



glasses direct

Guide to Buying Glasses Online

from the world's largest direct glasses retailer

- Why are glasses so expensive?
- Understanding my prescription and how to get it
- Is buying prescription glasses online safe?
- How to choose a pair that fit and suit me
- Lenses, coatings and how glasses are made
- and more...

Section 1 - About the Optical Industry



Why are prescription glasses typically so expensive?

Each high street optician pays for expensive stores, medical equipment, display stock and staff. As a result, after every eye test, they aim to sell a pair of glasses at a high margin. You'll typically be passed over to someone - not an optician - whose job is to sell you the most expensive pair of glasses they can convince you to buy.

By law, an optician must – following your eye test – provide you with a written prescription, regardless of whether you plan to buy glasses from them. A fact worth keeping front of mind if you begin to be pressurised into parting with your money there and then.

You shop around for the best deal on everything from your mobile phone to car insurance - why not your glasses?

“This is the way it’s been done for years and years, which is why the industry has been so aggressive towards us when we’ve challenged the old pricing model by offering glasses at much more realistic prices. We keep costs low by selling hundreds of pairs a day directly to customers through our website or by phone.”

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Your prescription

To buy glasses online, you need a copy of your prescription - which must be less than two years old. You will need to give your prescription details to order your glasses. For the majority of prescriptions, especially printed ones, this is a simple matter of copying the numbers into an online order form. However, some handwritten or more complicated prescriptions may need some translation.

When you’re given your prescription, we recommend asking for your pupillary distance - another measurement needed to custom make your glasses. Frustratingly, some opticians deliberately don’t include it – probably to stop you from buying your glasses online. They will certainly have it on record if you have previously bought glasses from them. The good news is that, if they don’t, you have several other options:

Many opticians will measure your PD on request, just after your eye test. For those who have websites (e.g. Specsavers), you’ll need the PD to order glasses online, so it’s more than reasonable to request it. If they refuse, perhaps the threat of you having your next eye test elsewhere may convince them.

“The majority of people can use our average PD measurement, explained in detail in the FAQ section at www.glassesdirect.co.uk. To help explain your prescription, we’ve produced a separate document which discusses prescriptions in depth, and can be found here: beta.glassesdirect.co.uk/your-prescription”

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Is buying glasses online safe?



Both online and on the high street, the optical market is regulated by the Government's General Optical Council to ensure medical health standards are adhered to.



Both the online opticians and many of the biggest high street chains use the same laboratories to have glasses made, so the quality is likely to be high wherever you buy them from.

“On top of this, Glasses Direct have our own advisory board that sets stringent guidelines on everything from how we take your order to quality checks before we send them to you. The board includes ophthalmic surgeons with a lifetime of medical eye care experience. Each pair of glasses is subjected to a detailed quality control check to ensure they conform to British Standards. In fact, your pair will arrive with a card introducing the person who checked them. Plus, we offer a 14 day, money back guarantee – one of the most generous available.”

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Section 2 - The right glasses for you

There are so many glasses designs to choose from, many people find it less daunting to have the advice of someone physically with them in a shop. However, you typically end up paying a lot of money for that advice, so if you can follow a few guidelines and use those to narrow down the glasses that will suit you, then you can save yourself plenty of money.



Will they suit me if I buy online?

There are a number of ways to make sure your glasses will fit before ordering them from a website.

- Some online companies have a 'virtual mirror' where you can upload a photograph of yourself, then see how particular glasses look on your face.
- Another option is to try them on at home. With a free trial, a pair with empty lenses are posted to you to try on at leisure. If you're happy with them, send them back to have your prescription lenses put in.

“Glasses Direct was the first company to do this online in the UK, and now has the most sophisticated facial recognition technology in the British industry – and we're still doing research to make it even better. We only charge the £3.75 postage to send you a trial pair. Even if you add this to the price of the glasses, you still make huge savings on high street prices.”

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Will they fit if I buy online?

This question is more complicated – simply because most glasses are very adjustable – so really, most glasses can be made to fit, once you're happy that they suit you.

There are two ways to be more sure that a pair of glasses will fit:



Check the measurements of an old pair of glasses you find comfortable or that really suit you. We show measurements for every pair we offer so you can compare them for a close match.



Try the glasses on at home with a home trial before deciding to buy.

“For many of our glasses, we publish a downloadable pdf showing their actual size that you can print out or study on the screen. This makes it even easier to compare them with an existing pair. Some customers even cut them out to help.”

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So much choice - how do I pick the right pair for me ?

