

7 Mistakes People Make Buying Glasses Online

A lot of people prefer to do their shopping online rather than traveling to a “brick and mortar” store. Amazon has changed many of our habits when it comes to purchasing the things we need on a day to day basis (maybe some things we don’t really need also!). In fact, at a recent meeting of optometrists, the speaker asked for anyone without an Amazon Prime membership to raise their hand. Only 1 person out of almost 200 people in that lecture room didn’t have an Amazon Prime account. Let’s face it, there are very few things you can’t find online these days; clothing, electronics, food, and yes, even eyeglasses. At first glance, this seems natural, why not get my glasses online too? Its easy, right? They claim it’s going to save me money, and who doesn’t want to save a little money.

What they don’t tell you is the convenience of shopping online for eyeglasses comes at a price, so let’s talk about the biggest mistakes people make when buying eyeglasses online.

- 1. Frame Selection** – Some people have very specific tastes when it comes to their “look,” and this section is no way is meant to imply that people can’t find a frame that enhances their sense of style when shopping online. However, what is missing is finding the proper fit. Even when you superimpose the frame image over your screenshot, that doesn’t show how the frame will fit when you wear it on your face. Everyone’s face has unique features, and not all frames will properly match those features. For example, do you know if you need nose pads because the bridge of your nose is too flat to hold a saddle bridge, or do you know what to look for when choosing the right bridge size, eye size, “b” measurements, or temple length (those are all different frame measurements)? Most people have one ear that is slightly higher than the other, and can the frame you chose online be adjusted, taking that into account so it sits level on your face? And even if all those factors were exactly right, do you really know how its going to look when you actually wear it? Have you ever purchased a shirt or dress online, but when it finally arrives, it doesn’t look anything like it did on the internet model? Your eyeglasses are the first thing people notice when they see you, don’t leave that first impression to chance. Perhaps most important of all, will the frame you chose be able to accommodate the type of lens your specific prescription requires? Certain types of frame materials, designs and shapes work better with different prescriptions and others just won’t work at all. An experienced optician is trained to not only find your best style, but also your best fit.
- 2. Lens Selection** – Contrary to what many retailers would have you believe; a lens is not a lens. When our doctors write a spectacle lens prescription, its more than just a series of numbers that will help you see your best, its also the lens style, design and material chosen to specifically address your unique visual needs. For example, a Hoya Lifestyle 3 Urban progressive lens in trivex material with Recharge no-glare lens treatment. This information is conveyed to our optical staff at the conclusion of your eye exam and they take our specific lens design and prescription numbers in account when creating your eyeglasses. Online retailers don’t have that same discussion with your doctor, and the lens selection decision is stripped down to “single vision, bifocal, or progressive.” The online platform doesn’t allow for a trained optician to discuss how you will use the lens, experiences you’ve had in the past and guide you to choosing the best lens options for you. Will you be using the lens for everything you need to do during they day, or only for specific tasks, such as driving at night, working at the computer, sewing, reading, working in the garage, playing golf, etc. Do you know which lens design will

enhance the specific tasks you intend to use the lenses for? Once we have a lens design chosen, then comes the lens treatments. Depending on the specific tasks you intend to do, the lenses we choose will be treated to assist you. For example, protecting your eyes from the effects of blue light, or blocking ultraviolet light to slow cataract progression, or helping reduce headlight glare at night, or lenses that automatically adjust to changing lighting conditions, etc. A trained optician will help specifically design your lens to meet your unique lifestyle needs. Finally, we need to choose the lens material. How many lens materials are there? Which material is best for my prescription and for what I'm going using the lens to do? That's where a trained optician comes in.

3. **Fitting the Lens Properly** – Many online retailers ask you to look into the mirror and measure your eyes yourself, there's a little more to it than just that. Many people's eyes are not exactly symmetrically spaced on their face. So, when you're asked to measure the distance from one eye to the other and "split the difference," you may not be getting the best lens alignment. For example, its often that we find the center of one eye to be 3mm further than the other eye. This may not sound like a lot, but if a lens is off center, it creates a prismatic effect, shifts the image away from the center of our vision and creates eyes strain, fatigue, and in extreme examples, double vision. We have specialized instruments that measure the position of each eye independently and ensures that the lens is aligned exactly in the position it requires. Some lenses also require vertical alignment to work properly, and depending on how tall you are, how far away you hold your book (smart phone or tablet), and your posture, that measurement will vary. Did you know that many lenses also have a specific angle or tilt in front of your eyes to work their best? Our experienced opticians have the necessary knowledge and training to make sure your lenses are properly fit to give you your best vision.
4. **Accuracy** – With all the lens factors we have discussed, you probably realize how important having an accurate lens is to achieving clear vision. Consumer studies have shown us at almost 50% of the lenses ordered from online retailers arrive with some error. It begs, the question, is a small perceived savings worth the 50/50 gamble that they will even be right when you get the glasses? Our trained opticians use a 10-step verification process to make sure each and every pair of eyeglasses we dispense are precisely what we ordered. We make sure to have fanatical attention to detail when it comes to your eyeglasses.
5. **Quality** – Similar to the accuracy of the lenses you are purchasing, the quality of the frame and lenses goes a long way to keeping you seeing for the months to come. The following sayings; "the bitterness of poor quality of remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten," "you get what you pay for," and "too good to be true" could all be used to describe many peoples experience purchasing low quality frames and lenses from online retailers. When you see advertisements for glasses offering "2 pairs for glasses for \$79," you know that something must be sacrificed to offer prices so low, quality is usually the first to be cut. If you've ever had the opportunity to feel the difference between a mass-produced injection molded plastic frame compared to a hand crafted Mazzucchelli cotton acetate frame, you'll know what we're talking about. Mass production factory workers churn out complete pairs as quickly as possible, with little attention spent (if any at all) to the craftsmanship required to create a truly beautiful optical device.

6. **Warranty** – Due to their low prices, many of the online retailers don't offer much of a product warranty or guarantee. Our office is a little bit different; we stand by our "Perfect Prescription Program," which states, "If you don't have the vision quality you expect with your new lenses, we ask you to return to the office within the first 60-days so we are able to double check the lens accuracy, adjustment and if necessary, the doctor's prescription. We understand the investment you have made in your eyeglasses, and we want to make sure they are functioning the way we intended; if not, we will fix them." In fact, some of our frames have a 2-year warranty against breakage. Our highly trained opticians are proud of the frames and lenses they provide and stand behind them.

7. **Personal Experience** – For many people, the hands-on personal experience you get when working with a professional who understands you and works to ensure you are getting the best quality and value available is an invaluable service that just can't be duplicated online.

All these reasons should be carefully considered when making the decision where to buy eyeglasses. While the initial price could entice you at first, please consider that a rock bottom price comes at a cost; in both quality and service. Eyeglasses are much more than a commodity that can be purchased just anywhere, they are actually a custom designed visual aid designed to help you perform your best! We can help you see the difference.

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