

Setting your sights on the perfect pair of glasses

by R.J. Ignelzi

When street signs become a blur at 20 mph and menu listings are as fuzzy as the well-worn napkin in your lap, it may be time for new eyeglasses.

Making that decision is just the first and often least expensive choice you'll have to make when shopping for new specs. In addition to choosing between hundreds of frames, you'll also have to focus on what kind of lenses you want, which coatings you need and which type of edgings will most effectively polish off your eyewear.

While choices are nice, every upgrade option comes with a price, and it doesn't take long before a basic pair of \$89 glasses can triple or quadruple in cost.

To make sure you purchase new eyeglasses with 20-20 consumer vision, it's important to think about not only how you will use your glasses, but also about your lifestyle and habits.

Consider your job, hobbies, activities and prescription. Do you work at a computer all day? Do you spend much time reading? Do you drive at night? Are you active in sports? Are glasses a backup for contact lenses? Will you be wearing the glasses outdoors? Do you have a very strong prescription?

"A good optician will inquire about your individual needs, because eyeglass options are very case

specific," says Sylvia Torres, optician for optometrist Dr. Ronald Rosa in Encinitas, Calif. "People who are (determined) to get glasses for a bargain price, may not end up happy (with their glasses) because the glasses won't do what they want them to do," she says. "You can't just go with base price (glasses) when you're relying on them for day and night use, computer work and multiple activities. The technology is there for glasses (that are multifunctional) and if you can afford it, it's worth it. "But, don't be surprised if one pair of glasses can't do it all, especially as you get older.

"Most people need more than one pair of glasses," says Dr. Anthony Novo, a Scripps Clinic optometrist in San Diego. "Glasses are a tool designed to accomplish a job. The more specific the design for the task at hand, the better it will be at that task. Sometimes the job is protecting your eyes from the sun, other times it's helping you (see while you) drive, work at a computer or read."

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Sites for your eyes

- www.allaboutvision.com/buysmart/eyeglasses.htm

This comprehensive and comparative guide to shopping for eyeglasses covers style and medical applications and includes a doctor-patient Q&A section.

- www.eyeglassretailerreviews.com

Get reviews of a dozen online eyewear businesses and charts detailing items and prices at this site, which also features coupons and reader forums.

- www.consumerreports.org

The Nov. 11, 2006, issue of the trustworthy Consumer Reports covered eyewear in its usual, thorough way. Type "eyeglasses" in the search box.

- www.nei.nih.gov/health/eyediagram

Learn about the anatomy of the eye in this excellent diagram provided by The National Eye Institute.

- www.lionsinsight.org

Did you know that Lions Clubs recycle eyeglasses and distribute the renovated items to people in need? Check out the site for more information.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

"Blue's Clues: Magenta Gets Glasses!" Deborah Reber, Troy Dugas (Illustrator) (2002)

For preschoolers, the TV-based book describes the eye doctor visit and the experience of wearing glasses for the first time.

"Winnie Flies Again," Korky Paul, Valerie Thomas (illustrator) (2000)

Witch Winnie's navigational problems are solved by a pair of eyeglasses in this book aimed at 4-to-8-year-olds.

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