Glasses are one of the most personal things you can buy because you wear them on your face. These guidelines might help you draw up your shortlist:-

- **Oval faces** have the most flexibility in glasses styles but we suggest choosing glasses that are as wide as the broadest part of your face.
- **Square Faces** are complimented by glasses that are slightly curved or wider than they are deep. The top of the frames should sit high enough on the face to downplay the jaw line.
- **Oblong Faces** are longer than they are wide with a long straight cheek line and sometimes a longish nose. They look good with deeper glasses perhaps with decorative arms and a low bridge to shorten the nose.
- **Round Faces** suit glasses with straight or angular lines. Deep colours such as black or tortoise also minimise fullness.
- **Triangular Faces** are defined by a broad forehead and narrow mouth and chin. Glasses with a thin rim and vertical lines will help balance the bottom part of the face. They should not sit too high on the face. Avoid large glasses, heavy nose bridges, bold colours and square shapes.
- **Large Noses** can be balanced by oversized glasses – smaller designs will accentuate the nose.
- **Long Noses** suit glasses with high sidebars that draw attention upward toward the temples and away from the nose. A double bridge helps a nose appear shorter.
- **Small Noses** benefit from a high bridge in a light colour which lengthens the nose.
- **The size of your glasses** should be in scale with your face size.
- **Colouring** works well when it compliments your best feature (e.g. blue frames to match blue eyes).

Lenses and coatings

Lenses are what often make up the bulk of the cost when buying glasses on the high street, especially on the thinner lenses. It's not unusual to make savings of more than a hundred pounds online.

Why thin lenses?

As your prescription increases the lenses need to be thicker. If you use standard optical plastic, then they can become unattractive and the weight of them can become uncomfortable.

Here's a comparison chart comparing our prices to the high street:
Correct as of July 29th 2008.

	Glasses Direct	Specavers	D&A	Vision Express	Minimum saving with Glasses Direct
Basic single vision optical lenses	FREE	FREE	£69	-	-
Standard lens (1.5) inc. AR+SR	£20	£30	-	£109	£10
Standard lens (1.5) inc. AR+SR+UV	£30	£42	£101	-	£12
Thin Lens (1.6) optical plastic lens	£40	£60	-	-	£20
Thin Lens (1.6) incl AR+SR+UV	£73	£102	£142	£150	£29
Ultra Thin Lens (1.67) incl AR+SR+UV	£85	£110	£176	£200	£25
Ultra Ultra Thin (1.74) lens, incl AR+SR+UV	£135	£150	£291	£257	£15

When thinking about which coatings you want to have it's worth considering how you're going to use your glasses.

Scratch-resistant coating

This hard, clear coating significantly reduces the potential effects of day to day wear on your lenses, meaning you'll enjoy that just-bought clarity for longer.

Anti-reflective coating

This coating lets more light pass through your lenses, giving you a clearer image while reducing any strain on your eyes. It also lets others see your eyes more clearly. Particularly useful for driving or working on a computer.

UV protection:

Invisible, UV light can be potentially damaging to the eyes (it's the same light that gives you sun burn). This coating stops it penetrating the lens, protecting the eye. Always add a UV coating when ordering a lens tint.

Section 3 - How glasses are made

The more complex glasses prescriptions go through the following stages, although simpler prescriptions may skip some of the earlier stages:

Stage 1 – The laboratory select the lenses from a number of basic variants. These are pre-formed plastic blocks.

Stage 2 – The lenses are ‘blocked’ and semi-finished so they can be held in the generator – the machine that grinds the lens to shape.

Stage 3 – Your individual lenses are designed from a template.

Stage 4 – They’re ‘generated’ – a process which grinds away much of the material of the lens, so that it is the right power and shape.

Stage 5 – Next they are polished to make them optically blemish-free.

Stage 6 – The lenses are then edged and marked up – which means their matched with their frame, and verified as being the right power/orientation.

Stage 7 – Lenses are cut to the right shape.

Stage 8 – Hand-edging removes any sharp edges and ensures a perfect fit with your glasses frame.

Stage 9 – Tints and coatings are added by dipping the lenses in dye or coating chemicals that bond to the lens surface

Stage 10 – The glasses are checked against your prescription for accuracy.

Further checking at Glasses Direct

When the glasses are received back from the laboratory, they go through a further set of stringent quality checks by our own quality assurance team who verify they’re the right frames with the correct prescription.

We think this final stage is so important that we introduce you to the person who checked your glasses by including a card with your order showing the checks they completed.

Once he or she is happy, your glasses are placed with the case and cleaning cloth that come as standard, plus any other items in your order, and dispatched via next day delivery. We use our own courier rather than Royal Mail so that we can trace the glasses right up to your door.

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