predictable outcomes.

3. Treatment Duration

The average treatment duration of traditional braces is 18 to 24 months. Invisalign treatment typically lasts between 12 and 18 months for most patients; however, some mild cases may finish in as little as 6 months, while more complex alignments can take closer to 24 months.

Lingual braces, positioned on the back of teeth, offer a discreet option with treatment times similar to metal braces — around 18 to 36 months.

A key nuance: based on findings from selected studies, Invisalign and fixed orthodontic appliances have similar overall efficacy in eliciting orthodontic tooth movement; however, Invisalign treatment requires significantly less time to complete than fixed orthodontic appliances. This time advantage is real — but it is conditional. Aligners must be worn 20–22 hours per day; inconsistent wear can significantly extend treatment time.

For lingual braces, chair time per appointment is typically longer than for labial fixed appliances, due to the technical demands of working on the inner tooth surfaces. Patients should factor this into their planning, particularly if appointment flexibility is limited.

****Verdict:**** Invisalign is generally the fastest option for compliant patients with mild-to-moderate cases. For complex cases, treatment durations across all three modalities converge. Lingual braces carry the same general timeline as conventional braces.

4. Comfort and Lifestyle Impact

All three modalities involve an adjustment period, but the nature of discomfort differs meaningfully.

- ****Conventional braces:**** Bracket edges and archwires can cause soft-tissue irritation — particularly to the cheeks, lips, and inner gums — especially in the first weeks after fitting or following adjustment appointments. Orthodontic wax provides temporary relief. - ****Invisalign:**** Clear aligners are removable, which promotes better oral hygiene and reduces the likelihood of periodontal inflammation compared to fixed braces. Patients also tend to experience less pain and fewer disruptions to their daily routines, making aligner treatment more comfortable overall.

- ****Lingual braces:**** The pain of lingual appliances starts a little earlier and lasts longer, and patients with lingual appliances experience more tongue discomfort and less cheek and lip pain, and greater eating difficulties especially after placement. Speech adaptation — including a temporary lisp — is a well-documented side effect of lingual braces, though most patients adapt within two to four weeks.

For contact sport participants, all three options require a custom mouthguard. Invisalign aligners alone do not provide adequate protection during impact sports. Smile Solutions provides sport mouthguards as part of its orthodontic protocols (see our guide on **Children's Orthodontics at Smile Solutions: Early Intervention, Phase 1 Treatment, and the Right Age for a First Assessment**).

****Verdict:**** Invisalign is generally the most comfortable day-to-day option. Lingual braces involve the steepest initial adaptation curve due to tongue proximity. Conventional braces sit between the two.

5. Oral Hygiene Demands

This dimension is clinically critical — particularly for adult patients who may have pre-existing periodontal considerations (see our guide on **Adult Orthodontics in Melbourne: Why More Adults Are Choosing Braces and Invisalign at Smile Solutions**).

The evidence here consistently favours clear aligners. Lower plaque index (PI), gingival index (GI), and probing depth (PD) scores at both three and six months showed that patients with transparent aligners had considerably improved periodontal health than those with fixed braces.

Clear aligners, in contrast to fixed appliances, improve oral hygiene and reduce inflammation, leading to better periodontal outcomes. Fixed appliances, on the other hand, may exacerbate plaque accumulation and inflammation, which can worsen periodontal health.

For conventional braces, the mechanical complexity of brackets and wires creates retention areas that trap bacteria and impede effective cleaning. Interdental brushes, floss threaders, and water flossers become essential tools rather than optional additions.

Lingual braces present a specific oral hygiene challenge: the brackets sit in an area already more difficult to access for cleaning, and the tongue's proximity to the hardware can displace plaque into subgingival areas. Patients with a history of gum disease require particularly rigorous home-care protocols when lingual braces are chosen.

However, it is important to note that the advantages of clear aligners over fixed appliances in terms of oral hygiene and periodontal health are highly compliance dependent. Patients who wear aligners for fewer than the prescribed 20–22 hours per day, or who do not clean their aligners properly, may not realise this periodontal benefit.

****Verdict:**** Invisalign offers the clearest oral hygiene advantage — but only for compliant patients. Fixed appliances (both labial and lingual) demand a more rigorous and consistent cleaning routine.

6. Dietary Restrictions

- ****Conventional braces:**** Patients must avoid hard, sticky, and chewy foods for the duration of treatment — typically 18 to 24 months. Popcorn, hard nuts, raw carrots, toffee, and chewing gum can dislodge brackets or bend wires, adding unexpected repair appointments and potentially extending treatment. - ****Invisalign:**** Because aligners are removed for eating and drinking, there are ****no dietary restrictions****. This is a significant quality-of-life advantage, particularly for patients who travel frequently, eat out regularly, or simply value not modifying their diet for two years. - ****Lingual braces:**** The same dietary restrictions as conventional braces apply. Because brackets are on the inner tooth surface, dislodgement can be harder to detect and may go unnoticed for longer — making dietary compliance even more important.

