

HOW TO CHOOSE

Eyeglasses, Eyecare

The 'three Os' offer varied levels, areas of eyecare, eyeglass services

There are three kinds of eye doctors covering specific areas for patients eye care needs. The "three Os" as they are known as optometrist, ophthalmologists and optician.

An optometrist's most basic function is to improve your vision with prescription glasses and or contact lenses. If an optometrist determines that you have a physical problem with your eyes that could require medical treatment, i.e. glaucoma, cataract etc., you will be referred to an ophthalmologist who is a medically trained M.D. You also would be referred to an ophthalmologist if you and your optometrist determine that LASIK surgery is a logical choice for you.

Optometrist exams are adequate for most issues. When choosing a provider, consider their availability and the expense. Usually ophthalmologists are less available and significantly more expensive.

The third O is for optician. Opticians help with frame selection and actually make your glasses. What confuses people most about the "three Os" is who to buy their glasses from, since there are significant overlaps.

Many ophthalmologists and most optometrists sell eyeglasses. However, the trend is for more glasses to be sold by opticians who may be located nearby optometrist offices. The optometrist is most interested in doing the eye exams and letting someone else, usually the optician, sell and service the glasses.

Most eye doctors will recommend a two-year interval for exams unless some unusual problem obviously requiring immediate attention occurs. More frequent care may be necessary for a youngster whose eyes can change most rapidly or if you have a physical issue in need of monitoring.

When it comes to the eyeglass prescription, the patient owns it. That issue was decided years ago by the federal government. An eye doctor is required to give you a copy of your eyeglass prescription. This permits you the flexibility of shopping for glasses where you believe you will get the best value.

An eye doctor may put an expiration date on a prescription that will protect him from liability if you choose to fill an old prescription and doing so leads to a problem. It's your choice to make. However, most responsible sellers of glasses will suggest a new exam if a prescription is really old and logic dictates a fresh look at the patient.

Glasses can cost as little as \$29 for simple single-vision lenses and an inexpensive frame.

An expensive designer frame with no line bifocals and other extras can cost up to \$1,000. You can choose to spend a little or a lot to satisfy your needs.

Beware of bait and switch retailers who advertise low prices as a way to get you in the store and then tell you that your special needs require a greater expenditure. Good quality frames and single-vision lenses generally will cost between \$100 and \$150.

Frames come in all price categories. The choice is very personal because we all have an idea of how we want to look and what we want to project.

When selecting frames you usually are looking at them without a prescription in them so it's good to shop with a friend or go to a retailer who can give you an expert.

There are a variety of lens choices to consider.

Thin lenses usually are a good idea since they can significantly lighten the weight of glasses. Also, depending on your prescription, they may be especially helpful to the weight issue. Higher power lenses can wind up with a thick coke

bottle edge or look like magnifiers. In either case you would probably go for the extra \$30 to \$60 for this feature.

Transition lenses or lenses that change color have improved a lot in recent years. The only disadvantage is that the color change is not instant. It takes a few moments to go from dark to light or vice versa. Cost of this extra can be anywhere from \$50 to \$80.

No-line bifocals have become the choice for bifocal wearers because the no-line lenses of today are easy to adapt to and provide more visual benefit than the old half-moon bifocals. They usually cost from \$60 to \$100 more than single-vision lenses.

Anti-reflective coating helps you see more clearly. And because they eliminate most reflection, people can see your eyes and features more clearly. It also offers easier night vision.

The average with selected extras can be approximately \$100 to \$200 for a single-vision pair of glasses and \$150 to \$250 for bifocals.

The eyeglass provider should at least warranty the product from manufacturers defects for one year and take liberal view of the issues and from the base line shop for more extensive warranties such as "satisfaction guaranteed."

Many so-called one hour service opticians do not make their glasses on the premises in which case it will take one to two weeks. A real one hour optician with a full service lab on the premises can make most glasses (even bifocals) in an hour or two.

Be sure to tell the sales person or optician what your needs and expectations are before you waste time choosing frames and lens options only to find that you won't get them in the time needed.

Almost all glasses will require periodic adjustment and or minor repair. Whoever you buy from should be available and willing to provide these services at no charge to you.



1-HOUR SERVICE