

A new perspective on frames: Choosing the right reading glasses

If you're holding your book at arm's length, then it's probably time for a new frame of reference.

Or, more likely, some references on new frames. The signs you need reading glasses are easy to spot. What's more difficult is choosing your next steps. Sure, you need glasses, but what kind and when? Can your eyes last another year?

Anyone who is holding a smartphone or cereal box farther away because of trouble reading is likely asking these questions. And how they are answered is crucial for future eye health.

Many may be inclined to grab a pair of pharmacy or grocery store eyeglasses. That solution, however, could only be as long lasting as the expiration dates on the canned goods nearby. And while drugstore frames are easy to access, the lenses are not customized to our eyes. They are universal while our vision problems are not.

Signs you may need prescription glasses

Choosing the right reading glasses begins with framing up the symptoms. Other than arm's-length reading, physicians have identified several warning signs:

- Noticing objects nearby are out of focus or fuzzy
- An inability to focus on words when trying to read
- Eye strain, eye fatigue or drowsiness when performing activities such as solving a crossword puzzle, drawing or working on the computer
- Frequent unexplained headaches¹

Choosing the glasses: half, full and progressive

Eyeglasses may be a necessity, but that does not mean they have to be a chore. Eyeglasses are functional fashion, and choosing the frames can be as enjoyable as shopping for a new watch or shoes. No one needs an appointment to visit the eyeglass store and try on a few frames.

That said, there are a lot of options. So let's narrow them down:

Go full or half full? They look just as they sound. In a full frame, the entire lens is matched to the vision prescription. The smaller half-eye glasses sit a little lower on the nose, so the wearer may look up to see far away and then down to read.²

Made in the shades: If you like to read on the deck but the sun turns the page into a white light, consider reading glasses with UV protection. It's advisable to protect your eyes from the sun at all times since it can contribute to cataracts, macular degeneration and other conditions.³

Be progressive: If you already have difficulty seeing at a distance, then you may want to manage all eye issues at once with a set of progressive lenses or bifocals. Progressives contain a prescription that shifts throughout the lens so the wearer can see near, far and in-between. Bifocal lenses include two distinct areas, one for near vision and one for far.⁴

Know when to fold 'em: While foldable glasses are a common sight at drugstores, some manufacturers produce highly fashionable folding frames that are prescription-lens compatible.⁵ If compact glasses are more suitable to your lifestyle, ask a sales professional about them when visiting an eyeglass store.

Trust the eye Rx

Regardless of type, the best glasses are those that carry a prescription lens. While ready-made drugstore cheaters serve as handy backups, they are not customized to the wearer. This means both lenses are the same even if your vision in each eye differs, and the location of the optical center is not customized for you.⁶

Only through an exam by an eye doctor can you identify the specifics of your eyesight needs. Until then, the distance between your eyes and that book speak volumes about your vision future.

1 Upham, B.; "Is it Time for Reading Glasses?"; Everyday Health; everydayhealth.com; Reviewed April 19, 2022. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/presbyopia/know-when-you-need-reading-glasses/>

2 DeFranco, L.; "Reading glasses: What to know before you buy"; All About Vision; allaboutvision.com; March 18, 2020. <https://www.allaboutvision.com/en-au/reading-glasses/>

3 "Photokeratitis"; Cleveland Clinic; my.clevelandclinic.org; Last reviewed December 16, 2020. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/15763-photokeratitis>

4 Mukamal, R.; "Pros and Cons of Progressive Lenses"; American Academy of Ophthalmology; aao.org; Last reviewed April 4, 2023. <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/pros-cons-progressive-lenses-computer-glasses>

5 "Folding reading glasses explained"; Lensmart; lensmartonline.com ; August 1, 2022. <https://www.lensmartonline.com/blog/eyeglass-basics/details/folding-reading-glasses/>

6 DeFranco, L.; "Reading glasses: What to know before you buy"; All About Vision; allaboutvision.com; March 18, 2020. <https://www.allaboutvision.com/en-au/reading-glasses/>