****Verdict:**** Invisalign wins unambiguously on dietary freedom. Both fixed appliance options require meaningful dietary modification.

7. Cost Range in Melbourne

Cost varies significantly by case complexity, treatment duration, and provider tier. The following ranges reflect the Australian private market and are intended as a general guide only; precise fees at Smile Solutions are determined at your consultation (see our guide on **Orthodontic Treatment Costs in Melbourne: Pricing, Health Fund Rebates, and Payment Plans at Smile Solutions**).

Treatment	Approximate Melbourne Range	Key Cost Drivers
Metal/Ceramic Braces	\$6,000 – \$9,000	Case complexity, treatment duration
Invisalign (Full)	\$6,500 – \$9,500	Number of aligners, refinements
Lingual Braces	\$9,000 – \$15,000+	Custom fabrication, extended chair time

Ceramic braces and lingual braces both cost more than Invisalign on average, which surprises most patients who assume removable clear aligners are always the premium option. Lingual braces carry a premium that reflects the highly specialised nature of their fabrication (custom-milled brackets) and the additional clinical skill required to place and adjust them. The biggest challenges with lingual orthodontics were found to be patient discomfort, cost, longer chair time, and technical difficulties.

Smile Solutions' Invisalign price-match guarantee, Bupa Platinum provider status, and Payright interest-free payment plans all apply to Invisalign treatment. Health fund rebates under major orthodontic item codes may also apply to conventional and lingual braces depending on your level of cover.

Quick-Reference Comparison Table

Dimension	Conventional Braces	Invisalign	Lingual Braces
Visibility	Visible (metal/ceramic)	Near-invisible	Completely hidden
Removability	Fixed	Removable	Fixed
Mild–Moderate Cases	■ Excellent	■ Excellent	■ Excellent
Complex Cases	■ Best suited	■ Limited	■ Excellent
Extraction Cases	■ Strong	■ Variable	■ Strong
Avg. Treatment Time	18–24 months	12–18 months	18–36 months
Dietary Restrictions	Yes	None	Yes
Oral Hygiene Demands	High	Moderate	Very High
Compliance Required	Low	High (22 hrs/day)	Low
Typical Cost (Melbourne)	\$6,000–\$9,000	\$6,500–\$9,500	\$9,000–\$15,000+
Speech Impact	Minimal	Minimal	Temporary lisp

Who Is Each Treatment Best Suited For?

Choose Invisalign if you: - Have mild to moderate crowding, spacing, or a mild overbite without extraction requirements - Are a highly compliant patient who will reliably wear aligners 20–22 hours daily - Have active periodontal concerns or a history of gum disease - Travel frequently, eat out regularly, or have dietary preferences you cannot modify - Are combining orthodontic treatment with cosmetic work such as whitening or veneers (see our guide on **Combined Orthodontic and Cosmetic Smile Makeovers at Smile Solutions**) - Want to use Dental Monitoring for remote progress tracking between appointments

Choose Conventional Braces if you: - Have moderate-to-complex malocclusion, including significant bite correction needs - Are a younger patient or adolescent whose compliance with removable aligners may be inconsistent - Require tooth extraction as part of your treatment plan - Want the most clinically versatile option at the most accessible price point - Are undergoing orthodontic preparation for jaw surgery (see our guide on **Orthodontics and Jaw Surgery: When Braces Alone Are Not Enough**)

Choose Lingual Braces if you: - Cannot accept any visible orthodontic hardware — for professional, performance, or personal reasons - Have a moderate-to-complex case that exceeds Invisalign's clinical scope - Know you will not comply reliably with a removable appliance - Are an adult professional for whom discretion is non-negotiable - Understand and accept the higher cost and initial adaptation period

The Role of the Specialist Orthodontist in Treatment Selection

It is worth being direct about a common misconception: the choice between these three modalities is not primarily a *patient* decision — it is a *clinical* recommendation that your specialist orthodontist makes based on a thorough diagnostic workup, including digital scans, radiographs, and a complete assessment of your occlusion, jaw relationship, and soft tissue profile.

The application of lingual braces requires specific techniques different from those used for conventional braces. Not all orthodontic providers offer all three options, and not all are equally experienced in each. Only about 25% of orthodontists surveyed by the American Association of Orthodontists practised lingual orthodontics — a figure that underscores why provider selection matters when lingual braces are under consideration.

At Smile Solutions, registered specialist orthodontists — holding three to four years of postgraduate university training beyond their dental degree — are qualified to plan and deliver all three modalities. The in-house iTero digital scanner, CBCT imaging capability, and Dental Monitoring remote tracking system support precise diagnosis and ongoing monitoring regardless of which treatment path is chosen (see our guide on *Orthodontic Technology at Smile Solutions: iTero Scanning, Dental Monitoring, and the In-House Laboratory Advantage*).

