All dentists have articulating papers as part of their armamentarium to make occlusal adjustments. However, we often don’t appreciate the subtle differences between the many papers and products that exist. The purpose of this article is to recommend a small number of well-designed products by one well-known manufacturer which will enable you to deliver a very high standard of dental care when assessing and adjusting occlusal contacts.

Clinical tips

**Shimstock holds**

The BK58 Arti-Fol® 8mm wide metallic uncoated Shimstock-film (12µ) is a high-tech test film made of metallic poly-ester-film. It is antimicrobial and can be easily held on the end of the Miller type forceps. The film is extremely tear resistant and is used for resilience testing i.e. making a note of "shimstock holds" before any treatment is carried out.

Always record a "shimstock hold" before a tooth (or teeth) is prepared. Then ensure this is re-established when the provisional restoration has been fitted. This also applies when assessing the laboratory made restoration on the master model (against the opposing model), and once the restoration has been cemented in the mouth. By making a simple note of the shimstock hold (on teeth that are not to be prepared) ensures time saving, accuracy and minimal adjustments to the occlusal surfaces of finished laboratory made restorations.

**Bite registration & Shimstock holds**

An excellent tip is to hold Shimstock-film between the posterior teeth (where there was a hold) during bite registration. As the bite registration material (eg Luxabite from DMG) is setting, resilience testing is carried out to verify with certainty the accuracy of the bite registration. This can then be recorded for the dental technician.

Help from the dental assistant

Let your dental nurse help by holding two articulation forceps bilaterally each time, as well as using gauze (to dry the occlusal surfaces), blow air from the “three in one” syringe and saliva aspiration to ensure a dry field and maximum efficiency when checking for markings. The dentist can then concentrate more with the fine adjustments using the fast hand technique i.e. making a note of Shimstock film on the end due to clear and red spots to remove in the occlusal adjustments. Therefore, one typically sees a blue larger zone, with a clear halo in between and a red spot in the middle.

The BK 51 paper affords a unique combination of a high-tech metal foil (Shimstock foil 12µ) and a two-sided colour coating with microfinely ground colour pigments which enable clear visible marking of all occlusal contact points. The paper also marks moist occlusal surfaces.

**Occlusal splint adjustments**

The BK28 Arti-Fol® metallic black/red paper (12µ) paper is ideal for occlusal splint adjustment due to the ability to mark the centric and eccentric positions thanks to the two different colours.

**Interproximal tight contacts**

The BK55 Arti-Fol® 8mm wide metallic red (one sided) Shimstock-film (12µ) is useful for checking approximal contact points when fitting dental bridges, crowns or veneers. Since the back of the film is metallic, it is obvious which side is colour-coated and which is not.

Articulation forceps

There are two different articulation forceps that are useful for everyday practice:

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The dentist can immediately detect the preferred side of the mouth. Symmetrical marking of all contacts is desirable especially when testing the occlusion of full dentures which are primarily adjusted according to the concept of bilateral balanced occlusion.

Even marking of the full dental arch is essential when adjusting an occlusal device. In this respect, horseshoe-shaped papers provide a welcome relief especially when testing occlusal contacts on moist artificial surfaces.

Checking crown fits and denture clasps
I use the BK86 Arti-Spot® Highspot-Indicator (red) which is a contact colour for testing the accuracy of fit of crowns, inlays, onlays, telescopic crowns and clasps. It is applied to the test surface with a brush. The solvent evaporates in seconds, leaving a thin film 3µ thick. Every contact destroys skin colour exactly at the point of contact. The base material then shines through and high spots can be easily detected.

Arti-Spot® can easily be removed after use. Hot water, mechanical friction (e.g. toothbrush or floss), alcohol, isopropyl alcohol and steam- ing will also loosen residual colour deposits. Marking on dental plaster can also be removed with a fine brush.

Checking interocclusal clearance during tooth preparation

The Fleximeter-Strips (BK 253) are a useful innovation

The combination of Bausch PROGRESS 100° Articulating Paper, 100 microns, and Arti-Fol® metallic, 12 micron, articulating film offers considerable advantages, especially on occlusal surfaces like gold or ceramic which are difficult to examine. The first test should be made with blue articulating paper. Markings are immediately evident since the bonding agent of PROGRESS 100, Transculase®, is transferred as a fine coating.

The next step is to use a thin film (preferably red) because of its intensity and excellent contrast with blue. The colour transfer properties of the film are considerably enhanced by the PROGRESS 100’s bonding agent. This method offers the utmost reliability in accurately identifying high spot markings.

Two steps to perfect occlusion.

Step 1: Examination of the occlusion with Bausch PROGRESS 100° Articulating paper with progressive colour transfer 100 microns.

Step 2: Examination of the occlusion with Bausch Arti-Fol® metallic 12 microns.

Bausch PROGRESS 100°’s blue markings work as a bonding agent and form a contrasting background for precise occlusal markings.
for the dentist and technician alike. These strips are flexible measuring instruments in three different thicknesses. They are very useful to assess the inter-occlusal space when preparing a posterior tooth for a crown or bridge. In addition, it is possible to paint some Arti-Spot® on one side of the Fleximeter-Strip and place this coloured side against the prepared tooth. The patient is then asked to bite up and down. Where there is inadequate clearance, the occlusal aspect of the prepared tooth will mark red, and this can then be accurately adjusted. The thicknesses of the Fleximeter-Strips 1.0mm, 1.5mm, and 2.0mm can also be used to enlarge the vertical dimension (bite height). They are made from a special silicone rubber that can be sterilized up to a temperature of 200°C.

Use of T-Scan
T-Scan is a computerised occlusion software system. Used in conjunction with the “two phase articulation system” of occlusal markings is the most precise way to make occlusal adjustments and equilibrate an occlusion.

Summary
By understanding the design and differences between articulating papers allows the dentist to make accurate and precise markings. This will then help more accurate adjustments to be made rather than “just chasing the blue marks”.

About the author
Ashish B Parmar (Ash) is a private dentist and has a unique state-of-the-art practice in Chigwell, Essex called Smile Design By Ash (www.smiledesignbyash.co.uk). Ash is a national and international lecturer and was one of the main dentists on the three series of Extreme Makeover UK. He offers an outstanding eight-day Course which includes training on leadership, vision creation, goal setting, step by step techniques in doing Smile Makeovers, treating advanced cases (e.g. wear cases), lasers, fibre-reinforced composite dentistry, photography, communication, case presentation skills, team development, etc. Ash has written numerous clinical articles in dental journals and is well recognised for his passion in cosmetic dentistry – using composite and porcelain techniques. To review many other informative articles and FREE TRAINING CLINICAL VIDEOS, and to find out more about the unique training Course run by The Academy By Ash, visit www.theacademybyash.co.uk, or send an email to training@theacademybyash.co.uk. Alternatively, you may phone Ash personally on his mobile number 07971 291180.