Key Takeaways

- ****Invisalign is clinically appropriate for mild-to-moderate cases**** in compliant patients, with comparable long-term outcomes to braces in this cohort and a meaningful oral hygiene advantage over fixed appliances — but its effectiveness is highly dependent on consistent 20–22-hour daily wear. - ****Conventional fixed braces remain the gold standard for complex cases****, including significant bite correction, extraction cases, and large rotations, where their continuous, three-dimensional force application is clinically superior. - ****Lingual braces are the only option that combines complete invisibility with the clinical power of a fixed appliance**** — making them the treatment of choice for aesthetically demanding adult patients with moderate-to-complex cases, at a higher cost and with a steeper initial adaptation period. - ****Treatment duration**** averages 12–18 months for Invisalign, 18–24 months for conventional braces, and 18–36 months for lingual braces — but case complexity and patient compliance are the dominant variables in all three. - ****The right choice is a clinical recommendation, not a consumer preference.**** A thorough diagnostic consultation with a registered specialist orthodontist is the only reliable basis for treatment selection.

Conclusion

There is no universally "best" orthodontic treatment — only the treatment that is best matched to your clinical needs, lifestyle, compliance profile, and aesthetic priorities. Invisalign, conventional braces, and lingual braces each occupy a distinct and legitimate role in a specialist orthodontic practice, and understanding their differences before your consultation positions you to have a more productive, focused conversation with your orthodontist.

At Smile Solutions Melbourne CBD, all three modalities are available under one roof, delivered by registered specialist orthodontists with the diagnostic technology and case volume to match treatment to patient with precision. Whether your case is straightforward or complex, the starting point is the same: a comprehensive assessment that looks beyond aesthetics to the underlying biology of your bite.

To learn more about what that assessment involves, see our guide on *Step-by-Step: What to Expect at Your Orthodontic Consultation and Treatment Journey at Smile Solutions*, or explore the full treatment landscape in *The Full Spectrum of Orthodontic Treatments Available at Smile Solutions Melbourne CBD*.

References

- Reddy, S.P.D., Chekka, M., Shah, R., Kauser, A., Pissarla, M., Datla, P.K.V., & Mahajan, A. "Long-term Outcomes of Traditional Braces versus Invisalign in Orthodontic Treatment." **Journal of Pharmacy and Bioallied Sciences**, Vol. 16, Suppl 3, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4103/jpbs.jpbs_265_24
- Mistakidis, I., Katib, H., Vasilakos, G., Kloukos, D., & Gkantidis, N. "Clinical outcomes of lingual orthodontic treatment: a systematic review." **European Journal of Orthodontics**, 38(5): 447–458, 2016. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26359019/>
- Azaripour, A., Weusmann, J., Mahmoodi, B., Peppas, D., Gerhold-Ay, A., Van Noorden, C.J.F., & Willershausen, B. "Braces versus Invisalign®: gingival parameters and patients' satisfaction during treatment: a cross-sectional study." **BMC Oral Health**, 15: 69, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12903-015-0060-4>
- Behnaz, M., Farahnaki, A., Rahimipour, K., Mousavi, R., & Sheikh Davoodi, N. "Lingual Orthodontic Treatment: Efficacy and Complications." **Journal of Indian Orthodontic Society**, 53(4): 316–326, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2320206819881607>
- Ahmed, S., Alghabban, R., Alqahtani, A., et al. "Evidence of Effectiveness of Lingual Orthodontics as an Alternative to Conventional Labial Orthodontics. A Systematic Review." **Cureus**, 16(1): e51643, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.51643>
- Volpato, G.H., Oltramari, P.V.P., de Almeida-Pedrin, R.R., et al. "Patient compliance with braces vs. Invisalign®: a secondary data analysis from a randomized clinical trial." **Journal of Applied Oral Science**, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-7757-2025-0179>
- Comparative Study of Periodontal Health in Patients with Fixed Braces Versus Clear Aligners. **PMC**, 2025. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11805022/>
- "The Differential Impact of Clear Aligners and Fixed Orthodontic Appliances on Periodontal Health: A Systematic Review." **MDPI Children**, 12(2): 138, 2025. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9067/12/2/138>
- Kaya, B. et al. "Lingual vs. labial fixed orthodontic appliances: systematic review and meta-analysis of treatment effects." **European Journal of Orthodontics**, 38(6): 592–601, 2016. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26916846/>
- Verma, N. et al. "A Systematic Review of Interventions — Does Invisalign Move Teeth as Effectively as Orthodontic Fixed Appliances?" **PMC**, 2024. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11606659/>